

On August 23, President Johnson signed into law the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968. Additional to authorizing appropriations for the various federal-aid systems, the law extends the scheduled completion time and authorizes additional mileage for the Interstate System, authorizes use of federal-aid highway funds for TOPICS, provides funds for highway beautification, increases relocation payments to families displaced by highways, provides continued support for highway safety programs, establishes a new demonstration program for fringe parking facilities, and requires a nationwide, functional classification study of streets and highways.

Interstate Authorizations—The law authorizes Interstate System appropriations of \$1.0 billion annually for the fiscal years 1970 through 1973, and \$2.225 billion for fiscal 1974. Apportionment factors of the 1968 Interstate System Cost Estimate will be used to apportion Interstate System funds for the fiscal years 1970 and 1971.

Primary, Secondary Systems Authorizations—Appropriations of \$1.1 billion each for fiscal years 1970 and 1971 are authorized for Federal-aid primary and secondary systems and their extensions within urban areas. Additional authorizations of \$125 million are made for the Federal-aid primary and secondary systems, exclusive of their urban extensions, for each of the fiscal years 1970 and 1971. Sixty percent of these funds will be available for projects on the Federal-aid primary system; the remainder for projects on the Federal-aid secondary system.

TOPICS—The law adds a new Section 135 to Title 23, United States Code, authorizing a program to improve traffic operations on streets and highways within the designated boundaries of urban areas. The TOPICS program is authorized \$200 million annually out of the Highway Trust

Fund for the fiscal years 1970 and 1971. These funds are to be used for projects on an extension of the Federal-aid primary or secondary system in urban areas.

Other Roads—The law authorizes a total of \$547.5 million in General Fund appropriations in fiscal 1970 and 1971 for forest highways, public lands highways, forest development roads and trails, public lands development roads and trails, park roads and trails, parkways and Indian reservation roads and bridges.

Highway Beautification—The existing 10 per cent penalty against Federal-aid highway construction funds for failure to control billboards and junkyards is continued. Authorized is an appropriation, out of the General Fund of the Treasury, of \$25 million in beautification program funds for fiscal year 1970 only. Also provided is \$1.25 million for administrative expenses for fiscal years 1969 and 1970. Areas subject to "bona fide State, county and local zoning control" will not have to be included in agreements entered into between the States and the Secretary of Transportation.

Advance Right-of-Way Acquisition—Establishes a "right-of-way revolving fund" in the U. S. Treasury. The fund is available to the States, without interest, to pay the entire costs of projects for the acquisition of rights-of-way, including the net cost of the State of property management, and related moving and relocation payments. To implement the program, \$160 million for each of the fiscal years 1970 through 1972 will be appropriated from the Highway Trust Fund.

Highway Safety Program—For continued support of State and community highway safety programs begun under the Highway Safety Act of 1966, appropriations of \$75 million for the fiscal year 1970 and \$100 million for the fiscal year 1971 are authorized. The highway safety research and development programs are authorized \$20 million for the fiscal year 1970 and \$37.5 million for the fiscal year 1971. The new law extends the deadline date for approved State safety

programs to December 31, 1969. The 10 percent penalty feature is retained.

Fringe Parking Facilities—A demonstration program for the construction of fringe parking facilities is established. Until June 31, 1971, the Secretary of Transportation may approve for demonstration purposes, the acquisition of land adjacent to the right-of-way on any Federal-aid highway system outside a central business district, and the construction of a publicly-owned parking facility.

Federal-aid highway funds can be used to pay 50 per cent of the cost of these parking facilities that "shall be located and designed to permit its use in conjunction with existing or planned public transportation facilities". The Federal share is not to exceed five per cent of the sum apportioned for the ABC programs.

Interstate Adjustments and Additions—Additional mileage, not to exceed 1,500 miles, to the 41,000-mile Interstate System is authorized. Scheduled completion of the Interstate System is extended to June 30, 1974. Whenever the Secretary of Transportation determines that a highway on the Federal-aid primary system meets Interstate standards, he may designate that highway as an addition or connection to the Interstate System. Any highway so designated shall not create any Federal financial responsibility.

