



DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

## FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

### "HIGHWAYS AND THE CITY"

ADDRESS BY FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR  
F. C. TURNER, AT LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE  
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The city has been with us for quite a while.

Even back in the golden days of ancient Greece, the city was present in a pretty advanced form. The Romans developed it even further. It received a setback during the Dark Ages, but it was still present.

All through the ages in which the city has existed, it has had one dominant characteristic: its very existence has depended almost totally on its highways and streets.

That remains true today. It will remain true tomorrow -- and for as many tomorrows as can presently be foreseen.

True, the mode of travel over the city's highways and streets has changed over the centuries. Once, in the very early stages, the residents of a city had to walk wherever they wanted to go. Then came the camel, the donkey, the horse-drawn carriages and wagons. Then, the bicycle. Today it is the automobile, the truck, and the

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bus which carry the overwhelming bulk of both people and goods. But whatever the vehicle used, the one thing that has remained constant over these hundreds of years has been the city's highway and street network to furnish the right of way by which mobility can be maintained.

It is perhaps an irony that such a key factor in the life and development of the city -- and without which the city could not exist -- is almost completely taken for granted. But this is similar to the "take-it-for-granted" attitude with which we accept any other of our many commonplace, routine items of life.

Highway transportation permeates virtually all facets of a city's everyday life.

If there is a fire, you need the firemen and their trucks quickly! How do they get there? -- by street and highway, of course. Fast travel for such equipment by our street network in cities has certainly been an important factor in keeping our homeowners' fire insurance premiums low -- and this is a worthwhile dividend for the citizens of a city, which we never really associate with an adequate street network.

How do the police cars patrol the city's streets -- or bring policemen to your house if you hear a prowler or burglar? By highway.

If you suffer an emergency illness, how does the ambulance speed you to the hospital? By highway.

How does the garbage truck get to and from your home to remove your refuse? By highway.

When you are in need of the plumber, the electrician, the carpenter, the painter, the TV repair man, the dry cleaning or laundry man -- how do they get there? By highway.

And when you go to the supermarket to buy your groceries... or to the drug store... or the movies... a concert... a sporting event... your church... to visit friends... how do you generally go? By highway.

Think, too, of the truck traffic which is so vital to the economic life of a city. It is a truism that in the movement of goods -- no matter what form of intercity transport is used -- trucks almost exclusively originate and terminate all cargo. It is by this means that the stores in the city -- along with those in the surrounding suburbs -- receive all that infinite variety of goods so essential to the life of an urban area: the food, the clothing, the housing materials, appliances, medicines, newspapers and publications, ad infinitum.

It seems to me that the relative importance of highways to a city is very obvious. They simply are irreplaceable -- because there is nothing with which to replace them. And there will not be in our lifetime.

The highway program is often pictured in the press as being badly bogged down in controversy, particularly in the cities.

This simply is not true!

The fact is that only a little more than 100 miles of Interstate System routes, in 11 cities, are being delayed because of some controversial aspect of the proposed route. This represents less than 1.5 percent of all urban Interstate mileage.

That is hardly being "bogged down."

However, those few cities where Interstate freeways are currently stalled had better get busy solving their problems. The States must provide firm assurances by 1973 that these urban routes will be completed expeditiously -- or the Secretary of Transportation will have to delete them from the Interstate System. And that would be a definite loss to any city, with widespread and lasting ramifications.

There is another falsehood that gets bandied about quite a bit, and that is that urban highway construction and improvements take land from the ratable rolls, and thus compel the remaining taxpayers to make up for the loss by having to shoulder an added tax load.

But this tells only half of the story.

We have in our files at the Federal Highway Administration hundreds of studies which show that while there may be a brief loss in ratables in some instances, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the highways bring with them substantially increased economic benefits.

One of the best documented, and best known, cases is Route 128, a circumferential highway around Boston. It was opened in 1951, and by 1959, it was estimated that more than \$137 million had been invested in new plants along the route, employing some 27,500 workers.

Although some of this activity involved relocation from other parts of the community, the net gain to the whole metropolitan area represented an estimated \$129 million, and added 19,000 new employees to the area's payrolls.

The second example involves a smaller town -- Yankton, South Dakota, a city of 9,000 population where 3.1 miles of U.S. 81, running through the heart of the community, were widened and upgraded in design at a cost of \$852,489. We have made an in-depth study of this project, and we learned some interesting facts.

The study showed that the highway improvement saved time and money for the citizenry, reduced accidents, spurred business, boosted employment, hiked land values, and increased the tax base!

To mention just a few of the specifics disclosed by the study, after the highway improvement was completed -- the number of businesses increased 100 percent -- from 60 to 119. Land values showed a sharp upward trend, with assessed valuations for property tax purposes climbing from \$1.2 million to \$2.79 million. The number of persons employed by business firms along U.S. 81 increased from 402 in 1956 to 952 in 1966, a 137 percent rise. And it was determined that at least one-third of this increase was attributable solely to the highway improvement project.

Boston and Yankton, South Dakota, are just two communities that have clearly benefitted economically from highway improvements. However, the same is true for countless cities in all parts of the country.

Since highways are so essential to the life of a city, that could logically bring us to the question, "how are the cities faring under the Federal-State highway program?"

The answer is -- they are faring very well, indeed. And rightly so.

About half of the highway user taxes that go into the Highway Trust Fund are derived from travel on streets and highways in urban areas, including the large volumes of travel on urban extensions of State highway systems. At the same time, our inventories of highway needs indicate about half of the capital improvements are needed in urban areas.

