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## Interchange project stalls

### Rocklin: Engineer says project will boost traffic flow

**By Kim Minugh -- Bee Staff Writer**  
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Progress on planned improvements to the Sierra College Boulevard-Interstate 80 interchange has slowed temporarily as Rocklin officials negotiate the purchase of roughly 13 acres.

But now, those negotiations have halted as well.

The declining availability of land in Rocklin and its resulting increase in value has lawyers struggling to come up with an agreed-upon dollar amount for the land.

Offers thus far, based upon year-old appraisals, have been unsatisfactory to the landowners. Both they and the city now are waiting for new appraisals, scheduled to be completed in August.

In the meantime, all parties remain optimistic - albeit cautiously - that the issue can be settled at the negotiation table and not in court.

"(The city is) responding to our concerns," said Braiden Chadwick, a Sacramento lawyer representing three parties. "I'm very encouraged by the city's desire to do the right thing here."

Nonetheless, the City Council this month jump-started the process of acquiring the property through eminent domain should negotiations fail.

The council held a public hearing to allow property owners to protest the acquisition of the land - an action required before the city can file a formal lawsuit to take the land by eminent domain.

At the hearing, property owners expressed no opposition to giving up the land. Their concern, they said, is money.

"There's no question that we're working together to try and reach a solution. It's not adversarial, in other words," Sacramento lawyer Kent Wyatt, who represents another property owner, said in a later interview.

However, Wyatt said, the city's offer was so low "that I'm not as optimistic as I might otherwise be."

All parties declined to publicly discuss figures because negotiations are ongoing.

In question are 13 properties, totaling about 12 1/2 acres, surrounding the Sierra College Boulevard-Interstate 80 interchange in southeast Rocklin.

The land will be used to expand the Sierra College Boulevard overpass to five lanes and to add sidewalks and bike lanes. The overpass also must be elevated.

"The current clearance doesn't meet the federal standards for interstate highways," city engineer Larry Wing said. "Certain trucks and especially certain military vehicles (in the event of a national emergency) can't get beneath this interchange."

Wing also said the project would improve traffic flow on the street, which often is plagued with congestion.

Pending the land acquisition negotiations, construction is set to begin in June 2006 and be completed by mid-2008.

City officials are negotiating acquisition of two of the 13 parcels, one owned by Wyatt's client - Sacramento resident and real estate investor Cecil Finegold, who owns 5 acres of vacant land - and the other involving Chadwick's three clients - Rocklin residents Milton K. Takahashi, George Makimoto and Norm Nakamura.

Takahashi, whose family has a long history in the area, owns the parcel. Makimoto leases the land, on which a Union 76 gas station is run by Nakamura.

In addition for compensation for the land, Chadwick's clients are seeking the city's help in finding a new site and relocating to it.

"This is their livelihood," Chadwick said. "This is how they put food on the table."

City Attorney Russell Hildebrand said that in most land acquisition cases, there is a dispute between property owners and city officials over the value of the land.

But in this case, he anticipates an agreement can be reached that serves everyone's needs.

"I don't have any anticipation this thing will end up in court," he said.