

MAINTENANCE AND WISCONSIN'S NEW DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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•BASED on the number of current legislative proposals, task forces, and study groups, the state highway department as an institution is entering a period of change. Following the federal lead, states and even cities appear about to reorganize into comprehensive, unified departments of transportation that will approach transport issues and problems using all the tools of modern management theory. The need for this type of change or reorganization is becoming a necessity in most areas because:

1. We need increased operating efficiency to handle greater workloads without proportionate increases in staff;
2. We must make government as understandable and responsive to citizens as possible;
3. We face a growing complexity of problems which more frequently involve several agencies; and
4. In order to aid and abet the new efficiency required in the entire industry, government needs to perform in new areas and in a coordinated fashion.

Governments and governmental agencies continue to grow in size and the attendant problems take on ever-increasing complexity. We are experiencing a time of very severe attitudes and reactions toward organized government. Dissatisfaction with government results when the public witnesses unfulfilled promises, proliferation and overlapping of agency efforts, illogical responses, and even incompetency. It is the responsibility of active leaders such as yourselves to help give a sense of purpose to our government. We must lead in establishing a sense of belonging, purpose, pride, and fulfillment, and a philosophy for good. These were some of the basic thoughts behind the reorganization effort in Wisconsin. A study for reorganization of government in Wisconsin was authorized by the governor. William Kellest, retired president of the Kimberly-Clark Paper Company, was named chairman of a citizens' committee to make the study. A recommendation was made to the legislature by the committee that resulted in legislative action, combining 91 state agencies into 8 departments. The Department of Transportation (shown in Figure 1) was only one part of the general reorganization.

The state highway commission, consisting of three full-time commissioners, directed the activities of what was then known as the State Highway Commission of Wisconsin. The motor vehicle department, headed by a full-time director whose appointment was for a 6-year term, administered the functions related to the state patrol, registration and licensing of vehicles and drivers, and related activities. The aeronautics department, headed by a part-time commissioner and a full-time director, administered the programs relating to aeronautics. By creation of the department of transportation, these three agencies were transferred to the department. The three-member, full-time commission was retained in the division of highways, the full-time director was retained in the division of motor vehicles, but the aeronautics commission was, in effect, abolished. G. H. Bakke, former chairman of the state highway commission, was appointed the first secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation which was activated on August 8, 1967.

The transfer of the three agencies to the new department was made in a manner which permitted the highway commission and the administrator of the division of motor vehicles to retain their statutory powers and duties. The abolishment of the aeronautics commission, however, stripped that body of the statutory authority they previously had and their basic functions and staff were assigned to the office of the secretary.

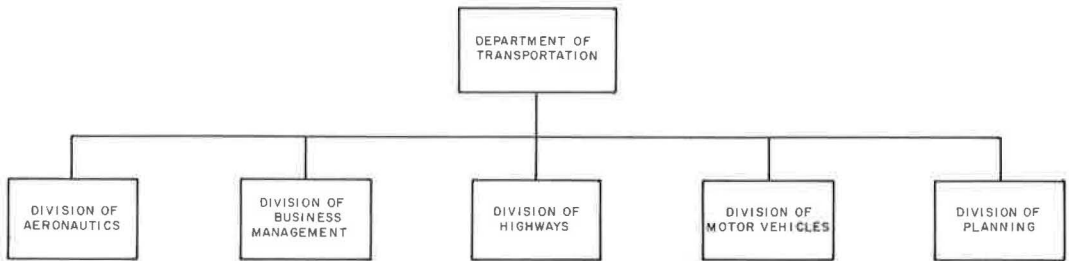


Figure 1. Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Basically, the secretary has statutory powers and duties with respect to program coordination, budgeting, and related management functions. To accomplish these activities, the secretary has authority to determine the internal organization of his office and, with the consent of the governor, makes such changes and creates such additional divisions as he may deem necessary. He also has authority to appoint a deputy and executive assistant outside of the classified service who serve at his pleasure.

Under the authority given to the secretary to determine the internal organization, and with approval of the governor, a fourth division—that of business management—was created. Similarly, a fifth division—known as the division of planning—was also created. Each of these divisions is headed by an administrator and functions under directions and limitations prescribed by the secretary.

Under the direction of the head of the division of business management, a steering committee of professionals from within the organization was formed to lead self-analytical studies. The studies were to determine what administrative services should be retained in each division and what services could best be performed on a department-wide basis. Although these studies are continuing, a number of department-wide service bureaus have been established as a result of the initial studies. Examples are: (a) systems and data processing, (b) personnel, and (c) management services.

