

## First part of industrial connector road opens

BY JOHN JARVIS • The Marion Star • November 13, 2010

MARION - Even before the formal opening of the first half of the much-anticipated road, Whirlpool Corp. was using it.

Dozens of elected officials, county and city employees attended the ribbon cutting marking the completion of phase I of the Northwest Industrial Connector.

As of Friday afternoon, the 2.63-mile Northwest Industrial Connector linked Ohio 95, west of Whirlpool Corp., Marion Division, and Ohio 309. Once the entire connector is complete, it will join Ohio 95 to Marion-Williamsport Road, providing a thoroughfare to U.S. 23.



Completion of the first phase already has proved a benefit to the county's largest employer, said Tim Anderson, director of accounting and materials at Whirlpool's Marion-Agosta Road (Ohio 95 West) plant.

"It really improves the logistics for our plant," Anderson said, adding the company began trucking parts on the road from its Holland Road warehouse to its main plant before the ribbon cutting. "When it gets all the way out to 23, the trucks from 23 will come this way."

He said the company did a study in 2009 that counted 128,000 trucks "through the Whirlpool gates," indicating the connector will reduce truck traffic through downtown Marion significantly.

County Engineer Brad Irons, who emceed the ribbon cutting, said, "It's a good day for Marion County. It's been a long time coming, and we're well on our way."

Approximate cost of phase I is \$5.1 million, with the estimated price of the entire project expected to be about \$17.8 million, Irons said. The second and last phase will include a 321-foot-long overpass, for which the Ohio Rail Development Commission authorized up to \$6 million in funding when in May 2006 CSXT refused to allow an at-grade crossing of its track through the area.

The delay and increases in construction costs led to increased total expenses also contributed to by costs of crossing CSX pull-back rail and the Union Tank Car rail yard. The road route also was realigned to reduce effects on the property of Union Tank, "another important employer," Irons states in a description of the project.

Facing a \$5.1 million shortfall in funds, the county applied successfully for funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act as a shovel-ready project.

Shelly & Sands Inc. was awarded the construction contract for the first phase.

Irons said he hopes bids will be advertised for the second phase this winter, with construction beginning in the spring. He estimated the final phase will be completed possibly as early as next November, but noted the county probably will put out an 18-month contract to ensure the road is done by July 2012.

He credited Dave Claborn, then the president of Marion CAN DO!, for prodding him into initiating the project.