

Bridge may be built by 2007

To help end the traffic crunch in Folsom, agencies work with the city to expedite construction.

By Jamie Francisco -- Bee Staff Writer

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Relief for commuters inconvenienced by the Folsom Dam Road closure may arrive by 2007 -- two years sooner than expected.

The news came Tuesday night as the Folsom City Council reviewed time lines for a new bridge below Folsom Dam. The council also heard concerns about Mather Airport noise and appointed members to a new veterans recognition committee.

Officials initially predicted a new \$66 million bridge would be finished by 2009, but the agencies involved are working to shorten the time by two years, said Rich Lorenz, city public works director.

To alleviate traffic in Folsom neighborhoods, the city is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and federal Bureau of Reclamation to expedite construction of the bridge. Its exact location is still being determined, but it would link Folsom-Auburn Road to East Natoma Street, Lorenz said.

The bridge is part of a deal brokered by Rep. Robert Matsui, D-Sacramento, and Rep. John Doolittle, R-Rocklin. Rep. Doug Ose, who represents the area, supported the project.

While \$66 million has been allocated for a new four-lane bridge, potential cost overruns may have to be shouldered by the city of Folsom and surrounding areas, said Will Kempton, assistant city manager. Commuters from El Dorado and Placer counties relied on Folsom Dam Road as a thoroughfare before it was closed last year as a security measure.

Until the bridge opens, businesses and residents will continue to suffer, said Councilman Jeff Starsky, who urged for an even quicker completion of the project.

"It's still a long time," Starsky said.

Along with a new bridge, the City Council heard a presentation on the Mather Airport Master Plan, delivered by Rob Leonard, assistant director of the Sacramento County Airport System.

About six residents expressed concerns about nighttime noise from cargo planes interrupting their sleep. Several of the residents pleaded for the council to take legal action against proposed runway expansion plans.

"They're coming in at all hours at night," said Charles Coalson, a resident of Folsom's Broadstone development.

"We need something done. We need your help. Please, put a stop to this."

Councilman Andy Morin assured residents that the city is working to find solutions to the noise issue.

"This is a dangerous threat to quality of life," Morin said.

In other matters, the council voted 4-0, with Councilwoman Kerri Howell absent, to appoint seven veterans to the Ad-Hoc Veterans Recognition Committee.

The group, along with members from the Parks and Recreation and Arts and Cultural commissions, will advise the council on designs for veterans memorials. Mayor Steve Miklos proposed forming the veterans group in response to a controversy surrounding the future site of the main library, which would be built in a field dedicated to slain Vietnam War veteran Marshall C. Farley. The group will meet soon and is expected to present ideas at the Feb. 24 City Council meeting