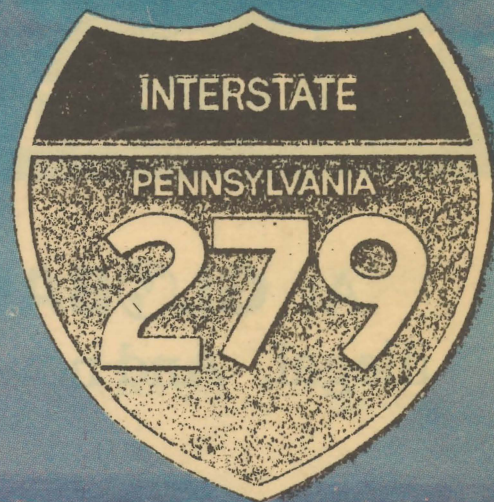


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NEWS RECORD NEWSPAPERS
September 22, 1989

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Drivers save time, trouble

By Alice T. Carter

News Record

PennDOT received its first commuter complaint concerning I-279.

An unidentified commuter called PennDOT District 11 Engineer Dick Skrinjar this week. She said she used to paint her fingernails while sitting in traffic on her 45-minute morning journey.

Now that she is using newly completed I-279, she gets to work in 17 minutes and has no time to do her nails.

A reporter for the North Hills New Record, who lives on Mount Washington, commutes in reverse to the traf-

fic flow. Once she clears the congestion on the Liberty Bridge, she travels I-279 northward in record time — saving a half an hour from her previous commuting time.

Skrinjar says "In the evening, people are joyous. They find they're getting home faster than they ever thought possible."

Skrinjar predicted that I-279 would become a time machine because it would provide commuters with more free time. While that seems to be true so far, Skrinjar says it's too early to tell for sure.

"People will ultimately decide how they will use the highway, so any predictions at this time would be premature."

PennDOT plans to give commuters and other travelers a month to try out the new highway.

The week of Oct. 16, crews will meter I-279, McKnight Road, I-79 and State Route 65 to find out how many cars are actually using which roads during various time periods.

After these statistics are compiled, PennDOT will know whether the opening of I-279 has reduced traffic on roads such as McKnight.

PennDOT grades how well a particular road handles traffic, using factors such as ability to maintain a constant speed, or perform lane changes at will. "It's an A level of service from what we've observed so far," Skrinjar said.

Statistics pile up on Interstate-279

By Alice T. Carter

News Record

PennDOT spokesperson Dick Skrinjar calls the Interstate 279 project the largest public works project in the history of mankind.

Just in case anyone out there is not aware of the magnitude of the I-279 road building project, PennDOT I-279 Project Engineer David Rocher and District 11 Locations and Contract Management Engineer Justin Smith, P.E., have compiled the following statistics.

- Interstate 279 is made up of 13.5 miles of superhighway, five interchanges and 44 bridges.
- Total cost of the project is estimated at \$440 million.
- The federal government contributed 90 percent of the cost of road building or \$396 million.
- Pennsylvania contributed 10 percent or \$44 million to build the road. That breaks down to \$3.66 for every person in the state.
- Estimated total labor involved would equal 3,179 laborer years.
- To complete the project a carpenter would have worked 618 years, a laborer 858, an iron-

- worker for 157, a labor worker for 512, a Teamster for 184, an equipment operator for 418, and an electrician for 134. The remaining 298 years of labor would have been divided between a painter, a pile driver, a plumber and a roofer.
- Some 507,000 cubic yards of concrete went into the construction work. That's the contents of 56,333 cement trucks. If all those cement trucks were lined up bumper to bumper, they would be lined up for 293 miles. That's the approximate distance between here and Philadelphia.
- You could build 34,000 cars

- with the 68 million pounds or 34,000 tons of steel that were used in the project. That's also enough steel to build six Veterans Memorial Bridges.
- The Veterans Memorial Bridge is the largest bridge ever built in Pittsburgh. At 1,050 feet long and 142 feet wide, it is the widest in the area.
- Some 20 miles of guiderail and 22.2 miles of fence protect drivers.
- There are 539,775 feet or 102 miles of electrical wiring.
- 18 HOV control gates will control traffic access to the restricted high occupancy vehicle lanes.

Celebrate I-279!

The News Record dedicates this magazine to North Hills motorists.

Inside:

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Ray Wilt profile	14
Engineer Rudy Melani	15
History	16-18

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Who will benefit?

Ohio Twp., Bellevue and Avonworth to win

By Teresa Price

News Record

Ohio Township, Bellevue Borough and the Avonworth School District all will benefit with the North Hills Expressway in their backyards.

The highway will allow drivers easier access to Lowries Run and Camp Horne Roads, Brighton Road and Reiss Run Road, which lead to those areas.

Other townships and boroughs in North Hills may see growth in housing, while some may not be affected at all.

John Sullivan, Ohio Township manager, said the township will flourish with new developments.

"There are hundreds of acres waiting to be developed," he said. "We think it's a prime area, especially around the interchange. We think it will foster more residential growth."

Unlike booming areas in the North Hills like Franklin Park, McCandless, and Cranberry in Butler County, Ohio Township's population is 2,400. Only four housing plans were built in 15 years.

Sullivan said he expects population to double by year 2,000 as a result of easy access from the interstate.

Growth in Ohio Township may

be a catalyst for increased enrollment in Avonworth School District.

Avonworth Superintendent Bruno Raso said, "It will definitely effect the district in commercial and residential growth."

Raso said the district won't notice short-range growth, but a lot of growth is anticipated in two to five years. The district's enrollment this year is 861.

"We're presently adding on to the high school and to Avonworth Elementary to accommodate 35 percent more students," he said. "We're anticipating that type of growth. We'll have the room."

Raso said millage in the district shouldn't be affected even if more staff members are needed for increased enrollment.

"Once we get more students, we'll get more aid from the state," he said.

Avonworth also takes in students from Ben Avon Heights, Ben Avon, Emsworth, and Kilbuck.

Farther north, Cranberry's building boom was under way while the interstate was under construction. Township population is 18,500 and may increase with the highway, said Jim Phillips, township manager.

Cranberry's building boom is a result of access to Interstate 79

and the turnpike. The expressway will become add to motorists expediency.

He said many real estate agencies will be using I-279 as a selling point. Phillips said growth in the township will continue and the interstate may even open up areas north of Cranberry.

The North Boroughs along Ohio River Boulevard aren't going to see an increase in development, but the communities may benefit in a different way.

Bellevue Manager Bob Grimm said, "We're hoping to market Bellevue as an alternative living area for people working in the Cranberry area."

