



Gazette photos by Buzz Orr

A vehicle passes the intersection of South Market Street, the route of Highway 1 through the town, and East Main Street in Solon last Tuesday.

Bypass worries

Super 2 road might hurt, help Solon, officials say

By James D. Wolf Jr.

News correspondent

SOLON — City officials hope the Iowa Department of Transportation takes to heart what residents say Monday night about proposals to build a Highway 1 bypass east of town.

The controversial bypass would be Iowa's first Super 2 highway — a wider two-lane highway with straightened curves and passing lanes. For Solon, the changes would mean either increasing the highway's width as it goes through town or bypassing the city altogether.

DOT plans call for construction to begin in 2005.

The city is sponsoring a 5:30 p.m. hearing at the Solon Junior-Senior High School for people to comment on plans to build the bypass.

"That's certainly a voice with a lot of constituents that the DOT couldn't ignore," Solon Mayor Merlin Studdt said. "If we can formulate some opinions and share them with the DOT, I think there's a larger impact with two governmental bodies."

Members of the Johnson County

FYI

A Super 2 highway differs from a two-lane highway:

■ **Limited access:** Driveways entering the highway are discouraged. Road-level intersections are at least a quarter-mile apart.

■ **Passing lanes:** For inclines where some vehicles slow; for stop signs and railroad crossings where trucks have trouble resuming speed.

■ **Left and right turn lanes:** These improvements to Highway 1 are estimated at \$35.8 million if the highway goes through Solon and \$32 million if there is a Solon bypass.

Board of Supervisors are to attend the meeting, along with Solon City Council members.

The meeting is in response to a public information meeting the DOT held April 27 in Solon. DOT maps displayed 11 possible bypasses for Solon and one option for widening the highway through town.

Even before that meeting ended, Studdt and council members were talk-

ing about holding a community hearing to identify the community's position and its favored routes.

With the DOT gathering information and opinions about the highway work, Solon should take advantage of the opportunity to speak up and influence the outcome, Studdt said.

The City Council invited supervisors to attend because Solon's concerns spread beyond its city limits, he said. "Certainly it serves their interest that we continue to have success with current economics and future growth and economics," Studdt said.

The bypass could affect county zoning, road care, the Sheriff's Department and other services the county provides, said Johnson County Supervisor Sally Stutsman.

"We understand that the road needs to be widened, and the traffic problems," Stutsman said. "But we want to make sure we know how it will affect the county."

If the state abandons the route through Solon in favor of a bypass, Stutsman and Studdt said they want to

■ Turn to 4: **Bypass**

Route options divide family farm

By James D. Wolf Jr.

SOLON — For Ron Holubar, this was supposed to be the payoff year for his hard work and investment on the family farm.

After the required three years of farming without chemical pesticides or fertilizers, Holubar got his 285 acres certified as organic. He can sell this year's harvest of oats, popcorn and tofu soybeans at premium prices.

However, on April 27, Holubar and his father, Melvin, found out that the farm that has been in their family for three generations since 1941 may be split down the middle if Highway 1 bypasses Solon.

For 20-year farmer Ron, that could end what he has been working for.

"This is the only job I have. I do not work off the farm, and I'm trying to stay on the farm," he said.

According to Iowa Department of Transportation maps, seven of the 12 Highway 1 bypass options proposed would cut two-thirds of his farm off from his house and the rest of the farm.

Holubar said the swath cutting through the farm would be 180 feet wide. He hasn't figured out how much of his prime farm ground the highway's length would take.



Ron Holubar stands on his farmland where a proposed Highway 1 bypass east of Solon would cut off two-thirds of his farm from his home.

"I guess I don't really want to . . . that would be more depressing," he said.

Organic farms also require 30-foot grass buffers next to neighboring land to avoid chemical drift and cross-pollination, he said. And buffers would be required around the high-

way, taking more land from farming.

Putting the highway through Holubar's land also could affect the organic certification, which would take another three years to achieve, he said.

In addition to those burdens,

■ Turn to 4: **Farm**