

A LOOK AHEAD AT THE HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Remarks by Francis C. Turner, Director of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, at a Kiwanis luncheon, Salt Lake City, Utah, October 19, 1967.

It is a genuine pleasure to be with you today. As you know, I'm in Salt Lake City to take part in the Annual Meeting of the American Association of State Highway Officials, or AASHO as we call it. But one's sense of perspective tends to suffer from too many strictly technical sessions, so I'm glad of the chance to talk a little about highways in more general and human terms.

By way of background I'll say just a few words about AASHO and the Federal-State roadbuilding partnership which has served the country so well for more than a half-century. The Association was founded in 1914 as a non-profit organization of the State highway departments and their officials, principally for the exchange of ideas and scientific information about the roads which were beginning to assume tremendous importance in the developing country. It was also felt that such a group was needed to advise Congress on highway matters that were in the national interest.

In that year of 1914, there were about 1,800,000 motor vehicles in the United States, a total which seemed almost astronomical at the time. I checked just before I came out here and the official estimate is that we will have 97,527,000 by the end of 1967. This is an increase of about 3,350,000 over 1966 - but nearly 96 million over 1914.

AASHO today includes the highway departments of the 50 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, as well as the Bureau of Public Roads. Although it is not a promotional organization, Congress and successive

national Administrations have always looked to it for guidance and counsel on highway matters. The Association has met annually since its founding and this is its third annual gathering in Salt Lake City, having met here in 1931 and in 1948.

Federal-aid for highways started in 1916 during the administration of Woodrow Wilson when a modest \$5 million was made available in Federal funds for the whole United States. Again skipping across the years, a total of \$4.8 billion has just been apportioned to the States for the fiscal year 1969. This brings the total apportioned since the beginning of the program to \$54.01 billion.

As you probably know, Federal-aid funds may be used only for new construction or highway improvements, right-of-way and engineering costs. Roads so built remain under State ownership and maintenance. Under the traditional Federal-State partnership, the States choose the routes to be improved, select and plan projects, award contracts, supervise construction, and acquire right-of-way. All of these steps require approval of the Bureau of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, but the entire initiative in the program rests with the State highway departments.

Events have proven the wisdom of this separation of duties and powers between the Federal government and the States. The mutual respect for each partner's prerogatives and responsibilities has persisted through the years, despite many profound changes in the size and direction of the highway program, as well as the percentage of the Federal contribution. The partnership arrangement has been largely responsible, I believe, for giving us the finest

highway system in the world -- even though we find it increasingly difficult to keep pace with the rise in population and the number of motor vehicles.

One more historical note because it has direct application to the progress of the highway program in Utah. In 1917 your Legislature gave consent to the provisions of the 1916 Federal-aid Road Act. Negotiations with the Lincoln Highway Association were begun but the high proportion of Federal lands in the State proved to be a financing problem and some portions of the Lincoln Highway were not completed as planned. The enactment of a State gas tax in 1923 made possible the orderly development of Utah's road network in cooperation with the Federal government.

To connect up the historical note with the situation today, the Federal government has recognized the financing problem due to the preponderance of Federal lands in Utah by: (1) Contributing 94.38 percent of the cost of the Interstate System instead of the usual 90 percent, (2) Contributing 76.52 percent of the cost of primary, secondary and urban highways instead of the normal 50 percent.

In addition, a considerable amount of 100 percent Federal funds are committed to projects to improve roads through Federal lands and these are important to the State's economy. For example, \$2 million has just been allotted for work on State Route 95 between Hanksville and Lake Powell to provide access to Bullfrog Recreation Center.

Financing has been a continuing problem at all levels of government. At the national level it took 40 years to devise, or at least win acceptance of, an adequate and equitable method of financing the Federal share of the highway program. Prior to 1956 Federal funds apportioned to the States for road improvements came from the General Fund of the Treasury, made up of

tax receipts of all kinds. In connection with the financing of the Interstate System and the expanded program of other Federal-aid highway construction, a Highway Trust Fund was set up as a repository for receipts from the gasoline and other highway use taxes. This Fund has financed all of the Federal share of the highway program since 1956 and has made possible the physical progress that is in evidence and in use all across the country.

We now have well over 24,000 miles of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways open to traffic and construction is under way on nearly 6,000 more miles. Engineering or right-of-way acquisition is in progress on about another 9,700 miles. Thus work has been completed or is under way in some form on 39,700 miles of the projected 41,000-mile System. That leaves less than three percent of the mileage which has not advanced beyond the preliminary stage.

Mere mileage itself, however, is not a true measure of physical progress. It depends to a large extent on where the mileage is. Utah's major Interstate efforts have been quite heavily concentrated in urban areas where -- because of location, engineering and construction problems -- a mile of finished pavement may represent more actual progress than 20 or 30 miles in the open country. For this and other reasons, Utah's Interstate record in terms of mileage is behind that of the country as a whole.

Nevertheless, our figures as of June 30 show that 253 miles of your 935-mile Interstate System were open to traffic, 160 miles were under construction, and engineering or right-of-way acquisition was in progress on another 285 miles. That leaves about 235 miles or 25 percent of Utah's Interstate System in preliminary status or not yet in progress.

