

# B LOCAL & STATE

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**HAMILTON  
COUNTERFEIT  
MONEY REPORTED  
IN CITY B6**

## YOUR COMMUTE

# Fairfield targets I-275 congestion

Study underway for solutions to afternoon traffic backups on Winton Road and South Gilmore.

By Michael D. Pitman  
Staff Writer

Commuters along Interstate 275 and Winton Road navigated construction barrels and lane closures for about two years until that widening project wrapped in the summer of 2014.

But one problem wasn't solved: the afternoon traffic backups of southbound traffic along Winton Road and South Gilmore headed to westbound I-275.

"Everything is pretty good except for that southbound traf-

fic and interchange," said Fairfield City Engineer Ben Mann.

A study underway is looking at how the city can fix that problem.

That traffic can back up upwards of a half-mile as employees of the city's top three employers – which includes the county's No. 2 employer in Cincinnati Financial – leave work.

A project plan hasn't been developed, but Mann said the end result is clear.

"We want to improve traffic from Omniplex Drive south," he said.

City Council gave the Public Works Department on Monday the OK to apply for a future Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments grant.

"Though we don't know exactly what that project will look like but we want to get it in the queue," Mann said.

The intersection at Interstate 275 and Exit 39 is being studied by Mead & Hunt of Columbus. This project is looking at improvements to the westbound ramp to I-275, and a widening of the existing southbound Winton Road/South Gilmore Road between Omniplex Drive and the westbound ramp

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Commuters head south on Winton Road toward the westbound Interstate 275 on-ramp in Forest Park on Thursday afternoon. The city of Fairfield is waiting on the results of a study to determine how to fix the issue. MICHAEL D. PITMAN/STAFF



Fairfield is ready to pay for a 20 percent match of a potential \$1 million project to solve southbound congestion along the South Gilmore/Winton Road corridor. Pictured is the congestion area at the Interstate 275 Interchange in Forest Park. CONTRIBUTED

## I-275

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to 275. Metering at the ramp and the collector-distributor road at the I-275 merge is also being studied.

Though the project is not in Fairfield – it's in Forest Park in Hamilton County – Mann said it was economically beneficial for the city to take the lead and pay for the project. The city's share is expected to be 20 percent of a potential \$1 million project.

More than 400 businesses exist within 1 mile of the South Gilmore/Win-

ton Road corridor which collectively employ more than 8,000 people. The corridor also averages around 40,000 vehicles a day, according to the city of Fairfield. There's around 130 acres of available land within the Fairfield corridor for development, according to the city.

"We believe the benefit is to all of our business in Fairfield ... so we thought it was in our best interest to spearhead it," said Mann, adding that they're expecting to receive a letter of support from Forest Park.

Funding assistance could also come from the Butler County Transportation

Improvement District, but any application at this point would be premature, said Mann.

But Dave Spinney, executive director of the county TID, understands the importance of this project, including the significant impact it would have on existing business and future growth in southern Butler County.

"That section between the interstate and Mack Road has got to be one of the most congested in southern Butler County, if not a larger area," he said.

Not only are top businesses in the city and county located just north of that

interchange, but Spinney said there's potential redevelopment for Forest Fair Village (formerly Cincinnati Mall) and Cincinnati Mills Mall, "and that part if Fairfield is going to reach its potential, trying to stay a head of the congestion and the traffic issues there is very important."

Spinney said he's had preliminary discussions with Hamilton County's TID, but while "it's a bit premature" to talk about funding options, they do exist.

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