Roadside Rest Requirements on the Interstate Highways

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Developing highways today that will be serving the public for years to come in an over-all satisfactory manner entails not only the safe movement of vehicles, but also their safe stopping and parking well off the travel way. Much of the travel on the Interstate highway system is expected to be of the long-haul type. The monotony, eyestrain, and fatigue of constant driving justify the need for occasional well-located, well-designed places where the motorist can stop safely off the traveled way for recuperation.

The spacing of roadside rests should conform to a statewide master development location plan. The sites for safety rest areas should be carefully selected as to location and natural advantages of topography and scenic qualities.

An aerial and ground survey will reveal the character of the site with reference to the drainage factors, the extent of the area available without heavy grading, the number of trees for shade, and the source and quantity of drinking water.

Usage dictates the amount of water necessary to serve those who use the park. If wells are inadequate, then lakes, streams, ponds or a municipal supply will need to be used.

Acquisition of necessary land, for adequate rest area development, outside normal right-of-way width, should be part of the original right-of-way purchase. In areas that are being developed rapidly, highway right-of-way, together with rest area sites, may have to be purchased years in advance of construction not only to assure the purchase of the desired site but also to obtain it at a reasonable price.

Inasmuch as adjacent land use may change from an agricultural development or wooded area to residential or industrial, sufficient acreage should be acquired not only to accommodate the normal rest area features and allow for expansion but also to provide sufficient space for a buffer strip to screen adjacent developments adequately.

It is preferable for safety measures that roadside rests be constructed in pairs (although not exactly opposite) one along each roadway of the divided highway (Figs. 1 and 2). They should be located back of the normal right-of-way line to eliminate possible parking on the shoulders and encourage travelers to

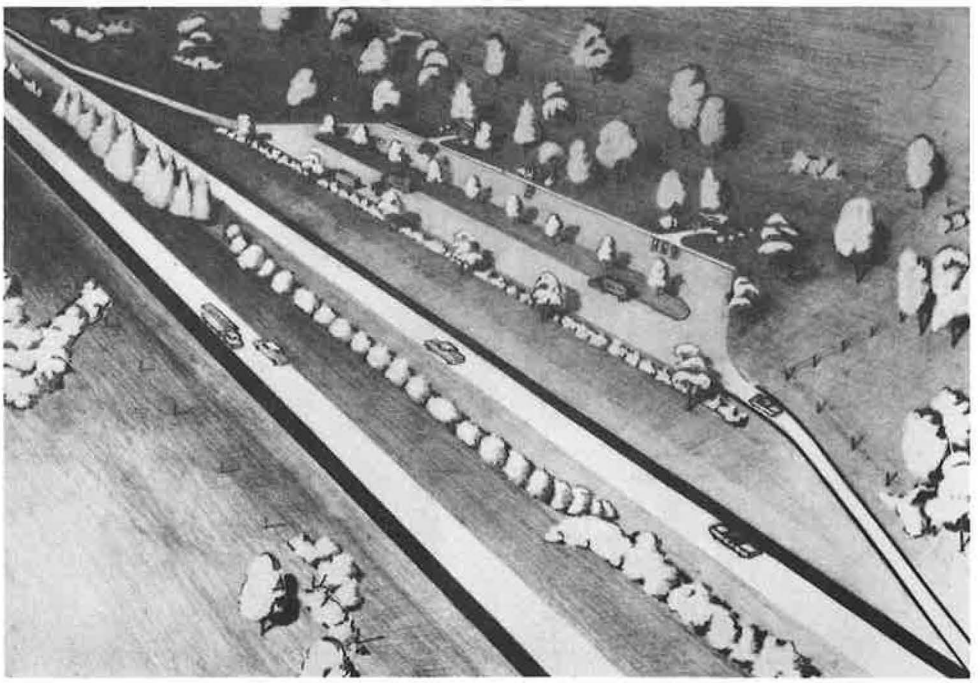

Figure 1. Roadside rest, showing the two traffic lanes with planted median to control headlight glare and discourage vehicular crossing.

Figure 2. Vegetation in median and the two traffic lanes; decelerating lane and roadside rest on right, accelerating lane and a portion of roadside rest parking area on left.