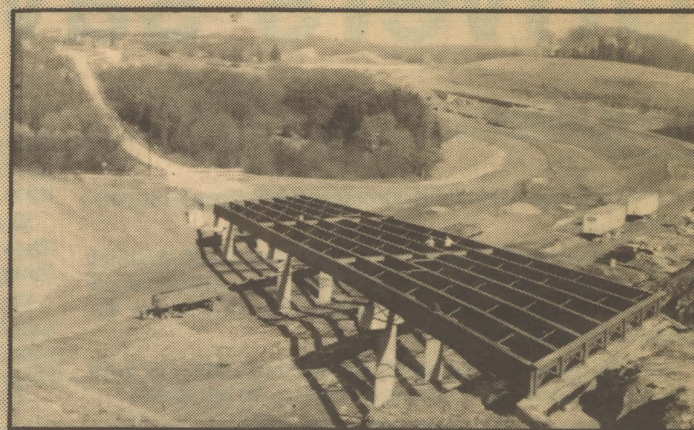
He said Bellevue and its surrounding boroughs will provide an alternative to suburban living and a small town atmosphere. He said people can live and shop in the same town and have easy access to the interstate.

"There isn't going to be any growth," he said. "It's a marketing tool now."

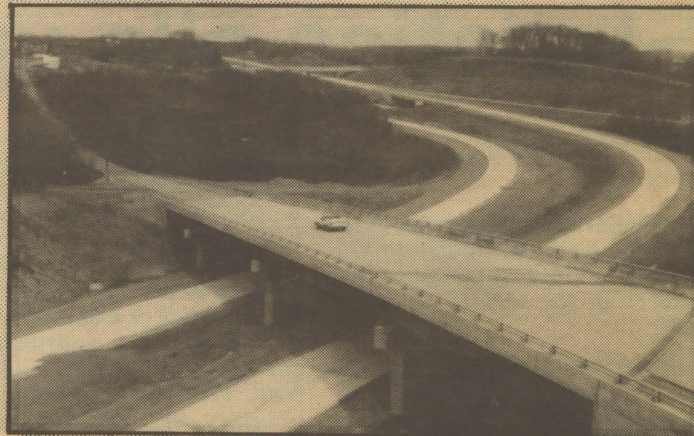
The expressway goes as far north as I-79 in Franklin Park. Borough Manager Harold Hucklestein said it took him only 20 minutes to get downtown.

The housing boom in Franklin Park began in 1978, he said. The borough now has a population of 11,000 and more building is planned for the future.

Work on I-79



A year later in 1974

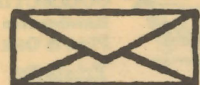


By ROBERT J. CARROLL, News Record

Construction under way on the Brunner Nicholson Road Bridge over I-79's intended path in Franklin Park and also Lowries Run road Bridge in 1973 and then a year later in 1974. Upper right corner is where I-279 would later intersect with I-79.

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St. Boniface saves miracle for church

I-279 plans were a threat

By Virginia Miller

News Record

The dust had settled, so to speak, when the Rev. Kieran Rodgers took over as pastor of St. Boniface Roman Catholic Church four years ago.

The church on East Street had been saved from the wrecking ball and Interstate 279 already was being constructed, Rodgers said.

Memories of the fight to save the church and the controversial relocation of the majority of St. Boniface parishioners have softened with time, and many of those who were forced to move from the valley have returned to their church.

Rodgers, who gave the invocation at the opening of the East Street Valley Expressway Saturday, said: "It's progress, and people now have easy access. We were in a busy area; it (East Street) was like the Indianapolis Speedway here, but it has slowed down. For the people who were relocated, it was hard giving up their homes but many have come back (to the church)."

Still, about 400 families now attend the four Sunday Masses at St. Boniface, in comparison to the 1,300 who formerly made up the parish.

About 90 feet from the front of the church, a tall retaining wall is a mute reminder of the el-

“Because it's elevated, we're not disturbed by any noise on the highway.”

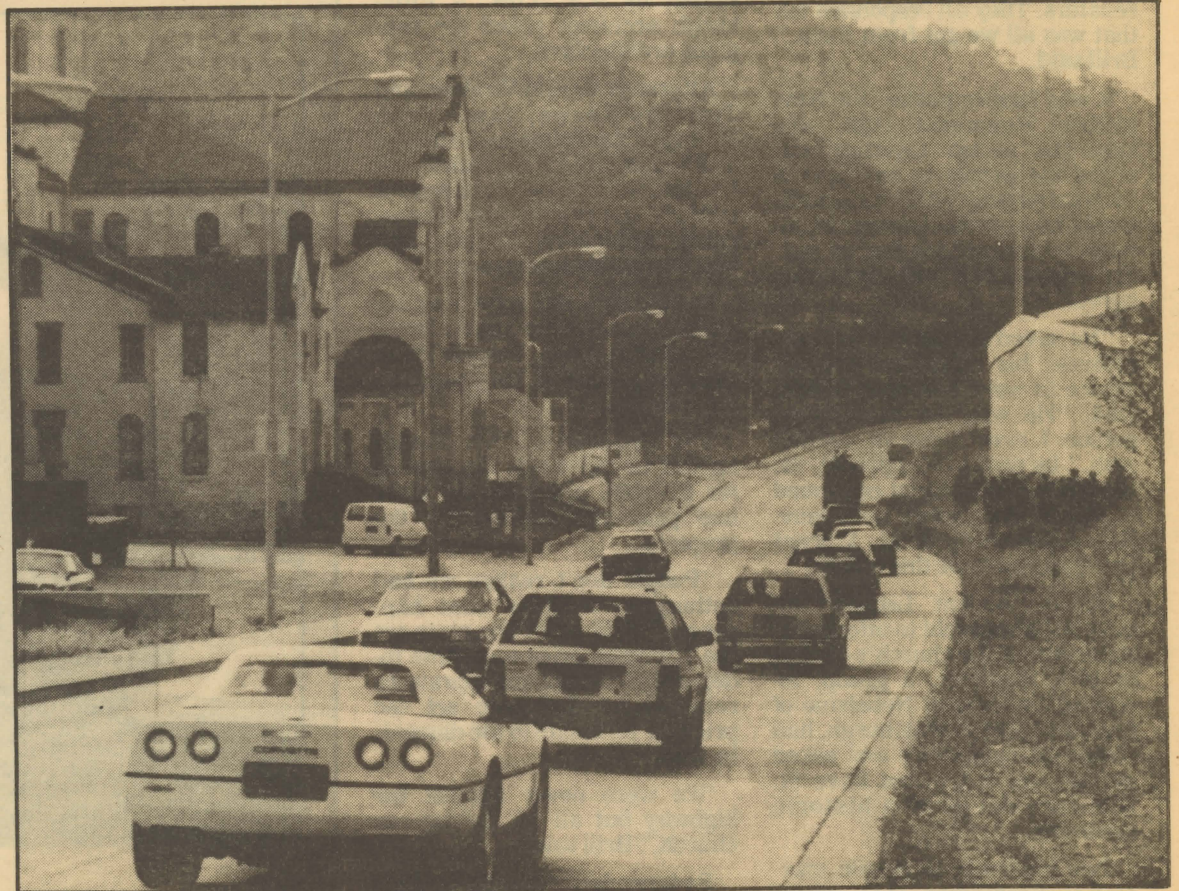
St. Boniface parishioner
Bernard Brill

evated highway passing close by.

