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DUBUQUE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATION PROJECT

PLAN FOR COORDINATED PUPIL TRANSPORTATION
1984-1985 SCHOOL YEAR

PREPARED BY MICHAEL KYTE
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING CONSULTANT

MAY 15, 1984

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

The Dubuque Transportation Coordination Project (DTCP) is one of six pilot projects to be undertaken by the Iowa Department of Transportation. Other Iowa communities for which pilot projects will be developed include Burlington, Nashua, Ottumwa, Sioux City, and Spencer. The major purpose of the projects is to determine whether, through consolidation or coordination, pupil and public transportation services can be provided more efficiently and at less public cost. While transportation coordination within Iowa is not new, this is the first time that school transportation has been specifically included in the coordination effort.

Transportation Coordination in Dubuque

There has been an interest in coordinating the transportation services provided by the Dubuque Community School District and Keyline for several years. A general perception exists that such coordination would increase revenues and ridership for Keyline and reduce the transportation costs now incurred by the School District. The problem, however, is that the basic cost structure of both agencies favors the School District: lower labor rates, higher vehicle capacities, and a larger fleet size. Thus, the only way in which coordination can be feasible is for Keyline to modify its present service structure to accommodate student travel patterns. Only in this way can Keyline serve students more cost effectively than the School District.

To determine the technical feasibility of coordination in Dubuque, travel patterns of Dubuque students and the service structure of Keyline were analyzed. Service provided by the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was also reviewed, particularly with respect to the potential for transporting rural handicapped students. From this analysis, an initial pilot project has been developed that would include Keyline serving 320 junior and senior high school students and the RTA serving up to 40 rural handicapped students.

Institutional Issues

While there is good potential for coordination in Dubuque, the successful implementation of such a project remains difficult. Each agency involved has developed efficient procedures for its day-to-day operation, and any changes in such procedures involves careful planning and good communication. Often the relationships between the staffs of the agencies need time to develop. For this

reason, the recommended plan described below is a small but appropriate starting point. For this first year, the emphasis is placed on gaining operational experience and establishing good working relationships among all of the agencies involved.

Recommendations For The 1984-1985 School Year

The additional revenue generated by Keyline and the RTA, and the operating cost savings to the School District from this initial project would be comparatively small. But the plan that has been developed is only one element of several that have been identified during this project, and the potential benefits from future coordination are much greater. The most important objective now is to implement a plan that is feasible and that would provide the School District, Keyline, and the RTA with the necessary operational experience to determine whether coordination can work in Dubuque. The risks are minimal for this one-year pilot project, and the potential long-range benefits for the agencies are large.

It is recommended that five actions be implemented for the 1984-1985 school year.

1. Keyline should transport approximately 320 students to Hempstead High School and Washington Junior High School by modifying its John Deere/School tripper services. The estimated cost to Keyline is \$11,800 annually; estimated savings to the School District is \$15,800 annually.
2. Keyline should provide Northend area high school students who will no longer be eligible for school bus transportation with route and schedule information and insure that these students can be accomodated on Keyline routes.
3. A marketing plan should be developed to promote Keyline services to the 1600 students who are potential Keyline patrons.
4. When school assignments are completed in June, a plan for the RTA to carry up to 40 rural handicapped students should be finalized.
5. The East Central Intergovernmental Association should develop a plan for additional transportation coordination for the 1985-1986 school year, using the experiences gained during 1984-1985 as a guideline.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

The Dubuque Transportation Coordination Project (DTCP) was initiated in January 1984, as a cooperative effort between the Dubuque Community School District, Keyline Transit, the Regional Transit Authority, and the East Central Intergovernmental Association. It is one of six such projects to be undertaken throughout Iowa as part of a legislatively-mandated feasibility study to test the concept of coordinating school bus and public transportation programs. The primary objective of this effort is to determine whether coordination or consolidation can result in a net decrease in the public funds required for the operation of such programs.

