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The only fair solution to the parkway controversy - let's do it

April 6, 2005

In News Sentinel reporter Don Jacobs' March 27 article "Miles To Go" regarding the Knoxville Regional Parkway conflict, one of the 19-member Resource Team was quoted as saying, "those who are not committed to the mission statement should respectfully resign."

(No! Don't resign.) Open your eyes please. The mission is the very core of the controversy. My goodness, let's all stop for a moment and clear the ever-thickening fog so the right decision can be made. Remember the ad "Where's the beef?" Well, that's precisely the problem here. Where's the parkway beef - data? In 1971 the East Tennessee Development District saw the need for a "northern bypass" around Knoxville. Later the Metropolitan Planning Organization agreed a beltway was needed. Yet suddenly the mission got demoted from "beltway around" to "parkway through" Knoxville. Politics, economics and personal gain swung their swords and now people say resign if you don't agree with an altered mission. How sad and unfair is that?

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Opponents and proponents, listen up. Here's what's needed, and needed now. The studies have been done, the arguments made, now put all the facts on the table. The mission is a northern bypass (beltway) around Knox. TDOT must lay out all data including: the percentage of reduced truck numbers; the percentage reduction of all traffic; the parkway's ability to meet long-term traffic growth; can the area inside the parkway handle all the development that always accompanies a beltway; the number of existing industries that will benefit; and is the parkway the right solution job?

Then do the very same thing for the bypass that would skirt Oak Ridge (Blue Route). Answer the same questions and add the reindustrialization benefits to Oak Ridge, and the many existing industries, growth potential, and pay close attention to long-term. Take away all the politics, anger, prejudice, and personal gains, and simply match mission with facts and benefits. I implore Jacobs to do a detailed follow-up article giving the facts obtained from TDOT and the consultants and show us how the parkway and the Blue Route factually compare. Then all of us should accept the top runner and demand our Governor select it, even if it means waiting for money or seeking federal assistance. It's a given any route will uproot families, for progress has benefits and costs. But the cost must accomplish the mission.

I will whole-heartedly rally behind the best route. If it's the parkway I'll complain with every box I lift into the moving truck, but I won't be angry at anyone, for I'll know it's for the right reason, not politics, people with power, or the economic benefit of a few.

So "Where's the beef?" Let's end this needless and destructive controversy - life's beautiful and way too short. Look, no little column can accomplish a thing. Tell the Governor this is what you want done for fairness to every person affected, and spread the word. Send an e-mail message to

Phil.Bredesen@state.tn.us or write to him: Governor's Office, Tennessee State Capitol, Nashville, TN 37243, or call 615-741-2001.

How about we do the comparison? This is the proper and only fair way to decide.

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