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Published: Friday, August 10, 2007

Orlando Toll Road May Be Extended Into Polk

Agency pursues study to determine effects if State Road 417 is expanded.

By [Tom Palmer](#)
The Ledger

BARTOW | An Orlando-based toll-road agency is studying the possibility of building an extension of State Road 417 into Polk County, Polk's Transportation Planning Organization was told Thursday.

"These are concept studies," said Lennon Moore, director of planning for the Orlando Orange County Expressway Authority.

State Road 417 is a toll road that forms an eastern beltway around Orlando.

The study area Moore laid out includes a wide area that loops from Interstate 4 near the Polk-Osceola line to north of East Lake Tohokepaliga in southeastern Orange County.

Moore said the study will determine what the land-use and environmental implications of the project are, what transportation needs such a road project may actually solve, whether the project is feasible and whether it should be a toll road or be a project pursued by another agency, such as the Florida Department of Transportation.

Project manager Howard Newman, an engineering consultant hired by the toll agency, said as the study progresses public meetings will be held.

One of the study corridors outlined includes a route that would take the highway across Lake Tohokepaliga.

TPO members asked about the reasoning on that alternative.

"Our usual approach is to go around water bodies, but this may be a case where the environmental impact may be minimized, but we haven't documented that," Moore said.

Polk County Commissioner Randy Wilkinson asked what toll officials meant by "socioeconomic constraints" affecting the proposed project.

Newman said the study area goes through sections of Poinciana and other residential areas and the impact on existing homes would have to be part of the analysis.

Polk Commissioner Jean Reed said the study area includes an area where Polk transportation planners have proposed a new interchange at U.S. 27 to relieve local traffic.

Newman said they could consider that.

But Moore said commissioners need to keep in mind that the map depicts half-mile-wide study corridors, not actual road alignments.

Polk County Commissioner Sam Johnson said he supported the idea of looking at new roads.

"It makes a world of difference in getting from Point A to Point B," he said.

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