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Transportation Issue

"Once In A Generation Moment in Transportation History" Administration Submits Reauthorization Bills

Taken from a memo to the Transportation Advocacy/Service Group of the National Association of Regional Councils (TASG-NARC), December 14, 1990.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Samuel Skinner submitted to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) the department's proposed federal aid highway and transit reauthorization package. Apparently two proposals were submitted — a two year bill and a five year bill. The legislative package supposedly tracks, with some changes, a concept paper prepared by FHWA [Federal Highway Administration] last September. The FHWA concept paper and an UMTA [Urban Mass Transportation Administration] outline of its proposed program are included.

Some of the key features which will likely be seen in the final highway and transit legislation include the following:

- A National Highway System (NHS) program which will capture 50% of all funds and 70% of the NHS versus Urban/Rural funds. This program would include an Access America sub-program to ensure that all communities 10,000 and above are connected to the NHS (about 500 miles would have to be added to the NHS for this). 75/25 match except

90/10 for operational improvements on full access controlled facilities. In urban areas, operational improvements on closely adjacent facilities would be eligible.

- An Urban/Rural program to replace the minor arterial part of the FA Primary Program, the FAU and FAS programs. Any public road would be eligible for funding. Transit capital costs would be eligible. 60/40 match.

- A separate bridge program.

- A small discretionary rural development program.

- A small discretionary metropolitan action program to "Encourage solutions to congestion and air quality problems". Both highway and transit projects would be eligible.

Metropolitan planning would continue to be funded by a one-half percent takedown from the NHS, Urban/Rural and bridge programs. Planning would be an eligible activity for program funds (but probably few states would use funds for this activity). Areas over 200,000 would have to have an areawide congestion management plan, and would have to give more

emphasis to coordination with land use planning and to multimodal considerations.

Authorizations will average about \$17.5 billion over the 5 year period.

Two features are apparently in the highway legislation that FHWA thinks Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) should be very interested in. The first (which is not reflected in the concept paper) is the addition of limited

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flexibility (10 - 15%) to transfer NHS funds to the Urban/Rural program. The figure that has been discussed is 10% with no questions asked and some additional percentage (probably 5%) if states can show that all pavement needs are met on the NHS. The second feature is the ability to urban areas to use NHS funds to make operational improvements on facilities adjacent to fully controlled access highways if those investments can be shown to improve the level of service and operation of the NHS facility.

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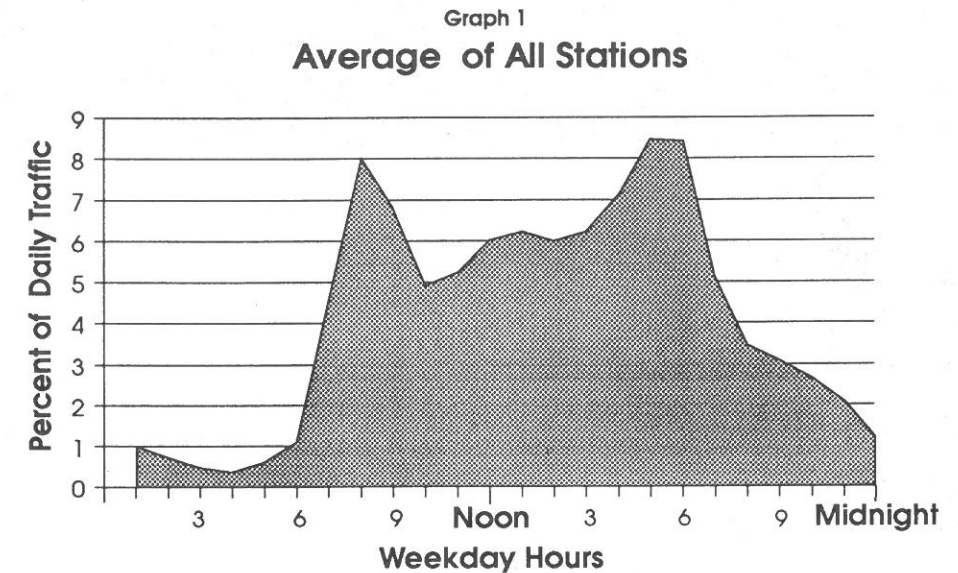
Peak and Off-Peak Traffic



