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Volpe Now Says Design Only In Overton Park Route Case

CA 10/4/69 By JIMMIE COVINGTON

Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe will consider only the design and not possible alternate routes in his "good strong look" at the Overton Park expressway section, an aide to the secretary said in Rome yesterday.

"The location (route) is completely approved," Joseph Bosco, special assistant to Mr. Volpe, told The Commercial Appeal by telephone.

Mr. Volpe was "with the prime minister" and could not be reached for comment.

The latest statement differed somewhat from comments Secretary Volpe made to The Commercial Appeal in a telephone interview Wednesday night.

Mr. Volpe said then: "There has been some discussion about whether the site and location complied with (federal law) that requires that we do everything in our power to avoid parks . . . we are attempting to fulfill our obligations . . ."

"This doesn't mean that it might not be approved. We are taking a second look to see that it is the most feasible location . . . If there is an alternative that will be less destructive, we certainly will want to consider it."

A spokesman for Mr. Volpe's office in Washington yesterday released a telegram from Mr. Volpe to James E. Beggs, acting secretary in Mr. Volpe's absence.

The telegram said:

"Confirming my phone conversation with you, my understanding of Overton Park, Memphis, is that while Section 44 of the Transportation Act of 1966 would normally require investigation and consideration of alternative routes there is no feasible alternate route in this case.

"Therefore my decision, which will be made as soon after my return as possible, will be related to design considerations in preserving the environmental quality of the park."

The spokesman said the telegram was "received sometime after your paper came out with the statement and everybody got upset."

He was asked who is "everybody."

"Well, everybody down in your town, but that isn't for quotes," the spokesman said.

Earlier in the day, Secretary Volpe's news office called The Commercial Appeal seeking information on the secretary's comments in the interview Wednesday.

Mr. Bosco, in yesterday's telephone interview, said Mr.

Volpe is scheduled to return to Washington next Saturday.

Asked how long it would take to decide on the expressway design, Mr. Bosco said, "I don't know how much time. I would hope as soon as can be."

He said any change in the expressway route "would involve the relocation of housing and the displacement of people . . . We are seeking the minimal effect on the esthetics and environment of the park."

An announcement Tuesday that Transportation Department officials had placed a "freeze" on construction of the park segment caused an uproar among state and local officials.

Representative Dan Kuydendall (R-Tenn.) said Tuesday that James B. Braman, assistant secretary of transportation for urban systems and environment, told him that he had recommended that the park segment be built as a "cut and cover" project instead of merely being depressed through key portions of the park.

"In 'cut and cover,' the expressway would be depressed and covered over in certain areas of the park.

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