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## Belmont County TID operating

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THE BELMONT County Transportation Improvement District is now up and running following its first, official meeting Monday morning at the county offices in St. Clairsville.

The TID was established on Dec. 19, 2007, as a separate, legal county entity under Ohio law for the purpose of allowing the county the opportunity to facilitate and find funding for all county-wide transportation and construction projects.

Nine such entities existed in Ohio before Belmont County became the smallest county to create a TID.

Although the TID was initially created to address the Interstate 70 strategic corridor in Richland Township, TID board member Gregory R. Bizzarri assured that the newly formed entity will exist to serve the entire county.

"This is for everyone in the county," Bizzarri said. "Everyone gets a piece of the pie."

"It's a statutory board to analyze and study the county and its subdivisions to facilitate and improve transportation within the area," Rusty Schuermann, legal council to the TID, said. "It's an umbrella organization that brings together the expertise of separate entities under one roof and allows a more innovated approach to project development."

The five members of the TID's Board of Trustees, appointed by the Belmont County commissioners, met to discuss the proposed bylaws, as well as to establish who would represent the TID in various positions.

Each trustee was selected to represent several of the county's existing entities. They include Bizzarri, Richland Township Trustee; Larry E. Merry, director of the Belmont County Port Authority; Fred F. Bennett, Belmont County engineer; Dennis E. Bigler, director of public services; and Mark A. Thomas, commissioner.

After adopting the proposed bylaws, the board appointed Thomas as the chairman, Bigler as the vice chairman and Merry as the secretary/treasurer.

Two additional, non-voting members will be appointed to the TID board following the approval of Ohio legislature.

"They will be two more voices on the board to lend their expertise," Thomas said. "The five of us don't profess to have all the answers. We want to hear as many voices as we can."

During the next regular meeting, Thomas said that the board will get down to project business as well as establish the TID budget, which will initially be financed through each of the board members' separate entities with the possibility of refunding them after the TID lobbies for funding from the Ohio Department of Transportation next year.

"By the time we get our ducks in a row, we'll be ready to start lobbying for that funding," Thomas said, adding that future project funding may be sought from several sources.

The TID will meet during the first Monday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the county offices located at 121 Newell Ave., St. Clairsville. The next meeting will be held on June 2.

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