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Overton Park: Still No Highway

## Find A New I-40 Route

To The Commercial Appeal:

Memphians, more than any persons in the entire country, need the I-40 completed. And yet, we of Memphis are leaving the initiative for finding a solution in the hands of persons who have little to gain from its completion.

Twenty years ago the highway experts proposed an I-40 route which they had selected upon accepted engineering grounds. Twenty years and millions of dollars later, it is clear that a successful project must rest on more than sound engineering — it must be publicly acceptable. Yet today the highway experts are offering nothing more than a "re-wrap" of

their original plans. For Memphians to continue to depend on the experts who have, at best, a secondary interest in Memphis and to support a plan that has failed for 20 years, is as futile as was Pickett's charge at Gettysburg.

Successful completion of I-40 is possible and Memphians can make it happen. What we have to do is to set priorities in the right order — find a route that is acceptable to the people, and the engineers will find a way to build it. Each day Memphis' business managers and statesmen are helping foreign nations who have been enemies since the dawn of time to negotiate their differences. Negotiation is the key to completing I-40.

I suggest the City Council, as managers of this city, take the initiative in finding an acceptable I-40 route. This initiative can be taken by appointing a small group of citizens to meet with responsible elements of the citizenry and to

quietly explore areas of differences until an acceptable route is found.

This group should be chosen to represent merchants, manufacturers, lawyers, sociologists, political leaders and engineers. Individually, they should be new faces to the controversy who have no close friends or bitter enemies with whom they must negotiate. When an acceptable route is found, the state and federal agencies and the city can jointly participate in the final planning.

Such a move is timely. During the last few months public statements have been made in Washington and Nashville and locally that appear to indicate willingness to move to new positions. Such changes invite the city to take the initiative in exploring possible solutions to the problem that has become something of an albatross about the neck of Memphis.

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