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NEWS

Connector JPA takes path of least resistance

Board prefers to keep multi-use path on connector route

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The Capital Southeast Connector Board of Directors on Feb. 10 selected a preferred multi-use path alternative in an attempt to solicit feedback from the public.

The board, which consists of representatives from Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova, and Folsom along with Sacramento and El Dorado counties, stated a preference for a multi-use, Class 1 path that would be "in corridor" and run along with the connector from El Dorado County along Grant Line Road, through Sheldon, and end at Interstate 5.

Depending on the area, the path would be a mixture of what is already in place, a shoulder of the connector, and a separate sidewalk. It would allow bicyclists to go from section to section of the path without barriers and would stress continuity and safety for bicyclists who commute to work along with recreational users.

"There is support for a higher-class facility, and the intent is to solicit input," Tom Zlotkowski, executive director of the Connector Joint Powers Authority (JPA), told the board members at their Feb. 10 meeting. "Without a decision, we may not get the input."

Zlotkowski and JPA staff added that the board still has the ability to go with another alternative, such as a Class 1 path that would be completed to provide a path of 36 continuous miles along the Laguna Creek trail system.

With that alternative, the JPA would build paths to go along with the estimated 15 miles of trails that currently exist and another nine miles of paths to be built by others in coordination with local park jurisdictions, such as the Cosumnes Community Services District for the Elk Grove area.

According to JPA staff, each alternative is slated to cost \$42 million.

While a majority of the board indicated a preference for the path that would run along the route of the connector, Board Member and Elk Grove City Council Member Pat Hume told his JPA colleagues that he preferred getting bicyclists off of the connector, which will be used primarily as an expressway.

"I'm in the minority as I look at (my preference) as the best of both worlds," he said.

Zlotkowski said the board could mix and match alternatives, such as keeping some of the path on the connector route and some of the path off road.

"There is an attractiveness to putting the trail on the outside because it's more scenic," Zlotkowski said. "We can adjust this. We are still in the programmatic stage."

Sheldon resident and activist Bill Myers told the board members before they voted that he had no problem with a bike facility that would be separate from the connector.

"You would want to thread this through vineyards and make it more convenient for the community," he said. "In Sheldon, the idea of continuity does not have to pertain."

Myers said the board should wait until the program environmental impact report is complete before selecting its preferred alternative.

That was a sentiment echoed by Board Member and Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli, whose

district includes the entire connector route in Sacramento County. He asked if the board needed to state its preference at the meeting.

"It's not a matter of being objective," Myers said. "It's a matter of appearing to the public to be objective."

Zlotkowski told Myers after the meeting that a footnote will be inserted into the document that states the preferred alternative will veer off road a bit in the Sheldon area but that cyclists will have access to those businesses that are along Grant Line Road.

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