



Gov. Riley urges business leaders to support U.S. 280 toll road

By Michael Tomberlin -- The Birmingham News

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Gov. Bob Riley called on the Birmingham business community to help him push through plans for a toll road stretching from the Elton B. Stephens Expressway to Eagle Point in Shelby County.

The plan is the latest one that addresses the growing traffic problems on U.S. 280. Changes from past plans calls for up to \$300 million to create grade-level toll lanes from Elton B. Stephens Expressway to Interstate 459 and \$410 million to build an elevated toll road from I-459 to Eagle Point Parkway.

The private development and the tolls would offset expenses to the state.

But, more importantly, Riley said, the plan fixes a problem on a road that was designed for 50,000 vehicles a day that now has 97,000 per day and is projected to have around 140,000 in a few years.

Riley asked the **Birmingham Business Alliance** at a luncheon today to evaluate the project and help him get approval for the toll road, which could be completed in December 2013.

"We could have you driving on that in three years," he said. "Normally it would take us three years to get the environmental permitting."

Dalton Smith, chief executive of the BBA, said in an interview the business organization often supports highway projects that promote economic development and quality of life. He said the group will do as the governor asks by studying the plan, suggesting changes and deciding whether or not to support it.

Riley said the **Alabama Department of Transportation** has already started design and environmental assessment on the project.



Gov. Riley says toll road to relieve congestion on U.S. 280 could be open in 2013.

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