

SUMMARY OF PAPERS ON MAINTENANCE LEVELS

George M. Briggs, New York State Department of Transportation

•AN INSIGHT into the legal aspects of formalized maintenance levels was given to us by Oliver. He warned that, while there was not a large body of precedents on which to base exact rules of law, basically lawyers should be included in the process of setting levels and, while it may still be desirable to set these levels, they should be well planned and documented as to rationale. We should be prepared to meet them or face law suits due to negligence.

Forbes summarized the various uses which his department makes of their codified maintenance levels to educate, form a base for budget requests, and furnish a rationale by which to effect and reflect budget cuts intelligently. He makes a strong case for these standards as he feels you cannot make an intelligent budget request unless you know your aims. These standards become a necessary part of the maintenance management package.

Pletan showed how the Minnesota Department of Highways has met the extraordinary manpower requirements of maintenance management studies by the skillful use of committees composed of experts from several disciplines. This not only achieved the desired results but it also gained the involvement and acceptance from field forces that usually view such work with suspicion.

Ross and Miller furnished a description of the Ohio Department of Highways' proposed comprehensive system to evaluate statistically the existing level of service provided by that department's maintenance forces. This tool would seemingly provide the means to control their efforts, program remedial action, and, if necessary, to request additional capability. Few states indicated that they have a complete set of quality standards although some indicate they are in the process of developing them. More seemed to have adopted a "watchful waiting" attitude.

Discussion raised the fear of establishing an exact level of surface friction because few states would have the capability for correcting deficiencies within any reasonable period of time. Questions were raised as to where the responsibility for the establishment of standards should rest—with the operating maintenance personnel or an independent group outside of maintenance.

The public reaction to and its involvement in establishment of maintenance standards was questioned. It was pointed out that a state, involved in a management system, should inform its local government departments of these efforts, so that both groups would derive benefits from the studies.

Resolving the opposing forces of legal responsibility created by the establishment of standards versus the need for such standards in a management system poses a serious problem to managers. Research seems called for into the legal aspects of standards nationwide so that a body of experience can be accumulated, thus providing insight into the legal problems posed by maintenance levels. Further, research or information exchange seems warranted so that any state can go to a listing of set standards to prevent duplication of efforts in its own program development. Perhaps a need exists for nationwide quality levels for interstate routes.

The meeting raised new questions, furnished answers to some questions, and stimulated new thinking. I think I would have to agree very strongly with Carl Forbes that we must set aside our fears of standards. We need them because we can't effectively conduct maintenance without them. If this briefly faces us with law suits, then perhaps it is the price we must pay for progress.