

PSC 2-15-68

Overton X-Way Up to U.S. Official

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The controversial matter of the expressway through Overton Park was in the hands of Lowell Bridwell, federal highway commissioner, in Washington today.

Citizens for and against the proposed routing presented their arguments in a four-hour meeting with Bridwell in Memphis yesterday. "I will go over the material presented here today," Bridwell said at the conclusion of the meeting. "A couple of questions came up in my own mind."

Bridwell pointed out that the decision has already been made to route the expressway through the park. "If I didn't do anything, this route would go ahead and be built. I would have to change that (decision) if the expressway is to be rerouted."

'SEVERAL DAYS'

He said that he will reach his final conclusions within "several days."

"As of right now, the city of Memphis' official position is in favor of I-40 and going through Overton Park. That is the record," he said. The city's formal approval came under the old City Commission. The new City Council, which heard arguments against the routing this week, can still go on record opposing the route, Bridwell said. "Whatever they are going to do, they should do it soon, in their own best interest, because the decision is going to be made soon."

LOEB'S POSITION

Mayor Loeb has endorsed the routing of the expressway through the park.

About 75 people — the majority opposing the route — attended the meeting at the Federal Building yesterday. Dr. Arlo I. Smith, chairman of the Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, said the park should be preserved as it is because of its serenity, its natural habitat for birds and animals, and its value as a field laboratory for students.

OPPOSE ROUTE

Dr. J. Lyndal York, assistant professor of bio-chemistry at the University of Tennessee and president of the Tennessee Ornithological Society, and Waldo Zimmerman also spoke against the expressway.

Samuel Langley, executive director of Future Memphis, Inc., spoke for the routing, citing its advantages. "Through this route you get more highway per dollar, than any alternate route, aesthetically it is more pleasing and socially it is more acceptable because you displace fewer people," he said.

Tom Meanley, skipper of the Memphis Queen, suggested that plans for building the I-40 east-west leg be discarded altogether, as did Mrs. Willis Ayres.

HIS REPLY

Bridwell replied: "Any study done shows a requirement for an east-west highway facility."

Percy Brooks, executive vice president of the Chamber of Commerce, said that availability of the park to out-of-state visitors would be increased with the expressway.

George Houston, president of Future Memphis, said that the land taken will be only about one-half of 1 per cent of the park land in Memphis. Hundreds of acres of park land are being added in the green belt around Memphis and from 1,000 to 2,000 more acres is expected from the Penal Farm area, he said.

Mrs. W. W. Deupree replied: "In regard to the green belt, it's too far in the future. This is now. You don't cut out a heart and add a leg and cure the situation."

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