Secretary of Transportation, G. H. Bakke, has determined that the administrators of the five divisions should constitute a cabinet and become an advisory body to him in all matters pertaining to the operation of the department. This cabinet of administrators meets on a regular basis and designates one from among them to act as the chairman on a three-month rotating basis. The cabinet has been extremely helpful to the secretary in advising him on many matters pertaining to the functions of the department. Presently, the several divisions are functioning in their respective areas as follows:

1. Division of Highways—The highway commission has the authority and responsibility for the operations of the division of highways. This includes the appointment of staff; the selection and approval of the improvement programs including engineering and design and operation and maintenance; budgetary recommendations; the assignment of fiscal resources; and various other functions attendant to the total operation of the division. The division of highways, shown in Figure 2, maintains a permanent staff of approximately 2,000 permanent employees and also employs approximately 900 persons on a seasonal basis.

2. Division of Motor Vehicles—The division of motor vehicles, under the direction of the administrator, is fully responsible for the operations involving driver control (licensing and training), motor vehicle registration and licensing, enforcement (state traffic patrol and weight inspection), and related activities. The division has a permanent staff of approximately 1,350 persons.

3. Division of Aeronautics—The division of aeronautics, headed by an administrator, has authority and responsibility, guided by an advisory council on aeronautics, for public airport development, aviation operations, and education and safety. The present staff numbers approximately 20 persons.

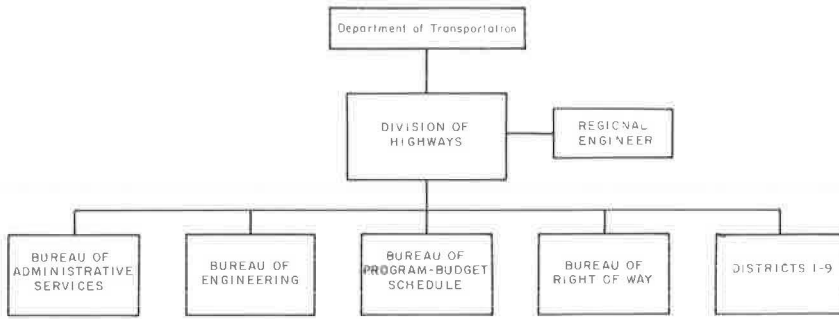


Figure 2. Wisconsin division of highways

4. Division of Planning—The division of planning is headed by an administrator and has authority and the responsibility for planning, on a state-wide basis, covering all modes of transportation. The nucleus of the staff was made available through transfer of the former planning and research bureau of the division of highways. Because of the intermodal planning now necessary, other disciplines have been added to this staff involving all phases of air, rail, and water transportation, as well as highways. The present staff of 96 persons will be expanded as further intermodal planning becomes necessary.

5. Division of Business Management—The division of business management, headed by an administrator, has authority and responsibility, department-wide, for systems and data processing, personnel, management services, and management analysis. It employs approximately 210 people.

The department of transportation budget is prepared cooperatively with the several divisions. It is presented to the secretary and he presents it to the governor and the Joint Finance Committee of the Legislature.

Since the department was activated in 1967, some difficulties have been experienced in implementing certain phases of the reorganization. During the first two years of the department's experience the central office staff of the several divisions were housed in widely separated areas of the city of Madison. However, this problem has largely been overcome by moving these central offices into a single office building.

There are still some transportation functions that have not been transferred to the department in the reorganization process, particularly pipelines, ports, and railroads. Functions with relation to these modes of transportation are still vested in various state agencies. It would appear that ultimately these modes of transportation would, by legislative action, be assigned to the department of transportation.

On all governmental levels it is increasingly recognized today that our transportation policy cannot remain segmented. The day is past when each transportation mode could successfully be treated in isolation, without reference to the total transport system of which it is a part. It is no longer valid, if ever it was, to plan and construct highway, air, rail, or water facilities, without reference to the transportation regulatory climate or knowledge of the interplay of transport investment, economic growth, and social change. Over the years our nation has seen rapid technological change in all fields of endeavor and the simultaneous development of a vast and complicated transport network. As we increasingly recognize the complexities of our transportation system and its interrelationships with all aspects of our interdependent society, we are forced to develop new public policy approaches to transportation and more sophisticated methods of analysis.

In Wisconsin we are taking the first steps toward a systems approach to transportation. We must replace fragmented governmental policy with a system-wide approach. The Division of Planning exists to direct governmental efforts toward the interrelation of all forms of transport with a comprehensive network devoted to efficient movement of goods and persons.

