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DENVER, COLORADO

Senator -- members of the American Road Builders Association:

The President asked me to bring you his personal greetings today. Both of us deeply appreciate the whole-hearted support which your organization has given to the highway beautification program.

So I am glad to have this opportunity to thank you in person and also to discuss with you what I feel is the most exciting public works program in the history of mankind.

By 1973, the country -- you primarily -- will have completed the Interstate Highway System.

This highway program is staggering in its size. It is 35 times as large as the Panama Canal, Grand Coulee Dam and St. Lawrence Seaway combined.

Above that, in the next six years, you are planning to build half-a-million miles of road.

Your creations, your works are as public as any can be. They are public property. They are open to all and for the service of all. And inevitably they affect the lives of the people, for better or for worse. Therein lies both the glory and the burden of roadbuilding.

Whether we will one day stand in pride and be able to say "well done" depends very much on the skill and imagination and sheer determination we put forth in the next six years.

And that is why I accepted your invitation to come here today and say to you that your countrymen are counting on you. I know because I hear from them day after day.

There is a rising tide of desire in this country to make our towns and our landscapes everything they can be -- in beauty as well as in service.

I'm not bringing you any news because I know that this is very much on your minds, too, and that the meetings you attend, more and more, discuss and are concerned with such new demands as "social and aesthetic values," "scenic vistas," "historic routing" -- an unheard-of vocabulary today.

But let's take a look at why it is a most necessary vocabulary today.

We are the road-buildingest nation on earth. There are 3,600,000 miles of streets and roads in our land -- nearly a mile of pavement for every square mile of land, and a lot more of this country is going under concrete and asphalt.

In disturbing that much of the turf of this beautiful country, we have a special obligation -- not only in terms of land use, but also in an aesthetic sense. We are obliged to leave it looking as good if not better than the way we found it.

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The scope of this obligation becomes staggering when you look at the statistical side of the story. Every day, American industry is producing enough cars to form a bumper-to-bumper line 125 miles long. Last year, we had 90,000,000 registered vehicles traveling our Nation's streets and roads. In the next four years, it is predicted that will swell to more than 100,000,000. That means more roads, more parking facilities, more bridges, more cuts and fills.

We are a nation on wheels and our affluence and leisure have whetted our appetite to enjoy the journey-- not just head for the destination.

Today, the average American commuter spends 350 hours each year behind the wheel of his car just driving to and from work. On weekends, he's off in the car again, driving to the ocean or the mountains or just around the city -- what in yesteryear they called "motoring." There's more of this than you realize -- 35% of those on the road are driving for pleasure.

Driving for pleasure is the most popular form of recreation in America. It exceeds baseball, swimming, fishing, any form of sport. The challenge of a civilized society is to make those hours on the road refreshing and enjoyable ones.

Last spring, I took a trip down in Virginia. For one small segment we drove along Highway No. 1, with its jumble of signs and junkyards, the landscape blighted. And then we swung over to Interstate 95 -- that sweeps up the rolling hills of Virginia between tall stands of oaks and evergreens laced with white dogwoods. From this road itself, you know why Virginians love their state.

We all know the difference between the road that beckons and the road that depresses.

I know what a lift of spirit and surge of pride I feel when I drive up over the crest of the hills back home near Llano, Texas. There, in the distance is Pack Saddle Mountain, and on either side of the broad right-of-way, a long sweep of bluebonnets and then a roadside park, golden with daisy-like wildflowers, and picnic tables under the live oaks.

Everytime I see that sight, I bless the garden clubs that started the wildflower program in Texas, and the highway department that has expanded and nurtured it.

In the kaleidoscope of my most cherished memories is a road through Vermont in early October when the majestic mountains are covered with maples -- flaming torches of scarlet and crimson against the evergreens. Astors and goldenrod line the roadside, and I remember nature's bounty of pumpkins and apples piled high at roadside stands.

Certainly, this lush display of color is one of the most priceless resources of the State of Vermont. Knowing this, the Governor is proposing legislation to create a scenic corridor one mile wide along certain portions of its interstate highways to protect its native charm.

The Merritt Parkway in Connecticut is an early ancestor of our present great freeways, but to drive along it, is still to drive through one of the most enchanting natural gardens in the world.

Along the Pacific Coast, the first designated "scenic highway" in the Nation is a dramatic road that hugs the jagged cliffs above the surf, and winds its way from Carmel, California to the Hearst San Simeon Castle.

These great roads not only get you from "here" to "there", but they afford a revelation of America's great beauty along the way.

It is the difference between just pouring asphalt or concrete between two points or building a landmark -- a monument -- that will live. I, as a citizen, am proud, not only of the result, but of the kind of talent that produced it. If I were the roadbuilder, my pride would be very keen and very personal.

This is a difference illustrated best by the story of how Sir Christopher Wren one day walked unannounced and unknown among various craftsmen who were raising the timbers and placing the bricks of his St. Paul's Cathedral.

According to legend, Sir Christopher approached one carpenter and inquired:

"What are you doing?"

"I'm following the plans," the carpenter replied, without even stopping his hammering.

Of a workman pushing a barrow loaded with materials, the architect asked: "What are you doing?"

"Working for wages," was the reply.

Then Sir Christopher went up to a mason who was applying mortar to bricks and asked: "What are you doing?"

Somewhat taken aback, the stonecutter put down his trowel, stepped away from his work, looked up at the half-formed structure, and said:

"Why, can't you see? I'm building a cathedral."

Pride in work is one of the most substantial joys in life. It gives a cathedral -- and a highway -- the lasting quality of greatness.

Today, millions of Americans have been travelling far and near and looking at their new highway systems with fresh eyes. A few months ago when the Highway Beautification Act became law, it marked the beginning of what I hope will be many considered public decisions in behalf of beauty in America.

