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Falls City Hwy Meeting Draws Crowd

(KLZA)-- The Nebraska Department of Roads hosted an open house to provide information to the public on a proposed project involving nearly three miles of U.S. Highway 73 in Falls City and north.

The proposed improvements include milling and resurfacing the existing roadway and shoulders. Additional improvements would include stabilizing the surfaced shoulders, concrete repairs, ADA curb ramp construction and would change the highway from 7th Street north to 19th Street from the current 4-lane configuration to a three lane design including a north and south driving lane and a center two-way left-turn lane.

A large crowd, including from the rural area turned out, and most, were not in favor of the three lane design.

Tom Goodbarn, District 1 Engineer with the Nebraska Department of Roads and several other Road Department personnel were on hand to explain the design to those in attendance. Goodbarn was well aware that nearly all those in attendance were not in favor of the plan. Goodbarn said the three-lane design is being done all over the state and they work very well. He noted in Falls City the volume of truck traffic and proximity of businesses is concerning to people. Goodbarn said comments heard at the meeting and written comments received will be considered.

Goodbarn explained with the rough pavement condition of Highway 73, there are concerns a mill and overlay project would not last as long as they would like. Under current rules, NDOR is able to put down three lanes of new concrete, which should last 20-30 years with only minor maintenance.

He went on to explain a three-lane highway with a center turn lane flows easier, allowing traffic to separate out, not stopping behind everyone waiting to make a left turn. He said it also allows more room on the outside for larger traffic.

The City of Falls City has water lines that run under Highway 73 as well as some gas and sewer lines that cross under the street. The exact age of those lines are not known but in the past several years there have been a number of expensive water line breaks under the highway. Goodbarn says if the highway is rebuilt, the City could work in partnership with the Department of Roads to replace those lines. If a mill and overlay is done, the city would be responsible for tearing out and putting back the roadway when they have leaks or need to replace utility service.

The proposed project comes with an estimated price tag of \$2.9-million and would be paid for from state and federal funding sources. To overlay the highway the cost is estimated at roughly \$1.9-million.

From 19th Street north, where there are medians in the highway plans call to leave those medians in place.

If you could not attend the meeting Tuesday, public comment sheets are available for you to fill out on the Nebraska Department of Roads website: <http://www.transportation.nebraska.gov/>

