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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

STATEMENT OF ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE HOUSE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ROADS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MAY 2, 1967

I appreciate this opportunity to appear before you on behalf of
HR 7797, which would provide for authorizations to carry out the
programs of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. I fully recognize
that your hearing has ranged in interest far beyond the matter of this
program's financing, and I hope that my expression of views today will
reflect that broadened interest.

Considering its short lifetime to date, this program has led a
stormy childhood. It has been both pilloried and praised, in equally
fervent terms. Some detractors have called it ineffective because it
doesn't go far enough and some have charged that it is inequitable and
confiscatory.

Yet paradoxically, everyone -- legislators, bureaucrats, businessmen,
the press, and the private citizen -- agrees that there is a great and
growing need to restore, preserve, and enhance the natural beauty which
frames our Nation's sweeping Federal-aid highway system. Not one word
has been uttered in these chambers, on the floor of the House, or in the
Senate, either in 1965 or within the past few weeks, that would contradict
this. Debate over this program has centered not on "whether," but "how."

Enactment of the Highway Beautification Act in 1965, I am firmly
convinced, was in response to a deep national mandate. Since that time,
I have neither seen nor heard anything to indicate that the public has
withdrawn that mandate. Recognition of the need to accomplish the

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purposes of this program -- both for its own stated purposes and as part of a broader national movement to enhance our environment -- is universal. So it is very important that we keep sight of the longer-range national goals evidenced in this Act, even as we examine the mechanics of its implementation.

These are goals which the Congress has expressed and emphasized in three separate pieces of legislation enacted over the past two years -- in the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1966, and twice in the Department of Transportation Act of 1966. Moreover, they are goals which underscore and harmonize with the objectives of other programs created by the Congress to raise and sustain the level of our national environment -- programs to clean our air and water, to safeguard our natural lands and wildlife for the pleasure and education of future generations, and in general to make technology a partner in the quest for a better way of life instead of an enemy in that quest.

These goals go far beyond the control of billboards and junkyards, or the enhancement of roadside scenery. Important as these may be, they are only parts of a whole. They must be considered in the broader context of total highway design, location, construction, safety, and comfort -- and then, in the even broader framework of the national pursuit of a better climate for our citizens.

In isolation, the specific components of the highway beautification program would count for relatively little: What purpose is there in beautifying our highways if we do not also improve their capacity, make

them safer, and plan them in light of national transportation needs? By the same token, what purpose is there in planning our highways properly if we allow them to remain or become so ugly and scarred in complexion that their use gives pain instead of pleasure?

Met in concert, all of these purposes count for a great deal. They envision a new degree of excellence which the public demands, and deserves, from its highway system. To provide for less is to break faith with the public, and to ignore the national aspiration for a better climate of life which underlies this and many other programs brought into being by the Congress during the past half decade.

It has been said by some that we cannot afford beauty for our highways yet, that other demands for the tax dollar are more important. I submit, Mr. Chairman, that we not only can, but we must. Whether in the open spaces of our cities or through our national historical sites, through our rural fields or over the mountains of our wilderness, preservation of beauty along our highways can no longer be classified as a frill, to be added on or dropped at leisure. It has become an integral part of the highway planning and improvement process. Just as surely as beauty is a subjective quality which surpasses precise definition, so is it an impossible quality on which to place a price tag.

This is not true of ugliness. We know something about the high price of ugliness. It is an expensive condition, not simply in terms of the blight it casts on the human spirit and climate, but also in the spiralling

cost of its elimination. Unlike beauty, ugliness spreads if left unchecked, and its removal costs swell accordingly. Often it secures so strong a foothold that the natural beauty it has destroyed can never be fully restored, at any price. This is the high penalty of neglect -- a penalty foreseen when this Act was created, a penalty spared our children if this Act is carried out. For this act recognizes that natural beauty is just as basic a national resource as are air, water, forests, and mineral deposits, and must just as surely be safeguarded from depletion and destruction.

At the foundation of the Act and the program it calls for is a partnership between the Federal Government and the States -- the same kind of creative partnership which has worked so wonderfully in the programs to develop our Nation's Federal-aid highway system. The Federal Government and the States are the partners of record in these programs, but they are only spokesmen for the silent partner -- the American citizen -- whose needs and aspirations are the mainspring of our highway development and improvement efforts.