According to Bernard Brill, 71, who was baptized, received his First Holy Communion, was confirmed and married at St. Boniface, the new expressway does not pose an environmental hazard to the church and its people.

"Because it's elevated, we're not disturbed by any noise on the highway," he said. An environmental impact study was done to ensure the absence of unacceptable noise or noxious gases, Brill said.

He was in the thick of the fight to keep PennDOT from destroying the Romanesque-Byzantine church, which stood in the path of the expressway in the original plans. The state had condemned the church in 1971 but did not take actual title until 1978, at which time the parish began



By ROBERT J. CARROLL, News Record

A retaining wall, at right, separates the elevated East Street Valley Expressway from St. Boniface Church. The road was rerouted to save the church from demolition.

leasing the building for \$700 a month.

"It began in 1973 when Pete Flaherty (mayor) proposed a compromise plan of a depressed

highway in front of the church." The road would have gone underground at that point, Brill said.

"That's when we realized it wasn't necessary to take the

church and wrote letters to the governor, president, the transportation department and

Turn to ST. BONIFACE Page 6



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St. Boniface

From Page 5

senators. They all responded but that was all we got from them," Brill said.

It was former pastor, the Rev. Norbert Rupprecht, OSB, who kept the parish together and urged the people to continue to "work and pray" that the church would be spared. Rupprecht always minimized his part in saving the church but Brill disagreed.

"He saved our church with his attitude, his optimism and his advice to work and pray," Brill said. "He was the most loved person I ever came in contact with," he said of Rupprecht, 81, who retired in 1985 but continued to live at the rectory until moving to the abbey at St. Vincent College in Latrobe this month.

Bishop Vincent Leonard instructed Rupprecht to inform parishioners of the church's closing in 1977. However, a group, including Dr. Arcadi Nebolsine of the University of Pittsburgh, had contacted Rupprecht and asked permission to try and have St. Boniface declared a historic landmark.

Two busloads of people traveled to Washington, D.C., where they caught the attention of Midge Costanzo, liaison to former President Carter. Costanzo set up meetings with the Department of the Interior and the De-

partment of Transportation and the church, built in 1925, was entered in the national registry of historic places. It had been designed by A.F. Link, a Pittsburgh architect noted for religious architecture.

Attorneys Gerald Wrabley and Timothy Keane, James Van Trump of the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation and Dr. Martin Krauss, president of HEART (Highway and Emergency Relocation Team), also lent invaluable assistance.

Eventually, the road was rerouted, the diocese repurchased the church from PennDOT in 1982 and a Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh agreed to buy back the church for \$590,000, although the state had paid \$2.1 million for the property.

"People don't realize we had nothing to do with what happened," Brill said. The state set the purchase price and three independent real estate appraisers retained by the state set the price for its resale to the diocese, he said.

"We were never against the highway but all for saving our church," Brill said.

Rodgers drove up I-279 to Wexford to make a sick call last week.

"It was nice going straight through and the scenery was beautiful," he said.

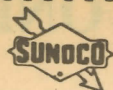
Piping up



By ROBERT J. CARROLL, News Record

In September 1985, the Rev. Norbert Rupprecht, former pastor of St. Boniface Roman Catholic Church, was dwarfed by a giant drainage pipe used in construction along Interstate 279.

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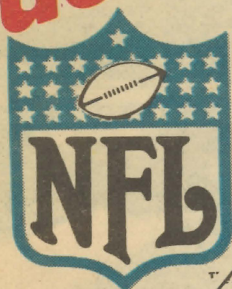
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Uniform system patrols highway

By Taitia Hager

News Record

Local fire, rescue, emergency medical service and police personnel in the municipalities along I-279 spent months planning ways to deal with the accidents that would occur once the roadway finally opened.

The result was a uniform system for dealing with calls that will enable rescue personnel to provide the fastest possible emergency services.

The road was divided into four zones, and a schedule established for first and second calls on each stretch. All emergency personnel involved in the agreement — including fire and rescue in the city of Pittsburgh, Ross, Ohio Township, West View, Reserve, Bellevue, Cranberry, McCandless, Franklin Park, and Marshall Township — have agreed to forego township boundaries.

"Usually, everybody kind of stays committed to their area," said Larry Barnes, supervisor of Ross-West View EMS. But, in this case, "We're just going to do what's best for the patient."

Only one major incident has occurred on the new stretch of

highway since it partially opened in August. Two cars traveling south on Venture Street were involved in an accident on Aug. 11, but no one was seriously injured.

City and Ross Township EMS both responded to the scene, as per the mutual aid agreement. Both felt the initial test worked out fine.

