

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING OF THE BOARD OF
ALDERMEN
CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI, AUGUST 15, 2002**

ALIGNMENT OF THE EPPS ROAD EXTENTION

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri, met for a Public Meeting in the Council Chambers of the City Hall on August 15, 2002 at 6:00 p.m. with the following members present:

Mayor Lou Schaefer presiding, Dick Gass, Stan Barker, Ron Huff, Eric Farris, and Bob Warlick present. Larry Taylor absent.

Also in attendance were: City Administrator Terry Dody, Assistant City Administrator Kevin Faught, City Attorney Deborah Deuster, Assistant City Clerk Linda Sewell, Director of Engineering David Miller, Jeff Dull, David Chinnery, Bill Skains, Greg Nelson, Todd Thalmann, Bruce Bowlin, Harold Epps, Robert Majetic, Lucy Combs, Kathryn Buckstaff, Jim and Carolyn Arend, Cliff Sain, Hob Divine, Cheryl Ford, Randy and Carol Sledd, Jeff Zoellner, Foster Plummer, Ken Johnson, Al and Donna Moon, Mary Lou Shepherd, Mark Weisz, Pat Rose, Karen Lacy, Ben Kinel.

Mayor Schaefer called the meeting to order with the "Pledge of Allegiance" and Larry VanGilder gave the invocation. Mayor Schaefer then turned the floor over to City Administrator Terry Dody.

Administrator Dody reminded the Board they had previously approved the contract for the preliminary and final design, the engineering of the extension of James Epps Road and the new intersection on Hwy 76 last November. After arriving at a decision, the Board's action that is being requested is final approval of the preferred route of the extension of James Epps Road. Upon approval of the route, the staff will initiate the final phase and design. Additionally, as requested by the Board previously, Trans System will also be present to provide information on intersection options where 76 Highway, Epps Road, and Fall Creek Road all converge. At this time, Mr. Dody asked David Miller to do a preliminary initiation of the presentation and introduce our guest.

City Engineer David Miller addressed the Board stating that this project started back several years ago when a firm from Kansas City was hired to do the transportation master plan, which is an area wide plan to show future roads and intersections throughout our community over the next twenty years. The result of

that study was a list of twelve options that were our top priorities to help move the traffic and alleviate congestion in the community. On that list, one of the top priorities was the extension of Epps Road from Roark Valley Road up to 76 Highway. After the completion of that master plan, the City requested proposals from firms to do the design of this Epps Road project. After receiving several proposals and evaluating them, the City selected Trans Systems, a firm in Kansas City that specializes in transportation planning. Trans Systems has a worldwide reputation for experts in transportation. The City had used the same firm several years ago with Green Mountain Drive and the East Expressway Project from Highway 248 to Roark Valley Road. Mr. Miller then welcomed two of the project engineers from the firm involved in this design, Todd Thalmann and Greg Nelson.

Todd Thalmann, Trans Systems Corporation thanked the Mayor and the Board for the opportunity to come and give their presentation. Overheads and a brief overview of the study portion of the project to date on the Epps Road corridor were presented. A map showing the various alignment alternatives that were evaluated for the corridor was displayed. Mr. Thalmann stated, the purpose of this evaluation was to come up with alternative alignments to connect James F. Epps Road at Roark Valley in the Fall Creek Road area, and on the other side of 76 Highway. The corridor is bounded by 76 Highway on the south, predominately, and on the west side is Truman Drive, on the East side is Berry Street, and on the north Roark Valley Road. These were the generic limits that were given at the beginning of the project to find a way to make Epps connect within that corridor area. Part of the corridor connection does extend beyond Highway 76 to the south in order to make an appropriate tie-in with Fall Creek Road. None of the alignments shown were predetermined alignments. They were asked to come up with various alternatives within the corridor to find a way to make the connection happen. There was no perceived idea of which alignment would be the best or what part of the corridor the alignment should go into. There wasn't any other practical way to go farther to the west or farther to the east and still make a connection to the existing intersection – so the limits were open and the corridor itself was open when we started this project. Currently, the intersection of Fall Creek and 76 Highway is very askewed intersection. Fall Creek comes around and blends in with 76 Highway going on to the east. The intersection does not lend itself well to a left turn to the west – so it is a very difficult intersection to use full functionality on. The intersection of James F. Epps with Roark Valley Road is a T-intersection right with a rock bluff at the south edge of that T-intersection and one of the engineer's challenges is how to connect up with the existing roadway and improve the geometry of this intersection on the other end to make it functional with traffic flow. City standards were used as well as MoDOT standards and also Ashtoe Greenbook standards, which is the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. Our contract with the City limited the evaluation to five different alignment alternatives as they wanted to make sure they had the information needed to pick five appropriate alignments that were valid designs to analyze and compare the alternatives. The five alignments that were determined are the ones being presented.

