

LOCAL

Will Dave Lyle finally get its extension?

York County to make a new push for the \$225 million project

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT

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If you drive down Dave Lyle Boulevard today on your way out of Rock Hill, heading past Interstate 77, past the Rock Hill Galleria, you'll eventually discover one of the city's main thoroughfares ends abruptly in a woody dead end.

Officials have hoped to extend the boulevard for years, with plans dating back at least 15 years to turn Dave Lyle into a major connector with U.S. 521 in Lancaster County, S.C.

Economic studies have shown the roughly 9-mile extension could have a major impact on the area, in terms of jobs, commerce and tax revenue, if only someone could pick up the estimated \$225 million price tag.

Now York County is hoping to make a new push to finish the extension, if it can secure funding from a combination of sources that can get the project off the ground.

"The next step is to see what's out there," said York County Manager Bill Shanahan. "I'll look at everything, whether it's state, federal, non-governmental... All we can do is examine the possibilities."

Dave Lyle Boulevard emerged as a regional priority earlier this month during a county government workshop when county, municipal and other community leaders determined the project would be a boon to the area. Shanahan cited projections of 8,000 retail jobs in the shops and businesses that would spring up along the extension, and an estimated \$235 million in annual sales tax income.

"This will create access to more land for retail space," said York County Councilman William "Bump" Roddey, an advocate of building



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Officials have long wanted to turn Dave Lyle Boulevard into a major connector.

the extension. "Some people are put off by that 200-million-dollar-plus price tag, but we'll see all that come back in sales and property taxes."

The potential growth of the boulevard east of Rock Hill has been on the drawing board since 1998, when the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank approved \$55.6 million for the project. But the plan was mothballed when it became clear the actual cost of construction would be much higher. Money approved for the project was instead used to help fund projects in the original Pennies for Progress program.

Pennies for Progress is York County's 17-year-old road construction program. It is funded by a 1 percent sales tax approved by voters in three separate referendums.

Several efforts have been made in recent years to revive the Dave Lyle Extension project. York and Lancaster counties made a joint request for state funding to the infrastructure bank in 2009 and also sought, un-

successfully, to receive federal stimulus funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Catawba Indian Nation, alongside whose reservation the extension would run, has separately sought federal funding for the project.

State Rep. Ralph Norman, R-Rock Hill, thinks a strong economic development case can be made for state funding. The extension would be a quick route for Lancaster County residents to reach the interstate and jobs surrounding the new Giti Tire plant in Chester. A longer Dave Lyle Boulevard could also feed into I-485 surrounding the Charlotte metro area.

Norman also said at the workshop that the timing may be better now for Dave Lyle Boulevard to get state funding because the political climate in Columbia has changed since House Speaker Bobby Harrell suspended himself from office earlier this month.

The suspension came after Harrell was indicted on several criminal charges that allege he misused cam-

paign contributions for personal expenses.

"Under the last speaker, most transportation money went to Charleston and Greenville, almost exclusively," Norman said. "It would not have been possible to make the case (for Dave Lyle) to the State Infrastructure Bank or state transportation officials."

It may take time for supporters to identify funding sources for the project, but some of the groundwork has already been laid. Last year, York County Council approved a land use plan that would permit a mixture of commercial and residential development along the proposed extension route, pending approval of the roadway being built.

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NCDOT TO HOLD PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSIONS
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The N.C. Department of Transportation is holding public information sessions for the I-77 Managed Lanes project in Irrede congestion and improve travel time to N.C. 150 (Exit 36), using managed

The sessions are scheduled for:

- Wednesday, Oct. 8: Charles M
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.
- Thursday, Oct. 9: North Meckle
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Citizens attending the sessions will meet the team from I-77 Mobility Part operating and maintaining the project, learn more about the project's timeline and dynamic pricing. NCDOT representative comments.

The sessions will be held open house

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