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"New Talks Assured On Expressway Path," "Park's Preservation Is Urged By Overton," and "Commissioners Hope Park Will Be Unhurt"

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THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, MEMPHIS

NEW TALKS ASSURED ON EXPRESSWAY PATH

Leech Pledges Specific Data For Southeast Owners

MAP WILL BE DISPLAYED

(Continued from Page One)

lection of a particular route from the standpoint of the best interests of everyone served by that route, then we would have no authority to change it," the commissioner said.

In his telephone conversation with the Mayor, Commissioner Leech assured that every property holder affected by the proposed expressway will be dealt with individually and each will be treated fairly.

"As final plans and specifications are prepared, real estate appraisers will be assigned specific pieces of property to be acquired," the commissioner explained.

Orgill Is Critical

The appraisers will inspect property and discuss purchase with the owners. If a satisfactory agreement is not reached, each owner will have the opportunity to present evidence to a jury of view. The right of trial by jury also is afforded property owners. If a satisfactory settlement is not made by the jury of view, Mr. Leech pointed out.

Mayor Orgill criticized the Thursday hearing for failure to have maps properly displayed, and no previous opportunity given citizens to examine any maps.

"The meeting was not conducted in an orderly fashion and no explanation was given to justify the selection of the route, and the people were not informed that they would receive a fair price for their property," the Mayor said.

Commissioner Claude Armour said "I think the people should be better informed as to specific routes and given an opportunity to be heard on exact locations."

He reminded that he and Commissioners John T. Dwyer and Stanley Dillard, had opposed the eastern route of the southeast quadrant.

Acceptance Forced

"But we were overruled by the engineers," Commissioner Armour said. "Then, we felt that we had to accept their recommendations. I don't think that is right, but that is the way it is."

"We need expressways, and all of us want expressways. But it seems that if we object to the decisions of the engineers that we won't get any."

Commissioner Dwyer said, "As important as expressways are and as important as it is to the people of Memphis and Shelby County to get them, I think citizens should have ample opportunity to be heard. They should have all necessary information and be able to take any legal recourse."

Commissioner Dillard said, "Citizens of Memphis were not satisfied with the Thursday hearing. I think another hearing should be conducted and everyone who wishes to speak should be heard."

County Commissioner Rudolph Jones described expressways as a "subject of a great technical nature and lends itself to difficult understanding . . . I feel

that it is almost as revolutionary in its effect on our daily transportation problems as atomic energy."

'Invasion' Felt By Some

He said the concept of expressways "leaves the impression with the people that it is an invasion of our private lives and represents an unfair regimentation. Most of us are inclined not to favor drastic changes."

The commissioner noted that expressways had been accepted in other communities and that increased vehicle registrations make the facilities needed here.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the State Highway Commission and Federal Bureau of Public Roads are sincerely endeavoring to alleviate our traffic problems in a practical manner and I regret that it is thought by so many people to be an unfair encroachment of their free way of life," he said.

Mr. Jones said the city and county are interested in fair treatment for all property owners. He feels that once citizens are fully informed, all who are fair-minded will hold no prejudice against expressways.

Commissioner Henry Loeb reiterated his stand for another public hearing and joined in requesting that a detailed map be publicly displayed. The map which Mr. Leech promised will be in the public hearing room in the Public Works Building, he said.

Fowler Urges Clarity

Recommending another hearing, City Engineer Will Fowler suggested the planning engineers precisely explain to property owners the proposed plan and then answer any questions.

Commissioner Leech said the hearings are conducted in compliance with a provision of the Federal Highway Act, which does not specify the exact purpose.

A mixup somewhat similar to the Memphis hearing occurred in Chattanooga last month, when Mayor P. R. Olgiati said he did not see the notice of the hearing until the day it was held, and County Judge Wilkes Thrasher said he did not recall seeing it at all.

The notice had been posted in an obscure place in the Courthouse and gave no details as to the nature of the hearing.

Policy of the State Highway Department has been to leave the hearings to the right-of-way attorney and his assistants with the commissioner and other members of his staff devoting their attention to other problems.

PARK'S PRESERVATION IS URGED BY OVERTON

Ex-Mayor Warns Against Use For Expressway

'NATURAL BEAUTY' CITED

City officials were urged last night by former Mayor Watkins Overton to "use their best efforts to see that Overton Park is not marred forever by expressways."

Mr. Overton explained that he was not opposed to expressways, but was anxious to see that the city's beauty spots are preserved. He attended the confused expressways hearing at the Courthouse Thursday.

'Sincere Hope'

The former mayor is the great-grandson of John Overton, who with Andrew Jackson and James Winchester, founded the City of Memphis in 1819. Overton

Park was named for John Overton in a public poll held many years ago.

"It is my sincere hope that the Memphis Park Commission and other city officials will use their best efforts to see that Overton Park is not marred forever by expressways," Mr. Overton said.

"Overton Park with its natural beauty is a priceless possession of the people of this city. Its value can not be measured in dollars and cents.

"It is hallowed ground—our heritage to our children."

'Priceless Value'

"Many years ago the founders of Memphis, for one of whom Overton Park is named, dedicated a beautiful promenade and park on our riverfront. It would today be of priceless value had it not been destroyed in the name of progress by granting a right of way for railroad tracks which could have been placed elsewhere."

(Mr. Overton referred to the railroad tracks along the riverfront. The city granted use of the area by railroads many years ago.)

"Cities all over America are

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SATURDAY MORNING, APRIL 20, 1957

trying to restore the beauty and glory so carelessly destroyed in an industrial age," Mr. Overton continued.

'Bureaucracy'

"I urge the people of Memphis to carefully consider the effects of this expressway on Overton Park, which belongs to them, before it too is destroyed."

"I sought to attend a so-called meeting on expressways at the Courthouse Thursday but soon discovered that no intelligent discussion was possible or wanted."

"Entrenched bureaucracy disdains the voice of the people but eventually the people will be heard."

Tentative plans for the proposed east-west expressway call for the route to slice through Overton Park. The tentative route would be just south of the

entrance to the park's nationally-known zoo.

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COMMISSIONERS HOPE PARK WILL BE UNHURT

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dren and adults off the right-of-way.

Commissioner Harsh pointed out that "Progress always is a disturbing element before it is accomplished. We believe the location of the expressway can and will be worked out to everyone's satisfaction without delaying the program. Where a citizen's property is harmed, the citizen will be adequately compensated."

"I do concur in what Mr. Dillard says," Commissioner Claude Armour said last night. I would like to see "every effort made to avoid Overton Park if possible."

Federal-State Decision

Pointing out that the "State and Federal governments have the final engineering decision," Commissioner Henry Loeb commented, "If enough citizens express themselves on Overton Park, we of the City Commission should certainly use every effort to let the state and Federal Governments know of the strength of that feeling."

Commissioner John T. Dwyer said he objects to expressways

Commissioners
oppose

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