

AN OVERALL LOOK AT THE HIGHWAY PROGRAM

Remarks by Francis C. Turner, Federal Highway Administrator, U.S. Department of Transportation, prepared for delivery at a Congressional Breakfast of the Michigan Good Roads Federation, Washington, D. C., May 13, 1969.

I appreciate the invitation to join you this morning. Congressman Jack McDonald left me free to choose my own subject so I thought I'd devote a few minutes to a status report on the Federal-aid highway program, with a quick glimpse into the future as I see it.

I don't know of any State which has a greater stake in this program than Michigan. Auto manufacturing is your principal industry and the steady growth and stability of that industry is obviously meshed in with the provision of an adequate highway network to move the products of your assembly lines. Highway transportation is a great generator of employment, not only in Michigan but nationally. Our three largest corporations, and seven of the ten largest, are automobile and oil companies; and the continued growth of these job-producing industries depends to a large extent on the continued growth in highway capacity.

We are making good progress in providing this capacity, in spite of financial and other problems and amid a climate that is not always conducive to highway progress, especially in a few of our larger cities. In fact, as you know, some of our more vocal critics are putting out the word that the whole urban program is hopelessly bogged down.

But a look at the record shows beyond question that the alleged "boggling down" is greatly exaggerated and the allegation has the earmarks of a propoganda ploy. Route controversies are holding up only 133.8 miles

(more)

of urban Interstate highways, and more than half of these miles are in three urban areas -- New York City (25.8 miles), Washington, D. C. (25.2 miles), and San Francisco (17.4 miles). The other areas are Atlanta, 4.0 miles; Baltimore 4.5; Boston 3.1, Charleston, W.Va. 2.0; Cleveland 8.8; Detroit 7.4; Indianapolis 6.5; Memphis 3.7; Nashville 4.4; Newark, N.J. 7.2; New Orleans 3.1; Philadelphia 7.3; and Pittsburgh 3.4.

It is difficult for any unbiased person to read a "bogging-down" of the whole urban Interstate program in the 133.8 miles of undecided routes out of a total of some 6300 urban miles. It is significant, I think, that the States are completing and opening to traffic every 10 days just about as much newly improved miles as all of the so-called "mileage in trouble." The vocal opposition to freeways and other Federal-aid improvements is loud and persistent but fortunately there are more supporters than opponents; otherwise the Federal-aid highway program would not have received such overwhelming support from the Congress through more than 50 years.

This is National Transportation Week by proclamation of the President and I think it is appropriate to point out -- without devaluing any other mode -- that transportation in the United States is basically rubber-tired transportation. Movement by highways accounts for more than 8 out of every 10 dollars of the total investment in all types of transportation in this country. Of the outlay for the movement of intercity freight, more than 7 of every 10 dollars goes to the movement by highway vehicles. Likewise, 9 out of every 10 dollars spent for intercity passenger movements goes for highway travel by cars and buses.

It was this utter dependence on highway transportation that led to the passage of the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1956 and the establishment of the Highway Trust Fund to finance the Federal share of the Federal-State highway program. Congress, in that Act and in its subsequent amendments and revisions, wisely retained the Federal-State partnership arrangement that has prevailed in highway matters since the pioneer Federal-aid Road Act of 1916. That partnership has made possible the progress we have recorded and the progress has been substantial.

At the beginning of this year, over 27,600 miles of the Interstate System were open to traffic and another 5,200 miles were under construction. The mileage in use represents 65 percent of the total System, now authorized at 42,500 miles because of a 1,500-mile addition legislated in the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1968. Despite this new mileage, only 5 percent of the total System has not been advanced beyond the preliminary status. In miles open to traffic it is interesting to note that Michigan is considerably ahead of the Nation as a whole. As of January 1, 1969, the State had opened to traffic 890 miles, or 76 percent of its authorized 1,174 mile Interstate System.

Across the Nation, construction contracts involving nearly 229,000 miles of primary and secondary highways and their urban extensions have been completed since July 1, 1956 and another 12,000 miles were under way. In Michigan nearly 9,000 miles of so-called ABC projects have been completed during the same period and another 326 miles are under way.

These are measures of physical progress but there is other progress not so easily measurable. Ever-increasing recognition has been given to the social and environmental impact of the highway program, without forgetting

at the same time that the principal purpose of highways is to move people, goods and services. Increasingly more equitable treatment has been given to those persons who must necessarily be displaced for the benefit of the populace as a whole.

Likewise, other programs having to do with the preservation of human, social and environmental values have been greatly stepped up during the past few years -- partly through Federal-State initiative, partly as a result of Congressional action. The protection of historical areas and natural scenic vistas, the control of roadside blight, the preservation of fish and wildlife resources -- all these have become automatic considerations in the planning and construction of highways.

More than 6,800 roadside safety rest areas have been provided and 1,200 of these have been constructed during the past three years. A total of 5,300 scenic easements have been acquired to preserve roadside areas for esthetic purposes. And today, landscaping is included in all major Federal-aid highway projects as a routine, regular item.

