

MFGS - STREETS - XWAY

# ew Action On Park Expressway Is Rebuffed

CA 3-27-68

JIMMIE COVINGTON

The City Council yesterday afternoon rebuffed Councilman Blanchard and refused to suspend its rules to consider a resolution approving the presently planned route of the west expressway through Park.

The move apparently delays any action on the heated issue for at least another week despite a report that Federal Highway Administrator Lowell Bell will not approve any east-west expressway in the "foreseeable future" unless the council changes its position with a new resolution.

Meanwhile in Washington, it came to light that national conservation interests may file a suit to stop the expressway through the park. Mr. Bridwell apparently does not want to commit funds to the through-the-park route in the face of a threatened suit without the solid backing of the City Council here.

A federal court suit — a national test case on whether Congress has authorized the Federal Bureau of Public Roads to take parkland for in-roads under existing law — may be hinged in large meas-

ure on whether the local government approves or objects to the freeway path.

Such a suit may also take years to decide in courts, delaying construction.

Representative Dan Kuykendall (R-Tenn.), who played an instrumental role in bringing Mr. Bridwell to Memphis several weeks ago and reopening the route subject, said last night the council should make a "thorough study" of both the park route and "and specific alternative (route) that might be offered by other parties.

"I think they ought to make it (the study) as quickly and as thorough as possible."

Mr. Kuykendall said he had never considered personally recommending a route and planned to take no further action in the controversy. He said he felt the law prohibiting the taking of parkland was not retroactive and could not be applied to the Overton Park case.

The Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce, Future Memphis, Inc., and the Downtown Association yesterday sent telegrams to city councilmen urging immediate approval of the Overton Park route.

As the council meeting closed yesterday, Mr. Blanchard brought up his expressway resolution. "The city, it seems to me, is obligated and has committed itself to following the expressway route," he said.

"We would be well advised to carry out that commitment."

Mr. Blanchard referred to commitments by previous city administrations. He said persons have been required to sell their homes and move.

The Tennessee Highway Department, with 90 per cent federal aid, has already spent more than 10 million dollars buying right-of-way and contracting initial land-clearing.

The council on March 6 adopted a resolution opposing the park route and suggested a route along the northern boundary of the park (North Parkway) as an alternative if no other route outside the park were feasible.

In spite of his press statement's, Mr. Bridwell has not yet made a formal decision on the Overton Park route.

Mr. Blanchard yesterday

failed to obtain the unanimous consent of the nine other council members present to suspend the rules and take up the issue. Councilman Thomas Todd called for a week's delay. Councilman Lewis R. Donelson III, acting chairman, also voted against suspending the rules.

Council members failed in attempts to contact Mr. Bridwell by telephone yesterday.

Several council members expressed anger that Mr. Bridwell made public statements about the issue without contacting them first or making a decision.

"I haven't read my paper yet to get all the facts," Councilman Billy Hyman said sarcastically during yesterday's meeting. Mr. Donelson made a similar remark.

Two alternate expressway routes received heavy study in 1965 before the park route was adopted. Previously at least 25 routes had been studied. A northern route would have passed near Southwestern. A southern route would have passed through residential areas.

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Important in context of sanitation strike, etc?

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