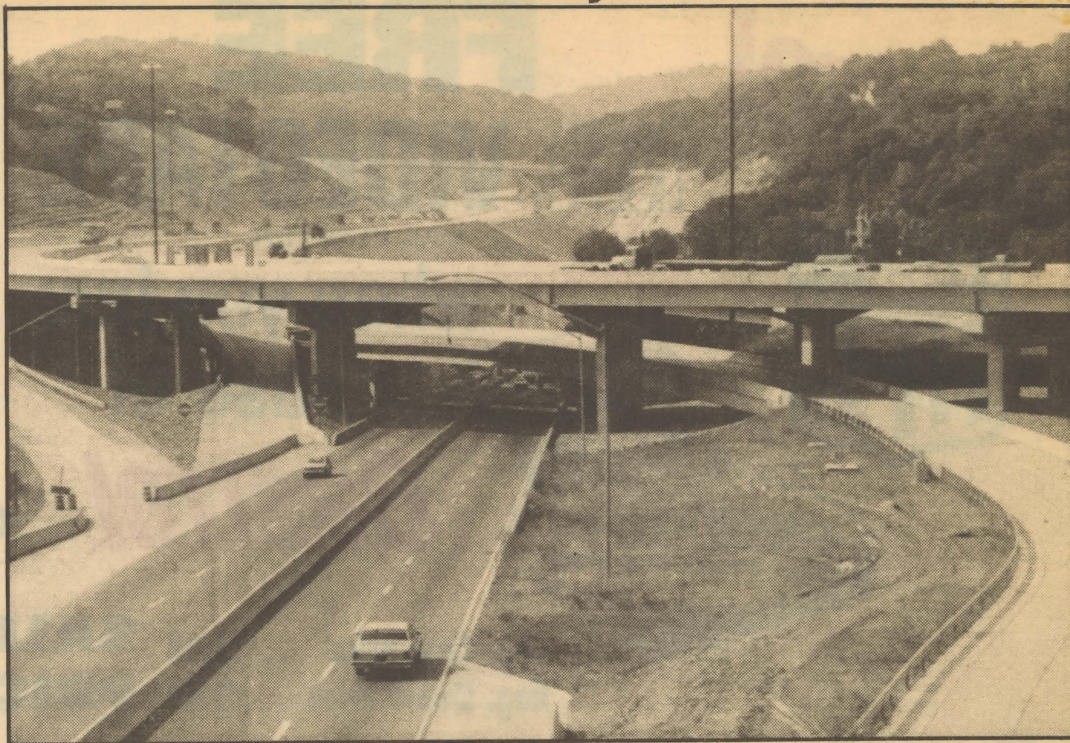
"For that particular incident, I feel the system worked well," said Robert Full, assistant chief for the city EMS. "It was uneventful on our half; it worked the way it was planned."

Barnes agreed. "It was nice because we sent our second ambulance in and the city sent a second ambulance in, so we were able to free one of ours," he said. "We didn't tie all our units up and they didn't tie all theirs up."

Full said the city has similar agreements with municipalities along the Parkway East and West, although they are not as formalized.

One drawback to the new highway that some of the emergency personnel are concerned about is the lack of emergency telephones along the stretch. Because of this, a CB channel was established to monitor emergency calls, Barnes said. Calls now come in on Channel 9 in ad-

Old view from Ivory Avenue



By ROBERT J. CARROLL, News Record

Last year's view of the highway intersections from Ivory Avenue

dition to the emergency telephone numbers.

Speeders long I-279 also should beware.

In addition to the state police, Ross Township and Ohio Township will be authorized to give speeding tickets along the highway. They won't be patrolling on a regularly-scheduled basis,

however, because of a lack of manpower.

"We're patrolling, not on a regular basis, but a fairly regular basis," said Ross Police Chief Carl Zotter. "Hopefully, when we get up to strength, we'll be patrolling more."

Zotter said his department has issued a few hundred traffic vio-

lations on I-279 since it opened.

Brian Kording, Ohio Township police chief, said his department is awaiting approval from the state police to issue traffic tickets, but won't be patrolling I-279 on a normal basis.

If they are on the highway responding to a call and see a speeder, they won't hesitate to issue a ticket, he said.

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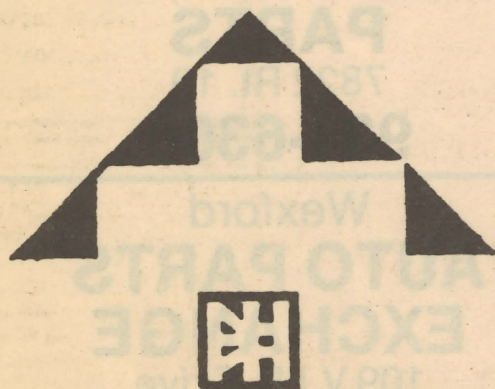
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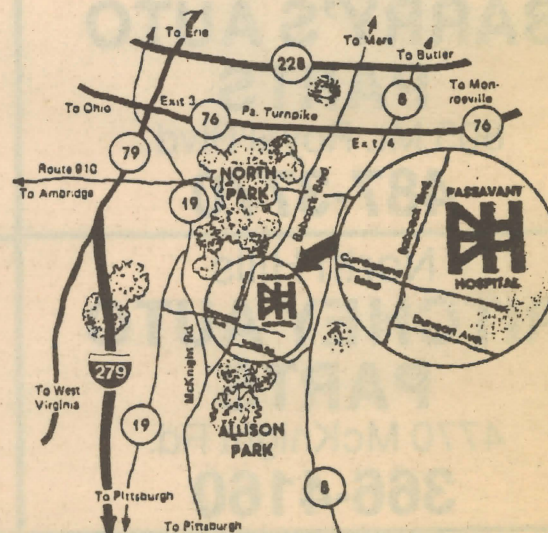
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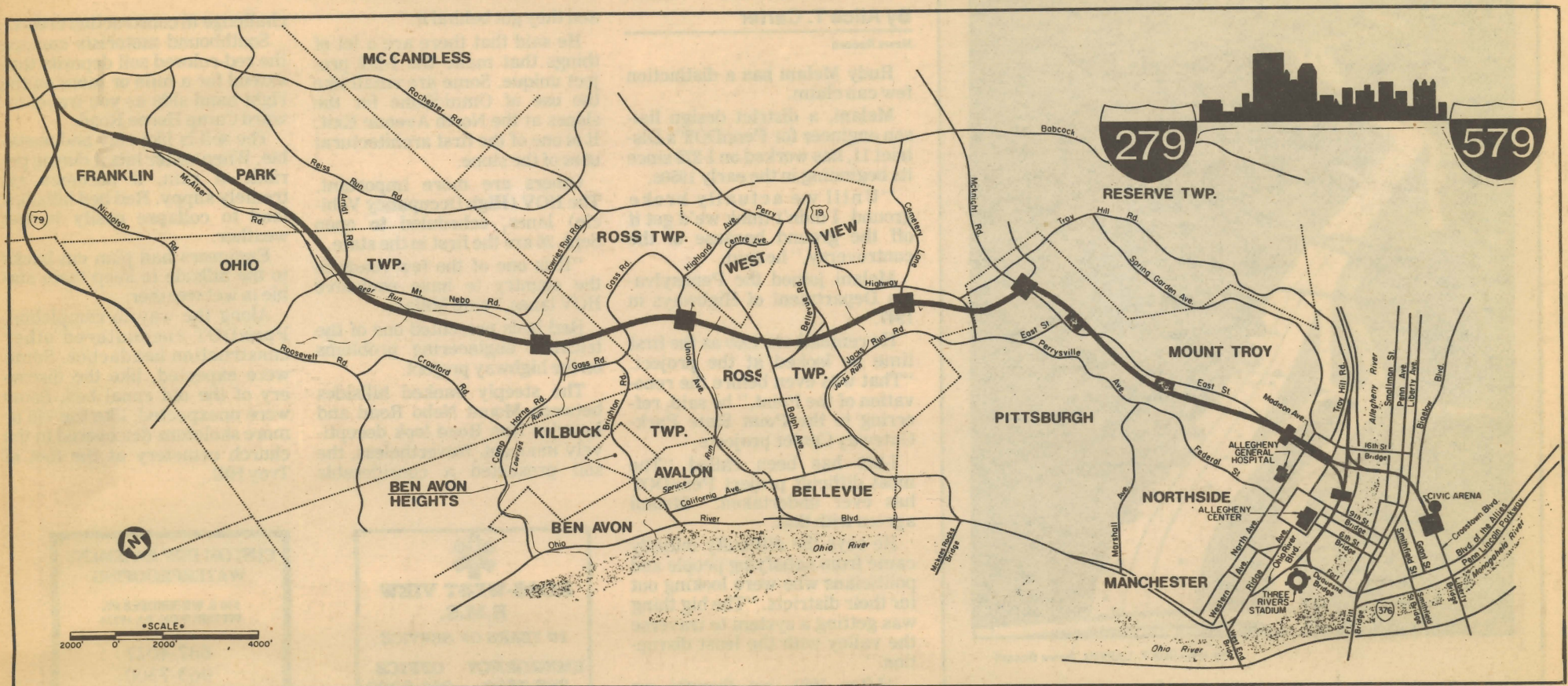


