

REPORT OF PROJECT COMMITTEE  
ON  
EDUCATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

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After nearly a decade of nationwide effort in Roadside Development supported by Federal funds, it is encouraging to note the progress made and to take a brief look toward the future.

In the beginning, the whole movement was characterized as either one of beautification or for billboard control. Since the Public Roads Administration took hold of the situation with intelligence and vigor it has been quite a different story. Soon it became closely integrated with the highway designers, construction and maintenance men. During recent years it has been thoroughly justified through improved visual effect as well as resulting economy and safety factors:

These factors which to many of the original advocates of highway improvement were not even thought of, at once furnished more justification for the continuation and stepping up of the whole program. So convincing were the successful demonstrations of roadside erosion control and the stabilization of slopes through proper design and the variation of the highway cross-section in accordance with landscape engineering principles, that these considerations alone were sufficient to sell the program throughout the country.

Then the inescapable fact was found that maintenance costs in many cases were appreciably lessened.

Though less demonstrable perhaps but none-the-less important, the highways with the streamlined and rounded slopes and shoulders have proven to be much safer.

All this without the benefit of any planting whatsoever except grass and ground cover. Having justified the improved design without other vegetation, tree and shrub planting when judiciously and skillfully arranged then adds the final touch of beauty and assists other factors such as safety and economy of operation.

Important research projects on many technical aspects of this subject have vastly improved the technique of design as well as the theory and the practice of roadside development in several States.

The task of this committee on Education and Public Relations is now somewhat relieved by the good work in construction as well as the public educational work being done in the states and by the Public Roads Administration. Because in the last analysis it is by examples of good design throughout the nation that public education and understanding is most effectively advanced. The following statements taken from State Landscape Engineers reports during the past year contain some of the methods and means employed to accomplish this goal.

## ARIZONA

The west approach to Flagstaff has been improved by condemning certain needed parcels of land adjacent to the right of way and incorporating them in the landscape plan for the whole area including screening of adjacent railroad property and the elimination of 'unsightly purveyors of junk automobiles, used tires and the like'. This gives Flagstaff a fine dignified attractive approach from the west in harmony with the natural beauty of the area. Here is a fine demonstration where thousands of citizens may enjoy, see and realize the manifold benefits of fine roadsides.

## ARKANSAS

The real progress accomplished is in the general acceptance of the necessity of protecting and maintaining the rights of way in a satisfactory condition, both from the standpoint of appearance

and utility. This perception has been of slow but steady growth through the effort of the State Highway Department, as well as of educational institutions, and garden, civic and commercial clubs, and reflects the attitude of the public in general.

## COLORADO

**Educational Work** - Radio talks on Roadside Development are given mostly by the Landscape Engineer of the Colorado State Highway Department. Generally each of the four broadcasting stations is reached at least once a year. Both short addresses and dialogues are given. The latter seem to take better and, of course, reach additional circles of friends and acquaintances.

**Garden Clubs** all over the State and some other clubs are reached in their regular programs by talks on different phases of roadside development, zoning, etc. The landscape engineer addressed the Rotary Club, Farmers Clubs and local meetings on the subject of rural zoning, roadside protection, etc.

A new cantonment south of Colorado Springs is being protected by another zoning plan surrounding it, which promises to be highly restrictive, especially in regard to highway setbacks (220 ft. between building constitutes the highway restrictive area).

**New Departures in Construction** - Recently most of the projects have been in the mountains. More and more emphasis is being placed on erosion control and cross section design and less and less on planting. Roadside turnouts are being featured, both for pausing to admire especially scenic views and for resting areas. The latter are appreciated by truck drivers particularly.

Full advantage is being taken of natural springs to furnish drinking fountains of pure snow water for the traveler. Picnic fireplaces are being installed in a few places, although sanitary considerations prohibit encouraging travelers to stay too long at a place where toilet facilities are not available.

