

# City Needs More Expressways Now

**O**KLAHOMA CITY is expected to keep on growing for the remainder of this century. Therefore, more thoroughfares are essential.

We need them now. Growth rate has been more rapid than road building rate and traffic density is increasing in all areas of the city. You don't need a traffic count to know this. Just go somewhere.

A special transportation issue of "Oklahoma," publication of the OKC Chamber of Commerce, shows where the area stands in expressway development. A need for more planning immediately becomes obvious.

One reason is that cities which fail to provide access for business and customer vehicles stagnate, leaving long rows of dilapidated buildings and slums. Business goes where the roads are.

Another reason is the extremely long time that elapses between adoption of a plan for a thoroughfare and its completion.

"The Central Expressway could be complete by 1989 and the West Express by 1987," the reports says. "There are many details and poten-

tial roadblocks which lie ahead. However, 1980 was a year of great progress on these two major transportation projects."

By then, narrow streets already overloaded will become more so. Thoroughfares planned only for existing needs often are obsolete by the time they are completed. What will our needs be in 1989?

Right-of-way has not yet been acquired. Considerable property has been taken over by speculators, while delays have resulted from social concerns for homeowners who aren't there.

"The cost of highway construction is going out of sight," says the Chamber report. "It is estimated that more than \$200 million will be spent in Oklahoma City during the 1980s on three projects . . . The high cost of road construction is one reason why projects take so long to complete. There is only so much money which can be appropriated for road projects in Oklahoma each year."

It is noted that a special interim legislative committee has been studying alternate funding methods

for highways and streets. Several possibilities are being considered, but if changes are made they would not instantly project the revenue already needed.

"Hanging over the committee is the fact of a declining federal highway trust fund and its implications for the state's transportation system," the report states. This may be seen as a mixed blessing if less federal funding restores more authority to state government.

Meanwhile, roads and streets carrying excessive traffic are wearing out faster. This is costly and results in frequent inconveniences to motorists dodging around street patching crews.

Through traffic impeded by signals at clogged intersections consumes more fuel than on expressways, increasing cost and pollution.

Oklahomans are geared to automotive transportation. No other means of mass transportation is in sight that will get us to our work or wherever else we might need or want to go. Unless road planning and building is accelerated, we might not even get there by cars!