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NEWS

Sheldon group submits connector report to JPA

Residents, business owners show unity

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While attempting to please everyone but recognizing that was not likely to happen, the Sheldon Community Association (SCA) submitted its final report regarding the Capital Southeast Connector project.

The report was submitted to the Connector Joint Powers Authority late last month, and the SCA's Community Working Group held an open house in Sheldon on Oct. 29 for people to see and hear about the findings and recommendations in the report.

Bill Myers of the SCA said that the report sought to express the concerns and hopes of residents in the Sheldon area who would feel the greatest effect of the proposed 37-mile connector that would by the year 2035 link Interstate 5 and Highway 99 south of Elk Grove with Highway 50 in El Dorado County.

The primary way to do that is along Grant Line Road, which runs through Sheldon.

"Sheldon is the only urbanized area. If you're going to slow things down, this is the place," Myers said, adding that Grant Line Road is going to expand beyond two lanes no matter what the JPA decides.

The report culminated a six-week process that consisted of meetings and discussions among Sheldon residents. Myers said the city paid the rent for a space where the meetings could be held. He said business owners were on one side of the room with residents on the other, and all opinions were heard before moving forward.

"The participation was excellent," Myers said, adding he wanted to make sure people had a chance to express their thoughts. "The first couple of meetings was the brush clearing."

SCA members said that allowing residents to have their say gave everybody a sense of involvement.

"When it's something that affects your corner or where you live, you will come out," Ritchie Seymour said. "Once they came just once and they were able to see what was happening, they would come back."

The report contains a plan that poses the least impact on Sheldon residents. There are six proposed traffic lights on Grant Line Road from Bond Road to Calvine Road, which is about three miles.

The design includes right-turn only lanes to keep traffic moving, especially during rush hour. This means that people who want to turn left on to Grant Line Road to head toward Highway 99 might have to turn right on to Grant Line Road and then turn left at the next traffic signal. It's not perfect, Seymour said, but she added that the design was what was best for local residents.

"We've redone this the way we wanted it," she said.

Myers said that also meant some sacrifice.

"More than widening Grant Line Road, the lack of access would kill Sheldon," Myers said, adding that doing something different would put a huge dent into the quality of life in the area.

He said it is possible that the connector could have about 900 18-wheel trucks rumbling down its path per day, but that is better than having the big rigs clogging up turn lanes and driving through neighborhoods.

The next step is for the JPA to conduct an environmental impact report, which Myers said is likely to be done early next year.

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