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January 24, 2012

Supporters of extending Highway 3132 should turn out for tonight's meeting

Highway 3132 is back in the spotlight tonight as citizens get another chance to weigh in on their expectations and concerns regarding the possible extension of this highway toward the Port of Caddo-Bossier.

Consultants and staff of the Northwest Louisiana Council of Government will lay out the status of the current feasibility study in anticipation of pushing ahead toward an environmental review. NLCOG spokesmen say the format is more "participatory" with the public able to gather around maps to discuss potential routes, interchanges or potential impediments.

Some areas that should be covered tonight.

Traffic study. A major desire of many for constructing the Inner Loop extension is to provide an alternate route for large trucks now using Flournoy Lucas Road to service the port and other industrial needs. A fall traffic study may indicate that safety and congestion alone won't justify the extension but rather the potential for economic development — industrial and residential — by connecting 3132 with the port, Louisiana 1 and the future Interstate 69. Traffic reviews also have dealt with safety concerns: increasing the speed limit from 45 mph to 50 mph on Flournoy-Lucas, and adding traffic lights at Twelve Oaks subdivision and The Oaks retirement community.

Corridors. Tonight is another opportunity to speak out against more controversial routes that would compromise multi-million dollar developments such as The Oaks. Or homeowners who live in the outer rings of Twelve Oaks may want to ensure any route south would be distant enough to lessen traffic noise in their backyards. Landowners farther south may want to reiterate concerns about wetlands and what potential construction would do to drainage patterns.

"No build." A concern by some informed observers worry that the effort may be window dressing for an ultimate decision to kill the project. Tonight offers extension proponents an opportunity to point to 30 years of community intent to complete an interstate loop around Shreveport-Bossier City and to note the benefits to quality of life and economic growth. "No build" proponents with practical rather than political concerns — exacerbating suburban sprawl, for instance — also should be heard.

Regardless of your route concerns, it's good to get them on the record. Written comments will be accepted during and after the meeting. We have some concern that verbal comments may be limited only to folks around your particular table during the map exercise. Some ideas may be worth broader circulation, not for the sake of a public official's ability to grandstand but for some thoughtful soul's ability to share a concern or alternate vision.

Whether speaking or learning, just showing up is an act of participation that ought not be lost on decisionmakers as this project continues.

Additional Facts

If you go

WHAT: Feasibility and environmental reviews of proposed extension of state Highway 3132
WHEN: 6 to 8 p.m. tonight
WHERE: LSU-S University Center Ballroom, One University Place, Shreveport
