

Freeway Will Ruin Homes, Board Told

Residential Areas on 80% of Route, Legislator Claims

A 30-year-old freshman legislator, bucking urgent appeals for early construction of the Olympic Freeway, yesterday carried the fight against routing of the disputed superhighway through West Los Angeles to the State Highway Commission.

Thomas M. Rees of the 59th Assembly District charged at a public hearing in the State Building that 80% of the route recommended by the State Division of Highways would cut through residential areas of Rancho Park and West Los Angeles, none more than 10 years old.

The young lawmaker, who attended his first session of the Legislature this year, said that some 300 of the 500 spectators who crowded the State Building Assembly Hall were homeowners who would be vitally affected if the commission adopts the proposed routing.

Considering Extension

The session, conducted by four members of the commission's hearing committee, was called to consider the 6.6-mile freeway extension endorsed by the Highway Division and alternate routings suggested by interested parties.

James A. Guthrie, commission vice-chairman of San Bernardino, stressed that the policy body had not yet adopted any portion of the route which would extend from a point near La Cienega and Venice Blvds. to Lincoln Highway and Olympic Blvd. in Santa Monica.

Already approved, however, is the easterly section of the proposed freeway which will extend for 10 miles from the Santa Ana Freeway near Soto St. to La Cienega Blvd.

Called Most Direct

Large maps used as exhibits by the Division of Highways showed that the recommended route of the freeway's westerly portion would traverse a section of the California Country Club, cross Overland Ave. near National Blvd. and bisect the proposed San Diego Freeway near Sawtelle Blvd. south of Pico Blvd.

Paul Harding, assistant State highway engineer, explained that the route constituted the most direct line and, among other factors, would provide the best overall traffic service.

As for using the abandoned railway right of way along Venice Blvd. for the freeway, he told the hearing the property was not wide enough but suggested that it might be developed into an important thoroughfare.

Gets Frequent Applause

Rees, whose presentation was punctuated by frequent applause from the audience, followed a series of official and civic representatives from Los Angeles, Beverly Hills, Culver City, Santa Monica and other West Side communities.

Almost without exception they urged early adoption of

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OLYMPIC FREEWAY

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the route as defined by the Highway Division as a means of providing the Bay area with long-overdue freeway transportation.

Chuck Chandler, freeway and street design engineer for the Los Angeles city Bureau of Engineering, told the commission the proposed route is one of two westerly super-highways which have been on the city master freeway plan for many years.

'Of Greater Importance'

"The Olympic route is of greater importance to us now but we still urge that the proposed Santa Monica Freeway be given consideration," Chandler said.

Rees, who only the day before voiced his views at a legislative subcommittee hearing on highways, contended that the proposed Olympic Freeway route would split the Rancho Park community.

"It would constitute a wall diagonally across this area," he declared. "As it is set up now, it comes within a few hundred yards of three schools and just as close to a new grammar school and a new high school.

'Not Worth It'

"We all want freeways but this freeway is very bad. No freeway is worth the intrinsic value of a community."

Earlier, Superior Judge Stanley Mosk, who said he was appearing before the commission as president of the Vista del Mar Child Care Service Orphanage in West Los Angeles, contended that there were "more direct routes (other than the recommended one) that would do less damage."

The orphanage, he explained would suffer the loss of four of its 21 acres if the route is adopted. He said an alternate route would take less acreage but would eliminate three buildings, including a chapel.

"In any case, the freeway

would disrupt the lives of the 200 children the orphanage cares for," he said.

Other objections were voiced by Al Marcus, president of the Rancho Park Chamber of Commerce, and the Rev. John Taber, pastor of the Redeemer Baptist Church of West Los Angeles.

Additional opposition, including testimony from some homeowners who would be directly affected by the freeway, came from representatives of the Westwood Gardens Civic Association, the California Country Club Homeowners Association, a Cheviot Hills group and other speakers.

Supervisor Burton Chace, one of the hearing's first witnesses, urged the State group to give the freeway top priority.

Stand Reaffirmed

"Only last Tuesday the Board of Supervisors reaffirmed its stand in favor of the recommended route," he explained. "There is no doubt among us we want you to act. We think it's justified and urgent that the new freeway be constructed to serve the western portion of the county."

Other proponents included Mayor George Davis of Beverly Hills, E. E. East, chief engineer of the Automobile Club of Southern California; Clark Galloway, Southern California district manager of the State Chamber of Commerce; Ralph Farley of the Culver City Chamber of Commerce and representatives of the Los Angeles Downtown Business Men's Association, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Traffic Association and other groups.

Maurice King, Santa Monica City Engineer, told the commission the beach city's Council had urged adoption of that portion of the route in Los Angeles but asked that the re-routing in Santa Monica be reconsidered.