



## Letters To The Editor

CA, Nov. 11, 1977

### Another Road Should Be Canceled

To The Commercial Appeal:

Your editorial, "Cancel The Parkway," is cause for rejoicing as well as for a reminiscent "what if?"

We rejoice that our leaders, including the media, have reflected upon what seemed a good idea in the Wolf River Parkway, found it wanting, and were not afraid to change their minds.

But what if . . . ?

Back in the 1950s, when full expressway plans were first published, instantly provoking dismayed protest from those who saw the impending destruction of Overton Park — what if one editor had similarly reflected? What if a headline had then read "Cancel The Overton Park Expressway" because Memphis doesn't want or need it.

Other portions of the current editorial apply also to the proposed park expressway. For example: "As City Council members and others have asked questions, it does not look so good." In 1968, too, the Overton Park expressway did not "look so good" to the new City Council. Thus on March 5 of that year they voted unanimously against an expressway through the park.

The story of how they recanted a few weeks later may be a microcosm and a symbol of Memphis' political, social and economic regression during the past decade.

Memphis was in the throes of the sanitation workers' strike. Conflicts already were swelling into the crescendo that was to climax in the assassination of Martin Luther King, followed by months of unrest. During that period pressures upon the council to reverse its expressway decision were unbelievable, including "authoritative" implications that if I-40 were not completed Memphis would lose the new

bridge. Hardly surprising then that on April 4 the council reversed itself.

Though the Overton Park expressway has been repeatedly ruled illegal by the courts and by transportation secretaries, local interests have advocated ignoring, circumventing, and even changing the laws which had been enacted by Congress to protect the people from those self-interested forces which continue to threaten Overton Park.

Let the unfinished ends of I-40 stand as a monument to a city which, on the brink of a dangerous mistake, had courage to change its mind. It really is time to drop the Overton Park plan.

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