The latest published information, as of December, 1970, showed that total estimated expenditures in 1970 on all streets and highways in cities, by all units of government, was approximately \$6.3 billion. Of this total, \$3.3 billion of Federal and State highway user taxes was directly expended for improvements and maintenance of those portions of Federal and State routes serving urban areas, and an additional \$844 million of highway user taxes was contributed by States' grants-in-aid to municipalities, primarily for construction or maintenance of municipal street systems.

In short, then, the Federal and State Governments in 1970 contributed \$4.1 billion in highway user taxes, including \$152 million directly expended by State highway departments on local city streets.

This means that 65 percent of the total expenditures for streets and highways in municipalities came from the Federal and State Governments.

Of course, the city dweller also benefits from the highway user taxes spent for improvements to rural roads, for statistics tell us that slightly more than half of the total travel on rural roads is done by city residents. This is a fact that I think is sometimes overlooked -- that the city resident needs the rural roads to get where he wants to go when he leaves the city. And, of course, the produce and goods that the city needs for its everyday life arrives over these same rural roads.

Another area in which the highway program is benefitting the city is in upgrading substandard housing.

Of course, no one likes to lose his home or business to make way for a new road, or anything else, whether it be a park or a hospital. This is only natural. But sometimes it is necessary, and when it is, as a result of the provisions of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968 and the Federal Relocation Assistance Act of 1970, we are providing a model of humane treatment for those persons who must relocate.

Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe has ordered that no persons shall actually be displaced until what we refer to as "DSS" -- decent, safe and sanitary -- replacement housing is available for them to move into.

When such housing is available, we can now authorize up to \$15,000 in payments additional to the fair market value of the property so that the displacees can obtain comparable replacement housing. We also provide benefits to renters and apartment dwellers who must move, and as a result of these payments, many people have been able to afford the down payment on a house for the first time in their lives.

It is our experience that inevitably the housing that replaces that taken for the highway is of a higher standard -- and that most people who have had to move have actually improved their housing situation.

I should mention, too, that more and more State highway department relocation officers are going far beyond the line of duty in counselling and helping people who are being displaced. In a sense, they have become part-time social workers, to the benefit of the entire community.

Another means by which the highway program has been providing "bonuses" to cities in the way of side benefits is in the multiple use and joint development concepts. Under these programs, the right-of-way obtained for freeway development is used for other worthwhile projects, as well.

We have been utilizing the air space above and below freeways for high-rise apartment buildings, office buildings, bus depots, playgrounds, public basketball and tennis courts, parking facilities, and



the like. We are using space alongside the rights-of-way for such desirable development as schools, recreational facilities, parks, etc.

And this is a relatively new program. The potential to cities is great and we are hoping to realize that potential.

The highway program can increasingly help cities in many ways. Under our TOPICS program -- an acronym for Traffic Operations Program to Increase Capacity and Safety -- cities of all sizes can improve the capacity and safety of their streets and roads at a very modest cost. Hundreds of cities already are taking advantage of this program, and we are delighted that they are. Improved signalization, street markings, channelization, better directional and informational signing, one-way streets -- these are some of the many things we can help a city achieve under this program. And it can result in up to a 25 percent speed-up in the flow of traffic. I believe that most of the start-up problems of a new program like this have now been eliminated.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 contained a new provision which has great significance for every city. It is the one calling for creation of a new Urban Federal Aid Highway System.

This new 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 city 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 of Transportation is to report to Congress in 1972 on the designated system and its cost of construction. The roads and streets on the system can either be upgraded existing ones, or, where needed, totally new ones.

I believe that this new system will be a real boon to our cities. Combined with our existing programs, it will mean Federal-aid support for improvements to handle 75 to 80 percent of all vehicle miles of travel in our urban areas. Thus the Federal-aid program is offering very substantial relief to local governments.

Of course one of the main problems confronting the city today is that of rush-hour traffic congestion. The solution to this problem is to get more utilization out of our existing street network through greater use of public transportation or high-occupancy carpools.

When we talk about rapid transit, we must in practical terms be talking about bus transit because this is and will be the mode in all but a handful of cities.

The Federal Highway Administration in cooperation with our sister Department of Transportation agency, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, has promoted several highly successful on-going bus transit programs around the Nation such as:

-- the well-publicized exclusive bus lane on Shirley Highway (I-95) which speeds bus commuters into the heart of Washington, D.C.'s

central business district from the northern Virginia suburbs -- and saves them up to 30 minutes in travel time over private vehicle traffic,

-- the reserved bus lane on I-495 between the New Jersey Turnpike and the Lincoln Tunnel, which is saving New Jersey commuters to Manhattan up to 15 minutes each morning, and

-- the so-called "Blue Streak" program in Seattle, which gives transit buses preferential treatment on the Seattle Freeway (I-5) and on several surface streets.

There are several more, and there are many more on the way. While they differ in approach, all have the same objective: to help solve the rush-hour congestion problem.

Some other brand new tools are available in the Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration to help cities solve their transportation problems. These were provided in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1970. For example, if studies show that construction of an exclusive busway would move more people more expeditiously and practically than construction of a proposed highway project, or reduce its scope, then the funds that would have been used for this portion of the highway project can be used to build the busway, instead.

And UMTA can then provide grants to assist city transit companies to obtain fleets of modern, comfortable buses.

The future of our cities is inextricably tied up with transportation, and that transportation is overwhelmingly oriented to an adequate streets

and highway network moving automotive types of vehicles. We all must therefore find ways to improve and live with the system, rather than beat our breasts and write letters to the editor decrying its faults. Of course, there are some faults, but these are being eliminated or reduced in their impact. Offsetting them are benefits which on the plus side far exceed the negative. And without these positive values, there will be no cities and no urban life to create any of the other values we cherish. Adequate highways are essential to our way of life -- we need to get on with the job.

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