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Public weighs in on U.S. Route 30 bypass options

Northwest by north, or south?

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BY CHRISTI WARREN cwarren@saukvalley.com
800-798-4085, ext. 5521

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MORRISON – More than 300 people showed up to the Odell Public Library in Morrison on Thursday night to talk to engineers and review plans for the proposed U.S. Route 30 bypass project.

The two proposed options, which have taken a number of different forms since the plan was introduced, are routes that would bypass Morrison to the north and south.

Many residents are concerned that the proposal, which will expand Route 30 into a four-lane highway, will take away business from Morrison.

Phil Renkes, who was at the open house Thursday night, lives in Morrison and is part of the Morrison Area Development Corp. He has followed the project since it first was proposed years ago, and sees that it could be a good thing for the town.

Renkes said that he sees that, in the short term, it might look like a bad thing, but residents should be thinking long-term.

"You see towns our size or a little larger maybe that have added a lot of industry, and why? Because they're on the interstate," he said. "Take DeWitt, Iowa. DeWitt was a small town with very little industry. Now you drive by on a four-lane; they've had a lot of growth."

And, for the record, he prefers the southern route.

Project leaders, though, don't have a preference, which is why they're asking for the public's input on the matter.

Becky Marruffo, a project engineer with the Illinois Department of Transportation,

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said that the next step in the project will be to take into consideration the public's comments, and hopefully reach a decision in the next 6 months on which bypass route is the best option – or, if no construction is the best option.

She said roadwork likely wouldn't begin for years, though.

Residents may submit their thoughts until Nov. 10 via the project's website www.idot.illinois.gov/projects/us-30-fulton-to-rock-falls; on the phone at 866-768-8330; and by regular mail: write to Paul A. Loete, IDOT, 819 Depot Ave., Dixon, IL 61021.

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