

## The Columbus Dispatch

Bradley M. Harmon, President and Publisher | Alan D. Miller, Editor | Mary Yost, Editorial Page Editor

### Federal funds would help transform I-70/71 split

**A**s anyone who's traversed Downtown during rush hour knows, traffic doesn't get much hairier than where Interstate 70 and Interstate 71 come together briefly before continuing their east-west and north-south paths, respectively.

Data tell the story: 130,000 vehicles a day including 17,000 trucks; traffic exceeds design capacity by 50,000 vehicles a day; the overlap represents 6% of the Columbus freeway system but sees 25% of freeway crashes.

A \$216 million construction project, known as Columbus Crossroads Phase 4, has been planned to eliminate the bottleneck ranked second worst in the state last year.

Improvements are projected to reduce travel delays by 97% and eliminate 95% of lane changes drivers must now make.

The project has funds committed from the state (\$146 million), city of Columbus (\$27 million) and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (\$3 million). It needs \$40 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation to become reality.

Just as important as what the Phase 4 trench will do to ease traffic through the city is what four rebuilt bridges above it will do to reconnect Downtown, German Village and the Brewery District and create economic development opportunities and new pedestrian green space.

As the High Street

cap over I-670 helped transform and reconnect Downtown with the Short North, a new Third Street cap proposes similar commercial capacity while a new High Street bridge would include a double-sided green cap. Rebuilding Front and Fourth streets' bridges also will boost development opportunities.

City, state and federal elected officials and dozens of businesses, community organizations and nonprofits have endorsed federal funding for the project.

With \$900 million available nationwide, The Dispatch strongly urges USDOT to award \$40 million in Infrastructure for Rebuilding America discretionary grant funds to Capital Crossroads Phase 4.



ABC6 (Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019)  
Alexis Moberger

## **Gas tax hike helps I-70 and I-71 revamp project move forward**

Governor Mike DeWine says several Columbus transportation projects that were in jeopardy of cancellation are now moving forward. It's all thanks to the recently passed gas tax hike. (WSYX/WTTE)

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Governor Mike DeWine says several Columbus transportation projects that were in jeopardy of cancellation are now moving forward. It's all thanks to the recently passed gas tax hike.

DeWine says the bill will generate \$828.5 million a year in additional funding for maintenance projects and safety upgrades on Ohio roads.

A major local project called, Columbus Crossroads can now be set in motion. The project includes three future phases, the current one, which crews will begin next week, includes reconstructing I-70 East from Fourth Street to Miller Avenue. A new ramp will also be added to I-70 East to Parsons Avenue. Ultimately, it will make for a safer exits and entrances at Nationwide Children's Hospital. This phase is expected to take just under three years.

"We see over 1.5 million patient encounters a year, the vast majority of those patients arrive via car," said Patty McClimon, senior vice president at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Governor Mike DeWine said, the current phase, set to begin next week was already in the budget. However, the future three phases were in danger of being cancelled. Now, the gas tax increase, which is set to take effect July 1, will create enough construction money.

"Future phases of the Columbus Crossroads projects simply would not have happened, they would have been put on hold I guess for forever, without the increase in the revenue passed by the general assembly," said DeWine.

Other phases include reconstruction and widening of 71 from Broad Street to Long Street. a project that will begin in a year. This phase will also widen part of I-71 northbound and replaces the Broad Street Bridge to make it more pedestrian friendly. In about two years, the reconstruction of 70 eastbound and 71 northbound will begin. This project includes building a new ramp from 70 east to Fulton Street to create a new

eastbound gateway to downtown and will replace the Front Street Bridge. Eventually, there will be two continuous 71 north lanes through downtown.

Then in three years, crews will construct a new ramp from Mound Street to 71 south.

"I think that will be great and help with the congestion and moving traffic through a little bit better," said driver Lashun Burris.

Part of the project also includes fewer lane changes, which will hopefully decrease the number of crashes. It also aims to improve safety at three of the state's top ten crash locations. Those locations include, I-70 over 315, I-70 just east of 315 and 70/71 near Front Street.

Drivers say they're happy the project can now move forward. However, they aren't looking forward to more construction.

"I think it's going to be a nightmare but I think it's a nightmare we're going to have to live through," said driver Sue Dozer.

Link: <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/gas-tax-hike-helps-i-70-and-i-71-revamp-project-move-forward>



## **Ohio transportation budget includes three endangered central state projects**

The latest Ohio transportation budget — contained in the recently passed House Bill 62 — has guaranteed that three projects in the central region of the state are saved from cancellation.

Gov. Mike DeWine made the announcement, securing the future of the Columbus Crossroads project. That project has three future phases left to it, which will result in the reconfiguration of the I-70/I-71 interchange running through downtown Columbus, Ohio.

