

Bypass: Project could start in 2003 or 2004

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know who will be responsible for that stretch of road.

Council member Rick Jedlicka said he wants Monday's meeting to focus on Solon's concerns. "This is one of the biggest things that'll happen to our town for the next 40 years," he said.

Each option has advantages and disadvantages, Jedlicka said. A west bypass would make a good intersection with Highway 382 but would conflict with Lake Macbride, a cemetery and subdivisions.

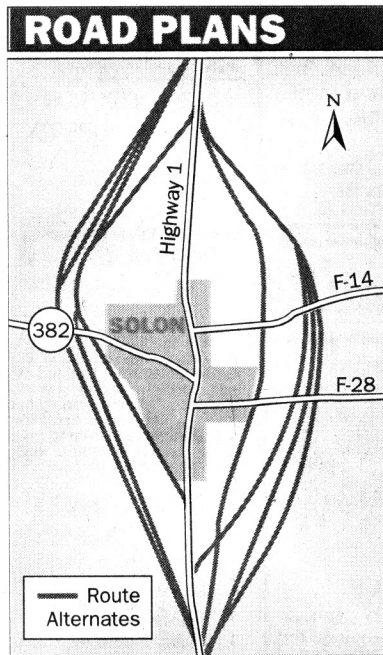
An east bypass would be cheaper, but Main Street would need to be extended to meet the highway so commuters could get to Solon's west side.

Employed in town by Ellison Insurance, Jedlicka said he is concerned what a bypass could do to local businesses.

Art Altman, of 2355 Jordan Creek Rd. NE, thinks it will kill businesses.

Altman, who owns Solon Car Wash and property along Highway 1, said adding turn lanes and a traffic light at the intersection of Highway 1 and Main Street will solve traffic problems in town. The Super 2 highway will thin business traffic through Solon, he said.

A Highway 218 bypass at Crawfordsville dried up that town, said Altman, who added



Gazette map

that he doesn't know many people in Solon who favor a bypass.

Ray Randall of RBD Development is against a bypass. Most of the suggested eastern bypasses would go through the Prairie Acres subdivision RBD Development started in 1996. No houses have been built yet, but are planned.

Randall said the proposed eastern bypasses are too close

to the original highway to effectively speed up traffic.

"That close, they might as well leave it where it's at," he said.

Plans for those eastern bypasses divide Ron Holubar's 285-acre organic farm, just north of Solon. "This road, wherever it goes, is going to affect somebody," he said.

Leaving Highway 1 through town would cause problems. Not only would some century-old houses along it be closer to traffic, some of the town's original business buildings at the intersection with Main Street would be removed.

DOT officials are interested in what Solon residents have to say, said Lee Benfield, DOT transportation center planner in Cedar Rapids. "I'm looking forward to the outcome of that meeting," he said.

Benfield said input from Solon officials, residents and surveys probably will yield three alternatives: one through town, one for a western bypass and one for an eastern bypass.

The DOT commission likely will not meet about those alternatives until October 2000, Benfield said. Pending a DOT decision, the state could start buying land in 2003 or 2004, he said.

Farm: Farm certified organic

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dividing the land would create more work for Holubar, whose only help is from his father during planting and harvesting.

"It's just going to be a whole lot more difficult to go out and do the 'back 40,'" Holubar said. Right now, he can move his equipment and bring in the crops without worrying about highway traffic.

Splitting the land also would make the necessary weed control machinery almost useless. Holubar said the machinery needs square fields to be effective. It cannot reach into diagonal points.

Besides affecting business, a Highway 1 bypass would change the life he and his family — wife Mary and their four children — enjoy now.

"You might not be able to put

in dollar signs the inconvenience of not being able to have your kids get on their bikes and come out and give their father a pop," he said.

The children, at ages 9, 8, 5 and 9 months, are "a little young to be doing field work," Holubar said.

If some of the children decide to follow in Holubar's footsteps,

"I figure I'll be 80-something by the time it turns into a century farm, and I'd like to keep it intact," he said.

Even if Highway 1 divides his farm, Holubar plans to stay with farming. "You have to be addicted or you find something easier," he said. With organic farming, "the rewards are there if you're patient enough."