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Interstate 279



Map provided by PennDOT

The highway provides nearly 11 miles of highway to ease travel throughout the northern suburbs.

Getting there from here

By Alice T. Carter

News Record

Now that the final link of Interstate 279 has been completed, motorists will find that at last they can get THERE from HERE.

For those anxious to try out the new road, here are some directions to help speed you to your destination.

To get from Wexford and I-79 to Bellevue, West View, Camp Horne Road, Perrysville, Venture Street and the North Side's East Street-North Avenue Exit:

Take I-79 south. I-279 intersects with I-79 south about a mile below Wexford. Use the far left hand lane to get on I-279.

Motorists traveling to West View, Bellevue, Avalon, and Ohio River Boulevard (Route 65) should use the Bellevue-West View Exit.

The Camp Horne Road Exit is convenient to Avonworth High School. Continuing down Camp Horne will take you to Ohio

River Boulevard near Emisworth.

The Perrysville Exit intersects with Perrysville Avenue near Cemetery Lane.

Turn right onto Perrysville Avenue and left onto Ivory Avenue to get to McKnight Road, Evergreen Road and Mount Troy Road.

Venture Street exit intersects with the East Street service road.

The East Street-North Avenue exit will bring you out onto North Avenue heading toward Allegheny General Hospital.

To get from I-279 to North Shore destinations; Three Rivers Stadium, Fort Duquesne Bridge, downtown Pittsburgh and the Parkway West

Stay on I-279. Resist the impulse to get off at Venture or East streets. I-279 connects directly to the North Shore Expressway.

Watch closely for signs. Those used to traveling through the North Side business district will be

surprised at how quickly they arrive at the Three Rivers Stadium exit.

The exit is on the right. There is also an exit for Route 65, Ohio River Boulevard.

Travelers wishing to use the Fort Duquesne Bridge should merge to the left. The left most bridge lane will exit onto the Fort Duquesne Boulevard near KDKA.

Those continuing on the bridge may use the Stanwix Street Exit to gain access to the Parkway East towards Oakland and Monroeville, Stanwix, Market, Smithfield and Wood streets, and the Smithfield Street Bridge.

Continue to travel across the bridge and roadways where I-279 links up with the Fort Pitt Bridge and Tunnels to the Parkway West.

To get from I-279 to the Veterans Memorial Bridge, Downtown, Civic Arena and the Liberty Bridge:

Watch for signs directing you to the proper lanes for I-

579-The Veterans Memorial Bridge. I-579 intersects directly with I-279.

The Veterans Memorial Bridge carries you across the Allegheny River. There are exits for Sixth and Seventh streets downtown which will put you downtown near the USX Building and the Convention Center.

Watch for signs directing you to the Civic Arena.

The Crosstown Boulevard Exits will convey you to the Liberty Bridge and to the Boulevard of the Allies. You can use the Boulevard of the Allies exit to link you with southern Oakland near Magee-Womens Hospital and the Pittsburgh Playhouse.

The Boulevard of the Allies also has an exit that connects you with the Parkway East going toward Monroeville and Squirrel Hill.

You can also use this roadway to reach the Liberty Bridge and Tunnels which will link you with the South Hills and Mount

Washington.

To get from Route 28-East Ohio Street to I-579-Veterans Memorial Bridge:

Watch closely for signs and continue straight ahead. Route 28 links directly to The Veterans Memorial Bridge near the Heinz plant.

To get from Route 28 to North Shore Expressway:

Take Route 28-East Ohio Street to East Street. At the second traffic light, near Madison Avenue, turn left onto North Shore Expressway-I-279 South. Watch for the sign. There is a stacking lane.

This will take you to Three Rivers Stadium, Route 65 and the Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt Bridges.

To get to I-279 Northbound from East Street:

The Madison Avenue Exit Ramp is now open. Madison Avenue intersects with East Street. No left turn is required. Using the Hazlett Street Entrance ramp requires a left hand turn at the light across oncoming traffic.

Heading downtown



By WILLIAM T. LARKIN, News Record

The East Street Valley Expressway looking south toward Pittsburgh offers a stunning glimpse of the city skyline.

Engineer recalls start I-279 was a challenge facing builders

By Alice T. Carter

News Record

Rudy Melani has a distinction few can claim.

Melani, a district design liaison engineer for PennDOT's District 11, has worked on I-279 since its beginning in the early 1950s.

"Until we actually broke ground, I didn't think we'd get it off the ground because of the controversy," he said.

Melani joined the Pennsylvania Department of Highways in 1947.

He remembers 1950 as the first time he looked at the project. "That was even before the renovation of the Point," he said, referring to the Point State Park-Gateway Center projects.

I-279 has been called "The most difficult project PennDOT has ever undertaken." Melani agrees with that.

He says the difficulty initially came from satisfying people and politicians who were looking out for their districts. "The big thing was getting a system to traverse the valley with the least disruption."

