

STATEMENT BY CLAUDE S. BRINEGAR, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,  
AT WHITE HOUSE PRESS BRIEFING FOLLOWING SIGNING OF THE  
FEDERAL AID HIGHWAY ACT OF 1973, AUGUST 13, 1973.

The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 authorizes a total of \$23 billion for highway and mass transportation construction over the next three years. Both in terms of dollars and numbers of separate programs, this is the single most important piece of legislation that the Department of Transportation has been called upon to administer.

The Act's most significant feature is its new approach to solving the urgent transportation problems of our urban areas. Three related programs are directed to these problems:

First, and most important, the Act gives urban transportation planners immediate flexibility in the uses of the Highway Trust Fund dollars that are allocated to urban areas. No longer must these planners think "just highways." Now they will be able to consider trade-offs to such alternatives as buses, exclusive bus lanes, and rapid rail systems. We do not see such flexibility as a "busting of the trust," but rather as a sensible broadening of its uses. Approximately \$2½ billion is authorized for this "flexible" urban usage.

Urban areas will also benefit from the \$3 billion in new authority for the capital grant programs of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. These grants, which come from general funds, continue to be the Administration's major effort to help our cities solve their transportation problems.

The third way that urban areas will benefit is from an important new provision that will permit the substitution--on a dollar for dollar basis--of mass transit projects in place of unbuilt interstate highway segments that are now no longer considered essential to the national system.

Although this Act will do a great deal for urban transportation, these gains will not be at the expense of the vital interstate highway system or needed improvements in rural highways. A total of \$8.75 billion is authorized over the next three years for the 42,500 mile interstate system, which should bring it very near completion. In addition, \$3.3 billion is authorized for various rural highway programs.

The Act also creates several new special highway safety programs--such as the elimination of dangerous rail grade-crossings and other high-hazard situations.



The Act even helps the bicycle rider--perhaps the ultimate in the efficient usage of energy--by providing up to \$120 million from the Trust Fund to be used for the construction of bicycle paths in connection with highway projects.

Finally, I'd like to add my personal appreciation to Congress for this legislation. The Conference Committee worked hard and in a spirit of constructive compromise. Out of this effort has come a good bill--one that will go a long way toward providing our Nation with the balanced, total transportation system that it needs. As something of a newcomer to the political process, I found this an encouraging and gratifying accomplishment.