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AMERICA'S FUTURE HIGHWAY NEEDS

ADDRESS BY FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR
F. C. TURNER, BEFORE APWA SYMPOSIUM ON
TRANSPORTATION, 1971 PUBLIC WORKS CONGRESS,
SEPTEMBER 13, 1971, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
CIVIC CENTER

Six years ago, in 1965, with the Interstate System program then in its 10th year, Congress made a wise and far-reaching decision.

It directed that, beginning in January, 1968, a report be made to Congress every two years of estimates of this Nation's future highway needs.

It was a wise decision for many reasons.

For one, Congress recognized that the construction of the Federal-aid highway systems -- and in particular the Interstate System -- represented a gigantic Federal-State effort -- one which would be extremely costly and difficult to reestablish if it were allowed to become moribund upon completion of the Interstate System.

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Congress pointed out, too, that the United States' continued population growth -- with most of it concentrated in urban areas -- accentuated the need for a thorough review of the highway program in the light of overall transportation problems and various possible solutions.

And it specifically suggested the classification revision of Federal-aid Primary and Secondary Systems and their urban extensions.

Of course, such biennial reports to Congress would be justified because of the basic element of change, alone. For it is an indisputable fact that things do constantly change. Our mores change, our technology changes, our emphasis changes. A few years ago ecology and the environment were words which were heard only infrequently; today they have great meaning in our way of life. We have found improved methods of building safer and more efficient roads. In short, we are doing things differently now -- and better -- than we did, say 20 years ago. And there is no doubt in my mind that 20 years hence we will be doing things differently -- and better -- than we are doing them now. That is as it should be, for we must always seek improvement -- in all areas of our national life.

And as our techniques and methods change, so, too, do our needs and goals -- and this, of course, necessitates changes in emphasis in the highway program to fit the particular needs of the day. The highway

program in every respect, therefore, is under constant and continuing study and review by the Congress to keep it current and anticipatory of future needs.

One of the recommendations in our first report to Congress, in 1968, was for a nationwide functional highway classification study, to be undertaken with the State highway departments and local governments, to examine the future transportation role of all highway routes and their suitability for inclusion in the Federal-aid System. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1968 authorized such a comprehensive study, and the results of the first phase of that study were reported to Congress with our 1970 Highway Needs Report. That phase identified, and functionally classified, all highways according to how they were used in the base study year -- which was 1968. Results of the second phase, which will be reported in the 1972 Highway Needs Report, will cover the classification of highways needed to meet estimated 1990 travel demands.

This brings us to the upcoming 1972 Report, which will attempt to provide much of the kind of information needed to help in determining national development goals and the impact and contribution toward those goals by different transportation options. It will provide analyses which are designed to:

- (1) Evaluate various highway investment programs under several different assumptions of population distribution and land use development, and under varying assumptions of all kinds of future transportation demands.

(2) Provide the most efficient mix of highway investments to maximum cost effectiveness.

And (3) determine the highway role, and specifically the appropriate Federal involvement, in furthering national development and transportation goals.

Within the Federal Highway Administration we are working on several background projects in developing the 1972 report to Congress.

These studies are designed to analyze the needs reported by the States and to compute the costs and benefits associated with meeting all or part of them. Attempts are being made to assess the social costs and benefits of various alternatives, and to evaluate the effect that alternative national growth policies, or changes in our living and commuting habits, would have on our highway needs.

In addition, we have on-going studies to identify and assess the overall effects of highway program alternatives; to develop financial programs to implement such alternatives; to estimate economic impact and land use implications; and to develop policies concerning the relationship of toll facilities to future Federal-aid programs.

The type of highway program alternatives we are considering range from such extremes as elimination of the Federal-aid highway program altogether to satisfying all the needs reported by the States to serve projected travel requirements until 1990.

Notice I emphasized "extremes." Obviously there are several more reasonable and probable highway program alternatives in between these two extreme postures. They are included in the studies so that a complete picture will be available of any and all possibilities -- in spite of how "far-out" they may be.

