

INDIANA COMMERCE CONNECTOR

WHERE THEY STAND

Joe Abban

Franklin City Council

Wants to know how toll road will affect people and the community. Sees possible benefits with road bringing jobs and businesses, growing Franklin economy.

Feedback from people is split between support and opposition.

Would like to see a more detailed route before deciding to support or oppose.

Also would like to see if any of the project could be accomplished using existing roads, so that the impact on landowners would be less.

"A lot more information has to be presented before anybody can make an educated decision," he said.

Would stand up in support or against toll road if asked by constituents.



Joe Ault

Franklin City Council

Believes toll road could bring businesses to area because it is another transportation option.

Wants to contact state officials and mayor for more information on project.

Would be willing to support landowners if his opinion is same or if they can convince him otherwise.



Phil Barrow

Franklin City Council

Toll road will have positive influence on city. Needs to know more, such as where it will go and who it will affect before making a final decision to support the beltway.

City can choose not to have any truck stops at exit and recruit businesses with more and higher paying jobs. Where the access points are will determine how the beltway affects Franklin.

Toll road could relieve truck traffic through Franklin and could serve as an east-west route through the county. Would be a mistake not to give motorists access to U.S. 31 through beltway.

"It is a toll road, but I think trucks will be willing to pay the tolls to keep from going through the turns at King and Jefferson streets," he said.

Wants more information on the route and doesn't think legislators should vote for the beltway until they have a better idea of where it will be located.



Ron Bates

Johnson County Council

Road will relieve traffic congestion but doesn't like the proposal to collect tolls.

Tolls will discourage people from using the road and make the most sense along the proposed Interstate 69 extension. More businesses will locate along the beltway if it is not a toll road.

Would like to see a proposed natural gas pipeline, which is planned to cross through Johnson County, follow where the beltway is planned.

Hopes state will do least amount of harm to property owners when taking land.



STAFF PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERSON/sroberson@thejournalnet.com

Johnson County Council member Charles Canary asks questions about a toll-way proposed to pass south of Franklin night during a meeting Tuesday in the

Branigin Room at Franklin College's Napolitan Student Center. Canary is frustrated that county officials and landowners have little information about the road.



William Bless

Greenwood City Council

Is undecided on issue. Sees advantage of commercial businesses locating along beltway, disadvantage of government taking people's land.



Ron Deer

Greenwood City Council

Route is not physically close to Greenwood and impacts the county and Franklin most. Sees no negative impacts to Greenwood, such as in businesses that could be attracted to the area. Growth will continue in the city because of Interstate 65, regardless of whether the toll road is built through Johnson County.

Questions how the toll road will impact traffic on I-65. If it reduces traffic, it would be a bonus to Greenwood. Will help traffic on Interstate 465.

"I'm not sure Greenwood, as a city, has a dog in this fight," he said.



Jeff Eggers

Franklin City Council

Needs more information, such as how much farmland will be taken for the road. If it will have positive effect on county and city, it is good idea.

"If it is going to have substantial economic benefits, Johnson County is hard-pressed not to support it," he said.

Proponents need to go before city, town and county groups to give information about the toll road and why they anticipate an economic boom.

If there isn't enough information, legislators can wait until next session to approve the beltway.

"If this road comes to fruition, it is way down the pike. So I don't think another year or two is going to adversely affect that plan," he said.



John Gibson

Greenwood City Council

Thinks road is necessary as central Indiana grows. Light manufacturing companies and businesses that will supply the Honda plant in Greensburg could locate along the route.

City and county officials affected by beltway need to plan ahead, such as what utilities would be needed for businesses.

Amy Gordon

Franklin City Council

Just returned from vacation. Hasn't done enough research on issue to comment. Hasn't formed opinion yet.

Keith Hardin

Greenwood City Council

Worries the toll road could make people view Greenwood as a suburb of Indianapolis while the city is trying to create its own identity.

Greenwood officials won't make the decisions on the toll road. City council



Charles Henderson

Greenwood mayor

Should consider discussing the project at a meeting. Should bring in experts and talk about how the toll road could affect Greenwood.



Steve Hougland

Franklin City Council

Doesn't have position on tollway. Hasn't researched it and is waiting for state to send him information.

"I've been really tied up and haven't had a chance to really think about it," he said.



Tom Kite

Johnson County commissioner

Doesn't know enough about the toll road to take a stand for or against but has concerns. Is skeptical of why the state isn't giving out more information, such as why the state thinks the beltway would bring economic development.

Hopes to get more information at upcoming public meeting.

Feels like the project is a done deal and state doesn't want input from people or officials. Thinks that information should be released earlier to get educated feedback.

"I think that if (the state) is truly interested in receiving input, they should be putting out a lot more information," he said.

"This seems to be a secret more closely held than the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden."



