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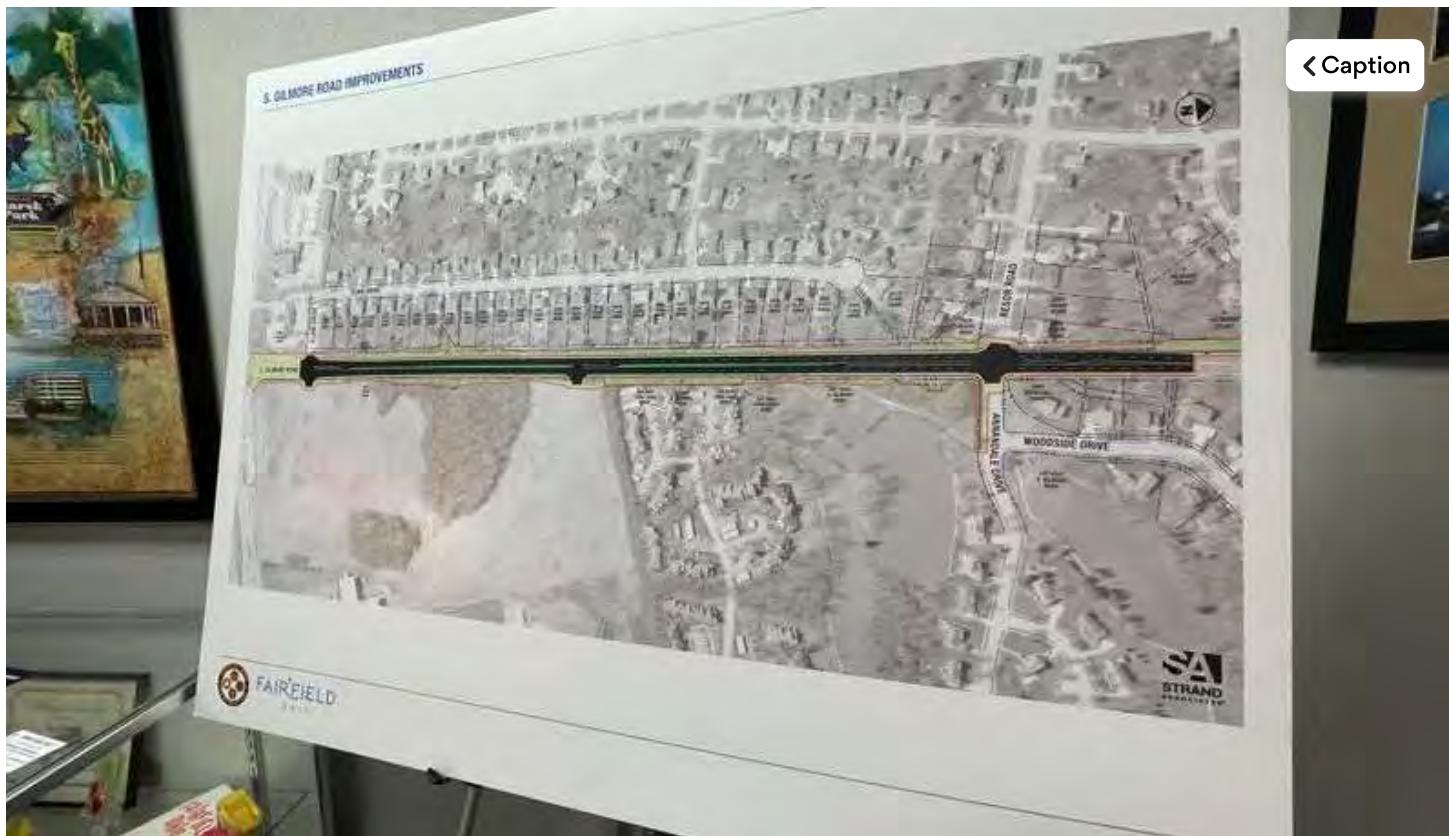
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South Gilmore Road bottleneck in Fairfield set for widening in 2024



NEWS

By Michael D. Pitman

Aug 10, 2022



FAIRFIELD — In less than two years, a longtime bottleneck on South Gilmore Road will be unclogged.

The \$3.86 million project, which will receive \$2.2 million from the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments, and hopefully \$900,000 from the Ohio Public Works Commission, is scheduled to start construction in the spring of 2024 and could take as many as nine months to complete. But before that can happen, the required right-of-way along South Gilmore Road needed for the project will take until this fall to secure.

City Engineer Nick Dill said Fairfield contracted a consultant in early 2021, and they delivered a first draft of the plans late last year. Once the city received those plans, the city started to seek public input, including the four most-impacted property owners, three of whom are at Resor and South Gilmore roads intersection. The fourth property owner is the Villages of Wildwood apartment complex.

They also set up an in-person public meeting in April, and a website design to provide information and accept public input, did not indicate anyone was against the fix, which will widen the road and add a southbound thru lane, wider sidewalks, and medians.

Of the nearly 2,500 pageviews, only 15 responded on the website, and only a handful of people attended the in-person meeting. Mailers were about the project, as well as the meeting and website, were sent to impacted property owners, and information was posted on the city's social media accounts.

With the little response, and no negative responses, Dill said, "I have taken that to mean people think we're more or less on track and don't seem to have any substantial objections."

Dill said traffic congestion and roadway safety were among the top concerns of the public, which will be addressed with the project.

One concern, Dill said, was some worried the improvements will appear like a truck route. Though the corridor will be wider, the lanes will be narrower and there will be a median.

In addition to signage, said Public Works Director Ben Mann said trucks will be "discouraged" as it will also "look less like a truck route."

This project that's planned for 2024 was recommended as needed 14 years ago, but Mann said, "There's a reason that short-term recommendation didn't get done until now."

Actually, there were several reasons that were identified from the June 2006 Burgess and Niple South Gilmore/Winton roads corridor study, which highlighted the congestion of South Gilmore between Mack and Resor roads. City Council was presented the recommendations, along with others, in 2008.

But the study highlighted necessary recommendations along the corridor that came first, including improvements at the Mack and South Gilmore intersection, the South Gilmore Road widening to fix the bottleneck south of Mack Road to the Interstate 275 interchange, and several improvements to the I-275 interchange, including widening the overpass and various on and off ramps to the interstate.

With mostly outside funding supporting the projects, nearly \$13.5 million have been invested into the corridor to help move traffic.

Mann said the plans for the South Gilmore Road widening project is about 60% complete, and at this point, the city's bill for the \$3.86 million project is around \$228,000. However, Mann said that could increase based on supply chain issues, construction delays or some other unknown cost.

The city could receive additional OKI funds, as the organization has a history of granting justifiable additional requests. There is also the city's share of the county motor vehicle funds, but Fairfield needs to apply in order to receive it.

Regardless of how much the city will need to put in — the city already paid nearly \$400,000 for engineering costs — Mann said this project “will be a good bang for the buck” as the city will not need to take on more debt for the project.

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About the Author

JOURNAL NEWS

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Michael D. Pitman has been a reporter in southwest Ohio since 1999. He's covered local governments in Warren and Butler counties, as well as state and national issues. He currently covers the cities of Fairfield and Hamilton.

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