

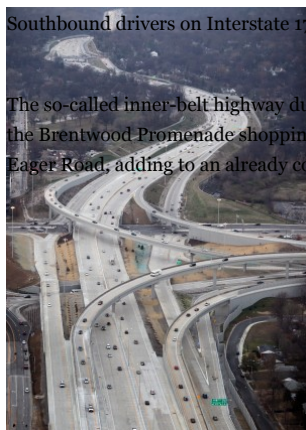
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Proposed South County thoroughfare no relief to some

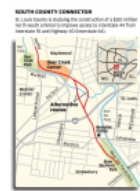
June 02, 2013 12:05 am • By Ken Leiser kleiser@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8215 Loading...



Interstate 170 at Highway 40 (Interstate 64), looking west, on Dec. 7, 2009. Photo by David Carson, dcarson@post-dispatch.com

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Great Rivers Greenway questions need for South County Connector



Is a new road necessary, they ask. Read more

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Southbound drivers on Interstate 170 don't run into a true dead end. Think of it more as a shopping opportunity.

The so-called inner-belt highway dumps onto Highway 40 (Interstate 64) right at the doorstep of the Brentwood Promenade shopping center. Motorists not keen on taking Highway 40 turn off at Eager Road, adding to an already congested scene on surrounding streets. Some of the traffic winds up on residential streets that weren't designed to handle it, officials say.

St. Louis County leaders abandoned the idea of extending I-170 south beyond Highway 40 in the 1990s. That's when the late County Executive George R. "Buzz" Westfall — the primary mover and shaker of an extended 170 — withdrew his support of the \$600 million idea in 1997. Foes predicted it would displace homeowners and businesses and divide communities.

Fast-forward to 2013. St. Louis County is now talking about building a four-lane, \$110 million "connector" that would extend from Hanley Road at Deer Creek Plaza to River Des Peres Boulevard, near Watson Road. There's no money in the bank to build it. But county officials are working on preparations. The latest is an environmental study.

"This has been on the books for years and years," said Sheryl L. Hodges, director of the St. Louis County's Department of Highways and Traffic and Public Works.

Smoothing out the traffic jams will require more than just retiming traffic lights, Hodges said. The plan also would address safety concerns in the corridor, she added.

The so-called South County Connector, officials say, would displace up to eight families and 21 businesses, according to



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Opposition builds to South County Connector proposal



Officials in Maplewood and St. Louis are on record against it, and

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St. Louis County needs to rethink South County Connector project



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in the South County Connector and consider transit instead. New, unwanted roadway C... [Read more](#)

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South County Connector not worth the small benefit

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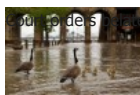
St. Louisans sidestep another potential traffic nightmare



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the report. About 40 to 43 acres would have to be acquired.

Last week, the county invited local residents to a public hearing in Shrewsbury to look at a bunch of easels arrayed inside a gymnasium. St. Louis County employees were on hand to answer questions. Residents had a chance to sound off, both in writing and through testimony taken down by a court reporter.

“I think it’s an effort on the part of St. Louis County to get the South County Connector built that they were never able to do,” said Rick Bonasch, who opposes the idea. “It’s as simple as that.”

Bonasch, who lives in St. Louis Hills, said the county wants to deal with the morning and afternoon congestion in the little “maze” around Marshall, Hanley and Shrewsbury roads. While it will take cars off neighborhood streets in Shrewsbury, it will put more cars on neighborhood streets in south St. Louis, he said.

Ann Rivers Mack, chief executive officer for Trailnet, said that while the corridor merits attention, the county plan fails to connect to public transportation and the Great Rivers Greenway trail system.

“We aren’t against a project,” she said. “We’re just saying to spend \$110 million for a road of this design isn’t acknowledging that voters just taxed ourselves three times in a little more than a decade. Once for transit. And twice for Great Rivers Greenway. That’s a clear message that any road that’s built or redesigned must accommodate people walking, biking and getting to transit.”

Hodges said the plan does account for bicyclists and pedestrians. By pulling cars off neighborhood streets, she said, it helps to make the going smoother for cyclists and walkers.

Others who live with traffic congestion in this part of the county think the connector project has merit.

Rick Berra, of Arnold, doesn’t think the county is going far enough. In an interview outside the public meeting, he said the road should go all the way to Manchester. Three lanes each way. Or two lanes each way, with a turn lane.

“I’d say there are traffic problems,” said Berra, whose mother lives on Murdoch Avenue. “Will this address some of them? Yes. Enough? Not in my opinion.”

St. Louis County is taking comments on the necessary environmental documents until July 19. If you want to look at the project and weigh in, you can do so online at the project’s website, www.southcountyconnector.com.

NO MORE ‘511’ HOTLINE

The Missouri Department of Transportation pulled the plug on the 511 travel information hotline in the St. Louis area last week.

The service began six years ago in anticipation of the Highway 40 (Interstate 64) reconstruction. It allowed drivers

to use their cellphones to get real-time information about specific highways.

The service was provided at no cost to taxpayers. But a private partner could not sustain the model, which was based on minimal advertising, MoDOT officials said.

The 511 service averaged about 100 to 250 calls a day, said Tom Blair, MoDOT's assistant district engineer in St. Louis.

MoDOT officials said they have other tools to assist drivers and can no longer offer the 511 hotline without cost to Missouri taxpayers.

Those include a traffic map available on the MoDOT website and through a mobile application, the Gateway Guide website, text alerts and email updates, and the electronic message boards that convey information about traffic tie-ups.

Drivers also can call MoDOT's 24-hour customer service center at 1-888-275-6636.

Ken Leiser is the transportation writer at the Post-Dispatch. Read his Along for the Ride column online and every Sunday in the newspaper.

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