



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Library 2200
NEWS

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

THE ROAD AHEAD

ADDRESS BY FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR
F. C. TURNER BEFORE NORTHERN VIRGINIA
CHAPTER, VIRGINIA MOTOR VEHICLE CONFERENCE
SEPT. 23, 1971, MARRIOTT TWIN BRIDGES MOTEL
ARLINGTON, VA.

Certainly, in recent American history, 1956 would have to be regarded as "a very good year." For that was the year the 42,500-mile Interstate System construction program was launched -- the most gigantic public works program the world has ever known. It is already paying untold benefits to this Nation in many ways: in vastly increased highway safety, in related economic development, in time-savings -- you name it.

But now is the time for all of us to turn our attention to the road ahead, rather than to contemplate past accomplishments, outstanding though they may be.

The Interstate System is now slightly more than 75% completed.

-more-

It will only be a few more years until the entire system is completed and in operation, and we can today see not only the end of the tunnel but the world beyond that portal.

There are two main areas that we will need to focus our full attention on just as soon as possible. They are the major arterials our urban areas and our rural segments of primary highways.

Regretfully, both have had to be given less attention and funds during these past 15 years when the emphasis has been -- and properly so -- on completing the Interstate System, with its greater benefits for the greater numbers of people, just as quickly as possible. No apology is needed for this past emphasis on Interstate System construction, for I am convinced that it was a wise and correct decision. As I mentioned, the Interstate System, though not yet complete, is already paying the Nation tremendous dividends. It has saved 30,000 lives and one million injuries already and will continue to save one fourth this number every year into the future.

At the same time, however, we must now be readying ourselves to move into two known areas of great need -- the cities and the primary routes between them -- even before the ribbon is snipped on the final section of Interstate. There must be no lag, no delay, no indecision, for the time to move is now.

And there must be no appreciable drop in the overall level of highway funding if these needs are to be met.

At the present time, we are spending about \$4 billion a year on the Interstate System. The record is clear that we will need to have that kind of funding available in the post-Interstate years in order to bring our urban and primary road systems up to acceptable standards of safety and efficiency in providing transportation service to our Nation.

At least \$2 billion annually for each of the urban and primary systems will be needed in order for them to be brought up to such a standard. And a catch up in these areas is essential or this Nation is going to be in serious trouble.

Let me explain why. The reasons are obvious to anyone whose eyes and mind are open to the facts.

As far as cities are concerned, highways and streets are their very lifelines. They are the conduits that keep cities liveable and without them, cities inevitably would die. It is as simple as that. Every city -- whether large or small is controlled in this way by its street system. It has been thus, since the dawn of history, and this condition was not brought about by invention of the auto -- or even the wheel. It began with the city itself.

Every service in the city of today depends on streets and highways. Take the police car, the fire truck, the ambulance, the service truck, the delivery truck, the garbage truck -- they all move by highway, and can move only by highway.

And the city dwellers, themselves, when they go to the supermarket, or a drug store, or to the theater or the movies, or a concert, or a sporting event, or to visit friends or to the grave -- how do they travel? By highway transportation, of course, and this is clear and indisputable to anyone.

Highways are irreplaceable in the daily life of the city -- because there is nothing else with which to replace the kind of service they provide. And there can't and won't be for those years of the future for which you and I must be planning.

It seems to me quite clear, then, that since the future of our cities is so interrelated with a need for adequate roads and streets systems, we had better be busy as soon as we possibly can to meet those needs.

Over the years there has been a growing awareness that the Federal-aid program in urban areas, which has been confined by law to extensions of the rural Interstate and primary routes into and through the city, would have to be expanded to solve the highly complex and costly internal urban transportation problems involved in providing additional streets for collection and distribution routes. This was recognized specifically in both our 1968 and 1970 Highway Needs Reports to Congress, and Congress responded in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 by establishing the new Federal-Aid Urban System.

This system is to consist of additional arterial routes other than those already on the Primary or Secondary Systems in urbanized areas.

The new Urban System routes are being selected cooperatively by local officials and State highway officials, who are guided by the present on-going urban transportation planning process in each affected area, in determining which routes will best serve the goals and objectives of the community.

