

Proposed bypass routes face local opposition

The proposed West Bypass, a highway rerouting traffic around the west edge of Lincoln, could pass through either Wilderness Park or the Yankee Hill community.

At a meeting of the Lancaster County Board April 16 both proposed routes, compared in a state Department of Roads' study, faced local opposition.

The original bypass proposal, which was approved by the Lincoln City Council and the County Board, would cut through the west edge of Wilderness Park, taking part of Camp Wilderness.

This route has been opposed by the Bluestem Chapter of the Sierra Club for over two years.

Federal level

Because Wilderness Park, a dense wooded area, was partially purchased with federal funds, the use of any of the land for the proposed route must be approved by the federal government. Representatives of the Sierra Club said that building the bypass through the park would be a violation of federal law.

The other proposed route between the Southeast Nebraska Regional Center and Pioneers Park would divide the Yankee Hill community in half.

William Patterson, representing the Yankee Hill

School, told the board that the proposed west route would add an extra mile to 32 children's walk to school, create safety problems, cut the community in half and take more land off the school district's tax rolls.

Another vote

Though the original east line was approved by a former county board, the present board is expected to hold another vote on the bypass in the near future.

County Commissioner Bruce Hamilton, who originally had asked the State Department of Roads to study a route west of the Wilderness Park area, said he was disappointed with the report because it deals with only "one line when there may be 11 other routes which could be drawn."

Edward Hailman, attorney for the Sierra Club, said, "The club believes there are other feasible and prudent locations available for the West Bypass which have not as yet received serious considerations."

Highway act

The Federal-Aid Highway Act 1968 prohibits the use of locally significant parkland for highway

purposes unless "there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and for all possible planning be carried out to minimize the harm resulting from such use," Hailman said.

The club favors constructing a west detour from Old Cheney Road to South Street.

The west line would cause problems for the Regional Center, dividing the administrative buildings and Pioneer Park, which patients use for recreation.

Lengthy delay

Any change in the currently proposed route could mean a delay of from one to three years, federal and state road officials said.

Several local businessmen urged the county board "to get on with it" because any delay might kill the bypass.

Hamilton said the board should make their decision. "If we decide against the east line, we delay the bypass; if we approve the east line, the Sierra Club will file a law suit," he said.

The county board expects to decide within the next two weeks where a West Bypass would be located.

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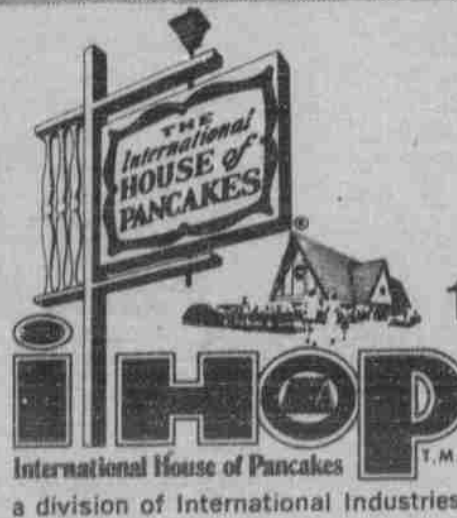
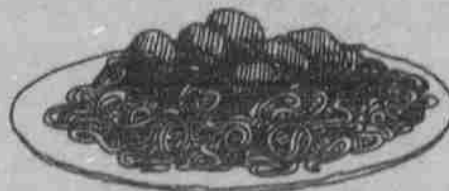
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