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An ancient philosopher (Plato) reminds us that "What is honored in a country will be cultivated there."

We are assembled here today to recognize the work of those public and private officials who have contributed so much towards beautifying and enhancing the scenic values of our highway system.

We know that these efforts will be widely honored by fellow Americans; we hope they will be as universally emulated.

The task of preserving and enhancing the natural beauty of this nation is a task for millions of people. In some significant ways, it is an obligation analogous to national defense itself.

For when we think of defending America, we know that that is the responsibility of all citizens. And when we think of the many precious things to be upheld in America, we know that this must include, along with the freedoms of our land, the aesthetic qualities of our land.

The organized protection of our nation's scenic heritage assumed a new and dynamic focus, two years ago, under the leadership of President and Mrs. Johnson. With the passage of the historic Highway Beautification Act of 1965, State and local governments joined with the Federal Government in a far-reaching counterattack on roadside ugliness.

We have begun to make landscaping a part of all projects on the Federal-aid systems, over and above normal measures required for erosion control.

We have begun to acquire land or scenic easements adjacent to the highway as an essential means of preserving the natural condition of the countryside.

We have begun to provide for more recreation and rest areas along our highways, for the greater convenience, safety and relaxation of the traveler.

Our States--determined to make their roads highways to personal enrichment through the enjoyment of nature and scenic beauty--have obligated, since 1965,

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close to \$225 million in various Federal and State matching funds. They have taken steps to improve or construct an additional 700 rest and recreation areas; and to acquire over 3,000 scenic easements. In addition, they have landscaped literally hundreds of miles of highways.

This program, primarily being carried out by the State highway departments, is undoubtedly one of the greatest efforts in our history to restore, protect and enhance the grandeur of America's scenic resources. And it is supplemented, I am happy to say, by widespread public participation--by social, civic, business and professional organizations, as well as by individual citizens--who have contributed their money and efforts to roadside beautification projects in virtually every State.

I hope there will be much more of this because as I said, this is a task for millions of people as well as millions of dollars. All whose actions will have an influence on selection of routes and development along these routes must join in the work.

For beautification is more than a matter of cosmetic treatment, or superficial landscaping. The roads themselves--in the way they're located and the way they're designed--have to harmonize with the terrain.

There is an art involved in this kind of road-building, an art that merits applause and deserves the most careful study.

To stimulate that dimension of awareness, the Department of Transportation, next year, will begin presenting annual citation awards to non-Federal governmental agencies.

This year, as a preview of what will be an annual competition, the Department has selected eight completed projects which exemplify modern Highway Beautification. Our judges declared these to be outstanding in regard to location, design and roadside development. They have selected both rural and urban examples, examples of roadbuilding which required a combination of high engineering skill and aesthetic sensitivity.

It gives me great pleasure to present certificates of excellence to the eight State highway departments so identified.

Will the State representatives please come forward.