

COMMISSION WORKSHOP



Mayor Woods called the second workshop to order regarding the Florida Department of Transportation Railroad Overpass location Customer Utility Deposits; present were Commissioner Carolyn Spooner, Commissioner Tommy Chastain, Commissioner Danny Nugent, Commissioner Wilbur Waters, City Clerk Ricky Thompson, City Manager Tom Ernharth, and City Attorney Dan Sikes.

Mayor Woods turned the workshop over to City Manager Ernharth.

Mr. Ernharth reported since the last workshop there has been a meeting the Florida Department of Transportation (DOT) and discuss the various options. Part of the meeting we were able to obtain a larger set of plans to see the impacts of the overpass options. These plans are for discussion only and are not set in stone.

As part of the DOT discussion, they have requested that the City do not take any recommendations on which options would be preferred. DOT is still in the process of their feasibility study and they don't have all their information. They requested for the City to take a step back, their schedule will be to hold a public meeting in August and have the final decision sometime in January 2016 to where the overpass will be located.

DOT felt if the City made a premature decision without having all the facts and information were in they would discount the City's recommendation because we didn't have all the information to make a decision.

Moving forward they ask for us to take a step back, and continue to discuss work out what we like and what we don't like. Don't make suggestions on things that why it won't work; what are options that will make it work.

He took a look at the pros and cons of each of the options. When the meeting was held with DOT there was a discussion of Weldon Street, and they were more like us were not too excited about it and presented more problems than any of the others, so it was written off. They are going to focus on 144th Street and the two options at State Route 100.

The following are his pros and cons of the options.

Route 100 Option

Pros:

1. About 25 to 29 trains pass through Starke per day and the average wait time is about 3 minutes. If the overpass is more than 3 minutes away, Emergency vehicles would be better off waiting for the train rather than taking the over pass.

2. Almost 9000 vehicles use 100 and it is also 1.25 miles from the hospital.
3. Route 100 is the Evacuation Route for the east coast and this will allow traffic to flow.
4. Bridge will be owned by DOT, so they will be responsible for the inspection and maintenance of the bridge.
5. Increased acreage added to Veterans Memorial Park

Cons:

1. Access from downtown to Route 100 restricted. Will cause a number of vehicles to drive through Walgreens parking lot instead of backtracking to Water Street. Also traffic would have to cross the tracks on Call Street to get on 100 from Water Street.
2. Impact on businesses and residents due to right of way acquisition and construction.
3. Overpass will be aesthetically unpleasing and will significantly alter the look of the area.
4. Drivers on Call Street would have to back track and cross the railroad to access Route 100 and the overpass to go south on 301 or west on Route 100.
5. Impact to Call Street would be primarily aesthetic in nature. Will result in a wall-like structure one block away from Call Street that would significantly alter the look of the area.

Commissioner Chastain ask if it would be of interest to say the City would lose eight access roads to State Route 100 with the overpass?

Mr. Ernharth responded that is correct.

Commissioner Chastain added the side streets used as feeders for 100 would go away?

Mr. Ernharth responded yes.

Route 100 Alternative Option

Pros:

1. About 25 to 29 trains pass through Starke per day and the average wait time is about 3 minutes. If the overpass is more than 3 minutes away, Emergency vehicles would be better off waiting for the train rather than taking the over pass.
2. Almost 9000 vehicles use 100 and it is also 1.25 miles from the hospital.
3. Route 100 is the Evacuation Route for the east coast of Florida this will allow traffic to flow.
4. Bridge will be owned by DOT, so they will be responsible for the inspection and maintenance of the bridge.

Cons:

1. Access from downtown to Route 100 restricted. Will cause a number of vehicles to drive through Walgreens parking lot instead of backtracking to Water Street. Also traffic would have to cross the tracks on Call Street to get on 100 from Water Street.
2. Major impacts to surrounding property owners.
3. Significant right-of-way acquisition required. Loss of ad valorem tax base.
4. Major change to existing traffic patterns.
5. Major disruptions to neighborhood during construction.
6. Overpass will be aesthetically unpleasing and will significantly alter the look of the area.

