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Expressway proposal rankles the citizenry

BY EROK

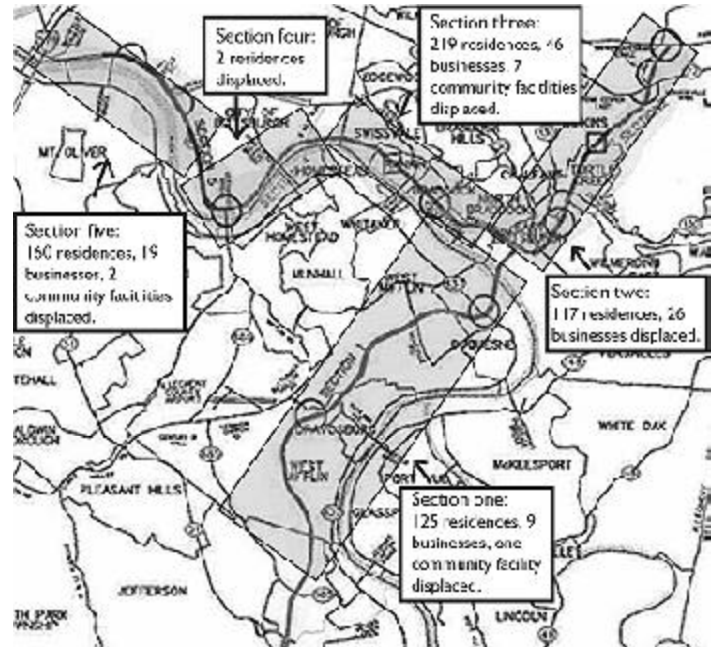
Only weeks after a scourge of floods hit the area, the final public hearing regarding the mammoth 11 volume, 1000 page Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed Mon-Fayette expressway, took place yesterday in a Hazelwood Elementary School's gymnasium. This extension of the original deadline for comment was due primarily to the public's reaction to the inadequate amount of time originally given. Citizens who wished to testify before the facilitators of the meeting, two representatives from the turnpike commission (TPC), and one each from the US Army Corp of Engineers and Mackin engineering, were given five minutes to present their piece, which was recorded and included in their final report.

Many citizens expressed outrage toward the distance of the turnpike commission and lackluster effort to communicate with the public, specifically with those communities most affected by the highway. We were given only "100 days to go over a document that took the Turnpike Commission ten years to write," decried Sandra Brown, an activist working toward the preservation of historic buildings. The DEIS is available for review only during business hours at a number of locations throughout the county, none of which contained a second major TPC

report explaining the alternatives to the highway. In addition, despite the twenty-two regional newspapers in which the TPC announced the public meeting, one speaker pointed out that they did not include the Pittsburgh Courier, the city's African American newspaper. This is quite an oversight considering the large number of black families that the highway will affect. Homer Craig, a lifelong resident of Hazelwood asked the commission bluntly whether the omission was "inadvertent, because being 3/5ths of a man most of my life, I'm sort of sensitive to these things." Many other speakers concentrated their efforts on the subject of environmental and economic justice.

"I don't think you could draw a line through a region that could hit more low-income and minority communities than the plans for the Mon-Fayette "The No-the nine reasons that he opposes the plan.

He also cited sprawl as a major concern, because "no plan has been laid out to protect older neighborhoods." This lack of regard for the older neighborhoods is reinforced by the TPC's lack of community involvement. The Hazelwood community has been working for some time on a process called the Hazelwood Initiative to plan their future in the Pittsburgh region. The turnpike commission has been invited to partake in planning and brainstorming meetings, but



The route of the North Shore preferred alternative, the route being touted as the best by the Turnpike Commission. Homes, businesses and community facilities that would be destroyed by each section are noted.

Source: Mon-Fayette Environmental Impact Statement.

hardly deem it important enough to show up. On the rare occasion that they have attended, they simply asked where they would like the highway to go, not whether the community wants it or not. The DEIS does make a reference to the Hazelwood community plan, but they chose to ignore it. During an interview with Bob Hilliard of the Mackin Engineering Company, when asked if he knew anything about the section of Hazelwood that has been protected from development so that citizens can enjoy a walk in a wooded area, replied, "we have, on occasion, heard of that."

