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### New Braunfels loop discussed

Roger Croteau EXPRESS-NEWS STAFF WRITER

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NEW BRAUNFELS -- About 300 people, many worried that their homes could be in the way of a proposed outer loop around this city, got their chance to give their input to Texas Department of Transportation officials Wednesday.

It could be decades before the road is built, and no funding is in place, but local and state officials want to identify the potential route so they can keep the corridor open.

"Who wants to drive around the city in a circle?" asked George Cosson, whose home is in the study area. "Why not just improve (FM) 306 and the other corridors you have identified as overcrowded?"

A study under way by TxDOT will identify a potential corridor of land, prioritize which segments of the loop will be needed first and identify whether to build the road as a major arterial, parkway or freeway.

Sarah Bading said existing roads should be improved before the state turns its attention to a loop.

"It will bring more growth," she said at the hearing at Hofmann Lane Elementary School.

James Hawkins, a local developer, said he owns land that would go up in value if the loop is built.

"I understand there are some people who are anti-this," he said. "I just came because I'm wondering where they are coming from. I'm glad the state is looking this far ahead. This is how to avoid tearing up people's neighborhoods in the future."

The study area would put the route about 3 to 5 miles farther from New Braunfels than Loop 337 and would include parts of Guadalupe and Comal counties, the 24th- and 12th-fastest-growing counties in the state, respectively.

The study aims to identify a route by next spring, but the road may not be built for 25 to 30 years, TxDOT said.

"We're not about to go to work with bulldozers," TxDOT engineer Judy Friesenhahn said. "We are not about to show up on anybody's doorsteps and say we're there to relocate them."

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