

# Future Freeway Needs Startle State Committee

By VINCENT THOMAS  
Assemblyman

That California will still be bursting its seams in all directions 20 years from now has again been fully demonstrated by a startling report on future freeway needs just submitted to the Joint Interim Committee on Highway Problems by the State Dept. of Public Works in answer to a request of the 1957 session. Called the most comprehensive highway study ever taken, the report is the result of 18 months' work by the Division of Highways, two teams of technical consultant, and a special committee of 14 representatives of both counties and cities.

The report boldly calls for a multilane freeway system totaling 12,250 miles which would link together every California city of 5000 and more people by 1980, including every county seat. All the mileage in the present state freeway system would be included plus an additional 1500 miles now under local jurisdiction.

THE COST OF completing this huge system by the target date is estimated at \$10 1/2 billion but it is also figured that it will save the motoring public during its first 20 years of use around \$20 billion in operating costs, almost twice the cost of building it. It is also estimated that it can be financed from existing highway revenue, federal, state and local, and still leave ample funds for maintenance of the full street and highway system.

The report bases the need for this enormous program upon an anticipated increase in California population from the present 14 million to 31 million by 1980, plus increases in motor vehicle registration from 7 to 17 million vehicles, and in total annual mileage from 65 billion to 200 billion annually.

THE SYSTEM WOULD also provide much greater safety in driving than our present highways do. When developed to full freeway standards, it is expected to cut fatalities 60 to 75 per cent for those using it. It will save much time and expense for commercial operations, and will expand marketing areas.

Though the system will contain only about 11 per cent of the total street and road mileage in the state, it will account for about 59 per cent of the total mileage traveled. It will relieve the most congested city streets and county roads for local traffic.

SOME FINDINGS of the report reveal interesting lights on how we live in California. Of total mileage traveled, 48 per cent is connected with earning our livings; 23 per cent with shopping and other family business; and 29 per cent with social and recreational activities. One surprising fact is that non-residents account for only 2.6 per cent of total travel.

Preparation of such a thorough report in the time allowed is regarded as positive evidence that state, county and city leaders can and will work together on problems of major statewide importance. There were 23 separate meetings held in connection with the study, which were attended by 780 county representatives and 250 city leaders. The City and County Advisory Committee worked especially hard and gave the final report a strong and unqualified endorsement.

BETWEEN NOW AND December the Joint Committee on Highway Problems will hold a series of public hearings in every part of the state, so that all concerned can express their views on this plan for the California Freeway System before it is presented to the 1959 Legislature. The committee hopes that leaders from all communities will assist in its work.

COLONIAL AREA France's overseas territorial possessions contain more than 4.5 million square miles, which is more than 20 times the size of the mother country, according to recent surveys.

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