

State analyzes intersection's issues

Officials: Whether McDonald's-Walgreens plan passes or not, roads need work

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State transportation officials said that it doesn't make much difference whether a McDonald's restaurant and Walgreens are built at a busy corner or something else goes there - road improvements are still needed.

The town council met last week with a developer and officials with the N.C. Department of Transportation to learn more about the proposed development at the corner of U.S. 158 and N.C. 66.

State officials said that Walkertown could approve or reject the rezoning request to allow the businesses. But they said that if some other development were proposed on the corner, similar road changes would be required.

Kelley-Austin Properties of Winston-Salem is requesting the rezoning for the McDonald's and Walgreens. The businesses would be on the southwest corner of the intersection, across U.S. 158 from the Sheetz convenience store.

The town's planning board will hear the request April 3. The town council would consider the request sometime after that. State officials will require the developer to put an extended middle lane on N.C. 66 and a raised concrete barrier dividing the eastbound and westbound lanes on that road in front of the corner businesses.

The developer is proposing to take on the added expense of extending the middle lane to Whitehall Village, a proposed housing development, where land clearing and other work are taking place.

State officials said that would be a welcome addition to the roadwork they are requiring.

One of the most controversial aspects of the proposal has been the DOT's decision to allow U-turn access to the corner lot for traffic that is eastbound on U.S. 158.

"This intersection is known as dead-man's crossing," Council Member Brenda Mabe said. "This intersection is so dangerous that I don't accept a U-turn for any reason."

John Rhyne, a district engineer with the DOT, said that the westbound lane at the intersection would be made wider to accommodate the U-turn traffic at the intersection.

State officials said that the only potential for conflict would be between U-turners and those on N.C. 66 wanting to turn right - toward Winston-Salem - from N.C. 66. But those drivers would have to stop for a red light, giving the U-turners the right of way.