"After 1981, we thought we were going to achieve something," he said.

"The business and political people realized they needed it

and they got behind it."

He said that there are a lot of things that make the I-279 project unique. Some are small like the use of Omni-Stone for the slopes at the North Avenue Exit. It is one of the first architectural uses of the stone.

Others are more important. The HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes, scheduled to open Sept. 26 are the first in the state.

"It is one of the few roads in the country to have exclusive HOV lanes," said Melani.

Red beds presented one of the trickiest engineering problems on the highway project.

The steeply banked hillsides between Mount Nebo Road and Lowries Run Road look deceptively innocent. Nevertheless, the soil presented a considerable

challenge to construction crews.

Southbound motorists can see the red-colored soil deposits that extend for a mile or more on the right hand side as you travel toward Camp Horne Road.

The soil is like clay and unstable. When water hits it during periods of rain, it becomes extremely slippery. Red bed hillsides tend to collapse easily in wet weather.

Engineers had plan cut backs to the hillside to keep them stable in wet weather.

Along the way to completion, PennDOT encountered other construction headaches. Some were expected, like the discovery of the old canal bed. Some were unexpected, like the 740 or more skeletons discovered in the church cemetery at the foot of Troy Hill.



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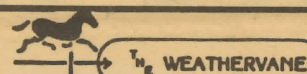
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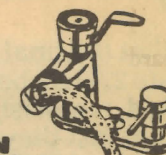
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Stretch honors state lawmaker

By Sharon Sabatino

Although he never graduated from high school, West View native and state legislator Raymond E. Wilt Sr. became one of the main forces behind the development of Interstate 279.

To honor the late senator, the state House unanimously approved a bill in 1979 to name the stretch of Interstate 279 from the Perrysville and Franklin Park interchanges the Raymond E. Wilt Memorial Highway, an area near his district.

According to his son, State Rep. Roy W. Wilt, Wilt Sr. foresaw the need for the highway because he believed that East Street would soon exceed its traffic capacity.

"He always had a reason for everything. He was a larger than life person," said District Court Justice Mark Devlin, whose father served as justice of the peace in Ross Township with Wilt. "He had a lot of authority in getting things done in the area."

Wilt's political career encompassed nearly 20 years as 29th District representative in the state House of Representatives, 21 years as Justice of the Peace in Ross, township Republican chairman and membership in

the Ross Township Zoning Board.

While in the House of Representatives from 1951 to 1970, Wilt served as Chairman of the House Committee on Highways and as a member of the former Pennsylvania Highway Commission. During this time, Wilt participated in the revitalization of Pennsylvania's highway network of interstate, primary and secondary highway systems.

"He spent a great deal of time and energy on this," said his son. "That road offered more challenge than most," he said. "It's easy to forget after something has been completed what it takes out of people."

"The definition of the route was a big challenge," said Wilt. "People problems existed, for example, how do you handle those people who were displaced? It was next to impossible to find compensations of equal value to be made. That was the tough part."

Wilt Sr. fought to compensate his constituents who were displaced because of the highway construction's right of domain rule, said Wilt. When possible, he made adjustments giving those people stipends over their appraised property.

Link to the city



By WILLIAM T. LARKIN, News Record

East Street Valley Expressway stretches north from its intersection with the North Shore Ex-

pressway and Veterans Memorial Bridge. Allegheny General Hospital is at far left.

"He was a self-made businessman, coming out of the Depression to become a success," said Wilt.

Wilt Sr., who died in 1978 at 72, was a well-known Ross businessman born into a West View family of nine children. His first job

at age 11 was to drive a team of mules for Brant's general store, which used to be on Bellevue Road.

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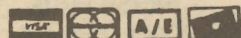
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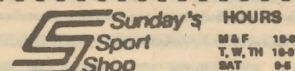
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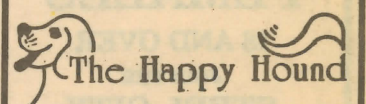
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History of I-279:**Recapping the plans, problems and construction**

Frustration rode highway for 37 years

By Alice T. Carter

News Record

It has been called "The most difficult project PennDOT has ever undertaken," and a lot of even less flattering names.

During the 37 years Interstate 279's East Street Valley Expressway progressed from a general plan for neighborhood improvement to a 13.5 mile conduit for high-speed traffic, the highway disrupted lives, suffered innumerable and unimaginable delays and rewrote the rules for state and federal highway relocation planning.

Plans begin in 1952

In 1952, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways conducted a traffic survey of the North Side of Pittsburgh. That same year the North Side Civic Promotion Council called for a general plan for area improvement.

Two years later, the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association published a study of the North Side that proposed an East

Street-Crosstown route. The study predicted that the route would become the most important north-south route in the Pittsburgh area.

Clear up urban blight and speed traffic

Leaders of the Pittsburgh Renaissance project saw the proposed highway as a way to clear up urban blight and speed traffic flow.

In 1955 the Federal Bureau of Public Roads approved an expressway network that would travel through Pittsburgh as well as circle it. One spur of the roadway was planned for the North Side.

Interstate system born

Not until July 1, 1956, did then President Dwight D. Eisenhower sign into law the Federal Highway Act which would allow construction of what we call the Interstate Highway System.

Plans for The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways called for a 41,000 mile in-

terstate roadway system that would link 90 percent of the cities in the United States with populations over 50,000. The interstate highway system was to cost \$27 billion. Completion was scheduled for 1971.