There has been interest in coordinating the transportation programs of the Dubuque Community School District and Keyline Transit since the 1970's. A widespread perception has existed that such coordination would result in increased ridership and revenue for Keyline and reduced transportation costs for the School District, obvious benefits for both public agencies. Achieving these benefits, however, involves two difficult tasks: first, the development of a technical proposal that will achieve the above objective and, second, the necessary cooperation and give-and-take between the two agencies so that such a proposal can be implemented.

At the beginning of the DTCP, a number of possible project elements were suggested. These included:

1. Modification of Keyline routes to serve students now served by school bus routes. Cases investigated included inefficient or non-productive routes and schedules now operated by the School District and/or areas that are now well served by Keyline with connecting or direct services to the schools.
2. Provision of Keyline service to students no longer eligible for school bus transportation; that is, Northend high school students who formerly were bused to Hempstead and will now be reassigned to (and be within three miles of) Senior High School. While some of these students will find other means of traveling to school, a number will need public transportation.
3. Coordination of school bus and RTA routes in rural areas of Dubuque County. Possible options include use of school bus routes by non-students and use of RTA vehicles by students, including special education students.
4. Use of school buses during non-peak periods to serve non-students. It may be that the type of vehicle available from the School District is more appropriate than one now

in use by the RTA or another agency.

5. Transport of students (including special education students) by Keyline or the RTA during off-peak periods. It may be that these midday transport needs could be better served by more appropriately-sized vehicles or on existing routes operated by other agencies.

Further analysis indicated that projects 1, 2, and 3 described above offered the greatest potential for success. To develop these projects further, and to determine their feasibility, a three-step process was undertaken. First, groups of students who now qualify for school bus transportation were identified geographically. Second, potential services that could be provided by Keyline and the RTA were identified. Finally, these market groups and services were matched to determine which Keyline or RTA services could be made available to serve which groups of students. This process was refined several times to reach the recommended plan that is described in the next section of this report.

III. RECOMMENDED PLAN

Recommendation #1

Keyline should provide four morning and four afternoon trips each to Hempstead High School and Washington Junior High School to carry approximately 320 students now transported by the School District. These trips would be available by modifying the John Deere/School trippers now operated by Keyline. It is estimated that this service would cost Keyline approximately \$11,800 annually, while annual savings to Dubuque Community School District would be approximately \$15,800.

A draft contract covering this proposed service has been prepared. The contract identifies all requirements of the Iowa Code and the Iowa Department of Public Instruction administrative rules that would have to be met by Keyline including operating regulations, level of service, driver training, and vehicle inspection.

Recommendation #2

Keyline should make available route and schedule information for its services to the Northend area high school students no longer eligible for school bus transportation who will attend Hempstead and Senior High Schools. It should also monitor passenger loads on the Red, Green, and Gray routes to insure that sufficient capacity is available to carry students from the Northend to Senior High School.

Recommendation #3

A marketing plan should be developed jointly by Keyline and the School District to promote Keyline's services to the nearly 1600 students who could potentially be served by the city bus system. This group consists of "non-eligible" students who currently have access to Keyline's regular route system but who may not now take advantage of the service.

