

LAKELAND

Roundabout approved for Lakeland intersection

By Michael Waddell, Special to The Daily Memphian

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"I think if you're going to do a roundabout, this is the ideal intersection because of the askew (intersection layout), the sight lines are poor, and it's often confusing...just to see what's going on," commissioner Wesley Wright said. "I think it's worth looking into."(Patrick Lantrip/The Daily Memphian file)

The Lakeland Board of Commissioners approved an agreement with the Tennessee Department of Transportation on Thursday, July 18, to design a new roundabout at Seed Tick Road and Memphis-Arlington Road.

The new single-lane roundabout will replace the existing four-way controlled stop.

“This intersection is a major problem,” Lakeland Mayor Josh Roman said. “Any sort of remedy should make it a much friendlier intersection.”

Former commissioner and current Industrial Development Board member Richard Gonzales was less certain.

“I thought the board as a group earlier this year decided that roundabouts weren’t really...we couldn’t afford them at the time, and now this one’s popping up,” he said.

He said the priority for the city should be completing the New Canada Road project.

“I’ve been here since 2000, and you could drive down New Canada Road and not see a car,” he said. “Now it’s a cluster, especially during rush hour.”

Lakeland Staff Engineer Luis Camarillo Hernandez said the city has received a grant from the Memphis Metropolitan Planning Organization that will fund 80% of the cost of the design of the proposed roundabout. The city will cover the remaining 20%.

Once the design is finished, the city plans to seek other grants to cover a portion of the construction costs.

City Engineer Emily Harrell said the city applied for the MMPO grant several years ago before there were talks of having roundabouts on U.S. Highway 70. In March, the commission voted down a roundabout on U.S.

However, a new TIF (Tax Increment Financing) district for a series of roundabouts is being considered for the Lakeland Meadows project north of U.S. 70 along Old Brownsville Road.

Commissioner Connie McCarter suggested a traffic light at that intersection would be better than a roundabout.

“Since we have so many taxpayers who are not wanting this, I think we need to listen to the people,” she said, going to request a cost comparison and safety study. “I do agree with (former) Commissioner Gonzales. I do hear from the citizens, and New Canada Road is where they want their money going.”

“I would not recommend a traffic light at Memphis-Arlington and Seed Tick,” Harrell said.

Commissioner Wesley Wright voted in favor of the project.

“I think if you’re going to do a roundabout, this is the ideal intersection because of the askew (intersection layout), the sight lines are poor, and it’s often confusing...just to see what’s going on,” he said. “I think it’s worth looking into.”

The board voted 4-0 in favor of the item, with McCarter abstaining.

City Manager Michael Walker assured the board that city is still moving forward on the New Canada Road project, where skyrocketing construction costs have slowed the constriction timeline.

The city has already received \$13 million from the MMPO for the project, which at the time of submitting that application years ago would have been sufficient. But the total cost for new road has ballooned during the past few years from \$15 million to \$36 million.

“We have not taken our foot off the accelerator on the New Canada Road project,” Walker said. “We’re still exploring additional grant funding opportunities because our latest cost estimates were so high.”

On Thursday, the commission unanimously approved submitting an application with TDOT for the 2024 Statewide Partnership Program, which could help cover costs related to Phase 2 of the New Canada Road project.

As a result of the escalating costs, the city decided earlier this year to break the project into two phases, and Harrell hopes to have Phase 1 out for bid this fall.

TOPICS

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Michael Waddell is a native Memphian with more than 20 years of professional writing and editorial experience, working most recently with The Daily News and High Ground News.
