

STRONG ECONOMIES, RESILIENT COUNTIES

The Role of Counties in Economic Development



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CLERMONT COUNTY, OHIO

Strengthening the County Economy through Transportation



A medium-sized county in Southwestern Ohio, Clermont County is part of the Cincinnati Metropolitan Area. While the trade, utilities and transportation sectors employ a large number of the county residents, the local economy faced transportation challenges such as inadequate access to roadways. Addressing transportation issues to spur economic growth requires a significant amount of funding. As a result, Clermont County created a Transportation Improvement District (TID) to support large-scale capital improvement projects.

Clermont County seeks to improve the local economy through partnerships with non-profits and government agencies: the Clermont County CIC, Inc. (CIC) and the Clermont County Port Authority. The CIC is the designated agent of the Clermont County Board of Commissioners. Founded in 2003, the CIC focuses on facilitating industrial and office park development. The Port Authority, established in 2012 by the Board of County Commissioners, has a range of authorities to facilitate economic development, including acquisition of property, issuance of revenue bonds for the port authority facilities and operation of transportation and government facilities. Clermont County oversees both of these mechanisms, with the Board of County Commissioners serving as CIC Trustees and appointing the members of the Board of Directors of the Port Authority. The Clermont County Department of Community and Economic Development manages the projects done through the CIC and the Port Authority.

Clermont County Transportation Improvement District

In 2006, the Board of County Commissioners formed a Transportation Improvement District (TID) that encompassed the entire county, in response to the limitations of the county transportation infrastructure curtailing economic development. For example, rising traffic congestion along major arteries increased delivery times for shipments in the area, and costs for local businesses. The TID governing board consists of the Clermont County Engineer, the president of the Clermont County Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the City of Milford, Miami Township and Union Township.

The intra-county collaboration involves intergovernmental partnerships pledging funds from each entity over a 15-year period. In 2014, the pledged revenue included \$2.4

- Population, 2013: 200,218
- County Board size: 3
- County Administrator

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million from the Clermont County government, \$25,000 from the City of Milford, \$600,000 from Miami Township and \$100,000 from Union Township. The county revenue is a combination of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and property taxes. Individual governments can also choose to contribute additional funding for specific projects. As of 2014, the TID had accumulated approximately \$14.8 million. With these reserves, the county and its municipalities gain an advantage when competing for grants from the Ohio Department of Transportation, since the funds allow the TID to provide significant matching funds for transportation projects.

TID funds are often applied to large-scale improvements that affect the entire county, such as the expansion of a major interstate interchange. The members of the TID can also request funds for smaller, local initiatives. The TID Board ranks projects through a Regional Transportation Improvement List, which is reviewed and prioritized on a regular basis. The TID Board votes on any changes to the list by majority rule.

The TID allows each partner to work on infrastructure projects that would otherwise have been prohibitively expensive. One example of a significant road improvement project is the upgrading of the Interstate 275/SR32 interchange, which involves widening the state road and changing the location of on-ramps to improve traffic flow. Smaller projects include the extension of roads to improve access to a new industrial park and the addition of new lanes to major roadways in highly congested areas. In January 2014, the TID had enabled \$80 - \$90 million worth of active transportation infrastructure projects within Clermont County.



One of the TID's projects reconstructing and widening the Eastgate Boulevard structure over SR 32 to provide improved level of service on the boulevard.

Clermont County addresses its economic development challenges by creating partnerships that allow it to finance the necessary transportation capital improvements. The county, along with the CIC and Port Authority, advances industrial and office park development. Together with townships and other entities within the county, Clermont County helped improve its transportation infrastructure by forming a countywide TID. Through its use of creative financing and collaborative partnerships, Clermont County has made economic growth a priority.