

Free, Feb. 18, 1977

CA (p. 12)

I-40 Park Route Deadline Set By State Transportation Chief

State Transportation Commissioner Eddie Shaw said yesterday that if the federal government does not approve plans this year for completion of Interstate 40 through Overton Park the project will be abandoned.

"If we don't get approval this time, we're going to put it on the back burner," Shaw said. "If we don't receive some encouragement, we're going to drop it."

Mayor Wyeth Chandler said he has not discussed the matter recently with Shaw or Gov. Ray Blanton and was not familiar with Shaw's statement.

"But I feel the completion of the expressway is one of the three most important matters in the City of Memphis," Chandler said. "We would hope and expect that the state would never withdraw its efforts for its completion."

He said he expects Public Works Director Frank Palumbo to meet with Shaw within a week to discuss "general road matters" and that he hopes to receive some clarification of Shaw's position on I-40 at that time.

The 3.7-mile strip through Overton Park has been the subject of a 20-year battle between environmental groups and civic and political leaders.

Shaw, speaking at a legislative budget committee hearing, said he believes federal Secretary of Transportation Brock Adams favors current plans to build a depressed highway through the park at a cost of about \$30 million. He said a meeting is planned with Adams in Washington in two or three weeks to review plans for completing the interstate.