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Changes to N.C. 24-27 shelved by planners

By Matt Irvin, Staff Writer

Sunday, February 11, 2007 — The controversy of rerouting a state highway through Norwood and southern parts of Montgomery County has come to a close.

The Rocky River Rural Planning Organization (RPO) Thursday night decided to leave the planned expansion of N.C. 24-27 as originally planned.

The RPO decided at a meeting in Marshville to continue with plans for a bypass, widening U.S. 52 to four lanes and building a connector road for the Interstate 73-74 corridor to Norwood.

"Montgomery County said they are not interested in the proposal (the redesignation)," said . "We ran it up a flag pole to see if it would fly, it appears as if it won't" said North Carolina Board of Transportation member Larry Helms.

"What may have been a good idea on the Stanly County side - people on other side (Montgomery County) are not going to play ball. It is a moot point. They are not interested - it is a dead issue."

The RPO came to a agreement that it would support a bypass around Norwood and have a four-lane connector road to the existing N.C.24-27 to connect with I 73-74.

Martha Sue Hall, Albemarle's representative to the RPO and city councilmember, made the motion to leave N.C. 24-27 as planned and not realign the road as proposed at an earlier meeting in November.

"We encourage a bypass around Norwood and have connectivity of (N.C.) 731 to I-73-74," she said. "And to leave 24-27 completely alone."

Harold Thompson, Norwood's representative to the RPO, said the original idea began as a conversation with Barry Moose, the N.C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Division 10 engineer.

"It began at a lunch meeting with Barry," Thompson said. "We (officials of the town of Norwood) were concerned about U.S. 52 being removed from the TIP."

TIP is the Transportation Improvement Plan the group recommends to NCDOT for road improvements projects.

"We have been talking about getting (U.S.) 52 four-laned when we saw (U.S.) 52 being removed," Thompson said. "The council said we need to be connected to other places. Dwight (Smith, the Norwood town administrator) and I talked with Mr. Moose about our concerns."

Thompson said he hoped the RPO would pursue a bypass of Norwood and connect to Mt. Gilead.

RPO Chairman Tony Dennis , chairman of the Stanly County Board of Commissioners, said he will fight to get the project through and felt Anson County would support the proposal.

"We need it," he said.

Albemarle Mayor Elbert "Whit" Whitley, Jr. said he appreciated the RPO's vote and wanted to officially state the city's position on the road.

"I very much oppose the redesignation," he said. "I personally would support and feel council will support the new proposal.

"I know Norwood needs help. (U.S.) 52 would not only help Albemarle and Norwood. It would be

better situation in lieu of place of the redesignation
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