

Parkway alternatives announced

Actual construction not expected to begin until 2017.

By Calen McKinney

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It may be nearly 10 years before construction actually begins, but local residents are having their say now in what path the Heartland Parkway will take.



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About 300 residents attended a meeting Tuesday night to review and cast their votes for the best of five alternative routes for the Heartland Parkway.

On Tuesday, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet hosted a public informational meeting to announce the stage 1 conceptual alternatives for the parkway's route.

The meeting, which was at Taylor County High School's cafeteria, attracted more than 300 local residents who came to cast their votes as to which route they believe is best.

John Moore, engineering branch manager for the Transportation Cabinet, said the purpose of the public meeting is to present five alternative routes and obtain feedback to narrow those alternatives to three.

Once that is done, he said, the Cabinet will review the three alternatives further, do some environmental work and then have another public meeting this fall to further narrow the alternative routes.

Those who attended the meeting looked over several drawings of the five proposed alternative routes. The entire length of the parkway was broken into 14 sections so residents could see exactly how each would impact their properties.

Moore said the parkway's path can be "mixed and matched" according to which alternative route is best for each particular segment.

Ultimately, the 60-mile Heartland Parkway will connect the Louie B. Nunn Parkway at Columbia with the Martha Layne Collins Bluegrass Parkway at Springfield by widening the existing KY 55/U.S. 68/KY 555 route to four lanes. Locally, the project includes widening KY 210 from U.S. 68 to KY 3183 and widening KY 55 to five lanes from KY 1625 to U.S. 68. The Taylor County portion of the project will use a design-build approach, allowing different phases of the project to be built simultaneously.

David Lindeman, vice president of Palmer Engineering, told the crowd that since the first public meeting addressing the parkway in 2007, several focus groups have met to discuss the parkway's route.

The Transportation Cabinet completed the parkway's planning study in 2005.

According to information given to each person who attended the meeting, the five alternative routes include widening along both sides of the parkway, widening to the west, widening to the east of KY 55 and adjustments to avoid historic sites and provide free flowing movement between KY 55 and the Columbia Bypass. Some alternative routes, Lindeman said, do call for the parkway to be built through land owned by area residents.

Lindeman said the parkway will contain four driving lanes, with a median of 40 feet, or possibly less in certain areas, with partially controlled access. There will be 1,200 feet between areas where vehicles could access the parkway.

After officials gather feedback from Tuesday night's meeting, and a meeting last week in Adair County, the five alternative routes will be narrowed to three. Those will be announced at another public meeting in the fall. Moore said a focus group will meet in the next few months to discuss feedback from Tuesday night's meeting.

Next year, Lindeman said, the three alternatives will be refined even more and studies will be performed as to the impact of the proposed paths.

In 2011, the final route will be selected and an environmental report will be submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for its approval in 2012.

At that point, Moore said, all of the funding for the project will have been exhausted, leaving no funding for final design, purchasing rights of way, utility relocation or actual construction. He said he estimates rights of way could be purchased around 2015, which would put actual construction beginning in 2017.

Those wishing to submit written comments about the parkway project can mail those to Patty Dunaway, P.E., Kentucky Transportation Cabinet-District 4, P.O. Box 309, Elizabethtown, Ky. 42701.

Comments may also be e-mailed to comments@heartlandpkwy.com.

- Staff Writer Calen McKinney can be reached at 465-8111 Ext. 235 or by e-mail at reporter@cknj.com. Comment on this story at www.cknj.com.