Since most workers start work between 7:00 and 9:00 a.m., and end work between 4:00 and 6:00 p.m., it is not surprising that principal commuter routes exhibit morning and afternoon "peaks" in daily traffic volumes (see Graph 1). Mid-day peaks in traffic volumes may also occur on some routes, generally due to lunch-hour travel.

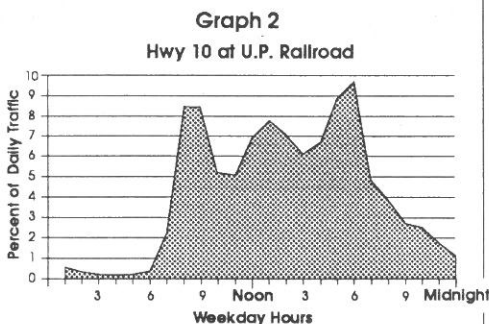
In order to establish the basic traffic patterns on primary commute routes in Pulaski County, the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) has installed several permanent counting stations that continuously record vehicular volumes. Data collected during 1989 by these automatic traffic recorder (ATR) stations are summarized in the accompanying graphs.

The hourly variation in traffic volumes at the four ATR stations depicted (Graphs 2 thru 5) are similar to each other. But, a mid-day peak is quite pro-

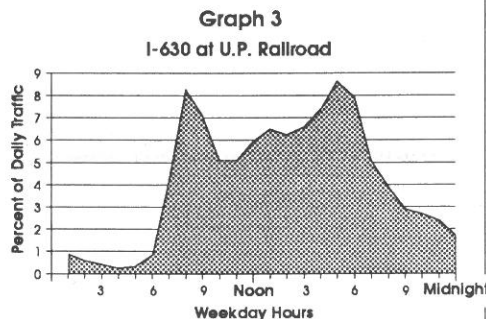


tionately greater utilization of Highway 10 during and after lunch by persons typically not

most important destination for commuters is still the Little Rock central business district (CBD). When summarizing the data of all ATR stations by direction of travel (i.e., either towards or from the Little Rock CBD), the resulting graphs (Graphs 6 and 7) indicate that the "inbound" or morning peak is shorter than the "outbound" or afternoon peak, which is typically the case in U.S. cities, due to the effect of more non-work trips occurring

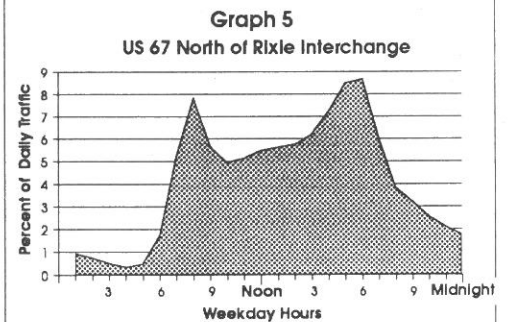
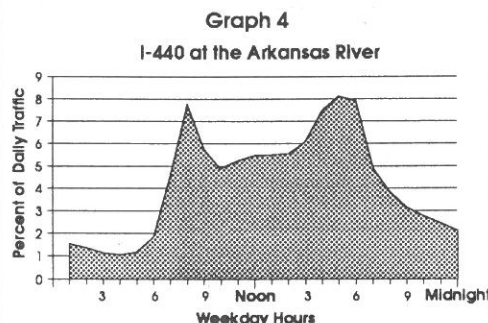


nounced in the case of Highway 10 at the Union Pacific (U.P.) Railroad (Graph 2). The three remaining ATR stations exhibit much less mid-day peaking than the Highway 10 station. This difference between Highway 10 and the other ATR routes is understood to reflect the propor-



traveling to/from work. This is consistent with the observation that work-trips to/from the CBD tend to use the freeway system, while non-work trips tend to be shorter and often use other arterials.

