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# 155 Citizens Praise, Condemn Park Expressway Proposal At Public Hearing

By MICHAEL LOLLAR  
The variety of Overton Park expressway verbiage grew yesterday with arguments involving "pot-smoking animals," motorcycle gangs, racial equality and William Shakespeare.

When a two-day public hearing was over at 4 p.m., 155 persons had taken a verbal stand. Ninety-two persons urged immediate completion of Interstate 40 through the park, and 63 asked for another route or no highway at all.

Their arguments will be forwarded to Secretary of Transportation John Volpe within 15 days. Mr. Volpe is expected to make a new decision, based partially on those arguments, by January.

Meanwhile, Charles F. Newman, attorney for the Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, said yesterday if Mr. Volpe again approves the park route, environmentalists will resume their courtroom protest.

The park route was first chosen in 1955, and the man who made that choice defended it during the City Hall hearing yesterday. William S. Pollard Jr., an urban planner and transportation engineer, argued, "It was then in my opinion and continues to be the single feasible and prudent alternative in the maximum interest of the citizens of the Memphis metropolitan area and of the nation as a whole."

When he chose the route, he was chief engineer for Harland Bartholomew & Associates, a Memphis firm hired to explore route possibilities by the state Highway Department.

One unexpected endorsement of the park route was by the Memphis branch of the NAACP. Its president, Leroy Clark, said, "Human rights should prevail when a need for progress causes a conflict between human and animal or property rights . . . construction of alternate routes would be more costly, resulting in the usual inequitable sharing of the tax burden by blacks and low-income taxpayers . . . and

Negroes and low-income workers usually do not reside in the neighborhood of their employ, and, accordingly, require the fastest route of transportation."

The NAACP and others also argued that the proposed L&N Railroad alternative route should be discarded, since it would divide the experimentally integrated Vollintine-Evergreen community.

The more esthetic environmental arguments included a 50-foot banner prepared by Mrs. Sarah N. Hines. To be sent as an exhibit to Mr. Volpe, the banner is a paste-up compilation of newspaper articles and pictures dating from 1967, which chronicle fatal automobile accidents on Memphis freeways.

Mrs. William W. Deupree told the audience, "As my old

cook used to say, 'It's sho a sick dog who tries to spoil his own nest.' Park route supporters are "either blind or it's entirely self-interest," she said.

Rudolph Jones, consultant to the Shelby County Conservation Board, argued in favor of the park route, but he asked that about 50 more acres of inner-city land be acquired to expand the park in the future.

Duke O. Smith began:

"Now, listen. I'm tired of all this. I was 70 years old last Sunday . . . and I'm tired of the wild animals out there in Overton Park smoking pot and nouthing obscenities.

"Shakespeare wrote a play about this thing. It was called 'Much Ado About Nothing,'" Mr. Smith said.

Another park route supporter, Mrs. Stanley J. Smith, shook her fist: "I'm mad at tie people who scream ecology . . . We've fooled with this

thing for 17 years, and because it's fashionable to scream ecology at the present, a few people are jumping on the bandwagon."

Mrs. Smith said the last time she drove through Overton Park her car was rocked and she and her husband cursed by a motorcycle gang.

At the conclusion of the hearing, Robert C. Odle, development engineer with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, said the state

will advertise for bids in about two weeks for the northern, Interstate 240 circumferential expressway. A public hearing will be held her within 30 days after the bidding begins, Mr. Odle said.

Others in favor of the I-40 park route yesterday included Shelby County Commission Chairman Jack Ramsay, Shelby County Court Squire Joe Cooper, City Councilman Jack McNeil, the Downtown Asso-

ciation of Memphis, the downtown Sertoma Club, the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association and Mrs. Robert Shafer, former chairman of the City Beautiful Commission.

Others opposed to the park route included Waldo Zimmerman, a veteran park supporter, the 100-member local branch of the Sierra Club and the Student Government Association of Southwestern at Memphis.