While we have a pretty good idea of what the range of highway program alternatives are, we are still in the process of selecting a representative set of them for detailed analysis and evaluation. In fact, one of our most difficult tasks has been developing a rationale for this.

The reason is that in trying to develop a rationale for highway program alternatives, we must think in terms of not only total transportation goals and how highways relate to them, but also in terms of overall national development goals and how they interrelate with transportation.

Consequently, we have structured our thinking in such a way that an alternative is conceived on the basis of a "guiding philosophy" for the overall program. From this viewpoint we can apply different systems eligibility and funding criteria along with specific national population distribution and total transportation objectives.

Concerning the Federal-aid highway system realignment issue, there are four basic questions.

The first question is, Do we need Federal-aid systems?

This is an extremely important question in light of the Administration's transportation revenue sharing recommendation. Under

revenue sharing, only the Interstate System would remain and all other Federal-aid highway programs would end. While this is a viable program alternative, it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to evaluate the consequences of it in terms of traditional cost/benefit measures. That is because we do not know what type of transportation investments -- particularly in the highway area -- State and local governments would make under the revenue sharing programs. Of necessity, then, we are concentrating our analytical approach on system and program alternatives which would result in a predictable level and mix of the Federal-aid investments and matching funds.

The second question is, How far down the functional classification hierarchy should the Federal-aid system go?

This really is a matter of what is in the Federal interest. In the case of the Interstate System, the interest, I daresay, is obvious to everyone. But in the case of the subdivision street down at the end of your driveway, most people would probably agree that this is not part of a national interest system. The question is, where do we draw the line in between? How far down should we go? Acceptable answers must be found, and to find them we intend to select several different types of Federal-aid system highways and report their particular characteristics to Congress, so that Congress will have a basis for its ultimate decisions. In each instance we will include estimates of the costs of improving the various optional systems and the benefits to be derived if the improvements are made. We also

will report where, geographically, these costs and benefits would accrue.

The third question is, Should Federal-aid designation be on the basis of existing or future functional classification?

This is complicated, because the 1968 classification study was based upon existing functional usage of all routes, and the Classification and Needs Study which is presently being conducted uses a 1990 target year for both classification and needs estimates. Inherent in the 1990 estimates, of course, are assumptions as to what the shape and character of population distribution and economic development will be over the next two decades. More often than not, these future estimates are based on a continuation of past trends. Now, as you know, the President, Congress, and others have expressed concern over where these past development trends are leading us. The 1970 Housing Act directed the President's Domestic Council to develop a national urban growth policy designed to, among other things, reverse the trends of migration from rural to urban areas and bring about a more balanced development pattern. In establishing our Federal-aid systems we must, in effect, use a crystal ball and look into the future, but in so doing we do not want to inadvertantly foreclose on any future growth policy options. Perhaps an answer to this dilemma would be to designate a Federal-aid system based on existing functional usage, with some modification for imminent or known pending developments which would change functional classification, and continually update the

Federal-aid systems through the addition of development roads and highways which are not needed now but which will be needed to guide and serve future development. Then once these roads are built, they would become part of the regular Federal-aid systems. In this way, the designation of Federal-aid systems would not prejudice or limit our options on future developmental policy.

The fourth question is, What is the appropriate extent of Federal interest in rural and urban systems?

Seeking the answer to this we must consider whether we should serve the same proportion of urban traffic with Federal-aid systems as we do rural --or should there be other criteria such as Federal interest in local as opposed to long-distance travel? Or should we put extra emphasis on urban transportation because of the traffic congestion which exists in some of our large cities?

I believe the foregoing gives you an idea of some of the problems we face and some of the questions we must answer in compiling our 1972 Highway Needs Report.

Naturally, since the Report will not be transmitted to Congress until January, I cannot at this time divulge any specific findings. Moreover, the returns are not yet all in; the report is still in a very incomplete form.

I do feel, however, that our 1972 Report is going to be a very significant one, with important ramifications for the Nation as a whole.

