

CIAL APPEAL

Morning, July 18, 1975

Dr. John Shea Jr. Confirms Elevated I-40 Idea Is His

Dr. John Shea Jr. said last night he commissioned the proposal which calls for building an elevated section of Interstate 40 around Overton Park.

The noted ear surgeon said he had requested anonymity because, "I felt the idea coming from me would be discredited because of its source."

"I am in a world (medicine) completely away from the world of public affairs and I felt it would have reduced the likelihood that it would ever be accepted by the public."

Dr. Shea said he commissioned an architect and engineer, to come up with a viable alternative to a route through the park. He would not identify them.

"Why can't Memphis have 1.6 miles of elevated expressway. All we need here is to give up on Overton Park as a lost cause and get this city going again," Dr. Shea said.

His comments came after he was identified by Mayor Wyeth Chandler as the source of the proposal.

Chandler, who arrived too late to speak to a meeting of neighborhood organizations at Southwestern which hotly condemned the proposal, said afterward that Shea was the man who commissioned the proposal.

Earlier in the day, Gov. Ray Blanton said he would look with favor on the proposal if it meets requirements for 90 per cent federal funding.

"I'm most anxious to build that remaining portion of the expressway. I'm determined to," the governor said in Nashville. He said the proposal is being studied to see if the federal government would pay the customary 90 per cent of the cost estimated at \$26 million.

The cut-and-cover design under the park, as suggested by U.S. Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman Jr. would cost an estimated \$200 million.

Coleman is scheduled to meet today with William Goodwin, the state's deputy commissioner of the Transportation Department, and Robert Odle, a state developmental engineer. They are to discuss the availability of federal aid for a full feasibility study for the slurry wall construction method for Coleman's cut-and-cover suggestion.

Meeting at Southwestern last night, various citizens speaking against Dr. Shea's proposal termed it "horrendous," "ridiculous" and "hazardous" and said it would destroy their neighborhoods and deliver a severe blow to the city's mid-section.

In general, the proposal calls for six lanes of traffic to be elevated about 16 feet beginning east at about Hollywood and down North Parkway to west of McLean where it would take a sharp curve to the south. The route would circumvent Overton Park.

Councilman A. D. Alissandratos, speaking at the meeting, referred to the then-unknown backer of the proposal as "the Godfather."

Councilman Bob James said the City Council learned of the proposal "the same time you did — in the newspaper" and said he would fight it.

"My main objection, other than the destruction of property values and the uprooting of more people, is that it will create a (dangerous) double dogleg on the expressway. I also don't think it will pass muster with the environmentalists," James said.

James, who said he "doubted" the proposal would be adopted, urged about 150 residents of neighborhoods in the area attending the meeting to fight the proposal.



— Staff Photo

Moderator George Morrow Strongly Opposed Plan

"sense-of-the-council vote" be taken on the matter, James warned that a vote might not be good strategy at this time. "Remember, there are a whole lot of people east of here who would be delighted to resolve this issue — regardless of whose neck is stepped on," the councilman said.

The proposal has been placed on Monday's agenda for discussion by a joint meeting of the City Council and County Court.

Spokesmen for the Hein Park Civic Association, Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association, Mid-Memphis Civic Association and the newly formed North Parkway Association pledged to fight the proposal in a number of ways.

Both Chandler and County Court Chairman William W. Farris were expected to speak at the meeting, said George Morrow, a lawyer and vice president of the Hein Park organization. Farris did not show and Chandler was too late to speak.

However, Chandler said earlier that he merely conveyed the proposal to Blanton last Tuesday along with Farris.

He said he went to Nashville "with some reservations" and "requested the governor to study the plan so that we might all know the good and the bad of it."

Chandler, who repeated his stand that the expressway should be built through Overton Park, said his reservations for Dr. Shea's proposal centered on a "severe curve" in the plan, the width of the roadway, whether it had adequate shoulder for emergency parking and potential noise pollution.

He said, "It's something we ought to look into . . . and get a report on and say it's good or it's bad. Everybody seems to be jumping out of their skins before we even get a report."

Chandler signed an ordinance July 2, 1974 which includes North Parkway from

Dunlap to East Parkway as one of the major streets to be protected from commercial encroachment.

However, the scenic drive ordinance, as it is called, could be superseded by the federal government if the state and federal authorities decided to build the segment over North Parkway, the meeting was told by Councilman James.

The proposal was strongly attacked on the same grounds which Chandler expressed "reservations" about as well as others such as the decline in property values, danger to Snowden School students from carbon monoxide, the injurious effects to the trees and animals in Overton Park and the destruction of what some termed "the nicest" part of town.

Among suggestions for the neighborhood organizations to fight the proposal were filing suit, commissioning a study, letter-writing campaign, petitions, raising a "war chest," sending a delegation to Nashville and Washington, calling for the resignation of Chandler and Farris and appearing before the City Council and County Court.

Eckbo Is Awarded Architects' Medal

Garrett Eckbo, leader of the planning team which is studying future uses of the Shelby County Penal Farm, has been awarded the 1975 Medal of Honor of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

The medal, highest award given by the society, was presented to Eckbo at the society's annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas last week. The society cited Eckbo for his accomplishments as "talented and innovative designer as thoughtful and creative author and as inspiring mentor of young people."

When one person suggested that a