

# ENQUIRER JOURNAL

## Stallings council supports route 18a

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**STALLINGS**

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The Stallings Town Council Monday flipped on its support for one of two proposed routes for the Monroe bypass, despite stiff opposition from a board member and Mayor Lynda Paxton.

Three members voted to back route 18a, a course that has the bypass cutting through several residential neighborhoods near Stallings Elementary, dropping another path, dubbed "Option 2," that veered farther east and would have potentially hit businesses harder along U.S. Highway 74.

"It's not like we're Charlotte and can afford to lose that highway property," said Town Councilwoman Barbara Anne Price, who voted to support 18a.

Price voted with council members Al Graham and Thelma Privette, while Wyatt Dunn voted in opposition and Renee Hartis abstained from a vote because she said she couldn't make up her mind.

Councilman Mark Franza was absent, but the board ignored Hartis' request to take the vote when Franza returned.

The town is making a recommendation to the N.C. Turnpike Authority, the state agency planning the toll road, but NCTA makes the final suggestion to federal highway officials.

The road is expected to be open in 2013.

The Town Council supported Option 2 in 2003, fearing 18a will venture too close to the elementary and residential development, but a group of industry leaders rallied against the second option Monday, arguing it would cost Stallings thousands in tax dollars because dozens of businesses would be forced to move.

Some said it would also have a major impact on the nearby Forest Park subdivision.

"If we move out of Stallings or Union County, we may lose some employees because of the longer commute," said Todd McGee, vice president of nearby manufacturer McGee Corporation, who claims Option 2 would disable employee traffic around his plant and his loading bays.

Others, like Lisa Swiceberger, a Forest Park resident, said traffic will hurt her neighborhood. "I feel I have no representation," she said.

Town Manager Brian Matthews estimated Option 2, in a worst-case scenario, could cost Stallings more than \$52,000 in tax revenue, or about 1.7 percent of the town's revenue, by impacting commercial and residential development.

Option 18a would likely cost more than \$26,000, Matthews said.

Option 18a has drawn significant opposition from locals who say it will endanger local schoolchildren, and Ernie Vanderwalt, a representative for grassroots group Citizens Against Route 18, reaffirmed that stance Monday.

“It is not good for Stallings, period,” he said.

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