Gentlemen:

The views I want to express here today are not those of the Rural Highway Department, nor of my Fiscal Court. They are my own, and I hope that you will take them for what value they have for you.

The Rural Highway program is seventeen years old. That sounds like a long time, but if you have been working in the Rural Highway program, I am sure it would seem to be a very short time. At the time this program was started, the allotment was Two Million Dollars, which was an excellent start to get the farm people out of the mud. You have noticed the program advance in this stage until 1946 when the legislature increased the allotment to Five Million Dollars. My county’s share, or allotment, is $48,219.88, which I hope the legislature will see fit to increase at the next session.

By this time, thousands of farm people are getting out of the mud. I entered into the program as a County Commissioner in Daviess County in 1945 to fill an unexpired term. We were then spending our money on grading, ditching, surfacing, and building permanent structures, and in our County we had 150 miles under this set-up. I believe the way the program was set-up, we were to first get the people out of the mud, and second, to grade, surface and new culverts. As time goes on, the program changes, and there are new and greater demands; new methods of doing maintenance work, and the people want advancement in the structures. In my county, the people have been demanding dustless roads, so now we are in the era of blacktopping our roads.

Blacktopping is very costly, not only in putting it down but to maintain. If grading, and surfacing has been going on for these past seventeen years, a county should have, as we have in Daviess County, several miles that are ready for this all weather surface. We plan to have a good drainage and base that will hold up. If not, maintenance will become a serious problem.

I remember once asking Mr. Hailey about using some of our money for blacktopping. I believe he told me to go ahead if I had our people out of the mud as well as good drainage and a good base. I told him that we were in good shape on that because we had been spending our money along with the Rural Highway money to see that this was done.

We have seven patrol graders and two Athey force feed loaders to help maintain the roads and to keep our ditches open for drainage. This we have been doing for years. By doing this, we have made our Rural Highway money go further. (I will discuss this later on as one of our suggested improvements.)

After you once start this type of program, you can’t back up for the demands come hard and fast. Especially is this true during an election year. If you have your roads ready, I believe it is a good program to start. After all, we are public servants, and nothing is too good for our people if we have the money to do with. You know you have really accomplished something for your people when you get them out of the mud, and with good rock surface and permanent structures, you are beginning to get them out of the dust.
It is a slow program but rewarding. After this year, we will have 60 miles or more blacktopped in my county on rural roads. We are now spending all of our money on this type of construction and maintenance. I find that freezes do more damage to this type of road for when you do not get a very heavy pound treatment, heavy traffic along with the freeze will run maintenance up very high, which in turn will keep you from getting new blacktop surface from time to time. As I have said, you can’t back up when the road becomes full of holes. You can’t grade it so you will have to patch or half-sole it. It does run into a lot of time and money, but nothing is too good for our people if we can see a way to do the work for them.

I do not want to be critical of anyone who may be here nor of the Rural Highway Department, and the improvements that I can suggest are very few. I do feel that under Mr. Hailey’s direction, the program has been administered in the highest and fairest degree. When you are told that you have a certain amount of money to spend, and you can spend it like you see fit, what more do you want? (I know . . . more money!) It might be time for us to wake up and see what we are doing for ourselves in our own counties. If we could match the Rural Highway funds with money of our own, our programs would go further and would mean more to us because we would feel that we are helping with the program and would not feel that we are getting “something for nothing”. At this point, I would like to say that most of our counties are expecting too much from Frankfort. But when they have anything to put out, I am like the others, I am going to be looking for my share for my county.

I do think that sometimes we do not accept our own responsibility for our local advantage, but maybe we should look at it this way. Our revenue has not changed very much in the past 17 years, so we have to look for help. I am sure we are glad to receive it. Another way we can help is to build up our program on certain roads, and in areas that mean the most to our respective county so that the state may assume them for maintenance. This may be done in grading, drainage, surfacing or blacktopping, so let’s don’t scatter our program out too much because it may be a long time before the state can handle it, and your maintenance problem will be terrific.

I also believe that since 1946 the cost of everything has advanced so much that we would not be out of line for us to ask the legislature for an advance in our over-all allotment. I know that all of us need it and can use it. I believe it would be worth while to work and elect a legislature that will be favorable to our Rural Highway system.