

State readies projects budget

Franklin County may get \$20 million for construction from 2007 capital budget

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Franklin County is expected to get about \$20 million for community projects in the new state capital construction budget, including \$7 million for a Downtown baseball stadium and \$3 million for the Rt. 315 Research and Technology Corridor.

The capital budget, a list of funding for brick-and-mortar projects in various state agencies and local communities, will be introduced today and is expected to move quickly through the legislature during the next two weeks.

The bill also will include funding for schoolbuilding construction and universities, and, at the urging of Gov. Bob Taft, is expected to extend the Clean Ohio Fund, a \$400 million bond issue approved by voters in 2000 that is nearly tapped out.

The fund has helped preserve 25,600 acres for wildlife, protect 20,000 acres of farmland from development, build 216 miles of recreation trails and advance cleanups at 126 abandoned, polluted factory sites.

In all, legislative leaders got more than \$1 billion in community project requests, though the capital budget contains about \$120 million statewide for such projects. Many requests will be rejected or funded at a reduced amount.

Franklin County's allocation is an increase from the \$15 million it, Cuyahoga and Hamilton counties each got in the last capital budget, passed in January 2005.

Franklin County's state funding mainly sticks to a priority list compiled in September by the Columbus Partnership. Taft added one project, \$1 million for Franklin County's portion of a bike trail that, when completed, will cut across the state from the Ohio River to Lake Erie.

The biggest chunk of county funding will help build Huntington Park, the Columbus Clippers' \$55 million Arena District baseball stadium that is set to open in April 2009. The state caps its support of stadium projects at 15 percent of the cost.

Of the \$3 million requested for the Rt. 315 Research and Technology Corridor, \$2 million is for upgrading sewer and water capacity. The remaining \$1 million is for COSI, helping make it a portal where the city can show off features of the corridor to economic-development prospects.

Central Ohio leaders hope to double the 50,000 jobs that exist in the 10,000-acre corridor, stretching from COSI Downtown to Riverside Methodist Hospital. The goal is to build upon the \$1 billion worth of research that has been commissioned in the area through Ohio State University, Battelle and four major hospital systems.

Other local projects expected to get at least a portion of the requested funding include:

- Rickenbacker Airport, to continue developing it into a major inland distribution hub, including direct rail access to Rickenbacker facilities. Requested: \$3.5 million.
- The Scioto Mile, to help develop a system of parks, streets and bike and hiking paths designed to reconnect Downtown to the Scioto River. Requested: \$8.5 million.
- Lincoln Theater and King Arts Complex, to continue renovation of the building, which city leaders hope will serve as a catalyst for economic growth in the King-Lincoln District. Requested: \$1.5 million.
- BalletMet, to assist in renovating a recently purchased building. Requested: \$250,000.
- Children's Hospital, to help in construction of a community amphitheater. Requested: \$1 million.
- The Columbus Museum of Art, to support a \$33 million renovation and 150,000-squarefoot expansion of the facility. Requested: \$1 million.
- The Franklin Park Conservatory, assisting with a \$45 million project that includes a conservation plan for the historic Palm House, a new catering facility, four greenhouses, and a picnic pavilion. Requested: \$1 million.
- Columbus College of Art & Design, to help construct fashion design, communications and fabrication studio facilities at its newly acquired building on E. Broad Street. Requested: \$1 million.

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