

METRO

Study: Tollway would pay its way

But lack of details bothers some

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If they build it, they'll be able to pay for it.

That's the message Arvada officials received recently from a consultant hired to determine whether a tollway on the northwest edge of the city would be financially feasible.

In rough terms, the consultant told the City Council that a tollway could raise \$250 million in about the next two decades. That money, city officials said, could finance construction bonds and cover operating costs for the new road.

"That's good news. We know there is an option that can be financed," Arvada

Councilwoman Shelley Cook said Tuesday as residents from Jefferson County gathered to look at transportation issues in the northwest section of the county.

Arvada officials say the proposed Northwest Parkway in Broomfield, running between Interstate 25 and U.S. 36, would dump a troublesome amount of traffic at Arvada's door. The parkway is expected to be built by 2003.

Arvada's tollway would run along an undetermined route from Colorado 128 to Colorado 93, diverting traffic from the north around the city, Arvada officials have said.

But the city's consultant hasn't said

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how much traffic would travel the tollway, where it would go and what assumptions were used to come up with the recommendation that a tollway could be built. The consultant is expected to give the council more information on Monday.

That lack of information has left others skeptical.

One issue is whether building a tollway would improve the traffic flow throughout the northwest corner of the county. Preliminary information from a broad study of that area being conducted by the county shows that motorists won't divert from their existing routes to get onto a parkway, let alone a tollway, leaving Wadsworth Boulevard

and other roads highly congested in the coming years.

Residents wary of the tollway — an idea of continuing the Northwest Parkway from Broomfield into Jefferson County — took little heed of Arvada's study.

The latest numbers from the broad study, known as the Northwest Quadrant Feasibility Study, shows that the biggest increase in traffic during the next 20 years will come from people driving from Arvada north to Broomfield to places such as Interlocken business park or east to Denver, said Tom Atkins, who is with Citizens Involved in the Northwest Quadrant.

"The parkway really won't help," Atkins said. "Our belief is there is a serious traffic problem, but it's mostly generated in Arvada."