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Interstate Route Through Park Gains MATCOG Support

The proposed Interstate 40 route through Overton Park was endorsed by the Mississippi-Arkansas-Tennessee Council of Governments, a regional planning and coordination agency, yesterday.

"I think it's just too late a date to do anything but go on," Jack Ramsay, Shelby County Commission Chairman, said.

A draft environmental impact statement, basically backing the expressway through Overton Park, was endorsed by the MATCOG executive committee in an unanimous voice vote. The agency also adopted a resolution urging prompt construction of the road.

J. Alan Hanover, a highway

department attorney, said he was sure highway officials would "be delighted" with the action.

A public hearing on the environmental statement, prepared by state and federal highway officials, will be held at 10 a.m. Sept. 14 in the City Council chambers.

Only two agencies contacted

by MATCOG responded with opposition to the proposed expressway route, William N. Fondren, executive director, said.

The Shelby County Development and Coordination Department, headed by Cliff Tuck, supported an alternate route along the L&N Railroad or

elevation of the roadway through the park. A spokesman for the Environmental Action Council of Memphis also criticized the route.

"It is our belief that the interstate system was created to connect cities, not bisect them," Frank Millington, chairman of a council committee, said.

None of the objectors was present at the meeting.