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Officials abandoning effort to alter control of El Dorado transportation funds

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Published 12:00 am PDT Thursday, September 11, 2008

After lobbying for months to give El Dorado County's most populous communities a stronger voice in the distribution of transportation dollars, county Supervisor Rusty Dupray called for disbanding a committee assigned to study the matter.

Dupray and Placerville Mayor Carl Hagen were appointed in July as an ad hoc committee of the county Transportation Commission to explore possible changes in the panel's membership.

Dupray and commissioner-Supervisor Helen Baumann cited concerns among constituents, particularly in El Dorado Hills, that their community was not receiving its fair share of transportation funds.

The Transportation Commission has six voting members: three from the county Board of Supervisors and three from the Placerville City Council.

As the only city on the county's western slope, Placerville represents about 7 percent of the population but has 50 percent of the votes on the commission, leading the two supervisors to suggest adding a seat for a representative of El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park or other unincorporated communities.

But Dupray said Aug. 28 that he was concerned about comments Hagen made to a reporter after the July meeting indicating that Placerville City Council members were unlikely to support a change in the structure of the Transportation Commission.

"I indicated I would be willing to sit down and discuss a change," Hagen said, "but that any change would have to go to the state Legislature with our recommendation, and at this time I did not see a particular reason to make changes."

Kathryn Mathews, the commission's executive director, has said a change would require state legislation.

Mark Acuna, a member of both the Transportation Commission and the Placerville City Council, said he was disappointed by Dupray's request to dissolve the ad hoc committee.

Acuna said he met with a group of El Dorado Hills residents after several of them appeared at commission meetings in June and July to seek representation.

Many of their grievances were based on the misconception "that every road project comes through this commission," Acuna said.

The panel establishes rules and regulations for administering transportation planning and allocating Transportation Development Act funds in western El Dorado County, but the county and city determine what transportation projects to pursue in their respective jurisdictions.

Acuna argued that many of the issues could be resolved through better communication with the public. He suggested the commission hold some of its meetings in the unincorporated

communities.

Dupray and Baumann said they have held community meetings on transportation issues, and they sought the membership change to satisfy constituents' concerns.

"We don't have the votes," Baumann said. "It's apparent we're not going to get the votes. The hardest thing is to know we've got to walk away from it because we're not going to get anywhere."

Dupray said, "I prefer we settle down, see where we're at and look at it next year."

Commission Chairman Jack Sweeney asked that the proposal to disband the ad hoc committee be placed on the commission's next agenda.

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