In Pulaski County, the single



during the afternoon. It is interesting to note, however, that the Highway 10 station (Graph 2) does not fit this general rule, in that the duration of morning and afternoon peaks is approximately the same, unlike the

(continued on page 5)

Traveling F A R T H E R In Less Time?

True or False? - *"It takes me longer to arrive home by car today from downtown Little Rock than ever before."*

To answer that question, the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD), in cooperation with METRO-PLAN, recently conducted a morning and afternoon peak central business district (CBD) travel time study within the Pulaski Area Transportation Study (PATS) Area. The study was conducted over a two-week period during early November, 1990. Such studies are conducted periodically within the urban area and compared with previous PATS travel time studies to determine the impact of changing land use patterns and programmed roadway improvements on area travel times and travel patterns.

Changing land use patterns within the PATS area are a result of population growth along the perimeter of the urbanized area and in the adjoining counties, coupled with the depopulation of the central core (*METRO-TRENDS*, December, 1990). This outward expansion has had substantial impact on travel patterns within the region and, to a lesser degree, impact on local travel times. In years past, the

central business district (CBD) served as the premier employment center in the Little Rock-North Little Rock area and attracted the greatest percentage of journey-to-work trips. Today, the CBD is but one of several employment centers in the metropolitan area and many of the traditional suburban-to-CBD trips have shifted to suburban-to-suburban trips.

Nationally, the average journey-to-work travel time has decreased slightly from 21.7 minutes in 1980 to 20.5 minutes in 1985¹. The average travel time to work for the Little Rock-North Little Rock area in 1980 was 19.6 minutes². As can be seen on the 1990 PATS Travel Time Study Map, most of the Little Rock-North Little Rock urban area is still within a 20-minute commute from downtown.

Based on data derived from the 1990 PATS Travel Time Study, the average afternoon commute has increased only for commuters living north of the Arkansas River where commuting time has increased approximately five minutes during the 1980s. This increased commuting time can be

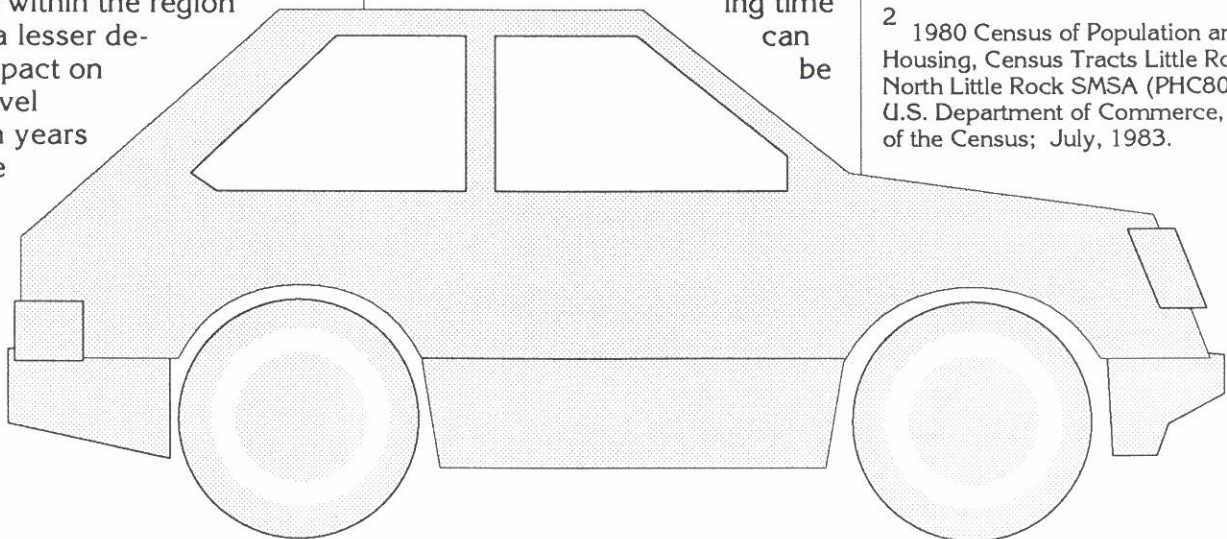
partly attributed to relatively few major roadway improvements on the north side, combined with the increased number of vehicles utilizing the existing roadways. With the completion of major roadways such as I-630, I-430, I-440, Chenal Parkway and the widening of I-30 coupled with the dispersal of major traffic generators away from the CBD, commuting times for persons living south of the Arkansas River actually decreased during the same period.

