

life, these accidents cost Mississippi citizens \$1.3 billion per year, or \$500 for every resident, for emergency services, medical costs, property damage and lost productivity.

Another relevant statistic is that 77 percent of all fatal accidents were on two-lane roads and only 14 percent were on roads with four lanes or more. Money that is spent on highway improvements, such as adding lanes and shoulders, will save lives. It is also good economics.

I'm confident the flexibility provided in this bill will help Mississippi solve some of its special and most serious highway and transportation problems, especially the completion of our comprehensive four lane program.

Mississippi has been working for over ten years to implement this program. According to the Mississippi Department of Transportation, projects remaining to be put under contract include 30 miles of US 45, 17 miles of US 49 West, 69 miles of US 61, 25.4 miles of US 82, 54.6 miles of US 84, 24.6 miles of US 98, 58 miles of State Road 25, 33 miles on State Roads 57 and 63, and 10 miles of State Road 302. All of US 72 is now under contract and all of US 78 is now open to four-lane traffic.

The specific provision of the bill that helps us in this way gives states the flexibility to use up to 22 percent of their trust fund allocations for any projects that fall within title XXIII of the U.S. Code, which covers all highway programs.

There are other provisions of this legislation that are of special interest to our efforts in Mississippi to ensure that roads, highways and bridges on federal lands within the States are improved. Additional funding added to the bill as part of the committee amendment will provide \$850 million in additional contract authority over 5 years for the three elements of the Federal Lands Highway Program.

Funding for Parkways and Park Roads will increase by \$70 million per year for fiscal years 1999-2003, and funding for Public Lands Highways by \$50 million per year during the same period. This ought to provide funding to bring the Natchez Trace Parkway closer to completion and ensure some much needed improvements are made to roads in our national forests and wildlife refuge areas.

Another provision of this bill that is of major interest to me and my State is the additional \$450 million for funding NAFTA Trade Corridors.

The I-69 Trade Corridor Highway, which will run from Canada down through the Mississippi Valley to our border with Mexico, will provide significant economic benefits to the entire region through which it passes. We expect our State of Mississippi will be one of the states through which I-69 will pass.

Without this investment, the transportation infrastructure of the Mid-South region cannot accommodate the needs associated with increasing trade

and commercial traffic. Growth in North American trade, as well as trade between the U.S. and the rest of the world, is supported by recent trends and current projections, particularly in the agricultural sector.

U.S. agricultural exports, which were valued at \$26.3 billion in fiscal year 1986, increased to \$54.2 billion in 1995 and to nearly \$60 billion in fiscal year 1996. We also consistently export more agriculture commodities and food products than we import.

A recent USDA Agricultural Outlook publication projected "robust growth" in global demand for agricultural products in international commodity markets through the year 2005. It also predicted that U.S. high-value agricultural exports will continue to show strong growth, generally outpacing bulk exports and accounting for a growing share of U.S. farm exports.

Every state in the I-69 Trade Corridor exports agricultural products and commodities, sharing in export-generated employment, income, and rural development. These exports generate economic activity in the non-farm economy as well. USDA estimates that each \$1.00 received from agricultural exports in 1995 stimulated another \$1.38 in supporting activities to produce those exports generating an estimated 895,000 full-time civilian jobs, including 562,000 in the non-farm sector.

Trends in agriculture exports and the potential for their growth suggest that additional investment in transportation resources, particularly in the I-69 Trade Corridor, will provide a favorable return to the economies of all the States and communities along the route.

Madam President, I commend the members of the Committee on Environment and Public Works who have worked hard to provide more funding for our transportation needs and to ensure a more equitable distribution of funds to the States, and I especially congratulate, our distinguished majority leader for his effective leadership in helping to produce a good and fair bill. This bill ought to receive an overwhelming vote of approval.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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SENATOR COLLINS' GOLDEN  
GAVEL AWARD

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, today I have the pleasure to announce that Senator SUSAN COLLINS of the great State of Maine, the current Presiding Officer, is the latest recipient of the prestigious Golden Gavel Award.

Since the 1960s, Senators who preside over the Senate in excess of 100 hours

are recognized with the Golden Gavel. The Golden Gavel has long served as a symbol of appreciation for time these dedicated Senators contribute to presiding over the U.S. Senate—a privileged and important duty.

With respect to this particular Presiding Officer, two words describe Senator COLLINS as she presides over this Chamber: reliable and punctual. Senator COLLINS takes her presiding responsibilities seriously and is someone who can always be counted on to serve. We now take the opportunity to extend our thanks to her for her commitment to the fine way in which she presides.

I must say, she has received one of the highest compliments that can be received from the Senate itself. Senator BYRD has commented about what a good job she does in the chair and that she presides fairly and she pays attention to what the Senators are saying.

I congratulate her and thank her on behalf of the U.S. Senate for her time. (Applause, Senators rising.)

Mr. BAUCUS. Will the leader yield?

Mr. LOTT. I will be glad to yield.

Mr. BAUCUS. I agree with the leader's comments and observations with respect to the current Presiding Officer. In the few times I have been on the floor—and certainly during this last week of managing this bill—she has often been the Presiding Officer. And she smiles.

Mr. LOTT. Sometimes that is hard to do.

Mr. BAUCUS. Yes. Not all Presiding Officers smile. I don't know why she is smiling, if it is in agreement or whatever, but she certainly is engaged. It is a very refreshing continence and demeanor compared to a lot of Presiding Officers.

I also very much congratulate her and agree with the leader's comments.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you.

Mr. CHAFEE. Will the majority leader yield?

Mr. LOTT. Yes.

Mr. CHAFEE. I share those sentiments. I have noticed that the Presiding Officer who is in the seat now, the distinguished Senator from Maine, as you say, follows the debate. Now, she may be thinking about something else, but you wouldn't know it, and, as a matter of fact, she has indicated approval of many of the things I have said, at least it looks that way.

So I think it is wonderful that she has won this great award. I hope she will not give up now. What can she aspire to? How are we going to keep her in this chair?

Mr. BAUCUS. Give her a second one.

Mr. LOTT. Make her a permanent one, except when, of course, Senator THURMOND is available.

I thank the Senator for his comments.

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INTERMODAL SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY ACT OF 1997

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.