The landscape isn't the only natural amenity that is sacrificed for a quick ride to the airport and largely ignored by the DEIS. Air quality, comprising a mere three pages out of a thousand in the report, will also be degraded in these communities. Hazelwood activist Gerald Gardner pointed out that the report only addresses the increase in carbon monoxide. Other forms of pollution including fine particulate matter and ozone were not even mentioned because the EPA only requires a carbon monoxide prediction. Fine particulate matter carries carcinogens emitted by automobiles, and is especially damaging to the elderly and to



Making the roads safe for bikes

BY NATHAN SHAFFER

Nearly 60 bicycling activists tied up traffic during the evening rush hour on Friday August 30. The cyclists demanded recognition of their vehicles, forcing cars, trucks, and SUVs to acknowledge their presence and right to the road.

The ride's route snaked from Oakland in front of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History down 5th Avenue to Downtown Pittsburgh. The ride then crossed the Smithfield Bridge into the South Side. From South Side, the ride crossed the Hot Metal

Bridge back into Oakland, ending at the starting point.

The mood of the ride was festive as riders received cries of support from onlookers and sometimes motorists.

This critical mass was much larger than Pittsburgh's Critical Masses have been in the past. The organizers worked very hard to get more people out and were successful. The Critical Mass will meet the last Friday of every month at 5:30 next to the giant dinosaur on Forbes Avenue in Oakland.



Protesters tell Bush to go home

Almost 40 Anti-Bush protestors took to the streets the evening of September 1st to voice their opposition to G.W. Bush's visit to Pittsburgh on Labor Day. Marching down the sidewalk in several loops around Forbes and 5th Avenue, protestors were vociferous in their disapproval of the President's policies and what they see as hostility to Labor, the Environment, and Pittsburghers in general. Shouting slogans like, "You can't eat guns, you can't breath money, George Bush is a f—cking dummy," the group made it's views clear. Some signs read, "Fascism isn't good," and, "W Go Home."

Reactions from bystanders were mixed. Some cars honked in support while others disapproved. One Bush supporter harangued the march, calling the protestors, "Pathetic."

The march was shadowed for a short time by University of Pittsburgh Police, but a confrontation did not take place. The activists remained on the sidewalk for the majority of the march.

The march was quickly assembled from a teach-in concerning World Bank and IMF issues that was being held at Pitt.

- Nathan Shaffer



Planned toll road raising eyebrows around the city

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children, both comprising a large proportion of the Hazelwood population. The problem is compounded in areas with a significant percentage of poor and minorities, many of who do not have adequate health care. Due to recent events, most notably the flood in the South Hills that residents are blaming on the newest section of the M-F, and is currently being reviewed by an "independent" engineering company, the chance that flooding will increase has been on peoples minds, especially after observing the destruction it caused to homes and businesses a few weeks ago. In another interview with an

engineer of the highway, we asked him that, "considering the National Weather Service describes the Mon River watershed as one of the most flood-prone in the nation, what is the plan to control rainwater runoff after 65 miles of concrete are laid, creating a huge impermeable surface?" He responded that it is too early to assess the details of runoff, and assured us that we need not worry because "we're essentially laying concrete where it already exists." This was an especially surprising reply since the DEIS itself describes "the general character of the southern portion of the project [as] rural," and that in the preferred

north shore alternative, the highway will impact 1139.2 acres of forest land, 140.7 acres of range land, 64.8 acres of floodplain, and 12.74 acres of wetland. In short, they are taking the wait and see approach.

Most ominous was the refusal of the traffic engineers to admit that the building of more highways actually compounds the very thing that they are trying to eliminate, congestion. By allowing people to drive out to the suburbs easier, many of those that can afford to move there will, making them even more dependent on their car for transportation resulting in an increase in traffic. Every

engineer was quick to change the subject and dangle the carrot of economic development in front of our eyes.

As Homer Craig pointed out, one only has to direct your attention to Detroit, and all their highways and all of the dead businesses that were going to flourish because of these highways. Craig responded to the promise of jobs that the highway will bring to the region by quoting his father, a steelworker for 44 years, "had the unions been awake and watching the owners, we might still have a steel industry. So I'm not gonna follow any of these people blindly."