Special Topic - Building Baltimore Prof. Garrett Power Spring 2000

THE BALTIMORE CITY INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

This paper will focus on the history and impact of the federal highway system in Baltimore City. A brief history of the federal interstate highway system in general will be discussed, followed by a more detailed historical look at the highway system in Baltimore City. This paper will focus on the different plans that were proposed for the highway system in Baltimore and why those plans failed or succeeded. There will be a brief look at the main players involved in both the promotion of the highway system in Baltimore, and those who opposed the highways. This paper will not draw conclusions as to whether or not the current highway system is beneficial or detrimental to Baltimore City today, but will present the two opposing views so the reader may draw their own conclusions.

I. A Brief View of The Federal Interstate Highway System¹

The history of the federal highway system in the United States can be traced back to its earliest beginnings in the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, which began the idea of federally aided highway development and programs. However, the strong push for large highways across the country did not come until the late 1930's. It was recognized that the state of the roads in the country would not meet the needs of the growing popularity and use of the automobile. President Franklin D. Roosevelt looked at the construction of highways across America as a means to provide labor to aid in relieving the pressures of the Great Depression. President Roosevelt's view of the highway system was to create six super toll roads. In his view there would be three main north-south routes and three main east-west routes. In 1938 the Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed which directed the Bureau of Public Roads to review the feasibility of Roosevelt's proposal.

As

The proposal from the Federal Highway Act of 1938 met with mixed reviews and in the early 1940's the focus was on the war effort and not building highways. However, President Roosevelt recognized the need for a highway system after the war so he appointed the National Interregional Highway Committee to again look at the need for a nationwide highway system. The committee issued a report in 1943 recommending a highway system of about 63,000 km designed to handle traffic loads 20 years in the future. From this report the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 was introduced in Congress. However, due to competing interest disagreements during the approval of the Act, it did relatively little to forward development of a federal highway system. But, the Act did allow the Public Roads Administration to work with the states on recommendations and proposals for a federal highway system.

Under the 1944 Act, the Public Roads Administration and the American Association of State Highway Officials developed design standards for the interstate system. By August of 1947 about 60,640 km of the interstate system had been designated, but construction was very slow in coming. Most states did not want to divert their portion of federal funds from other state needs to construct the highways. By 1950 very little was done, and the war in Korea again changed the focus of the country away from interstate highways.

The first funds specifically authorized by the federal government for the interstate system came from the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1952 which create a 50-50 matching basis, where the federal government would match equally all of the funds donated by the states for construction. Most states did not feel that this was enough and construction still moved slowly. By 1953 only 10,327 km of the highways system had been built.

In January of 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower was inaugurated. President Eisenhower long recognized the importance of a highway system. President Eisenhower's military career exposed him to the need for a large interstate system. In 1919, he was part of a military convoy from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco which took 62 days because of the poor road conditions. Additionally, during World War II, President Eisenhower noticed the military benefits Germany had realized because of their autobahn network of roads. After the war in Korea, President Eisenhower focused on the development of a national highway system. In 1954, another

Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed, but again competing interests could not come to an agreement on how funds should be apportioned to state and the Act changed little. The biggest change was a 60-40 ratio of federal funds to state funds.

Realizing that the 1954 Act would not go far enough President Eisenhower sent a new committee recommendation to Congress. At the same time Senator Albert Gore Sr. from Tennessee submitted an alternate proposal. Both proposals had problems which prevented them from becoming passed by both houses. But, Representative George H. Fallon of Baltimore drafted a new bill which seemed to take elements from each of the prior proposals. In Fallon's bill the new ratio of federal to state funds would be 90-10. Although this bill was originally defeated, it became a major component of a revised bill that was passed on April 27 of 1956 and became the Federal Highway Act of 1956.

This Act retained the 90% federal support for the cost of the highways, which was to be financed by a \$.01 per gallon gas tax. The Act had many desirable attributes to it which made it successful, such as: it created standards for all of the highways, prohibited service stations and right of ways on the highways, prohibited states from allowing over-sized vehicles, allowed the federal funds to be used to acquire property for the highways and if the state laws did not permit the acquisition of land through condemnation then federal law would allow the acquisition, the funds could be used for toll roads, bridges or tunnels as needed, and incorporated the Davis Bacon Act, enacted in the 1930's, requiring that prevailing wages in the area be paid on federal projects. This was the Act that got America "rolling."

II. THE BALTIMORE CITY HIGHWAY PLAN²

The history of Baltimore City's highways dates back to the late 1930's and early 1940's. As early as 1942 it was recognized that the city would need a "cross-town" expressway which ran east-west through or near the city. In addition to this, it was also recognized that there was a need for a beltway around Baltimore to connect all of the outlying suburbs. The Baltimore County Planning Commission proposed the beltway in 1949. Construction of the beltway began soon after its proposal and was initially funded by the Baltimore County taxpayers. But, in 1953 the

project was taken over by the state. During this time, many agreed that Baltimore needed a cross-town expressway but no agreements could be met and, therefore, Baltimore started to fall behind the suburbs in providing highways. As will be seen below, this delay would cost Baltimore it's needed cross-town expressway permanently.

Although the beltway project had begun long before the Federal Highway Act of 1956 was passed, most of the construction would be completed only after the federal government dollars were put into the project. The beltway was completed in 1962.³ However, even before the beltway was completed Baltimore began to suffer. In the late 1950's malls were beginning to develop in the suburbs and some of the department stores in downtown Baltimore began to open branches in the suburbs near the beltway. This only added to the already existing exodus to the suburbs. In addition to the retail industry, many of the downtown factories and white collar industries looked to the large open spaces of the suburbs for relocation. A dramatic example of this is the Social Security Administration, which moved to an 80 acre site near the beltway, taking 7,000 employees and leaving 600,000 square feet of office space vacant in downtown Baltimore.

For many in Baltimore City government this caused great alarm and caused refocus on the cross-town expressway. As stated earlier the cross-town expressway had first been proposed in 1942, and there were 8 other proposals between 1942 and 1957. All were rejected because of questions of need, and because of disagreement as to where the route would be located.⁴ But, with the urgent need for highway access to Baltimore, to compete with the beltway, Baltimore had to move forward.

In 1958, Philip Darling⁵ became head of Baltimore's Department of Planning (DOP).

Darling likened the beltway threat to Baltimore as equivalent to the threat in 1825 when the Erie

Canal was opened, and he felt that Baltimore had to respond like it did when it started the B & O

Railroad. Darling's solution was a modern expressway system for Baltimore which was linked to
the beltway through a "radial" system. This, he believed, would allow people from the suburbs to
have easy access to downtown Baltimore, as the automobile became more and more popular.

The first of these "radials" to downtown began construction in the early 1950's. This was the Jones Falls Expressway (I-83). I-83 became a radial as an afterthought when the state

government decided to extended the route from Harrisburg into the city. However, according to Darling this would not be enough. Baltimore would need more, especially an east-west cross-town expressway.

Even though there were no solid plans for an east-west expressway in the late 50's, the federal government included it in the federal highway system. Recognizing the need for this cross-town expressway, Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr. had Darling review all of the old proposals and come up with a new plan for Baltimore City.

A. DARLING'S PLAN

Wanting to avoid the controversies which surrounded the earlier plans for a cross-town expressway, Philip Darling moved the east-west highway from the North Charles Street location south to Pratt Street, just north of the Inner Harbor. He felt that this route would better serve the Central Business District⁶ (CBD), and the industrial areas of Fells Point and Canton. Darling downplayed the role of the cross-town expressway as a "interstate" highway to try to eliminate any concerns that the highway would be congested with thru-traffic. His efforts in this regard were aided by the existence of the Harbor Tunnel, which was completed in 1957, and which most interstate travelers used to avoid the congestion of U.S. 1 and U.S. 40.