Brenda Jones-Matthews

Franklin mayor

Supports beltway concept, has questions about the proposal. Wonders how landowners will be impacted and what the state will do for those who are affected.

Will be good for county if the beltway adds another Johnson County interchange to Interstate 65. Doesn't know what types of businesses, if any, will be attracted to toll road.

Doesn't know if she will get questions answered and whether the city will have any say if they don't have answers, since route doesn't go into city of Franklin. Too early to decide whether Franklin will annex land around toll road or provide utilities for businesses, since route isn't finalized.

Wants city to be involved in planning process. Will attend public meetings and talk with the governor.



Tom Kite

Johnson County commissioner

Worried about county losing farmland to the project and whether the county will be responsible for providing police and fire service to the road and area around it. Wonders if state will help pay to upgrade roads around the toll road.

Plans to contact the governor's office and attend public meetings to get answers.

Officials

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

meeting in February, to see how members feel and how they can best support the community's opinion.

Members of the county council and Franklin City Council expressed concerns about the toll road and said they wanted some answers before forming an opinion. Whether those questions will be answered soon is unknown. Most local leaders are leaving it up to the state to come to them with answers.

Three county officials said

they don't expect the toll road to create a large number of jobs.

Ron West, a county council member, thinks the road will bring truck stops and restaurants but not a significant number of jobs.

"I never saw it as bringing a lot of jobs. It's a way to move traffic and avoid congestion," he said.

Another county council member and a county commissioner believe a lack of exits on the route could slow development.

With few exits, maybe two or three in Johnson County, there would be fewer opportunities for businesses to locate along the toll road, said Josh McCarty, county council member. Commissioner Mitch Ripley said he had wondered about the same issue.

Commissioner Tom Kite, who is a Greenwood firefighter, worries about whether the county will need to provide emergency services and if the state will help pay for upgrades to surrounding roads, such as ones that could lead to future businesses along the route.

A Franklin City Council member feels that the project is a done deal and that the state doesn't want input from local residents or officials, especially since state officials are releasing little information.

"I think that if (the state) is truly interested in receiving input, they should be putting out a lot more information. This seems to be a secret more closely held than the whereabouts of

Osama bin Laden," said city council member Steve Hougland.

The beltway, as laid out by the governor last year, would pass south of Franklin. Any businesses that would locate along the route would need to be served by utilities, which would have to be provided by a city or town.

Franklin Mayor Brenda Jones-Matthews doesn't know if the city will seek to annex the land around the toll road or provide services. She said it's too early in the process to make a decision.

She supports the concept but still has questions, such as how landowners will be affected. Jones-Matthews will rely on the governor's office and public meetings to get information on

the project, she said.

For others, the toll road isn't a top issue.

Greenwood Mayor Charles Henderson said he hasn't had time to research the issue and is waiting for information the state typically sends about local issues.

"I've been really tied up and haven't had time to think about it," he said.

Three Greenwood City Council members said they also have had little time to research the issue, especially since it doesn't directly affect Greenwood.

"I could take it or leave it. I really don't care. I try to worry about what's going on in Greenwood and not go beyond the area where I feel is my juris-

PR firm to help promote toll road

By ANNIE GOELLER

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Tax dollars will pay for an Indianapolis company to help the state seek support for and get feedback about a proposed toll road.

The Indiana Department of Transportation hired a public relations company to help set up public meetings, make presentations and contact the people and community organizations affected by the Indiana Commerce Connector, as the toll road is dubbed.

For most projects, the state's communications department and spokespeople discuss projects with media and the public. But the firm was needed to help explain a large project in a short amount of time, said Gary Abell, spokesman for the transportation department.

The department has used public relations firms for other projects, but the practice isn't common and is usually just for large projects.

The state did not hire a company for work with Major Moves, the governor's proposal to allow the state to lease the northern Indiana toll road to a private company that passed last year, Abell said.

State officials hired Sease, Gerig & Associates, a management, communications and public relations consulting company, in December. The company's total payment will not exceed \$75,000, according to a contract with the firm.

Depending on which workers are helping the state, the firm is paid an average of \$150 per hour, said Lou Gerig, company president.

The company's job is to develop relationships with the people who are affected by the beltway, update information on the state's Web site, plan presentations and help the state conduct public information meetings.

So far, the company has developed mailing lists of people interested in the project, contacted media and organized meetings, Gerig said.

State officials are conducting informational meetings across the state, listening to landowners' concerns and trying to answer legislators' questions.

The communications company is helping organize and conduct those meetings, Abell said.

Other projects where a public relations firm has been used include building bridges across the Ohio River in southeastern Indiana and rebuilding the Borman Expressway in northwestern Indiana.

Both of those projects involved years of planning and public education, and the state hired the companies to help with public outreach, Abell said.

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