

State Plans New Push Today On I-40 Overton Park Routing

By WILLIAM BENNETT

From The Commercial Appeal Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, Oct. 2. — A team of state and local officials will personally urge U.S. Transportation Secretary Claude Brinegar Thursday to approve Overton Park as the "prudent and feasible" routing of Interstate 40 through Memphis.

Reliable sources said Wednesday they will recommend that the originally proposed partially depressed design of the link be utilized because of its relatively low cost and because it would minimize harm to the park.

But the study, to be hand delivered to Brinegar, points out the state Transportation Department feels completion of I-40 is so greatly in the public interest that a vastly more costly cut-and-cover design would be acceptable.

The department has concluded that no prudent and feasible alternatives to the use of Overton Park can be identified and that cut-and-cover would minimize "all possible harm" to Overton Park.

Those expected to attend the meeting with Brinegar include Gov. Winfield Dunn, Sens. Howard Baker and William Brock, Rep. Dan Kuykendall, Mayor Wyeth Chandler and Ray Terrell, director of the state Transportation Department's bureau of planning and programming.

The study is an update of all material contained in an earlier proposal for the park route — which was rejected by Brinegar's predecessor, John Volpe — and is intended to answer all questions federal officials have raised about the legality of the park routing.

A source said the report is "voluminous," reviews the long history of the route and examines more than five possibilities while concluding the park corridor is the only prudent and feasible one.

Among the alternatives, it was said, is that the expressway through Memphis simply not be completed.

Officials declined to comment on reports about the study that will be given the secretary.

The conclusion that Overton Park is

the only prudent and feasible route was reached after years of study and delay "which have thwarted" the goals of the Memphis and Shelby County governments, the report says.

In recommending the partially depressed design, state officials note the cost of that approach is less than \$18 million.

The expense of a cut-and-cover design, it was estimated, would run to more than \$178 million and the cost of a bored tunnel — even if it were possible with anticipated water problems — would be a thumping \$775 million.

The state found in its study that a bored tunnel would, in addition to being enormously costly, have to go to a depth of 90 feet in order to protect tree root systems.

Among other alternate routes which the state found not to be prudent and reusable were corridors north and south of the park and along the Louisville & Nashville Railroad tracks.

Conservationists have successfully fought the routing of I-40 through the park and most think they will resume the legal battle if the park link is approved.

State transportation officials, who have been busy preparing the new plan since early this year, have declined to reveal any of its details.

However, most indications all along

have been that the main thrust once again would be to have Brinegar conclude the park route is the only reasonable corridor.

In August, state Transportation Commissioner Robert Smith pointed out that is the current legal question and said until it is resolved, no design for the remaining 3.7-mile segment of the expressway through Memphis may, under federal law, be approved.

But Smith, in a conversation with Memphis City Councilman Jack McNeil, said the state would "have to have an alternative to anything we do."

When Volpe ruled out the park route last year he did not specify an alternative.

Thereafter, U.S. Dist. Judge Bailey Brown of Memphis ordered Brinegar, who by then had succeeded Volpe, to say there was no feasible and prudent alternative or, if he felt there were, to state what it is.

But the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals overruled Brown. Nevertheless, Brinegar conceded the Volpe decision had been made on an insufficient record and he gave the state an opportunity to upgrade that record. The report he will be given Thursday is the result.

C.A.

Oct. 3, 1974

OPE 22-27