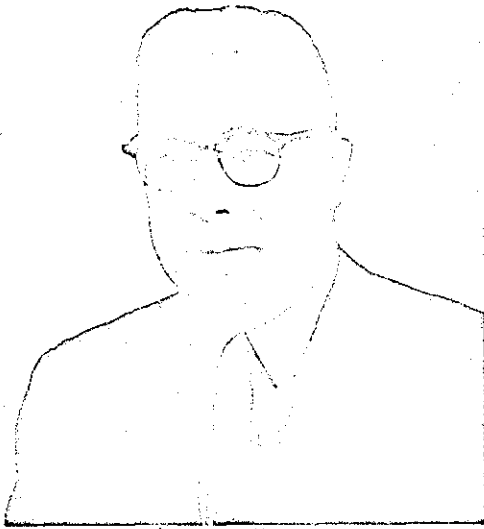


# The Big Job Ahead



*Highway planning*

so much because of the new Department as because of the changing nature of our society—greater affluence, more leisure time, ever-increasing urbanization, and many other factors, all of which place apparently limitless demands on the nation's transportation plant, including the highway network, which can never be considered as a separate thing. The highway engineer must broaden his role to that of transportation engineer if he is to fulfill his complete potential and responsibility.

In my opinion the greatest challenge facing the highway engineer of today is to build safety into the new highways and to remove the accident hazards which exist on the old ones. And when I speak of highways, I'm talking not only about the riding surface, but also the shoulders, the right-of-way, and the adjacent land over which we have any control.

Our traffic death toll now stands at 52,000 a year. Traffic accidents are due to any one of many factors, and most frequently to a combination of several. Some of these problems, such as defects in the vehicle and the driver, have been assigned

by Francis C. Turner  
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Condensed from a talk given at the Mississippi Valley Conference of State Highway Departments in Chicago on March 16.

THE PAST YEAR'S most significant highway development on the federal level was the creation of the Department of Transportation, officially activated on April 1. Most of the travel and transport-oriented federal agencies are now grouped under one head to work toward an efficient, integrated total transportation system. As to the traditional, cooperative relationship between the Bureau and the state highway departments, there will be no substantive change.

If any shift is indicated, I think it might be that we must all become still more "transportation conscious" in addition to our being "highway conscious." This is not

## *Turner, Francis C. Engineer*

essentially at the national level to the new Safety Agency. This agency will operate with the Bureau of Public Roads as a part of the new Federal Highway Administration in the Department of Transportation. It is clearly the responsibility of the Bureau and the state highway departments to provide the safest, most foolproof roadways and roadsides possible with available funds.

Aside from building safety into the new interstate and other modern highways, we have an even larger assignment in removing the deadly boobytraps from older ones. This is being done through a spot improvement program undertaken in March, 1964, to rid the federal-aid systems of accident-inducing features by September 1, 1969. Nearly all states have completed their inventories of hazardous locations and developed plans to correct them. I must say, however, in all candor that we're going to have to materially step up our efforts if we are to meet the 1969 deadline.

One of the toughest safety problems concerns roadsides and rights-of-way. Accidents involving cars running off the road and striking a lethal object too close to the roadway are commonplace—except to the unfortunate victims. Any program to enhance traffic safety cannot be completely successful if it does nothing about obstructions which may kill or maim. The Bureau has issued several memoranda on the subject, and a new report of the Special AASHO Traffic Safety Committee not only studies the problem in depth but presents enlightened recommendations to cope with it. We must also get more uniformity in signing, signals, and markings, so that we don't confuse the motorist and create still another accident hazard.

Though I consider highway safety our greatest challenge, there are many other problems facing us. The public has indicated quite vocally that it wants not only more, better, and safer highways, but more beautiful highways. The Bureau is now working toward a more rapid and, we believe, more effective and practical implementation of the beautification program by adopting a simpler approach. It is expected that less sophisticated, less formal projects will serve to enhance the natural beauty of the countryside on a broader scope, at less cost, and in less time than the more elaborate approach contained in a number of projects being submitted to us. Action toward this change in emphasis is well under way.

We are proceeding to implement the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 in all its aspects. The final draft of suggested standards for the control of outdoor advertising has been developed, and the Secretary of Transportation is ready to begin negotiations with the states. An estimate of the cost of the entire beautification package based on two differing program levels has been sent to Congress. Standards for the control of junkyards—some 17,500 of them—are nearing the final stages of formulation.