Based on the continuing studies we have been making, we tentatively believe that in any future highway programs we are going to have to give considerably increased attention to our Primary and Urban Systems, and that new and additional provisions are going to have to be made to promote bus mass transit facilities.

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 many of them were built for the traffic of yesteryear and are almost completely inadequate today.

Of necessity, these primary roads have been somewhat neglected in recent years because of the emphasis that has been placed on completing the 42,500-mile Interstate System -- with its greater benefits for the greater numbers of people -- as quickly as possible. In order to accomplish this, most of the money and manpower available have been concentrated on the Interstate System, and no apology is needed for that, because the Interstate System freeways, the safest roads the world has ever known, already have been paying the Nation high dividends. There is no question in my mind that this was the correct decision.

At the same time, I am absolutely convinced that as soon as the Interstate System is completed later in this decade, we must expend considerable funds, energy and expertise in order to permit our primary roads to catch up with the times. And catch up they must -- or the

Nation's transportation system is going to be in very real trouble.

So I think that as soon as we possibly can, we must get on with the job of rehabilitating our Primary System -- and it is going to require a large-scale Federal-State program to accomplish this.

As to the cities, I believe that the need for an expanded highway program there is quite obvious. After all, a city cannot exist without adequate roads and streets. As with the human body, they are the arteries that keep the city viable; without them, it will die. It is as simple as that. And every city, whether large or small, is dependent either to a large degree or entirely on its streets system for its very existence.

Remember that practically every service in a city depends on highways: police cars, fire trucks, ambulances, service trucks, delivery trucks, garbage trucks -- you name it; they all go by highway. And when the people who live in urban areas want to go anywhere -- be it the supermarket, the drug store, a movie, a concert, sporting event, or to the homes of friends -- how do they get there? Almost always by highway.

So the fact is that highways simply are irreplaceable in the daily life of a city -- because there is nothing with which to replace them. And there won't be, as far into the future as we can presently foresee.

It seems to me, then, quite plain that since the very existence of cities depends on highways, we had better get busy as soon as

possible in improving our urban roads.

Congress showed an awareness of this need in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970, which provided for establishment of a brand new Urban Federal Aid Highway System. We are working on this now, and the Secretary of Transportation will report back to Congress in 1972 on the proposed system and its cost.

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 local officials and State highway officials, who are to be guided by the urban transportation planning process in determining which routes will best serve goals and objectives of the community.

In addition to the amounts specifically funded for the System for fiscal '72 and '73, (\$100 million each year) up to 50% of the amounts apportioned to each State for extensions of Primary and Secondary System roads within urban areas and up to 50% of TOPICS funds can be used for projects on the Urban System.

These roads on the Urban System will be extremely important arteries. They are expected to carry 75 to 80 percent of all vehicle miles traveled in urban areas.

This means that as the Interstate System is completed we will continue to require all of our highway resources if we are to meet

even partially the compelling needs of our Primary and Urban Systems.

Of course, one of the main problems confronting our cities today is that of rush-hour traffic congestion. There is only one solution to this problem, and that is to get more utilization out of our existing street network through greater use of public transportation or high-occupancy car pools.

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 cities.

And buses can do -- and are doing -- the job. But to do the job, they must be given preferential treatment. This can be accomplished in any of several ways -- through exclusive bus lanes on freeways and city streets; through new "busways" or private roads for buses, and perhaps car pools; and through preferential treatment at traffic signals and at on and off ramps on freeways.

In cooperation with our sister Department of Transportation agency, the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, the Federal Highway Administration has promoted several highly successful on-going bus transit programs around the Nation. More are on the way. This is the wave of the future, and it is why I said that future highway programs must continue to provide for such mass transportation facilities -- as did the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970. We must move people in our cities if the cities are not to become stagnant and dormant --

and good highways and good bus mass transit facilities are the solution.

As I see it then, extensive improvement to the Primary and Urban Systems, and provision for adequate bus mass transit systems, are unquestionable needs in our future highway programs. Many other needs and programs will be disclosed in the 1972 Highway Needs Report, and this Report could well help shape the form that the highway program will take in the years ahead.

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