



Online News Archive

Holk County News.

Citizen Advance

ESTABLISHED 1883

A HOME PAPER PRINTED FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

WEEKLY

Editorial Opinion - 5/6/09

May 6, 2009

TDOT's new approach to highway planning is a far cry from the days when the agency would come up with a plan and present the finished product to the public for comment. With the Context Sensitive Solutions approach, the agency's Corridor K contractor is required to develop a project that is sensitive to the local environment and also to have a Citizens Resource Team involved from the beginning.

By all accounts, the CRT is not a rubber-stamp group. Members were screened by a consultant to get a diverse group who represent all interested parties but are able to work as a team and be open-minded. Team members are obviously committed to the responsibility, as the day-long meetings have been packed with information and followed up with homework. Team members are becoming immersed in road construction tools and techniques while being asked to identify critical values and objectives to be included analyzing Corridor K alternatives. The citizens participating on the team are to be commended for making the commitment.

There has been no discussion of routes. The initial purpose seems to be setting the key parameters to be taken into consideration regardless of route. Along the way, the consultant has been working to get varying interests to talk to each other, to be open minded about opposing views. There are no doubt extreme viewpoints, from those determined to see a new road to those who oppose any new construction, but the goal is dialogue rather than polarization.

TDOT is to be commended for including an approach that includes citizen input. Getting the diverse opinions now is important, especially with a project as sensitive as this one. The approach is an acknowledgement that highways are essentially for people and communities, not engineers.

While citizens and engineers are doing their work, all agencies involved in the process should also be providing their input now rather than at the end of the process.

The end result should be a much better project.

