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## County officials take case for sales tax to Olathe City Council

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Johnson County officials paid a visit to the Olathe City Council on Tuesday to discuss an impending sales tax for public safety and a proposed road in south Johnson County.

Johnson County Chairwoman Annabeth Surbaugh and Sheriff Frank Denning outlined some of the plans for the funds from a proposed quarter-cent sales tax for public safety.

The tax, which voters consider on Aug. 5, does not have a sunset, in order to create a dedicated funding source for operating costs. Two-thirds of the funds raised from the tax would go to the county, and one-third to the cities in the county.

The county's portion of a similar tax that ended had been used in its previous six years for an economic development boost for the area's school districts. While the Olathe School District opposes the loss of the tax money, the Shawnee Mission and Blue Valley districts have not been opposed to the measure, Surbaugh said.

"The public schools are the responsibility of the state Legislature, not the county," she said.

Johnson County expects to see \$19.6 million in revenue from the tax, with the remainder being distributed to cities. The county's portion would be used to build and operate a new crime lab, a juvenile services complex and a jail expansion.

Because Olathe stands to benefit from the tax, Surbaugh asked the City Council to consider publicly endorsing the tax.

When City Councilwoman Marge Vogt asked about the county's alternative for finding funds if the tax fails at the polls, Surbaugh answered simply.

"Mill levy," she said, referring to a property tax increase.

Olathe Mayor Mike Copeland said the city would discuss Surbaugh's requests later.

In another county issue, the council discussed whether it wants to take a position on the South Metro Connector study detailing plans for a two-lane road on 175th Street and 179th Street between U.S. 69 and Holmes Road in Missouri.

City Engineer Mary Jaeger said the city staff would recommend a larger four-lane road with limited access in southern Johnson County.

Surbaugh said there was no support among commissioners for such a roadway.

Many council members expressed support for a freeway somewhere south of the proposed road, to complete a "freeway loop" in the county.

Copeland suggested the road be built so that it could maximize economic development potential for the county, rather than in a residential area.

Surbaugh said the board would take council members' comments under advisement.

In other business Tuesday, the council received a report on a proposed 50-percent tax abatement for Opus Northwest LLC for warehouses near Spruce Street and Ridgeview Road.

If approved, more than \$984,000 in taxes would be abated over 10 years.