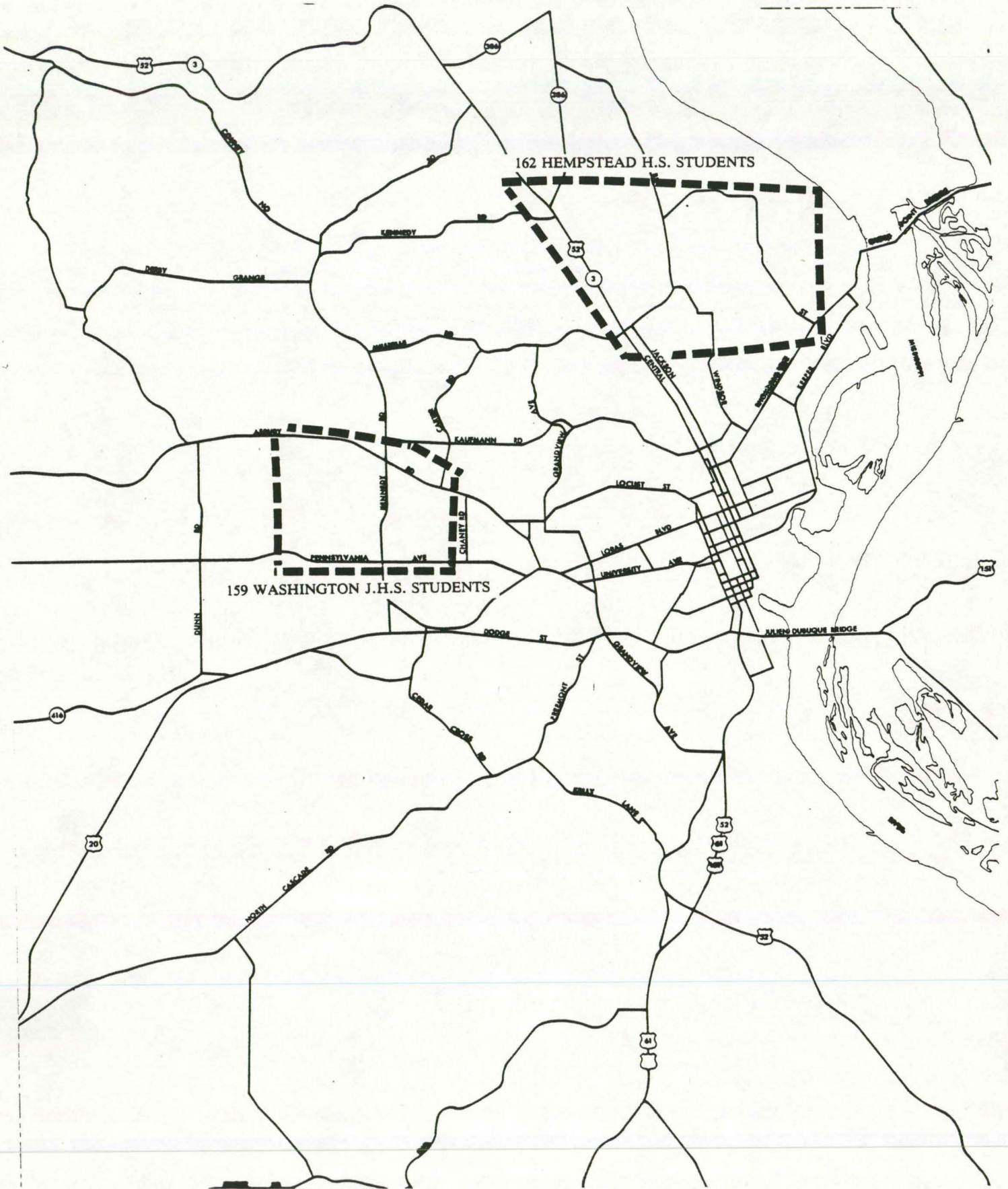
Recommendation #4

When school assignments for handicapped students are completed in June, the RTA and the School District should finalize a plan that will include the RTA transporting as many as 40 rural handicapped students to various schools within Dubuque.