Figure 3. Decelerating lane and truck and car parking areas with planted strip separating the two areas.

use the parking area provided for them. The parking area should be so designed that trucks and cars are separated by a grass strip with curbs outlining the parking area (Figs. 3 and 4). Adequate decelerating and accelerating lanes are required to ease the public in and out of fast-moving traffic.

All ramps, parking areas, and walks should be of the same material as used in the construction of the roadways. All rest area construction should be included in the general construction plans and the 3- to 5-acre minimum area necessary for park development should be included in the general right-of-way purchase.

It is more economical to do the grading, parking areas, and ramps at the same time the general contract is processed. For prompt service and public use, the other features comprising the rest area should be in progress at the same time the road is being constructed. Thus, when the highway is opened for traffic, the rest areas will also be completed and ready to serve the public.

To reduce maintenance, all tables and structures, including fence posts, should be constructed of lumber that has been pressure treated with pentachlorophenol.

In keeping with the use of pressure-treated lumber, brass screws and cadmium or aluminum nails should be used. Because there is a general striving for permanence in all structures, it is well to consider brick, stone, or tile.

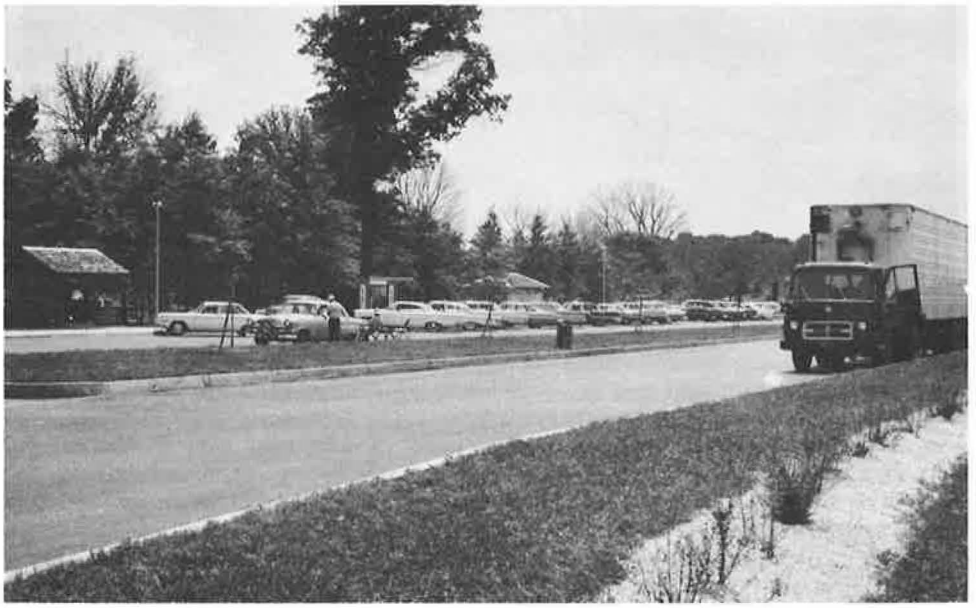

Figure 4. Truck parking area in foreground. Car parking area separated by tree planting strip. General view of toilet, shelter house, well, and motorists' service shelter. Note interviewing by State Highway Division employees.

Figure 5. Table on concrete slab, well, and shelter. Note light fixture at right of well shelter.

Tables as well as charcoal grills should be placed on concrete slabs (Fig. 5).

Increased use of the rest areas had dictated the use of flush-type toilets (Fig. 6). In some areas the design will have to include heating the building. The design must provide for toilets and wash basins and may specify a drinking fountain, bulletin board, and telephone. The areas nearest the State line may also

