

If you will permit me, I would like to briefly summarize the economic growth pattern of the United States since the establishment of a system of roads connecting our principal cities by legislation in 1916.

At that time, the Gross National Product was estimated at around 50 billion dollars.

In 1921, legislation was passed that required the creation of a system of highway development and concentrated financial resources on the connecting highway system concept and the establishment of priorities for construction on a carefully programmed basis. The long range objective called for an inter-connected, coordinated and integrated system of highway routes.

By 1955, the Gross National Product had grown to 400 billion dollars.

In 1956, the U.S. Congress enacted a monumental piece of legislation establishing the Interstate Highway System financing plan that was designed to assure the funds needed to carry out the contemplated long range highway plans for improvement.

Most significantly, it provided a dedicated source of revenue to be used exclusively for the purpose of financing the construction of a specified system of roads in the United States.

By 1968, we expect our Gross National Product to be 800 billion dollars. From 50 billion in 1916 to 800 billion in 1968 is the measured economic growth during that period of time when we committed ourselves to building the required system of highways in the United States.

The success of this venture is widely known and we are scheduling hearings before our Public Works Committee next year to consider and act on the future highway needs following the completion of our presently authorized system. We are openly confident that our people will support our efforts to expand our system because they have seen the immediate benefits to our standard of living that are associated with road building.

It is not enough, just to formulate great highway proposals—for they must be financed—and there must be proper machinery provided in the way of organization and authorization to convert ideas and proposals into reality and action.

I want to emphasize one of the points made by Mr. Turner at the opening session on Monday afternoon when he said and I quote: "As the proper body in which to focus all our hemisphere efforts in highways, this Congress occupies a position of great responsibility because it can serve as an effective instrument to assure the efficient coordination of highway systems between countries, and the improvement of our highway management capabilities, by which knowledge we can provide the most economic, safe and effective service to the highway users of our hemisphere. Perhaps it is now time to consider the establishment of some planning body within the PAHC to coordinate these and other projects in the future on an overall basis".

It would seem important to me that this Tenth Pan American Highway Congress might want to take some positive action along this line and work toward the creation of a package plan of integral highway system development in your countries to provide a coordinating mechanism to integrate the overall planning of a continental and intercontinental Pan American Highway System. Into such a total planning package would be placed such regional proposals as the Darien Gap, the Transversal Route, the River Plate crossing, the Caribbean Circuit, and others needed to forge a truly integrated system physically linking both of the Americas and all of the countries therein. While you have appropriately focused attention on the Darien Gap proposal, we must also give proper attention to other very important and pressing road projects that will require multi-nation coordination and cooperation.

Each individual country's own planning could then be made to conform internally, and at the border connections, in such a manner as to insure the ultimate creation of a single connected system truly international and intercontinental in its scope.

To accomplish this, I would like to suggest that this Congress create a new special ad hoc committee to give its full attention to the development of such a comprehensive-total-package.

Some will say this is too large of an undertaking but, having evaluated the extraordinary display of technical talents present at this Congress, I'm convinced that no task is too great for you and your organization. Frankly, the signs of our time demand that we rise to this challenge.