Recommendation #5

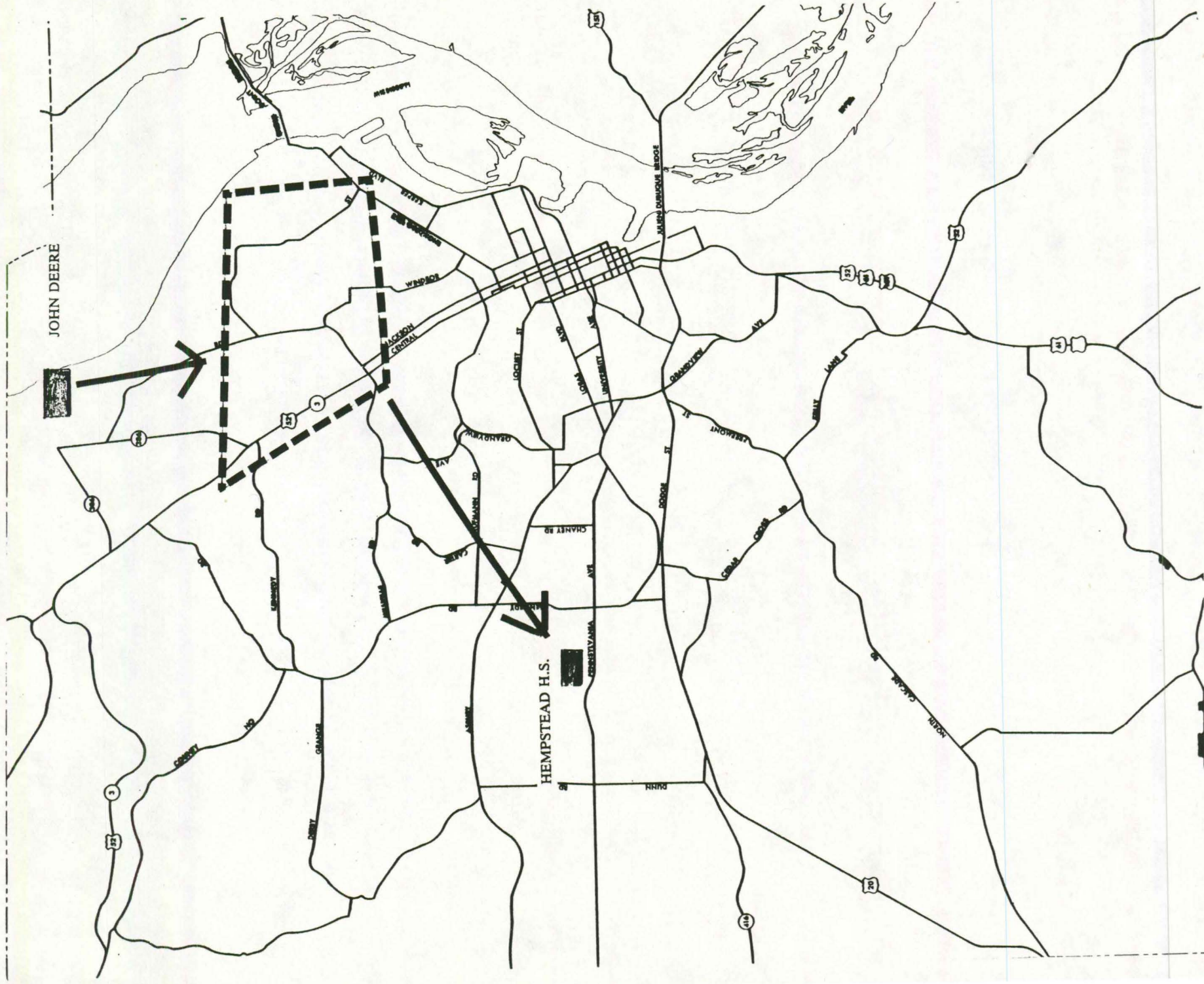
The East Central Intergovernmental Association should continue to develop plans for additional coordination between the RTA, Keyline, and the School District. It should monitor the services implemented during the 1984-1985 school year, and, using this experience, develop plans for the 1985-1986 school year. These plans should include modifications to Keyline's fixed route system as well as improved productivity on both the fixed route and Deere tripper systems.