Functional Classification Study—The Secretary of Transportation will report to Congress by January, 1970 on the results of a systematic nationwide functional highway classification study, to be made in cooperation with the State highway departments and local governments. Particular attention is to be given to the establishment of highway system categories rural and urban, according to the functional importance of routes.

Preservation of Parklands—The Secretary of Transportation is not to approve any program or project that would use public parkland, recreational areas, wildlife refuges or historical sites unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of such land, and (2) such

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Commentary

A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such park, recreational area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or historic site resulting from such use."

Highway Relocation Assistance—The law allows increased relocation payments to families, farmers, and businesses displaced by Federal highway programs. The Federal share of the first \$25,000 of payments to any person on account of any real property acquisition or displacement, before July 1, 1970, shall be 100 per cent of the cost as a part of the cost of construction of a project under any Federal-aid highway program. Up to \$5,000 from the Highway Trust Fund may be paid over the fair market value for homes, businesses and farms that are in the path of a highway. Tenants would be eligible to receive up to \$1,500 in order to lease or rent a comparable house or apartment elsewhere.

Other Provisions—No toll road may be constructed on the Interstate System after June 30, 1968, without the official concurrence of the Secretary of Transportation. (Does not apply to any toll bridge or toll tunnel.) Although the law directs prompt construction of four Interstate System segments in the District of Columbia, the President instructed the Secretary of Transportation not to release any funds until certain criteria, including a comprehensive transportation plan, are met. The Act also contains provisions for equal employment opportunity, bridge inspection, emergency highway relief, wage rates on primary and secondary system work, construction by States in advance of apportionment, consideration of the urban impact of highways, and highway studies for Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands.

Traffic engineers, who for years have contended they could make a significant contribution towards unsmiling urban traffic congestion if financial resources were made available, now face an unprecedented challenge.

The authorization by Congress of \$200 million in Federal aid for each of the next two fiscal years to implement the Bureau of Public Roads Traffic Operations Program to Increase Capacity and Safety (TOPICS) offers traffic engineers an opportunity to demonstrate they are able to restore some semblance of traffic sanity in our urban areas.

For the first time, substantial Federal funds have been earmarked to increase the capacity of city streets and to enhance safety by traffic engineering improvements, rather than through major reconstruction projects.

Congress has provided an essential ingredient in the battle against urban traffic jams—money. It is now up to our traffic engineers to prove they have the expertise to deal with a problem growing progressively worse as the United States becomes more urbanized. With 76 percent of all Americans living in metropolitan areas, and with urban vehicular travel growing at a rate twice that of the population, urban traffic problems cry out for solution.

Important as it is, Federal money by itself does not guarantee the success of the TOPICS program. There are legal requirements to be met, matching funds to be provided, and

numerous procedural matters to be complied with. However, since the Bureau of Public Roads initiated the program in 1967, using regular apportioned Federal-aid funds, it became increasingly evident that traffic engineering indeed did hold many of the answers to our mounting urban traffic problems.

The Highway Research Board project resulting in Special Report #3 and the Institute of Traffic Engineers—AAA workshop series on urban arterial improvement programs have been most encouraging. It was apparent that only the lack of money prevented widespread adoption of the program by cities and States. That obstacle has now been removed and the way is clear to move ahead.

Many city traffic engineering departments have indicated interest in TOPICS and have already taken preliminary steps to adapt the program to suit their needs. These engineers have a pretty good idea of what has to be done to provide an arterial system that can move traffic safely and expeditiously, even though they were stymied by the absence of funds.

Now the picture has changed and they are in a position to proceed. The outlook for TOPICS has brightened considerably. Frankly, I will be surprised and disappointed if the country's traffic engineers fail to accept the challenge confronting them and the opportunity presented to them to relieve the congestion plaguing our cities.



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