

Rhodes College Digital Archives - DLynx

"The Highway Juggernaut (Cont.)"

Item Type	Article
Authors	Wicker, Tom
Publisher	New York Times
Rights	All rights reserved. The accompanying digital objects and associated documentation are provided for online research and access purposes. Permission to use, copy, modify, distribute and present this digital object and the accompanying documentation, without fee, and without written agreement, is hereby granted for educational, non-commercial purposes only. The Rhodes College Archives and Special Collections reserves the right to decide what constitutes educational and commercial use. In all instances of use, acknowledgement must be given to Rhodes College Archives Digital Repository, Memphis, TN. For information regarding permission to use this image, please email the Archives at archives@rhodes.edu .
Download date	2026-03-15 18:06:38
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/29353

N.Y. Times,

vs. March 4,

1971

p.35 THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY

The Highway Juggernaut (Cont.)

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON, March 3 — The hounds are beginning to harry the flanks of the highway juggernaut as it rolls along toward the grim possibility of a paved America.

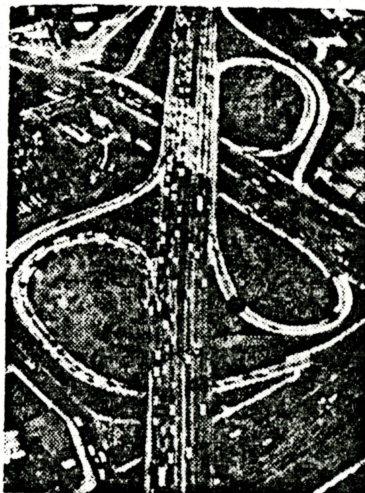
The latest check to its pollution-laden advance was administered by the Supreme Court, a welcome recruit to the cause. The Court held this week that the interstate highway tycoons have not proven their unavoidable need to appropriate a 26-acre slice of a 342-acre city park in Memphis, Tenn.; in the absence of such proof, no freeway.

The law, the Court said, does not permit the Secretary of Transportation to authorize turning all or part of a park into an interstate highway because that would cost less or be more convenient to the engineers or present fewer obstacles to the bulldozers; rather the law permits Federal highway construction through parkland only as a last resort and if there is absolutely no "feasible and prudent" alternative.

The Memphis park route already had been approved by two Secretaries of Transportation, but the Court ruling means that the issue will have to be decided again, this time with appropriate public hearings. Justice Black, in a separate opinion, observed that the record so far did not show that the Transportation Department (in either the Johnson or Nixon Administrations) "raised even a finger to comply with the command of Congress."

That's the way it goes in the world of the highway juggernaut, or used to; now the people are beginning to catch on. What was originally intended, back in the Eisenhower Administration, as a high-speed interstate highway system has become an \$80-billion conglomerate of indus-

IN THE NATION



trial, commercial, construction and political interests. In order to keep the contracts rolling, the juggernaut has been pushed, not just between cities but into them—through parks, residential neighborhoods, business areas, historic sites—almost anywhere the planners have been allowed to get away with it.

But even motorists as avid as most Americans finally are beginning to realize that a freeway between the outskirts of Kansas City and St. Louis is one thing, but a freeway in the backyard or through downtown is something else entirely. Even an interchange for one of these smelly rivers of concrete can require seventy acres of land.

In the Washington vicinity, the Virginia Highway Commission gave "final approval" last month to Interstate Route 66 through the heart of the heavily populated Arlington suburb —

but, significantly, at the same time the commission employed an environmental planner to conduct a quarter-million dollar study of how to ease the impact of the freeway on the neighborhoods it will invade.

That was the tip-off that "final approval" by no means insures construction of a road first planned twelve years ago. The Arlington County Council opposes the project as now planned, and there is a strong citizens' opposition to a road that will not only be noisy and a source of pollution but will also rather effectively cut the community in two—all in order to dump more automobiles into the overcrowded streets of Washington.

Even the Arlington area Congressman, Joel Broyhill, a strong freeway advocate, may be thinking again. Last year he supported Congressional action in holding up funds for District of Columbia subway construction until the district complied with Congressional directives to build something called the North Central Freeway through the heart of the inner city. But last week Mr. Broyhill told a radio interviewer:

"What the District of Columbia has done up to this point puts them in compliance with the 1970 act . . . so it just naturally follows that the funds will be released"—perhaps within thirty or forty days.

This had no direct connection with the I-66 controversy, but it may well represent a new wariness on Mr. Broyhill's part, with his own constituents obviously up in arms. Indeed, citizen opposition to urban freeways is increasing everywhere.

But neither in Virginia, Memphis, Washington nor anywhere else is the highway juggernaut as yet in check—which is a primary reason why so little is being done to develop high-speed, efficient and comfortable mass transit within American cities.



LONDON
neighb
From t
could loe
most sen
to the s
of the p
emperors.
Someth

OPB 76-15