ADDRESS
Hon. John A. Keck, Commissioner of Highways
Kentucky Department of Highways

I welcome this opportunity to speak to those attending this Kentucky Highway Conference.

Roads from early times have been a public concern. Their history dates back to the dawn of recorded history. Their beginnings are connected with man's first quest in search of food, water, plunder or sheer adventure. They developed with man's advance. A people without roads would be a people without intercourse with the outside world. Once established, the road becomes the stage upon which much of the human drama of history is enacted. It was the absence of adequate North-South roads which cut off contact that contributed in no small measure to the conflict in economics and eventually to the War Between the States in 1861. With the advent of the automobile and motor truck, our entire economy has been affected.

Not many people give thought to the fiscal significance of roads in the total economy, but let roads be in poor physical condition and violent reactions are often registered in unmistakable terms. One may not be aware of the condition of the city waterworks when he turns on the faucet in his bathroom but the defects in the public roads he passes over are registered by a number of his senses, punctuated oft' times by rude impacts on his spinal column. I have been Commissioner long enough to realize that here in Kentucky we of the Highway Department have a tremendous task facing us in trying to give the people of the state, and our visitors, the kind of roads they desire and need.

Privately owned motor vehicles, operating over streets and highways constructed and maintained by public agencies, are the principal movers of persons and things in Kentucky. Railroad transportation, and to a lesser extent, water and air transportation, share in many of the long haul movements. Of necessity, however, these latter mentioned forms of transportation operate from fixed termini. Movements to and from these fixed termini,
as well as the constantly increasing number of trips that are wholly by motor vehicle, have elevated motor vehicle transportation to the top position among the various forms of transportation that serve the needs of the state.

Our responsibilities to this transportation need are:

1. To provide highway facilities which are in keeping with the needs of the traffic which they serve, so far as available funds permit.

2. To divide the funds available as nearly equitably as possible among the various classes of highways.

3. To regulate the use of the highways to whatever extent necessary to safeguard individual users, and

4. To protect the investment in these facilities by proper maintenance.

Since the sole need for highways is to serve highway traffic, knowledge of the volume and nature of traffic using the various highway systems is the first essential in carrying out our responsibility. Highway Planning Surveys, carried on since 1937 as a cooperative project with the Public Roads Administration, have developed much valuable information on this subject. These surveys show that:

1. 79 per cent of all motor vehicle traffic is upon rural highways and approximately 21 per cent is upon municipal roads and streets.

2. 70 per cent of all rural traffic is upon state maintained roads and 9 per cent of all rural traffic is upon county roads.

Here in Kentucky we have several so-called systems that need consideration in our programming:

A. The Interregional System, selected under authority of Congress by the Public Roads Administration, which constitutes as a whole the most heavily traveled highway system of the Nation. In Kentucky, these are U. S. 25, U. S. 31-W, U. S. 42, and U. S. 60 east of Louisville.

B. The Federal Aid Primary System which includes the Interregional and consists of 7 per cent of the total state mileage selected by joint agreement between the State and P. R. A.

C. State Maintained System not on Federal Aid Primary.

D. Federal Aid Secondary System consisting of roads
second in importance to the Primary System, which roads may be either on the State Maintained System or under county jurisdiction.

E. Principal county roads not on the State Maintained System.

F. Rural highways which are county roads selected by joint agreement between the Highway Department and county fiscal courts for assistance under the $5,000,000 annual appropriation of rural highway funds by the General Assembly. These funds are allotted to the counties by formula.

G. County roads to be selected for construction, reconstruction and/or maintenance and, thereafter, be state maintained from the 2/7th gas tax funds.

H. Other county roads often called "feeder" or "land service" roads.

I. Streets in cities of 5,000 or more population.

J. Streets in cities under 5,000 population.

A simpler classification is indicated in order that any discussion of the various needs will be more understandable.

Funds for the construction and maintenance of our highway system are derived from highway users in the form of gasoline taxes and registration license fees, and from Federal Aid. Federal Aid funds must be matched with state funds and are available for expenditure as follows:

45 per cent for projects on the Federal Aid Primary System.

30 per cent for projects on the Federal Aid Secondary System.

25 per cent for projects on the Federal Aid Highway System in urban areas.

Possibly the greatest problem that confronts the Department of Highways and the counties of the state today has to do with rural secondary roads. In round figures there are 47,000 miles of such roads in Kentucky in addition to the 10,200 miles on the present State Maintained System. Only 20,000 miles of these have been improved to the extent that they might be called all-weather roads. Of the remaining 27,000 miles, some have been partially improved, while others are still in a primi-
tive state. According to our Planning Survey, there are 130,000 farm units served by this 27,000 miles of road and dependent upon it for access to schools, churches, county seats and markets.

The last General Assembly, taking cognizance of the great need for farm-to-market roads and upon recommendations of the Governor, raised the gasoline tax 2c per gallon with the provision that the funds from this source be used for the construction, reconstruction and/or maintenance of secondary and rural roads and for no other purpose.

Under the direction of Emerson "Doc" Beauchamp, Commissioner of Rural Highways, one of our main activities at the present is in the implementing of this act and it is our hope to make a substantial showing this year in the construction of needed roads in every county in the state.

In summing up our highway plans, I might state that they will consist, in so far as finances are available, of:

1. The construction and reconstruction of our Primary System to standards suitable for modern traffic.

2. Greater attention to the important sections of what are now county roads which will become part of the State Maintained System when constructed or reconstructed.

3. The provision of adequate urban highway facilities.

4. The construction of those portions of interregional highways that will be in Kentucky.

5. The proper maintenance of roads already constructed. The roads we build must be maintained for there is no such thing as a permanent road.

6. We must continue the long range studies of our highway needs and give a fair distribution of funds available to those needs.

Before closing I want to call attention to what I conceive to be one of our greatest handicaps in carrying out our obligations to provide Kentucky with an adequate road system such as she deserves. I refer to the shortage in the Department of trained engineering personnel.

We realize that in the past our salary schedule, due to Constitutional provisions, has not kept pace with the salaries for the
same classes in other industries. This fault we hope will be corrected at the polls this fall.

Other steps taken to remedy the situation have been the establishment of 18 scholarships here at the University, whereby prospective engineers may be assisted in securing an engineering education. We have also inaugurated a 72-week extension course designed to enable present employees to step into higher classifications within the Department. The course, conducted jointly by the Highway Department and the University Extension Department, currently is available to all engineering employees at the Central Office and is to be extended to engineers in the nine highway districts. Divided into six sections of 12 weeks each, the course will cover general mathematics, mechanics, strength of materials, stresses, steel design, and reinforced concrete design.

Finally, conferences such as this should be most valuable in bringing together state, county, and city engineers and officials, contractors and others interested in the design, construction, and maintenance of streets and highways to the mutual good of all so interested.