ADVANCE ACQUISITION OF RIGHTS-OF-WAY

The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1966 required a study of advance acquisition of highway rights-of-way. This study has been concluded and reported to your Committee with the recommendation that a Federal revolving fund of $300 million—$100 million a year for three years—be established. The need for such a fund will become more critical as construction moves into urban areas where land prices frequently escalate at an alarming rate. Advance acquisition of the necessary rights-of-way for future highways can save the highway user millions of dollars.

Both measures provide for the advance acquisition of rights-of-way, with $100 million annually. Mr. Cramer and other members of the full Committee have introduced separate legislation, H.R. 16622, with the same monetary provision on the subject.

We support the creation of a fund for advance acquisition and recommend the language in Mr. Cramer's bill be substituted for that which appears in H.R. 16994 and H.R. 17134. Neither of these two provide a minimum time period before the land can be used.

Mr. Cramer's bill requires two years to elapse before the land acquired with these funds may be used. This will prevent states from using advance acquisition money to buy land for immediate use, which would negate the purpose of the fund.

URBAN AREA TRAFFIC OPERATIONS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS (TOPICS)

Under the language in both pieces of legislation, money authorized under this program could be used on any street, road, or alley within an urban area.

The program authorizes $250 million for each of five fiscal years 1970–1974—a total of $1.25 billion for urban traffic operations improvement. Expenditures are authorized for projects which "include but are not limited to those which directly facilitate and control traffic flow." There is no requirement that the projects must be on any Federal-aid route.

Under H.R. 16994, but not under H.R. 17134, the Trust Fund would pay, wrongly we think, for work on city streets and conceivably for a host of other projects which have only an indirect relationship to the federal interest in highways.

While AAA favors the objectives of the TOPICS program, it opposes the expenditure of Highway Trust Funds on non-Federal-aid roads. Federal-aid routes are already eligible to receive matching grants for a number of such improvements. There seems little justification to burden the Trust Fund with additional commitments for roads which are of more local than national importance.

FRINGE PARKING

Section 14 of H.R. 17134 would authorize a 75–25 payment formula for the construction of fringe parking areas outside the central business district. AAA is opposed to this because it uses Highway Trust Fund money for non-highway purposes and, in fact, the money is to be used to encourage other forms of transportation.

AAA suggests that if fringe parking lots are necessary to provide convenient access to public transportation systems that the cost of their construction be assigned as a capital improvement to the transit system. Just as the cost of the construction of subway stations is charged to the transit agency.

H.R. 17134 would fund the fringe parking program from money authorized for the Interstate program. We are already years behind in the construction of our Interstate highways and can ill afford to assign the construction of fringe parking lots a higher priority than the early and expeditious completion of the Interstate program.

This completes our testimony on the items in the two pieces of legislation before you. I would like to bring up several related items which we suggest be added to the bill your Subcommittee reports out.

HIGHWAY FUND CUTBACK

The AAA is greatly concerned by the unilateral action of the Executive branch of the Federal Government in withholding previously authorized Federal-Aid Highway funds from the states. This has happened in two successive years, and