

# U.S. Impact Study Supports Overton Park Expressway

By LEE STILLWELL  
The Press-Scimitar Bureau

WASHINGTON. — A just-completed draft of an environmental impact study supports completing a 3.7-mile segment of I-40 through Overton Park in Memphis.

The draft, produced by the Federal Highway Administration, argues that three alternate routes — one along the L&N Railroad tracks and others to the north and south of the park — are feasible but not prudent because of the community disruption they would cause.

The report also warns that a "do-nothing" approach toward finishing the last segment will lead to massive traffic congestion in the future.

**"To load residential streets with such traffic is a very dangerous situation, having severe environmental and social effects and should be avoided if at all possible,"** the report said.

I-40 in Memphis will be extended toward Overton Park following a ruling yesterday by Federal District Judge Bailey Brown that a new exit ramp will be permitted onto Broad Avenue just west of Bon Air. The present western limit of I-40 is at Highland.

Judge Brown allowed the extension after complaints that the exit ramp onto Highland caused traffic to pile up on that busy thoroughfare.

The impact study, prepared with the help of the Tennessee Highway Department, argues it would take 18 additional lanes of city

streets in this corridor to meet traffic needs, calling this "not very realistic."

Mass transit as the answer is called unlikely and the draft rules out a larger I-240 route to replace I-40, claiming it would take 12 to 14 lanes in some sections and isn't feasible.

**Present plans to complete the I-40 segment in the park contain "all possible planning to minimize harm,"** the report said, pointing out city planners have long determined the need for better east-west transportation in Memphis.

The national and local impact of completing the interstate system is increased safety, mobility, and security for car drivers, the draft says.

**The adverse effects caused by building the segment, and steps taken to minimize them, were listed:**

- Dust, noise, and erosion would be an inconvenience along with traffic tie-ups during construction. But these can be minimized by proper control of traffic, equipment, hauling and sequence construction.

- Community disruption caused by displacing people has been curtailed somewhat by following existing community patterns and an east-west grid pattern. Home owners and businessmen also are receiving fair market value for property taken.

Highway officials maintain air and noise pollution would be within national standards.

The report said depressed

highway design limited to a segment that will retain natural gravity drainage is considered the most prudent.

Design features which the report said would minimize harm:

- Redesigning the East Parkway interchange to reduce the amount of right-of-way needed.

- Using vertical retaining walls part of the way up the cut section of the depressed highway with the remainder of the cut slope landscaped. A landscape artist will be hired to save trees.

- There will be two overpasses, one only for pedestrians and the other for traffic and pedestrians.

Zoo officials already are anticipating the highway construction in their building plans, the draft states.

Alignment of the freeway along the bus line right-of-way in the park also minimizes taking land now being used for recreation and leaves the south park area undisturbed while providing enough land in the north to keep from disrupting facilities, the draft claims.

**Copies of the draft are being circulated and a public hearing probably will be scheduled later this month in Memphis.**

John A. Volpe, secretary of transportation, is expected to make a decision in the project within 60 days of the hearing.

Volpe was required to make a decision when Federal Court remanded the case to him for such action.

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