

ROADSIDE PARKS on LIMITED-ACCESS HIGHWAYS

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Ohio recognizes the need to develop through highways which permit drivers to maintain a safe and continuous speed. The objective of many motorists is to cover considerable territory. For efficiency they should not be interrupted by the necessity to change speed every few miles because of a village, traffic lights, or congestion due to roadside businesses.

In Ohio the interstate highway system is being developed as a totally controlled-access highway. This means that, in order to meet the interstate standards and receive Federal money, the only places where people can get on and off the road are at the intersections of public roads. There can be no filling stations, stands, theaters, shopping centers, and the like emptying directly on the highways.

With such highways, however, the traveler who is taking long trips may need to stop for gasoline or meals and will possibly not find either without first turning off the highway.

We might have had the same situation concerning facilities for rest and recreation such as our roadside parks provide, but Ohio has legislation allowing the Department of Highways to purchase sites for roadside park purposes.

We have formulated a policy on our interstate highways and on our main limited-access highways to search for and buy sites and build roadside parks as a part of the highway construction.

So, in general, we are in a position now to pick the places where we want to build roadside parks. We do not want them too close together, neither do we want them on the edge of a town or city. We want them out where the traveler gets the main benefit and spaced somewhat in proportion to the traffic the road carries.

On our dual-lane highways we plan to build the roadside parks in pairs, but not directly opposite each other. This, we feel, would encourage visiting back and forth and possibly cause children to run across the highway.

We feel that the roadside parks will be quite an asset to our limited-access highways.

To start the program of roadside parks on limited-access roads, the following directive was sent out by Director Linzell to all deputy directors and department heads on August 10, 1955:

"As a result of the passage of H. B. No. 51 by the 101st General Assembly amending Sec. 5529.02 of the Revised Code, it is now possible for the Ohio Department of Highways to acquire by purchase, but not by appropriation, land outside municipal corporations which abuts upon a state highway and to establish roadside parks thereon. The improvement of the interstate system to full interstate standards will result in long stretches of limited-access highways being constructed having no comfort facilities with direct access for the motorists, and for that reason it was deemed advisable to appoint a committee to explore the problem and to recommend policies to be followed in the construction of roadside parks on this system.

"All available literature on this subject was reviewed by the committee. Information on practices followed by the states of New York and New Jersey on their toll roads and parkways was obtained, as well as the policies established by the

Ohio Turnpike Commission for Turnpike Number One. The local office of the Bureau of Public Roads cooperated by making what information they had available relative to this subject.

"Visualizing the future construction of long stretches of limited-access highways on the interstate system, with no opportunity for the traveling public to leave the highway except at interchanges spaced miles apart, the committee was of the opinion that these highways would be incomplete without systematic provision for roadside parks. In some cases, foreign cars or trucks will remain on one route clear across the state. An analysis made of the registered visitors to the parks on existing US 40 and US 25, US 40 being an east-west route transversing the state, and US 25 being a north-south route also transversing the state, produced a representative sample of the probable usage of our roadside parks on interstate routes. It was found that for the period from January 1, 1954, to June 15, 1955, in the 13 roadside parks located along US 40 there were 928,736 out-of-state registrants, 26,382 Ohio registrants, and 413 foreign-country registrants. In the four roadside parks located along US 25, there were 122,253 out-of-state registrants, 83,870 Ohio registrants, and 186 foreign-country registrants. These registrants comprise only about 35 percent of the total number of visitors, as the majority of visitors do not register. These figures demonstrate the need for providing this type of facility for the traveling public.

"No uniform standard could be found as to the proper spacing of roadside parks. The committee reached the conclusion that the proper spacing should be around 25 miles. Expressed in terms of travel time, they would be spaced about 30 minutes apart. This spacing is on the assumption that, since interstate highways will be constructed with berms of sufficient width to accommodate emergency parking, it will not be necessary to provide any intermediate parking turnouts or turnouts with one or two picnic tables, in addition to the roadside parks. However, location of parks will also be governed by other factors besides spacing, such as adequate and pure water supply; existing topography of ground which would hold grading operations to a minimum and would also make possible the construction of approaches on easy grades; a location having natural drainage and not subject to floods; sufficient trees, desirable but not essential; locations with historical significance; locations having scenic value or providing lookouts over unusual scenery; high volumes of traffic at certain portions of the route; and value of land to be acquired.

"Sites adjacent to interchanges are not recommended because so many other features, such as route markers and directional signs, distract the driver's attention away from the roadside park.

"There is a consensus amongst authorities that roadside parks should not be located near municipalities, but there is a wide difference of opinion as to the minimum distance they should be located away from the municipality. This varies between 2 and 10 miles. The committee recommends that a minimum distance of 3 miles be maintained.

