

Aurora estimates casino would mean \$63 million in road improvements

Written by Administrator

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AURORA — It would cost more than \$60 million to improve roads near a potential casino at the Arapahoe Park horse racing track, an examination by the city of Aurora has found. Voters throughout Colorado in November will decide the fate of [Amendment 68](#), which, if passed, would authorize limited-stakes gaming at horse racetracks in Arapahoe, Mesa and Pueblo counties. Arapahoe Park in unincorporated Arapahoe County is the only horse track in operation in those counties. Tom McMinimee, associate engineer for the city of Aurora, said it is projected that infrastructure improvements near the horse track and casino would cost Arapahoe County and Aurora roughly \$63 million. Aurora and Arapahoe County would share the cost of road improvements near the casino, while getting no revenue from gaming taxes, Aurora City Councilman Bob Broom said. "Aurora gets nothing out of it, but we're going to have to deal with the traffic and all the public safety issues," he said. Broom requested the review of the costs to improve roads around the casino site and is calling for the City Council to pass a resolution opposing the casino and Amendment 68. He plans to forward that measure at an upcoming study session. The casino would be built at the Arapahoe Park horse track at 26000 E. Quincy Ave. While it is in Arapahoe County, Aurora owns and is responsible for parts of Quincy, which is now just a two-lane road heading east of E-470. McMinimee said the review was a "very conceptual budgetary estimate" and there was no real hard-core engineering or surveying done to come up with the price tag. The \$63 million estimate is for a six-lane highway on Quincy, three lanes in each direction with a "continuous flow intersection" at Quincy and Gun Club Road. Also included in that cost is widening Gun Club Road, as well as improvements for Harvest Road, which feeds into the Tollgate Crossing subdivision. Drainage in that area also would have to be upgraded. Aside from infrastructure costs,

[other expenses](#)

would be associated with the casino, such as police and fire services. While the casino wouldn't be built in Aurora, the city likely would be responsible for calls for service to the casino because it is the nearest agency for fire and police and has mutual-aid agreements with other jurisdictions. "We'll have to run on all the heart attacks and everything else that happens at the casino," Broom said. "Older people and heavy smokers go to casinos, and there would be a lot of demands on public safety." If Amendment 68 passes, backers say it would raise more than \$100 million annually for K-12 education and charter schools statewide by charging casinos a 34 percent fee on gambling proceeds. The casino at Arapahoe Park could have up to 2,500 slot machines and 65 gaming tables. Counties, such as Arapahoe, are funded mainly through property taxes. Sales taxes typically are earmarked for specific areas, such as parks and open space or to build a new jail. There have been questions of whether Aurora would annex the casino at some point. But even if it did, money from casino earnings wouldn't be subject to Aurora's sales tax, Broom said. Nancy Doty, chairwoman of the Arapahoe County commissioners, said the board has not yet taken a public stance on Amendment 68 and wasn't sure it would. On a personal level, Doty said she opposes the casino proposal "for a lot" of reasons. "I just don't see the benefit for Arapahoe County," Doty said. "There's nothing in the legislation that assigns revenue to Arapahoe County."

Carlos Illescas: 303-954-1175, cillescas@denverpost.com or twitter.com/cillescasdp

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