But comparisons are not only odious; they can be highly misleading, as I have indicated. And in any case, my purpose in accepting your hospitality was not to make comparisons but to touch upon some of the current trends and the future challenges in the highway program for the Nation, for Utah and for Salt Lake City.

I want to talk briefly about highway planning both in the traditional sense and as we view it in relation to contemporary problems. Those familiar with the many steps that go into the making of a highway network know that the value of the final result is likely to be in direct proportion to the amount, scope and thoroughness of the thinking and planning that precede by many years the engineering design and the acquisition of right-of-way. Thus the Interstate System, which we consider quite a new and revolutionary undertaking, had its roots in ideas, studies and reports going back to the 1930's and even earlier.

Highway planning in our contemporary society is actually a misnomer, especially in relation to urban routes. In the best sense of the phrase today, it has come to mean planning highways as part of total transportation systems and relating these systems to their impact on people -- on their environment, housing, recreation, cultural interests and all the other elements of modern living. No highway or highway program can be considered in isolation from these factors. What we are working toward is an adequate highway network that will be safe and esthetically pleasing as well as serviceable, and will be closely integrated with other modes of transportation. These modes are complementary, rather than competitive, and highway planning must be considered in that light. At the same time, we recognize that highways are capable of

servicing important purposes other than the movement of people and goods and we are encouraging the fulfillment of this potential to the maximum extent.

The Federal-aid Highway Act of 1962 provided that after July 1, 1965, programs of Federal-aid projects proposed for urban areas of over 50,000 population must be based on a continuing, comprehensive transportation planning process to be carried on by States and local governments. This process is concerned with transportation, not just highways, and by its very nature must involve land-use planning and the overall economic, social, and cultural objectives of the community and its people.

I am pleased to say that the Utah State Highway Department was among the first to accept this challenge, in cooperation with the planning commissions of Salt Lake City and Davis County. This study is in its continuing phases and others are under way in Ogden and in Provo-Orem. I understand also that your State highway department has established a fine working relationship with the State Planning Agency, which administers funds granted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for its Urban Planning Assistance program.

The need for long range planning has been recognized again and again by Congress, most notably as far as the highway program is concerned, in the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1965. This required a report to be submitted in January 1968, and every second year thereafter, on the highway needs of the Nation. The first report is now reaching the final stages and I'm sure it will be of tremendous significance in shaping the future of the highway program.

Among other things it will include a review of the existing Federal-aid systems and consideration of needed changes; an analysis of present and anticipated future deficiencies in the rural and urban highway networks; an analysis of the needs for future highway improvements as reported by the State highway departments; and a discussion of highway financing, existing trends and future options.

This covers a multitude of problems. In connection with the report, a nationwide system classification study was conducted, incorporating 66,000 miles of the most important rural corridors not included in the present Interstate System. The study of this mileage was developed in three increments with the purpose of providing a factual basis for considering the possibility of (1) Expanding the Interstate System, (2) Establishing a new Federal-aid system intermediate in function between the Interstate System and the other mileage in the present Federal-aid primary system, or (3) a combination of both.

Without trying to predict the findings of the study, I think it is safe to forecast a continuing high level of highway construction activity as far ahead into the future as we can reasonably look. I believe it will include many more miles of freeways, especially in the urban areas, where most of our people already live and urbanization continues to increase at an astounding rate. By 1990 it is forecast that nearly 220 million people will be living in urban areas -- more people than we have in the entire United States today.

This fact of life requires not only more and better transportation arteries in the metropolitan areas, but other non-highway facilities which

we believe can be provided simultaneously in many instances at minimum total cost. The Bureau of Public Roads is pushing what we call the joint development concept which is designed to make the maximum use of both space and funds in building urban freeways. In simplest terms it involves the use of the freeway to serve the economic and social ends of the community as well as its transportation needs. The key lies in the acquisition of entire blocks or squares of property rather than the minimum required for the freeway right-of-way.

In many cases, we have found, this can be done at little or no extra cost and certainly is much cheaper than buying the same land piecemeal for housing, recreation centers, parks and other community needs. Of the total property acquired by the local authority, the highway department would buy what amounts to an easement for the right-of-way or "air tunnel." The rest of the property over, under and adjacent to the freeway could be used for any of a number of community purposes.

This is an enlightened concept, permitting the construction of replacement housing while building the freeway, with a minimum of displacement of the dwellers in that area. It makes the most efficient use of both money and space to provide the needed freeway and the other needed facilities as a cut-rate package development. It also makes possible a rebirth of the downtown area, with its consequent benefit to the municipal tax rolls. This program is still mainly a concept, too new to have demonstrated its full potential in actual practice, but almost limitless in its possibilities for the future. There are, for example, more than 2,000 miles of urban freeways still to be built under the Interstate highway program alone and many of these miles offer good opportunities to apply the joint development idea.

Undoubtedly thousands of other miles of urban highways will be built in the years ahead under other programs because the cities are where the real problems are, and where the action is, in terms of sheer numbers of people.

Fortunately, through the tried and tested Federal-State partnership, plans are being forged to accommodate -- not only the travel desires of these people -- but some of their other requirements as well.

Not that the needs of the rural population will be neglected in our national planning, but a look ahead at the highway program demonstrates beyond any question that its main thrust will necessarily be concentrated in the cities. We must look to the future before it is upon us.