

NEWARK AREA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

158 Bruce Street
First Floor
Newark, New Jersey 07103

February 13, 1970

Commissioner John C. Kohl
Department of Transportation
1065 Parkway Avenue
Trenton, New Jersey

Dear Commissioner:

In late November of 1969, the Newark Area Planning Association was approached by a team of consultants from System Design Concepts under contract to the New Jersey Department of Transportation who were seeking to develop "a program for citizen participation" as a part of the study for the joint development of Route 75 in Newark.

At the outset it should be pointed out that the highway, as originally conceived, was not designed to service the residents through whose neighborhoods it would have passed; rather, Route 75 denotes a connector corridor, whose sole function was to facilitate the flow of traffic from the suburbs to the downtown business district of Newark, and back to the suburbs.

Route 75 has been on the books of the Department of Transportation for almost ten years and during this period the City of Newark has experienced a civil rebellion; the demolition of a considerable portion of the housing in or adjacent to the proposed corridor; the conveyance or abandonment of large tracts of land in or near the highway corridor; the relocation of large numbers of people into inadequate and insufficient housing; and the systematic dehumanization of a great mass of people.

The victimized inhabitants of America's technological wasteland designated as Newark, New Jersey, are physical documentation of man's inhumanity to man and the ruthlessness of technological advancement without human understanding and compassion.

The present trend in Newark toward community self-determination is one of the legacies left us by the failure of the planners of the sixties to recognize and acknowledge the human life affirming processes signified in the relationships of man to child to man to child, presided over by the universal order if man in his community is to be healthy.

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The health of any being is insured only so long as there is an equilibrium between the life-sustaining forces within and the life-sustaining forces without. Likewise, in order to maintain a balanced equilibrium among people, a government institution such as the Department of Transportation ought not hastily consider projecting an institution as disruptive to a community as a highway, without first consulting with the people whose lives will be affected most immediately and with the greatest impact, i.e., the residents, and achieving a true consensus of opinion.

The demolition of housing, the relocation of individuals, the programmed dilution of the primary mechanism through which the lawful and orderly processes of government in these United States is achieved, i.e., the vote, are consequences which necessarily flow from the construction of any highway in a highly urbanized city and necessarily are defeating to any type of local self-determination aspired to by a community from within.

The continued existence of the Route 75 Mid-Town Connector has the added effect of inducing landlords and authorities who control the land in and adjacent to the original proposed corridor, from building housing and rehabilitating dilapidated housing.

The development of a program of citizen participation was one of the goals sought to be achieved in phase I of the study. To this end, during the months of December and January, the consultants met with various groups, municipal officials, and other interested persons. The Newark Area Planning Association after weeks of preliminary negotiation managed to bring together an ad hoc coalition of interested persons from the local community which embarked upon formulating the minimum ground rules through which any meaningful program for citizen participation could be developed. These ground rules were presented to the consultants in the form of a letter of agreement which they were requested to sign and adopt. That letter is enclosed.

In response to the letter, the consultants indicated that they could not sign the letter, and they have adopted the position that although its contract with the Department of Transportation calls for the development of a program for meaningful citizen participation, it cannot act for the Department in entering this agreement. It can only be concluded, therefore, that if S.D.C. lacks the power to enter such an agreement, it also lacks the power to develop a significant program of citizen participation in the joint development and, therefore, that aspect of the entire joint development process would be a sham.

The phase I portion of the joint development study has virtually been completed. The parameters of the physical alternative plans have been fixed without any mechanism for citizen participation having been created, although the residents were available and willing to participate in the study if there had been some written guarantee that their interest would be effectively protected. Thus, the posture of the report in its present form does not reflect the human insight gained through the subjective experience of the people whose lives Route 75 has and is affecting.

Toward harmony and understanding,

Clarence Swann (People Council E.C.C.)

Ben Brown (Peoples Council E.C.C.)

William L. Yuen NEWARK AREA PLANNING ASSOCIATION

Herbert Jones (Peoples Council E.C.C. -

George Pontaine - Joint apprenticeship Program

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Froy [Signature] (Peoples Council E.C.C.)

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