

Aiken City Council Minutes

December 2, 2002

WORKSESSION

Present: Mayor Cavanaugh, Councilmembers Clyburn, Cunning, Price, Smith, Sprawls, and Vaughters

Others Present: Roger LeDuc, Gary Smith, Ed Evans, Bill Huggins Sandra Korbelik, Larry Morris, Ronnie Young, Rick Osbon, Willar Hightower, Scott Singer, Clay Killian, Noel and Dan Johnson, Jimmie Tabor, Don Reese, Joan Donnely, Mike Clark, Steve Cote, and Sara Ridout.

Mayor Cavanaugh called the meeting to order at 7:30 A.M. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a presentation by Jordan, Jones & Goulding on a proposed Whiskey Road-Silver Bluff Road Connector Study. He stated several members of the Aiken County Council were present to hear the presentation. He asked those present to introduce themselves.

Mr. Ed Evans, Planning Director for the City of Aiken, stated traffic has been a big issue in Aiken, especially on the south side, for the last several years. He said there had been discussion over the years about constructing a road to connect Silver Bluff Road and Whiskey Road. He said about six months ago City Council retained the consultants of Jordan, Jones & Goulding to do a study for a route for a proposed connector road between Whiskey Road and Silver Bluff. He said the consultants will present some alternative routes for a connector road. He said the main purpose of the meeting is to summarize the alternatives and to get reactions to the alternatives.

Mr. Steve Cote, from Jordan, Jones & Goulding, made the presentation. He first reviewed the basics of the study—the purpose and process to this point, the project status, possible alignment locations and the next steps.

Mr. Cote stated the study objectives were to study potential options for a connector road joining Silver Bluff Road and Whiskey Road, solicit and involve the public throughout the course of the study, and determine recommended alignment location for proposed connector to preserve future right of way.

Mr. Cote stated the process so far had involved public meetings, data collection, traffic analysis, traffic forecasts, alignment analysis and cost estimation. He said the process had been on-going for about five months.

Mr. Cote stated the study area involved the area south of Woodside Plantation between Silver Bluff and Whiskey Road to approximately one mile south of Anderson Pond Road.

He stated from the public meetings those along Chukker Creek Road do not want Chukker Creek Road used as a possible alternative connector road. They did not seem to be opposed to a more southern location, but were more concerned about the school and the traffic associated with the school. He said those from Anderson Pond Road for the most part did not seem to be opposed to Anderson Pond Road being used as a possible corridor road. Some respondents were in favor of possibly using the Chime Bell Road area for the connector.

Mr. Cote stated another question was the kind of road the citizens would like to see. He said some of the responses were lower speed roadway, landscaped medians, bike paths and sidewalks.

Mr. Cote then reviewed the traffic analysis findings. He said they looked at existing and future traffic aspects. He pointed out that most of the major roads in the study area south of Woodside between Whiskey and Silver Bluff were LOS As and Bs. He said at peak

times there were some issues on some of the roads, especially Chukker Creek when children are being dropped off and picked up from school.

Mr. Cote stated they had looked at future travel demand to year 2025. He said two scenarios were tested, a two lane connector with two access points and a two lane connector with no access points. He said in summary, assuming limited access and current GDOT modeling estimates, a four-lane facility does appear to be warranted by 2025.

In reviewing the accident data, he noted that none of the intersections in the study area were listed on Aiken County's list for hazardous or unsafe intersections.

In the environmental screening, Mr. Cote noted there was no indication of hazardous or contaminated sites in the study area. The main concern was water resources or wetlands associated with Hollow Creek, which bisects the study area.

Mr. Cote stated they looked at short-range planned projects under the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and the ARTS long range plan. He noted one of the projects is extension of Richardson Lake Road to Anderson Pond Road.

Mr. Cote then reviewed six alternative routes for a connector road. These included:

- South of Kimball Pond Road from Silver Bluff Road connecting to Whiskey Road via Chime Bell Church Road.
- Anderson Pond Road east from Silver Bluff Road and connecting to Whiskey Road via Chime Bell Church Road.
- Herndon Dairy Road east from Silver Bluff Road and connecting with Whiskey Road via Chime Bell Church Road.
- Glenwood Drive at Silver Bluff Road east and connecting with Chime Bell Church Road to Whiskey Road.
- Glenwood Drive at Silver Bluff Road connecting with Talatha Church Road to Whiskey Road.
- Glenwood Drive at Silver Bluff Road connecting with Chukker Creek Road to Whiskey Road.