Within your hands and hearts is the opportunity to implement this legislation with imagination, and with vision about the future of your country.

Most of the news stories about the legislation have featured the fact that it provides funds, and authority, to screen automobile junkyards and control billboards along the Nation's major highways.

That is a dramatic and evident need, but a less publicized and most exciting facet of the Act, to my mind, is that Congress has appropriated three additional cents for every dollar of federal highway funds -- a total of \$60,000,000 -- to be used for the acquisition and maintenance of beauty spots adjacent to highways.

States can use their money for such items as:

-- A meadow of wildflowers where motorists can take time out to stretch their legs and breathe the fresh air.

-- A scenic overlook -- Colorado and the Rocky Mountain states are spectacularly rich in potential.

-- A yet-untouched stand of timber, where travelers can picnic.

-- An entrance to each state marked by some of the trees and flowers most typical of it. In Washington, D.C., we plan to plant cherry trees at ten entrances this spring. They will be a wonderful introduction to the city.

The possibilities are almost limitless for a beauty-minded citizenry through whose communities and countryside the highways run.

You, in the roadbuilding profession have done so well in your work that the public now takes the safety and utility of your pavement surface for granted. But what they remember about a trip are the masses of blooming flowers along the roadside and the stunning vistas, and the delightful camping and picnic spots.

As one highway official told me, "That's what brings in the fan mail!"

One point that concerns me particularly is that each year it costs American taxpayers \$100 million to clean up the litter on our roadsides.

It is an interesting side of human nature, but one of the by-products of beautification is the sharp reduction in vandalism.

We have had that experience in Washington in landscaping some of the schools. Broken windows cost the District of Columbia about \$118,000 each year. I stood in front of a school one day and counted 26 broken windows on one side alone. But (and here is the magic) at the nine schools we have landscaped, the breakage has dropped to almost nothing.

I believe we will see some of the same results along the highways. The motorist is just not as likely to toss that soft-drink bottle into a roadside park or a well-maintained landscape. If we make our travelers beauty-conscious, that \$100 million litter cost each year may very well diminish sharply.

I know that you know there is a rising aspiration for beauty abroad in the land.

And there is an increasing effort of state governments to compete for the tourist dollar.

The highway -- and the beauty which Congress has now made possible with the new bill -- offers states a perfect opportunity to use these funds to beckon the tourist.

More and more states are now planning their state line information centers.

I love that sense of welcome I feel when I cross the state line into Florida and I am met by palmettos and palms.

I suggest that states would do well to use their native trees and flowers at their state lines as a welcoming natural backdrop. For instance, glossy magnolias and crepe myrtles in the deep South; giant saguaro cactus rising like sentinels in Arizona and the West, fields of purple lupin in Wyoming, tall evergreens in the great northwest -- all of these offer great possibilities and bespeak the state's individuality.

What a tragedy it will be if we do not make our highways instruments of beauty as well as convenience in the vast construction program which lies ahead of us.

Much of what we have talked about are the easy-to-solve problems -- really the joy of construction and the imagination we can put to it.

But you and I well know that unavoidable knotty problems still rest with us. Simply, it is "Where do you put the road?" Always there is someone who will be hurt.

I cannot solve these problems, but I know they exist. I hear about them most emphatically and you do, too.

They will become larger.

Even though we are growing wiser about them, they will become more numerous as the interstate highway program goes into its final and most complicated months and increasing mileage is planned in cities.

The voices that you have been hearing -- and that I have been hearing -- are going to rise in volume. For that voice is the voice of all of us -- reaching out, aspiring to a better, more constructive, more lovely world.

The standard criteria on the routing of roads, such as careful consideration of the taxpayers dollar and safety, are, of course, still with us.

But a civilized society -- and a humane government -- can do more than that. And plainly, it is clear that we must also weigh in the social and aesthetic values of the routing.

We must improve the public hearings which the law requires to be truly open hearings and open-minded hearings at an early stage of planning. Hearing all sides is time-consuming, but empathy and understanding can help both sides realize each other's problems. And it does require tolerance on both sides.

The citizens who don't want the new highway to split up their neighborhoods, destroy their homes and places of business, their schools and churches; the preservation groups who don't want an historical landmark demolished; the conservation groups who want to keep the natural contours of the land, protect the stream valley, the great forests, the vistas and wildlife -- all of them deserve not only the right to be heard, but a right to be heard sympathetically, with the new sliderules of public values.

They won't always win. They can't always win. But let's not just fall into the attitude: "I'd rather fight than switch." Sometimes our technical know-how at an early stage can produce a better route.

Anyone in public life -- and that, I believe, includes you and me -- learns to respect public opinion and the new appearance of a public need.

There is great room for improvement in the relationships of government agencies with the public, as well as with each other.

And I urge you -- at the earliest possible time -- to review your plans with all who might be affected. You have done this in working with fish, wildlife, and recreation agencies. But this type of relationship should be extended to those who speak for other public interests -- the private as well as the official groups.

Those who so often are your critics can come to understand decisions if they are alerted to your problems and your goals early enough.

While it is true that the public is demanding, you have already shown them they are not asking for the impossible.

New equipment advances have provided the machinery to make beauty more possible. Your developments in new mowing equipment are fantastic. Today they can give the sides and back slopes a manicured look never possible five years ago.

Your machinery can tunnel under mountains and in precious parts of cities. You can maneuver to preserve the vistas. You are not defeated by terrain. You have developed great engineering know-how and I know you will continue your inventive efforts.

Now lies before us the opportunity for great understanding, great human know-how.

I have no doubt you will rise to these challenges with all the skill that the public has come to expect -- and that our country deserves.

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