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No set path on road work

Potential expansion of West Broadway reveals split among candidates

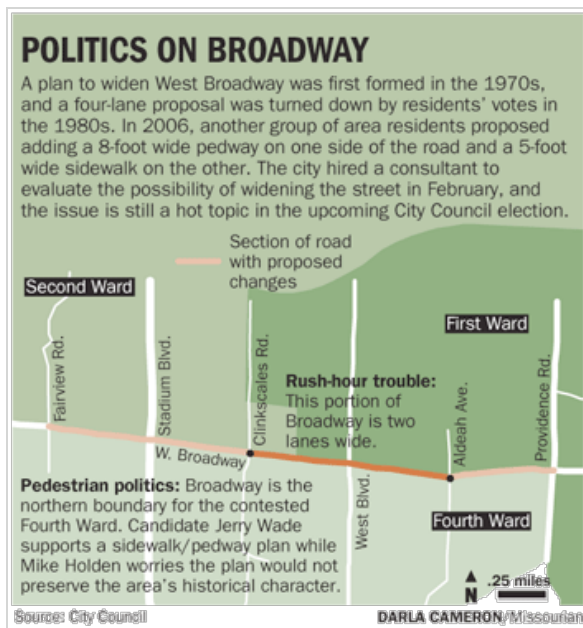
BY LINDSAY TOLER

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As the City Council elections draw closer, voters have tightened their focus onto West Broadway, especially between Aldeah Avenue and Clinkscales Road, where rush hour bottlenecks have left residents clamoring for an expansion of the two-lane section into a four-lane road.

The city has initiated a traffic study with Crawford, Bunte and Brammeier, a traffic and transportation engineering company based in St. Louis, to evaluate the cost and benefits of an expansion of the road. For those running for the council, the dilemma comes in balancing the historic character of the West Broadway neighborhood and alleviating traffic patterns for the city.

Mayor Darwin Hindman said he kept his focus on improving non-motorized transportation as he considered plans for Broadway's improvement. He said he would like to keep Broadway as a two-lane road with turn lanes at intersections and focus on bicycle lanes, a pedway, a walkway and landscaping.



"It will preserve the present ambiance," Hindman said.

Some of the candidates say they want to see the results of the traffic study before any decisions about Broadway are made.

"I will be interested in the traffic study," mayoral candidate John Clark said in an e-mail. He also said he wanted to see the questions and data given to the consultants to check for assumptions and confirm that the study is not "biased toward more lanes."

Third Ward candidate Karl Skala agreed a study is needed.

"You have to demonstrate need first," Skala said. "Just because

you widen a street doesn't mean you relieve traffic.

Often times it increases."

His opponent Gary Kespohl said while some of the land along West Broadway would accommodate an expansion, he said he thinks the area between West Boulevard and Clinkscales Road just wouldn't have room.

"No sense in doing part of it unless they can do the whole thing," Kespohl said.

The area of West Broadway that would be widened serves as the northern boundary of the Fourth Ward, where Jerry Wade and Mike Holden are running for a spot on the City Council.

Both candidates agree that the street should not be expanded

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to four lanes, but should be equipped with turn lanes to alleviate traffic congestion. Both also agree that the electrical lines should be buried to protect residents.

However, the candidates differ on how to balance safe transportation for pedestrians with maintaining the area's historic character.

Wade said he supports adding a 5-foot sidewalk on one side of the road and an 8-foot pedway on the other.

"It is time to do the improvements on West Broadway," Wade said at an informal meeting of residents of West Broadway and the surrounding area on Sunday afternoon. The group met to discuss a proposal for a pedway along Broadway from Garth to West Boulevard. Wade referred the group to his Web site, wade4council.com, which lists four goals for the improved street, including that the "street will be a safe place for pedestrians, including people with wheelchairs and handicapped scooters, and cyclists." Wade said that those four guidelines would be the principles along which he would guide his final decision.

Holden said an 8-foot pedway would not preserve the area's character, and that he plans to focus on repairing existing sidewalks. He said the scenic houses and large trees along the road are a view people who return to Columbia expect to see.

"I don't want to see us cut five feet into people's yards just to build a new pedway," Holden said.

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