

Road extension decision awaiting traffic study

By Meera Pal
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Hoping more data will lead to a decision, the Pleasanton City Council and Planning Commission have asked city staff to forecast the traffic impacts the controversial Stoneridge Drive extension could bring if it is built.

The council and commission gathered at a joint workshop Tuesday night to discuss the results of "preliminary traffic modeling" for the city's General Plan update. The initial traffic flow study looked at the council's preferred land use for the city during the next 20 years. It did not include the Stoneridge extension.

After more than an hour of public testimony, the joint governing bodies decided they needed the traffic flow information sooner rather than later.

"Our community has become much more polarized on this issue," said Councilman Jerry Thorne. "We should make a decision on Stoneridge Drive as soon as we can, so we can stop the polarization of this commu-

nity — we need the data to make this decision."

The city began preparing an update of the General Plan in April 2003. The plan was last previously updated and adopted in 1996.

During the update process, the City Council must decide which aspects of the 1996 plan — the Stoneridge Drive extension is one — it wants to carry forward.

To date, the council has supported the idea of removing the Stoneridge extension from the plan, Mayor Jennifer Hosterman has said.

Although city leaders acknowledge Pleasanton has a congestion problem, they don't agree on a solution.

Pleasanton residents also are split on whether the proposed extension will alleviate traffic issues. Members of a local grassroots group called Stop Pleasanton Gridlock attended Tuesday's meeting, urging a traffic study of the extension.

Most who spoke in favor live

in the Santa Rita Road and Valley Avenue neighborhoods. They contend that extending Stoneridge Drive to El Charro Road and extending El Charro Road to Stanley Boulevard are critical steps to reducing gridlock in central and southeastern Pleasanton.

They claim the Santa Rita Road-Valley Avenue intersection is one of the most congested in Pleasanton, with the highest number of traffic accidents.

Other residents, mostly in the Stoneridge Drive neighborhood, argue that the extension will be used predominantly by drivers looking for a shortcut from the normally congested Interstate 580 freeway.

"This extension will not alleviate traffic, it will make traffic worse," Max Mahini said.

Proponents argued that no one knows that for sure and no one will know until the data are collected.

Reach Meera Pal at 925-847-2120 or mpal2@cctimes.com.