

## I-75

From I-8

reaction accidents frequently caused in Tampa when cars clearing a steep hill are unable to stop before colliding with slower or stopped cars.

**ST. PETERSBURG'S** portion of I-75 also will feature wider medians, more landscaped interchanges, as well as gradual curves and wider paving than in Tampa. Traffic signs will break away on impact. Interchanges will be 150 feet apart, rather than the 100-foot spacing of Tampa and downtown interchanges at Fifth Avenue N and S will improve the traffic flow.

Where I-75 intersects Booker Creek just north of Ninth Avenue North, engineers plan to intercept the stream with a culvert and carry it down to south of Burlington Avenue. Greater spans the culvert will control the creek's flow, eliminate steep side slopes and curb cutting.

The City of St. Petersburg has hired a Chicago consulting engineering firm to plan multiple uses for the I-75 corridor south of 18th Avenue N. Among possible uses would be housing, retail, recreation, high-rise apartments and parking.

**THE FIRM, H. W. Lachner Inc.**, also will determine the environmental and social impact of the highway on the neighborhoods through which it passes.

State Rep. Donald Crane, R-St. Petersburg, has recommended building two recreational facilities on part of the I-75 corridor, one near Fifth Avenue S and 28th Street, the other near 11th Avenue S and 28th Street. He expects the federal government to help the city and volunteer groups in paying for the centers.

"If we're going to put in some concrete, we might as well put in some green space with it," Crane said. He added, however, that the environmental damage I-75 will cause has been exaggerated by some. "There are those who would like you to believe it's a lot worse than it really is," he said.

One product of interstate highways always is a bundle of dead-end streets. I-75 engineers are planning a series of frontages to allow many residential streets to retain access to a major road. In other areas, some streets will be dead-ended deliberately to separate land uses — such as residential from commercial.

**NOISE POLLUTION** will be a key concern of those studying the highway's environmental impact. Hawkins says that at peak traffic periods in downtown St. Petersburg, with trucks comprising about 8 per cent of the traffic, the noise level on I-75 will be about 80 decibels, eight times as high as the level in a quiet residential area at night but only one-fourth the level of a cocktail party with a loud band.

There are many who think that no matter how the engineers try, I-75 will be a disaster to St. Petersburg's natural beauty.



The prime objection of environmentalists is that official studies of I-75's impact in St. Petersburg have been minimal. The northern and central sections of the highway in St. Petersburg were begun before the National Environmental Policy Act requiring impact statements went into effect Jan. 1, 1970.

And, so far, the impact statement for the northern section of the highway in St. Petersburg, from 28th Avenue S to the Sunshine Skyway, contains a survey of noise, air and water pollution produced by a highway that up to 100,000 cars may use every day. The report also concludes that the highway will encroach on Matanzas Park and the Skyway Boat Basin and that it is a potential threat to the quality of those waters receiving the government storm run-off.

**LEARNING** the opposition to the highway is the Red Flag team of the Pinellas Planning Council, which June 21 urged an immediate halt to I-75 construction in St. Petersburg until damage caused by the highway can be assessed.

Ross Ginn, the outspoken naturalist architect of the Treasure Island who heads the Red Flag team, says people who live and work near the highway may be uprooted by noise, air and water pollution, as well as "visual pollution."

He charges that highway planners usually don't look beyond the concrete ribbon they create, thus ignoring the serious effects the ribbon may produce.

"Every urban expressway should be an aesthetic statement," Ginn says. "No city has ever solved its urban malaise by creating more freeways."

Perhaps the biggest criticism Ginn and other environmentalists have of I-75 and expressways in general is the contribution the highways make to what Ginn calls the "urban smog" — the slow of cities into centers of noise, congestion, air and water pollution, crime and other pressures that make people generally unhappy.

**BUT SOME** ecology-minded persons like developer Robert Wray, a member of the city's Environmental Planning and Development Commission, think that I-75 will lower air pollution levels by eliminating smog-causing stop-and-go driving, which now is the only way to get through the city. The highway is expected to reduce traffic on heavily traveled U.S. 9, now the major north-south route in Pinellas.

Substantiating the notion that high-speed traffic finds the air far less than ordinary city driving, inspectors recently measured air pollution at the heavily used intersection of I-75 and 14th in Tampa and found it well below harmful levels.

Whatever the ecological objections, it appears certain that the highway will be built through St. Petersburg, but probably not completed before

**I-75 Plans Protect Booker Creek** Duff Photo

About the only barrier to construction to find other housing. Federal funds will be held up if the displaced can't find new homes. The relocation process is slow and tangled in red tape, but it is inching along. And so is Interstate 75.

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