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# I-40—Park Snag Termed 'Symbol'

Federal Highway Administrator William Cox yesterday described the Overton Park expressway case as "a national symbol" of the environmental hot potato.

Cox, in Memphis for the annual convention of the Tennessee Motor Transport Association, said Transportation Secretary Brock Adams still is considering his ruling on the case.



William Cox

"He is letting everybody put his two cents worth in before he makes up his own mind.

"And only Secretary Adams knows what he will do."

Cox submitted his recommendation to Adams in June. State Transportation Commissioner Eddie Shaw later said that Cox had urged Adams to approve completion of Interstate 40 through Overton Park.

The highway administrator said in his room at the Hilton Inn that there are more than 5,000 employees in the U.S. Transportation Department and "there may be

leaks." He would neither confirm nor deny Shaw's statement.

But, he said the Memphis case is one of the most difficult environmental disputes ever handled by the Federal Highway Administration or the Transportation Department. "It's a close call no matter how you look at it."

Cox said that in every city he visits he is asked, "What happened to that expressway case in Memphis?"

"It has become a national symbol. Overton Park is symbolic of the balance we've got to develop between highway transportation needs on the one hand and environmental considerations on the other."

In two-decades of dispute, the uncompleted 3.7-mile segment of I-40 has been approved for construction by five federal highway administrators only to be rejected by a succession of transportation secretaries.

The Tennessee Transportation Department now is under a federal injunction issued by U.S. Dist. Judge Bailey Brown forbidding construction within the park pending a ruling by Adams.

"We reviewed every element of the public hearings in the case. I personally spent four days walking through the park. I walked through the park with Secretary Adams, and we even visited the zoo.

"Our thinking was, 'Let's not make a decision based just on the papers in front of us. Let's do it so that we can discuss it knowledgeably.'"

At the transport association convention last night, Cox presented Presidential Medals of Honor to Franklin, Tenn., truck driver Robert Harry Thompson and Greenville, S. C., truck driver Raymond Earle Wilson. Both were cited for standing in knee-deep diesel fuel to rescue another trucker from his overturned tractor trailer on I-40 near Fairview, Tenn., last year. Moments after they used tire tools to pry the trucker from his cab and away from the wreckage, the truck and its spilled cargo exploded, Cox said.

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