Darling took a novel approach to his design by discussing the plans with many public and civic agencies prior to releasing his report. This allowed him to receive endorsements for his plan before it was released. Therefore, he greatly decreased the potential for any controversies between proposal and construction that could delay the project.⁸ In 1960 Darling's proposal was released in a report called *A Study for an East-West Expressway*. He made this report as attractive as possible to aid in its approval.

Darling's plan called for the east-west expressway to enter Baltimore's west side on a route which paralleled U.S. 40. The highway would be an extension of I-70 (called I-70N) which would cut through both Leakin and Gwynns Falls Parks, through Rosemont, to a corridor bordered by Franklin and Mulberry Streets. The route would then turn south between Myrtle and Pine Streets and would turn east again at Pratt Street. The route would travel along Pratt Street, via an elevated freeway, separating the CBD from the Inner Harbor and connect with I-83 which

would be coming from the north. Additionally, Darling's plan had an expressway called the Southwestern Expressway (I-95) that would pass Federal Hill and cross the Inner Harbor on a fixed bridge which would also extend into the interchange of I-83 and I-70N creating a super interchange at the south end of I-83. The bridge over the Inner Harbor would have a clearance of 50 feet, which the Port Authority agreed would be adequate. After all three highways converged at the south end of I-83, the highway would continue southeast through Fells Point following a corridor around Boston Street and would eventually connect with the Harbor Tunnel Thruway (now I-895) around Boston Street. This highway going through Fells Point would be designated I-95. See Figures #1 and #2, #2A - #2F below showing Darling's proposed routes.

Everyone agreed that Darling's route would greatly impact many residential neighborhoods in Baltimore. Approximately 3,187 houses would have to be taken for the proposed routes. But, most civic groups including the Citizens Planning and Housing Association felt that residents in these areas would be better off moving because only 114 of the houses to be taken were considered "good." A large reason for this was that many of the residents in these areas were actually encouraged not to invest in their homes because they believed that their homes would eventually be taken in the highway construction that everyone believed was inevitable. The common consensus was that this project was a large "slum clearance" effort.

The only real opposition to Darling's plan came from the Hunting Ridge Community

Assembly and the Wildwood Improvement Association. Neither of these communities would be directly affected by the highway but they were concerned with the loss of land in Leakin Park. To appease their concerns Darling agreed to, and the City actually did, buy the Windsor Estate, which adjoined Leakin Park, so as to have no net loss of park land.

There was only one minor hurdle before Darling's plan could be approved for federal funding, and this hurdle would prove to be the downfall of a cross-town expressway for Baltimore. Under the Federal Highway Act of 1956, the Bureau of Roads required an independent consulting agency review and approve any of the DOP's plans. The consultants would have the duty of reviewing the feasibility of the plans along with creating most of the construction blueprints. The Department of Public Works looked locally for these consultants and chose a

conglomerate of the Baltimore firms J.E. Greiner & Company, Remmel, Klepper & Kahl, and Knoerle, Graef, Bender & Associates. All of these firms had extensive highway construction experience. The conglomerate firm would be called the "Expressway Consultants." ¹¹

Most felt that this review would be a mere formality in the approval process, especially because of the wide-spread approval the plan had received prior to its completion in 1960. However, this is far from the truth. Expressway Consultants made major changes in the plans, and more importantly did so without seeking the widespread approval that Darling had sought prior to releasing his proposal. After significant political maneuvering and bickering over the benefits and drawbacks of each of the plans (which will be discussed in more detail below) Baltimore's Planning Commission approved the Expressway Consultants plan for the highway system in Baltimore on January 24th, 1962. These changes would cause controversy and delays which would end Baltimore's hopes for a cross-town expressway.

B. EXPRESSWAY CONSULTANTS PLAN

Expressway Consultants plan for Baltimore's highways, which would eventually be called the "10-D" plan, made dramatic changes to the Department of Planning's plans. Like the DOP plan the 10-D plan was to have I-70 enter the Baltimore area from the west through Leakin and Gwynns Falls Parks, but instead of turning south in the Myrtle-Pine Streets corridor, I-70 would turn south further west at Fremont Avenue. Additionally, I-70 would continue south and link up with I-95 prior to its crossing of the Inner Harbor. This completely eliminated the cross-town expressway along Pratt Street proposed by the DOP. As in the DOP, plan the Expressway Consultants' plan used a fixed bridge for I-95 over the Inner Harbor, with 50 feet of clearance, which would link up with I-83. The route of I-95 after its link with I-83 would follow approximately the same path through both Fells Point and Canton, but would connect with the Harbor Tunnel Thruway (I-895) north of the DOP's planned connection. In all the Expressway Consultants plan would go through more neighborhoods and take more homes than the DOP plan. See Figures #3 and #4 showing the Expressway Consultants proposed plans.

Expressway Consultants cited many reasons for these changes. First, they stated that DOP's route went through St. Paul's Cemetery in western Baltimore and the city's right of

condemnation did not apply to that property and, therefore, it would be too difficult to deal with. However, Philip Darling had been negotiating with St. Paul's Church and in 1959 the Church had indicated that it would seriously consider moving the cemetery to a new location. Alternatively, Darling also had a plan to have the highway go under the cemetery. (See Figure #2D.) Second, Expressway Consultants stated that there was a power substation on West Pratt Street which would be difficult to avoid in DOP's plan, but again, Darling had plans for relocating the power station. Third, Executive Consultants claimed that the raised freeway along Pratt Street would require sinking pilings to a depth of around 125 feet to hit bedrock for the foundation of the freeway, causing unnecessary expense. They also stated that an elevated expressway would be an eyesore. Fourth, Expressway Consultants stated that a new building, already existing, would have to be taken down to meet curve radius standards for the federal system, although Darling disagreed with this finding. Finally, Expressway Consultants stated that their plan would be more economical because it would cost about \$213.6 million as compared to DOP's cost of \$237.3 million, but again, DOP claimed that Expressway Consultants was fudging the numbers.

The Expressway Consultants plans were not without their own problems. The problem which would hurt their plan the most was the fact that, unlike Darling and the DOP, Expressway Consultants did not try to, nor receive, a consensus of approval from all of the major civic groups within the city. They did not discuss their plans with any of the groups in the city, including both public and private groups. Without this consensus many of the groups which had approved of DOP's plan protested Expressway Consultants plan, and from there the fabric of this project began to unravel.

One of the many groups concerned over the new plan was the Charles Center Development Office. Expressway Consultants argued that by not having a freeway along Pratt Street the Central Business District could expand south, beyond Pratt Street, but the proponents of Charles Center and Darling argued differently. They argued that the elimination of the freeway along Pratt would weaken downtown because of the limited access opportunities to the CBD.

Another group which opposed the new plan was CPHA (Citizens Planning and Housing Association). CPHA strongly began to oppose the taking of park land in Leakin Park. Darling's

plan was to move his route slightly north to appease the civic groups but Expressway Consultants refused to modify their plans and kept the route going through the heart of the park. This failure to yield would permanently prevent I-70 from continuing any further then the Baltimore City line.

In addition to Leakin Park, CPHA and other groups, were opposed to the new route having I-70 turning south further west and, therefore, taking more public housing then the DOP plan. The public housing threatened by the Expressway Consultants' plan was called the Poe Homes. 12 These groups argued that the homes in the original Myrtle-Pine Streets corridor were run down and should be taken, but the homes in the Expressway Consultants Fremont Avenue route were of better quality and should remain. As civic groups, especially the CPHA, became more active, it was argued that this new route was an example of racism by trying to run out the blacks living in these areas of western Baltimore. In this same, area other civic groups challenged the planning of the route through Rosemont. This was a middle income community in western Baltimore, which was about 90% black.

