

CA. Aug. 4, 1976 (23)

# Support Urged For Park Route

Tennesseans for Better Transportation yesterday urged Memphians in favor of completing Interstate 40 through Overton Park to show up in large numbers at public hearings on the project Aug. 18-19.

The private agency, which originally proposed the state's current "plaza" design for the highway segment, urged the mass turnout in hopes of countering anti-expressway sentiments during the sessions in City Council chambers.

"A lot of people can take a break from their jobs and go down," said Gene Brymer, executive vice president of Tennesseans for Better Transportation (TBT).

At a press conference at the University Club of Memphis, Brymer and other TBT board members expressed concern that those in favor of the park route have been less vocal and therefore less effective in their efforts to complete the I-40 segment.

TBT, a statewide organization with about 400 members, proposed the plaza design for the midtown roadway in 1973. When the state saw little chance of approval for an uncovered partially depressed roadway, it adopted the plaza concept as a compromise in hopes of appeasing park route foes, state sources said yesterday.

The plaza design calls for a sunken highway across the one-mile park segment, with tree and shrub-covered plazas covering the highway at intervals. The plazas could double as picnic areas, walkways or bicycle trails, state Transportation Commissioner Eddie Shaw said at a press conference here last month.

Public hearings on the project are the final input into the debate before it is turned over to U.S. Transportation Secretary William Coleman for a decision. Shaw said last month Coleman liked the plan when it was previewed for him in February.

Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, Inc. disapproves of the compromise plan and all other plans involving parkland. The group already has announced plans to take the dispute to federal courts if Coleman approves the park route. Thus, its earliest possible completion date, 1980, "is more than optimistic," TBT board member Carl Carson said yesterday.

Tennessee Transportation Department attorney J. Alan Hanover said anyone "who wishes to speak at the hearings, pro or con, will be given the opportunity." He said specifics of the hearings have not been completed, but those who wish to speak likely will be asked to sign a log as they enter the council chambers.

Speakers then will be called to the podium in the order in which their names are signed, he said.

City Council secretary Mrs. Jan Long said the chambers have been scheduled for use during the hearings from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. both dates, "just in case."