The first alignment - Alignment # 1 (yellow alignment) is one of the most direct alignments which is from Fall Creek to Epps Road. It is one of the two westerly routes that crosses 76 Hwy with about a 10 degree askew which is acceptable within engineering parameters, and then proceeds on to the north. It goes near the Dixie Stampede, The Track and Seven Fall's Mini Gold Complex and is a relatively tight fit to get between the existing businesses in that area. It then continues along with Dixie Stampede and moves out into the open around Neihardt Ave., continues on through Murphy Park, and ties into the existing intersection with James F. Epps Road.

Alignment #2 (red alignment) is the alignment that was chosen for the tunnel option. It is direct, if not more direct than #1, and has good straight roadway characteristics which makes it a good possibility for the roadway. It has a good longitudinal grade and has a good horizontal curvature - the problem is that it is cost prohibitive. The tunnel option, evaluated by Shannon and Wilson, a tunneling expert, a sub-consultant to the firm, came up with a cost estimate between 15 and 20 million just to build approximately 1100 feet of tunnel out and through the area. That option was obviously eliminated from consideration rather quickly, but it also continues down and ties into the same location as Alignment #1.

Alignment #3 is another westerly alignment alternative that follows the same general alignment as #1 on the south side of 76 Highway. Tying in back at the three lane section of existing Fall Creek Road and moving on across and with a slight skew in the intersection of 76 Highway, which is quite acceptable within engineer's parameters but skirts around a westerly side of the study area going around a hill where the subdivision is located. It has a significant impact on the residential development by impacting 5 or 6 homes and it also comes along the north side of Murphy Park and ties into the James F. Epps Road.

Alignment #4 (blue alignment) follows the same general logic that #3 follows - in that it goes around the hillside instead trying to go over it or through the hill. It comes across at a different location closer to the existing intersection of Fall Creek road -further east on 76 Highway. Between the Travel Lodge facility, the Old School Park, the Silver Fountain Inn, and near the intersection of Berry Drive. It then follows down into the valley and around the hill and ties in again at James F. Epps Road.

Alignment #5 (orange alignment) follows Berry Drive, it will be again tied in on the south end on Fall Creek where it is a three-lane segment and comes across in the same location as #2 and #4 on 76 Highway with a 90 degree intersection with everything being perpendicular and square, which is the best thing you can do for a signalized intersection. It follows the existing Berry Drive alignment down thru the valley instead of coming back and tying into the James F. Epps Road at the existing intersection. This alternative looks at coming across Roark Valley Road with an

elevated bridge structure, coming across Stockstill Park, over the creek, over the B&SF Railroad, and tying back in the area on Epps Road. That eliminates the reverse curvature from the main thru movement – this area would be T-ed to tie into the new alignment and thru traffic would come straight across and not have an intersection with Roark Valley Road. If needed, to get off of James F. Epps and come down to Roark Valley the existing alignment could still be used in the T intersection and function as it does today.

To evaluate the alignment alternative, they used what was called a systems engineering and analysis approach. They looked at various different aspects of each one of the alignments. The system attributes are some things that needed to be determined, and they came up with some design elements, community impacts and cost impacts. Each one of these are broken down into additional detail – such as horizontal and vertical curvature, the number of businesses that are impacted, these issues were all broken down under each one of the individual elements, and used to determine what was important to the City of Branson, what characteristics of the roadway carried the most weight and most value to the City of Branson. Once those attributes were determined, they were weighted. All of the design parameters would be done in accordance with the standard mentioned previously, and were given a weight of 20. Community impacts, which consisted of looking at businesses, homes and various aspects of the community by each one of these alignments was given a weighting factor of 35. Cost impacts was weighted at a 45, an important factor that needs to be considered. There are limited resources, you can only spend as you have, so that is very important factor in the process.

