

## **Urban Loop neighbors will still hear the noise**

September 27, 2008

Greensboro News-Record  
Greensboro, NC

Despite state Department of Transportation plans to redirect traffic to Interstate 40, the new stretch of Greensboro's Urban Loop will continue to be heavily traveled.

And that's hardly what loop residents bothered by incessant road noise and living in vibration-damaged homes want to hear. For them, co-existing with what they view as an obtrusive nuisance looks like a fact of life.

To its credit, DOT listened to their complaints and, as a result, will install signs routing some traffic back to the original I-40 path.

But for many commuters and truckers, the new 7.7-mile western loop, between I-40 and Interstate 85 south of town, remains the most direct and convenient route.

In addition, the eight-lane highway will keep the Interstate 73 and U.S. 421 designations. And, as work is completed on I-73 in other states, legions of travelers from the upper Midwest will choose it as their route to South Carolina beaches.

DOT's retrenching involves more than reacting to a neighborhood outcry. Complaints from motorists confused by I-40's diversion onto the loop also played a role in the decision.

Hopefully, the revamp that dumps more vehicles onto I-40 won't worsen congestion in the rush-hour-clogged "death valley" area near the I-85 merge. Highway engineers assure that the loop's next phase, already on the drawing board, will lighten that load.

Whatever happens, DOT officials deserve praise for listening to voices in the community. Too often, bureaucrats dig in their heels and ignore angry citizens dealing with life-altering issues.

Besides changing the route designation, DOT has approved additional landscaping measures that could block out at least some of the loop's relentless din. However, frazzled residents must accept that there are no guarantees any modifications will bring satisfactory relief.

The hard lesson learned: Vigilance begins before the bulldozers arrive. As the Urban Loop progresses, property owners affected by it should stay abreast of plans and possible impact. Relying on assumptions rather than facts, as did some western loop neighbors, could be a costly mistake.

Yet, if the Triad is to avoid the gridlock choking Charlotte and Raleigh, highways like the Urban Loop become a necessity. Unfortunately, the collateral damage always weighs more heavily on some than others