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News

Trailnet Shares Concerns About Connector Roadway

County public hearing on Thursday, May 30, 4 to 8 p.m., at the Shrewsbury City Center

by Steve Birmingham

05/17/2013 - As the South County Connector nears fruition, concerns about the new roadway and its effects on neighborhoods continue to mount.

Trailnet presented "Re-envisioning the South County Connector," an informational meeting held May 8 at the Shrewsbury City Center, as a way to counter the recent release of a Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) by St. Louis County.

The planned South County Connector would cut through the heart of Shrewsbury. Trailnet speakers last week addressed the DEIS, spoke to concerns over its findings, and used the meeting to promote walkable and bikeable communities.



The River Des Peres Boulevard alternative, chosen over four other routes more than a year ago, will come off of Hanley Road and along the Deer Creek shopping center, then south through the Big Bend Industrial Court, through the Laclede Gas property, through the Shrewsbury MetroLink Station parking lot, then connects to River Des Peres Boulevard. *(click for larger version)*



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The DEIS lays out possible routes the South County Connector could take through Shrewsbury. Trailnet's active transportation manager, Jennifer Allen, urged audience members to ask government officials whether the possible \$110 million price to build the connector -- along with the cost of its continued maintenance -- was worth it, and whether all alternative transit options had been considered.

The DEIS was carried out by the St. Louis County Department of Highways and Traffic, the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. Allen conceded that Trailnet had only recently received the over 600-page DEIS and had yet to scratch the surface of its findings.

Still, she thought it important to "get people's awareness up just so they can get it on their radar.

"What we're trying to say is when we do a project of this scale with such impacts over time and cost, we have to exhaust all the options," she said. "We don't feel that due diligence has been done by St. Louis County government. End of story. These are taxpayers, these are our dollars, and we want to see what we're paying for and what we get to choose from.

"Maybe one of the choices is a new roadway and we should have a say on how that road is built, how it is impacting our communities," Allen continued. "Unfortunately, there are still a lot of questions and we keep trying to find the answers to those questions."

The South County Connector corridor extends from Hanley Road, near Flora Avenue in Maplewood, south to River Des Peres Boulevard at Watson Road.

According to the DEIS, the proposed roadway runs along Deer Creek Center, Big Bend Industrial Court and through a section of the parking lot of the Shrewsbury MetroLink Station.

A new, full interchange at Interstate 44 is being proposed as part of the project. Two variations of what is known as the River Des Peres Boulevard alternative have been evaluated within the corridor and will be shown at a St. Louis County sponsored public hearing on Thursday, May 30, 4 to 8 p.m., at the Shrewsbury City Center, 5200 Shrewsbury Ave.

John Hicks, project manager for the St. Louis County Department of

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Highways and Traffic, said there is no current funding for the project, but that funding is expected to come from a combination of federal, state and St. Louis County sources.

"There have been a number of conflicting statements out there, and one of the things I would like to point out is that this really is a multi-modal approach to transportation needs to the south central part of the county," King said.

"It will improve access to MetroLink and it pulls a lot of traffic off of local roads, which is going to make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists and the local drivers. And it alleviates a lot of the bottleneck there at the Murdoch Avenue-Laclede Station Road-Interstate 44 complex. It's going to help in quite a few areas."

The DEIS is available for public review and comment through July 19 at the Shrewsbury City Center.

King said the public will be able to speak at the May 30 meeting on issues of concern -- social, economic and environmental impacts of the proposed roadway alternatives.

Representatives of the South County Connector Study Team will be available to provide information and answer questions about the DEIS during an open house meeting held at the same time as the public hearing.

No formal presentation will be made and display boards and copies of the DEIS will be available for review at the open house meeting.

The DEIS is also available for viewing at the Webster Groves Public Library, 301 E. Lockwood Ave., Webster Groves, and at www.southcountyconnector.com/eis_docs.html.

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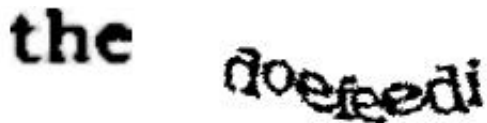
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