“This interchange was built in the 1960s, and Columbus has long outgrown it,” DeWine said. “Right now, drivers are traveling on a highway system that wasn’t built to handle the number of cars that travel in and out of Columbus today. Now that these three phases of the Columbus Crossroads project will proceed as planned, we can look forward to a safer interchange in the future.”

The project includes a \$43.8 million reconstruction and widening of I-71 expected to take a year. Additional efforts will take place on I-70 eastbound and I-71 northbound, costing another \$103.6 million, with a notable start date of around two years from now. They will replace the Front Street Bridge and create a new ramp for access between eastbound and the city’s downtown. Other reconstruction efforts will be pursued on I-70 westbound and I-71 southbound, focusing on new ramp constructions under a \$107.2 million price tag. That final project is expected to begin in around three years.

“Without the funding provided in House Bill 62, these phases could have been delayed for years or permanently put on hold,” Jack Marchbanks, Ohio Department of Transportation Director, said. “These next three phases are essential pieces of the puzzle and will make a meaningful reduction in traffic crashes through this notoriously congested stretch of interstate.”

The new budget grants more than \$800 million per year of additional funds for such maintenance projects and road safety upgrades statewide. Thanks to the addition, the Columbus Crossroads project began its next phase this week.

Link: <https://transportationtodaynews.com/news/13616-ohio-transportation-budget-includes-three-endangered-central-state-projects/>



*Qfm96, 96.3 WLVQ – Radio*

## **Massive Columbus Crossroads project continues next week**

COLUMBUS – More than \$300 million worth of Central Ohio transportation projects that were in jeopardy of cancellation will be moving forward in the next three years, thanks to the new state transportation budget and its 10 ½-cent-a-gallon gasoline tax increase approved by the General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Mike DeWine earlier this month.

The bill will generate approximately \$828.5 million a year in additional funding for maintenance projects and upgrades on roads throughout Ohio, including the sprawling Columbus Crossroads project to rebuild the I-70/I-71 “split” through downtown Columbus to decrease congestion and reduce crashes.

Several phases of the project are already finished, but the new funding ensures that the entire project will eventually be complete.

“This interchange was built in the 1960s, and Columbus has long outgrown it...Now that we know the Columbus Crossroads project will proceed as planned, we can look forward to a safer interchange in the future,” DeWine said.

The current 2.5-year \$80 million phase of the project, which will begin next week, will reconstruct and widen the eastbound side of I-70 from 4th Street to Miller Avenue and includes a new ramp from I-70 east to Parsons Avenue to provide improved access to Nationwide Children’s Hospital and East Side neighborhoods, Ohio Department of Transportation Director Jack Marchbanks said.

At the conclusion of the construction, there will be two continuous lane of travel for both interstates in both directions.

That will be followed over the next three years by three more phases of the project, widening I-71 on the east side of Downtown and rebuilding the East Side I-70/I-71 split, including bridge replacements and additions of ramps.

“These next three phases are essential pieces of the puzzle and will make a meaningful reduction in traffic crashes through this notoriously congested stretch of interstate,” Marchbanks said.

Those construction projects will be complete by the end of 2024 at a cost of \$253 million, said DeWine and Marchbanks during a press conference Monday.

ODOT officials estimate the reconstruction will eliminate nearly 70 percent of the lane changes approaching the East Side split and will also relieve bottlenecks and back-ups

while improving safety at three of the state's top 10 accident locations: I-70 over State Route 315, just east of SR 315 and I-70/I-71 near Front Street.

The highway construction will coincide with improvements to a number of downtown and East Side streets, including Mound Street, Fulton Street and Elijah Pierce Avenue.

New bridges at Front Street, Grant Avenue and Broad Street will include pedestrian walkways and greenery.

Link: <https://qfm96.com/news/061160-massive-columbus-crossroads-project-continues-next-week/>



*Ohio Public Radio* (Tuesday, April 16, 2019)

## **DeWine Says Gas Tax Hike Funding Latest Round of Columbus**

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine has unveiled plans for the next phase of construction on the I-70-71 split downtown.

He says the recently approved gas tax increase will make projects like this possible for a little while. Ohio Public Radio's Karen Kasler reports.

DeWine says big exchanges like Columbus Crossroads at the I-70/I-71 corridor are in urban areas, but there are smaller safety-related road projects throughout the state. And they'll all be helped by the gas tax increase taking effect July 1. He'd wanted 18 cents, which he says would have financed a ten year plan for road construction, repair and maintenance, but he appreciates the 10 and a half cent hike.

"This is a shorter time. I'm not sure how many years, but this is shorter time. But we're going to be fine for the first couple of years, first three years probably. Maybe into the fourth year."

The gas tax increase will bring in \$865 million a year, with 55 percent going to the state and the rest to local governments.

Link: <https://www.wcbe.org/post/dewine-says-gas-tax-hike-funding-latest-round-columbus-crossroads-construction>