7. Drivers on Call Street would have to back track and cross the railroad to access Route 100 and the overpass to go south on 301 or west on Route 100.
8. Impact to Call Street would be primarily aesthetic in nature. Will result in a wall-like structure one block away from Call Street that would significantly alter the look of the area.

Commissioner Chastain added the loss of the ad valorem tax base is something that would be significant.

144th Street Concept

Pros:

1. Overpass not on major State Road thoroughfare.
2. Overpass is in rather remote area with minimal traffic (1400 ADT) and is not centrally located.
3. Minimal impacts to residents.
4. Minimal change to existing traffic patterns.
5. Location of overpass should not be objectionable from an aesthetic standpoint.

Cons:

1. The overpass would be about 2.5 miles from the hospital.
2. The bridge would have to be owned by Bradford County and they would have to agree to accept the future inspection and maintenance of the structure.
3. There is a railroad crossing near the intersection of 144th street and Route 100 that would need to be crossed before you would get to the hospital.
4. DOT would have to remove the improvements that they just completed at the intersection of 301 and 144th Street.

Commissioner Waters asked if DOT would be responsible for the overpass in the City why wouldn't they be responsible for it over 144th Street?

Mr. Ernharth explained State Route 100 is a state road so they are responsible for that right of way and structure. The 144th Street is a County Road so they would be responsible for it.

Clerk Thompson asked why the County couldn't just deed the State an easement on 144th Street for the bridge?

Seven Browning from DOT; also added that DOT has requested for the City to wait on a decision as Mr. Ernharth said earlier and wait until the meeting in August.

Mayor Woods responded he felt that would be right to wait but he also is representing the community. If we put our thought and wishes off until August is it going to be too late in August for the City to say what they want?

Mr. Browning stated; no it definitely won't be too late. The decision will not be made until January so we would want your input before that.

Someone from the audience asked if Weldon Street was completely off the decision?

Mr. Browning responded there has not been much feedback relating to Weldon Street one way or the other, so we assumed no one wants it.

Mayor Woods added it hasn't been taken off the table but not looked at.

Mr. Steve Futch added there was a meeting last week with DOT at the Chamber and we heard the proposal as far as asking the elected officials to postpone their vote until after the public meeting in August. It would be better to wait for that meeting and the Chamber supports that.

Someone asked once DOT decides will the persons that would have a house be notified, who will be responsible for that?

Mr. Browning responded DOT Right-a-way; they will be notified in January.

Mayor Woods requested for Mr. Browning to confirm the date in August and requested that it not be the same time the Florida League of Cities Conference is held.

Several persons from the audience made comments regarding the impact of the downtown as well as residential areas around the State Route 100 options.

Commissioner Spooner commented the purpose of the over pass is to expedite emergency vehicles to get to and from an emergency. The State Route 100 is the most expeditious route although the businesses oppose that. It is not going to affect the businesses in terms of persons being able to come downtown and to have your business. If you send it to 144th Street it will defeat the entire purpose of reducing the amount of time and adding to the time for emergency vehicles response to an emergency by the need to go out on US Highway 301, which will increase the time due to the amount of traffic.

We need to look at what would be best for all, not just the City but the County as well. It will not take away from your business it is to help emergency responders. The message she is getting because it is an inconvenience that is more valuable than life of people and what she is looking at.....

Mayor Woods asked if anything additional needed to come before the workshop.
Hearing none he closed the workshop.

Travis V. Woods, Mayor
Commissioner Tommy Chastain
Commissioner Daniel Nugent
Commissioner Carolyn B. Spooner
Commissioner Wilbur L. Waters

Attest: _____
Ricky Thompson, City Clerk