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"Interstate 40 Route Through Park Called 'Final' By Ellington"

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Interstate 40 Route Through Park Called 'Final' By Ellington

CA 2-4-67
Change Is Out

Road Commissioner Says
Alternates Are Not Up
To US Standards

By WILLIAM BENNETT

From The Commercial Appeal
Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, Feb. 3. — Gov. Buford Ellington and his highway commissioner, Charles Speight, firmly rejected Friday any change in the routing of Interstate Highway 40 through Overton Park in Memphis.

The Governor's office said the situation has been reviewed and a "final decision" made that the park route "is the only feasible location for the highway."

As the announcement was made, the major portion of design work on Memphis' east-west expressway, including the Overton Park stretch, was completed in Memphis and sent to the state Highway Department by Buchart-Horn, design engineers. The department will review the plans and send engineers for an on-site check about the middle of this month.

Since the original route study made in 1958, there have been several proposals to keep the superhighway out of the park.

All of these, Speight said, have been studied and have not measured up to requirements set out by the United States Bureau of Public Roads and the state Highway Department.

"The route through the park," Mr. Speight said, "is the most direct and the most economically feasible. Other proposed routes would have caused hundreds of people to move from their homes and would have necessitated the moving of several churches, schools and business establishments.

"I do not feel we could justify the inconvenience to these persons and the additional cost involved."

Ellington said he believes the route through the park will better serve the people, giving them the most efficient route from the standpoint of traffic flow, safety and economy.

It is estimated the route will take only about 20 acres of the approximately 300 park acres.

The expressway will follow the present bus route along the south edge of the Overton Park Zoo. It will be depressed about seven feet. A four-million-dollar expansion plan announced last week by the Memphis Park Commission includes a pedestrian bridge across the expressway to the Zoo entrance. Philanthropist Abe Plough, a chief backer of the Zoo plan, earlier had withdrawn a million-dollar gift in protest of the expressway route.

Construction will begin in 1969 on the 7½ miles from Claybrook east to Interstate 240, including the park route, and next year on a stretch from Claybrook to the new Mississippi River bridge site where the east-west, I-40, will cross into Arkansas.

(Map and Picture on Page 17)

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