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# Planning Commission says dump bypass

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City planning commissioners March 14 decided that implementation a bypass system to reroute north/south traffic around Sebastopol was not feasible, and have asked the City Council to remove Route E from the city general plan.

Taking the advice of City Planning Consultant Bruce Aspinall, the commission decided to downgrade the status of the Environmental Impact Report because it failed to address the northerly portion of the bypass proposal. Then it proceeded to take a more definitive stand on the plan by asking for its removal.

Elgar Hill, author of the Environmental Impact Report, agreed the document should be incorporated into a broader environmental impact report for the whole bypass system. The commission has recommended the report be considered an Environmental Reconnaissance.

Removal of Route E from the General Plan came at the suggestion of Realtor Dave Madsen, who owns property that would have been impacted by construction of the bypass, commented Bruce Aspinall.

If the City Council agrees to such an amendment to the

General Plan city attention would likely be focused on several other options designed to solve traffic flow problems in downtown Sebastopol, including the controversial one-way street system.

Interestingly, the Route E environmental impact report suggested that the \$350,000 one-way street system is a more economical traffic solution than the more costly bypass proposal.

The bypass price tag was estimated at \$3.5 million, which many commissioners felt was unrealistically low. A more realistic cost estimate would have been around \$5 million, said Commissioner Gale Brownell.

There was widespread public opposition to the bypass EIR during previous discussions. Criticisms ranged from dissatisfaction with the report's treatment of wildlife impacts, to anger over the removal of homes which would be necessary with construction of the controversial road.

Route E is proposed as a two lane highway. Three different alignments have been under consideration: one beginning at Fircrest Avenue, another starting at Cooper Road, and a third at Bloomfield Road. All three would connect with Highway 12 about one-quarter mile east of the town's main intersection.

Commissioners agreed that there would be 'significant' unmitigable impacts if the bypass was actually built. That was part of their reasons for recommending its removal from the General Plan altogether.

Traffic through Sebastopol is expected to reach 'jammed' levels by the year 2000 since the growth rate in the area is projected to be 40 percent.

To many, that indicates a need to get a move on in resolving traffic flow problems. However, Commissioner Don Buttner, an opponent of the one-way street system, believes the traffic problem is no more than an inconvenience to some motorists during peak commute hours.

"The traffic flow is fine 23 hours per day. Why go through all the expense and risk upsetting the economics of downtown," Buttner said.