Environmentalists challenge highway plan

In recent editions, this newspraper has published the Michigan Department and the Michigan Department of the Michigan Control of the Michigan Control of the Michigan Control of the Michigan State of the Michigan State of the Michigan State of the Michigan State of the Michigan Control of the Michigan Control of the Michigan Environmental Action Council, one of the groups opposing a freeway. Here are excepts from EMEAC's statement to the Michigan Transportation Commission:

THE TONE of the department's pub-cation is advocacy rather than analy-

sis.
Unfortunately, it is characterized by what must be regarded as only a "sales pitch" and, in our view, fails to measure up to what should be expected from the professional staff.

We continue to feel that the freeway and its junior version, the (McConnell) "boulevard" would cause more problems than they would solve.

We are alarmed at the department's representation of the Vivian alternative and feel that, of the alternatives of the Citizens in Opposition (CIO) alternative represents the best balance, (Editor's note: MDOT refers to it as the "Rosman alternative," after Steven Rosman, chairman of the CiO.)

THE NEED "is evident," says the

THE NEED 'IS evident,' says the MDOT report.

The "evidence" is that there are 22 miles between adjacent freeways, that the local roads by and large conform to the landscape, and that the localities can not afford to reconstruct the local system (in order to meet a need still yet undefined).

Again, the department is convenient-Again, the department is conveniently neglecting to point out that a free-way would convert many of the local roads into "Rededer roads." While a free-way relieves traffic parallel to its path, it increases traffic perpendicular to it, and the fact is that new roadways generate several types of new traffic. . . .

THE COMPUTER runs assumed that future growth of the area was a "given" and that travel demand was also a "given" — which is to say the department assumed housing would not be affected at all by the freeway construction and, further, that the propensity of people to travel in the area would not be affected at all by the freeway.

would not be affected as any one re-way.

Thus, the department in practice takes both sides of the issue, saying that not only is the freeway desperate-ly needed, but it will have little or no effect on such factors as growth of the area or the number of trips in the

area. . . .

In the freeway description, the Black Spruce Bog becomes "so-called" and then is described as being "totally missed" by the freeway alignment.

While it is true that none of the pro-posed pavement would actually lie on top of the bog, the groundwater system of the bog would definitely be affected by the road and its construction.

"IN CONCLUSIONS and Recommendations" we find that the department claims it is the commission that has created confusion and stymied

nas created contusion and stymied planning.
We would like to suggest that it has been the department's steadfast refusal to even attempt to plan anything other than a freeway that has eliminated planning for any alternatives.

Reference to the referendum of 1978:

Reference to the referendum of 1978. Our review of the referendum results showed that less people voted in the referendum than signed the petitions opposing the freeway in the petition drive by the ClO in 1976. ... Most observers agree that the vote was not a vote "for the freeway." Lastly, several of the communities voting in that referendum would best be characterized as not lying in the path of the freeway, but rather occupying locations which the local officers believe might benefit from the access the freeway might provide.

WE SUDDENLY hear about the "professional planners and engineers" who have "been consistently in favor of a freeway." Incredible.

Can anyone read this report, or the "addendum" of 1977, and in good conscience regard them as "professional"

reports? A private enterprise consulting firm would be embarrassed to publish such an overt attempt at a "free-way sales manual."

In that same paraman l'agraph, we find 1955 vintage highway planning jargon alleging freeways to be conservators of lives and efficiency. The oversimplification of these statements is worse, however, than even the 1955 vintage planners would have ventured, since even then the design manuals acknowledged the interrelationship and feedback effects of freeways and "generated" traffic and growth.

(THE MDOT REPORT) touches the tip of the iceberg when it refers to sewers and their relationship to devel-

That sewer plans are not finalized yet, and in fact the now-shrunken Super Sewer was scheduled to lie almost directly under M-275/I-275.

Whatever justification for the free-way there is is largely based on popula-tion projections which assumed sewer installations which assumed sewer installations which may never occur, Quite simply, the DPW and the road commissions are usinge each other to support their own self-fulfilling proph-ecies.

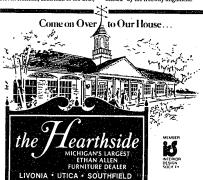
Lastly, the department thumbs its nose at the commission and advises the commission as to its legal area of concern, to wit: Route location is none of the commission's business.



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