The impact of future major roadway improvements on travel time to the CBD may not be as great as in the past due to the circumferential location of the major new roadways and the continuing dispersal of population and employment away from the CBD.

The accompanying map shows the 1990 average afternoon peak travel times from the Little Rock central business district (CBD) at Capitol and Broadway compared to the off-peak travel times of 1979.

¹ National Transportation Strategic Planning Study; U.S. Department of Transportation; March, 1990.

² 1980 Census of Population and Housing, Census Tracts Little Rock — North Little Rock SMSA (PHC80-2-222); U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; July, 1983.



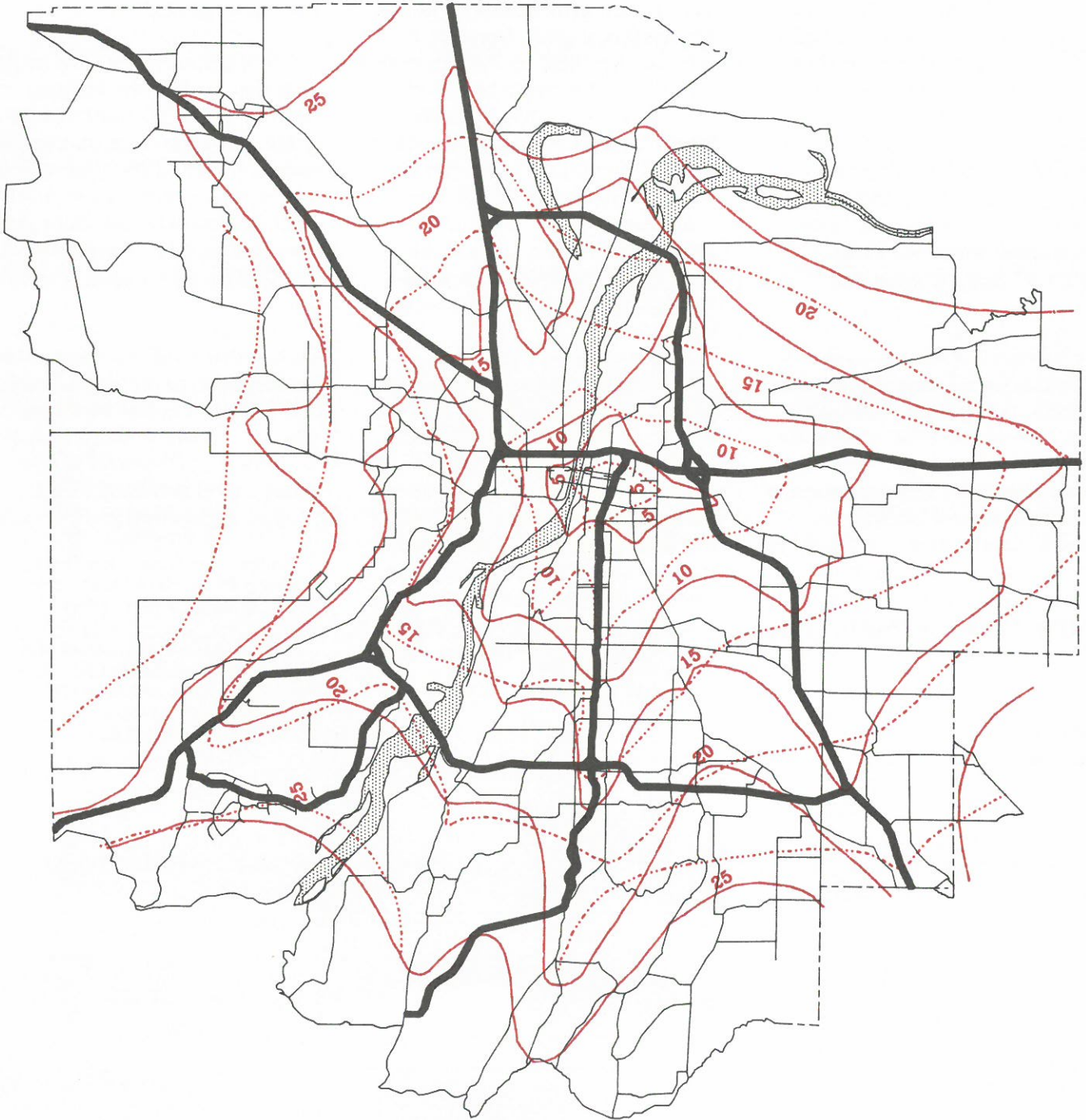
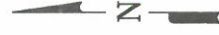
1990 PATS TRAVEL TIME STUDY

