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Feasibility study planned on Cibolo toll road

By Jeff B. Flinn, Staff Writer Published 5:49 pm, Wednesday, October 5, 2016

A third Cibolo Parkway toll road public hearing brought some new information to light, but left city officials and vocal citizens desiring more toward a decision on the toll project.

A feasibility study is up next for the city, which is studying several efforts to combat and alleviate traffic headaches along one of its major thoroughfares. The city is in talks with Dallas-based **Public Werks** Inc. to build a seven-mile toll road from FM 1103 near **Steele High School** that would reach Interstate 10 to the south.

The tollway's intent would be to funnel traffic away from Interstate 35 and divert some I-35 southbound traffic off of the heavily congested road and onto I-10 into San Antonio.

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Officials from the **Metropolitan Planning Organization** and the **Texas Department of Transportation** were in attendance at the Sept. 29 public hearing and spoke bluntly to Cibolo's efforts to obtain money for an I-35 to I-10 connector.

The city of Cibolo submitted an expansion of FM 1103 to the MPO for consideration in both 2011 and 2013. Both years, the project was turned down. MPO's director **Sid Martinez** said the project is not in the organization's current 25-year plans.

TxDOT district engineer **Mario Jorge** said his agency will receive about \$240 million per year for the next 10 years for the region, "but we've already identified about \$5 billion in current need," he added.

"Although we're going to receive additional funds in 2015, it's pretty much spoken for in projects," Jorge said. "To get \$240 million in one year to serve 2.1 million people, and spend \$125 million on a single project in Cibolo, that is unrealistic."

John Crew, Public Werks CEO and spokesman, reiterated the benefits of the project to the area — traffic relief, no city taxation or funding necessary for construction of the proposed \$125 million privately financed stretch of road, and a potential for growth and economic development along the stretch.

But **Terri Hall**, executive director of Texans Uniting for Reform and Freedom, countered many of Crews' statements and urged the city to seek other ways to divert traffic and not put its citizens at the mercy of having to pay a daily toll just to get to and from their homes.

Mayor **Allen Dunn**

said an original timeline had city council voting in November to go forth with a feasibility study, which could take anywhere from two to three months or more to complete.

“Only then,” he said, “will the city know if a toll road makes sense, and might be something we want to pursue.”

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