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Parkway predicament

Residents vent frustration with TDOT's indecision over state Route 475 plan

By **DON JACOBS**, jacobs@knews.com
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All meetings are 6-8 p.m.

- **Today, Aug. 17: Claxton Elementary School, 2218 Clinton Highway, Powell**
- **Aug. 30: Hardin Valley Elementary School, 11445 Hardin Valley Road, Knoxville**
- **Aug. 31: Karns Elementary School, 8108 Beaver Ridge Road, Knoxville**

LENOIR CITY - Cheryl Travis and her husband spent \$10,000 just for the plans for the home of their dreams, but they now face the prospect that the 6,000-square-foot home will never become reality.

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"We didn't think we were going to be directly affected until they started looking at alternate routes," Travis said while expressing her frustration with the wispiness of the plans for a regional parkway. "We found out about this two days before we signed off on our plans."

Travis and the occupants of Hope Creek Colony off Hope Creek Road have boat access to Melton Hill Lake by way of Hope Creek. On Monday night they looked at Tennessee Department of Transportation plans that threaten to take their 2.1 acres of waterfront property for an interchange of Interstate 40 and the proposed parkway, which also is deemed state Route 475.

"What about the people who've already built their homes?" Travis said. "At least we have a choice about building. They don't have a choice."

More than 125 people attended the information-gathering meeting at Eaton Elementary School to look at detailed corridor maps of the proposed state Route 475, share thoughts about the project and make notations on 20-foot-long maps about points of interest.

David Lindeman, vice president for Palmer Engineering, said the scores of comment pages left by attendees will be tallied and viewed by the 19-person Regional Parkway Design Resource Team. The resource team, composed of representatives from the impacted communities, local governments and businesses, is tasked with recommending a specific route for the parkway within a 1,000-foot-wide study corridor.

While a few people marked comment pages strongly urging TDOT to "hurry up and build this road," it seemed the majority of comments were derogatory toward the parkway.

"There's a lot of passion in the room," said Carolyn Greenwood, the Karns community representative on the resource team.

"One person said half jokingly that he knew we had the meetings in schools so people couldn't carry weapons in," she said.



JEFF ADKINS / NEWS SENTINEL

Concerned residents gather around a map of proposed state Route 475 during an information gathering meeting held at Eaton Elementary School on Monday.

Greenwood said comments directed at her ranged from "I don't care what you do, just do something" to "concerns about the process and the corridor."

Count Wes Hines among both those groups. The 41-year-old Hines, his wife and two children, ages 2 and 5, have lived along Hope Creek for nearly four years. He bought another plot of land in the community in hopes he could move his mother from Ohio and build her a home.

Hines said he asked about noise abatement devices for a bridge planned over Hope Creek because sound carries so well over water. He said officials told him if such technology was available, it would be employed, if it didn't cost more than \$25,000 per impacted resident.

"This is a rolling valley here, a beautiful valley, and now it'll be a super highway valley," said the University of Tennessee nuclear engineer. "You can't hold back progress, but they need to minimize the impact on the residents."

Joe Pierce just wants a solid answer to his questions. He built a house seven years ago on the property along Buttermilk Road that's been in his family for nearly 60 years. With the corridor study cutting through the middle of his 65 acres, his future is in limbo.

"I can't sell it," the 31-year-old Pierce said, "and any improvements I make, I'm just tossing money away. It's been discussed for 10 years. They need to go forward with it or close it out."

Planners have said it may be 20 years before the road is complete

Monday's meeting was the first of four designed to gather information from the public about the parkway route. The resource team has until October 2005 to recommend a specific route linking Interstate 75 in Loudon County with I-75 in Anderson County.

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