

CA.

Fri. Jan. 5, 1972
1973

P. 21 (first p. of section 2)

North I-240 Route Easily Clears Hurdle

By MICHAEL LOLLAR

Construction of Interstate 240 expressway across North Memphis moved a step closer to reality yesterday after a public hearing in which no one raised great objections.

About 85 spectators showed up for the hearing in the State Office Building, but about half of them left as state highway officials spent more than an hour describing the highway project.

When the forum finally was turned over to the public, about 14 of the spectators asked to speak.

Afterward, Henry K. Buckner of Nashville, attorney for the Tennessee Transportation Department, said he expects swift approval of the project by the United States Department of Transportation.

Construction contracts would then be let, and the 9.9-mile, 57.2-million-dollar stretch of freeway probably would be under construction by spring, he said. The projected completion date is in mid-1975.

The concrete highway arc is planned in two sections. The larger is I-240 from North Watkins on the west to Bartlett Road on the east, a total of 9.09 miles. A smaller stretch, consisting primarily of an interchange, will connect I-240 with federal-aid Route 101, which is known as the Northwest Expressway. The interchange will be located at the intersection of Danny Thomas Boulevard and Route 101. The connecting highway measures .809 mile.

One of the few objections to the project was offered by Fred Cook, vice president and station manager for Cowles Tennessee Radio Properties, Inc., owners and operators of the

WREC and WREC-FM radio stations.

Mr. Cook did not object to the overall route and design of the expressway, but he said the I-240 interchange planned over North Watkins will require Memphis Light, Gas & Water Division to elevate the city's major power lines in the area. WREC's transmitting building and towers are located at 2531 North Watkins, just north of the interchange.

The city's power lines now are about 75 feet high, Mr. Cook said, but, if they were elevated to any great height, "Our engineers tell us it could have very serious ramifications on our transmission patterns."

The expressway will have six lanes and will require a minimum right-of-way of 230 feet in its path across the city. The total cost of the I-240 section is estimated at 54.8 million dollars, and the cost of the Route 101 connecting highway is estimated at 2.5 million dollars.

In support of the project, Edward L. Boyd, assistant city traffic engineer,

read a statement prepared by city traffic engineer Robert Fosnaugh. He said, "The City of Memphis Traffic Engineering Department strongly endorses the routing and design of the subject portions . . . and urges immediate construction."

Mr. Fosnaugh's statement said Memphis presently is "an almost totally auto-oriented city, and based on present development and projected growth does not appear to be destined to be capable of supporting any form of mass rapid transit in the foreseeable future."

Mrs. Sarah J. Hines, a member of Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, earlier had endorsed the I-240 route. But she urged the state to consider an "urban mass transit system to possibly replace Interstate 40."

Richard Iddins, a design engineer for the state Transportation Department, told her, "I-240 will not be able to handle all traffic . . . It cannot replace I-40."

(also on tape)

1
OPE 21-01