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Put Expressway On Two Levels

To The Commercial Appeal:

It appears to me that one of the most fundamental aspects of the Overton Park I-40 dispute has not been discussed. Namely, that Overton Park, unlike other controversial environmental and park cases, has an existing busway which consists of a two-lane concrete slab plus a shoulder of approximately another lane width, which has been used by buses and public service vehicles for years.

Prior to MTA buses, the right-of-way has been used by streetcars, buses, etc., for many years. Why can't it be used by ordinary traffic? By precedent of the above, I don't understand how traffic can legally be prevented from using the right-of-way. The major problem should be how does one squeeze a six-lane expressway into a three-lane right-of-way without disturbing adjacent parkland and trees.

The answer is that two levels of three lanes each would do it. Two levels could be constructed by any one of the four following methods and still be confined within the existing right-of-way.

1. Build a two-level tunnel of three lanes each under the busway. This method is now being studied by the United States Department of Transportation. Some of the disadvantages are that it will be expensive to build, will take a long time to put into operation, and will be expensive to maintain due to the continuous lighting and ventilating required.

2. Build three lanes depressed in an open cut below ground level and three lanes directly overhead above ground level. Park roads could cross between the two at ground level. Advantages are no lighting or ventilation problems. The upper level would roof lower level from rain, minimizing drainage problems.

3. Build three lanes at ground level with three lanes elevated above. Disadvantage — this would cut the park in two as is now being done by the present bus route.

4. Build three lanes elevated above the busway with another three-lane level above it.

All of the four methods including the first would cause some pollution but many Americans work, live, or go to school near expressways and it is a problem that cannot be avoided in an urban area.

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Misconception

To The Commercial Appeal

In a recent letter, J. P. Jones attributed the effort to preserve North Parkway from the incursions of an elevated interstate to the "rich citizens of Hein Park." For him this assumes the form of a class conflict, with the entrenched and influential "aristocracy" of Hein Park attempting to preserve its position and halt progress at the expense of the deprived "middle class," presumably resident exclusively in other areas of the city.

This view is a ridiculous misconception. The effort to preserve North Parkway is the work of a community of people from diverse walks of life, social strata, age groups, and economic levels, who live in a large area surrounding Overton Park, of which Hein Park is but a small part. This group seeks not merely to preserve one small area, but to save what remains of midtown Memphis in all its beauty, stability, heterogeneity, and tolerance, and thereby to maintain a stable place to live for those who do not want to join the flight to homogeneous, barren, exclusively middle-class, and sometimes bigoted suburban communities.

We in the area affected do not see our opposition to the North Parkway route as opposition to change or progress, but rather as opposition to wanton, unnecessary destruction in an area which has suffered enough already. One need only observe elevated expressways in New Orleans to see their aesthetic, social, and economic effects on large areas.

If Mr. Jones wishes to speak of progress, let him not chastise the residents of Hein Park, but rather let him laud the remarkable social progress manifested in the Vollentine, Evergreen, Jackson, North Parkway neighborhoods, a progress that has brought all races, creeds, ages, and attitudes together in an important attempt to live happily and stably together. Please, let us not destroy this!

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Drop It

To The Commercial Appeal:

The proposal to position I-40 over North Parkway may be the best thing that could have happened for the opponents of

that expressway — and for Memphis. For now the secret environmentalists and midtown advocates are coming out: "Save the Parkway trees and residents from air and noise pollution." It's official, too, for influential citizens, and some politicians, are finally spreading the word: Pollution is bad, and I-40 would cause pollution.

Since I-40 is so bad for a handful of North Parkway residents, why haven't they spoken out for the thousands of less influential folks along its long path — or for Overton Park?

Logically, I-40 should be dropped. For north I-240 is being built in the Wolf River bottom — a sparsely populated route ideal for the endless stream of cross-country trailers and cars that would cause most of the pollution.

Let's face it: Of the 30,000 or so people working in downtown or medical areas, only those living out east, and between Summer and Poplar would really use I-40 — about 1 per cent of the total county population. Doubters should study a local map.

Now that "pollution" and "environmental impact" have achieved official status in Memphis, maybe we can scratch "the great I-40 boondoggle, panacea, and all-purpose myth" — and tackle the practical problems facing our city.

BYRON H. WISE

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