Cajundome May Be Dressed, But....

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ease traffic flow at "key points." But, he added, "asking a contractor to phase a project — to do paving of one part, then drainage or whatever, then paving again.

when he could be more quickly paced once — will again be more costly with all parts of the project are vitally. Commissioners also talked with consultant Robert Kent about cost boxes, advertising, Cajundome agreement and other such matters handled before the civic center opens.

For details on those discussions related story on Page 3.

Cajundome May Be All Dressed Up

With No Place For Ticket Holders To Go

By DONNA FONTENOT
Advertiser Staff Writer

Local attorney Bill Broadhurst grimaced, shook his head and called it a "vision."

But it’s more like a nightmare:

Lafayette's new $55 million Cajundome opens on schedule, maybe even ahead of schedule, with a top-rate booking. Commercial lease boxes are filled and thousands of other spectators are jammed into the building for a big event.

The function goes well, advertising dollars come in big and then the thousands go back to their cars — soon to be caught in hour-long traffic because surrounding streets cannot accommodate them, or the streets are under construction.

Cajundome commissioners are working quickly to prevent that scenario, but it may take some financial juggling.

Underpass Project Mentioned

When commissioners met yesterday, they talked of possibly getting the state to pick up the City's $7.75 million balance on the proposed North University underpass, then using that money to build or improve routes to and from the Cajundome.

Without state help, roads near the Cajundome may not be ready in time for the civic center's opening in July, 1985.

The City's chief administrative officer, Glenn Weber, told commissioners the City has no extra money to devote to the project unless bond revenue priorities are restructured.

And that's not likely, he added, as long as the North University underpass still needs to be constructed. (It is reportedly the only new capital outlay project to get City bond money within the next year because of budget constraints.)

Rebuffing Necessary

State Rep. Ron Gomez, who was on hand for the meeting, questioned why plans to finance Cajundome road improvements had not been made before now, but Weber said they had.

Declines in the City's sales tax revenues have kept them from being carried through, the chief administrative officer said.

Gomez cautioned that the state’s not very likely to pitch in for an access road to Lafayette’s Cajundome.

But it might be persuaded to assume the City's $7.75 million debt on the underpass, which would free that money for Cajundome use, he said.

The underpass is to be located on a state highway (La. Hwy. 182, or North University) and is, therefore, a "state project," the representative noted.

As it stands now, the state is to match the City's $7.75 million commitment to build the underpass.

As Soon As Possible

Cajundome commissioners gave no indication that the underpass project would be jeopardized in any way, or that alternative funding is available for the Cajundome road if the state does not assume the entire underpass project.

For now, they're trying to work out the arrangement — "as soon as possible," said Broadhurst, who heads the Cajundome Commission.

"I have this vision that we’ll be all ready to open the Dome, and people won’t have a way to get in and out of there," he said.

Most commissioners agreed the project must be done, and done soon, so roads are not under construction when the Cajundome opens in about 18 months.

City Traffic Engineer Tony Tramel said plans for a proposed one-mile access road widening and connecting nearby Souvenir Gate to Congress Street are "progressing complete" and would take about two more months to finish. That road is to include what he called two "pedestrian overpass/underpass walkways."

Another month would be required to advertise for bids, and still another month would be needed to take and award bids before actual construction, he said.

Tramel also spoke of City plans to widen Congress Street to five lanes to help accommodate Cajundome traffic.

One Year's Work

The entire project would take nine months to a year but "could be speeded up under the right conditions and for the right price," Tramel added, explaining that weather will determine how fast road work is done, and contractors will charge more to meet quickened deadlines.

About $3.5 million of the Cajundome will be needed just for the access road, he said.

He agreed with commissioners' suggestions that parts of the project could be phased for completion before other parts to