

The logo for shreveporttimes.com, featuring the text "shreveporttimes.com" in a white, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow, set against a dark blue rectangular background.

June 16, 2011

3 routes proposed for Shreveport Inner Loop extension

*By Adam Kealoha Causey
acausey@shreveporttimes.com*

Shreveport's stalled Inner Loop could move forward after Wednesday's approval of three potential routes for extension.

Local officials tasked with regional transportation planning signed off on a \$1 million examination of options to connect state Highway 3132 with the future Interstate 69. Dirt wouldn't move for at least two years.

The Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments' transportation committee will use \$800,000 in federal funding to consider feasibility. The state will contribute \$200,000.

The report should be done by Dec. 31. After that, an environmental study would take another year-and-a-half.

Potential paths:

A: Abandoning the section of 3132 that now runs from Bert Kouns Industrial Loop to Flournoy Lucas Road. The new piece would head from Bert Kouns to state Highway 1.

B: Extending 3132 from its current terminus at Flournoy Lucas and curving eastward toward Highway 1.

C: Continuing 3132 from its current terminus and heading more directly south to connect with I-69.

Leaving the incomplete loop the way it is also might happen, NLCOG Director Kent Rogers said. Examining several alternatives — including termination of the project — is mandatory.

"If you want the feds to write the check," Rogers said, "you have to go through this process."

But not all who attended the hearing agreed.

Tony Janca, developer of the Twelve Oaks subdivision near the loop's Flournoy Lucas exit, suggested the Caddo Commission and Port of Shreveport-Bossier foot part of the bill to build the rest of the road.

"How do we do 3132 right?" Janca said. "It's not always federally funded."

Political jabs barbed some comments aimed at revealing details about how the loop's future was jeopardized.

Willis-Knighton Health System — which runs The Oaks retirement center on Flournoy Lucas — again showed up with dozens of supporters. Workers and residents connected to the medical care provider

have been among the most outspoken since the public got involved in discussions.

Some were miffed when Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover suggested the company cover costs for extending 3132.

"Get back on the subject, mayor," Willis-Knighton CEO Jim Elrod said, interrupting Glover during a speech. "You have rambled."

Glover was ready with a response.

"If we're going to count shots being taken at this point, then the numbers on the other side are stacked up to the sky," Glover said. "I consider you my friend, but friends sometimes disagree."

Elliott Stonecipher, a local political analyst who lives in Twelve Oaks, called for the Shreveport City Council to investigate. Shreveport's charter grants that board powers to subpoena documents and to require sworn testimony.

"I know everybody's waiting on the FBI or somebody else to swoop in. If that's happening, trust me, none of us are going to know about it," Stonecipher said. "We got ourselves into this, and we need to get ourselves out."

No council members spoke publicly Wednesday, but they discussed starting their own probe in May.

At issue for Stonecipher and others is the Esplanade subdivision, planned to go in near the current end of 3132. Its developer is also a Bossier City councilman, Tim Larkin. He wants a street from his development to cross land Shreveport bought for the extension of 3132.

Larkin said he was glad things are moving forward and echoed his previous assertion that he wants to see the loop completed. Much of the rest of the commentary could go.

"I am so sick and tired of these personal attacks," Larkin said.

Shreveporters have protested at public meetings since May, when many found out NLCOG decisions may have compromised the freeway's future. Most are worried about heavy traffic — bound for the port or nearby Haynesville Shale wells — on Flournoy Lucas.

Shreveport attorney John Settle and Willis-Knighton have filed suit against Shreveport, Caddo Parish, and Larkin seeking clarification for responsibility in the situation.

Additional Facts

Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments' transportation committee

Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover
Caddo Parish Administrator Woody Wilson
Bossier City Metropolitan Planning Commission Director Sam Marsiglia
Shreveport Metropolitan Planning Commission Director Charles Kirkland
Port of Shreveport-Bossier Director Eric England
Northwest Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Administrator John Sanders
u Bossier Parish Administrator Bill Altimus
Bossier City Mayor Lo Walker and Webster Police Jury President Charlie Walker did not attend Wednesday's meeting.
