

COORDINATING  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES DURING 1941

REPORT ON SURVEY OF ROADSIDE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES  
*Summary of replies received up to February 15, 1941*

FEBRUARY 15

The Executive Committee on Roadside Development distributed outlines for a survey to determine the effect of topography and soils on cross-section design, plant growth, and landscape practices in all regions of the country. State highway department representatives filled in the outlines and returned them through the District Coordinators. This report with chart tabulations of data is presented in three parts:

- PART I - TYPICAL HIGHWAY CROSS-SECTION DESIGN
- PART II - EROSION AND PLANT MATERIALS
- PART III - RIGHT-OF-WAY AND ROADSIDE CONTROL

To simplify the summary the Administrative Districts have been grouped into three general climatic regions: cool humid, warm humid, and dry. The dry region has an annual rainfall of less than 20 inches, whereas the humid regions have an annual rainfall of over 20 inches.

The three influential factors, climate, topography, and soil affect both cross-section design and plant growth. When the entire country is considered as a whole, the influence of climate on cross-section design is relatively small, although it is the dominant factor in plant growth. Topography, on the other hand, influences the design of cross section much more than do soil and climate. Soil has a more decided effect on plant growth than on design.

PART I - CROSS-SECTION DESIGN

In studying the tabulation on sheet 1 of the chart, it is noted that topography has little or no effect on width of surfacing. Surface widths for two lanes vary from 20 to 24 feet with 22 feet dominating when the entire country is considered. Apparently, climate, topography, and soils have little, if any, effect on the surface widths.

When data on other features of the cross section are studied, however, topography is generally the controlling factor. For instance, in rough topography shoulder widths tend to become narrower than in moderate topography. There is also a tendency toward a narrower V-type gutter. Slope ratios from edge of shoulder to gutter tend to steepen. Cut and fill slopes are higher and steeper. An interesting point is brought out, which is not manifest in the charts, that although topography viewed broadly greatly influences design, the individual States are inclined to design a cross section for the type of

topography which dominates the State, and that when topographical changes occur within the State, the design of the section generally is not changed to fit them.

The effect of soil and climate on design cannot be readily seen from a study of the chart and seems to be more or less local in extent. For instance, clay slopes are often steeper than sand for the same height of slope. In regions where snow is a serious problem, the cross section is often designed to keep the roadway as clear of snow as possible and to provide space for snow removed from the traveled way. Gutters often are widened in regions of heavy "cloudburst" summer showers, to obtain the necessary capacity to carry the resulting heavy run-off.

## PART II - EROSION AND PLANT MATERIALS

As stated before, climate in the form of abundant rainfall with accompanying relative humidity, is the dominant factor in plant growth. Thus, vegetation is much more easily established in the humid regions. In the dry region, the annual rainfall is not only generally insufficient to provide good plant growth, but much of the precipitation comes as heavy summer showers in which most of the rain runs off and causes heavy erosion instead of soaking into the soil to benefit plant growth.

Topography affects plant growth in that rough topography results in steep slopes where vegetation is more difficult to establish, whereas in easy topography slopes are relatively flat and vegetation is easily established (with sufficient rainfall).

Soils affect plant growth principally by their physical character. Sandy soils are pervious and encourage plant growth, whereas clayey soils are impervious and discourage plant growth.

A study of the charts brings out the fact that low-cost ground cover is used generally in easy topography with flat slopes. As topography becomes rougher and slopes steeper, more costly methods of establishing vegetation are used. Instead of low-cost seeding, mulching and mulch sodding, high-cost strip sodding, and solid sodding, vine and shrub planting are generally resorted to with modifications.

Machine methods for preparing ground can be used on the flatter slopes generally encountered in easy topography compared to costly hand labor methods largely used on steep slopes.

Fertilizers vary widely. Generally inorganic fertilizers are used much more in the humid regions than in the dry region, but formulas have no particular relation to region. In general, fertilizers are of low concentration and have a relatively low nitrogen content. Organic fertilizers generally in the form of manure are used mostly in the dry region, possibly because it is

more available there and because the organic matter in manure undoubtedly is desired to conserve moisture. Also the soils generally are probably richer in plant food making inorganic fertilizing less necessary.

Seed formulas vary considerably even in the same region where growing conditions are similar. In general, the bluegrasses, fescues, timothy, orchard grass, and redtop are commonly used in the cool humid region with the addition of bents in the Pacific northwest area. In the dry region, the wheatgrasses, grammas, and bromes are most common; while in the warm humid region Bermuda, carpet grass, and the Lespedezas are commonly used. In the transition zones between humid and dry, and between cool and warm humid regions, seeds common to the regions on both sides of the zones are noted as being used.

Vine and shrub ground cover plants are generally confined to the cool humid region, the northern part of the warm humid region, and in the dry region to areas having the most favorable climates. See charts for more detail.

### PART III - RIGHT-OF-WAY AND ROADSIDE CONTROL

Most States control right-of-way in fee simple, some by easement, and few by both methods.

Generally most of the roadside development factors of (a) erosion control, (b) public utilities, (c) wayside parks, and (d) tree planting, were reported as being considered in acquiring right-of-way.

In control of the roadside, building set-back lines exist in only a few States; billboard legislation is reported generally; roadside zoning, where practiced, is generally by county; limited access control is reported by only a very few States.

Detailed examination of the self-explanatory data tabulated in the accompanying charts is suggested, particularly for comparison by regions.

ψ                      ψ                      ψ

Climate is the most important factor influencing plant growth.

