

Mountain Democrat

Thursday, January 15, 2004

Placerville, CA
(El Dorado Co.)
(Circ. 4x W. 14,300)

Elk Grove connector planning under way

by Karen Billing
McNaughton News Service

Nobody really knows what the region will look like in 20 years, but the Sacramento Area Council of Governments suspects there will definitely be a lot more people. And a lot more cars.

In response to that looming fact, SACOG is working on developing an expressway that will stretch from Elk Grove to El Dorado County. Kenneth Hough, director of planning for SACOG paid a visit to last week's El Dorado Hills Chamber of Commerce luncheon to tell about the council's plans for future transportation in and out of El Dorado County.

The state forecasts that the region's population will swell to 2.8 million by 2025, a 49 percent increase. According to SACOG, that will result in a 54 percent increase in travel. The council predicts that Rancho Cordova and Folsom will continue to grow as job centers and the urban edges will include El Dorado Hills as well as east and north of Elk Grove and south of Rancho Cordova. As residential and industrial areas continue to grow over the years, the proposed thoroughfare will help to ease the traffic woes that may ensue.

"We need to figure out if there's a need and if people want to pay for it," said Hough.

Hough said the project is not intended to be a freeway.

"We don't need a six-lane freeway. It's not envisioned as a freeway, rather an expressway," said Hough.

Hough said an advisory committee of six elected officials throughout the corridor as well as Caltrans, chambers of commerce and community groups are all working together to develop ways to reach out to people and get their feedback.

Hough said that SACOG has held meetings in the past, like the ones for the carpool lane and they were sparsely attended. He hopes for a little more public participation on this particular project.

The proposed expressway would start at I-5 east of Elk Grove and come straight across the Grant Line interchange and into White Rock Road. Hough said this particular point in the expressway will be a great improvement for commuters, because White Rock is currently a

very winding road without shoulders. The expressway would continue across Latrobe and have an interchange at Silva Valley Parkway and Highway 50.

Hough said that the plan seeks to protect existing historical resources and to invest \$15 million for open space preservation. Hough said there is a draw to keep open space to the south.

Hough envisions the interchange as an open space with lots of greenery and nice views along the road.

The expressway is planned to be multi-modal, including a bike lane and maybe a form of a rapid transit bus. Hough said light rail is not in the immediate plans.

Hough said that every three years SACOG makes a transportation plan that aspires to help ease traffic problems plaguing the region. Another change proposed in the plan includes extending the carpool lane from Sunrise Boulevard to downtown Sacramento and from El Dorado Hills to Shingle Springs.