Congress provided authorizations of \$100 million for the Urban System for each of fiscal years 1972 and 1973, to get it under way. But this literally can be only a drop in the bucket, for the clearly known needs are much, much greater. For example, right at the present time, these needs in the urban areas during the next 20 years are preliminarily estimated at not less than \$80 billion, which averages out to \$4 billion annually for these 20 years, without any allowance for cost increases.

The new Urban System has an interesting similarity to the Interstate System in that it will be of limited mileage compared to the over-all total of roads and streets, but it will carry the maximum traffic volumes. It is estimated that the new Urban System will carry 75 to 80 percent of all vehicle miles traveled in each urban area. A program of street improvement that will aid each city to the extent of 75 to 80 percent of its daily traffic load is bound to be helpful to the city and relieve it of a heavy burden -- and permit it to turn its resources to other needs.

Like other States, Virginia has urbanized areas that will qualify for this new system. They include Lynchburg, Newport News-Hampton, Norfolk-Portsmouth, Petersburg-Colonial Heights, Richmond, Roanoke,

and Northern Virginia, which includes Alexandria City, Arlington County and a large area of Fairfax County. So I am sure that groups such as yours will have a great interest in this vital new program.

The cities have other needs, too, that we must meet. One of the major ones is solving the problem of rush-hour traffic congestion -- and it is the highway program to which we must look to provide much of the solution.

The basic solution, of course, is to get greater utilization out of our existing street network -- and you accomplish that by making greater use of public transportation or high-occupancy car pools.

Of course, when we talk about rapid transit today we must, in practical terms, be talking about bus transit, because this is and will be the mode in all but a handful of our largest cities.

And by means of preferential treatment, buses can do -- and are doing -- the job. This preferential treatment can consist of exclusive bus lanes on freeways and city streets, such as the well-publicized Shirley Highway program; completely new "busways" or private roads for buses, and perhaps car pools; and through specially regulated traffic signals and on and off ramps on freeways and the new Urban System arterial routes.

The Federal Highway Administration, in cooperation with our sister Department of Transportation agency, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, is conducting several highly successful bus transit programs around the Nation. More are on the way.

There are other areas, too, in which the highway program must continue to help our cities for years to come: with the TOPICS program (which is an acronym for Traffic Operations Program to Increase Capacity and Safety), with relocation assistance for those who have to move from their residences or places of business because of road construction, and with the multiple use and joint development concepts, under which the right-of-way obtained for highway development is used for other worthwhile projects as well.

Much needs to be done in our cities in the years ahead, and the highway program is being readied to provide its share of the solution.

Incidentally, while 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, the urban areas are getting their money back, with interest. In 1970, it is estimated that about 65 percent of the total expenditures for streets and highways in municipalities came from the Federal and State Governments.

Moving on now to that other area of great need, our Primary System, Virginia may already be providing a preview of the new Federal-State program of the future.

In this country there are 256,499 miles of highways on our Primary System. As you know, these are the highways that usually -- though not always -- have a U.S. designation, such as U.S. 1, for example. These

are roads that are traveled heavily, but most of them were built 30 to 40 years ago, for the traffic of 10 to 20 years ago, and so they are totally inadequate for today's traffic, let alone for that of 20 years into the future.

About six percent of our rural Primary System carries volumes of 10,000 vehicles per day or more, which is about twice the point of adequate service with a typical two-lane highway. In Virginia, though, the mileage is more than double that of the national average.

So Virginia started out several years ago on her own to do something about this problem with an arterial program to dualize, or make divided highways out of existing two lane roads.

One good example of this type of upgrading an existing road is found on U.S. 29, which runs from Northern Virginia, through Charlottesville, and Lynchburg to Danville. While not yet complete, the improvements made so far have already resulted in reduced driving time under considerably safer conditions. Our Highway Department is similarly upgrading other similar routes around the State.

This is a splendid program, and our Virginia is to be highly commended for it. However, most States do not have such programs, even though they are badly needed, for I believe that such "Junior Interstates," if you will, are typical of what we must be turning our attention to on the Primary System.

On all of our rural Primary highways which carry 5,000 or more vehicles per day, we must plan to upgrade or replace them with something more than a two lane road. And these "Junior Interstates" are certainly one good answer.

Virginia's program is aimed at tying together all the major cities in the State by dualizing the primary links that connect them. This should be done in all States, and it will require a major Federal-State program to accomplish it.

