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South County Connector Plan Dividing Opinions About Project

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ST. LOUIS, MO (KTVI) – Dozens loudly voiced opposition Monday night to a new major thoroughfare that would connect mid and south St. Louis County.

Three city aldermen held a meeting at Southwest Baptist Church to get feedback from their constituents, since a portion of this mainly north-south corridor would run through the city.

The idea for this connector came in the late 1990s, shortly after plans to extend Interstate 170 south of Interstate 64/Highway 40 fizzled.

The South County Connector would be slightly less than two miles long. It would begin where Hanley Road becomes Laclede Station Road, wind down through Deer Creek Plaza, cross I-44 near the Shrewsbury Metrolink station and end at River Des Peres Boulevard.

Although the connector aims to improve traffic flow and efficiency, Alderwoman Donna Baringer worries that River Des Peres Boulevard won't be able to handle the significant increase in traffic, "Without upgrading River Des Peres, you cannot add more cars to it because it's not safe for more cars."

At this meeting, many critics cited a number of additional concerns, including the increase in noise levels, and negative impact on small businesses and property values.

Alderman Scott Ogilvie feels the project also ignores taxpayer dollars spent on alternative forms of transportation, "We just build a \$686 million Metrolink station to Shrewsbury that follows the same corridor. There's two important bike trails that will converge right in this area."

In total, the project would cost roughly \$110 million. Eighty percent of the funding would come from Washington, DC, and the other 20 percent would come from St. Louis County.

Because federal funding is involved, the county is required to document how residents would be impacted by the project.

The public can submit comments on the South County Connector website until July 19.

John Hicks, with the St. Louis County Department of Highways & Traffic, says all comments and concerns will be taken into consideration: "That's our responsibility, and we certainly want to make this a project that the city of St. Louis is satisfied with, that the municipalities are satisfied with, and that solves the traffic problems."

The decision on whether this project goes through is ultimately up to St. Louis Mayor Slay and St. Louis County Executive Charlie Dooley.

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