

Architect Calls For I-40 Tunnel Under Parkway

Architect Francis Gassner has proposed to Gov. Winfield Dunn that the controversial Overton Park segment of Interstate 40 be built as a cut-and-cover tunnel under North Parkway.

In a letter to Dunn released yesterday, Gassner said the tunnel, although expensive, "would be the quickest, most expeditious means of resolving the controversy."

The plan would permit maximum use of right-of-way the state has already acquired and would require a minimum of new right-of-way, Gassner said.

"In this connection it would appear that, through proper construction phasing, traffic on North Parkway could be maintained during construction," he said.

Former Secretary of Transportation

John A. Volpe ruled shortly before he left office that the state would have to find an alternative to building the expressway through Overton Park. The Sixth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati upheld Volpe last week.

Gassner said he could find no evidence that his idea had been "explored in a professional way by anyone."

The 120-foot-wide right-of-way of North Parkway would be adequate for six lanes of traffic with median, emergency strips and shoulders, Gassner said.

"The impact on the neighboring institutions and upon Overton Park itself would be minimal because inherent in the proposal is the restoration of North Parkway to its existing," he said.

"Ninety per cent of the cost would be paid by the federal government out of highway trust funds, which funds must, under the law, be spent for the construction of highways and transit facilities somewhere."

Gassner said he had not conducted detailed technical studies of the proposal.

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