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Page 6

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Brinegar Is Receptive

THANKS TO THE visit Gov. Winfield Dunn paid to Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar in Washington on Friday, the door is open to submission of a new proposal for completing the Memphis mid-city link of Interstate Highway 40.

The hope now is that the state Transportation Department will move quickly to put together a package containing both route and design. Dunn says that should not take too long — “It may be weeks. It may be a couple of months.”

WHAT IS MOST significant is that the Dunn administration and other top political leaders, all the way from Memphis to members of Congress, are not standing still. The court suit that has blocked an overland expressway through Overton Park does not mean that the I-40 section cannot be built. The object is to present national transportation officials with a plan they can accept that is within the stipulations of environmental law and which can stand up in any renewed court test.

For rest assured that whatever

the plan for a route and design may be, there are those who are waiting to pounce on it, search out its flaws, and try to stop it with any and all legal tactics available.

Although the expectation now is that the state will propose a cut-and-cover design using the Overton Park route, or a variation of it, Dunn says that “wouldn’t necessarily” be the plan. If it turns out to be a tunnel design, there is no assurance Brinegar would approve. There is no clue to what he might accept or reject. But one person involved in the Dunn-Brinegar meeting did bring out the good news that the secretary is “completely open on the thing.”

THE PESSIMISTS AND the opponents already are beginning to ruffle their feathers and prepare to obstruct whatever move Dunn makes on this unfinished business.

The important thing is not to be dazzled by the flashes of distant artillery. The goal is to complete this essential segment of Interstate, and to do it right.

The governor has made a commendable effort in that direction.

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