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## Thought needed before past mistakes repeated again

By **ROLAND TERRELL**  
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Whether you are for the new Knoxville Parkway, alias the Orange Beltway, or against it, there are several issues that are likely to impact you. What are some of them?

Will the rural countryside be impacted by the parkway? Yes, it will travel right through the heartland of pristine farmlands, valleys, ridges, streams and homes in its path.



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Will it take a long time to build the 22-mile road? If you consider 15 years from the beginning of construction a long time, then, yes. You will likely need orange-barrel therapy by the time the barrels are removed.

Is it true that the Tennessee Department of Transportation has an arrogant and aloof attitude toward the public in its decision-making regarding highways? That is perceived by many as true.

Positively, TDOT has approached the parkway design process with a new-to-Tennessee context sensitive solutions process. Identified are residents and public and private agencies. Additionally, profit and not-for-profit interests are present. This could give an advantage to specific interests. In the majority are the agencies and for-profit interests. At this date, the CSS process has problems.

Significantly at issue, the process allows for the use of the "group-process trap," which enables TDOT to report that a democratic approach was used to make changes to the parkway design when future critics appear.

What are the hot issues underlying the parkway?

How many interchanges are needed on the 22-mile parkway expected to move traffic through the area? How about two? One on each end. If the purpose of the parkway is to move traffic quickly and safely through the region, why not restrict the number of interchanges and accomplish this goal? Numerous interchanges create traffic congestion and sprawl, thus defeating the objective of keeping traffic moving.

Will there be an increase in the number of cars and trucks on local roads if seven interchanges on the parkway are built? Yes. The local streets are ill prepared to handle the expected increase in traffic.

Who pays for the new expanded roads to meet the traffic congestion problems? Special interests are pressing for interchanges under the banner of economic

development. Just how many jobs will be created that earn more than minimum-wage salaries by businesses springing up at each interchange? Would these jobs not also appear on other potential routes? We need to know if we are asked to believe that the parkway means economic development.

Has a final environmental impact study been completed? No, it will take a year or longer before it is released. Knox County has been identified as a nonattainment pollution area in violation of federal standards for air quality at this time. Health organizations are reporting an increase in asthma in children because of our local ozone and air quality.

The Great Smoky Mountains National Park continues to have smog alerts and environmental issues, although not car-related. However, it is expected that the parkway will contribute to an increase in ozone and particulate matter from traffic; water run-offs in the Beaver Creek watershed is also a threat. Will we have to live with environmental issues and the parkway? Yes.

How do we measure urban sprawl and its impact? In a Smart Growth America report, Knoxville ranked eighth in the nation. This study measured sprawl as "higher rates of driving and vehicle ownership, increased levels of ozone pollution, greater risk of fatal crashes, depressed rates of walking and alternate transport use and no significant differences in congestion delays."

It concluded, "You cannot build your way out of congestion" (Schiller, The Trust for Public Land, 2002). Sprawl means more people, housing, schools, services and increased taxes to pay for the developing sprawl.

Finally, what roads do we take if a horrific event should unfortunately occur in Oak Ridge or Knoxville? The Y-12 Weapons Plant is a prime target. A recent hazardous spill on Highway 95 raised the security level and closed the road for some time. Did Anderson County and the city of Oak Ridge lose a valuable opportunity when they did not lobby TDOT and the governor for a northern parkway? Yes. Then, how will the planned parkway help or hurt all of us in a disastrous event?

Planning teaches us that, when you plan for one outcome, there are additional unforeseen outcomes being planned simultaneously. Interstate 40 was planned as a great idea to go through the middle of downtown Knoxville. A different plan 40 years ago for a perimeter interstate route that circled Knoxville might have avoided many of today's difficult issues. Faulty planning can be repeated. Can't it?

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