

Sebastopol bypass cost \$3 million

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SEBASTOPOL — A new bypass route to relieve pressure on downtown streets until the year 2000 will cost \$3 million, require the removal of several homes and fill of some Laguna de Santa Rosa wetlands, if only half completed.

That is conclusion of the environmental impact report recently released by Penngrove planning consultant Algar Hill on "Route E," the proposed north-south bypass that would bring Highway 116 one-third mile east of its current intersection with Highway 12 and terminate on Highway 116 south of town.

The Sebastopol city council commissioned the report in June in the wake of a ground swell of public opposition to another traffic proposal — the one-way street system which was scheduled to be implemented last summer.

The city arranged \$350,000 from local, county and state sources to pay for the one-way system, which would put northbound traffic on Petaluma Avenue and southbound traffic on Main Street, when public pressure put the project in limbo.

According to the Route E study, the bypass fares poorly both in terms of expense and effectiveness in comparison with the one-way system.

The report says local traffic problems will increase in the next 17 years to the point Route E will not provide adequate traffic relief and "additional measures, such as a one-way system, would eventually be necessary."

"If the one-way north-south system were implemented instead of the bypass, congestion would be relieved for a number of years, 10, at much less cost," the report states.

The further addition of one-way streets going east and west "would provide many more years of relief," the report said.

If the city chooses a bypass route, the \$3 million alignment would give virtually no relief to Highway 116 unless the northern "leg" of Route E, connecting Highway 12 to Occidental Road, also is built, according to Hill.

The report's projection that the bypass would provide traffic relief in downtown Sebastopol through the year 2000 is based on the assumption that both legs will be built.

The city council said the northern leg will not be built for many years, if at all, when it approved the construction of ball fields in an area that would be traversed by Route E north.

Hill's report studied three alignments for Route E south, one terminating at Fircrest Avenue, one ending at Cooper Road and the third connecting with Bloomfield Road.

Each is a 40-foot wide, two-lane paved road, ranging from about one mile to two miles. All alignments require the removal of six mobile homes. The different alternatives offer a choice of removing more houses or agricultural land and green houses.

The report says the effect of the bypass on Laguna pools and marshes "could be significant in terms of loss of natural resources," but suggest there are various ways of mitigating the damage.

The city council is expected to hold public hearings on the report in January.

In the meantime, council discussions are underway on other proposed traffic solutions, including the one-way system, removal of parking on Main Street and additional traffic signals.