Based on the evaluation of these alignments, each one of the colored alignments were given a score for each one of the design elements as it was ranked. Composite scores of each one of the alignments were outlined:

Alignment #4 (blue alignment) was the top ranked alignment. Primarily because it best suits the entire package of the criteria that was used to analyze the roadway. It is less costly. It has slightly greater impacts to the community than some of the other alignments. It has slightly less desirable design elements than some of the other alignments in some respects, but then again, it is a safe alignment and not the worse one by far on the community impact. It has relatively minimal community impacts as far as homes and businesses are concerned. Most of the community impacts had to do with the number of trees – the area of trees - that would have to be disturbed and the amount of creek that would have to be relocated thru the alignment study. It had a minimal impact overall in that area.

Alignment #3 statistically equivalent. Statistically valid with the blue alignment to be equal.

Alignment #1 (yellow alignment) close contender in second place.

Alignment #2 tunnel option and Alignment #5 significant bridge over Stockstill Park, were eliminated primarily because they were just too expensive. The benefit of the alignments were that both were good design speed articles, had a good roadway scenario, and would carry traffic very well. The cost prohibited both of these alignments and was the main problem.

Based on the above criteria, Trans System recommended Alignment #4 to be considered as the primary choice for the alignment.

At this time Mayor Schaefer opened the floor for questions by the Board.

Alderman Gass asked if they would be putting a signal at 76 Highway; how many of the main businesses would be affected; and if it was a two-lane highway? Mr. Thalmann replied that a signal was one of the options. The RV campground, the corner of the Dogwood Inn parking lot, and the hamburger stand may also need to be acquired. Mr. Thalmann also stated they were planning a two-lane facility and turn lanes could be added to those locations.

Mayor Schaefer inquired if they were putting in the acquisition of right-of-ways and cost of the properties that are impacted. Mr. Thalmann said that an estimated cost of right-way was included.

Mayor Schaefer asked which one of the routes affected residents the least? Mr. Thalmann's response was Alignment #4. Mayor Schaefer then asked how it would affect the commercial, and Mr. Thalmann said that the three on the east, Alignment #2, #4, and #5, wouldn't be too differential, primarily because they all take the same route through the commercial area on one end of the project.

Alderman Farris inquired about the capabilities that this will open up development on the south side of Roark Valley Road; and which of these routes on either side would open up new areas for development with access? Mr. Thalmann's response was that either Alignment #1, #3, or #4. Alignments #1 and #3 would open up 14 acres of area and alignment #4 also opens up 14 acres of area.

Mayor Schaefer then open the floor for questions or comments by the audience.

Bill Skains, 805 Mockingbird Lane, owner of the Engler Block addressed the Board indicating his concern was that this road extension improves the traffic flow at one place, it will create a problem at the other end. Highway 65 was improved all the way thru until it reached Hollister and now it's a mess south of us.

Lucy Combs, 211 River Bend Road. Asked a question concerning traffic flow, and didn't feel we would be gaining anything unless traffic lights were put at the intersection at 76 Highway and Fall Creek Road area. The second concern was

that the traffic flow at west end of Fall Creek near the residential area was already becoming heavy, and now that Fall Creek Road has been redone down to Wildwood the traffic flow into that area would get even heavier and would need some form of traffic control at Wildwood and Fall Creek Road.

David Chinnery, vice-president of First Community Bank at 301 South East Main in Lee Summit, MO 64063, owner of thirty acres of real estate in the area being discussed. Mr. Chinnery stated he agreed that this project needs to be done, but has a concern that it would split his property in half, which would be reasonable but the elevation is going to be such that they would have no way to get to their property, and options #1,2,3, and 4 are going to make their property totally invaluable.

Mark Weisz, 386 Dalton Drive, addressed the Board stating he has worked with the transportation committee of the Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, and has felt this has been needed for many years, and will give the City a great relief especially for traffic that builds up in the Dixie Stampede area. As a realtor, he believes that it would not benefit the First Community Bank property and may have some negative economic impact, but no question this is a road that was needed.

