

Route E

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Nobody wants it, nobody can pay for it, but the beast won't die

City officials this week again wrestled with the fate of Route E, the unpopular \$5 million bypass road proposed around the perimeter of the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Following a joint meeting of the Sebastopol City Council and planning commission Tuesday, council members said they'll hold a new public hearing on Route E, probably in July.

The bypass barely survived a public hearing before the planning commission in January, when dozens of Route E opponents attacked the plan as an expensive environmental outrage.

Although chances are presently slim that Route E will ever be built, the city council must still decide whether to shelve its half-finished \$30,000 environmental impact report, or spend another \$30,000 to have it completed.

Following the show of opposition in January, the planning commission recommended the EIR be tabled and that the Route E solution to Sebastopol traffic

problems be removed from the city's General Plan.

The commission became convinced "Route E is a cancer in the general plan," said planning commissioner John Lewis, who urged the council to hold its own public hearing to feel firsthand the public resistance to Route E. "There's not a voice out there for Route E," said Lewis.

The council agreed informally Tuesday to hold a public hearing before deciding what to do with the inadequate EIR, which examines only the southern leg of Route E, stopping at Highway 12. For the bypass to relieve traffic congestion it needs a northern leg too, although Elgar Hill, who prepared the EIR, was not hired to look at Route E beyond Highway 12. That oversight could mean the EIR is demoted to the status of a "reconnaissance" report. Otherwise the completion of a north-leg study report would be needed before the EIR qualifies as a proper report under state environmental codes.