

REPORT OF
PROJECT COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF ROADSIDE VEGETATION

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IT is generally recognized that vegetation is the most appropriate covering for all earth surfaces along roadsides. It prevents erosion. It aids in merging an obviously man-made strip of construction into its surroundings to improve the appearance of highways. It aids in the direction of traffic. In many ways, both tangible and intangible, it benefits the motorist and others in matters of safety, economy, comfort, and pleasure. Vegetation is therefore properly recognized as an essential and integral part of the complete highway.

The term "vegetation" as used herewith embraces the range of plant growth from grasses to vines, shrubs and trees of forest stature. Plants along highways may be considered in two general classes, the low-growing kinds like grasses, legumes, and vines, and the taller-growing kinds which have woody stems.

By and large and country wide, wherever moisture conditions permit, the low-growing kinds are the ones used most extensively as a cover on roadsides. They are the usual vegetative cover on road shoulders and they predominate on considerable proportions of the right-of-way which lie beyond the limits of the shoulders. As an erosion protection measure, it is assumed that they will be established as a part of highway construction.

Woody plants, on the other hand, because of their greater height, create a third dimensional effect in the landscape and require more special design considerations. This Project Committee is therefore preparing a report of its studies of the planning and management of the taller-growing plants as they will be seen against the foundation or background of turf.

Certain considerations of a general nature apply to all kinds of highways in all kinds of situations. These topics are discussed as basic design considerations in the early part of the report. They include such matters as the relationship of vegetation which is on the highway right-of-way to use and value of property which lies adjacent to the highway; the use of vegetation as a guide to traffic movements; the basic considerations in using, or avoiding, particular plants for particular reasons; and, as given in last year's progress report, a discussion of the kinds of laws which are desirable to empower state agencies for the control of vegetation on highway property.

The next portion of the report will be essentially a tabulation of considerations with respect to a number of special situations. They relate to such topics as vegetation in relation to the highway cross section, the proper height of foliage over the pavement, the set back of vegetation from the edges of the pavement for different classes of highways, and vegetation in relation to curves. These topics and the following might be referred to only when such conditions are encountered: snow drifting, views, planting in malls, planting near bridges, planting at wayside developments, and planting in urban situations.

The section of the report dealing with the principles of planning the preservation and utilization of vegetation on roadsides is now essentially complete in draft form for issue by the committee when desired.

The next section of the report will deal with setting up roadside development work for execution and will include recommendations on such matters as the preparation of plans, estimates and contract specifications.

The third and fourth sections of the report will deal with construction and maintenance respectively. Under construction are the many considerations dealing with the approval of materials, such as plant materials, and the methods and equipment used in transplanting and the care of plants. Under maintenance there will, of course, be the application of all of the general and special design considerations as well as the care of the vegetation after it is planted.