

After roundabout's cancellation, questions sprout about two-way traffic in downtown Fairbanks

By CHRISTOPHER ESHLEMAN

FAIRBANKS — Public engineers say they must decide whether a week-old call for one-way bridges across the Chena River will change plans to establish two-way traffic on roads connected to those bridges.

City Mayor Terry Strle said it's too early to tell whether two-way traffic will work on Cushman Street. The proposed change to two-way traffic is part of a broader slate of traffic plans designed to rebuild major north-south streets downtown and possibly add more two-way traffic patterns.

The policy committee of the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System voted last week to abandon talk of a roundabout at a major intersection north of the river. They also voted to plan for one-way traffic on bridges to the intersection's immediate south.

The second decision leaves state and city transportation planners asking whether plans for two-way traffic on Cushman and its southbound counterpart, Barnette, remain compatible with FMATS' policy of one-way bridges. If there are problems, city engineers leading the project will recommend changes to technical transportation advisors, Strle said.

"Our engineers will look at this over the next couple of months," Strle said.

Proponents of the Vision Fairbanks downtown revitalization plan believe a return to two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette streets will attract investors downtown. About a dozen people, including many downtown business owners, lobbied the City Council on Monday to stick to the two-way traffic plan, which they say will slow traffic and encourage more people to stop and shop at downtown businesses.

"I want people slowing down and smelling the roses," said Frank Eagle, co-owner of Lavelle's Bistro.

The streets were converted to one-way in the 1970s.

Following an hour of public testimony, Mayor Strle encouraged the public to continue to make their opinions of Vision Fairbanks known.