Expressways Consultants plans for the highways in western Baltimore were not the only ones under attack. Many historic groups and civic groups attacked the plans because of their piercing the historic Fells Point area, and the impact the I-95 bridge would have on Federal Hill. The pressure from these groups was enough to convince then Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro III to reject these two routes.

These attacks on all sides, and the growing interest in mass transit systems in the early 1960's, effectively put an end to Expressway Consultants 10-D plan and left the city with no highway plans for the future. However, almost everyone recognized that Baltimore needed highway access to the CBD for its economic survival, so a new team was created to come up with a new plan. In 1966, Mayor D'Alesandro and the city organized a new team of highway planners. The Urban Design Concept Team was created and came into being on October 3, 1967, and was under contract to the Maryland State Highway Administration. The creation of this team was an attempt to appease the various public and private interest groups in the city. The team was made up of an outside architectural firm (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill from California), social scientists, and two different technical consulting firms (Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas and Wilbur

Smith & Associates), and they would work with J.E. Griener & Company (the only Expressway Consultants member still working on the project). The creation of the Urban Design Concept Associates team (UDCA) almost certainly put an end to Baltimore's hopes of getting a cross-town expressway because some of the new members to the team, including Nathanial A. Owings of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill were opposed to inner city expressways. The UDCA team eventually did come up with a highway plan for Baltimore, which was approved by the city in 1969, but met a similar fate to those plans before it.

C. THE URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT ASSOCIATES 3-A EXPRESSWAY PLAN

As stated earlier, the Urban Design Concept Associates was created in 1967 and was to come up with a new highway system plan for Baltimore.¹³ The make-up of this team made it very clear that Baltimore would have no cross-town expressway. The firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill was opposed to downtown highways in general, and the firm of Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Quade & Douglas was the main firm behind Baltimore's plans for mass transit.¹⁴ The stated goal of this team was to "assure that the Interstate System within the City will provide for the social, economic and aesthetic needs of the City's environments as well as provide an efficient transportation facility."¹⁵

Prior to the creation of the UDCA team, Baltimore was continuing with its original 10-D plans. On February 16, 1966, the Interstate Division for Baltimore City was created under the State Highway Administration to manage the construction and completion of the Baltimore's highways. On June 26, 1966 over \$6.5 million of federal funds was given to the city to start acquiring property in the Franklin-Mulberry Streets corridor. By January 14, 1969, the City had acquired 43 commercial and 496 residential properties of the 609 existing in the corridor. The majority of them were demolished and a few were used by the State. This caused the displacement of over 960 families in the corridor. ¹⁶

While the UDCA team was getting geared up the Regional Planning Council for the Baltimore Metro. Area adopted a new highway plan in their proposal for the Baltimore Metropolitan Region that followed the 10-D plan except that it split I-70N at the east end of the Franklin-Mulberry Corridor with one route going south to connect to I-95 and another going north

through the city to connect with I-83. (See Figure #2C showing and artists rendering of this bifurcation).

At about the same time, two prominent national groups, the American Institute of Planners and the American Institute of Architects, criticized Baltimore's 10-D plan as being socially, environmentally, and economically irresponsible. This led to the UDCA team contract being signed on October 3, 1967.¹⁷

UDCA's contract with the State Highway Administration had some very strict terms in it.

For example, none of the team members could "confer with or seek the advice or assistance of any federal official or agency," and all of the team members had to agree to not disclose any of the planning information to the public.¹⁸ This particular clause was probably used to keep the various private groups from organized attacks at specific parts of the plan to ensure its ultimate approval and completion. However, the contract was not air tight and much of the information was leaked out to give interest groups much needed information. Representatives of the firm Skidmore,

Owings & Merrill were credited with most of the informational leaks.

As suspected, UDCA strongly disfavored the earlier 10-D plan, and any plan which had a highway piercing the Central Business District. On August 22, 1968 UDCA reported to the Policy Advisory Board of the Interstate Division for Baltimore City that the 10-D plan should not be adopted. Specifically, UDCA criticized the plans two large interchanges on each side of the city stating that this would prevent sufficient ramp access to the CBD.¹⁹ Additionally, the UDCA criticized any plans for bringing I-70N through the Rosemont neighborhood in western Baltimore. They noted that it was a well maintained middle class neighborhood and its destruction was poor city planning.²⁰

UDCA came up with two different plans for Baltimore, neither of which had a cross-town expressway or any highway which pierced the Central Business District. The two plans were called 3-C and 3-A, and were very similar. Although the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill preferred the 3-A plan, UDCA unanimously approved the 3-C plan and on October 18, 1968 recommended this plan to the Policy Advisory Board.²¹ The Regional Planning Council studied the report from UDCA and preferred the 3-A plan and recommended that plan to Mayor

D'Alesandro.²² On December 23, 1968, Mayor D'Alesandro invited the Chairman of Movement Against Destruction (M.A.D.) Arthur Cohen to attend the meeting of the Policy Advisory Committee in reviewing the two plans. MAD was the old Citizens Planning and Housing Commission, which had become a well organized radical anti-highway organization, which was opposed to almost every aspect of the highway plans in the city. That day the Mayor announced that he approved the 3-A plan, and that I-70N would be shifted away from the Rosemont area.²³ On January 17, 1969 the Federal Highway Administration approved the incorporation of the 3-A system into the federal highway system.²⁴ Many thought that this would be the highway system for Baltimore's future and that the controversies are finally over, but as seen below, this is far from the truth.

As stated earlier, the 3-A system did not pierce the Central Business District but skirted it on its sides. Under the 3-A plan there were many changes which reflect the anti-downtown freeway sentiment of many of the UDCA members. First, I-95 was moved south from its Federal Hill location, and crossing of the Inner Harbor, to Locust Point where it would cross the Harbor near Fort McHenry. I-95 would cross the Harbor with a high level bridge with a clearance of about 180 feet. This would forever eliminate a link between I-95 and I-83. Second, I-70N would still enter the City through Leakin and Gwynns Falls Parks but would connect with I-95 near I-95's crossing of Washington Boulevard at the south east corner of Carroll Park. I-170 was to be a spur connecting I-70N to the western edge of the Central Business District by again going through the Franklin-Mulberry corridor. I-395 was to be a spur from I-95 to the south edge of the Central Business District which would connect to the south end of Harbor City Boulevard (which is now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard). The Harbor City Boulevard was designed as a collector and distributor bypass which would connect the main city streets to both I-170 and I-395. In the 3-C plan, which was not approved, the Harbor City Boulevard was to be a direct connection of I-70N to I-83 running south of the Central Business District. As in almost all of the plans ever proposed I-83 was to be a continuous route turning east and cutting through Fells Point and Canton and join I-95 near Boston Street.²⁵ There were many proposals with how to deal with the historic Fells Point area, and the 3-A plan had proposed a tunnel for I-83 that would be just south of Fells Point

in the Harbor. (See Figures #5 & #6 showing the different Fells Point Tunnel proposals. One under Fells Point and the other just south of Fells Point in the Harbor.)

It was commonly felt that these would finally be the plans for Baltimore's highway system. However, this is far from the truth for the battles were just getting started.

D. WHAT HAPPENED TO BALTIMORE'S 3-A PLAN?

After the 3-A plan was approved by Mayor D'Alesandro everyone felt that Baltimore had a plan for the highway system. UDCA was made up of social scientists, and architects, and highway consultants and was touted as a team taking the interests of all Baltimorians into account. It was thought that Baltimore's highways could now get underway.

