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Grant brings ethanol plant closer to reality

By LEE MORRISON, T-R Business Editor

CADIZ – A proposed ethanol producing facility near Cadiz is truly on track after the Ohio Rail Development Commission provided a \$700,000 grant and loan package Friday for the project.

The railroad line, known as the Georgetown branch, in Harrison County has not been used for more than 25 years. It will get major track upgrades to serve Ohio's first ethanol production facility. Ethanol is an alternative fuel produced from crops such as corn.

ORDC commissioners approved the funds to help rehabilitate the remaining 7.2 miles of the 12.7-mile line with new ballast, cross-ties, grade crossings and heavier steel rails.

"This is something we've been working on – it's another one of the larger steps that lead us toward seeing this project become a reality," said Chris Copeland, executive director and general counsel of the Harrison County Community Improvement Corp, which is helping support the project. "This is a fairly long rail line, and we're hopeful that these improvements will lead to additional business development in that area. We're very appreciative that the commission has used its funds for this project.

"There are some additional components that need to be put into place, but we're working on scheduling a date for the groundbreaking."

The \$68.7 million project is expected to create about 170 jobs. The state-of-the-art ethanol production facility is expected to employ 107 people on site and will directly contract an additional 60 truck driving jobs.

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"This is a great example of what government and the private sector can do to not only generate economic development and jobs in a part of Ohio that badly needs both, but also enable an almost completely sustainable fuel production and agricultural facility that is good for the environment and quality of life in Ohio," said ORDC Executive Director Jim Seney.

Harrison Ethanol LLC is an Ohio-based company composed of Ohio farmers and business owners. Among its founding members are Delaware County resident Phil Cunningham, a Piedmont area native, and Brent Porteus of Coshocton. The proposed corn-based biorefinery facility is designed to produce 20 million gallons of fuel-grade ethanol annually. Harrison Ethanol will consume nine million bushels of corn from area farmers and a significant portion through Coshocton Grain Co. by railroad transport. The 276-acre facility will be located off Dickerson Church Rd., south of Cadiz.

The complex will consist of several agricultural operations to help provide a consistent revenue stream. There will be a dairy operation of 2,000 cattle, plus a beef cattle operation of undetermined herd size. About half of the corn remaining from the distillation process will be fed to the animals on site. The rest will be sold to local farmers or dried for sale anywhere.

<http://www.timesreporter.com/left.php?ID=49685&r=3>

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