1979 NON-PEAK TRAVEL
TIME ISOCHRON

1990 P.M. PEAK TRAVEL
TIME ISOCHRON

TRAVEL TIME IN MINUTES

MAP NOT TO SCALE

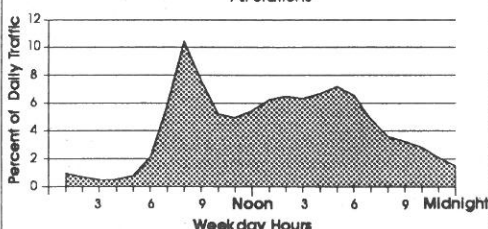


(Peak continued from page 2)

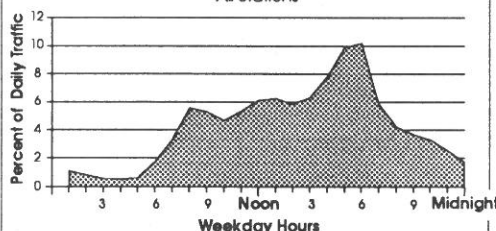
more typical freeway ATR station.

Another characteristic feature of morning and afternoon peak periods, is that traffic volumes during afternoons tend

Graph 6
Inbound Towards Central Business District
All Stations



Graph 7
Outbound from Central Business District
All Stations



to be slightly larger than mornings (Graphs 1 thru 7). This again can also be explained by more non-work travel occurring after than before noon.

In conclusion, since non-work trips are generally thought to be increasing as a proportion of all urban trips, travel demand during afternoon hours may increase faster than roadway capacity, resulting in longer and/or more congested "outbound" or afternoon peak traffic periods. Periodic examination of ATR data will allow transportation planners to evaluate such trends in peak travel demand and to propose improvements to alleviate congestion through increased roadway capacity, transportation demand management (TDM) (i.e.), land use alternatives, incentives for transit usage, alternative work hours and ridesharing.