However, at this time the community groups had discovered a new weapon to be used against the highway planners. This was the use of litigation in federal court. Although community protests and outcries were relatively effective, they could be ignored by the City if it so wished, unlike litigation. The effectiveness of the litigation strategy was greatly enhanced by the new federal regulations which had begun to sprout up. Some of the most important new regulations were: The Environmental Protection Act, The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA),²⁶ The Federal-Aid Highway Act,²⁷ The Clean Air Act,²⁸ and The Department of Transportation Act.²⁹ Examples of some of the requirements are that highway planners were required to prepare environmental impact statements for all of the proposed highways, and federal highways could not go through a historic cite unless "there is no feasible and prudent alternative." In all, the various requirements were complex and numerous, making it difficult to comply with and easy to attack. These attacks were used all throughout the country and especially in Baltimore.³⁰

In western Baltimore there were no historic sites or locations to be used to justify blocking any of the proposed routes, so community groups focused on the environmental and social impact of both routes I-170 and I-70N.³¹ The main focus of the attacks turned to the environmental impacts of the highways. The chosen battle ground would be the city line and Leakin Park. Using an acronym of then Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe's last name, a community group called Volunteers Opposing Leakin Park Expressway, Inc. (V.O.L.P.E.) was created.³² They were a relatively organized group which rallied public opposition to any expressway going through

Leakin Park. They printed and distributed flyers opposing the highway and focusing on the environmental impacts of freeways and cars, and promoted mass transit systems. The city planners tried to appease this opposition by claiming a \$4 million development plan for the park, but since federal funding for this redevelopment was highly unlikely the protesters found little faith in these promises and kept up the opposition.³³ This fight came to a head when Movement Against Destruction, joined other community groups, including the Sierra Club, and filed suit in federal district court against the Secretary of Transportation and the Chief of the Interstate Division for Baltimore City, Joseph Axelrod.³⁴ Although initially unsuccessful, M.A.D. was able to secure an injunction against the construction of I-70N through the parks until the city planners had complied with all of the pertinent regulations.³⁵ This delay caused the ultimate death of the I-70N plans.

As early as 1973, various political figures, the most prominent of which was Councilmember Barbara A. Mikulsky of the 1st District, began introducing legislation to all or parts of the expressway construction in Baltimore.³⁶ Although this legislation did not pass, there was no need for it to do so. The project in western Baltimore was mired in political debate and community opposition leaving it no where to go.³⁷ By 1981 only 1.3 miles of I-170 was constructed through the Franklin-Mulberry corridor³⁸ and I-70 stopped at the west edge of Leakin Park. The cost of completing the project had risen to over \$600 million and by the mid-1980's the project was officially abandoned and around 1990 the built section of I-170 was designated U.S. 40.³⁹ More than likely the only reason that this section was built was because of the demolition that had already taken place in the Franklin-Mulberry corridor. The City had to fill that space with something.

As late as 1997 this area was still controversial, in that some community groups had proposed a plan to demolish the existing U.S. 40 and back fill the area and rebuild the area with new homes. But, as this short section of highway is utilized by a large number of commuters (about 40,000 vehicles per day) and the costs would be quite large, the plans never came to be.⁴⁰

After the complete defeat of routing I-70 through Leakin Park, there were still plans in the early 1980's to connect I-70 to I-95 as originally proposed. That route would have been called I-595, but by the late 1980's that connection suffered the same fate and was abandoned.⁴¹

A similar saga was occurring at the same time in eastern Baltimore, at both Locust Point, Fells Point, and Canton. Unlike western Baltimore, eastern Baltimorians had another "ace in the hole" in their opposition to the highways. They had the historic monument of Fort McHenry and the, soon to be, historic district of Fells Point to oppose the highway planners.

Although the Locust Point community was not successful in stopping I-95 from being placed on Locust Point, they did have some victories. As stated earlier, the original plans for I-95's crossing called for a 4-lane bridge with a clearance of about 180 feet. However, the local community groups in combination with some City Council members, again including Barbara Mikulsky, were successful in changing the plans. On February 3, 1975, the City Council approved a tunnel crossing south of Fort McHenry instead of a bridge crossing, and I-95 would go through the railroad yards south of the Locust Point residential areas instead of through the neighborhood.⁴² This decision raised the cost of this project greatly as the tunnel would cost much more than a fixed bridge. This decision also ensured that other proposed plans of placing the tunnel actually under Fort McHenry would not be used.

Community members still opposed any plans of I-95 coming through Locust Point at all, but since this section of I-95 was critical to the importance of that major interstate, they had to know that their efforts would not be successful. So they had to settle with the victories that they received. In fact, evidence of the importance of this Harbor crossing is seen in its development process. Once plans for the bridge were completely blocked and the tunnel was proposed, then Chief of the Interstate Division for Baltimore City, William Hellman, organized a task force to expedite the permit process for the tunnel. He brought in federal, state and city agencies to conduct an environmental impact study before being required to do so. To avoid any potential future problems he also consulted with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers, by bringing them into the planning of the project instead of just submitting the plans to them for their approval. Hellman's efforts to expedite this process apparently worked as the permit for construction, most of the contracts were awarded and construction began in 1980, with construction being completed in 1985. With this effort by the planners, the local community had little chance to delay the project until it would be abandoned.⁴³

In the Fells Point area, the focus was on the I-83 extension. As stated earlier, the planners of this route decided to avoid the controversy of placing the route through Fells Point directly, so they decided to route it through a tunnel under the harbor, south of Fells Point. The planners hoped that this would appease the community activists. The planners were wrong. The focus of the fight in Fells Point was not on the environmental impact of the highway but on its impact on historic Fells Point, and the fact that even if a tunnel was used its entrance and exit would take some of the properties in Fells Point. The key in this fight was the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 which stated that the Secretary of Transportation could not approve "any program or project which requires the use of land from a . . . historic site unless there is no prudent and feasible alternative" and the planning had been done to limit the impact on the historical site as much as possible. This prompted the residents and community activists to fight to get Fells Point declared a historical area.

One of the major problems with the tunnel plan was how to build it without destroying some of the historic buildings. Mayor William Donald Schaefer⁴⁴ proposed a plan of removing the historic buildings until the tunnel is built and then bringing them back and restoring them.⁴⁵ Like the other plans this met with very little support.

This organized opposition would eventually be successful. Fells Point would eventually be declared a historic site and in 1977 the city lifted an ordinance which condemned 78 Fells Point properties for a construction project that would never come. By 1983, it was clear that the delay tactics had won and the I-83 plan would be dropped permanently.⁴⁶ The dropping of this project was a combination of waning interests in downtown highways, and a belief that the federal money (which would have had to be returned) could be better used elsewhere in Maryland. It was decided that the approximately \$1 billion federal dollars could better be spent on other highways in Maryland such as I-97, I-195, and I-370.⁴⁷

However, this victory was not without its costs. The traffic generated in eastern Baltimore by the industries in that area are now relegated to navigating the community streets, instead of being able to exit easily from the area via a highway. Additionally, the impact of this victory has changed the social fabric of historic Fells Point. Originally, Fells Point was a rather depressed and

poor community with many elderly and working class residents. With the designation of the area as historic the property prices and values have increased dramatically, thus causing the gentrification of the area, which many see as a drawback. Finally, and most disturbing, is the impact caused by the City itself. In 1966, the City condemned houses in Fells Point paying the owners market price for their property, with the idea that the expressway would be built and these houses removed. Then during the following years while construction was delayed the houses were rented back to the original owners. When the property was finally declared historic and was uncondemned, the City would offer the houses for sale back to the original owners at the now higher historic inflated values. An example of this is the City buying a house for \$10,000 in 1966 and then 10 years later offer to sell the house back to the original owner for \$41,000.

One of the few unsuccessful stories of community activism in Baltimore took place in the Sharp-Leadenhall Streets corridor, where the proposed I-395 was to be built. Unlike the other areas of Baltimore, this area had no park land or historic sites to aid in its protection. It was a depressed area where the majority of residents were tenants and not owners. What was commonly happening in this area is that the landlords were selling the properties to the city out from under their tenants. Therefore, there could be no solid organized opposition, and I-395 was constructed without much trouble. This 1.5 miles of interstate connecting I-95 to the southern end of the Central Business District was completed in 1982, and now serves Baltimore's twin stadiums.

