

SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 2008

The Bloating of that Springdale Bypass



There are lots of reasons why people would want to bypass Springdale and avoid the clogged arterials of Sunset and Thompson. Not everyone appreciates the clutter of unregulated commercial signs or the festoon of feathers between utility poles. The **Chickendale Cowbirds** want a bypass around the current mess they created, and they expect you to pay for it. Something like **\$495 million** by the latest reckoning.

The **Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department** held two public hearings in Springdale last week and let slip the fact that the Springdale Bypass would cost far more than originally suggested. Construction cost inflated 50% in three years, up from \$310 million to \$415 million, and right-of-way acquisition costs up from \$60 Million to \$80 million since 2005. And you probably thought the construction industry was hurting and the real estate market was down.

Building bypasses is the obsession of the **Northwest Arkansas Council of Corporations and Wealthy Business Executives**, so they have proposed a **Regional Mobility Authority** with the power of eminent domain and new taxes on local residents for their pet projects. The state highway department says it has \$27 million to spend on right-of-ways, so you'll have a chance to cough up taxes to cover the rest. Springdale won't help, because their general revenues are down and they chose to build a ball park instead. Springdale's State Representative Jon Woods recently voted against the severance tax to help fund highways, so don't count on the state spending that money in his district. They want *you* to build it for them.

This whole fiasco reflects a lack of imagination and foresight. Perhaps the PTB discourage such qualities and instead keep the focus on subsidizing highway construction to accommodate the trucking industry, and they certainly have no interest in a practical mass transit system. We will be the ones to pay for their schemes, with higher taxes to build their bypasses and beltways and increased costs for our personal transportation that now has a true cost of \$1.16 per mile and is sure to increase. Just like your taxes to build their bypass.