

As you all know, the Commission chose the third of these alternatives. This is the plan we have laid before the General Assembly and requested its approval. I believe the Commission made a wise decision.

I should like to digress here for a moment to say that I was highly pleased with the manner in which the Commission went about reaching its conclusion. It called a series of regional meetings in all parts of the State to discuss the problem with county and municipal officials, members of the Legislature and local engineers and planners. From these, the Commission members were able to draw out the public sentiment at a local level. The plan it evolved is in a very large measure a consensus of this feeling. For the Commission found these community leaders, when presented with these alternatives, favored giving the top priority to the big highways in an arterial system. As I said, I am in complete accord with their conclusion.

I could not subscribe to heavier taxes upon the motorists of Maryland at this time, particularly in view of the proposal of the Federal government for a half-cent increase in the gasoline tax at this session of Congress. I would not be content to see us muddle along as we have under an obsolete system, coming up at the end of the program with a jumble of partially completed and disconnected main highways and only partially modernized secondary roads. I, therefore, support the Commission's program to move ahead rapidly with the vitally-needed arterial highways, which, with the money we have, will provide more people with better highways in the shortest period of time. With these facts before us, I can see no other course of action.

In no sense of the word does this mean that we are breaking faith with the Maryland people in failing to fulfill pledges made in the inauguration of the twelve-year program. Rising costs, improved design standards and other factors, have made it impossible to fulfill in exact form and under precise schedule these pledges. Under conditions as they exist today, I believe the approach we are using is the best way to keep faith with the people.

In doing the big jobs first, every section of the State will benefit. For Baltimore, it means the early completion of the Beltway. The entire Western Maryland area will be improved by the completion of Route 40. The Eastern Shore will benefit from the dualization of Route 50, Route 301, and Route 13 and improvements to Route 404. Southern Maryland will get new roads connecting it with Washington and Baltimore. The Washington suburban area will benefit from the construction of commuter roads and the circumferential expressway.