Like I-395, the Harbor City Boulevard (Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard), did not receive any successful opposition, as its need was commonly recognized. Although it does currently fulfill its intended use of linking I-170 to I-395 it still serves a major function to the City by providing freeway access to many of the City's main streets. Harbor City Boulevard is approximately 1.5 miles long and was also opened in 1982.⁵² It is interesting to note that the St. Paul Cemetery, at the west end of Lombard Street, which was one of the arguments that Executive Consultants used to defeat the 1960 DOP plan for a Pratt Street expressway, remained substantially intact and Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. was routed to avoid the majority of the cemetary, even though it was modified slightly for the construction.

E. THE KEY BRIDGE

Not discussed in the above sections, but equally important to Baltimore and the interstate system is the Key Bridge. This was the last link of the Baltimore beltway (I-695) to be constructed.⁵³ There was little, if any, controversy over the construction of this bridge, as it did not affect downtown Baltimore, or any of its communities.

Originally, the Key Bridge was proposed as a two lane tunnel under the Outer Harbor. But, the costs of the tunnel would be too high, and it was determined that a four-lane bridge could be built for, approximately, the same cost as a two-lane tunnel. The cost would be approximately \$50 million. The bridge is 1.6 miles long and has a vertical clearance of 180 feet to accommodate the large marine traffic and naval vessels that use the Outer Harbor.⁵⁴

III. DISCUSSION

After well over \$20 million spent in the planning of Baltimore City's highways, only about half of the planned highways are built, and there is almost no hope for any future plans for highways in the Baltimore City area.

There can be no real argument that the federal highway system has immeasurably benefited American society. It has opened up commerce and travel beyond bounds that were even conceived 50 years ago. But, at the same time it has significantly injured the economic powers of most of America's major cities, including Baltimore. Philip Darling recognized this in late 1950's as the Baltimore beltway was underway. Its construction greatly contributed to the weakening of Baltimore. As an example, Baltimore's population peaked in the 1950's at just below 1 million, but by 1960 it was at 939,024, by 1970 it was 905,759, by 1980 it was 786,775, and has been declining ever since. It would be incorrect to say that the highway system was the sole cause of this decline, but it would also be incorrect to say that the highway system did not greatly contribute to this decline.

In Baltimore, an argument persists on whether or not Baltimore would have faired better as an economic and social power had it built a cross-town expressway. Depending on one's point of view Baltimore has been saved, or Baltimore has be irreparably harmed by the failure to build the planned highways.

One can site examples of how cities such as Boston and Sydney have developed prime waterfront entertainment centers with the presence of a raised highway, but what is to say Baltimore could have done the same thing. It is highly unlikely that much of the current Inner Harbor facilities, such as the Aquarium, Harbor Inn at Pier V, or the Power Station would exist if a cross-town expressway was constructed. Certainly Fells Point would not be the tourist center that it is if I-83 were to cut through its center. But, at the same time it could be argued that Charles Center, and downtown Baltimore would have been much more successful had there been easy access from the beltway and the suburbs, allowing large employers to remain downtown and not seek the wide expanses of land around the beltway.

Therefore, for one to declare Baltimore's struggle against downtown highways to be a success or not, depends on one's view of what is important to Baltimore: its tourism or economic power. It is not clear if Baltimore could have had both, and reached a happy medium between the two, but what is clear is that Baltimore's population is still decreasing, causing a continued weakening of its economic and political force in Maryland. If this trend continues, the question then becomes: "Can this trend be reversed, and are highways the answer?" Although the future of Baltimore is well beyond the scope of this essay, it seems that Baltimore must do something, and should look at all of its options. This may include providing more access to downtown to try to bring industry back to the Central Business District. This access can be provided by a cross-town expressway. It is not clear whether any of the above proposed plans would have changed the history of Baltimore, but what is clear is that access to Baltimore's downtown is difficult and mired with traffic hassles daily, and that the population and tax base of Baltimore City is declining.

Terry Wikberg

¹ The majority of the information in the following section was obtained from the following articles: Richard F. Weingroff, Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System (last modified Summer 1996) http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su10.htm and Wendell Cox & Jean Lowe, 40 Years of the US

Interstate Highway System: An Analysis, The Best Investment a Nation Ever Made (last updated June 1996) http://www.publicpurpose.com/freeway1.htm>.

- ² See Michael P. McCarthy, *Baltimore's Highway Wars Revisited*, MARYLAND HISTORICAL MAGAZINE, Vol. 93, No. 2, 137-57 (Summer 1998) and Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/ kozelsm/Balt_Early_Expwy_Plan.html> for the majority of the information in the following Section and Sections A and B.
- ³ Note, that the Baltimore County beltway was completed in 1962, and the final complete loop was not completed until 1977 when the Key Bridge was completed over the Outer Harbor making the complete circle around the city.

 ⁴ Many of the plans had the cross-town expressway going through the residential neighborhoods of North Charles

 Street, which was primarily an affluent white community, causing these plans to never get for beyond a proposal
- Street, which was primarily an affluent white community, causing these plans to never get far beyond a proposal stage. See Figure #1 showing in a dashed line the old proposed route for the cross-town expressway passing through the northern edge of the Central Business District (through the North Charles Street area).
- ⁵ Philip Darling was experienced in housing planning (as assistant director of Baltimore Urban Renewal and Housing Agency) and highway planning (Darling had a degree in civil engineering from Yale and a master's degree in city planning from M.I.T.).
- ⁶ "Central Business District" is a term which defines the area of a city which contains the majority of economic power for that city, including office, retail, and industry facilities.
- ⁷ The Harbor Tunnel is a four-lane tunnel under the Harbor which is on the now route I-895 (once called the Harbor Tunnel Thruway). The Tunnel is 7,650 feet long and was constructed in 1957. It was Baltimore's first harbor crossing and tunnel. *See* Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/kozelsm/BaltHarborCross.html.
- ⁸ Darling received endorsements from: the Committee for Downtown, the Greater Baltimore Committee (who saw it as a great benefit for their Charles Center proposal), the Association of Commerce, the Retail Merchants Association, the Port Authority, and the Citizens Planning and Housing Association.
- ⁹ There was some consideration given to a tunnel for I-95 going under the Inner Harbor but the distance was to short for the depth needed by the tunnel and, therefore, the angles would be too steep to be feasible.
- ¹⁰ The Port Authority agreed to this even though it would restrict access to some of the larger military ships that would sometimes dock at the inner harbor.
- ¹¹ Selected to head Expressway Consultants was Bruce Herman of J.E. Greiner & Company, who was a resident engineer for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and the project engineer for the Harbor Tunnel projects.
- ¹² The Poe Homes were the first public housing project in Baltimore. It opened in 1940.
- ¹³ See Movement Against Destruction v. Volpe, 361 F.Supp. 1360, 1373 (D. Md. 1973).
- ¹⁴ See James Bailey, How S.O.M. took on the Baltimore Road Gang, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, 41 45 (March 1969) (mainly discussing the involvement of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill in the Urban Design Concept team). ¹⁵ See Volpe, 361 F.Supp. at 1373.
- ¹⁶ *Id.* at 1372.
- 17 Id. at 1373.
- ¹⁸ See James Bailey, How S.O.M. took on the Baltimore Road Gang, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, 42 (March 1969). ¹⁹ See Volpe, 361 F.Supp. at 1374.
- ²⁰ It has been stated that if Rosemont was not 90% black there would have never been plans to go through this neighborhood.
- Nathanial Owings went along with the vote because of a threat that he would be fired if he did not. He had made public statements which upset other members of the team and they used this to force him to back the 3-C plan. See James Bailey, How S.O.M. took on the Baltimore Road Gang, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, 44 (March 1969).
- ²² See Volpe, 361 F.Supp. at 1374.
- ²³ See James Bailey, How S.O.M. took on the Baltimore Road Gang, ARCHITECTURAL FORUM, 44 (March 1969).
- ²⁴ See Volpe, 361 F.Supp. at 1375.
- ²⁵ See Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/ kozelsm/Interstates.html>.
- ²⁶ 42 U.S.C. § 4331 et seq.
- ²⁷ 23 U.S.C. § 101 et seq.
- ²⁸ 42 U.S.C. § 1857 et seq.
- ²⁹ 49 U.S.C. § 1651 et seq.
- ³⁰ See e.g., Movement Against Destruction v. Volpe, 361 F.Supp. 1360 (D. Md. 1973); Movement Against Destruction v. Trainor, 400 F.Supp. 533 (D. Md. 1975); and Greenspon v. Federal Highway Administration, 488

