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"Expressway Case Gets Last 'Ride'"

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CA 2-15-68

Memphis - Street + Xway
Expressway Case Gets Last 'Ride'

By JEFFERSON RIKER
The man who will make the final decision — if any more decisions are made — listened patiently for 3½ hours yesterday afternoon as opponents of the crosstown expressway route through Overton Park made an eleventh hour plea for reconsideration.

Lowell K. Bridwell, federal highway administrator, had earlier conferred with Mayor Henry Loeb and Downing Pryor, City Council chairman, and toured the expressway route with highway officials.

Before returning to Washington last night, the 43-year-old administrator and former

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newspaperman, said he will decide whether to order realignment "in several days or a couple of weeks."

"I'm going over in a corner and ponder for a while," he said after the meeting with Citizens to Protect Overton Park. "A decision has already been made — if I didn't do anything it would be carried out. All I'm doing now is reviewing it again."

During the session in the Federal Building's ninth-floor conference room, Dr. Arlo I. Smith, chairman of the protest group and a biology professor at Southwestern, asked for "a

solution which will keep Overton Park untouched by highway construction." He also called for a halt to right-of-way acquisition until a thorough study could prove that "no feasible and prudent alternative" exists.

Earlier, the soft-spoken highway boss had told Mayor Loeb and Mr. Pryor, "I came down here with an open mind. But I have a closed mind on one thing: No more studies. We have had all the studies on 'his that we need.'"

Mr. Bridwell made it clear who was presiding at the meeting with the save-the-park group.

When Waldo Zimmerman, president of Mid-Town Civic Club, assailed the "truckers" who he charged were pushing for the Overton Park route for selfish motives, Mr. Bridwell intervened:

"Mr. Zimmerman, I'd like you to limit your remarks to the specifics of the alternate routes." Mr. Zimmerman is a promoter of the route down Cypress Creek and along the L&N Railroad right-of-way on an elevated structure.

Dr. J. Lyndal York, president of the Tennessee Ornithological Society and an assistant professor of biochemistry at the UT Medical Units, discussed effects of the expressway on bird and wildlife in the park. The highway would become a "biological barrier" which would split the park into three segments to the detriment of birds, animals and flowers, he said.

Mr. Bridwell asked several penetrating questions on specific points in Dr. York's presentation.

Col. Samuel F. Langley (USA, ret.) and George Houston, representing Future Memphis, Inc., supported the Overton Park route, as did W. Percy Brooks, representing the Memphis Area Chamber of Commerce. They said it offered "more highway for the money."

(Home is derogatory!)

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