



DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

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REMARKS BY FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR
F. C. TURNER FOR DELIVERY BEFORE THE
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In the evolution of our national highway program, the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1970 will take its place as benchmark legislation.

It merits this description because it affirms in many practical ways the concerns and the priorities of our time. It looks from this vantage point with a sound plan for the future. And in so doing it provides those of us who manage the highway program with new support and new opportunities to serve our fellow citizens.

We have been administering a program whose foundations were laid in the 1956 legislation. But we have not been constrained by blind adherence to a set of plans and specifications drawn up in 1956. On the contrary, we have approved some very significant change orders along the way. America has been changing these past 15 years and so have we. To use the broadest description, it is the quality of life

that has increasingly concerned our fellow citizens. And I believe we in the highway program have been quick to respond to these emerging concerns -- not just with agreeable rhetoric but with meaningful action.

Last year, as this legislation was being considered, I testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Roads, and I offered this observation:

"I would point out that many of the things that we are looking at today that we consider to have been mistakes in the program are largely things that we did under a different policy. We have changes in our policy, we have changes in our personnel.

"I would point out to you that a little over 10 years ago I sat before this same committee in this same witness chair, and was berated rather heavily along with other highway officials, as to the high cost of this particular program, and the emphasis then was on cost, do it cheaper, cut out fringe things, keep the cost down.

"The policy has changed. The people have changed. This is progress, and we have made those changes. We changed our policy, we changed our procedures, we changed our points of emphasis. I believe we are working now in harmony with the policy and legislation that is before us, and I would hope that we would be allowed to continue to administer the program and get the job done in the way that you are asking us to do."

I believe the 1970 Act does give us very substantial support in doing the job ahead.

This Act embraces the broadened concept of the highway program that has been growing over the past decade.

It is concerned with the social responsibilities of the highway program -- with safety, with the environment, and with other human values.

It is particularly responsive to the problems arising from the continuing urbanization of our country.

It takes the long view, setting forth necessary steps for the orderly development of the continuing strong highway program we must have to meet the growing transportation needs of the Nation.

Let's take the last point first -- that of formulating policies for the future of the program.

First, the Act looks to the conclusion of the Interstate System construction program launched in 1956. It provides for removal from the system by July 1, 1973, of those segments whose construction is not assured, and the reallocation of this mileage. It sets a deadline of July 1, 1975, for submission of all Interstate System plans, specifications and estimates.

It extends Interstate authorizations through fiscal year 1976, but leaves a final additional authorization to be enacted at a later date, while requiring a final cost estimate to be submitted in 1974.

It assures continued funding by extending the Trust Fund five years to October 1, 1977.

Next, looking to the future of the regular Federal-aid program, it directs the Secretary of Transportation to make recommendations in 1972 for the functional realignment of the Federal-aid systems, based on studies made in cooperation with the State highway departments and local governments. Also in 1972, the Secretary is to make recommendations for a continuing Federal-aid highway program for the period 1976 to 1990.

In addition the Act provides for a reduced State matching requirement, by setting up a 70-30 Federal-State funding ratio beginning in fiscal 1974. Meanwhile, the Act extends the ABC and rural supplement authorizations at their current level through fiscal 1973.

Again, looking to long-range needs, the Act provides for establishment in the Federal Highway Administration of a National Highway Institute to assure a future supply of trained manpower for the Federal-aid highway program. The Institute will be developed in cooperation with the State highway departments and will be open to Federal, State and local highway employees.

It is noteworthy that this provision includes local employees. This is one of several instances where the Act specifically attempts to strengthen the participation of local government in the Federal-aid highway program.

Now let us turn to the new features the Act provides in our operating programs. It is here that we see reflected the concerns -- shared by highway officials and the public's representatives in the Congress -- over the problems of urbanization, the environment, and human values. It is here that we highway officials are given a mandate to do something about these concerns.

Urban growth has been one of the most remarkable processes of our century, and very likely will continue to be in the remainder of the century. About 70 percent of Americans now live in urban areas, and 80 percent will within another decade or two.

