

Rail project not on track

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Neglected maintenance creates liability for authority, but switch purchase still in future.

By Chris Dumond
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HAMILTON — A railroad project meant to spur economic development in a southern Hamilton industrial park has hit another snag, Butler County Port Authority officials discovered Tuesday morning.

The authority has been working with Terry Industries, CHEMCENTRAL and Universal Forest Products in the Symmes Industrial Park for more than a year to improve access to a CSX Transportation railway with an electronic switch. However, those companies have been neglecting the maintenance of their side track, creating a liability for the authority.

"Frankly, the three companies have deferred maintenance ... and none of them have it budgeted for this year," Fonner said. "In our negotiations with them, it's become apparent that they don't have a real commitment for putting money into that track."

Now, Fonner said, the authority needs to make sure it's not liable for any maintenance issues, although it still plans to buy and install the \$80,000 switch.

Bill Spangler, the plant superintendent at CHEMCENTRAL, said the companies are trying to resolve the maintenance issue, but said the buyout of Terry Industries delayed rail project agreements.

As it stands now, rail cars must be manually routed into the Symmes park off the busy CSX main line. Because the gap between mainline trains needed to

At a glance

Other Butler County Port Authority business at a glance:

The authority is creating surveys to send to Butler County companies about its rail shipping needs as part of the Butler County Freight Rail study. The authority is considering the creation of a study steering committee.

Authority members are being polled on their feelings about the sharing of staff and resources with the Butler County Transportation Improvement District.

According to an unaudited financial statement presented Tuesday, the authority ended 2005 with net assets of \$19,225. The authority had \$41,000 in revenue and \$21,775 in expenses last year.

Rail

Plans disrupted by maintenance issues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

safely complete the routing is so large, the companies frequently go without their scheduled deliveries.

While the new switch could be installed without repairing the side track, Fonner said the authority is taking some risk in doing so.

The cost to buy the switch is to be paid back by CSX according to how many cars use the side track. If the track is shut down because it fails to meet the railroad company's maintenance standards, the reimbursement would stop, too.

However, Fonner said he expects the costs to be paid back before the track reaches that level of disrepair.