- F.Supp. 1364 (D. Md. 1980). See also TOM LEWIS, DIVIDED HIGHWAYS 179-210 (1997) (discussing the tactics used in New Orleans to stop a elevated freeway along the river front near the French Quarter, and the evolution of litigation as a strategy to block inner-city highways).
- ³¹ Note that since Mayor D'Alesandro did not approve of I-70 going through the Rosemont neighborhood much of the "wind" was taken out of the "sails" of those community groups who argued that the plan for western Baltimore was racist. These arguments were still made but had less of an impact then the environmental impact of the highway.
- ³² V.O.L.P.E. was created in the summer of 1971. See T. Lee Hughes, V.O.L.P.E. a Road Block, Opposes Expressway Through Leakin Park, NEWS AMERICAN, August 22, 1971.
- ³³ See V.O.L.P.E. a Road Block, Opposes Expressway through Leakin Park, T. Lee Hughes, NEWS AMERICAN, August 22, 1971.
- ³⁴ Movement Against Destruction v. Volpe, 361 F.Supp. 1360 (D. Md. 1973).
- 35 See The Expressway to Nowhere, NEWS AMERICAN, January 2, 1981.
- ³⁶ See David A. Hearn, Expressway Plan Opponents Cite Money Waste, More Car Congestion, NEWS AMERICAN, June 21, 1973.
- ³⁷ An example of the changing public sentiment with regard to highways in general can be seen in the political battles of the times. On September 15, 1970, Representative George H. Fallon, from Baltimore, who had a major role in the passing of the Federal Highway Act of 1956 (see previous Section I) was defeated by Paul Sarbanes. He was attacked by Sarbanes on his pro-urban highway position. This demonstrates the changing public sentiment with regard to the importance of highways, which aided in the ultimate demise of Baltimore's (and many other cities) highway plans. *See* Tom Lewis, Divided Highways 211-237 (1997).
- ³⁸ The 1.3 mile span opened in 1979.
- ³⁹ See The Expressway to Nowhere, NEWS AMERICAN, January 2, 1981 and Scott P. Kozel, Roads to the Future (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/kozelsm/Interstates.html>.
- ⁴⁰ See Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/ kozelsm/Interstates.html>.
- 41 Id
- ⁴² See Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/ kozelsm/FortMcHenry.html>.
- ⁴³ *Id*.
- ⁴⁴ Mayor Schaefer initially was a strong advocate for the Baltimore City highways. He even went as far as to write articles in the newspapers promoting the highway plans. (*See e.g.*, William Donald Schaefer, *Why an Expressway? To build City Muscle*, THE EVENING SUN, April 11, 1974.) But, even Mayor Schaefer's political power in the city could not change the fate of the Baltimore City highway plans. Later in his career, apparently recognizing the change in public sentiment, Mayor Schaefer became very pro-urban neighborhoods, and vowed to protect them from the highway construction plans. For an excellent discussion on the history of William Donald Schaefer, *see* C. FRASER SMITH, WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER, A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY (1999).
- ⁴⁵ Schaefer confirms plans to proceed with 3-A road, G. Jefferson Price, Baltimore Sun, May 26, 1972.
- ⁴⁶ See The End of I-83, THE BALTIMORE SUN, March 18, 1983.
- ⁴⁷ See Scott P. Kozel, Roads to the Future (Last updated October 24, 1998)
- http://www.richmond.infi.net/ kozelsm/Interstates.html>.
- ⁴⁸ See Linda Zeidman, The Baltimore Book, 139-142 (1991).
- ⁴⁹ Id.
- ⁵⁰ See James D. Dilts, Sharp-Leadenhall foes at the end of their road, BALTIMORE SUN, October 20, 1975.
- ⁵¹ *Id*.
- ⁵² See Bernard L. Berkowitz, City Boulevard: Boon or Abomination?, BALTIMORE SUN, May 28, 1977.
- ⁵³ See Scott P. Kozel, *Roads to the Future* (Last updated October 24, 1998) http://www.richmond.infi.net/kozelsm/BaltOuterHarbor.html>.

⁵⁴ *Id*.

APPENDIX - FIGURES & CHARTS

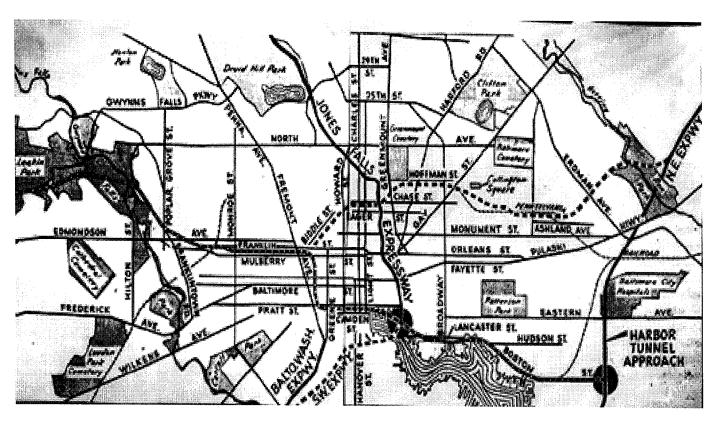


FIGURE #1 - BALTIMORE'S DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING HIGHWAY SYSTEM [PHILIP DARLING'S 1960 PLAN]

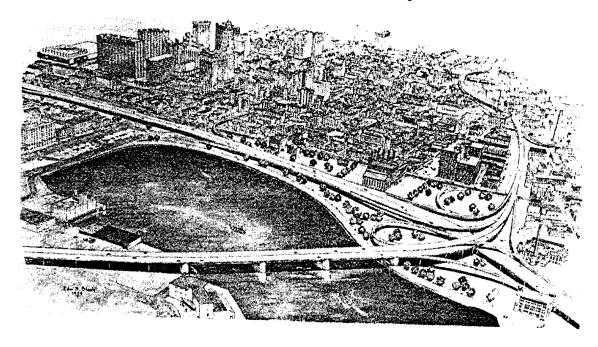


FIGURE #2 - ARTISTS RENDERING OF 1960 D.O.P. PLAN [DEPICTING INTERSECTION OF I-95, I-70N, &I-83]

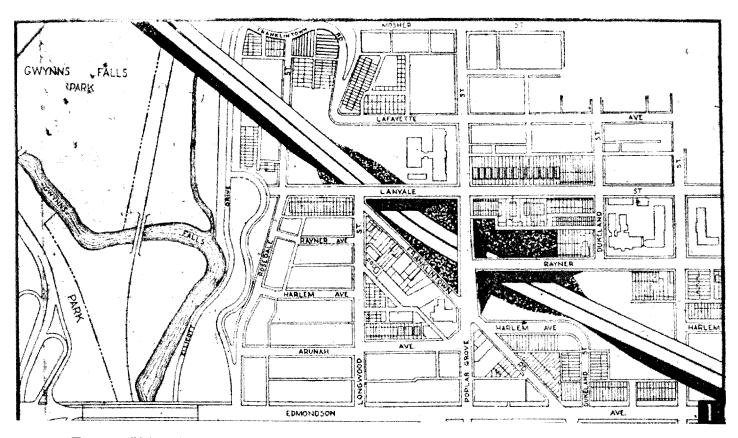


FIGURE #2A - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N AS IT LEAVES GWYNNS FALLS PARK [1960 D.O.P. PLAN]

