

# Fairbanks' Mayor Strle to reexamine Illinois Street Project

By CHRISTOPHER ESHLEMAN

FAIRBANKS — A Fairbanks mayor is again looking to put long-discussed plans for rebuilding Illinois and north Cushman streets under the microscope.

State transportation planners have lined up the work, dubbed the Illinois Street Project, to start next year, with demolition tentatively set for this fall. Aside from rebuilding Illinois Street, the project would create a two-bridge network across the Chena River.

But a slate of tweaks, including recent word the project could mean razing a popular bar, has slowed progress. Fairbanks Mayor Terry Strle called that change in schedule an “unexpected opportunity” to fully review the plan, particularly in light of more recent plans for traffic revisions on connecting roads — plans that conflict with the Illinois Street Project.

The second option, part of a downtown revitalization plan, recommends more two-way traffic than was envisioned when the Illinois Street Project was drafted, and outlines the option of a large roundabout north of the river.

“The (state’s option) is therefore no longer consistent with the current local land use plan because it has not considered the roundabout nor does it accommodate two-way traffic” in certain key spots, Strle wrote.

The Illinois Street Project — essentially planned as a rebuild of one of town’s oldest routes — has encountered hurdles since it was first proposed three decades ago. It would rebuild the heavily-used Cushman Street Bridge, add another bridge to the west and rebuild Cushman’s northern extension, Illinois Street, adding wider sidewalks throughout.

Strle had unsuccessfully called in February for revisiting the Illinois Street plans in light of the land-use plans.