Mr. Cote stated the proposed alignments for the road from Silver Bluff to Whiskey vary in length from about four miles to six miles. He pointed out the shorter the connector the less the cost. He pointed out a four-lane road versus a two-lane road is not double in cost. It was pointed out the Glenwood Drive options would cost about \$15 million. The routes farther south would get progressively more expensive because they would be longer. The Kimball Pond Road alternative, the farthest south, would cost about \$23 million.

Mr. Cote stated the consultants will complete their field review and return in January with presentations to the public and complete their analysis and come back to the city in February or March. Mr. Cote stated today he would like to hear from those present as to their opinions and any thoughts on the proposed routes. He then opened the meeting for discussion and questions and answers.

There was discussion on why have a connector road. There was also discussion on alignment of the connector road with other roads east and west of Silver Bluff and Whiskey Roads so traffic could continue on around the city. There was concern about the proposed road and its effect on residential areas and increased traffic. There was discussion on whether the proposed road should or should not have access points. It was also pointed out that land use should be considered in planning the road and whether the developments would all be residential or if some commercial areas would be planned for the area so as to keep some of the commercial traffic off Whiskey Road.

Mr. Cote pointed out that downtown Aiken, which has a grid pattern, gives many ways for people to get around to many different places. This is not true for south Aiken; the roads are mainly Silver Bluff Road and Whiskey Road.

Mr. LeDuc pointed out in considering the proposed roadway, it should be remembered that this will not be built immediately, but it will probably be seven to nine more years before it would be built. He also pointed out this roadway is planning for 10 to 20 years in the future. Another point is funding for the roadway. He stated ARTS funding is only about \$3 million per year for the entire county. He said if the group feels something should be done for the future, then some alternative funding should be considered as with only state funding the road will not happen for a very long time. It was pointed out the area is continuing to grow and traffic will increase in the area.

Discussion also centered around whether the connector should be closer to the developed areas or if it should be farther south. It was pointed out the farther south the road, the less controversial the road would be, but the length of the road would be longer and the cost would be more.

Councilman Smith stated he felt the northern-most option really makes the most sense for the next 10 to 20 years. He said there is an area of undeveloped land on Whiskey Road. He said if a road comes in much further south on Whiskey it will not really take traffic off Dougherty Road. He said the closer the road is to the city the more it will take traffic off the upper part of Whiskey Road. He said he did not feel that traffic from Woodside and Gem Lakes would want to go so far south to cross over to Whiskey Road. He said the long term solution would be a more northern route with access points, and he would hope that Woodside would consider entrances and exits on that road to help with traffic.

Councilwoman Vaughters was concerned about the proposed road becoming a mixed use and commercial development. She felt there was plenty of commercial development and felt the proposed road should be more of a parkway road to eliminate the negative impact on property owners in the area.

Councilman Cunning pointed out if there is no commercial development in the area, there is only one place for the traffic to go and that is Silver Bluff and Whiskey Road for the commercial. He said he felt the answer was good land planning for the area. He felt there could still be a parkway system, but there could be limited access and land planning.

Councilwoman Price also expressed concern about creating another area for commercial development, as business follows residential development. She felt a parkway would be the way to try to take care of traffic and try to eliminate commercial development. She was also concerned about developing a north Aiken and a south Aiken.

Mayor Cavanaugh stated he felt the study needed to look at the overall area and see how the connector was going to fit in with the whole area. Mr. Cote stated they were looking at the bigger picture.

Mr. LeDuc stated the connector study was a very important study as it was going to affect both the city and the county. He stated the city and the county were going to need to cooperate as the areas around the city develop. He said some decisions needed to be made soon on where the road will go before the areas are developed and the road will have to be moved farther out. He thanked the County Council members for attending the meeting.

Mr. Jimmie Tabor, Richardson's Lake Road, stated he was concerned about accidents. He pointed out there is already a high traffic accident rate at Richardsons Lake Road. He said he felt a connector road would take half of the traffic off Dougherty Road. He said he was more concerned about traffic than whether the development is residential or business. He said for planned development of the area the Aiken City Council and Aiken County Council would have to cooperate.

Those present continued to discuss the proposed connector road and the location. There was concern about Richardsons Lake Road and traffic since that road is very curvy. There was also concern about Anderson Pond Road being paved and the safety of traffic on that road since it is also curvy.

The meeting adjourned around 9:00 A.M.



Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk