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"New Try For I-40 Link"

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Download date	2026-03-12 05:13:10
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/10267/29584

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

A Scripps-Howard Newspaper

GORDON HANNA, Editor

Published by The Memphis Publishing Co., 495 Union, Memphis, Tenn. 38101

W. FRANK AYCOCK JR., Business Manager

Consolidated July 1, 1894 { The Memphis Commercial Established 1889
The Appeal Established 1840
The Avalanche Established 1867

Page 6

Thursday, April 25, 1974

New Try For I-40 Link

1. **FACING THE FACT** that Interstate Highway 40 through Memphis must not be left unfinished, Gov. Winfield Dunn will take an important step tomorrow. His conference scheduled with Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar is an effort to find a new and acceptable method of filling in the gap that now stretches across mid-city.

2. Recognizing that legal efforts to make the transportation chief choose an alternative to the rejected overland plan through Overton Park are all but exhausted, Dunn is now embarked on a fresh approach to the problem.

3. The momentum for a cut-and-cover tunnel through Overton Park has been growing. Dunn can give it new impetus.

4. **IN CONSIDERING** that solution, it is well to go back to the statement made by former Transportation Secretary John A. Volpe when he turned down the state's Overton Park plan for I-40 on Jan. 18, 1973:

5. "Among the possible alternatives which the State of Tennessee may wish to consider are the use of the I-240 circumferential combined with improvement to arterial streets, alternative routes such as the L&N Railroad corridor and a broadened use of public transportation facilities and services or combinations of the above to meet the transportation needs in and around Memphis. Apart from alternative locations, I am also convinced that a tunnel design would be less harmful to the park than the present design. Likewise it should not be construed as a finding that the 'no

build' alternative has been rejected."

6. The idea of not finishing the I-40 section has been firmly rejected by most local and state politicians, however.

7. Use of the so-called L&N corridor would disrupt a large residential neighborhood, and undoubtedly would meet new court challenges.

8. Depending on the circumferential I-240 ignores the long-recognized need for a way to move traffic east and west through the city, just as is now being done on a north-south section of Interstate.

9. Volpe obviously did not rule out a park tunnel as a "prudent and feasible alternative" to the proposal he rejected.

10. Also, going underground would overcome two objections Volpe did spell out, based on environmental legislation: First, the cut-and-cover design would keep the terrain open for use as parkland, and, second, it would meet noise restrictions.

11. And, as we have said many times, it is still the logical route between the two points where I-40 now comes to the infamous gap.

12. **REP. DAN KUYKENDALL** (R-Tenn.), a strong advocate of the cut-and-cover alternative, has recently sought to find out whether the Transportation Department will consider a package plan involving both route selection and engineering design. At this point he has not been given an answer.

13. That is one of the issues which Dunn undoubtedly will wish to discuss with Brinegar tomorrow.

14. But the real emphasis is on making the federal highway officials receptive to a different but determined approach to solving this 18-year-old problem.

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