Suburban Mobility Study Started

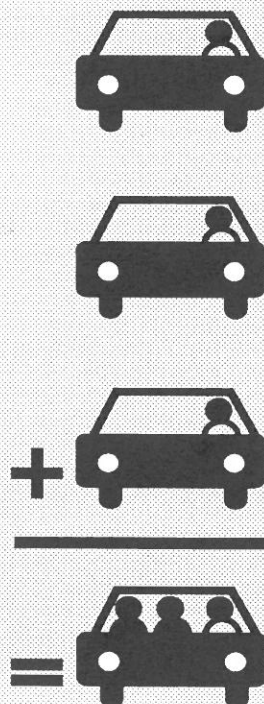
The outward expansion of metropolitan areas during the past thirty years has had tremendous impact on both travel behavior and travel patterns. This is especially true in suburban areas where intense development, coupled with disjointed land uses, have severely hindered travel mobility. The problems and opportunities pertaining to suburban mobility in the Little Rock — North Little Rock area will be studied through a Section 8 technical studies grant awarded to METROPLAN by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) during late 1990.

The study will provide recommendations to policy makers concerning suburban development strategies and nontraditional public transit alternatives that may be applied in suburban areas throughout the Little Rock — North Little Rock area.

2010 PATS Plan Nearing Completion

On November 27, 1990, the Pulaski Area Transportation Study (PATS) Coordinating Committee decided that enough progress has been made to recommend the adoption of three main elements of a revised long-range Streets and Highways Plan through the year 2010. Once adopted by the PATS Policy Committee, the three Plan elements will form the core of a new PATS Plan document. These three elements of the Year 2010 PATS Plan include:

- 1) the PATS Plan map showing existing and proposed roadways by functional classification,
- 2) the priority phasing plan listing proposed roadway improvements by priority phase, and
- 3) the proposed functional classification design standards depicted in cross-section.



Being Taken FOR A RIDE?

For more than ten years, Metroplan has supplied the central Arkansas area with free carpool information. Metroplan has matched thousands of participants through the rideshare program. With rising gasoline prices and the high cost of parking, carpooling is an easy way to trim expenses. For additional information and/or rideshare matching, contact Metroplan at 372-3300.

Why not CAR POOL?

(Bills continued from page 1)

The transit proposal is designed to parallel FHWA's. Among some of the features are: a name change to the Federal Mass Transportation Administration; the section 9 program would be funded from the Trust Fund with a 60/40 matching share; if an area had a "balanced local approach" for funding transit, it would be able to transfer funds to be used for highway projects; the section 3 program would be funded from the general fund and at a reduced level; planning and research programs would be consolidated; and the section 8 transit planning program would operate like the highway metropolitan planning program with a mandatory pass through from the states, and would have broadened eligibility in terms of the activities for which the funds could be used.

"National Highway System" Designation Discord

In October, FHWA invited National Association of Regional Councils - Transportation Advocacy/Service Group (NARC-TASG) and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (ASSHTO) representatives to Washington, D.C. to discuss the results of the National Highway System designation exercise. The NARC-TASG representatives reiterated their opposition to the NHS concept and expressed serious concerns with the designation exercise. They indicated that the results clearly show that the system envisioned by FHWA will not address metropolitan congestion and future transportation mobility needs. Eleven states (including the "Bread Basket" coalition of rural, western states) did not submit mileage for FHWA's basic and secondary mileage levels. Representatives from some other states indicated they might wish to withdraw those designations.

To the dismay of the NARC-TASG and state representatives, FHWA's initial progress report to the House Public Works Committee did not relate the serious misgivings of the MPOs and states about the exercise. In response, FHWA sent a follow-up letter to the Committee outlining the concerns of the MPOs and states.

According to FHWA, the "inconsistency" among the state submissions presented a problem for FHWA's assessment. Therefore, FHWA has used the submission to identify a "candidate" system for the purposes of analyses. The results of this exercise will probably be reflected in the proposed DOT reauthorization legislation as a cap on NHS mileage. OMB, no doubt, will want to limit the size of the system as well as the extent of federal participation in a future federal-aid highway program.

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