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## Bright, I-74 connector study in the works

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The possibility of a connector road linking the Bright area with Interstate 74 has taken another step as the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (OKI) Regional Council of Governments has contracted with an engineering firm to do a study of the potential project.

Dearborn County Commissioner Kevin Lynch said the study by AECOM of Cincinnati could be completed by spring. The idea of a connector has been on OKI's radar in its transportation plan for about a decade, and came to the forefront when Mr. Lynch recently became president of OKI, the federally mandated planning organization for the region.

Mr. Lynch said the study would look at whether the project is feasible, options for the route of a connector, environmental and archaeological impacts, and the potential costs.

Mr. Lynch said the benefits of a connector would include shorter emergency response time to the I-74 corridor, where development is taking place; enhanced opportunities for economic development; and shorter commutes for local residents who work elsewhere.

"Look at the number of people in our area who work in Cincinnati and northern Kentucky," Mr. Lynch said, noting that alleviating congestion and pollution are among OKI's fundamental missions.

Mr. Lynch said that an advisory committee consisting of local residents, business owners, emergency-services personnel and county officials will meet with AECOM as it conducts the study. "We want to get it right from the beginning," he said, adding that when the study is completed, community information meetings will be held.

The Dearborn County Council approved \$40,000 toward the \$200,000 study, although some members raised questions about the ultimate cost of a connector in light of other pending county projects and uncertainty about riverboat revenue. Federal funds would pay for 80 percent of the estimated \$50 million, which would mean that Dearborn would need to eventually come up with \$10 million if the project forward.

Mr. Lynch said other funding options that may help with the county's share are being explored. He said he has spoken with state and federal elected officials, and said that because of the "regional significance" of the project, there may be a possibility of OKI assistance.

Mr. Lynch said most of the feedback he has received so far from community members has been positive. "They understand or see the need" for such a project, he said.

*(Check back for updates on this story.)*

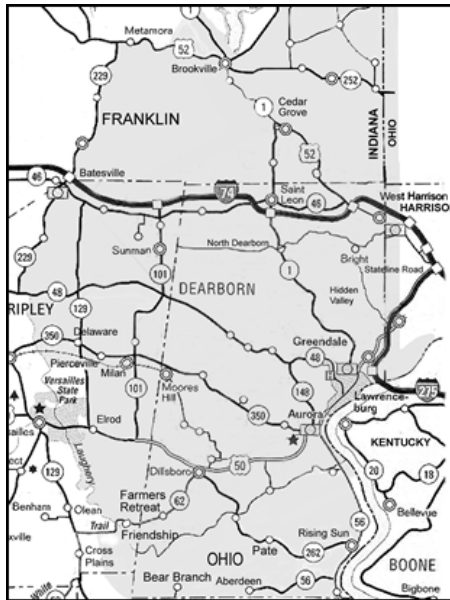
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24486 Stateline Rd. Ste F

Bright IN 47025

Phone : 812.637-0660

Email:

brightbeacon1@comcast.net



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