One of the interesting experiments in erosion control is the use of seedpockets and sod pockets on steep earth banks. On such banks, sometimes composed of very poor soil, small holes are scooped out at intervals and good topsoil mixed with a quantity of

appropriate ground-cover seed is placed in the hole. In other places native sod is used. These pockets give the plants a foothold from which they can spread over the rest of the bank, yet the quantity of topsoil and seed or sod is extremely small in relation to the area affected. This method has been successful in quite a pleasing degree. The cost per hole is very small.

## INDIANA

The Indiana Roadside Council is quite active and has 17 affiliated organizations. The Northern Indiana Power Company published an excellent illustrated article of Roadside Development in its house organ which indicates a cooperative attitude.

## KANSAS

The Roadside Improvement Program is making progress in Kansas. There seems to be more public enthusiasm for roadside development now than we have experienced during the last several years. An abundance of rainfall this season probably contributed to the added interest of Kansans in this type of work, but the real contribution is due to the efforts of public officials and citizens who want our highways and our State to be more attractive and serviceable to visitors as well as to local citizens.

The State Highway Commission sent a representative to the annual meeting of the Kansas Associated Garden Clubs, held in Beloit on October 7th and 8th, 1941.

The Kansas Industrial Development Commission has been encouraging organizations and individuals to turn their attention toward improving the landscape appearance of properties in towns and the enhancing of the beauty of the roadsides leading into towns. Talks by representatives of the Industrial Development Commission to numerous groups and organizations in the State have emphasized the desirability of building roadside turnouts and the importance of planting the roadsides. 'Build Kansas' an attractive illustrated booklet, published by this Commission gives roadside improvement the place of honor.

## MAINE

It is the feeling of this department that the work should be permitted to speak for itself. In accordance with this idea,

the comparatively small amount of money (20 to 22 thousand dollars per year) available for Federal aid roadside construction is allotted to three or four projects each year in separate parts of the state. In this way, we have completed projects in almost every section on particularly rough construction, thereby showing engineers, maintenance supervisors, and the public, working and traveling in those sections, the advantages of complete highway construction from one right of way boundary to the other. Such advantages obtained under our program are:

- I. Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty,
  - a. Flat, rolling gutters and cut and fill slopes.
  - b. Soil improvement to encourage volunteer growth.
  - c. Seeding, sodding and a small amount of planting.
  - d. Removal of objectionable growth, rubbish, billboards (by license and set-back requirements), and screen planting.
  - e. Trimming and planting to emphasize attractive scenes.
  
- II. Increased safety,
  - a. Wide shoulders, turnouts and parking areas at popular stopping places (views, springs, picnic grounds, etc.).
  - b. Shallow ditches and flat slopes (with consequently less guard rail in small fill sections).
  - c. Longer sight distance obtained by selective trimming and flattening slopes on curves and at intersections.
  - d. Shoulder stabilization.
  
- III. Facilities for Pleasure and Recreation,
  - a. Opening and framing views.
  - b. Providing turnouts at outstanding views.
  - c. Improving and safeguarding roadside springs.
  - d. Picnic facilities.
  
- IV. Maintenance Savings,
  - a. Sub-surface drainage in cut slopes to prevent sloughing
  - b. Soil stabilization to insure rapid surface drainage without clogging of ditches, culverts, etc.
  - c. Shoulder stabilization.
  - d. Less guard rail.

So far, it has seemed more important to acquaint engineers and maintenance officials with the values of a complete highway, which we can do by furnishing examples and cooperating with them on design and construction, than to furnish free speakers to clubs with small budgets.

It is the landscape division's aim first to prove the value of each roadside item and then to see it incorporated in original road construction plans. The contractor can do more by saving trees when the road is built than we can by replacing big ones with saplings. He can salvage loam and re-spread it cheaper than we can borrow and haul it to the job. An so on for nearly every item. When roadside work is considered an intrinsic part of highway construction, it needs no advertising.

## MARYLAND

The State Roads Commission of Maryland has during the past year set up a Public Relations Department which is now engaged in putting out a pamphlet on roadside development. The legislature at the last session passed laws authorizing the Commission to build freeways and parkways as well as to purchase property for other than road use such as roadside parks and scenic overlooks.

