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## Council not sold on Parkway plan Proposed reduction of lanes a concern

By JEFF CULL, [jcull@news-press.com](mailto:jcull@news-press.com)

The Community Redevelopment Agency's consultants were in town this week pleading their case for a reconfigured Cape Coral Parkway through the downtown.

And by the reaction of city council members, they still have some convincing to do.

"I've got a lot of concerns," said Councilman Tim Day of proposed changes to the city's main east-west roadway in south Cape Coral. "It'll be a hard sell for me."

The design for the parkway, called "innovative" by the CRA's traffic engineer Rick Hall, calls for the center median on the six-lane road — four traffic lanes and two parking lanes — to be removed through the downtown area and replaced on either side of four through-traffic lanes. The side medians would protect a single access lane and on-street parking.

Hall said that about 70 percent of the improvements made to the parkway about five years ago could be saved and incorporated in the new design. Hall estimated the new road would cost between \$1 million and \$2 million.

The CRA and its consultants argued that the proposal is the best balance of meeting cross-town traffic with the need to provide a pedestrian-friendly downtown.

"We're looking at trying to solve a number of issues," said Chet Hunt, executive director of the CRA. "We need the carrying capacity of the road through downtown. We also want walkability in the downtown."

But Councilman Paul Asfour questioned how people in the fast-growing southwest will get through the city to the Cape Coral bridge, the Cape's quickest access to south Fort Myers, in only two lanes.

"I don't see a balance," Asfour said. "As the southwest continues to develop it's going to be a problem. It's a problem now. I want to see some alternatives."

Victor Dover of Dover, Kohl & Partners, the CRA's planning firm, countered that running six lanes of traffic through the downtown would be "disastrous."

"It would be difficult to get the urban setting that the CRA wants," he said.

Other concerns voiced by council members and citizens in e-mails to council or letters to the editor include: traffic speeding in opposite directions without the safety of a center median; no way to make left turns; and difficulty crossing a four-lane road.



**PARISIAN PLAN:** Cape Coral Parkway as it's expected to look if reconfigured into a Parisian boulevard motif. *Dover, Kohl & Partners/Special to The News-Press*

*Click on image to enlarge.*

However, a number of council members like the Parisian boulevard idea.

"I like the plan," said Councilman A.J. Boyd. "Anything that will increase pedestrian-friendly business traffic in the downtown interests me."

Councilman Richard Stevens agreed.

"I think what they propose is good," he said.

Hall said that traffic would move smoothly in four lanes through the downtown, even at 35 mph, with the coordinating of traffic lights and other minor modifications.

"This is a revolutionary concept," Hall said. "It's startling and new, but it's a good plan."

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