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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

STATEMENT OF SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE
SALUTING NATIONAL HIGHWAY WEEK -- SEPTEMBER 20-27, 1970

National Highway Week, September 20-27, provides a special opportunity for all Americans to consider the role of the highway in our national life. But even more importantly, it recognizes the dedication and genius of the thousands of men and women involved in roadbuilding.

The public demand for mobility at the beginning of this century resulted in the Federal-aid Road Act of 1916, which established the Federal-State partnership in road building that has proved so successful. The concept of the super highway dates back to 1925, when T. Coleman duPont built a three-mile stretch of divided highway and gave it to the State of Delaware as a gift. Now, as a result of the Federal-aid Highway Act of 1956 and subsequent legislative amendments, the 42,500 mile Interstate System is nearing completion.

The U. S. has 3,686,705 miles of roads and streets. These avenues of mobility have affected every segment of American life. The whole process of urbanization can be tied to social patterns stimulated by the highway and the automobile.

The highway has been a major instrument in improving the quality of life in rural as well as urban America, for rich and poor alike. It has been a foundation of our economy, as well as a profound shaper of the geographic settlement of the country.

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Official cognizance in recent years of the highway impact on American life has put even greater social responsibilities on the shoulders of highway planners, designers and engineers.

The highway can lead families to recreation areas, quiet retreats, relatives, social services and job opportunities. But it can also lead to an alarming disruption of neighborhoods, the environment and what city planners generally call the "urban condition."

It is in this latter area that the highway of tomorrow faces its greatest challenge. The highway must become complementary to other forms of transportation. It has a special role in tying together many of America's new transportation opportunities.

The highway must mesh with the airport, the railroad, and the waterway to form a national transportation system that is truly responsive to public need.

National Highway Week is a time of praise for past achievement. And it is also an opportunity for reflection so that the future may be seen more clearly. I urge all Americans to take this week to consider the highway and its role in American life.

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