

Better City Street Projects Needed

OKLAHOMA CITY was among the first to have an outside boulevard around the community. The way things look, it might be among the last to complete an adequate city-circling bypass.

Back in 1909, when Guthrie was the state capital and Oklahoma City was just a thriving county seat, Grand Boulevard was created as an outside loop. Park Board Member Will H. Clark persuaded the city to vote \$400,000 in bonds and got others to donate land for a wide, curvy greenbelt.

Because automobiles were scarce then, perhaps Clark did not expect that scenic Grand Boulevard ever would be paved. Most of it is now, but in a variety of widths and road designs.

The length of Grand Boulevard has been reported variously at from 26 miles to as much as 39 miles. In recent years, writers who have tried to drive it reported trips of 50 to 60 miles, as detours stretched road time to as long as five hours.

Not all civic leaders favored the Grand Boulevard idea and it often

stalled in politics. Farmers planted crops on the right-of-way, squatters built shacks on it, and developers tried to include it in residential tracts.

City officials' spent a year one time trying to find out for sure where Grand Boulevard was located. Efforts were made to change its name. Forty years ago, a grandiose plan to erect monuments to its founders fell by the wayside.

Clark's idea of a city-circling boulevard still is a good one. Even though annexations have taken in territories far beyond the original country lane, the need still exists.

For any step of progress, some are opposed for various reasons. Seldom is there enough money available and officials have other places to spend what funds there are. Not everybody can visualize the potential value of long range road projects.

Traditionally, Oklahoma roads and streets have been built in bits and pieces, with contracts chopped up politically to allow more contrac-

tors to share the business. Unfortunately, Grand Boulevard is a grand example of how such a system produces failure.

Nevertheless, good roads boosters have advocated highways that "start somewhere and go somewhere" since the 1920s.

More than 40 years ago, a movement was under way to build a bridge across the North Canadian to connect South Broadway and South Shields. Finally, that bridge is under construction, but another link to connect with North Broadway may be stalled.

Perhaps Grand Boulevard never will be completed as a city-circling thoroughfare, due to other roads, commercial developments and obligations of adjacent property owners, but maybe some day an adequate expressway all around the city may become a reality.

We need to get with these street projects and get going rapidly. Oklahoma City is growing in every direction and traffic congestion is getting worse almost daily.