

Tentative OK Given Study Of I-40 Plan

From The Commercial Appeal
Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE — State Transportation Commissioner Eddie Shaw said Wednesday federal officials have agreed tentatively to fund a study of a side-by-side design for an underground interstate 40 route through Overton Park in Memphis.

"We don't have anything in writing," said Shaw, who noted he has currently only a verbal agreement from the federal government to conduct the study.

He said such an inquiry would require only a few weeks and cost no more than perhaps \$12,000.

Federal officials earlier commissioned a study which showed a stacked-lane cut-and-cover design — three lanes east and three west — could be constructed at a cost of about \$119 million, plus annual maintenance of perhaps \$450,000.

When that proposal was submitted by the New York engineering firm of Singstad, Kehart, November and Hurka, Shaw said the project was too expensive.

In addition, Gov. Ray Blanton had expressed misgivings about a tunnel so deep as the stacked-lane concept — about 70 feet — because of the water problem.

But a spokesman for the engineering firm that conducted the study disputed that, saying the proposed stacked-lane tunnel would be a "waterproof envelope."