Perhaps the most important aspect of our new approach in Wisconsin to systems planning lies in the defining of transportation goals. Goals determination is a difficult task, because better or more efficient transportation is not an end in itself. Transportation is neither separate from other economic activities nor unique among activities that broadly influence the life of most Americans. Transportation is merely a means of attaining other, deeper goals of society. In fact, it is difficult to set forth goals that apply to transportation and that are in any way different from the general goals of society.

Since the department of transportation was formed in Wisconsin, and based on experience which has been gained, together with the problems which have confronted our new organization, G. H. Bakke, Secretary of Wisconsin's Department of Transportation, has made a number of suggestions for those who may be contemplating a reorganization effort. The following are quotations from a previous address by Mr. Bakke:

1. Avoid to the extent possible the building of a super echelon of routine decision-making and administration. We insist upon a complete melding of the existing efforts of our divisions. Our contacts are directly with the five administrators. The administrators are my immediate staff. They are our executive committee.

2. Invite and expect and accept nothing less than the wholehearted participation and support of the fine professionals presently working in the transportation effort. As we look ahead we need all the competency we can accumulate. Don't throw any away.

3. If you move to enlarged departments of a cabinet type, inventory the existence of statewide centralized services. Except on a monitoring basis, many statewide centralized services are not practical for organizations of 4,000 to 9,000 employees like we now have in Wisconsin.

4. Avoid overselling "savings." Yes, I think we can show dollar savings. But why spend time trying to document them to validate an unnecessary claim. It is very difficult to say that a "saving" is due only to reorganization. People at the right place at the right time usually have much to do with it.

5. Organization structures alone do not mean efficient government. We must retain manageable units. Bigness, by itself, may mean fatness and flabbiness rather than power and strength. We will only be as effective as our management talents and efforts. If we governmental administrators are true to the "idiot" image so often attached to us, perhaps thought should be given to giving us units of comparable size to manage.

The maintenance of Wisconsin's State Trunk Highway System is performed by a unique state-county maintenance organization. Approximately 90 percent of all physical maintenance is performed by the county highway departments through agreements with the division of highways and under our supervision and direction. There are 72 county highway departments in Wisconsin and the state is divided into nine districts of the division of highways. Each district has a maintenance section headed by a district chief maintenance engineer.

The central office maintenance section, headed by myself, is a part of the bureau of engineering which is a part of the division of highways.

The formation of the new department of transportation has not had a great impact on our maintenance organization as yet. However, I do anticipate that the systems approach will eventually aid us in our efforts to anticipate our needs and to analyze our problems more accurately. This unique type of maintenance organization has several advantages as well as disadvantages, given below:

1. An abundance of manpower and equipment is available to us, making it possible to meet almost any type of emergency.

2. County-owned machinery is paid for on a rental basis. The rates are uniform throughout the state.

3. Machinery rental rates are normally quite reasonable because of the maximum use made of the equipment on both state and county road systems. In addition, some counties also perform work for townships. The system has been economically favorable for our counties and for the state thus far.

4. It is difficult to develop highly specialized crews to accomplish more complicated types of work. These situations do not occur repeatedly in the same counties, and therefore it is difficult to justify the necessary training. Therefore, it has been

necessary to accomplish this type of work by private contract, or under the direct supervision of our own specialists.

5. It is difficult to ensure a uniform quality or level of maintenance throughout the state because of the number and variety of agencies involved.

The state-county system of maintenance has worked very well for Wisconsin for approximately 52 years and is certainly a tribute to the very fine relationship which exists between the 72 county highway departments and our division of highways. I am sure that most of you as maintenance engineers recognize that our maintenance organizations must be service oriented. No function of our state highway departments or departments of transportation, has a more constant impact on the motoring public than does that of maintenance. The concept of maintenance is changing and will continue to change in order that today's motorists may be provided with as many services as possible. Just as many state highway departments have found it necessary to reorganize or restructure themselves in order to meet the problems of today and the challenges of tomorrow, we in maintenance must do our part to give a sense of purpose to our government. We can accomplish this if we will all continue to be self analytical and self critical of our efforts. The very fact that you are here is an indication that you are seriously interested in giving a sense of purpose to your individual organizations.

In closing, I would like to pass on a motto that hangs on the wall of my office and that has been a part of many of our maintenance meetings in Wisconsin: Coming together is a beginning; working together is progress; staying together is success.