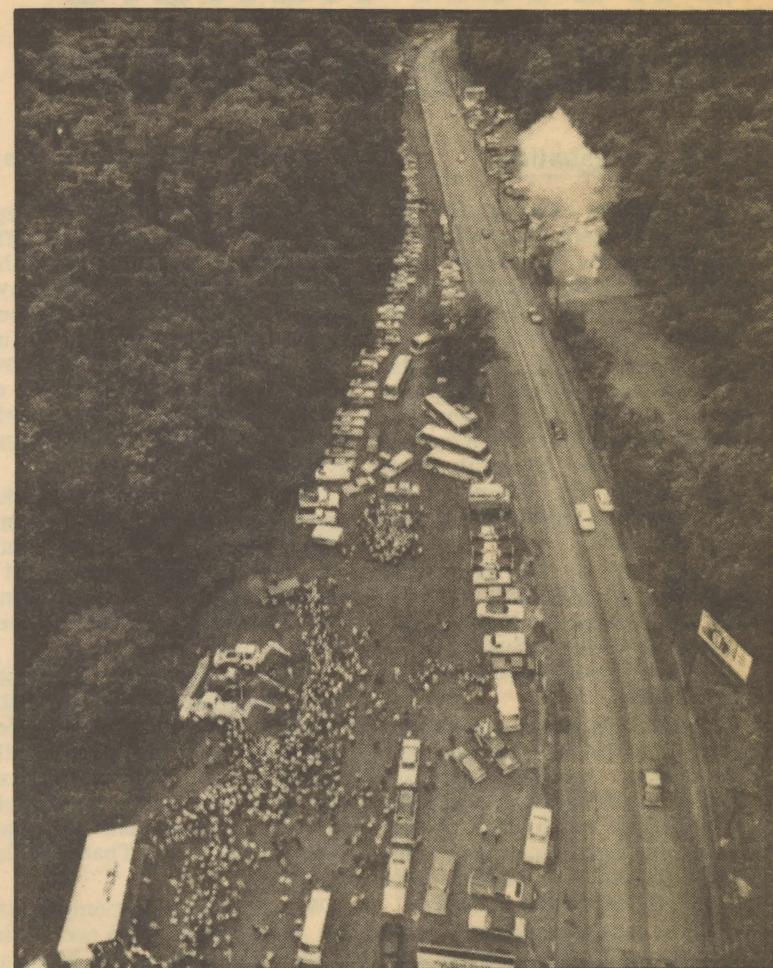
East Street suggested

The next year, consultants Richardson, Gordon & Associates recommended to the Department of Highways that East Street be used for the route through the North Side.

Three different routes were recommended. Two of the routes would have run along the sides of the East Street slopes. The third route ran along the valley floor. Although the two upper routes would have saved most of the homes in the valley, Pittsburgh Renaissance leaders favored the lower route.

Although the first public hearing was held Aug. 10, 1961, it was not until Nov. 14, 1963, that then Mayor Joseph M. Barr endorsed the East Street Route and signed an agreement with the state.

Turn to HISTORY Page 17



News Record photo files

Thousands attended ceremonies to kick off the long awaited start of construction of I-279.

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History of I-279: Recapping the plans, problems and construction

History

From Page 16

Controversy arises

Controversy was already raging in the North Hills. Proposals for Line A and Line B took differing paths from the intersection of East Street and McKnight Road.

Both roads would go north to an intersection with Interstate 79 near Wexford. Line A was planned to run roughly the same path that I-279 takes today. Only one interchange — Perrysville Avenue in Ross — was planned. On its northern end, it was planned to connect, via I-79, to the Perry Interchange of the Turnpike in Cranberry.

Line B would also have started at the East Street-McKnight Road intersection. From there it would have run along the west side of McKnight Road until it crossed to the eastern side of McKnight just south of North Hills Village Shopping Center.

The road would have continued along the east side of McKnight north to intersect with McKnight Road in McCandless near Corporate Drive and out McKnight to its intersection with Perry Highway north of Pine Creek Shopping Center. Beyond there, planners intended the road to run west of Route 19 to the Perry Interchange of the Pennsylvania

Turnpike in Cranberry.

Interchanges were planned for Northway Mall and the Perrysville Avenue-McKnight Road intersection.

Speaking in favor of Line A in November of 1963, Rep. Raymond E. Wilt of the 17th District and a Ross justice of the peace said, "We can't afford to sit on our hands. If we want Line A, we'd better get going. Those who want B are going to be holding meetings. I know Hampton Township has written to Harrisburg in favor of B."

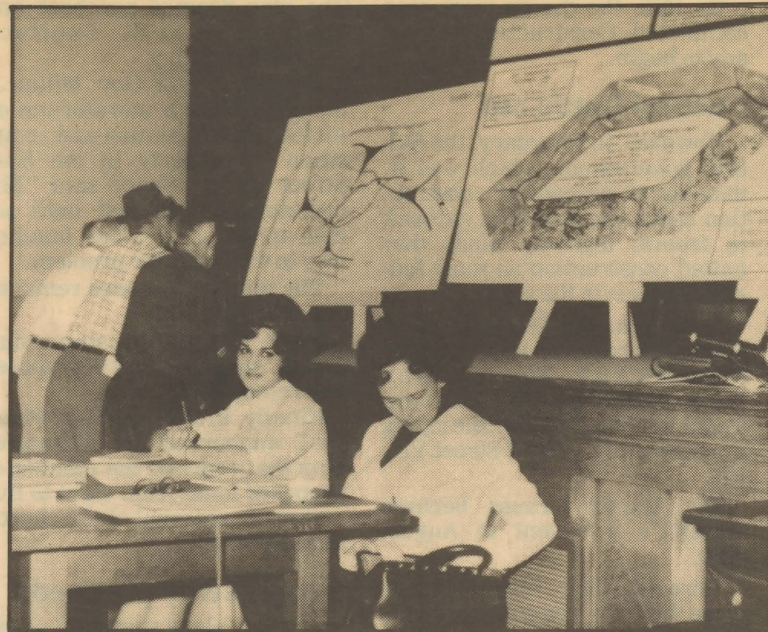
Choice made

By May 13, 1964, Line A was the official choice. Line A had received strong backing of Ross Township and the North Hills Planning Committee as well as Ohio and Marshall townships and the boroughs of Franklin Park and Bradford Woods.

They were opposed by the Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association, the Allegheny County Planning Commission and the Conference of Northeastern Allegheny County Communities which included Sharpsburg, Etna, Millvale, Hampton, Shaler, and Richland.

Subway proposed

Meanwhile, back in Pittsburgh, city officials were asking the state to approve plans for a rapid transit line that would run



News Record file photos

One of the first public hearings on the proposed highway was in the 1950s.

down the East Street Valley and cross under the Allegheny river as a subway.

It was also at this point that the city proposed a riverfront or north shore roadway to be built in conjunction with the new stadium planned for the banks of the Allegheny River.

The proposed subway was a key factor in the city's insistence that the East Street Valley Expressway run along the valley floor.

Turn to HISTORY Page 18

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History of I-279:

Recapping the plans, problems and construction

History

From Page 17

If the road ran along the slopes, the way the state wanted, there would be no room for rapid transit tracks.

The Port Authority said it would make funds available to build the transit system. The state ordered a feasibility study.

By December, the city had won. The road would run along the valley floor.

In January the highway department said it would begin condemning East Street properties in February.

The article announcing this included the note, "some observers believe studies will soon show that McKnight Road has reached its saturation point."

Design contracts

On April 15, 1965, The North Hills News Record reported design contracts had been awarded to Swindell-Dressler for the first mile of Line A between East and Evergreen streets and the Perrysville interchange.

