

A MODEL ROADSIDE SHORT COURSE

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The first Regional Short Course on Roadside Development was held at Iowa State College at Ames, Iowa, on Monday and Tuesday, February 22 and 23, 1937. Annual courses were held each year thereafter until the war interrupted. Ohio State University, and the Ohio State Highway Department began their series of outstanding collaborative Short Courses in 1942 and have held them each year since that time.

It is interesting to note the changing content of the first and most recent Short Courses on Highway Development. The first major difference to be noted is that the later ones are shorter. In fact one and one-half days with one evening session seems most practical. With registration in early afternoon of the first day time is permitted for driving half way across the average State that same morning.

The following subjects appeared on the program in the 1937 Short Course:

1. The Growth of Roadside Development.
2. The Public: What Does It Get Besides the Bill?
3. A Brief Look Into the Future.
4. The Proper Treatment of Our Cross Sections.
5. Factors Affecting Location and Alignment.
6. Parkways and Freeways.
7. Erosion and Ecology.
8. The Roadside Restored.
9. The Organization and Program of a Field Crew.
10. Construction by Force Account or Contract.
11. Standards and Specifications for Planting.
12. Plant Specifications.
13. How to Get Good Maintenance.
14. How the Bell Telephone Company Meets the Problem.

A casual examination of the papers presented divides them into three main groups, (1) those of general or inspirational nature; (2) those dealing with highway design and operations; and (3) papers on problems of planting.

Now let us take a look at the most recent Short Course program held at Columbus, Ohio, February 12-13, 1948.

The course opened with:

Planning the Highway Program
Cross Section Design and Safety
Developments in Weed Control with Chemicals
Planning, Zoning and Public Relations
Landscape Design in Roadside Development
The Layman Conservationist and Roadside Development
Training Tree Pruning Personnel
Fertilizers, Limes and Mulches; their part in establishing roadside vegetation

An examination of the full proceedings of this season will reveal a certain maturity of thought and confidence in presentation as well as an advance in technical methods. At the same time a broad approach to the subject in relation to planning and zoning is retained and horticultural subjects are not omitted. To those attending and closely associated with organizing and conducting these twelve Short Courses they seem worthwhile educational experiments. They have earned solid recognition and a permanent spot in the highway and extension educational program of a number of States.

Another worthwhile feature of the Ohio Short Course is an annual field trip when technicians and laymen can observe actual roadside development results.

Subjects to be covered at Short Course sessions should depend on local conditions and needs and the availability of experienced and able speakers who can keep a mixed group awake and eager.

It should be kept constantly in mind by the sponsors of these short courses that the public and their representatives are entitled to know what they are receiving for their investment in highways.

The close relationship between landscape and engineering design and their application to efficient practices leading to comfort, safety and ease of travel on our highways should be kept in mind throughout.

Each State or highway department should decide what subjects or phases of the highway development problem most need clarification and attention. As Landscape Architects, or Landscape Engineers, we should not forget the final result is, or should be, beauty. The following general list of subjects is suggested for short courses of this type:

1. The protection, restoration, and conservation of the natural or man-made landscape.
2. Economy and efficiency in salvaging all construction and maintenance material, particularly the natural materials, plants, including weed and brush, topsoil, water, rocks and gravel.
3. Molding and grading of slopes and cross sections for erosion control.
4. The relation of planting to safety, traffic guidance, comfort and highway appearance.
5. Turnouts and waysides for safety and comfort, parking, service, repairs, rest, and picnicking.
6. The suburban problem of walks, bridle paths and service roads for free-ways and parkways.
7. Perhaps most needed and important from a planning standpoint is the study of zoning and control of land use bordering the right-of-way.
8. Architectural design of structures and control of driveway entrances from the pavement are other vital subjects for discussion at Road School sessions.

Finally may I urge the extension of the Short Course idea as sound and as a much needed way toward bringing a better understanding between officials, citizens and technicians.

The Chairman of the American Society of Landscape Architects Committee on Highways first appointed in 1931 was instrumental in enlisting the interest of the Highway Research Board Director in sponsoring the work of the Committee on Roadside Development.

Through this committee A.S.L.A. members throughout the country, particularly at the great centers of learning and professional training, should take the lead in promoting cooperation with State and Federal Highway and Public Roads authorities in establishing these Short Courses.