## MASSACHUSETTS

One of the interesting features of the work in Massachusetts is the close collaboration of all divisions in the preparation of the complete design. The landscape engineer reviews the preliminary survey and presents a report to the designing engineer who in turn incorporates the landscape features into the original design. The landscape engineer or his representative is on the job during construction, thus making possible an adequate cross-section adapted to local conditions. Slides and motion pictures are used extensively for educational purposes. Field trips have been carried out and lectures to garden clubs are a definite part of the program.

Work on a new handbook for tree wardens is under way and several helpful meetings have been held with utility companies to help establish standards of tree trimming and clearance on State highways as well as all roads and streets.

## MICHIGAN

Education and Public Relations work in Michigan is concentrated along the following lines:

1. Radio Programs on department activities.
2. Releases to news agencies.
3. Exhibits of slides and motion pictures.
4. Lectures to civic, social and educational groups.
5. Public Exhibits and displays.

As a result of the above the people of the State are showing intelligent interest and enthusiasm for roadside improvement.

## MINNESOTA

Several special roadside development meetings were held with Minnesota Federation of Women's Clubs which organization is sponsoring the American Automobile Association's proposed 'Zoning for Roadside Protection'. Nearly 250 official delegations and field contacts throughout the State were made.

Much favorable newspaper publicity has been received concerning completed and proposed projects.

At the fourth district conference embracing North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin, held at St. Paul, February 25-26, 1941, very valuable technical information and encouraging reports were brought forth. These coordinators' meetings seem to be of increasing value to all concerned. This is especially true when one scans the reports of these meetings and finds listed on the agendas such subjects as the one ably discussed at St. Paul by O. L. Kipp on Coordination of Roadside Development with Road Design, Construction and Maintenance, and the forward looking presentation of Protection of the Roadsides by State Zoning Regulations by Mr. Harold E. Olson. During this discussion Mr. Olson said, 'The motorist has paid a large share of the cost of the highway through gasoline and license taxes and his investment is being impaired and its effectiveness decreased by what happens along the roadsides. Portions of the highway, and the public rights to use thereof are actually being confiscated by the slowing down, stopping and parking of vehicles to transact business which also impairs the convenience, the safety, and the pleasure of travel on the highway.'

'The important highways of our states are becoming increasingly characterized by unattractive roadside checks and roadside shacks and roadside advertising. The gateways to many of our most important cities consist of auto grave yards nested among disarrays of roadside shacks and billboards. In the more populous sections the disarray becomes practically continuous from town to town.'

## MISSISSIPPI

Mr. Holmes the newly appointed Landscape Engineer says, 'We are not going to lose any opportunity to bring this work before schools, garden clubs and other civic organizations. I hope to make Mississippi one of the leaders in this work in the South.'

## MISSOURI

'In Missouri,' says Chief Engineer Brown, 'we feel that a completed project is our greatest advertising agency. Our more insistent demands for projects came from citizens who have toured our state and have been impressed with a completed project. The demand for roadside projects in Missouri is far in advance of our finances. We must now sell the idea of stage development and get the public to consider the economic value of the roadside project to our highway system.'

## MONTANA

Design Engineer Berggren reports an interesting and encouraging step in the right direction from a state where gold mining dredges are devastating some of the most scenic mountain valleys in the state. He says a program is now being formulated for the acquisition of scenic and recreational lands along the highways in Montana for the preservation and for the future development of these areas. A survey was recently made along U. S. #2 between Kalispell and Libby for the purpose of acquiring scenic and recreational areas along a chain of beautiful lakes in a heavy stand of virgin timber.

With the cooperation of the larger timber owners, the State Park Board and the U. S. Forest Service, much of the land can be acquired by the state on a long range program.

The civic and commercial clubs throughout the state are desirous of such a program and have shown willingness to promote



greater interest in the acquisition of scenic and recreational areas along the highways of the state.

## OHIO

Probably the outstanding educational event of the year was the holding of the First (Ohio) Short Course on Highway Development, February 28-March 1, 1941 at the Ohio State University at Columbus. These meetings followed the coordinators' meeting at Columbus, St. Paul, Minnesota, and the Fifth Iowa Roadside and Shade Tree Conference held at Ames February 21-22, 1941. Therefore, it was possible for the Public Roads Administration representative to attend these and other coordinators' meetings.

