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LOCAL RESIDENTS FORM COMMUNITY COALITION AND LAUNCH WEBSITE TO ACCOMPANY LAWSUIT AGAINST ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (ALDOT), FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA) AND NOW CITY OF DECATUR OVER \$18 MILLION BRIDGE FOR A DEFUNCT “BASS PRO” DEVELOPMENT

Decatur Added to Lawsuit -- City Plans to Spend More Than \$4 Million of Local Money on Hwy. 20 Interchange.

Landowners Form Re:Vision 20|65 Coalition and Launch Website ReVision2065.org to share information with the public and gather support of local residents, farmers and commuters.

The website outlines the flaws of the existing plan and offers alternatives, asking the City of Decatur, ALDOT, and FHWA to Re-Engage with affected stakeholders, to complete a Revision of the process which should lead to the development of a better plan for the entire Highway 20 Corridor from Wilson Street to I-65, and to help create and promote a New Vision for the Limestone County portion of Decatur through 2065 and beyond.

DECATUR, Ala., Apr. 8 – A group of local landowners, who filed suit against the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in February, announced today that they have added the City of Decatur as a defendant in the lawsuit based on evidence that came from a subpoena to the City. Landowners and others have formed a community coalition called Re:Vision 20|65 to fight a proposed \$18 million bridge over Highway 20 in eastern Decatur.

The landowners' initial lawsuit was originally filed against ALDOT and FHWA, but they added the City of Decatur after learning more about the role played by the city in championing this project. In late March, amid the coronavirus crisis, the city filed a condemnation action to force the landowners to sell their property for the construction of this project. This left the landowners only two options: to try to protect taxpayers, their land and the area from what they allege is an invalid, unvetted and ineffective plan or simply to be stuck with the plan.

Re:Vision 20|65 has launched a website (ReVision2065.org) and a Facebook page (facebook.com/revision2065). These sites will share information with the public on how the defendants in the lawsuit followed a deeply flawed process and specifically violated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) related to the \$18.3 million planned interchange in the Decatur city limits just west of Huntsville and I-65.

“The coalition calls for our state and local elected officials to Re-Engage with affected stakeholders, to complete a Revision of the process in hopes of developing a better, holistic plan for the entire Highway 20 corridor from Wilson Street to I-65, and to help create and promote a New Vision and an attractive front door for Decatur beginning at I-65,” said John Eyster, a trustee of one of the plaintiffs and a founding member of the coalition.

The ReVision2065.org website outlines the coalition's case for public re-engagement, citing the need to protect the future of the region, protect the rights of the farmers and landowners, protect the safety of local neighbors and citizens, and respect the legal process required for these types of federally funded projects.

“The design of this intersection will help determine the future of thousands of acres of land. The current limited access highway plan tremendously limits options for what this area could be decades from now,” says the coalition website. “The City of Decatur used an invalid environmental process with limited public input to drive this project through the pipeline, and the illegitimate process led to a bad plan for the corridor and for the region.”

Re:Vision 20|65 invites the community to help create a vision for a “New Decatur” on the north side of the Tennessee River in the Limestone County portion of the city. “The current Highway 20 plan puts the area on a trajectory toward suburban sprawl and lower value development, however, there is an opportunity to design alternatives that get it right for a better future that benefits Decatur, Limestone County, North Alabama landowners, commuters and residents,” states the coalition website. One alternative suggested by the coalition, instead of the current overpass plan and making highway 20 limited access, is a six-lane parkway approach.

The website states that: “Six lane roads are safer, more accessible, more attractive and will increase capacity compared to the current highway or the proposed limited access approach. The value and appeal of the surrounding property would be much higher for homes and businesses, and a parkway would also provide multimodal options for pedestrians and cyclists to use the corridor through the increased connectivity of cross streets for local residential, retail, commercial and farming use.”

“We remain hopeful that Decatur’s mayor and City Council, the Alabama Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration will conduct a proper process, providing multiple design alternatives and showing the full impact of the implementation of this project throughout the corridor. After public input has been received with full knowledge of the various options and their implications, an informed decision can be made for a better plan that gets it right for everyone,” says the coalition.

The coalition has more than a dozen members fighting for Decatur’s future. Re:Vision 20|65 invites concerned citizens to join their effort, by signing up as a member of the coalition at revision2065.org/join.

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