The genesis of Federal-aid highway construction movement was the need and desire of the American public for an adequate, comprehensive, high-quality network of roads. That network is still to be completed and improved. Yet even as it grows, the American public has reminded us that this massive road system is being built not for cars, but for people -- that it must not only be technically and mechanically adequate, but adequate also in terms of human values.

Through this Act, the public has reminded us that driving for pleasure is our most popular means of outdoor relaxation -- that driving can and should be a release from the fabricated and sometimes jarring climate of our daily lives, and not an exposure to more of the same. In short, the public and this Act direct that our highways should complement and stress the best elements in our environment, rather than add to the worst.

Much is heard these days about the need to complete the Interstate highway system as rapidly as possible, so as to take early advantage of its built-in safety features. Unhappily, the implication has been left in some quarters that this rush for early completion of the highway network will be stalled by the highway beautification program, and that funds for the latter should be spent instead on the former. In essence, it is claimed by some that beauty and safety are incompatible at this time in the highway programs, and that we can have one but not the other.

The truth, of course, is quite another thing. The truth is that safety and beauty are never incompatible and often complementary. Split-level road alignments, variable width medians, interesting natural features, gentle curves, frequent rest areas and scenic overlooks, median planting to reduce headlight glare, gently sloping shoulders -- all of these are achieved by beautification, and all add immeasurably to the safety of our highways. In fact, although billboard control and junkyard control have received most of this hearing's attention, it is Title III -- the landscaping and scenic enhancement portion of the Act -- which by far will have the most positive, the most far-reaching, and the greatest impact,

and in the final analysis, will achieve the grandest results. The Congress recognized this fact when it authorized three times the amount of money for Title III than for Titles I and II combined.

Returning finally to the purpose of HR 7797, I hope that we are all in agreement that the universally accepted goals of the highway beautification program cannot be accomplished without adequate funds. This bill would grant an authorization of those funds. The Administration believes, and President Johnson has stated, that the soundest way to insure the integrity of the highway safety and beautification programs is through creation of a special trust fund.

This fund would be financed by the receipts from two percentage points of the automobile excise tax, and its proceeds would be used only for the purposes of highway safety and beautification. The trust fund concept which has worked so effectively in the financing of the Interstate Highway System can provide equally important benefits in the areas of highway safety and beautification, we believe.

HR 7797 would provide authorizations from such a proposed trust fund. Section I of this bill authorizes \$380 million to be appropriated for the next two fiscal years, 1968 and 1969, to provide for both new obligations to carry out the provisions of the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, and to meet unpaid obligations incurred under its prior authorizations.

Section 2 of HR 7797 would provide that funds authorized under the Highway Safety Act of 1966 and the ^National Traffic Vehicles shall be appropriated from the proposed Safety/Beauty Trust Fund. I would like

to point out that this section does not seek new or increased authorizations for the safety program, but merely changes its source of financing.

In this statement, Mr. Chairman, I have tried to put forth the broad overriding considerations that ought to structure every decision that is made on the highway beautification program. But I am aware of the precise issue which has generated much of the controversy with which this Committee has been dealing over the past month. I obviously refer to the question of billboard removal.

Let me state very clearly that I do not believe there can be a program of beautification of our highway system that does not provide for the substantial removal of commercial advertising along our Federal-aid highway system. Nor can there be a program that does not provide for reasonable coverage of highway traffic by the billboard advertising medium.

I worked very hard with the members of this Committee to bring about what may literally be called the law of, or rather for, the land -- the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 -- and make no mistake that it is the law itself which requires the removal of the overwhelming majority of advertising signs. We are not talking about any regulations or administrative determinations here, but the law as written and enacted.

I imagine that it is very hard for the public to understand -- the same public whose feelings were represented by that law -- why there is now a heated discussion over the basic tenets of beautification when not one sign has come down. No state, no municipality and certainly not the Federal Government has taken any direct action which would spark such a reaction.

The crucial point is whether a law is rewritten that has not had a chance to demonstrate whether it can do what everyone has said must be done -- or instead do we spend our efforts to see that what is done is in full consistency with the law, the intent of the Congress and the expressed opinion of the American public. There is no question in my mind that the latter course is the only sensible one.

For over three hundred years the name America has been a synonym for open spaces. It is squarely up to all of us to see that the scenic vistas along our great modern highways serve some purpose other than simply as a background for a twenty -four poster billboard.