

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

October 22, 1987

Des Peres Road Improvements Still On Shelf

By Jim Dustin
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

With all the attention on plans to rebuild Manchester Road in Des Peres, plans for another major artery — Des Peres Road — have been lost in the dust.

But the Board of Aldermen is going to have to make some major decisions about improvements to Des Peres Road before the end of the year. One of those decisions could mean giving up a \$500,000 grant.

Other decisions might involve negotiations with the state Highways and Transportation Department, the county Department of Highways and Traffic, adjacent property owners, real estate developers and possibly the federal government.

At its north end within the city, Des Peres Road intersects with Manchester Road. Manchester is a state highway scheduled for major rebuilding. That project will move Des Peres Road 1,200 feet to the west so one of the debates the board is having is how to reconnect with the existing road.

At the south end, Des Peres Road intersects Dougherty Ferry Road, a connector road that the county wants to rebuild and add to the county's Arterial Road System.

And in the middle, Des Peres Road is hilly and narrow. The city has asked developers to cooperate with plans to correct safety problems with the road. Developers are apparently agreeable to that but are awaiting direction from the city.

At one time, Des Peres had planned to completely rebuild its namesake road. In 1981, the community obtained a \$500,000 Federal Aid Urban grant to rebuild the stretch from Manchester to Dougherty Ferry.

In 1983, after completing engineering plans, the city held a public hearing on the project. People who lived along the road objected to the planned improvements and the increased traffic they feared would result. The project was kept alive, but shelved.

"The Missouri State Highways and Transportation Department annually inquires on the status of the project and has asked in 1987 that we either move forward or formally abandon the project," City

Administrator Douglas J Harms and Denis Knock, city engineer and director of public works, said in a recent report to the board.

Traffic has increased on Des Peres Road to the point where it now carries more than 11,000 cars per day. Harms feels that any FAU-financed project would require that the two-lane road be widened to four lanes.

"That's simply not acceptable to the residents, nor to the elected officials of Des Peres," Harms said.

He reported that feeling to the Board of Aldermen on Oct. 12 and didn't get any disagreement. The board then authorized Knock to seek proposals from engineering firms on improvements between Beaver Dam Drive and Westledge Drive.

The developer of Westledge subdivision has agreed to add turning lanes to Des Peres Road to help drivers entering and leaving the new subdivision, but Harms said the City needs to tell the developer where to put the improvements.

"We're under some time constraints in that we need to tell him by spring what we want him to do. We have to be fair; he's doing his part, and we have to do ours," Harms said.

Harms and Knock have suggested that a hill be leveled and that shoulders be added to the road and a sidewalk installed along the west side.

As for the south end of the road, the city is waiting for information from the county on where the new Dougherty Ferry Road is going to go.

That is an \$8.5 million project financed by a bond issue passed by county voters last November. Now, Dougherty Ferry slips between Des Peres' Sugar Creek Park and Green Briar Country Club. Harms said that some of the new road alignments he has seen would put a new road right through the park.

The problem with that is the park land was purchased with the aid of federal funds. "One of the conditions with a federally funded park is if you use it for any other purpose, you have to replace the land with another park," Harms said.

He said he hopes that the county will decide before Jan. 1 on the Dougherty Ferry alignment. That decision will evidently be made without much input from the city.

“The Board of Aldermen has been very careful not to take a position because we don’t have enough information to make a judgment,” Harms said.

Meanwhile, it is apparently solely up to the Board of Aldermen as to how to proceed with a connection to a Des Peres Road that will be relocated by Manchester Road improvements.

PIC Investment Corp. controls the land southeast of the Des Peres - Manchester intersection over which a

relocated Des Peres Road must travel. Harms said that PIC has agreed to build the new road and give it to the city if Des Peres approves two of three alternative routes.

The third alternative splits the PIC tract in half, and the developers were apparently unhappy with that plan. One of the two remaining alternatives has been endorsed by the city’s Planning and Zoning Commission, and the remaining alternative has been endorsed by the city’s traffic consultant.

The Board of Aldermen had been scheduled to vote on one of the three options next Monday, but is expected to postpone action again.