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## Transportation officials decide to push forward with Meadowood-U.S. 395 interchange

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Construction of a new freeway interchange at U.S. 395 and Meadowood Way should proceed as a top priority, transportation officials decided Friday.

The project, costing up to \$61.8 million, is needed to address one of the worst spots for traffic congestion in Reno-Sparks and to create upwards of 1,500 jobs over a two-year period, the Regional Transportation Commission was told. A bid for the project is expected to be awarded by spring.

Failure to proceed with the project would sideline an important opportunity to jump-start a troubled economy and endanger future projects, including the proposed construction of a Hard Rock Hotel-Casino at the intersection of South Virginia Street and McCarran Boulevard, supporters said.

"This is probably the most important thing that can happen in that area. There's a lot hanging on this," said Norm Dianda, owner of Q & D Construction Co.

The RTC Friday debated whether to proceed with the Meadowood interchange as its top road project or if resources should be focused on other high priorities, including the planned improvement of the intersection of Pyramid Highway and McCarran and widening of northbound U.S. 395 between Moana Lane and Interstate 80.

All three projects can likely occur on an accelerated schedule but the Meadowood interchange will proceed as the project offering the most immediate economic benefits, the RTC decided.

That decision was backed by developers, construction workers and union representatives attending Friday's meeting.

"We believe this is a good project. It will provide an economic boost to our community," said Steve Muchicko of the Carpenters Union 971.

The project is "desperately needed" to address worsening traffic congestion near Meadowood Mall, said Tony Vail, the mall's general manager. Construction of the interchange is also a required if a major expansion planned at the mall can proceed, officials said.

Developer Perry DiLoreto said a proposal to build a Hard Rock Hotel-Casino at the intersection of South Virginia and McCarran, still in the negotiation phase, would be doomed should the interchange not proceed as planned.

"If we kill this project, this will go away," DiLoreto said.

The hotel project is "meant to be a high-quality destination casino resort that we believe would represent a world-class addition to Reno's gaming community," Michael Soll, executive vice president of The Innovation Group, a consulting group, wrote in a letter to the RTC.

The proposed hotel-casino "will depend" upon the new interchange, Soll wrote.

Several speakers noted that the interchange was highlighted as a top priority project that would be funded by an increased fuel tax authorized by voters last November.

Any move to slow the project down could endanger the RTC's credibility, said Tray Abney of the Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce.

"I want to urge you to stay the course and move forward," agreed Grant Sims, who served on a blue ribbon committee established to plan the ballot question.

Reno Mayor Bob Cashell stressed that needed improvements to the highly congested intersection at Pyramid and McCarran remain a top priority.

"I want to make it clear Pyramid-McCarran will be the next project and we will move it forward," Cashell said. "Pyramid-McCarran has to be taken care of too."

## Additional Facts

Meadowood interchange

- Up to \$61.8 million project.
  - \$10.3 million already spent on property, design.
  - Would extend Meadowood Mall Way from South Virginia Street, under the freeway to Kietzke Lane.
  - A new southbound off-ramp and new northbound on-ramp would be built.
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