

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: I am Joe R. Seacrest, managing editor of the Lincoln Journal of Lincoln, Nebraska and Vice-Chairman of the Steering Committee, I-35W Association. It is my honor today to speak in behalf of the Association.

Our association is an interstate organization serving the 5 states of Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Membership includes several chambers of Commerce, state highway promotional groups, business and professional men, and citizens concerned that the west north central region of our country shall maintain its social and economic viability in the maelstrom of a rapidly expanding and highly dynamic national environment.

The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways has, without doubt, captured the public acceptance and raised the highway standard of living expectancy. As a result, there can be no denying the need to improve the ABC system and to emphasize, though tardily, the staggering unmet streets and expressway needs of urban communities. The I-35W Association agrees with and supports the provisions of H.R. 16994 addressed to solving these problems. But the federal aid highway system encompasses more than urban needs and ABC needs and the bill does not completely recognize and satisfy the other requirements of the system.

In the opinion of our association, there still remains a requirement for more Interstate system mileage which has to be met before the national highway system upgrading can be said to be complete. Therefore, we oppose the idea that the Interstate program should be terminated upon completion of the 41,000 miles currently authorized and we urge that the bill be amended to include:

(1) Extension of the Interstate system by approximately 6,000 miles to a new total of 47,000 miles.

(2) A 5% allocation of highway trust funds for completion of the 6,000 miles of "missing links" in the Interstate system or, as an alternative to the above, the following:

(3) Designating, within those sections of the bill dealing with the ABC and urban classifications, 6,000 miles to be used for completing "missing links" of the Interstate system financed by a 5% special allocation of trust funds.

The control points for those "missing links" could be designated either by the Congress or the Federal Highway Administration.

With respect to the "missing link" concept in connection with extension of the Interstate system, we believe that the links should be considered as further development phases not unlike the phased development of the navigable rivers and the railroads which began over a century ago and is still continuing. The initial stage of the Interstate construction was set, arbitrarily as admitted by the Congress, at 40,000 miles with subsequent modification or development phases of 1,000 miles and more recently 200 miles additional. Further development is logical to meet the needs of a dynamic nation.

Few would know better than a newspaper editor that highways are currently in an ebb tide of political interest and attention in today's world of Vietnam, racial unrest, urban crises, tax increases, crime, inflation and the war against poverty. Yet, the political interests of the American public are volatile and they ebb and flow like the tides. Today's de-emphasis of highways will assuredly require tomorrow's high priority of attention to moving tomorrow's greatly increased vehicular traffic speedily, economically and safely. The needs of tomorrow must be foreseen as much as possible now and programs properly instituted despite the disinterest and apathy of the public.

The American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) have displayed timidity in not taking a firm position with respect to the extension of the Interstate system. Although they recognized the need for about 6,000 additional interstate miles, they purposely shied away from designating the "links" making up this mileage preferring instead to relegate the emphasis to the ABC system. By following this course of action, AASHO delegated the planning of our principal arterial system to the 50 states thus effectively balkanizing the great principle of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways developed by past Congresses. Bluntly speaking, this recommendation to divide the spoils among the 50 state highway departments and the substitution of pat formulae for sound judgment is an invitation for Congress to pass specific highway legislation which will assure that the nation gets a complete system of Interstate highways.

Termination of the Interstate highway program would, aside from leaving an incomplete physical system, be grossly inequitable from the economics standpoint