

Baker Requests Panel Hearings On Park Issue

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WASHINGTON — Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) asked the Senate transportation subcommittee Wednesday to hold hearings to explore possible solutions to the Overton Park expressway impasse in Memphis.

In letters to the chairman and ranking Republican member of the panel, Baker did not mention a time for the hearings. He told newsmen he thought February or March of next year would be appropriate.

The letters, to Chairman Lloyd Bentsen (D-Texas) and Sen. John Chaffee (R-R.I.), said Transportation Secretary Brock Adams' recent decision rejecting a state plan to complete Interstate 40 through the park "offered no assistance" in meeting transportation needs in the area.

Baker told newsmen he would hope the hearings would deal with the question of permitting all of the voters of Shelby County to vote in a referendum on solutions. He said Adams had agreed to abide by a referendum. He said legislation probably would be required to arrange for a referendum and specify the ballot choices.

Baker said the subcommittee hearings could give the Department of Transportation an opportunity to make some suggestions on solving the problem.

"It is clearly imprudent not to bring the full expertise of the Department of Transportation to bear on this problem in assistance to the state and the city of Memphis," his letters said. "I am encouraged at the Secretary's (Adams) commitment made at my insistence . . . to do just that."

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