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## Clock is ticking on Cedros Crossing Delay could doom \$6 million grant

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SOLANA BEACH – The red flags are up for Cedros Crossing, a \$50 million mixed-use project at the Solana Beach Train Station that could change downtown.

If the City Council delays the proposed project one more time when it meets tonight, it could kill it, North County Transit District officials and the developer said.

The transit district, which is building a train station garage that would be the foundation of the proposed development, said time is running out on a \$6 million state grant that is vital to the construction of the garage.

“Any further delay is potentially crippling to the project,” transit district Deputy Executive Director Rick Howard said.

The transit district will lose the grant unless construction is ready to start by June. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to discuss the environmental studies associated with the proposed project. If the report is approved, or certified, many months of work remain before ground can be broken.

Delay is likely, some council member said yesterday, since the city has a new study that conflicts with the developer's traffic and parking analyses.

Transit district spokesman Tom Kelleher said, “If they delay it, I don't know if we could still build the garage.”

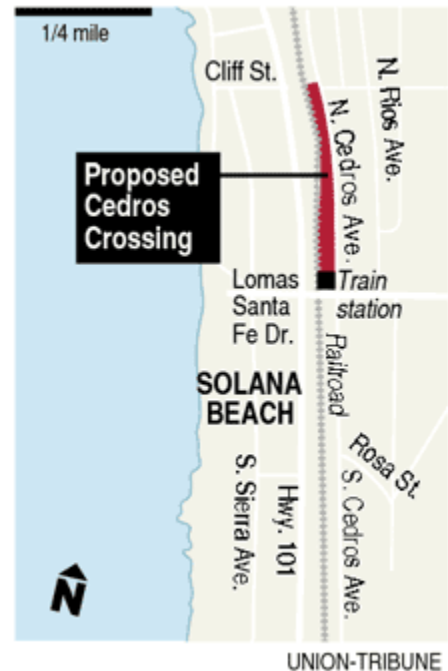
Without the garage, the rest of Cedros Crossing will dissolve, said developer Greg Shannon, who began planning the project in 2001. The development would be built above an underground parking garage and would consist of apartments, shops, restaurants and a new home for North Coast Repertory Theater.

“This is a horrible thing for the timing of the project,” Shannon said of any possible delay. “The city is not telling us what works. It is just telling us this doesn't work, that doesn't work.”

“I think they'd be much more comfortable if we went away and they don't have to make decisions,” he said. “But I'm not going to give up.”

Mayor Lesa Heebner said she wants Cedros Crossing built, but maybe in a different form.

“I want Cedros Crossing to be there. Yeah, definitely, absolutely,” she said yesterday. “What we see is not quite suitable for this location. There are too many impacts. It needs to be modified. Smaller is one option.”



The project has been controversial since it was proposed. In a series of City Council hearings earlier this year, dozens of residents complained that the project was too big and would draw too much traffic. Supporters also attended the meetings, often saying the theater would be a welcome addition to the neighborhood.

Tonight, the council will discuss some of those impacts based on a city consultant's audit of the developer's traffic and parking studies. The council will decide whether to give the community 45 days to comment on the new data.

The city's consultant concluded that:

- The developer underestimated the amount of traffic that Cedros Crossing would generate on Lomas Santa Fe Drive near North Highway 101. Lomas Santa Fe Drive is the city's only east-west artery. Sections of the road are already close to gridlock at rush hour.

- The train station parking garage needs to be reserved for commuters and should not share too many of its spaces with theater patrons. The theater would have to find or build parking elsewhere. The conclusion is disputed by theater representatives, who say no garage will ever be big enough to handle peak parking needs, not even a stadium's. Any additional parking would require further city review, which means more time.

The transit district doesn't think it can wait. The \$6 million state grant is ready to be disbursed, but to claim it, the transit district and the developer must have all their details settled.

To receive the state funds, the Solana Beach City Council must approve the entire project, the California Coastal Commission must OK a plan to dump sand excavated from the site onto the city's beach, and the builders should be ready to award a construction contract, Howard said.

The transit district received a one-year extension in June to claim the money.

If the council gives residents 45 days to digest the new traffic and parking information, the council would reconsider in November whether to certify the environmental report, City Manager David Ott said. The City Council would then hold a final public hearing to decide whether to approve the project.

Heebner and Councilman Dave Roberts said they are inclined to give residents time to review the new information.

"We had a feeling (the developer's estimates were not) right. Now we can see this information," Heebner said. "We looking forward to be able to sit down and talk to the developer and see how we can work things out, what changes need to be made."

Deputy Mayor Joe Kellejian said it was time for the council to vote on the environmental study, although he was still deciding his position.

Jay Sarno, first vice president of North Coast Repertory Theatre's board of trustees, said his group has no choice but to wait. The theater has outgrown its current location at Lomas Santa Fe Plaza.

"We have no other options. We're mortally committed to Cedros Crossing," Sarno said. "Nothing is built to cover parking needs under all circumstances, not the stadium, not the ballpark. We just need to sit down with the council and figure out how much outside parking we need."