

LINDA JUMP**FLORIDA TODAY (Melbourne, FL) - Friday, April 22, 2005****Author: Staff, LINDA JUMP**

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PALM BAY -- There's still no federal money to help build the Palm Bay Parkway to link Melbourne, West Melbourne and Palm Bay.

But that's not stopping Palm Bay from building its two-lane section from Malabar Road to the city limits -- and to plan a southern extension.

Officials said they think the city needs to move fast to accommodate growth in that area.

"We took it upon ourselves," Assistant City Manager Sue Hann said. "We'll start next year, and we're working on engineering plans."

The 3-mile section from Malabar Road to Emerson Drive and the city line will cost \$5 million and be paid for by developers. The 15- to 16-mile southern extension from Malabar Road south and then east to Babcock Street and beyond is estimated to cost at least \$30 million.

"Two-thirds of the extension in the city will be built in conjunction with developers," Hann said.

She said the ratio of tax money to developer contributions still are being worked out.

The parkway has been discussed for more than a decade as an alternative to jammed north-south arteries.

The Florida Department of Transportation hired a firm that last fall recommended the road should lead from an area west of Regional Park on Malabar Road, head north and east past U.S. 192 and linking with Ellis Road in West Melbourne.

Planning for that route has started with Brevard County and the three cities, and there's \$1 million proposed in a House version of a federal transportation bill for the Palm Bay-U.S. 192 section. But no money has been approved.

Katherine Johnson lives in northwest Palm Bay and uses Minton or Emerson roads to access U.S. 192.

"I've lived here 15 years, and traffic in Palm Bay used to be nothing," she said. "Now, it's hectic."

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