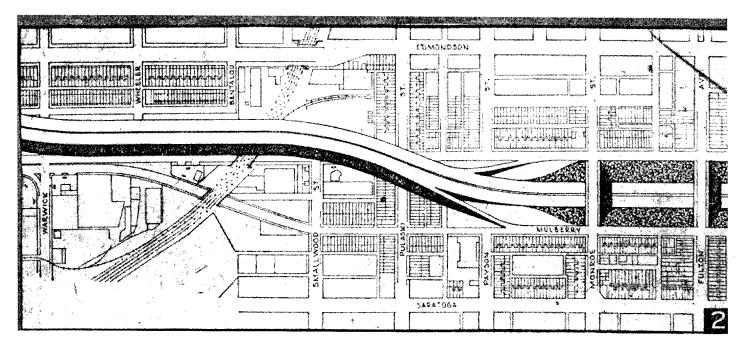


FIGURE #2B - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N AS IT ENTERS THE FRANKLIN-MULBERRY CORRIDOR [1960 D.O.P. PLAN]

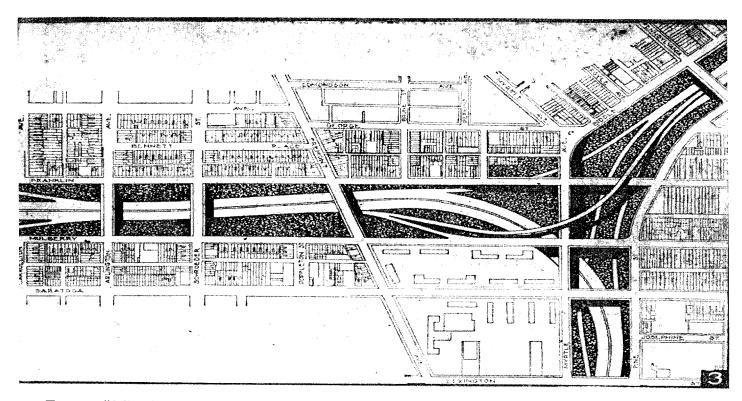


FIGURE #2C - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N AS IT TURNS DOWN MYRTLE-PINE CORRIDOR [1960 D.O.P. PLAN]

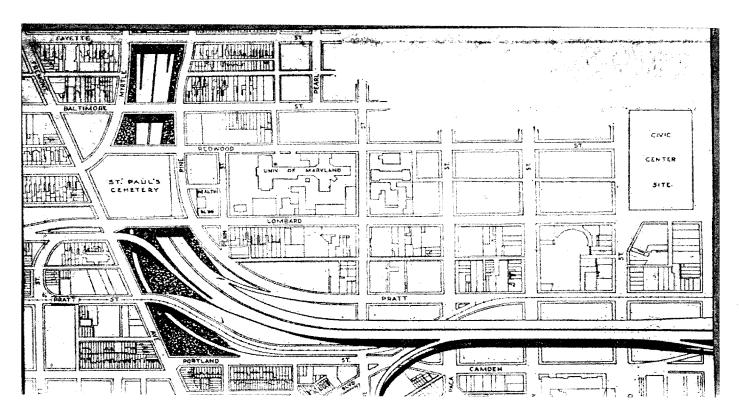


FIGURE #2D - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N AS IT PASSES UNDER ST. PAUL'S CEMETERY AND TURNS ONTO PRATT STREET [1960 D.O.P. PLAN]

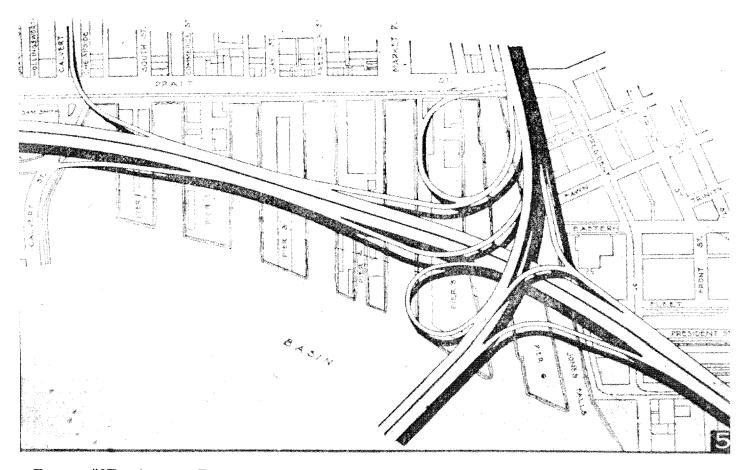


FIGURE #2E - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N, I-95 & I-83 JUNCTION @ THE INNER HARBOR [1960 D.O.P. PLAN]