MARKET GROUPS SERVED BY KEYLINE



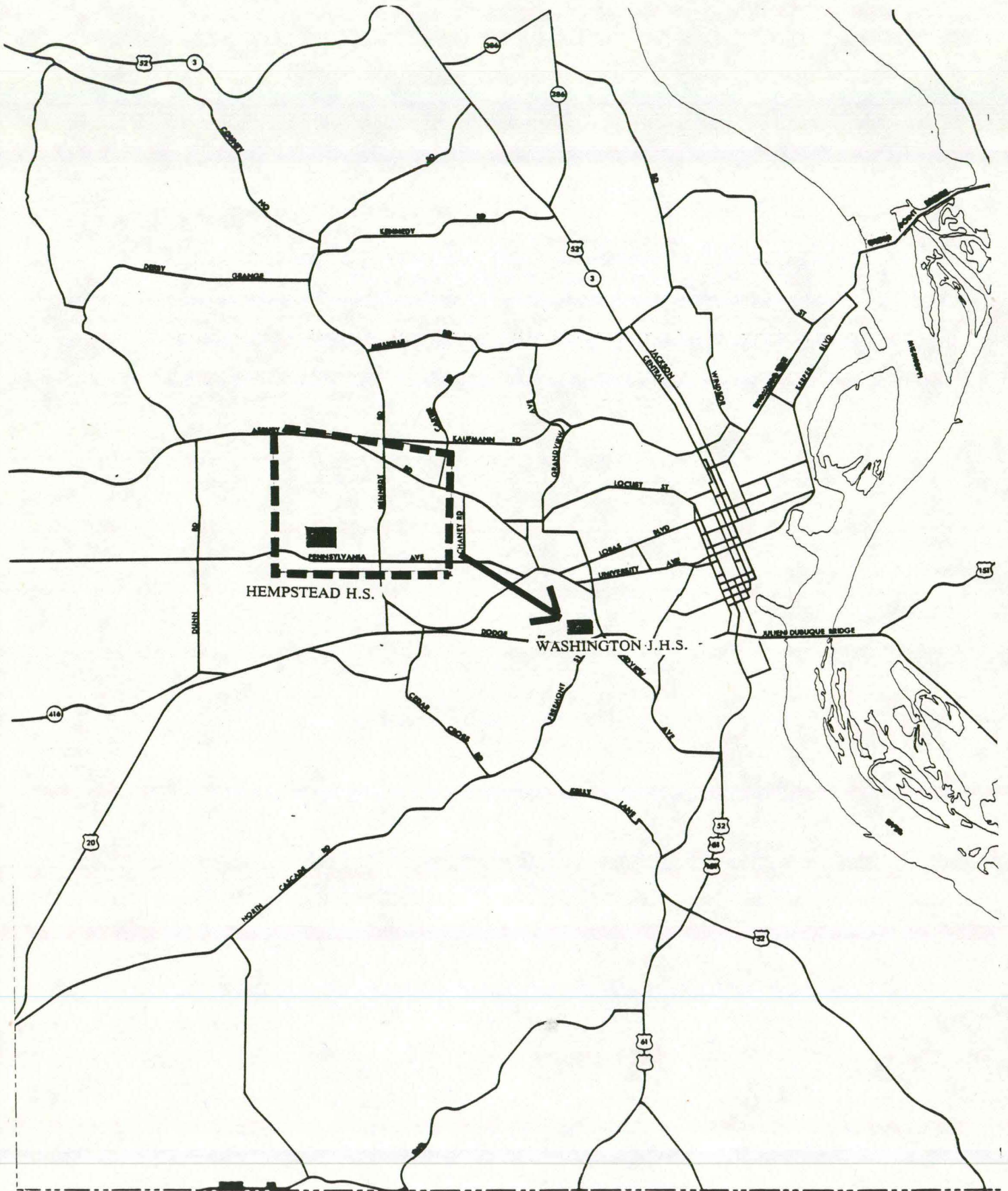
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