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NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON
THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK OF THE ECLA/TAA MISSION
ON TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL AMERICA

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE PROGRESS OF THE WORK
OF THE ECLA/TAA MISSION ON TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL AMERICA

During the Fourth Session of the Commission, held in Mexico in May and June 1951, the Delegations of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua expressed "the interest of their governments in the development of agricultural and industrial production, and of transportation systems in their respective countries, so as to promote the integration of their economies and the expansion of markets" In agreeing fully with this aim, the Commission resolved to request the Executive Secretary to study the means or projects by which a gradual realization of these principles could be brought about.

In keeping with this request, the Executive Secretary initiated conversations with the Central American Governments as to the best way to conduct the study of transport systems in their countries, taking into account their economic development and the possible integration of their economies.

The unanimous opinion of the Governments, which agreed with that of the Executive Secretary, was, that in order to make as complete a study as possible, a request for assistance should be made to the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations so that transport experts might be provided, who, working in collaboration with the economists and other specialized personnel of the Economic Commission for Latin America, would carry out this task.

As a result, for the reasons outlined above, the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Republic of Panama, in May and June of 1952, presented formal requests for technical assistance. These requests, which were approved by the respective organs of the United Nations, were immediately followed by the nomination of experts and by the organization of the preparatory work of the Mission.

The Joint United Nations Mission of the Technical Assistance Administration and the Economic Commission for Latin America is headed by Señor Julian Rey Alvarez, Director of Economic Research for the Uruguayan State Railways. Señor Rey Alvarez is aided by a group of technicians

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fully qualified in the fields of roads, railways, ports and coastal, river and overland transport. Two members of this group are permanent members of the Secretariat of the Commission. The International Civil Aviation Organization has lent its support to this programme and has provided a technician in air transport.

In addition to the above mentioned personnel, the Mission is being assisted by the economists of the Secretariat, and is making use of the services of both a number of experts with experience of Central American transport problems and technicians from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development.

The Secretariat of the Commission and some of the members of the Mission worked for two months at the Mexico office studying the general aspects of the economies of the Central American countries, and re-assessing and analysing the existing information dealing with transport on the Isthmus. One member of the Mission was transferred to the United Nations Headquarters at New York to consult members of the Transportation and Communication Division as well as other offices of the Department of Economic Affairs, and the Technical Assistance Administration concerning the work programme.

The Mission began its field work on 31 August 1952, returning to Mexico on 18 December after visiting Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Republic of Panama. During their stay in these countries, the members of the Mission investigated the various means of transport and compiled direct information concerning transport problems from the offices of the governments concerned and from private sources. The Central American governments assisted them at all times by granting every facility required to complete their task. Since its return the Mission has been preparing its report at the Mexico office of the Commission with the help of the personnel of that office.

Once the report is completed, the principal object of the Mission is to prepare a critical evaluation of the present means of transport in Central America and to study the practical possibilities for increasing and improving them, with the aim of encouraging the general economic

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development and mutual trade between the countries of the region as a long term objective towards an integration of their economies.

The report of the Mission will include all aspects of transport, such as roads, railways, air transport, rivers, lakes, ports and shipping. This report will be divided into three parts:

a) The first part will contain a general description, country by country, of the transport conditions and the existing means of transport in Central America. It will analyse the ways in which transport as a whole serves the present domestic economies by taking into consideration the possibilities of development, such as an examination of the internal production and distribution needs, as well as the requirements of international trade, particularly as between the individual countries of the region;

b) In the second part an analysis will be made of the transport problems for the region as a whole, noting in particular the solutions most likely to ensure a communication net-work to facilitate the economic integration of the Central American countries;

c) Finally, the third part will concern itself with the specific problems which, although common to the Central American countries, are largely individual in character. These problems will be analysed in detail, describing their appearance in each country and studying the various possible solutions.

It is hoped that the report will be completed by the end of March 1953, when it will immediately be brought to the notice of the Central American Governments.

A supplementary feature of this report, a seminar on Central American transport, will be held, on 20 May 1953, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations. The Seminar will be held in San José, Costa Rica in response to an invitation by the Government of that country.

Transport officials of the Governments concerned and private experts from Central America and other countries outside the region will participate in this seminar. At the seminar the report of the mission will be considered in detail and recommendations to be made, as well as certain

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problems concerning the development of the transport system in Central America, will be discussed.

The Committee on Economic Cooperation of the Ministers of Economy of Central America took note, in their first meeting in Tegucigalpa, of the background and preparations of the study described in this document and also agreed to cooperate in the seminar.

It is hoped that the discussions at the seminar will give rise to not only recommendations but also proposals to the Governments for concrete solutions which may perhaps be considered at a future meeting of the Committee of the Ministers of Economy on Economic Co-operation in Central America.