

The Park Route: A Question Of Values

To The Commercial Appeal:

The public hearings on the proposed Interstate 40 route through midtown may well determine the final outcome of this long-standing controversy. To the extent that the citizens of Memphis actively voice their collective will, they will be taking upon themselves the ultimate responsibility for the quality of life provided for future inhabitants of the city. As the facts in this dispute are by now well known, the question before us becomes one of values. What is most important to us?

On one side are those who have abandoned the inner city. For this group, personal convenience through obsequance to the automobile constitutes an ultimate value. For most of this group, the city is at best a necessary evil. It is a place in which as little time as possible should be spent, a place of threatening diversity which is best abandoned at a high rate of speed at the end of each business day. It should not be surprising that the majority of those advocating the destruction of Overton Park and adjacent midtown neighborhoods are precisely those who have deserted the city for the hinterlands of Raleigh, Germantown, Fox Meadows, and Whitehaven. Witness the latest

proposal for a great, ugly, open concrete trench, bridged here and there by token "plazas."

The expressway proponents assure us that unless I-40 is completed Memphis will face unacceptable traffic congestion in coming years. This argument clearly holds that facilitating traffic flow should be the overriding value for consideration.

But consider the other possible values — not so easily quantifiable perhaps, but no less pertinent to the future quality of life in Memphis. A completed I-40 will cut midtown in two with a vast, scarred no-man's land of concrete. Isolated to the north will be such civic assets as Southwestern, the zoo, numerous churches, and several healthy viable urban neighborhoods. The rape of Overton Park, if allowed to occur, will surely become the supreme monument to our callousness and short-sightedness in the eyes of future generations.

And what is to be gained? Granted, the businessmen of East Memphis and beyond may be able to roar back and forth from downtown 10 minutes faster than at

present. But what responsible citizen can advocate such destruction for the benefit of a small minority of the city's populace? Common sense asks what needs I-40 might meet which could not be just as well met by completion of the northern leg of I-240. Could not I-240 then provide a speedy route around the city for those traveling downtown or between Nashville and Little Rock?

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Westward, Ho

To The Commercial Appeal:

There is good news and bad news.

In spite of reports in The Commercial Appeal, I-40 is not complete except for Memphis. While it is complete (except for Memphis) from where it begins in North Carolina to the Texas border, there are many incomplete sections in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the world considers Memphis as a sister city with

Broom, Texas; Tucumcari, N.M.; Joe City, Ariz., and Mojave, Calif.

NORMAN GODFREY

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Admit A Mistake

To The Commercial Appeal:

After much thought on the proposal to complete Interstate 40 through Overton Park by the cut and partially cover tunnel, I am convinced that this is not a good idea. I am certain that the noise and air pollution from speeding cars and trucks in the uncovered portions of the expressway would make the park unuseable for people and inhospitable for other forms of life.

Is the completion of a roaring, polluting, and expensive six-lane expressway through Overton Park the type of progress we want?

My proposal is simple. Let's say "We made a mistake," keep Overton Park as it is, and save ourselves millions of dollars by not completing a speedway through the center of our city.

MAC McLELLAN

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Overton Park Bus Lane: An Expressway Next?

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