



'South County connector' causing friction between Maplewood and St. Louis County



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(KMOV.com) -- Maplewood city leaders spoke out about plans for a major road project Tuesday.

St Louis County is proposing building the “south county connector” to give drivers another route between south and central parts of the county.

The road would run through Maplewood, and city officials say it would devastate several businesses as well as impact the city’s tax base.

Part of the proposed connector would run through Deer Creek Plaza, a development that saw several new businesses open in the spring.

Current plans that are available online show the connector running through the plaza, but Tuesday, the St. Louis County Department of Highways and Traffic tells me it’s planning a flyover- meaning a bridge over the development- saying the connector would only affect some parking spots in the plaza.

But the City of Maplewood says losing any parking spaces will affect the development as whole.

Lease agreements are contingent on access and parking and the South County Connector would impact both.

“We’ve worked really hard to get that development fully occupied and we are almost there,” said Jeannine Beck with the Maplewood Chamber of Commerce. “To see plans where it would just obliterate it with no real regard for those businesses and the impacts that it has on Maplewood.”

Current plans also call for the connector to run through an industrial court on the other side of Big Bend. The county says that it may have to buy out 30 to 50 percent of the businesses there, depending on what route it picks. The connector project is still in the early phases.

“We have no interest obviously to hurt anybody’s economic base - whether it’s Maplewood or unincorporated St. Louis County,” said David Wrona with the Dept. of Highways and Traffic. “This is a good plan, a good project that will help St. Louis County. It will not hurt St. Louis County.”