

## Manchester Road plans pit cities against each other

By Phyllis Hyman  
Journal staff writer

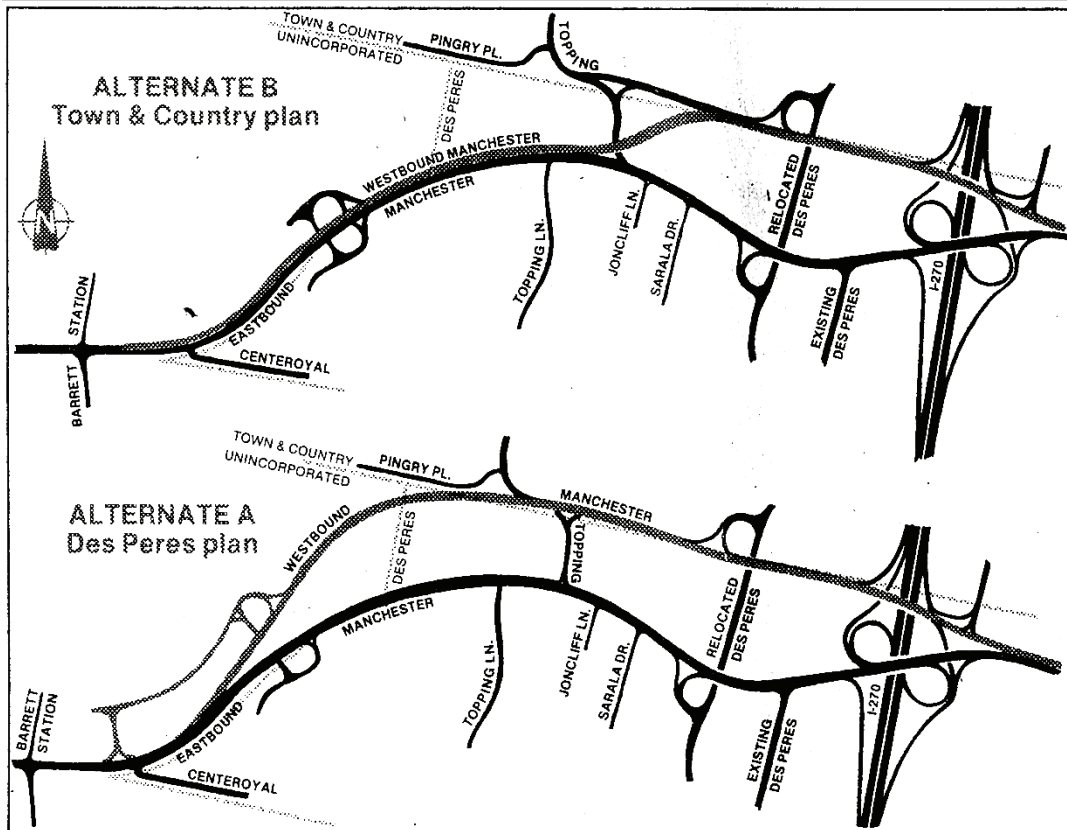
It was the city of Des Peres against the city of Town and Country and hired consultant against hired consultant Thursday night as residents cheered on their favorite side during a hearing on Manchester Road improvements.

The Missouri Highway and Transportation Department hearing was held in St. Louis County Council chambers to debate and explain two improvement plans under consideration, both of which are designed to help alleviate traffic congestion on Manchester Road between I-270 and Barrett Station Road.

The debate over the two plans has turned into a debate between Des Peres and Town and Country.

Officials and residents of each city back a different plan, although everyone, including highway department officials, agree either plan would help alleviate traffic congestion. In both plans, the existing Manchester Road from Ballas Road west to Barrett Station Road will become the four eastbound lanes of a new, divided, eight-lane Manchester Road. Four new lanes will be built to carry westbound traffic. The two plans differ on where the eastbound and westbound lanes of the divided roadway should be brought back together. Des Peres officials support Alternate A, which would bring the lanes back together just east of Barrett Station Road. Town and Country officials support Alternate B, which would bring the lanes back together just west of Topping Road.

### Manchester Road Improvement



Des Peres' plan would relocate seven residences and 13 businesses and the highway department would need 26 acres of right-of-way.

Town and Country's plan would relocate five residences and 22 businesses and the highway department would need 23 acres of right-of-way. Based on current land prices, and without taking any land dedication into account, the highway department estimates the Des Peres plan would cost \$34 million.

Town and Country's plan is estimated to cost about \$31 million.

Under Town and Country's plan, the eastbound and westbound lanes would be at different levels and a retaining wall would be required. No such wall is required in Des Peres' plan. Frank Kriz, district engineer with the state highway department, said a decision on the plans should be ready by late summer or early fall. Des Peres officials are hoping the decision is for Alternate A. "It is certainly the most attractive plan, the least disruptive to our citizens and the business community and by far the safest for the community at large," said Des Peres Mayor Shirley Sweet.

Lonnie E. Haefner of L.E. Haefner Enterprises Inc., a traffic consultant hired by Des Peres, said Des Peres' plan would provide better access to local businesses because it doesn't require a retaining wall. Town and Country Mayor Alan Wheeler said Des Peres' plan would "at best diminish, at worst destroy" residential homes in the city of Town and Country—homes that would be within 100 feet of the westbound lanes of Manchester Road under Des Peres' plan.

Town and Country's plan meets the traffic requirements of the road and yet is "substantially less expensive" and does not extend commercial development any farther west, Wheeler said.

Jon Omgvig of Campbell Design, land use consultants hired by the Town and Country, said Des Peres' plan

would intensify commercial development, while Town and Country's would inhibit it.

Des Peres' plan would create a bigger "island" between the eastbound and westbound lanes and would allow access from both the north and the south, thus encouraging commercial development, he said.

It also would encourage commercial development of land to the north of westbound Manchester Road, he said.

But Town and Country's plan would limit the size of the island and reduce the intensity of development, he said. The end result would be less traffic on Manchester Road, he said.

Des Peres City Administrator Doug Harms dismissed claims that Des Peres' plan would create more commercial development.

Almost all the land along Manchester Road from Des Peres Road to Barrett Station Road already is zoned commercial, so the same amount of commercial development will exist which ever plan goes through, Harms said.

Norm Roden of N.C. Roden & Associates Inc., traffic consultants hired by Town and Country, said the Town and Country plan would be safer and would move traffic more efficiently because it would allow only right turns, leaving three through-traffic lanes. Des Peres' plan would allow both right and left turns, leaving only two through lanes, Roden said.

The comments and documents gathered at Thursday's hearing, as well as letters and statements received by the highway department's district office by June 27, 'will be sent to the Highway Commission in Jefferson City.

The commission will decide which plan to use; commissioners also could elect to do nothing—an option opposed by the highway department.