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## TID formed in Belmont County

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The Belmont County Commissioners took a proactive economic development step forward earlier this week by forming a Transportation Improvement District. The county, in conjunction with the City of St. Clairsville and the Richland Township Trustees, have joined forces to create the TID for Belmont County to foster increased collaboration with local partner jurisdictions as other county, regional, state and federal agencies to implement a regional approach to transportation improvements in support of economic development in Belmont County.

The Belmont County TID will be structured to combine technical, legal and financial capability to link transportation investment that foster economic development in Belmont County. The TID will perform a strategic capital investment and management function and when fully implemented, will serve as a depository for pooled revenues and joint funding to manage implementation of the Belmont County's strategic corridor economic development.

Commission President Mark A. Thomas said, "While the TID is initially created to address the I-70 strategic corridor in Richland Township, it will be a countywide TID so that we may help our 16 townships and/or our 16 cities/villages. The Interstate 70 corridor throughout the entire county is a vital economic development link to the rest of the world and we fully intend to take advantage of every opportunity under the law to move the county forward."

Vice-President Gordie Longshaw added, "We cannot sit back and wait for our state-federal government to create transportation opportunities. We must take immediate action to help ourselves and work with our fellow colleagues in Columbus and Washington."

The TID, under Ohio law, will be governed by five voting trustees and two non-voting trustees appointed by the Speaker of the Ohio House and the President of the Ohio Senate. Initial board members of the Belmont County TID, appointed for a two-year term, are Thomas, Belmont County Engineer Fred F. Bennett, Belmont County Port Authority Director Larry E. Merry, St. Clairsville Director of Public Services Dennis Bigler, and Richland Township Trustee Gregory R. Bizzarri. The final two board members will be appointed by the Ohio Legislature.

Commissioner Chuck R. Probst, Jr. said, "The commissioners are very pleased to work on a project that will benefit the entire county. We are committed to the improvement of the I-70 corridor as it remains the driving force behind our ability to create economic development opportunities throughout the county."

A key element of the Belmont County TID will be to pool funds and resources available to the county, its local jurisdictions and private sector investment partners to leverage non-federal matching monies for federal funding purposes. This innovative approach will permit Belmont County and its partners to contribute to a pooled local match based upon the timing and availability of their local funds and resources.

"Our goal is to use the TID to help the county secure funding from ODOT and the federal government as we initially explore ways to improve I-70 in and around the Ohio Valley Mall and the Ohio Valley Plaza," Thomas noted. "All three commissioners stress the importance of this mega retail complex as it relates to the economic success of the entire county."

Bigler said, "This is an important step towards the realization of large transportation projects, including but not limited to Mall Road/Interstate 70. I am pleased to work with the others on the TID board to use this developmental tool to benefit the entire county and to have worked to implement this concept. I want to commend the Commissioners for taking this important step."

The next step in the TID process will be for the Board to meet, elect its officers and create its bylaws. It will then begin the task of improving transportation links throughout the county.

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