Urban living is made possible, among other things, by transportation, by the daily, hourly movement of goods and people. And the adequacy and efficiency of the transportation available to our urban areas has much to do with the quality of life in those areas.

Today, these urban areas are overwhelmingly dependent on highway transportation. And there is every reason to believe they will continue to be for the rest of this century.

If they are going to continue to grow, so must highway transportation. The challenge to the highway official is to get the most efficiency possible out of the urban highway system with the resources available to him.

The Federal interest in this challenge has grown over the years as urbanization has proceeded. In the forties, the primary and secondary systems were extended into urban areas. In the fifties, urban freeways were incorporated into the Interstate System. In the early sixties, the urban transportation planning requirement became law, thus providing a necessary foundation for decision-making on which we can call today. And in the late sixties, Federal aid was made available for traffic operations improvements -- the TOPICS program.

The 1970 Highway Act adds several new dimensions to the Federal interest in urban transportation. Combining it with existing programs, plus companion legislation for urban mass transportation assistance, we get a comprehensive set of tools to deal with urban transportation problems.

These tools include an active, on-going planning process; the Interstate program to provide the larger urban areas with a limited network of high capacity freeways; ABC funds to improve a limited number of major arterials, and the TOPICS program to increase the capacity and safety of major street systems beyond the ABC routes.

Now, the 1970 Act provides for creation of a new Federal-aid urban highway system, and authorization to use Federal-aid funds for highway-related improvements to serve bus transit. And the mass transit legislation provides funds to purchase new buses and operating equipment through UMTA.

The Federal-aid urban system will consist of arterial routes other than those now on the primary and secondary systems in urban areas of 50,000 and more population. The routes are to be selected cooperatively by local officials and State highway officials, who are to be guided by the urban transportation planning process in determining which routes will best serve the goals and objectives of the community. The Secretary is to report to Congress in 1972 on the designated system and its cost of construction. This system should materially assist the urban areas in meeting their transportation demands.

Of course, one of the major problems large cities have today is that of rush hour traffic congestion. This is what most people have in mind when they complain of the transportation crisis. In the context of the overall transportation needs of our urban areas the rush hour traffic is a relatively small portion of total transportation movement -- since trips to and from the downtown comprise only five to 15 percent of total urban trips. But it is a problem when transportation corridors to and from downtown become overtaxed under peak hour loads.

In all but a handful of cities the only practical solution to this problem is to divert commuters from private autos to higher capacity vehicles, namely buses and car pools, and thereby increase the people-moving capacity of our urban highways. And this is the only solution that can be applied in the immediate future -- in a matter of a year or two.

If rubber-tired mass transportation is to succeed in luring commuter out of their cars it will have to provide fast, convenient and comfortable service. The highway program can offer a major assist in bringing this about, by providing preferential treatment for buses -- and car pools -- in moving rush hour traffic.

The 1970 legislation specifically authorizes this type of assistance by making Federal-aid funds available for the construction of exclusive bus lanes on freeways, bus roadways, traffic signals and other control devices to give buses preferential treatment, bus passenger loading areas and facilities, including shelters, and fringe and transportation corridor parking facilities to serve bus and other public mass transportation passengers.

In addition, fringe and corridor parking facilities can be constructed with Federal-aid urban system funds.

Improvement of bus transit is not a unilateral endeavor, of course. It is a joint venture that requires cooperation of all levels of government. It requires cooperation at the Federal level between the Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and we in turn must cooperate with State and local officials and transit operators if we are to get the necessary assurance that transit-related highway projects will be effectively utilized.

Nevertheless, I believe we have a real opportunity here,

and I would urge State officials to examine their opportunities carefully as we prepare the report Congress has directed on the need for additional highway facilities or the adjustment of existing facilities to accommodate highway public transportation.

In addition to the new aids it provides for urban areas, the 1970 Act also shows concern for the problems of over-urbanization. It offers a demonstration program which would use highway improvement to help check the migration from rural areas and small towns to overcrowded cities.

