

City Growing, Congestion Zooming

OKLAHOMA City is growing and, the fuel crisis notwithstanding, traffic is becoming more congested by the week. Part of the overload may be attributed to shutdowns of important streets for construction, but obviously a great deal of it is due to more people going places.

The Central Expressway has been in the talking stages for decades. The objective has been to provide a limited access thoroughfare from bustling Edmond to booming Norman. It is needed more than ever.

The "Broadway Extension" was put together slowly, bit by bit, and after 50 years a bridge is being built across the North Canadian river to connect Shields Boulevard into the downtown area.

But people coming from Edmond, timewise, are only halfway downtown when they reach the 36th street bottleneck.

The Central Expressway project is being opposed on grounds that owners fear they might not get enough out of their property to buy replacements. Some claim abuse be-

cause they are poor or black.

Owners, including rental property operators, should be paid fair market prices, plus a reasonable bonus for inconvenience. The public needs the street and should be willing to pay well for the land, but should not be held up by civil rights activists.

The West Bypass is equally needed, because of fantastic growth in residential and business developments in the northwest area. Environmentalists and residents argue that this project would upset the ecology of the Lake Hefner area.

It should be remembered that the lake and its ecology were almost entirely manmade. The lake and its environs were designed for the benefit of mankind. It seems logical that the arrangement should be adjusted to fit changing needs.

Besides, the makeshift multi-lane road that presently serves that part of the city might be as damaging to adjacent property and the ecology as a well-designed expressway with adequate, convenient service roads.

The piecemeal construction of

39th street and crosstown improvements on Highway 66 would be comical, if the situation were not so costly and inconvenient.

Contractors may be blamed for apparently dilatory progress on construction, but state and city officials are responsible for the poor planning that leaves parts completed unused for months, or years, before the whole section may be opened to traffic.

The most congested section of the city may be the vicinity of I-40 and Meridian, where interstate, city, airport, hotel, restaurant, shopping and industrial traffic converge at one intersection.

Meridian could very well lose this unenviable title without being relieved. When the General Motors plant gets into full operation, its employees, Tinker employees and other traffic in southeastern Oklahoma City could create a jam beyond description.

If Oklahoma City is to continue to grow, the water must flow and the traffic must go!