

CA, April 24, 1975

Slurry Method May Stabilize Tunnel Cost At \$100 Million

From The Commercial Appeal Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON, April 23.—The cost of a cut-and-cover tunnel under Overton Park in Memphis may be “considerably less” than initial estimates of \$160 million, Transportation Department sources said Wednesday.

The cost will depend upon whether one of the conventional tunneling methods or a cheaper, so-called slurry wall method is used, they said.

One source said if engineering studies indicate the slurry wall method

is feasible and it is used successfully, the cost might be as low as \$100 million.

Transportation Secretary William T. Coleman Jr. has directed his aides to cooperate with the state in contracting for engineering studies.

The studies, to be financed by the Federal Highway Administration, will be made simultaneously with the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Both are expected to be completed within six months.

Meanwhile, FHA engineers are in Sweden and other countries of Europe, where the slurry wall method is often used, to discuss the method with engineers.

“Soil and water problems in Stockholm are comparable to some extent to these in Memphis,” one official said.

Gov. Ray Blanton and other Tennessee officials have indicated the state might have trouble producing its required 10 per cent contribution of the tunnel project.

The governor, here to testify before a House subcommittee on an unrelated subject, said in response to questions that a \$16-million state contribution would pose problems, even when

(Continued on Page 4)

Exhaust, Drainage Systems May Pose Problems

(Continued from Page 1)

spread over the planned two-year construction period.

Blanton indicated that he is even more concerned over the cost of maintaining the tunnel, including its exhaust and drainage systems, which a federal attorney said would be the state's responsibility.

“In my opinion,” Blanton said, “it (Coleman's proposal) is an unjustified cost to the taxpayers and an impractical solution because of what I'd consider unbearable maintenance costs.”

Blanton said he favored the state Highway Department's original plan for a partially depressed route through the park because of its lesser cost and maintenance. Such a design has twice been rejected by federal officials on grounds it would not comply with federal environmental laws.

Blanton said he will carefully consider Coleman's proposal before making any final decisions. He said that he has not yet received any official communi-

cations and therefore has had no chance to study the proposal in detail.

He also said he hasn't discussed it with state Transportation Commissioner Eddie Shaw.

“I will, as soon as our engineers have had a chance to appraise the situation, and can discuss it intelligently” Blanton said.

In Nashville, Shaw said he is inclined to reject the cut-and-cover tunnel as too costly. Shaw said he will make no official decision on Coleman's recommendation until Thursday.

An attorney familiar with the federal highway aid program said the question of proceeding with Coleman's proposal is up to the state.

“If the state doesn't want to build the project, it won't be built,” the lawyer said. “It is a state project. It is the state's option. The federal government won't and can't force the state to build it. The federal government pays 90 per cent of the cost. Otherwise it's a state project.”

The 5,000-foot tunnel will have to have some sort of mechanical exhaust

system to expel motor vehicle exhaust fumes and to assure adequate ventilation, officials indicated.

One official said ventilation shafts could run along the sides or the roof of the tunnel. Coleman's proposal barred any protrusions above the ground.

Drainage problems could be handled by tightly sealing the walls of the tunnel, thus eliminating any need for pumps. “In Europe,” one official said, “they put sealers on the inside.”

Other maintenance problems would include lights and possibly special policing, depending upon what city and state authorities decided. A federal officer discounted the necessity of stationing police inside the tunnel.

“There will be a tremendous amount of engineering interest in this project if the slurry wall method is used,” one official said. “It will be the first major demonstration of the slurry wall technique in his country. It will show that it is feasible and that costs can be held down. It will help get our contractors used to it. As of now, they don't have much experience with it.”

CA
April 24, 1975