A mile-and-a-half section of Peoples Plank Road in Ross was to be widened to four lanes that summer in anticipation of the increased traffic.

Construction was to begin by 1967. The Department of Highways still predicted completion of the entire project by 1972.

By 1968, the design work was completed. Construction was ready to begin.

Federal funds cut

However, in February, the federal government, which was financing 90 percent of construction costs, announced a cutback in federal highway funds that halted construction on most federal projects in the state.

In March, the Department of Highways received its first letter from HEART. The Highway Emergency and Relocation Team lead the fight for the rights of citizens of the East Street Valley.

Dr. Martin Krauss became HEART's president in August 1969.

Through their efforts, roads were built to connect residents remaining on the slopes to the floor of the East Street Valley.

A home for a home

Their rallying cry "A home for a home," was a force in rewriting the way governments relocated residents. HEART encouraged residents to refuse relocation until the state found them homes of comparable value.

Relocations needed

Plans were submitted in 1971 that incorporated the service road into the plans but the relocation controversy continued.

The plan deemed purchase and destruction of St. Boniface Church necessary.

On Feb. 9, 1972, Gov. Milton J. Shapp ordered a moratorium on further condemnation and acquisition of property in the East Street Valley. Shapp said "The moratorium will last until we can arrive at a more humane way to deal with the problem."

The moratorium was removed the next year.

From 1972 to 1974 compromise design solutions were proposed and rejected.

Finally, in January 1974, PennDOT announced an alternative plan that reduced the number of proposed lanes from eight to five and made removal of the church unnecessary.

Expressway proceeds

In June, plans showed it would be a six-lane highway with a median strip reserved for mass transit or two additional lanes.

Final environmental impact statements and the new design were submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation in September.

In April 1976, the governor instructed PennDOT to begin completing appraisals and negotiate final settlements in the East Street Valley. Citizen protests rose up again.

As of May 1976 PennDOT had spent \$900,000 on designs, and 24 years of planning the East Street Valley. It had acquired 507 of the

necessary 703 parcels of land and completed 1,140 of the estimated 1,565 relocations at a cost of \$21.2 million.

PennDOT had yet to lay a cubic foot of concrete.

Project in limbo

The project remained in limbo for four more years. It was not until 1981 that final approval came from the federal government for the road to be built.

The next three years, 1981-84 were spent drawing blueprints and plans as well as advertising for bids, and awarding contracts for construction.

The final East Street family, the Novaks, were evicted from their home and business in December 1983.

In 1984, ground-breaking ceremonies took place for the Cross-town Boulevard, Veterans Memorial Bridge, North Shore Expressway.

Construction under way

In October 1985, construction finally began for the East Street Service Road — to allow traffic to continue through the valley while the Interstate was constructed.

Actual construction on the East Street Valley Expressway began in March 1986. The following March, Gov. Robert P. Casey broke ground on the last section of the roadway.

Skeletons found

Construction moved along uneventfully until June 3, 1987. Then, workers uncovered the first four skeletons in the former site of the Voegtly Church Cemetery, between Chestnut Street and Mount Troy Road.

The bodies were supposed to have been removed in 1860.

Eventually some 740 bodies were discovered.

Nothing could stop the road's progress for long, however. In July, the new East Street opened to traffic.

On July 18, remains of the Pennsylvania Canal were discovered.

Traffic flows

On Veteran's Day, 1988, the first useable section of the East Street Expressway was opened to traffic. The Veterans Memorial Bridge section of the roadway accepted its first traffic.

I-279 from Perrysville to Bellevue-West View opened Dec. 29.

February 1989, the North Shore Expressway opened to traffic from East Ohio Street to its link up with the Fort Duquesne Bridge.

In August, 11 miles of the expressway opened from its intersection with I-79 just south of Wexford south to Venture Street.

And finally, on Saturday, Sept. 16, after 37 years, \$550 million, 1,500 relocations, and countless frustrations, the final link of I-279 opened to traffic, beginning a new era for the North Hills.

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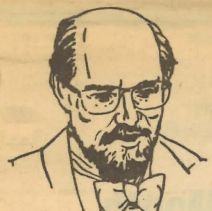
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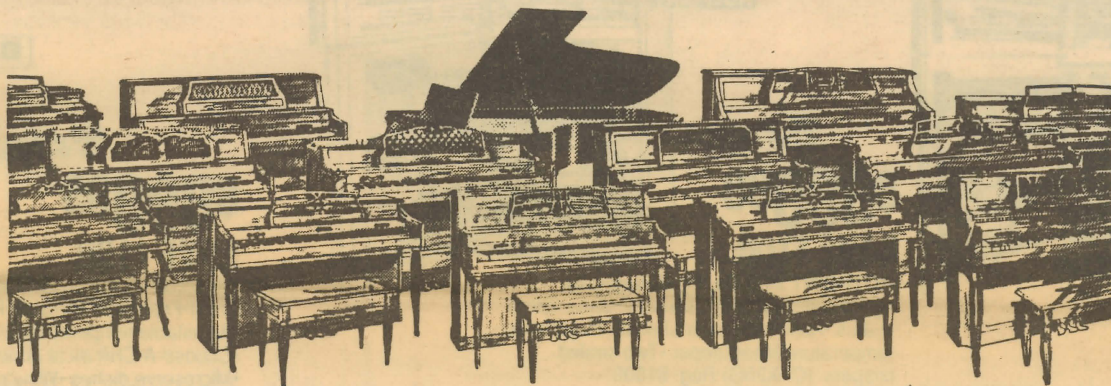
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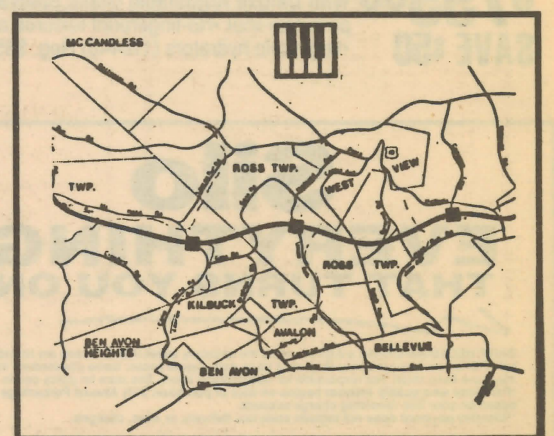
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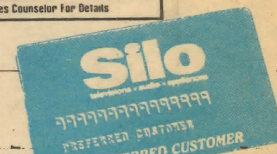
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