Highway safety, of course, is a top priority goal of the Federal Highway Administration, as it is of the entire Department of Transportation under Secretary John A. Volpe. We are making considerable progress in the safety field -- in terms of the roadway, the vehicle and the driver.

The safety features of the Interstate System are continuing to pay off handsomely, as shown most recently by a report just released. It shows that during 1967, 2.89 persons were killed for each 100 million miles of travel on the Interstate System. This compares with 5.66 on other roads.

The 1967 Interstate fatality rate showed an encouraging decline from the 1966 rate of 3.08. According to the most conservative estimates, the safety features of the Interstate System are expected to save at least 8,000 lives and countless injuries during its first full year of operation.

The Federal-State partnership has also made considerable progress in removing accident-inducing hazards from the regular highway systems. Some \$1.2 billion has been invested since April 1964 in spot improvements to make already existing highways safer for motorists, and more than 18,000 safety improvement projects of this type have been completed or programmed.

That covers in general terms the present status of the highway program. I assume you are interested in what the future may hold and I'll try in a few minutes to tell you how it appears to shape up. First, financing has always been a problem and still is. However, the present Administration does not favor a stop-and-go highway program as a matter of policy and hopes to avoid the cutbacks and deferrals that have affected the highway program in recent years.

As to the longer range, last year, in accordance with legislation enacted in 1965, we submitted to Congress the 1968 National Highway Needs Report. This dealt with the period 1973-1985 and was the first of a series of reports to be submitted every two years on the highway needs of the Nation. I believe some of its broad findings and conclusions may be of interest. For example, on the basis of State highway department estimates, the report gave preliminary figures for the annual cost of road and street needs for the period 1973-1985. These arrived at an average capital cost of \$17.4 billion

per year, more than double the \$8.5 billion per year estimated annual capital accomplishments during the remainder of the period, 1965-1972.

In general the report suggested that there will be only a modest growth in the extent of our national road network; it already reaches practically everywhere and it has for many years. We had nearly 3 million miles of roads and streets in this country in 1916. In the years since, this total has increased by only about 700,000 miles -- to some 3.7 million miles of roads and streets of all kinds, but many of these miles have had to be widened into 4, 6 and 8-lane roadways.

The report recommended that the Interstate program be terminated upon the completion of the presently authorized System. However, this does not mean that the need for additional freeways will end with the completion of the Interstate System, so there is need for a legislative program to accomplish this future need.

The estimates by the States include some 53,000 miles of needed freeway improvements on systems other than Interstate. These are the miles needing improvement, but they may be considered as roughly indicating the total miles of freeways that will need to be in service in 1985. It would appear, then, that to serve the traffic anticipated in 1985, additional mileage of the freeway kind at least equal to the present 42,500 mile Interstate System will be needed.

I won't take your time to discuss the various recommendations in the Highway Needs Report except one which undoubtedly will have a most important bearing on the future course and direction of the Federal-aid highway program. This recommendation was since acted upon by Congress and became a basic

feature of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968. This provision requires the Department of Transportation to make a study of the Nation's entire road network and to classify our roads and streets in accordance with the functions they perform. This functional classification study is important, fundamental in fact, to intelligent decisions on how to allocate spending among various types of roads. This is the first all-encompassing functional highway classification study undertaken on a national scale and it is now fully under way.

After the classification study is completed, it will be followed by two related studies. One will be an estimate of cost of needed improvements on each of the functional systems. The other will deal with highway user benefits that will flow from such improvements, including reductions in accident costs, travel time, vehicle operating costs and maintenance expenses, as well as increased capacity. The needs and benefits studies will supply the data for a larger and much more comprehensive 1972 Highway Needs Study. This, in turn, will form the basis for recommendations on the type and size of the program needed to meet future highway requirements and on the form and extent of the future highway systems.

Changes in our society have been dramatic in recent years. Americans are more affluent; they have more leisure time, and more social, cultural and recreational interests. They travel more often and go farther in the family car. Many families have two or three automobiles. They demand not only more highways, but more safety and increased traffic services, as well as more attractive highways. They continue to gravitate to the urban areas in increasing numbers.

There would seem to be nothing in the foreseeable future, therefore, that will eliminate, or even substantially reduce, the need for a continuing highway program at a high level to accommodate the desire and need for mobility on the part of our dynamically expanding economy and population.

On the other hand, each step of the way to a future Federal highway program will require the support of Congress, the general public, and the highway-related organizations such as the Michigan Road Federation. Your group has played a prominent role in various ways in the development of this country's highway assets, and in the fight to ensure that Highway Trust Fund revenues are devoted exclusively to highway purposes. It would be appropriate during National Transportation Week to rededicate yourselves as an organization to this equitable non-diversion principle which has served the country so well since 1956.

So in closing I want to thank you for your past efforts and ask you to continue your support of the development of an adequate highway network, which is to your own particular interest as well as to the larger interests of the American people.