

FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Bureau of Public Roads

"We recommend a cautious and conservative approach to the authorization of discretionary funds for use by laboratory directors in support of research relevant to national problems. (See comments on question 6 also.) It is our understanding that the existing Federal laboratories have been legally established on rather firm functional bases that testify to the efficacy of such assignment and the enhancement of professional competence in their respective spheres of program responsibility. Moreover, we would construe that the continued existence and Congressional support of such mission-oriented laboratories have been appropriately predicated on the periodic provision of convincing evidence of staff responsibility and effectiveness in the performance of specified assignments. When the researches conducted in one functional laboratory produce a spinoff potentially applicable in another functional area, we believe that the pursuit of that potential would best be conducted by staff of the agency having background experience and program responsibility in that area."

National Highway Safety Bureau

"In response to the first question in this sub-paragraph, I feel laboratory and/or research Directors should definitely have a specified amount of discretionary funds available for use in response to highly promising unsolicited proposals. The advantages of such a concept far outweigh any disadvantages that may attribute to such a plan. It is inherent in the research and development field to receive, from either in-house or outside sources, such new and promising ideas, concepts, and approaches to the solution of a given problem. To delay the funding of such proposals due to the prior commitment of available funds, is to allow these highly promising areas to slip or go completely unfunded during a given program year. The only disadvantages to such a concept would be related to the inappropriate use of these funds, and the fact that with a predetermined dollar amount, some proposals would not be funded and this could create hard feelings on the part of those proposers who do not receive support."

U.S. COAST GUARD

"Coast Guard laboratories are now equipped and staffed for testing, evaluation, and prototype development work. The allotment of discretionary research funds to Coast Guard laboratories would not be appropriate at present. Considering research laboratories in general, advantages of the use of discretionary funds include the stimulation of creativity and generation of interest in problems among some of the scientists best able to attack them. Disadvantages include the diversion of some laboratory funds and man-hours from the parent agency's immediate needs, and the possible excessive generation of research proposals which cannot compete effectively for available support."

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

"In a research and development environment characterized by the availability of unlimited funds, the provision of discretionary funds under broad guidelines and minimum of administrative controls to laboratory directors might be desirable in many situations.

"However, in the past and current research and development environment of FAA, funds have been limited, and inadequate to meet the burgeoning needs of increasing air traffic, larger and faster aircraft, congested airports, and obsolescing ground facilities. In the transportation field, in the words of the President (President's message, April 5, 1962, House Doc. 384, 87th Congress), 'research has been fragmented, unsteady, inadequate in scope and balance.'

"In this type of limited R&D funding environment, discretionary funds allocation to laboratory directors, as a general practice, would not appear desirable. Effective research and development management requires efficient technical program planning and close control of funds, as well as the provision of a mechanism for quick reaction to emergency projects. To the extent that discretionary funds would adversely affect technical program planning and conservation and management of limited funds, it would be undesirable.

"We believe a laboratory director should have some funds available to him to give him a quick reaction capability to respond to areas of opportunity, consistent with the basic mission of the parent agency; and that, if the guidelines are de-