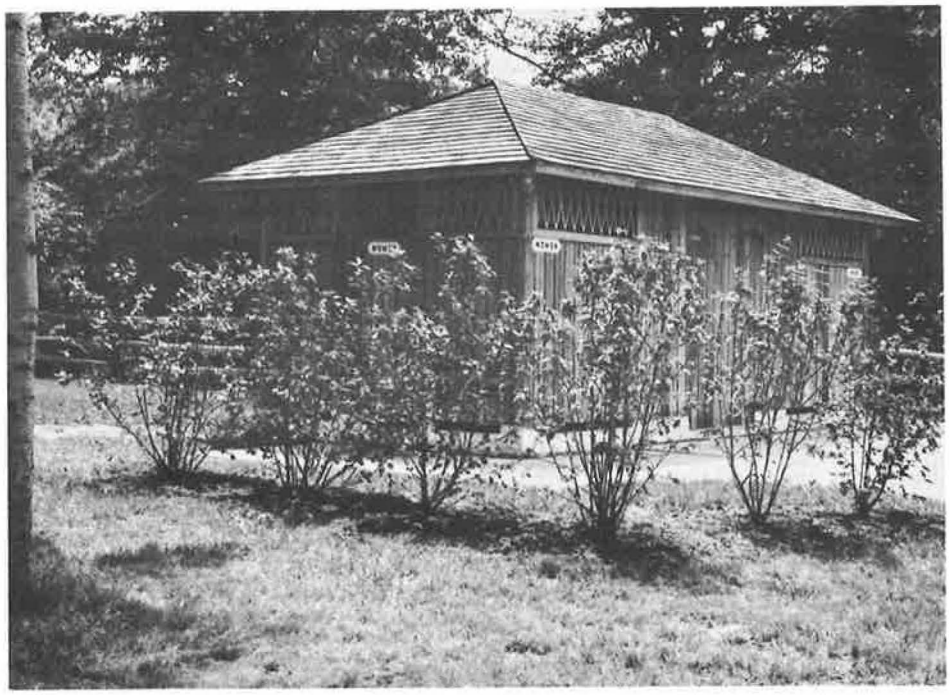

Figure 6. Vault-type toilet with planting. Note electric light fixtures at front corners of building.

Figure 7. Ohio's motorist services building. Building is lighted and has telephone service as well as tourist information.

have an information center (Fig. 7). If the information center does not have attendants, then bulletin boards should be provided. They should be large enough to include motorist services such as a map of the highway indicating the location of the rest areas, motels, filling stations, and restaurant accommodations located at the next interchange. There should be other important notices, such as highway patrol location and telephone number, a highway detour map, neighboring recreation areas, and historic sites. All this information should be placed behind a clear plastic cover for protection.

Increased use will also mean that more refuse will accumulate. This should be burned in the rest area in specially designed incinerators fitted with propane gas burners. Where climate dictates, these gas tanks can be located so as to heat the all-purpose building as well.

Because roadside rest areas are used not only during the daylight hours, but also come in for their share of use at night, the ramps, parking areas, and toilet building should be lighted. All utility lines should enter the rest areas from the rear or sides and then continue underground to the building.

Placement of approach signs may vary as influenced by road features, but a distance of two miles from the rest area is considered adequate. The directional sign should be placed just before the entrance to the accelerating lane. These signs must be uniform and standard for use on the Interstate highways (AASHO Manual for Signing and Pavement Marking on the Interstate).

It is important that each rest area be properly identified. The numbering method is much more desirable than naming the area, for record keeping. These numbers should be on the bulletin boards where they can be seen easily by the public in case of an emergency.

The State highway patrol should include the rest areas in their daily and nightly routes. They not only assist the motorist but also discourage obnoxious parties and persons and prevent vandalism. A sign to this effect can be helpful.

The problems of permitting overnight camping or allowing dogs in the roadside rests are matters that will have to be resolved by State policies. If camping is permitted, the camping area will have to be removed from the picnic area and the area will have to meet State health regulations regarding camping. It would necessitate an attendant on duty at all times.

Signs regarding dogs should inform the owner that his pet will have to be on a leash and walked along the planting strip between the car and truck parking areas, or placed in one of the dog pens.

Highway users travel in all kinds of weather and as they make use of the safety rest areas it is necessary to provide a small shelter house for picnickers during inclement weather. These shelters should be located near the parking area.

The caretaker is a key person in the roadside rest program, and his position is an important one for the reputation of the rest areas. The work of emptying refuse cans, keeping the toilets clean, and keeping flies, maggots, and mosquitoes under control is all that one caretaker can do in a pair of rest areas along an Interstate route.

Indications are that it will be necessary for a caretaker to be scheduled 40 to 60 hours, 7 days a week, in the two rest areas during the summer, and 30 to 40 hours during the winter. Mowing and maintenance of shrubs and trees should be done by a special crew to whom this operation has been assigned for a number of rest areas.

These recommendations are proposed as a guide to establish roadside rests that will be spaced appropriately, located advantageously, constructed economically, maintained satisfactorily, and offered as attractive, inviting roadside rest areas for the traveling public to enjoy.