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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 26 --- U.S. Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kans.) today introduced a bill that would designate certain highways as the "Pan American Highway." The following is the text of the Kansas Senator's floor statement concerning the bill.

On behalf of myself and Senators Bentsen, Burdick Harris, Pearson and Tower, I am introducing a bill which will require no expenditure of federal funds, no outlay of the taxpayers' money but will create a significant investment in inter-American goodwill and better relations and pay increasing dividends of understanding and closeness to all the peoples of the western hemisphere.

This bill would designate certain highways extending from Laredo, Texas, to the point where U.S. Highway 81 crosses the border between North Dakota and Canada as the "Pan American Highway." The actual roadways which would comprise the highway already span the United States from Canada to the Mexican border, largely along the route of U.S. Highway 81.

South of our border, beginning at Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, the highway winds through Mexico, Central America and on down the South American continent to the Republics of Chile and Argentina. This ribbon of highway is more than a thoroughfare, a path for visitors and commerce; it is an artery of communication and understanding between these sister states of the Americas and their diverse and great peoples.

Within our country there has been growing interest in several plains states concerning the development of an intercontinental highway. Organizations in many states have been working for years to promote this idea. My predecessor in the Senate, the Honorable Frank Carlson, first introduced legislation to designate a Pan American Highway. His efforts were well received by the people who would live along the route of the highway, and enthusiasm for the project has been maintained and increased over the years.

Under any circumstances, it would be fitting that our country join with our neighbors to the north and to the south in forming this inter-American bond, but it is particularly appropriate that our country proceed with the designation of this symbolic highway, because agreement has recently been reached on construction of the last physical link of the route, a 250 mile segment in Columbia and Panama. With the completion of this section, an unbroken 14,000 mile road will run from Alaska to the southern tip of South America.

The complete Pan American Highway is close to becoming a reality. The time is at hand for the United States of America to match its support for the construction of this highway with the designation of its own portion of the system.