

# Discussion begins on 12/26 intersection improvements



***Matt Boyer from Dokken Engineering listens to a public comment during Monday's meeting on the State Route 12/26 Intersection Improvement Project.***

**By Nick Baptista  
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Two alternatives to improve traffic flow at the State Route 12/26 intersection in downtown Valley Springs were unveiled Monday evening, but both had their drawbacks.

Matt Boyer of Dokken Engineering, the firm hired by the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors to do the preliminary work for the intersection improvement project, made the presentation outlining the conceptual alternatives of either a traffic signal or roundabout at the intersection. The option of no project at all is a possibility.

The no project at all alternative means the public would live with the congestion until an ultimate solution – such as a bypass – is completed.

A traffic signal or roundabout would have a profound impact on the downtown intersection, with at least one building – the Century 21 office - removed and the possibility of numerous parking spaces along Highway 12 and Laurel Street eliminated.

Billie Briski of Busy Bee Realty, located on the northwest corner of the intersection, said she was upset that she and the other property owners near the intersection had not been contacted prior to the meeting and informed of the proposed changes.

“That’s not good public relations or goodwill,” she said. “This involves our livelihood.”

She was concerned with the possible removal of parking in the downtown district and said steps should be taken to mitigate the problem, such as buying property nearby for off-site parking, including the recently closed Valley Inn.

Kevin Squires of the Valley Springs Home Center wanted to know how much property along State Route 26 would be needed to accommodate the additional lanes for a roundabout or a traffic signal. Boyer said his firm would come back with an approximation of those figures.

Jeff Davidson presented an alternative that would alleviate some of the existing problem. Davidson has submitted plans to the county for Mission Ranch Subdivision, a 103-acre residential and commercial development on property bordered by Highways 12 and 26. Proposed plans include a road or "parkway" connecting the two highways.

If approved by the county and market conditions improve, the parkway would be in well before the 25 to 30 years before a bypass is constructed, Davidson said.

Putting the bypass on the fast track was also discussed.

From his experience, Boyer said it would be almost impossible to have such a project ready in five to eight years.

Tom Garcia, the county's public works director, said no funding for a bypass project has been identified and it would be reasonable to expect such a project is 20 to 25 years away.

Others suggested extending Hogan Dam Road to either State Route 12 or Lime Creek Road east of Valley Springs to alleviate congestion in the downtown intersection.

There was also concern the intersection improvement proposals would hamper traffic trying to get in and out of the Valley Oaks Center.

The workshop at Jenny Lind Elementary School attracted nearly 70 people and many spent the first hour looking at the maps for the traffic signal and roundabout. Dokken Engineering staff members receive public comments on the alternatives and comment cards were distributed to the audience.

The comments generated around the maps seemed to favor the traffic signal over the roundabout.

A similar public workshop is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 17, in the Toyon Middle School multipurpose room, 3412 Double Springs Road.