The Act provides for a new program of economic growth center development highways to be funded at \$50 million a year, although an appropriation still is required before any funds will be available. The Secretary is authorized to make grants for demonstration projects that would lead to the development of economic growth centers in places of 100,000 population or less. The approach is similar to that of the present Appalachian road program, and projects must be on the Federal-aid primary system. The Federal Government can pay 100 percent of the cost of engineering and economic surveys and can sweeten by 20% the traditional 50% matching. It is emphasized that the demonstration projects must involve regular Federal-aid funding.

This program, with its objective of improving living conditions and the quality of the environment, could prove a significant example of the use of the highway program for social progress.

Another outstanding example in the 1970 Act is the expansion of the relocation assistance program -- the forerunner of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, which has now superceded our legislation.

As you know, these laws have expanded relocation assistance benefits to include compensation for increased interest rates on replacement housing, and to authorize the construction or acquisition of replacement housing where none is otherwise available.

This relocation program is delivering real social and environmental benefits by ensuring that all persons displaced by highway construction find decent, safe and sanitary housing, including those who previously lived in substandard units.

Yet another example of social responsibility can be found in the 1970 Act's provisions authorizing establishment of training programs for highway construction workers -- on an equal opportunity basis.

There has long been an awareness in the highway program of the potential impact of highway improvements on economic, social and environmental values. We have studied these impacts for years and shaped our procedures accordingly. We devote a substantial portion of highway resources to environmental improvement, and were doing so long before it became a popular issue.

Our policies have changed over time to reflect the greater emphasis that the public expects in this area. Now, the 1970 Act

continues this developing process by requiring the establishment of guidelines by 1972 to assure full consideration of possible adverse economic, social and environmental effects of proposed projects and the costs of eliminating or minimizing them.

The Act also requires development of standards for highway noise levels and guidelines to assure that future projects are consistent with applicable air quality standards.

Congress also made new money available in the 1970 Act to revive the billboard control and junkyard control programs of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, and it created a commission to report back within a year with recommendations on how to make these programs more effective.

Meanwhile, as you know, Secretary Volpe has lifted the moratorium on the penalty provisions of the Beautification Act and has called upon all States that have not yet done so to get the necessary legislation and agreements with FHWA to enforce billboard control.

I am personally hopeful that we will soon see some visible improvement in our roadside environment as a result of the Secretary's initiative. And I am sure our motorists will welcome it.

Another major concern in the 1970 Act is highway safety. The Act transformed the National Highway Safety Bureau into the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And it accepted Trust Fund responsibility for financing two-thirds of the cost of the grant and

research programs authorized by the Highway Safety Act of 1966 -- that is, for State and community highway safety programs.

The Federal Highway Administration retains responsibility for these State and community safety standards having to do with the highway element. It also retains the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, with its regulations for trucks and buses.

I can assure you that this division of safety responsibility will in no way diminish the high priority we put on safety across the board in FHWA programs. That goes for our highway safety standards, for the spot improvement program, for the clear roadside program as well as for our involvement in the State and community programs. These programs are yielding tangible payoffs in saving lives and preventing injuries, and we mean to increase their effectiveness.

The 1970 Act adds a new safety responsibility for the Federal-aid highway program. It requires an inventory of all bridges on the Federal-aid systems over waters and other topographical barriers, and makes new funding available to begin the replacement of the worst of them. Bridges are to be classified according to their serviceability, safety and essentiality for public use, and then assigned a priority for replacement. To get this program underway, \$250 million is authorized for the next two years. Federal funds can pay 75 percent of the replacement costs.

There are many other details to the 1970 legislation. I have

tried to review the highlights and to show that this Act, and the highway program, are in step with the times, and are proceeding soundly to meet the long-range needs of the Nation -- not only its transportation needs, but the many social and economic objectives which our vital highway program serves.

The Federal-aid Highway Act of 1970 is a law worthy of a great public works program -- a program that harnesses the cooperative efforts of all levels of government for the benefit of all Americans.

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