Carolyn Arend, 800 S. 3rd Street, realtor for Silver Fountain Inn, addressed the Board, asking if the Silver Fountain Inn office structure would be purchased; and if the old road where Berry Road comes thru is going to be eliminated. Mr. Thalmann replied that according to the preliminary plans, it would be extending thru the Silver Fountain Inn office but when they finalize the design, then they would be at a point where he could give details on what they would have to vacate, and what changes would be required.

Bob Magetic, 206 Kirbyville, Missouri. Manager of the Silver Fountain Inn, asked if the motel sign had to be moved, or will it be grandfathered where it is; and when do they anticipate these plans to be finalized? Mr. Miller responded that they have not gotten that detailed to know about the sign, but did know on the Shepherd of the Hills Expressway they encountered a similar situation, and the city went in prior to construction and relocated everyone's signs back to where it was most visible, fit into their property, and reinstalled their sign as part of the right-away acquisition. Mr. Thalmann responded to the second question and said that eight months to a year would probably be reasonable.

Mayor Schaefer asked about cost estimates. Mr. Thalmann replied that Alignment #1 was right at 6 million dollars, #2 was 20 million dollars, #3 was 7.6 million dollars, #4 was 6.6 million dollars and #5 was almost 11 million dollars including estimated right-of-way acquisition.

Alderman Gass inquired if these included right-of-way. Mr. Thalmann replied, it does include an estimated right-of-way on square foot estimates provided by Cooper and Associates.

Alderman Huff raised the question if these were two-lane roads and how many cars were estimated to travel these roads per day. Mr. Thalmann said these roads would have two 16' driving lanes and 2' curb and gutter on either side. It is a two-lane roadway, and it will be striped as a two-lane road with auxiliary turning lanes at the intersections. According to the transportation master plan, there will be in the neighborhood of 10,000 vehicles per day for average daily traffic including both directions of traffic. Comparably, Epps Road closer to Hwy. 248, is in the 12,000 to 15,000 range and it drops off as you go to the south. Roark Valley Road as it ties back into 76 Highway carries approximately 11,000 or slightly over.

Mayor Schaefer asked how many 76 Highway carries. Mr. Thalmann said a little over 14,000 with the projections with the 20/20 volume for the transportation master plan being just over 20,000.

Mayor Schaefer said the next phase of discussion was the intersection on 76 Highway. Mr. Thalmann said the two options being presented for the 76 Highway intersection have to do with standard signalized intersection and an installation of a roundabout, and he presented a small video that discussed the pros and cons of roundabouts to answer some of the concerns. The existing traffic volumes and the projected traffic volumes that came from the 20/20 master plan was that on 76 Highway approximately 50 right turns and 550 thru turns and 200 left turns for west bound 76 highway during a peak hour of the day would be anticipated. After showing some comparisons, they found that with the possibility of a roundabout they could reduce delays and save Billy Bob's Dairyland and a million dollars in acquisition of property costs. If a roundabout was chosen at this location, a sub-consultant would be hired to develop it. The firm they would probably use is from the United Kingdom who has designed roundabouts for over 30 years and knows the subtleties of multi-lane roundabouts. The traffic signal is a more standard approach, something that everyone is comfortable with, but he thinks there is a more unique opportunity to look at something different for Branson and a possibility of adding charm to the community and add to the neatness of Branson by developing a roundabout.

Alderman Huff asked what effect the roundabout intersection would have on emergency vehicles responding quickly. Mr. Thalmann said that islands could be mountable so an emergency vehicle can drive on them without any adverse affect what so ever. With the multilane facility, it would have a passing lane so vehicles could move to the right to get out of the way as emergency vehicles came through.

