

Dear Editor,

Will Rogers wisely thought, "When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is to quit digging." As far as I can tell, December 2014 is nearly three years away. So why was a vote mandatory right this moment for realigning the Walton Ferry Road and Old Shackle Island road connection to a four-way intersection?

If it is because there is "money" available from the Federal Government to the tune of \$4.6 million dollars, by now everyone should realize that the country is broke. Not only broke, but borrowing huge amounts of money from foreign countries that promote political ideals we disdain. This money that you may call a grant if you want to is based on a Federal Budget that requires you to pay higher taxes just to pay for the interest on that money. This is not free money by any definition of the word "free." There is a reliable precept called the law of unintended consequences. We can no longer generalize where this money comes from and to be honest- Local, State, or Federal, it is all coming from us. We are paying the entire bill one way or the other not just the \$1.2 million the city has to belly up.

If this and other projects that require significant revenues are absolutely necessary at this time, then a tax increase or a long term acceptance that greater percentages of our local budget will be for handling the debt burden must be expected. Let's see if anyone has the guts to suggest the always "popular" tax increase at this particular time. That is a political deal killer.

It is my understanding, based on TDOT sources I have read and I am willing to be corrected since I am by no means an expert, that if the project is simply deferred and not rejected, then when the budget is set in 2014, we can move forward without sacrificing the monies spent to date. So having a plan in place by the time the 2014 budget is set seems to meet the criteria already in place. We have waited since 2004 when times were "good." There is a recovery but like Steve Forbes recently quipped, it is like a car creeping along on the highway. The Dow hitting 13,000 has little impact on the average guy or gal paying rising fuel prices and not seeing wages increase to meet the inflationary trends currently unfolding.

Let me be perfectly clear. The realignment is a great idea since the town center has taken it on the chin of late and it will still be a great idea in 2014 when hopefully revenues have increased due to a real recovery and the city's debt has been reduced and the heart of town can be restored.

I often tell my kids "No". But more often than not, I tell them they have to wait. Let's fix potholes, patch up here and there, prepare for more emergencies as the spring storm season approaches, and hopefully weather the last phase of this economic crisis that has rattled us all.

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Then when all the past bills are paid and there is a light at the end of the tunnel, let's move on. I realize that this is a tough decision and I am not a one trick pony so if it happens, it happens and I will still love my hometown, debt and all. But when the shortfall continues and the inevitable tax increase follows, I hope that it will occur when times are better and the impact on the average citizen is minimal as we all should reflect on the words of Milton Friedman "...the burden of government is not measured by how much it taxes, but by how much it spends."

I am willing to listen to any further logical and factual information that anyone brings to light.

Tom Hicks

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