

May 6 - PANEL: The Highways We Need and How to Get Them -

**The Interstate Highway System**

H. S. Fairbank

G. Donald Kennedy

H. S. Fairbank

W. F. Corry

J. Clark Akers

Park Martin

William A. Stinchcomb

H. Willis Tobler

Baird H. Markham, John V. Lawrence

**The designation of the Interstate Highway System is an**

**important action preliminary to an efficient further development of the country's highway plant. It records an agreement upon those continuously connected routes which, within the smallest compass of mileage, are capable of contributing most to the national aggregate of transportation service.**

Constituting, in their intercity sections, little more than one percent of the total of rural road mileage, the designated routes will serve an estimated 20 percent of all rural highway usage. They join by direct lines all of our 92 cities of 100,000 population and more; and interconnect with these largest cities and each other 90 of the 107 cities in the population class between 50 and 100 thousand. In their passage between cities they traverse counties which yield nearly half of our agricultural production. They include the most important routes of the strategic highway network, and are therefore of utmost value from the viewpoint of national security.

With substantial accuracy it can be said that no other group of similarly connected and continuous routes of like extent or of greater or lesser extent could supply a higher per-mile average of traffic service.

Such a system obviously must be accounted a segment of great importance in relation to the remainder of the highway network, deserving of high consideration and reasonable preference in all plans for the modernization of highway facilities.

It does not in the least derogate from this high appraisal of the worth and importance of the Interstate System to say that proposals for setting it apart from other sections of the primary highway system for prior and exclusive development with earmarked funds could not fail to result in some inefficiency of application of available financial means. The existing roads now constituting sections of the designated routes, though together they form a continuous system of highest importance, are not invariably in their several areas the most useful of all routes in those areas. Nor are the individual sections of the system in their present state invariably less adequately improved in relation to the needs of their traffic than other roads in their respective areas.

Sound employment of available highway revenues, therefore, would not be accomplished by expenditure serving to raise from a high to the highest level of functional adequacy a section of the Interstate System if, by reason of such expenditure another road of equal or greater traffic usefulness in the same area were denied the means for its improvement from a low to an equally warranted highest level of functional adequacy.

The parts of our highway system have been previously improved at many times within a period of thirty years or more. There is a reasonably related sequential timeliness of their further improvement which the fact of their existence inside or outside of the Interstate System may alter in some degree, but not unduly.

The true significance of the designation of this system and the desirable manner of its further improvement cannot, I believe, be better described than in the words of the National Interregional Highway Committee in reference to the similar system it proposed.

Those words were:

"The Committee believes it would be a mistake to regard the interregional system as an object of exclusive attention, even by the Federal Government, or to concentrate upon it all or a disproportionate part of any effort and funds that may be applied to highway improvement. The Federal Government has substantial interests in many other roads and possibly other city arteries. Its assistance should not be confined to the routes included in the recommended limited system.

"Nevertheless it is important, both locally and nationally, to recognize this recommended system and the routes that comprise it for what they are - as that system and those routes which best and most directly join region with region and major city with major city.

"And with such recognition, it is desirable, in all Federal, State, and local highway improvement programs, to give to this system and to these routes, promptness and preference of attention, consistency of plan, and a large share of available financial means. This will be necessary for its progressive and balanced improvement at a rate sufficient to halt the present obsolescent trend of constituent routes and to substitute a reasonably rapid movement toward complete adequacy."

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April 29, 1948

Mr. Arthur G. Butler, Director  
National Highway Users Conference  
National Press Building, Room 938  
Washington 4, D. C.

Dear Mr. Butler:

Enclosed is a copy of the statement I have prepared for  
presentation at the panel session next week.

Very truly yours,

H. S. Fairbank, Deputy Commissioner  
Public Roads Administration

Enclosure

HSF:RBE

cc - Mr. Fairbank ✓  
Files

(Preliminary)

THURSDAY, MAY 6

10:45 a.m.

PANEL: Subject: The Highways We Need and How to Get Them

Moderator: Jack Scott, General Counsel  
National Association of Motor Bus Operators

Members: "Long Range Highway Planning"  
G. Donald Kennedy  
Vice President  
Automotive Safety Foundation

"The Interstate Highway System"  
H. S. Fairbank, Deputy Commr.  
Public Roads Administration

"State Roads and State Plans"  
W. F. Corry, Chairman  
State Highway Board of Vermont

"County Highway Problems"  
J. Clark Akers  
Tennessee County Highway Association

"Urban Highway Development"  
Park Martin  
Allegheny Conference on Community Development

"The Position of the Private Automobile Owner"  
William Stinchcomb  
American Automobile Association

"The Farmer's Need for Good Roads"  
H. Willis Tobler  
American Farm Bureau Federation

"Elimination of Fiscal Abuses"  
Baird H. Markham, Director  
American Petroleum Industries Committee

"The Economics of Highway Planning"  
John V. Lawrence, Managing Director  
American Trucking Associations, Inc.

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