

We are gathered to dedicate the zero milestone. We stand at the beginning of the road, and it is exceedingly gratifying to me as we stand here at the point from which the roads of the Nation radiate in all directions over mountains and plain, drawing together in a close bond of communication the one-hundred and ten million people of the United States. We are able to tell you of the great plan which has been formulated for the system of national roads which we may say will begin at this point at the seat of the National Government.

Not much has been said of this great plan which has been in the making for more than a year and a half, but it is a plan which has in it almost unimaginable possibilities of benefit to the American People.

Quietly and without the usual accompaniments of publicity the National Government and the governments of the 48 States have been at work since the passage of the Federal Highway Act in November 1921, shaping a system of Federal and State roads which, when they are completed will provide for the first time in our history a truly national system of highways, 150,000 miles in extent.

From this very point, the zero milestone of the great system, it will be possible before long for a traveller to set out upon the first lap of a journey in the course of which, if he so desires, he may visit every city of 5,000 or more inhabitants without once leaving an improved road.

So devised is this system that the roads which are included in it will pass within 10 miles of the homes of 90 per cent of all the people of the United States.

We are accustomed to think of the National roads of France as the epitome of all that is desirable in a national system of roads. You will understand, therefore, how complete will be this system of ours which we have planned when I tell you that it will include a slightly higher percentage of the total mileage of road than the French system.

As is the case in France there will be connected with this national system other roads of the States and counties which will ultimately extend to all the people arteries of highway transportation second to none in the world.

If you think of this system as affording the means of inter-communication between cities you will see that we shall have an extension of the main streets of the Nation which will penetrate to every quarter of our broad land and tie together, as I have said, practically every city and town of 5,000 or more people.

If you test it as the means of providing better and more complete transportation facilities for the farmer, you will find that, with the inter-connecting State and county roads and our great system of railroads, it will ultimately provide direct and economic connection between our farms everywhere and the railroad shipping points and market centers.

If you are interested in the roads from the point of view of the

tourist you will find that there is included in this system - not one, or two, or three transcontinental roads but dozens of them crossing the country from the East to the West and from Canada to the Gulf and the Mexican border. Through practically every feasible pass in the Western mountains one of these roads will be open to the traveller. Mt. Hood, Crater Lake, the Yellowstone, the Yosemite, the Grand Canyon and practically every point of scenic interest in the great National playgrounds of the West will be made accessible to the motorist by one of these roads.

Truly national in extent as this system will be, it is significant of the effective co-partnership and the community of interest that exists between the National Government and the several States, that it will not be built by the National Government alone, but by the cooperative effort and at the joint expense of the National and State Governments, each sharing approximately one-half of the cost.

The plan for this system is now receiving the finishing touches, but meanwhile we are at work upon the actual construction of the roads. Since 1916 the States and the Federal Government have been building Federal aid roads. Since 1921 every mile that has been built has been a link in this system I have described, and practically all of the roads previously built will also have their place in it. As a result of this work there stand today 25,000 miles of completed road - more than enough to girdle the globe at the equator and every State has its fair share.

Already the links are being welded together that ultimately will form

this great chain of communication beginning at this zero milestone and binding together as never before the American People. What has been done is prophetic of what is soon to be when with a network of 180,000 miles of main Federal-aid roads and interconnecting State and county arteries this country will find itself the possessor of an unrivalled system of highways which, supplementing our great rail arteries, will open the way to that unity of action which will enable us as a people to go forward to that yet more powerful place among the Nations of the world which destiny has ordained for us.