

OPE 28-22

CA, April 21, 1977

Foes Expect I-40 Park Route Defeat

By MORRIS CUNNINGHAM
From The Commercial Appeal
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Leaders of Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, attorneys, and others spent two hours here Wednesday urging Department of Transportation officials not to approve the Interstate 40 route through Overton Park in Memphis.

They emerged expressing confidence that Transportation Secretary Brock Adams, like four predecessors, will refrain from endorsing the state's plan to close a 3.7-mile gap in I-40 with a partially depressed highway through the park.

"We were very pleased with the meeting," said Charles F. Newman, a Memphis attorney and one of the leaders of the group of about 20, which included Memphians as well as representatives of national environmental organizations.

Newman, as well as Washington attorney John W. Vardaman Jr., declined to say whether they will file a lawsuit if Adams sides with proponents of a park route.

Newman said the "plaza" design being proposed by state highway officials is very similar to the partially depressed design that previous secretaries of transportation have declined to approve.

The state formally presented the plaza design to Adams at a meeting here March 24 that was attended by Gov. Ray Blanton and other Tennessee leaders.

Adams said at the time he would make a decision within 30 to 60 days. However, the ruling is not expected until after a visit to Memphis next month by William Cox, the

newly appointed administrator to the Federal Highway Administration. FHA is a part of the Department of Transportation.

A spokesman for FHA said Cox will meet with state highway officials and other supporters of the "plaza" design on May 10, and with opponents on May 11. Both meetings will be informal.

The plaza design is before Adams because federal environmental laws require that before a federal aid highway may encroach upon a public park the Secretary of Transportation must find there is no "prudent and feasible" alternative and that the design minimizes environmental damages.

Others at the meeting and their affiliations included Linda Billings of Washington, the

Sierra Club; Rober Buechner of Memphis, National Recreation and Park Association; Wanda Goodman and R. Michael Potter, both of Memphis, Mid-Memphis Improvement Association; Robert Lamb Hart of New York City, a transportation planner; Russell V. Keune of Washington, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Leonard Lubin of Memphis, a businessman; Mrs. Michael Lackner, Dr. Arlo I. Smith, and Dr. Howard H. Vogel Jr., all of Memphis and all affiliated with Citizens to Preserve Overton Park; Myron Swenson of Washington, National Audubon Society; Laura Rodenbaugh of Memphis, Council for a Greener Memphis; Kay Newman of Memphis, graphics designer; Charles Rond of Memphis, University of Tennessee Center for the Health Sciences public information director.

CA.

April 21, 1977