Your stated before, did you not, the Tampa-Mississippi-Miami missing link was requested even at that time as part of the Florida system?

Mr. HOPKINS. Yes, sir; and it is hard to understand why that was not approved originally when the system was set up.

Mr. CRAMER. And in 1957–58, myself and others introduced bills, feeling as you did, that it should have been on all along, trying to get it on the Interstate System; but, as you know, no individual separate bills have been enacted for highway construction, but rather on a national basis.

Now we come to the time, as I have suggested to the chairman, the time of decision as it relates to some of these missing links, and I consider this certainly to be in that category.

You suggested, relating to this one 268-mile section, that that should have top priority insofar as authorizing new mileage in Florida is concerned; is that correct?

Mr. HOPKINS. Yes, sir.

Mr. CRAMER. Can you give us some of the reasons for that?

Mr. HOPKINS. Well, because of the inadequacy of the existing road system in that area to handle the rapidly increasing load on those roads. We just cannot keep up with our needs down there.

And also there is a large segment of the State that is not serviced by any four-lane highway, let alone a limited-access highway, in that area, and a connection between the State's most populous urban areas.

Mr. CRAMER. A portion of that, from Miami over to Naples, is it—is it farther north than that—is served only by a two-lane highway. Where is the two-lane highway section?

Mr. HOPKINS. Well, there is a two-lane section all the way from Miami to Venice, with the exception of a short stretch right there south in Fort Myers.

Mr. CRAMER. So actually about what is it, two-thirds of that is now served by a two-lane highway?

Mr. HOPKINS. At least three-fourths of it.

Mr. CRAMER. Three-fourths of it. And here is an area where you have two of the major population centers in the southeast, Miami being obviously the largest and Tampa-St. Petersburg area being one of the largest, without an adequate connecting link on the Interstate System. You indicated you could not understand why that was never so designated?

Mr. HOPKINS. I never have been able to understand this.

Mr. CRAMER. Now, you recall—I am sure all of us do, particularly those of us who lived through it and close to it—the Cuban missile crisis and the need for new moving of war materiel rapidly and in substantial quantities in southern Florida, do you not, in the vicinity of Cuba and, if needed, for the protection of the United States?

Mr. HOPKINS. Yes, sir.

Mr. CRAMER. And that being the Interstate Defense Highway System, and as it relates to the defense of this country—possible need against the closest Communist nation to the United States, Cuba—that defense alone would really justify it? You would have the MacDill Air Force Base there in Tampa-St. Petersburg, with war materiel coming down I–4 and so forth?