



TxDOT has Eyes on Comal Loop Study

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NEW BRAUNFELS — San Antonio has an outer loop. New Braunfels may get one.

The Texas Department of Transportation has told local officials that the department has hired three consultants to perform a study to find the best route for an outer loop around the city that likely would be a toll road.

"It probably won't happen in my lifetime, but at least we will be ready when it becomes necessary," said Comal County Judge Danny Scheel. "This study doesn't mean we are going to build a loop. It means we can start acquiring land on the route and make sure schools, churches and subdivisions don't get built over it."

The outer loop would require a pair of bridges over the Guadalupe River and would connect to Interstate 35 north of Farm Road 306 on the north side of town and south of Solms on the south end, said TxDOT engineer Michelle Kopp.

"The goal is to have a planning document in about a year," she said. "We have not looked at funds for any portions of the road yet. What this would do is allow local officials to preserve the route."

Kopp said most of the loop would be new roadway and not follow existing roads in the area and it "is being developed with the idea that it would be a toll road."

Scheel said he would never support putting tolls on existing lanes, but he realizes there would likely not be any other way to get funding for the parts of the loop that are new road.

"I'm certainly glad we are moving forward on it," said County Commissioner Jan Kennady.

New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce President Michael Meek said the existing Loop 337, which goes around the west side of I-35 only, has been a boon to the city.

"We've been working for more than 30 years for an eastern loop around the city," he said. "So this is good news. It's a plan whose time has come. TxDOT certainly sees the growth in this area and I applaud them for having that kind of vision."

Meek noted that with no bridges over the Guadalupe River between Interstate 35 and McQueeney, it creates major choke points as all the local traffic on the east side of town has to funnel to I-35 to get to the other side of the river.

"We have tremendous traffic backups on (Texas) 46 because of that," he said.

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