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For Immediate Release

CUTBACKS IN HIGHWAY FUNDS

HELD TRAFFIC SAFETY RISK

Any further cutbacks in Federal funds for interstate highways could have a direct and unfavorable bearing on the number of lives lost in traffic accidents in Washington, according to an official of a leading construction equipment financing firm.

"Since government studies show that one life is saved annually for every four miles of road completed on the interstate system, it is apparent that construction slowdown will have an adverse effect on highway safety," notes F.L. Conrad of Seattle, vice president of C.I.T. Corporation.

The state now has open to traffic approximately 433 miles of the 726 miles designated for it under the Interstate Highway System. "This means," Mr. Conrad pointed out, "that 108 lives were saved in 1966 in this state by these roads, according to the government formula."

"We now have completed 60 per cent of our share of the highway program, compared with 57 per cent for the country as a whole," Mr. Conrad said. "Studies show that the fatality rate on interstate highways is only half that of other roads, so it is urgent this program be completed as rapidly as possible."

But the Federal Government order of last Nov. 23, noted the C.I.T. executive, not only cut back 1967 allotments to states by \$700 million, but also froze more than \$1 billion of allotments carried over from the previous year. Since funds available would have allowed an increase of \$400 million, the total impact was in excess of \$2.1 billion, Government studies show.

Washington's share of this reduction comes to \$50,678,051, or 41 per cent of total funds that should be available for our state's highways this year, added Mr. Conrad.

When completed, the 41,000-mile interstate system is expected to save a total of 8,000 lives a year. It was originally scheduled for completion by 1972. The system is financed 90 per cent by the Federal government and 10 per cent by individual states.

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