

STATEMENT OF HON. SAM GIBBONS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM
THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate this opportunity to present testimony pertaining to our National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. I certainly want to commend this Subcommittee for holding hearings on highway legislation. While I recognize the great progress we have made in improving our system of highways, I want to call the Subcommittee's attention to an important missing link in our Interstate System.

The Tampa and Miami metropolitan areas comprise the two largest population centers in Florida. At the present time, these rapidly growing areas are linked by U.S. Highway 41. In addition to heavy use by the residents of Florida, this highway must also accommodate the thousands of tourists who travel between Tampa and Miami each year. Most of the people coming to Tampa from the North use Interstate 75. What is normally a pleasant trip on the Interstate System is shortlived, however, since I-75 terminates in Tampa.

We have problems in providing safe, expeditious ground transportation between major urban areas. When the population growth and increases in tourist travel are considered, these problems become especially critical. By 1975, the population in the Tampa area is expected to reach nearly one million and Miami will have approximately 1.5 million people. Unless prompt steps are taken to handle projected transportation needs, we will be hopelessly behind in a short period of time.

Mr. Chairman, the traffic corridor between Tampa and Miami, which is served by U.S. 41, should be made part of the Interstate Highway System. This action would enable the State to undertake an improvement program which would provide adequate transportation facilities to serve both the residents of Florida and the people from all parts of our country who visit the State.

I have introduced H.R. 14812 to provide for this interstate designation. I urge this Subcommittee to approve this urgently needed extension of the Interstate Highway System.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN CULVER OF IOWA

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. I appreciate this opportunity to submit testimony to you on the future of the highway program, particularly as it affects Eastern Iowa.

The Director of Highways for Iowa, Mr. Joseph Coupal, is appearing before you today to present Iowa's programs and needs. Several months ago, at the time when the cutbacks in this year's highway program were announced, I called a meeting of the Iowa Congressional delegation and the Federal Highway Administrator and his staff, here in Washington. Mr. Coupal attended that meeting as well.

At that time, the Federal Highway Administrator Lowell Bridwell commented on the outstanding program which the Iowa Highway Commission has developed, and described it as one of the best in the country. I hope that the Commission's presentation today will be considered by the Subcommittee in that light.

My statement will be limited to brief comments on two particular aspects of the highway program: the manipulation of the highway trust fund for economic reasons, and the Great River Road.

THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

I have already indicated with other members of the House from Iowa, in a petition to this Committee dated April 1, my own deep concern about the reductions which were made in the program this year, and the arbitrary and discriminatory formula that was utilized.

A sound highway program demands careful planning of projected needs and priorities within a state over a period of years. The State of Iowa, I might say, has developed an excellent program based on 5-year and 20-year projections.

One of the major determining factors in the implementation of these programs is the reliability of federal funds. No state highway director can operate without reasonable assurances that the money he expects to receive from the trust fund for a given period of time will be forthcoming. What is more, state legislatures will be increasingly unwilling to appropriate state funds to highway programs if there is no certainty as to whether or when the federal commitment will be made.