

State OKs \$800K to study relocation of 309 at Marion Industrial Center

ODOT aims to address traffic issues at intermodal

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MARION -- Funding to study how Ohio 309 could be relocated to alleviate blockages of the state highway at a railroad crossing near Marion Intermodal received the state's OK on Tuesday.

The Ohio Department of Transportation's Transportation Review Advisory Council approved \$800,000 in funding of preliminary engineering as Ted Graham, president of Marion Industrial Center where Marion Intermodal is located, aims to complete a \$3 million expansion this year.

Graham said the study will determine the "best way to solve the problem of the railroad crossing." The options are an overpass, an underpass and a relocation of Ohio 309 to the rear of Marion Industrial Center near Patten Pike. If Ohio 309 near Marion Intermodal is relocated, the existing state route would remain open, but not as Ohio 309.

Loading and unloading of freight onto and from intermodal trains at Marion Intermodal located just east of Pole Lane Road stops automobile traffic 10 to 12 times daily and will only increase in number, Graham said.

An expansion of the intermodal, where rail freight is transferred for delivery by highway, will be completed in 2011, he estimated, adding the project currently is "dormant. I haven't decided what exactly needs to happen there." He declined to elaborate.

The expansion, funded by a \$1.5 million investment by Graham and a \$1.5 million state logistics and stimulus loan, will add 1.5 miles of rail at the intermodal site and triple its capacity, he said. The state loan will be forgiven if the expansion creates 17 jobs and retains 12 existing jobs.

Ken Lengieza, director for the Marion City/County Regional Planning Commission, said Marion Intermodal is a "great asset for Marion," which will become increasingly important as gasoline prices rise.

Eliminating the disruption of automobile traffic is needed, Lengieza said, adding the commission, Marion CAN DO!, county officials and Mayor Scott Schertzer support the intermodal facility's project.

"In itself it creates some jobs," and provides intermodal capacities for Marion-area businesses, Lengieza said.

Nancy Burton, ODOT District 6 spokeswoman, said ODOT will advertise for consultants in several weeks, beginning the study this fall. Awarding of the remaining \$1.4 million funding sought in ODOT District 6's application for the relocation project will be determined by the outcome of the preliminary engineering, she said.

The study will identify environmental concerns and issues and options. Subsequent steps in the project will be determined by the study.

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