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Orange Route bypass debated

Commission hears both sides of argument for beltway interchange

By **BOB FOWLER**, fowlerb@knews.com
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CLINTON - Opposing groups squared off Monday over whether an interchange for the proposed Knoxville Beltway is needed in the Raccoon Valley area near the Anderson-Knox county line.

Anderson County commissioners heard both sides of the argument but took no action on a resolution asking the state for the interchange.

The debate's been tossed into a committee's lap, but it's expected to resurface during the commission's May meeting.

The proposed Orange Route bypass, studied for years, is a 22.5-mile-long, four-lane roadway that would link Interstate 75 in Loudon County with I-75 in Anderson County.

For now, only two interchanges are planned on the bypass, at Clinton Highway and at Pellissippi Parkway.

A grassroots group, Better Roads in North Knox, drafted the resolution asking Anderson County commissioners to lobby the state for a third interchange.

BRINK members contend most area residents want the Raccoon Valley area interchange, and they say it's needed for emergency access and to open up "important industrial land in Anderson County."

"The bottom line is, almost everyone in Heiskell is in favor of the interchange," said David Elam, who said he owns property near the proposed interchange site.

Disagreeing were two members of the Knoxville Regional Parkway Resource Team, the 17-member group that sent its recommendations for the roadway to the state earlier this month after two years of study.

BRINK's resolution is rife with errors, including the level of support in the Heiskell community for a Raccoon Valley interchange, team member Carolyn Greenwood told county commissioners.

Greenwood said during the course of three public hearings on the roadway that more Heiskell area residents expressed opposition to an interchange than support for it.

Another team member, Bill McMaster, questioned whether the interchange would open up new industrial land.

Having too many interchanges on the proposed roadway would also defeat its purpose as a beltway around Knoxville, he said.

BRINK President Clark Hamilton said Heiskell area residents would have to drive miles to get onto the beltway if a third interchange weren't added.

Hamilton also rapped the makeup of the resource team, saying its "structure and makeup doesn't reflect the views of the community."

Bob Fowler, News Sentinel Anderson County editor, may be reached at 865-481-3625.



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