

REMOVING ROAD BLOCKS IN SANDUSKY COUNTY



Jonathon Bird | News-Messenger

Township Road 226 North of Fremont remains closed. The Ohio Turnpike Commission has agreed to fix one of 11 roads riddled with soil erosion in Sandusky County.

State commission to pay for road's repair

BY MATT MANNING
Staff writer

FREMONT — County officials are calling it a small victory in the battle against the Ohio Turnpike Commission.

After years of battling over who is responsible for fixing embankments, the commission has agreed to fund repairs to fix one of 11 roads riddled with soil erosion in Sandusky County.

Sandusky County Engineer James Moyer received a letter from the turnpike commission late last month, days after a private meeting with county officials, state Sen. Karen Gillmor and state Rep. Jeff Wagner.

According to the letter, the commission said it would pay for soil testing and repairs for Jacobs Road — the lone road currently closed for being hazardous. They also held out the possibility of additional soil testing on 10 other

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JAMES MOYER
Sandusky County engineer

bridges identified by county officials and representatives, if funding is available.

The letter said Gillmor will explore the possibility of state funding for future expenditures relating to fixing embankments.

Moyer said more repairs are needed, because winter wrought havoc on the embankments. He said it's a public safety hazard.

"We appreciate they're doing one," Moyer said. "The situation is getting much worse. ... The problem is getting more serious."

Moyer said he expects a formal agreement from the turnpike commission in the next few days. But, he said, he won't stop this fight until all the roads and embankments receive the necessary attention.

Gov. Ted Strickland vetoed a line item in a bill in July that would make that type of damage the turnpike commission's responsibility.

Moyer said progress was made after the issue was brought to the governor's attention, and with Wagner and Gillmor's backing. He said if a solution is not found, he'll go back to the governor.

Commissioner Dan Polter said Jacobs Road, or County Road 226, has been closed for almost three years because of the failing

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bridge embankments. He said getting the commission to pay for the repairs is an initial step.

"Hopefully, the same remedy could be the same remedy to fix them all," he said. "We're glad they're doing this, but we want them to do more."

The commission letter said this repair does not set a precedent. Turnpike officials continue to cite a 1953 decision by the Ohio Attorney General's Office saying where there is a grade separation at the intersection of the turnpike and a public road, the paved surface is not the turnpike's responsibility.

The 13 counties contain-

ing the toll road all signed agreements in 1955 alleviating the turnpike commission from responsibility.

Polter adds they'll continue to battle the Turnpike Commission in hopes they'll fix other embankments.

"You can't expect them to do them all in one year," he said. "Hopefully, they'll cooperate."

A spokeswoman for the Ohio turnpike Commission said the repair project likely would begin in the spring or summer, once an engineering firm is selected.

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