I say "major" advisedly, because I anticipate it will require funding of at least \$2 billion annually, an amount you will note is equal to the new Urban System program I mentioned a few minutes ago.

Now of course most of these "Junior Interstates" that I am proposing will not be built to Interstate System standards. Most of them will not be controlled-access roads, although some of them may well be. However, they will be divided highways, and as such they will be immensely safer than the existing two-lane roads they will replace. Of all the safety factors that have been developed, divided highways have shown the greatest impact in reducing accidents, other than control of access itself.

In addition to the greatly enhanced safety factor, the "Junior Interstates" will also provide greatly increased capacity, which already is sorely needed on many of these routes, and will be increasingly needed in the years ahead. Changing a two-lane road to a four-lane divided roadway will immediately increase capacity by about four to five times. No other treatment can do this.

Sometime in the future, perhaps, controlled-access freeways will also be needed in some of these "Junior Interstate" corridors, but even if they are, they will only supplement, not replace, these "dual" highways. For these "Junior Interstates" will be not only dual roadways, but will have a dual purpose -- to serve both long distance and local travel, and immediate corridor development.

Actually, you know, there is a relationship between the urban needs I referred to earlier and these needs of our Primary System. That is because the urban dweller also benefits from the improvements to rural roads; in fact, statistics show that more than half of the total travel on rural roads is done by city residents. It's rather obvious that the city dweller needs the rural roads to get where he wants to go when he leaves the city. And, of course, the produce and goods needed by the city for its everyday life arrives over these same rural roads.

So, in my mind, there is no doubt of the pressing need for a large-scale Federal-State program to upgrade the Primary System roads, such as I have described. And we had better be ready to go with it in the immediate future as soon as completion of the Interstate System will permit.

There are some, I suppose, who wonder why we are putting so much emphasis now on this "next highway program" when there are still several years remaining before the Interstate System program is finished.

The answer to that is contained in one word -- and that word is "planning."

There are many steps and many considerations that must go into the development of an adequate highway system. The quality of the final product almost inevitably is in direct proportion to the amount, scope, and thoroughness of the thinking and planning that precede it. The Interstate System, for example, while officially launched in 1956, had its roots in studies and reports going back to the 30's.

All of the overlapping considerations we must look at -- safety, esthetics, economic development, intermodal coordination, financing, and a host of others -- underscore the need for long range planning. And, indeed, by law we are required to do all of our planning to accommodate the highway needs of this Nation 20 years into the future -- not just those of the present.

Along this line the State of Virginia, as you know, just recently issued a report on its long range transportation needs, which showed that Virginia will need to spend \$17.2 billion on highway construction in the 16-year period between 1974 and 1990. The type of post-Interstate highway program that I am proposing will help Virginia to meet these needs -- and will help all other States to meet their needs, as well.

There is another compelling reason why we must plan well in advance of actual construction time. The construction of the Interstate

System has resulted in a major Federal-State road building capability which would be extremely costly and difficult to reestablish if it were allowed to lapse at the end of the Interstate program. That means, of course, that we must have an approved program all ready to go, so that a smooth and uninterrupted transition can be made from one program to the other later in this decade.

Finally, we are under a mandate from Congress to plan for the future. In 1965 Congress passed legislation requiring that beginning in 1968 -- the Department of Transportation every two years submit to Congress a National Highway Needs Study. We are presently busily engaged in putting together our 1972 report, which will go to Congress in January.

This 1972 Highway Needs Report could well help shape the form the highway program will take in the years ahead. I commend it to your attention when it is released.

In addition Congress has before it the Administration's transportation revenue sharing plan, which would make Federal aid available to State and local governments without any matching requirement and without the conditions applied to the usual grant programs. Except for a provision to complete the Interstate System under present funding arrangements, this would give State and local officials flexibility to deal with local transportation problems without regard to mode.

This question of what form our future national highway program will take is something that concerns all of us. All Americans can take justifiable pride in the magnificent Interstate System freeways, which they are already making extensive use of. These are the finest and safest roads the world has ever known. The many benefits they are now providing will become even more bountiful when the entire System is in operation.

But none of us can afford to rest on his laurels. We cannot afford to dwell on past achievements.

George Allen, the new coach of the Washington Redskins, has a well-quoted saying: "The future is now."

I think the same thing can be said of the future of the highway program. Whatever it is to be it will be the direct result of what we do now.

#

57578