ψ                      ψ                      ψ

**SUMMARY OF ROADSIDE PRACTICES BY COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON ROADSIDE IMPROVEMENT  
TABULATED BY CLIMATIC REGIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS**

| DATA<br>TYPICAL HIGHWAY CROSS<br>SECTION<br>L' ROADWAY | SOIL CLIMATIC REGION |        |         |         |        |         |         |        |         |         | RECAPITULATION |         |         |        |         |         |        |         |         |        |         |         |        |         |
|--|----------------------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|----------------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
|  | I                    |        | II      |         | III    |         | IV      |        | V       |         | VI             |         | VII     |        | VIII    |         | IX     |         | X       |        | XI      |         | XII    |         |
|  | 1                    | 2      | 3       | 4       | 5      | 6       | 7       | 8      | 9       | 10      | 11             | 12      | 13      | 14     | 15      | 16      | 17     | 18      | 19      | 20     | 21      | 22      | 23     | 24      |
| 1. WIDTH OF SURFACING HOBBLETS                         | 20'-24'              | 22'    | 20'-24' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'            | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' | 22'-24' | 22'    | 20'-22' |
| 2. WIDTH OF SHOULDER HOBBLETS                          | 5'-10'               | 7'-8'  | 3'-4'   | 2'-10'  | 2'-10' | 5'-10'  | 7'-8'   | 3'-4'  | 2'-10'  | 2'-10'  | 5'-10'         | 7'-8'   | 3'-4'   | 2'-10' | 2'-10'  | 5'-10'  | 7'-8'  | 3'-4'   | 2'-10'  | 2'-10' | 5'-10'  | 7'-8'   | 3'-4'  | 2'-10'  |
| 3. TYPE OF SHOULDER                                    | 1/2"                 | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"           | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    |
| 4. PITCH OF SHOULDER                                   | 1/2"                 | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"           | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    |
| 5. TYPE OF DRAINAGE CHANNEL                            | 1/2"                 | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"           | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    |
| 6. SLOPE DITCH FROM SHOULDER                           | 1/2"                 | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"           | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    | 1/2"    | 1/2"   | 1/2"    |
| 7. GUTTER SURFACE TREATMENT                            | 6 1/2"               | 4 1/2" | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2" | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2" | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2"         | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2" | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2" | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2" | 6 1/2"  | 4 1/2"  | 6 1/2" | 4 1/2"  |
| 8. CUT SLOPE SECTIONS                                  | 1 1/2"               | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"         | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  |
| 9. FILL SLOPE SECTIONS                                 | 1 1/2"               | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"         | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  |
| 10. EXPOSING TOP OF CUTS                               | 1 1/2"               | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"         | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  |
| 11. DRAINAGE TOP OF FILL                               | 1 1/2"               | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"         | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  |
| 12. TOP OF FILL BOUNDARY                               | 1 1/2"               | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"         | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2"  | 1 1/2" | 1 1/2"  |

Note: Figures by Districts represent a general average for each group of states within each climatic District. That is, they indicate practices prevailing in that District, but not necessarily an exact average.

Occasionally, no one practice stands out in which case they are indicated as "common" or "typical" in the column marked "1".

Some of these practices are "tabulated under" one or more than one climatic District, but are not necessarily common to all of them.

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SUMMARY OF READER-RESPONSES BY COUNTRIES, COMMITTEE ON READER DEVELOPMENT

| SHEET 2<br>READER DEVELOPMENT<br>COMMITTEE ON READER DEVELOPMENT  | MIDDLE WESTERN REGIONS   | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS  | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS  | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS  | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS   | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS   | SOUTHWESTERN REGIONS   |
|---|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| 13. CRITICAL RATIO OF SLOPE STRENGTHS FOR VARIOUS FOUND COVER TYPES   | 14. SLOPE STRENGTHS AND DECOMPOSITION  | 15. SLOPE STRENGTHS METHODS   | 16. SLOPE METHODS   | WARM HUMID REGION   | WARM HUMID REGION  | WARM HUMID REGION  | WARM HUMID REGION  |
| LOW   | LOW (CLASS I)  | LOW   | HIGH  | DISTRICTS 1, 4, 7, 9, 10  | DISTRICTS 2, 5, 6, 8, AND 11   | DISTRICTS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10  | DISTRICTS 6, 8, 9, 10, 11  |
| INTERMEDIATE  | HIGH (CLASS III)   | HIGH  | HIGH  | DISTRIBUTIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  |
| BETTER - MAXIMUM  | BETTER - MAXIMUM   | BETTER - MAXIMUM  | BETTER - MAXIMUM  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9   | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  |
| DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9   | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9   | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9   | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9   | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  | DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9  |
| <p>13. CRITICAL RATIO OF SLOPE STRENGTHS FOR VARIOUS FOUND COVER TYPES</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>INTERMEDIATE</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>BETTER - MAXIMUM</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>14. SLOPE STRENGTHS AND DECOMPOSITION</p> <p>LOW (CLASS I)</p> <p>INTERMEDIATE (CLASS II)</p> <p>HIGH (CLASS III)</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>15. SLOPE STRENGTHS METHODS</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>INTERMEDIATE</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>16. SLOPE METHODS</p> <p>LOW</p> <p>INTERMEDIATE</p> <p>HIGH</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>WARM HUMID REGION</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 6, 8, 9, AND 11</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>WARM HUMID REGION</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 6, 8, AND 11</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>WARM HUMID REGION</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 6, 8, AND 11</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> | <p>WARM HUMID REGION</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 6, 8, AND 11</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> <p>DISTRIBUTIONS 1, 2, 4, 7, 9</p> |