"The committee recommends that a minimum area of 3 acres be provided for a park site. At the present time it is not legal for the state to award concessions for gasoline stations and restaurants. Up to this time, no long stretches of limited-access highways have been built, resulting in practically no public demand for such facilities. The committee feels that after such stretches have been built, the public will demand that such facilities be provided. However, the committee is of the opinion that roadside parks should be kept apart from gasoline stations and restaurants, as it has been found that where such facilities are combined they have not proved too successful, as the intended use by the traveling public for the one

facility is not compatible with the intended use for the other. It was found, where these were combined, that the roadside park usage becomes supplemented. Most vehicles will park around the restaurant and filling station, requiring extra large parking areas to be constructed at this point. The park area adjacent to these establishments is subjected to heavy usage, making it very difficult to maintain vegetation, whereas the balance of the park area receives very little use.

"The committee recommends that on four- (or more) lane divided limited-access highways roadside parks be constructed in pairs. If it is found to be not feasible to construct these directly across from each other, the park on the right-hand side of the road traveling in either direction should be located ahead of the park on the left-hand side. This will reduce the number of median crossings by drivers attempting to pull into the first roadside park encountered. On two-lane limited-access highways with right-of-way being provided for future additional two lanes (divided), the committee recommends that the park adjacent to the first two lanes be constructed, and that the right-of-way be concurrently acquired for the park on the other side. On two-lane limited access, the committee recommends that a park be provided on one side only. Rights-of-way for parks should be purchased at the same time that the road right-of-way is acquired.

"Construction of a single roadside park in the median in place of constructing a pair of parks was considered but thought inadvisable, due to inducing traffic to turn into and off of the high-speed lanes, induce other hazardous traffic movements, and introduce problems in alignment. This plan would be unquestionably cheaper, but it was thought that safety in this case was a more important factor than lower initial construction costs and more economical maintenance.

"The committee decided that a typical layout should be developed for roadside parks on the interstate system, but since this will involve extensive design problems, it was thought that this function was beyond the scope of the duties of the committee. The committee recommends that the development of a typical layout be initiated as soon as possible and offers the following suggestions for consideration:

1. Ample parking area should be provided inside the park for passenger cars, buses, and trucks. Since it is highly important to eliminate dust and to provide an adequate parking facility, it is recommended that a permanent type of pavement be constructed.
2. A deceleration lane of ample length should be provided for those vehicles entering the park. An acceleration lane, or a right-angle approach to the pavement with ample storing capacity, should be provided for those vehicles leaving the park. Guard rails, posts, curbs, or other type of barrier should be erected to control entrance to, and exit from, the park.
3. Adequate islands or barriers should be provided to protect standing vehicles from vehicles traveling on the highway.
4. Planting should be provided in the median in front of the park in order to prevent vehicles from cutting across the median to enter the park. This will also serve to screen the park from the view of vehicles traveling in the opposite lanes, thereby avoiding any desire in the first instance to cross the median.

"The committee recommends that overnight parking in the roadside parks should be prohibited.

"The committee recommends that the construction of roadside parks be made a part of the construction plans. According to Section 11 of the Federal Highway Act

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f 1940, Federal-aid funds may be used to assist in financing the construction of roadside parks.

"The foregoing conclusions were arrived at either by unanimous or by majority opinion of the members of the committee. The committee has attempted to explore all the questions which might arise at this time in the establishment of roadside parks on the interstate system and has attempted to offer the best solution to these questions. As stated before, it is the concerted opinion of the committee that this system of highways would be incomplete without a systematic provision for roadside parks."

COMMENTS

L. Spelman:

The important point I want to make is that the Committee should have some standards or rules for the location of roadside parks along controlled-access highways, indicating when and where they should be placed and when and where they should not be used. These rules should keep in mind that the essence of a controlled-access highway is to reduce the number of entrances and exits to a minimum. To that end, the possibility should be explored of combining roadside park entrances and exits with those for filling station-restaurant spots where the latter are provided.

Wormhausen:

In Ohio we do have certain rules or policies that more or less govern the location of roadside parks. We also discussed the possibility of locating roadside parks and filling stations, etc., in the same area. Our decision was that we did not think they should be combined.

Walter A. Deakin:

The question was raised in regard to the problem that might be created by a marginal or service road passing through a roadside park.

In New Jersey on the Garden State Parkway we have designed service roads into service facilities such as gasoline stations to be used only by delivery trucks. Where these areas are located near a grade separation or local road, they will be used as a point of access. If the deceleration and acceleration lanes are adequately designed, it creates no problem. At a number of service facilities we have enclosed the area and provided a gate that may be opened and closed by the delivery-truck operator. This method is not too satisfactory because the gate is not always locked at the time of leaving.

In order to prevent the traffic using the service or marginal road from passing through the roadside park and creating a safety hazard to picnickers, the road may be located in such a manner it will pass around the roadside park. By following this method of design, the peace, quiet and attractiveness of the existing roadside park site are retained.

While working with the New Jersey Highway Authority on the Garden State Parkway toll section, we designed and constructed the Oyster Creek Picnic Area and Stafford Forge Picnic Area in the wide median zone. At these sites the separation between opposing roadway was 400-500 feet. Here again, by designing adequate deceleration and acceleration lanes, we have encountered no traffic problem.