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Blanton Gives Guarded Praise To I-40 Link Above Parkway

By WILLIAM BENNETT

From The Commercial Appeal
Nashville Bureau

NASHVILLE, July 15. — A proposal to end the long dispute on the Overton Park expressway by elevating the Interstate 40 link over North Parkway drew a favorable, if guarded, response Tuesday from Gov. Ray Blanton.

"This may just well be our solution," Blanton said after the plan was laid out before him by Memphis Mayor Wyeth Chandler and Shelby County Court Chairman William Farris.

And state Transportation Commissioner

Eddie Shaw, who also sat in on the meeting in Blanton's office, said, "It's a good idea. It's possible."

Though Blanton seemed to be impressed by the price tag on the proposal — about \$26 million compared to nearly \$200 million for a cut-and-cover design through the park — he was not without misgivings.

And a spokesman at the federal Department of Transportation, while saying he could not officially comment on any proposal until it is officially presented, added he "presumed the state is proceeding" with feasibility studies on a construction method for the cut-and-cover tunnel under the park as suggested by DOT Secretary William T. Coleman Jr.

Blanton, meanwhile expressed some doubt, for example, that the six-lane expressway envisioned would meet with federal approval in view of the heavy anticipated traffic count along the stretch.

And because the supporting structures would have to be within the North Parkway median, Blanton said, widening the roadway beyond three lanes in each direction would mean "you're going to get into some heavy concrete."

Shaw noted, too, that elevating the expressway about 16 feet above North Parkway would present a noise pollution problem.

Farris agreed, but suggested trees along the parkway would help buffer the noise. And Chandler told the governor and Shaw he felt "the elevation can work."

"The beautiful thing to me," Farris said, "is that it can be done right away. If you talk about the slurry wall method, you're talking about years and years."

Coleman last April suggested a cut-and-cover tunnel under the park and asked engineers to consider a slurry wall construction method to minimize the width of the cut and thus the damage to the park.

State officials don't know if the technique will work in Memphis, but Shaw said that within about 10 days the state will enter into an agreement with the federal government to determine whether a full-scale feasibility study is necessary.

In presenting the elevated design proposal to Blanton, Farris said some "citizens" had employed private engi-

neers who say the approach is feasible. Neither he nor Chandler would identify the citizens.

Chandler said the city is ready to do "almost anything" to have Interstate 40 completed through Memphis, and Farris agreed the missing highway link in the park area — which has been stalled for years by environmentalists — has been a "tremendous detriment" to downtown.

Though the impression given at Tuesday's meeting was that the environmentalists would not fight the suggested parkway routing, Farris told Blanton he could not speak for them.

Chandler and Farris presented Blanton with a model of the elevated design, but they had no engineering drawings. The mayor said he will ask the engineers to contact Shaw to discuss the proposal further.

All present expressed some concern about the sharpness of the recommended curve — nearly 90 degrees — at the western end of the design submitted to Blanton.

The elevated portion of the expressway would begin on the east at about Hollywood and extend to west of McLean before the road made the sharp curve to the south.

Farris conceded the curve is "comparatively severe," but said it meets federal standards.

The 5,000-foot-long tunnel proposed by Coleman would cost about \$100 million, and another \$60 million would be needed to restore the park.

Coleman said it was his judgment that there is no "prudent and feasible" alternative to the park routing, although he noted his decision is subject to reconsideration on the basis of an environmental impact statement, which he asked to be prepared.

Nose-Snipper Sought

NAPLES, Italy, July 15. — Police launched a search for Mrs. Amalia Lama, 35, because her husband Antonio complained that she was jealous and tried to cut his nose off with a pair of scissors while he was sleeping.