Although the beautification act does not require junkyards to be removed or otherwise disposed of until July 1, 1970, federal funds are currently available for this purpose. In one state, for example, 84 car bodies in a junkyard were buried on the premises at a low bid of \$760. The area will be seeded this spring.

There are two other matters closely allied to the beautification program. On March 1 the Department of Commerce released a study of

scenic roads and parkways prepared for the President's Council on Recreation and Beauty. For study purposes, state and federal agencies nominated some 136,500 miles of routes for consideration as scenic roads and parkways. Under one of several proposals developed by the study team, some 50,000 miles of scenic roads and parkways would be designated for development in a national program. Roughly 80 per cent of the mileage would be on existing roads, while about 20 per cent would be on new location. The report states, however, that no program can be proposed until after the Vietnam conflict.

The other matter is in connection with the preservation of natural beauty and historical sites. Both the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1966 and the Transportation Act contain requirements for special consideration of parklands, conservation areas, historical sites, and similar facilities. The Bureau will soon issue policy memoranda on these two enactments.

Congressional debate has brought out that the legislative intent was much broader than would appear to be indicated by the appropriate section of the Transportation Act. Chairman Kluczynski, of the House Roads Subcommittee, and Representative Rostenkowski cautioned against protection of parks, open spaces, and similar resources to the total exclusion of other considerations. Congressman Kluczynski includes the integrity of neighborhoods, displacement of people and businesses, and protection of schools and churches among the other social and human values which are to be given full consideration.

Social and human values. You have heard these words many times in the past couple of years, and it

must be plain to everyone by now that they are not passing phrases. One of the thorniest problems is the dislocation mentioned by Chairman Kluczynski. In 1962 the law governing federal aid provided assistance for the first time to families and businesses required to move because of federal-aid highway construction. Where the state can legally pay moving expenses, the federal government will share the costs. Unfortunately, only 35 states are now paying moving costs to those displaced.

The Bureau has been studying this problem, and no doubt recommendations will go to Congress this spring for liberalizing the relocation program, including the payments allowed, and for bringing about a uniform practice among all federal agencies which deal with the problem. An allied study, also near completion, involves the need for a program of advance acquisition of rights-of-way for federal-aid highways.

Urban traffic congestion is another problem that won't go away by itself, and it will tax the ingenuity of engineers and planners for as far ahead as I can see. Two urban developments are relatively new. One is the policy permitting the use of federal highway funds on certain city streets not previously considered eligible for federal aid. The policy involves inclusion in the federal-aid primary system of additional arterial streets in areas of 5,000 or more population for the purpose of making them eligible to receive federal aid for traffic operation improvement, though not for major construction or reconstruction projects. This new procedure should help relieve urban traffic congestion by making greater use of presently available streets, and it should

enhance traffic safety.

The other development concerns cities which continue to lag far behind needs in the provision of off-street parking facilities. Many urban streets continue to be used to a large extent for vehicle storage rather than for moving traffic. Under existing legislation, federal-aid funds cannot be used to participate in the provision of parking or terminal facilities. But some solution must be found, and the Bureau is conducting a study of the merits of making federal aid available for this purpose.

Among other matters, a revised report on the cost of completing the interstate system will be submitted in January, 1968. The changing and growing costs of construction and

right-of-way, plus new design concepts, require a new look by Congress at the time schedule for completing the system, as well as at the means of providing the necessary financing. This report is actually a part of a report on the future highway needs of the nation, and of a joint report by the Secretary of Transportation and the Secretary of Agriculture on the means of providing adequate protection against soil erosion on highway construction projects.

The highway engineer and the highway administrator have faced some tough challenges in history, and the years ahead will probably bring even greater ones. We shall do well to think of them as opportunities.

On the way up. Four recent graduates of the graduate engineer training program receive the congratulations of W. S. G. Britton (left), director of programming and planning, and J. E. Harwood (right), deputy commissioner and chief engineer. The four (from left) are T. F. Butler, Jr., R. H. Connock, Jr., G. R. Conner, and A. Myruski, Jr. Mr. Connock has been promoted to assistant resident engineer at Louisa, and Mr. Conner to assistant resident engineer at Martinsville. Mr. Butler and Mr. Myruski are receiving maintenance training in the field prior to assignments. Mr. Myruski is a graduate of VMI, and the others are VPI graduates. Heach photo.

