

Naturally, some of the towns that would be in the present existing route wondered if this would cut into their traffic and this would be a legitimate question that could be raised.

The increased flow of traffic is such that we need to create another alternate route to eliminate the bottlenecks, so there has been no real objection in any quarters that I know of.

Mr. DORN. What is the approximate population of Austin, about a half million?

Mr. PICKLE. No; Austin now is about 258,000. It is shown on one of our charts I have in the folder.

Mr. DORN. This route does go how close to Johnson City?

Mr. PICKLE. It goes directly from Austin to Johnson City to Fredericksburg and just beyond that it ties in with the present route.

Mr. DORN. Thank you.

Mr. PICKLE. It serves an area of around 800,000 to 1 million people, this particular alternate route.

Mr. KLUCZYNSKI. The gentleman from California, Mr. Don H. Clausen.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As usual, the gentleman from Texas makes a very effective presentation when he appears before any committee of the Congress.

Now, Mr. Pickle, I am assuming that when the routing was originally selected to go from Houston down to San Antonio and westerly out toward El Paso, one of the fine reasons for this was it was considered to be a necessary link because of the defense establishment in and around San Antonio.

If I read your testimony properly I read it to the effect that you feel this would be a very significant alternate route and sincerely believe it to be in the defense interest of the country to have an alternate route through that area. Do I read you correctly?

Mr. PICKLE. Yes. I think defense was a factor in the question of establishing the original Interstate route, plus population, because it is only logical that 15 years ago we connect Houston to San Antonio and El Paso which were the biggest cities in the whole Southwest area. Austin has grown so fast and the military establishment has increased and together with a great deal of research at the University of Texas, both on and off campus justifies this.

Mr. CLAUSEN. You actually combine this with the recommendation to relieve congestion that has been caused by the traffic going in and out of San Antonio?

Mr. PICKLE. Yes.

Mr. CLAUSEN. Well, I think that you make an excellent point when you consider the fact that you have the university and the research going on there.

Thank you very much.

Mr. PICKLE. And also my State capital.

Mr. KLUCZYNSKI. The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Harsha.

Mr. HARSHA. Mr. Pickle, have you discussed this proposal of yours with the Texas State Highway Department?

Mr. PICKLE. I quoted Mr. Woods, the State highway engineer because he was one who told me that the commission had authorized him to make this study and to start the plan out for a four-lane system from Columbus into Austin.