Alderman Warlick, asked how backing up two lanes thick through a roundabout would be dealt with. Mr. Thalmann replied that vehicles would need to yield to other vehicles to continue and move on thru the roundabout. There will be yield signs throughout the roundabout. It would not be any different than what a traffic signal would provide. Alderman Warlick stated that his concern was that people know how to deal with a traffic signal, and they might not have as much knowledge

with a roundabout intersection. Mr. Thalmann said that was a valid concern. It is something new, and it would take some time for people to get use to what they are supposed to do when they go into a roundabout. That is one of the concerns with tourism in the area. Over a period of time you would see a pattern develop that there would be enough people who know how to use it that there would be some guidance from other vehicles, and how they are progressing through for people to learn to use it fairly quickly as they see it used and it begins to function. Alderman Warlick also had a concern about having a flat enough area for a signaled intersection and about pedestrian traffic. Mr. Thalmann said that because of limited sight distance, it would lend itself more appropriately to have a roundabout instead of traffic signal. As far as pedestrians, you can take refuge in an island and then cross the other two lanes and you progress along. It actually lessens the impact of what pedestrians have to watch out for in a busy intersection by only having to worry about one direction at a time.

Alderman Barker stated that the state of Missouri was promoting these and wanted to know where some were located in Missouri right now. Mr. Thalmann said that St. Louis has two or three of them. Other specific examples that he knew of are in the Kansas City metro area – specifically in Olathe and Lenexa. Olathe has three, Overland Park just finished one in front of their convention center, and Lenexa has one.

Alderman Farris stated that he thought Alderman Warlick had a valid concern with our Sunday morning traffic where everyone is trying to go home. Alderman Farris has had personal experience driving a roundabout in Clearwater, Florida, where there is a similar situation, bumper to bumper, they have the same problem but somehow the traffic always flows right about that roundabout, there is really no stoppage close to the roundabout itself. He is aware that we have that situation, but thinks it would merit further study. Mr. Thalmann stated that is why they would like to bring an expert in to study the geometry features of a roundabout.

Alderman Gass asked what do you do in a roundabout if someone breaks down inside the circle itself. Mr. Thalmann replied that one of the advantages in the multilane was that if a car breaks down you do have another lane to go around, but it is going to cause a problem, and you need to get them out of there as quickly as possible. Your objective is going to be getting it out of there as quickly as possible. Alderman Gass then asked how you would construct something like this around 76 Highway that is busy all year long. Mr. Thalmann responded that there is pavement that could be constructed outside of 76 at the present time. The problem will be with Fall Creek, and they may have to temporarily shut it down or do some kind of re-routing. It is going to be a multi-stage construction project.

Alderman Gass stated that if it is safe and it works out, in the middle of that circle there could be some beautiful sculptures, it could be a show place inside there.

Mr. Thalmann commented on that further saying there are a lot of landscaping opportunities, and if done right with spiral lane marking; it should solve some of the problems.

Alderman Barker indicated that if it is an improvement over an existing intersection, does it take more or less room to put the roundabout into place. Mr. Thalmann said there were a lot of variables that go into that, one of the big variables is the traffic volume. Traffic volume dictates a lot of the geometric features of a roundabout –if a relatively large roundabout is need, which would also make the driving characteristics of the roundabout a lot easier for the driver to negotiate instead of tight compact roundabout. ID Geometry is a problem and we have a smaller intersection. There is a trade off there between right-of-way acquisition and balancing the geometry of the traffic flow. The subtleties are what makes it perform well. You can on certain intersections replace the traffic signals with a roundabout in the same general size, our approaches have very minimal widening over what is on 76 Highway now. The changes will be on the quadrooms.

Alderman Farris asked if MoDOT was looking at a roundabout option at the other end of Business 65 as it ends right now at the bridge. Mr. Miller confirmed that they are actually looking at two roundabouts in the area, one in the south area at the Taneycomo Bridge and also at Indian Point Road and 76 Highway. MoDOT has brought their internal people in and are doing studies on both locations, the city is waiting on those studies to see if MoDOT recommends the roundabouts to be put in.

Mayor Schaefer entertained a motion to select a route for the extension of the James Epps Road. Alderman Huff made the motion to accept the consultants recommendation and adopt Alignment #4 for their recommendation, and that the Board give serious study and consideration to a roundabout in lieu of the intersections, including having sub-engineers study it, as he felt it is worth it and shows merit. Alderman Farris seconded the motion. No additional discussion. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Huff, Farris, and Warlick. Nays: none. Absent: Taylor. Motion carried.

Mayor Schaefer entertained a motion to adjourn. Alderman Farris moved to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Barker. Voting aye: Gass, Barker, Huff, Farris, and Warlick. Nays: none. Absent: Taylor. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.