

Senators Renew Plea For Completion Of I-40

From The Commercial Appeal
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Sens. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) and Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.) Thursday urged the Carter administration to get moving on plugging the unfinished segment of I-40 in Overton Park in Memphis.

Baker called Transportation Secretary Brock Adams and invited him to visit Memphis for a personal study.

"The secretary gave every indication he would be willing to go personally to Memphis to take a look at the situation, although he did not give a date," Baker reported.

Baker said Sasser, Gov. Ray Blanton, and others would be invited to join in the inspection.

Sasser said he has asked the Department of Transportation to send a "high official" to Memphis to hold a hearing on the I-40 problem.

He said he expects a response after the state of Tennessee formally presents its proposed "plaza design" for building a partially depressed I-40 segment through the park.

Baker said Adams assured him he is fully aware of the I-40 problem.

Earlier Thursday, Baker told Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce leaders he will consider introducing legislation to waive federal environmental laws if a solution to the I-40 problem is not forthcoming soon.

The chamber leaders had as their breakfast guests Baker, Sasser, and Reps. Harold Ford of Memphis, Ed Jones (D-Tenn.), Robin Beard (R-Tenn.) and Jamie L. Whitten (D-Miss.).

Oscar Edmonds, chairman of the Memphis City Council, said the idea of legislative solution "seems to have unanimous support" among area congressman.

Completion of the 3.7-mile I-40 segment has been blocked for years by environ-

mental laws that provide that before a federal aid highway can encroach upon a public park the secretary of transportation must find there is no prudent and feasible alternative and that the design minimizes harm to the park. The three most recent predecessors of Adams have refused or failed to make the required determinations.

CA

Feb 25, 1977