

Woody Bliss backs Super 7 plan

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Weston First Selectman Woody Bliss acknowledges that, at the moment, Route 7 is anything but “super.” So when it comes to the rebirth of an old idea — to create a four-lane, limited access “Super 7” highway from Norwalk to Danbury — Mr. Bliss is all for it.

“I’m very favorably inclined toward it,” he said earlier this week.

In fact, Mr. Bliss, who also serves as the chairman of the South Western Regional Planning Agency’s Municipal Planning Organization (SWRPA/MPO), was one of many elected officials who spoke in support of the idea at a rally in Norwalk on Sunday, Feb. 11.

The rally was organized by state Senator Bob Duff (D-25) of Norwalk, who introduced a bill last month to complete the Route

7 expressway plan that has been on — and, more recently, off — the table for nearly 50 years.

Mr. Bliss said the rally was “packed” with more than 100 attendees and speakers from both political parties. Among those expressing support for the plan were Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat, and Norwalk Mayor Richard Moccia, a Republican.

Plans for Super 7 faced vehement opposition several years ago by officials and many residents in Wilton, Ridgefield, and Redding, towns through which the expressway would run. The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials withdrew its support for the plan in the late 1990s.

Most opponents site environmental reasons, cost, feasibility, and a loss of the character of the area as reasons not to build the expressway.

Mr. Bliss said that, while “there

are a number of forces against it,” including the fact that it would be very expensive, he still believes the idea has merit.

One of the main reasons Mr. Bliss believes Super 7 was not built when it was first proposed is simply a lack of foresight.

“They didn’t envision the kind of development we’ve had... They didn’t envision the car as the primary way to get to work,” he said of those who reviewed the plan in the 1990s, when buses ran far more frequently along the Route 7 corridor than they do now. “Housing costs have skyrocketed, and the people who work here can’t always afford to live here... Super 7 would make it easier for people to work in the Norwalk and Stamford area and live farther north where it is more affordable,” Mr. Bliss said.

The advantage to Weston would be to decrease the ever-increasingly congested local roads, the first selectman said.

During rush hour in the mornings and evenings, Route 57 is especially jammed in town, because “people are using it to avoid Route 7,” Mr. Bliss said.

He also believes the region must address all pieces of transportation puzzle, including cars, buses, and trains.

The current expansion of Route 7 from two lanes to four in some places does not sufficiently address the area’s needs, Mr. Bliss said.

“It will certainly help, but it won’t be the quantum leap that’s needed,” he said.

There will be a hearing on the Super 7 proposal before the Connecticut General Assembly in Hartford on Wednesday, Feb. 21.

Mr. Bliss said he is also putting the issue on the SWRPA/MPO agenda for its Feb. 26 meeting.

For more information on the Super 7 proposal, visit www.route7.org.