

Critics rally against Tribal Trail connector

A contingent of opponents of the Tribal Trail Connector, many of whom live in the area of the proposed bypass, condemned the South Park road project from just about every possible angle at an open house Wednesday.

Throughout a tense question-and-answer session with public officials and consultants, critics condemned the plan to extend Tribal Trail Road to Highway 22 in terms of traffic, design, transparency, cost to taxpayers, environmental harm, home value decreases and more.

But even before all that, when Teton County Sheriff Matt Carr stepped to the podium early in the evening to explain how the controversial new road would help first responders, he half-jokingly predicted the group was in for a tempestuous few hours.

“I’m trying to figure out my role here,” he said. “Is it to keep the peace?”

Carr described one of the main reasons for the connector: travel redundancy for normal drivers and, more importantly, for emergency services: “We like being able to have different access points,” he said.

Besides that, Teton County and the Wyoming Department of Transportation say the connector — which has popped up in transportation plans dating back to 1982 — is necessary to reduce vehicle miles traveled and to relieve congestion at the Y intersection of Broadway and Highway 22.

As engineers near the end of the planning process, they’re trying to narrow the list of alternative designs.

But specific iterations aside, the project has infuriated many who abhor the idea of paving 2,600 feet of open space and inviting more traffic into the peaceful neighborhoods of northern South Park.

Some critics said the project is premature and should be considered in connection with a series of updates planned for the Highway 22 corridor.

The majority of the members of a stakeholder group suggested the connector be postponed, but county and WYDOT representatives argued a “do nothing” option failed to remedy deficiencies the project is meant to address, and ultimately the idea was dismissed.

In light of that, neighbor Bill Smith said he is “really concerned about the willingness of the county to ignore public input.”

Another attendee, Bob Schroth, called the connector a “piecemeal patch job.”

The overwhelming majority of the crowd denounced the connector — at one point a show of hands revealed that all but three or four people in the crowd were against it — but the few who spoke in favor offered perspectives that may be more common among those who don’t live in the area.

Jenny Karns recalled how, when she grew up near Karns Meadow, Snow King Avenue did not connect from Flat Creek Drive to the library. Now, she said, that connector is “very much used and very much needed.”

Margaret Mary Ackerly said she “cannot understand why we are fighting about this road” if it will improve safety, especially by providing first responders another access point to the schools in the area.

Transportation planner Jared Smith, who supports the connector, suggested officials try to engage a wider range of the community and bring in more “diversity of voices” to inform the process.

The stakeholder group will meet one more time from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 4 at the Teton County Administration Building. Group members will select a final design for the

project, to be presented to the Teton County Board of County Commissioners in the spring.

The elected officials will have the final say on whether to proceed with the project.

- [By Cody Cottier Jackson Hole Daily](#)