

Mountain View Corridor speeding up

But poll shows residents prefer I-15 work in Utah County first

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Legislative leaders announced a deal Friday with local developers to donate as much as \$80 million in land on which to build the Mountain View Corridor in southern Salt Lake County — a move that will speed construction of the planned highway.

In addition, a plan was announced for a mass transit line along 5600 West in Salt Lake County, adjacent to a proposed route for Mountain View along 5800 West. The transit line has been a source of contention for environmental groups who have worried the state is building a pollution-producing highway without a transit option.

Marc Heilesen, regional representative with the Sierra Club, said the transit news was encouraging. His group has threatened the state with future lawsuits if transit wasn't included as part of work on Mountain View, which is proposed to run 44 miles from northwestern Salt Lake County into Utah County.

"I think our main concern is balance," Heilesen said. "I think there is a real solution out there where you put in transit immediately and then add road capacity where it's needed."

Officials with the Utah Transit Authority said they would begin buying land for the transit line within the next two years. It would begin as a bus rapid transit line, and then later be converted into a rail line, said Bruce Jones, UTA general counsel.

As for the land deal, it is contingent on the Utah Department of Transportation being able to start construction within the next five years on a 10-mile section of Mountain View from 9000 South to Redwood Road in Salt Lake County.

UDOT officials said they are committed and have funding to begin work on that segment once

environmental studies are finished. Under the negotiated land deal, the state would also chip in money as an incentive to construction, which is estimated to cost as much as \$586 million.

A new poll done for the Deseret Morning News and KSL-TV by Dan Jones & Associates shows residents support work on Mountain View but prefer reconstruction of I-15 in Utah County first.

The poll was of 412 people. It showed that 49 percent of Utah residents thought I-15 was a higher priority for construction, while 31 percent preferred that Mountain View be funded first.

The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent. It was conducted Feb. 19-21.

Sen. Sheldon Killpack, R-Syracuse, said the Mountain View deal could still be done in conjunction with the reconstruction of I-15. Earlier this week, the Senate Republican caucus took a position to support the rebuilding of I-15 from 12300 South in Salt Lake County to U.S. Highway 6 in Utah County

"These opportunities just don't present themselves every day," Killpack said of the Mountain View agreement. Killpack and House Speaker Greg Curtis, R-Sandy, were the chief negotiators behind the transit and land deal.

With the land donation, the state will have access to 50 percent of the property it needs to build the 10-mile stretch of Mountain View from 90000 South to Redwood Road. Three developers contributed land: Kennecott Land, Sorensen Development and Development Associates.

Lawmakers denied any suggestions during a noon press conference on Friday that the land deal was made by pressuring developers or with incentives. Also, they said they did not pressure UTA to obtain land for the 5600 West rail line as a way of pushing environmental groups away from a lawsuit. At present, UDOT is finishing an environmental study of Mountain View and anticipates federal approval of the road sometime next year.

The agency has studied several options for the road, including an alignment along 7200 West. The agency prefers 5800 West because it impacts fewer homes and wetlands, although it does cut across the property of two schools.

Earlier this week, the Granite School District board approved a resolution asking that UDOT study a new alignment for Mountain View away from schools located along 5800 West.

Likewise, Cameron Cova, transportation chair for Utah Moms for Clean Air, said she was pleased with the transit deal announced Friday, but her group was also concerned about the overall impact of Mountain View on the schools and the state's air quality.

For more information about Mountain View, log on to www.udot.utah.gov/mountainview.

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