Special mention should be made of the Ohio Short Course as the papers and addresses have been printed in a very attractive illustrated bulletin by the Ohio Engineering Experiment Station. Other noteworthy public relations activities are lectures -- 75 having been given during the year; dedication of roadside parks where of particular local interest; a roadside park scaled model at a scale of 1 inch to 1 foot; memorial plantings as a special feature of Armistice and Arbor Day; roadside improvement county maintenance schools conducted by the division Landscape Architect to familiarize local men with objectives, methods and results to be expected.

These widespread activities bespeak the versatility and vision of those in charge of this work in Ohio.

## NEW MEXICO

A revival of sound planned roadside developments is dispelling the aversion to landscaping in the state caused no doubt by early extravagant ill-advised work. The Highway Department sponsored a Freeway Law which, though it failed to pass, indicates the growing trend of thought concerning the importance of the roadsides of New Mexico.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Mr. Hottenstein reports that 'one particularly outstanding advancement has been the adoption of rules and regulations governing the trimming and removal of trees on or along state highways

by the various public utility companies.'

## TEXAS

Through the consistent good work of the past years, the many civic clubs of the state have organized to assist in cooperative enterprises with the Texas Highway Department. Interest and enthusiasm by citizen groups exceeds financial ability to follow this by construction. An important step in control of outdoor advertising has been taken by the Texas Legislature which passed an important amendment to the Liquor Control Act for the regulation of beer and wine advertising. This was done in cooperation with the beer and wine distributors, the State Liquor Control Board and the State Highway Department.

Great interest is evident in land use planning and highway border control. Mr. Gubbels has prepared specific studies for several projects of this type.

## VIRGINIA

The influence of the Associated Clubs of Virginia for Roadside Improvement in the cause of cleaner Roadsides is showing marked results. The property owners are becoming more conscious of the fact that their properties fronting out in view of the highways, are an integral part of the Roadside.

The State Highway Commission recently voted that 1 per cent of all construction funds be made available for Roadside Development and not confine it to Federal Aid Projects. Together with this, a new cross-section standard has been adopted with flatter slopes.

The Outdoor Advertising Act has been the means of removing over 136,000 illegal signs.

Five new waysides were added to the Wayside System.

## WASHINGTON

The principal public educational activity has been placing of historic markers at points of interest and in cooperation with

Chambers of Commerce, Federated Garden Clubs and furnishing motion pictures and approach plans for local clubs. Other states not listed no doubt have progressed during the past year in this type of educational work.

## WISCONSIN

Zoning is being publicized by the State Roadside Council. This includes strip zoning as well as county zoning. Sixty-five counties in the state are now zoned.

### SUMMARY

A nationwide roadside development program should be among the essential post-war Public Works in the U. S. After World War I highway paving lifted the country out of the mud and made possible the tremendous automobile industry. Such a program of national highway landscape development would be a great contribution to better, safer and longer living. It should be a part of a complete transport plan for the nation which should include a coordination of air, rail, highway and water transportation.

This new concept should be integrated with the newest land use pattern for the rural and urban areas and provide airplane landing strips, prompt access to airports and commercial outlets at urban centers and to loading docks along streams.

We should sell this broad approach or ideal to the public without delay to avoid misunderstanding and to gain intelligent support for future construction of the many units and integral parts of the system also.

Finally, let us frankly come out of hiding and lift our voices and declare to all the world we are not ashamed to stand for beauty. Beauty is as real and often more permanent than utility. Beauty exists universally until ravaged by man. The beauty of the roadsides should constantly improve with the years as plants grow to maturity and the whole highway development blends into the surrounding countryside.

Privileged we are to have a part in this great work which should become a veritable renaissance of beauty, not just a non-essential added even as a crown of perfection to the useful and practical. Indeed this whole program should unite utility and beauty for the highest service to the public.

Never again should we step aside for the so-called 'utilitarian', but rather grasp the hand of the useful giant and lead and help him toward greater achievements.

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