

Mr. Smith - 7/1/69

U.S. Official Blocks Pa

Pr. Sc. SEP 20 '69

Plans for construction of Interstate 40 through Overton Park have been halted by protests to the office of U.S. Secretary of Transportation John Volpe.

Mayor Henry Loeb told City Council today in its executive session that he met with State Highway Commissioner Charles Speight and federal officials who informed him of the action.

Loeb said the protestors by-passed the State Highway Department, and Volpe has ordered the halt.

It was reported in Washington that the halt was ordered by J. D. Bremen, assistant transportation secretary

for environment and urban affairs, pending Volpe's return from a trip to Europe.

The state has already purchased property on both sides of Overton Park for interstate right-of-way, and the state last week came to agreement with the city to pay \$2.2 million for right of way through the park.

Both Loeb and council members said they were shocked that local officials were not notified of the halt before the action was taken.

Plans for I-40, including the \$40 million bridge under construction across the Mississippi River, are aligned along the Overton Park route and any alterations would "probably

ark X-Way, Loeb Says

call for a dogleg to bypass the park." Loeb said.

A "save-the-park" campaign by objectors to routing the expressway through Overton Park has been one of the most bitterly fought political battles the city has seen. Before appealing to Volpe's office, they fought at City Hall and appealed to Volpe's predecessors.

Loeb said he called the office of Volpe and talked with an assistant, a Mr. Beggs. Loeb said he complained particularly about the fact that Memphis officials were not consulted before the halt was ordered.

Council Chairman Bob James said the news put the council "in an uproar." Loeb, seeking to get the order lifted,

was trying to reach Sen. Howard Baker and Rep. Dan Kuykendall.

Loeb said stopping the expressway at this date is "a serious mistake." He said citizens who have fought the expressway going through Overton Park went directly to Volpe and got the freeze, although apparently they reached Bremen instead.

Speaking of the Overton Park route, Loeb said: "It has been decided 50 times." He said the expressway system, including the new bridge, is keyed to the present route and "this freeze will stop everything."

(Dr. Arlo Smith's comment, Page 2)

B 9/30/69

COSSITT LIBRARY
MEMPHIS, TENN.