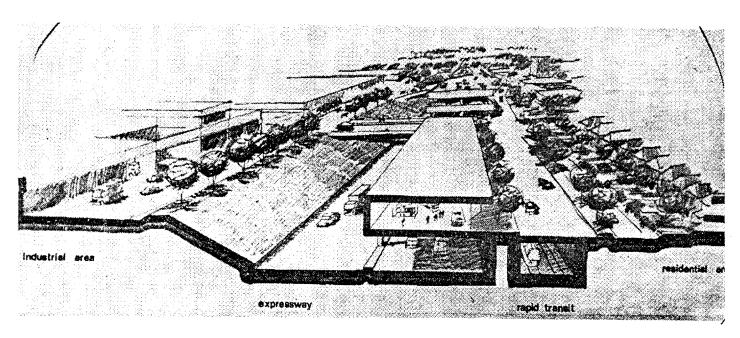


FIGURE #2F - ARTISTS RENDERING OF I-70N CROSS-SECTION AS IT PASSES THROUGH THE FRANKLIN-MULBERRY CORRIDOR

PROJECT ROUTE 10 D

MULBERRY - FREMONT - HAMBURG - BOSTON: CARROLL

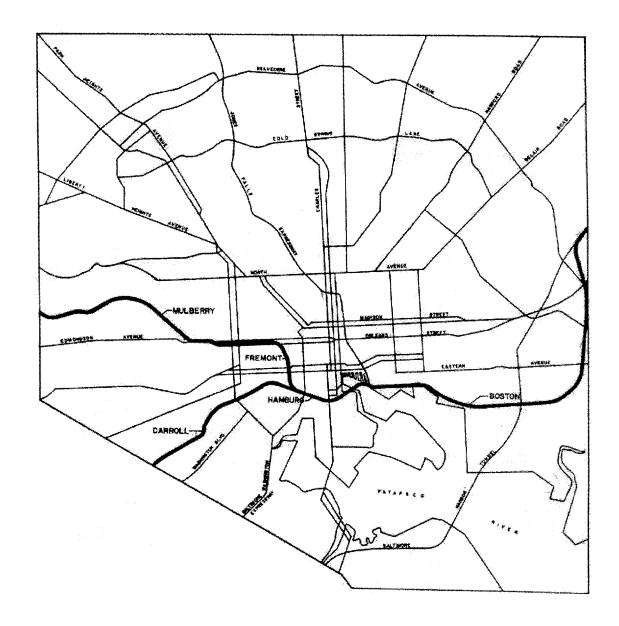


Figure #3 - Executive Consultants 10-D Plan 1961

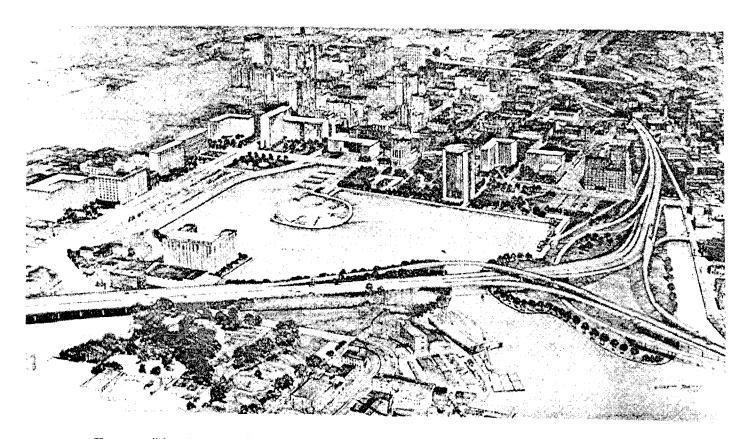


FIGURE #4 - ARTISTS RENDERING OF EXECUTIVE CONSULTANTS 10-D PLAN DEPICTED - I-95 CROSSING THE INNER HARBOR AND JOINING I-83

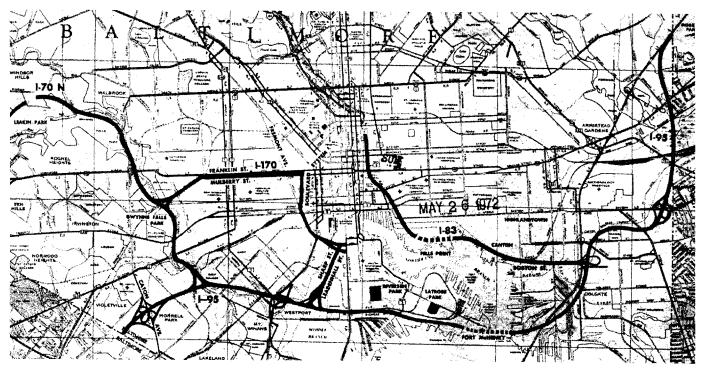


Figure #5 - 3-A BALTIMORE HIGHWAY SYSTEM MAY, 1972

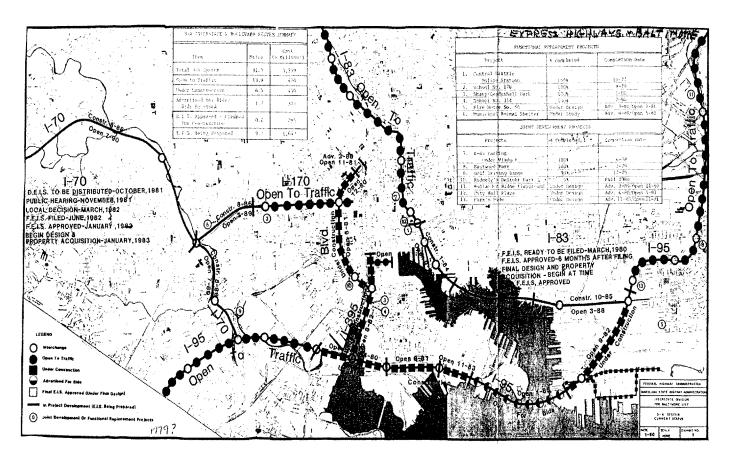


FIGURE #6 - URBAN DESIGN CONSULTANTS BALTIMORE CITY 3-A HIGHWAY PLAN [1980]

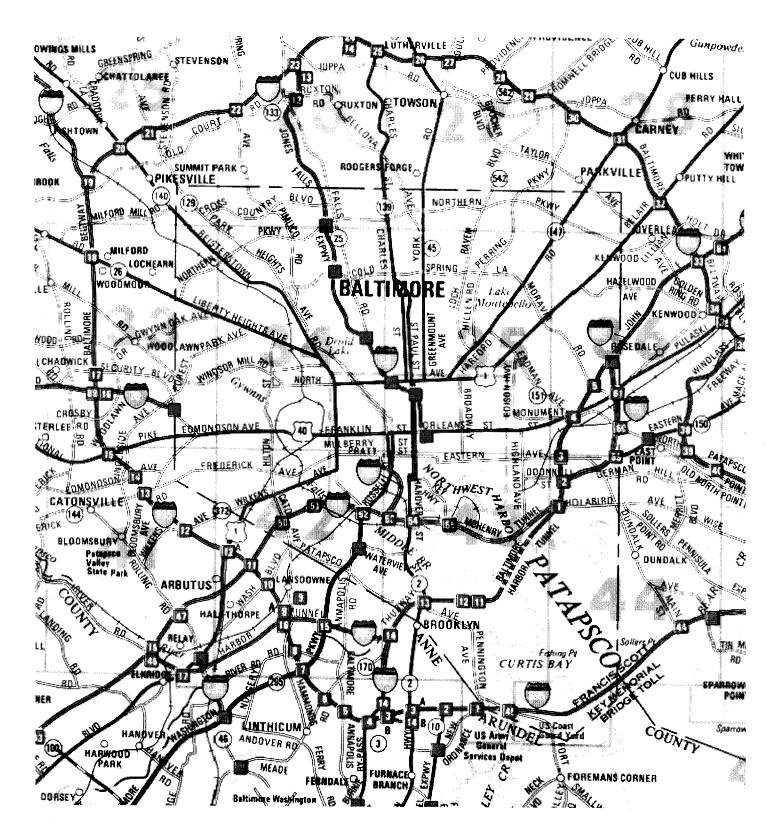


FIGURE #7 - CURRENT BALTIMORE CITY HIGHWAY CONFIGURATION

| ROUTE #: | LIMITS W/IN CITY | LENGTH (MI) |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------|
| I-83 | Fayatte Str Baltimore County Line | 6.70 |
| U.S. 40 | Baltimore County Line - Morvaia Rd. | 9.75 |
| M.D. 295 (B/W Parkway) | Baltimore County Line - Lombard Str. | 3.13 |
| M.D. 695 (Beltway) | Baltimore County Line - Anne Arundel County Line | 3.23 |
| I-95 (Md.T.A. Route) | SW Baltimore County Line - NE Baltimore County Line | 11.29 |
| I-395 (Md.T.A. Route) | I-95 - Camden Str. | 1.33 |
| I-395A (Md. T.A. Route) | I-395 - M.D. 295 (Russell Str.) | 0.65 |
| I-895 (Md.T.A. Route) | Anne Arundel County Line - I-95 | 8.44 |
| Morvaia Rd. | U.S. 40 - I-895 | 0.42 |
| Lombard St. | President St Greene St. | 1.03 |
| Pratt St. | Greene St President St. | 1.03 |
| Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. | I-395A - U.S.40 | 0.99 |
| President St. | I-83 - Fleet St. | 0.51 |
| Fleet St. | President St Boston St. | 0.84 |
| Boston St. | Fleet St Ponca St. | 1.93 |
| Interstate Ave. | Ponca St Odonnell St. Cutoff | 0.33 |
| Odonnell St. Cutoff | Interstate Ave Boston St. | 0.26 |
| Boston St. | Odonnell St. Cutoff - Broening Hwy. | 0.10 |
| Broening Hwy. | Boston St Baltimore County Line | 1.94 |

Total National Highway System Mileage in Baltimore City = 53.9 miles (Total Interstate Mileage = 28.41 miles)

CHART #1 - NATIONAL HIGHWAY SYSTEM ROUTES IN BALTIMORE CITY [UNDER 23 U.S.C. § 103]

(NOTE: THE ABOVE INFORMATION WAS OBTAINED FROM THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION WEBSITE AT WWW.FHWA.DOT.GOV/MDDIV/MDNHS.HTM)

