

Feb 10, 2005
 Statement
 Enterprise

Thruway project to be analyzed

By Nicole Fay Barr

The Thruway Authority has settled on one of its many proposals to improve the Albany Corridor — it will reconstruct the Thruway mainline between exits 23 and 24.

The project will include repaving the highway and reconstructing the road's drainage facilities. Other ideas to be evaluated include adding a travel lane in each direction.

through the backyards of many McKownville residents.

Reeb also had questions about where the additional lanes will go and when all this will happen.

This week, *The Enterprise* asked these questions of Thruway spokesperson Sarah Kampf. Information on the project can be found on the Thruway's website, she said, and other questions can be asked at next week's meeting.

Reconstructing exits 23 and 24.

A meeting will be held on Feb. 15 to inform the public about the environmental scope of the project and to receive public input.

"Scoping" is part of completing a project's Environmental Impact Statement. It gives the public a chance to comment on the purpose and need for reconstruction; to discuss alternatives that could be considered; and to raise environmental concerns.

The meeting will be at Saint Sophia's Orthodox Church, at 440 Whitehall Road, in Albany. It will begin at 6:30 p.m., with a formal presentation by the Thruway Authority at 7 p.m.

The Thruway Authority began developing ways to improve the highway in 2003. Traffic increases each year, Thruway officials have said, and parts of the 50-year-old Thruway are already handling their maximum capacity of cars at certain times in the day.

Members of the McKownville Improvement Association and other Guilderland residents have been vocal about their concerns with Thruway improvements from the beginning.

Of reconstructing the mainline, McKownville Improvement Association President Don Reeb says he's worried about whether sound barriers will be put in place during and after construction. The Thruway runs virtually

Kampf did say, however, that this project is part of several proposals to improve the Albany Corridor. While this project does not involve exits 23 or 24, other ideas to improve the Thruway and exits 21A to 25A are still in the air, she said.

For Exit 24 in McKownville, which links traffic from the Thruway to the Northway, to Interstate 90, or to Western Avenue in Guilderland, four proposals have been discussed; these were narrowed from 15 ideas. All four proposals would expand the toll plaza and move the Thruway ramps further west.

One proposal is to simply move the Thruway ramps west of Rapp Road. The other three proposals involve creating separate E-ZPass ramps.

E-ZPass is a system where drivers attach an electronic device to their windshields. The device is scanned as the vehicle goes through entrance and exit tollbooths on the Thruway. The driver only has to slow down to pass through the tollbooth and is billed monthly for the toll charges.

One of these three concepts is called the "flyover concept." However, all three involve some type of extra flyover ramp in McKownville, to which residents have voiced opposition and have drafted their own ideas.