

The Uniform Vehicle Code and the Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance

What Good Laws and Regulations
Can Contribute to the
Solution of the Traffic Problem

Address by A. B. Barber

before Fourteenth Annual Meeting of
National Association of Commercial
Organization Secretaries, Nashville,
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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D. C



ADDRESS by A B BARBER, *Manager, Transportation and Communication Department, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, before the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the National Association of Commercial Organization Secretaries, at Nashville, Tennessee, October 23, 1928*

THE SUBJECT of street and highway traffic has a pretty hard time to get under the big tent of city planning, but there are some cross-relationships between the two subjects. We find this practically in the relations between the Civic Development Department which, in the National Chamber headquarters, handles the subject of city planning, the Insurance Department which handles the subject of accident prevention, and my own Department which handles the subject of transportation and traffic. While there are overlappings, we find it easy to work out, in a practical manner, just who is to do the different parts of the work, and we have no difficulty at all. On the contrary, if I can get Mr Fitzpatrick and Mr Rogers to boost some of my wares as they go about the country, I am glad to reciprocate, and I appreciate your great courtesy in allowing me a few minutes under this general title of City Planning.

Only three or four days ago I was requested to come up into Michigan to make a couple of talks and confer with the directors of several organizations in that state where they are contemplating revision of their traffic laws at this next session of the legislature. Michigan has a pretty good traffic law. In fact, two years ago they brought much of their law into line with the Uniform Code developed by the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety. Now they are going ahead and seem to be entirely confident they will get through some further constructive legislation at this session.

At one of those meetings, in the discussion, a gentleman got up and said that his father was 90 years old and he asked him for an explanation of his longevity. The old man said, "I lived 75 years before the advent of the automobile, and since then I haven't gone out of the house." Perhaps we may feel from that the advent of the automobile has taken

away some of these fundamental human rights and liberties about which we hear so much. It is a fact that our citizens are entitled to much better conditions on our streets and highways, not only from the standpoint of safety, but also from that of being able to get about. I suspect that if we looked over the bargain counter of opportunities that lie before our communities and our public today, we would recognize that one of the biggest bargains which exists is that of straightening out our street and highway traffic.

National Conference Program

I am going to give you some figures later on to illustrate, but first should like to say just a word as to the program of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety. This program is very comprehensive. It outlines the setup of proper state and municipal administration for dealing with the street and highway traffic problem, the licensing of drivers, and so on. It contemplates uniformity in traffic laws and regulations throughout the land. It provides for the establishment of uniform signs, signals, and pavement markings in the cities as well as on the rural highways. It includes a program—and here is where we tie in to city planning—a very well worked out program as to what should be done to improve city traffic facilities. It includes a program of education of children and adults in traffic safety. It includes a program for enforcement of the traffic laws and regulations. It includes matters relating to the design and maintenance of the motor vehicle in the interest of safety.

The part of the National Conference program regarding which I have been requested to make a few remarks today is that relating to traffic legislation, state and municipal. For the purpose of getting before you clearly the value of such legislation let me compare the results in three sections of the country where widely different conditions prevail in this regard. Unfortunately, for the time being, we have to express ourselves largely in terms of automobile fatalities. It is a terrible thing when, in dealing with such a great eco-

conomic problem as this new street and highway traffic problem, we have to express ourselves in terms of the deaths of human beings as recorded in the U S Census Bureau, but that is practically the only index we have today showing conditions over the greater part of the country

Modern Laws vs Accidents

Taking the Census Bureau records from 1920 to 1926 inclusive, we find that in the northern group of states the increase in fatality was 64 per cent for that period of six or seven years. In the Middle West it was 100 per cent; in the South it was 230 per cent increase. You might think those figures can be explained by the difference in rate of registration. Therefore, in order to disabuse you of any such impression, I have listed alongside of these figures of percentage of increase in accident fatalities the percentage of increase in registrations. It runs like this:

Northeast with 64 per cent increase in fatalities, 158 per cent increase in registrations

Middle West with 100 per cent increase in fatalities, only 126 increase in registrations. You will note more of an increase in registrations in the Northeast and a very much less increase in fatalities than in the Middle West.

The South had a larger percentage of increase in registrations than in the other two territories, 194 per cent as compared with 158 in the Northeast and 126 in the Northwest, but had a much greater increase in fatalities—the enormous amount of 230 per cent. In other words, in the South they had a greater percentage of increase in fatalities than their increase in registrations, whereas, in the Northeast and in the Middle West, the increase in fatalities was less than the increase in registrations.

Let us compare the conditions from the point of view of motor vehicle regulation in those territories. The Northeastern states, although not yet on a basis of complete uniformity as far as their rules of the road are concerned, have made a good deal of progress in that direction, but the outstanding thing they have done is to set up a competent

motor vehicle administration in each state charged solely with the duty of supervising the administration of the motor vehicle laws. They have set up thorough driving licensing systems, including mandatory examination of applicants. The Middle Western states have made some progress toward uniformity in their rules of the road, but have done practically nothing in the direction of licensing of drivers. Only one state, Michigan, has a drivers' license law, and that doesn't amount to much because they do not have mandatory examination of drivers. However, those interested in motor traffic in Michigan seem to be quite confident that they will have a full-fledged drivers' licensing law in the near future.

In the South, I doubt whether there has been much thought about either one of the two subjects, either that of setting an adequate state motor vehicle administration or the adoption of a drivers' licensing act, because the South, not having had the traffic problem in acute form as long as the northern part of the country, has not been forced to give it the consideration that it deserves.

There are other figures that go to substantiate the conclusions from Census Bureau statistics which I have given as to the better results in the states where they have the full-fledged motor vehicle administrations and drivers' licensing systems.

Savings Due to Licensing

From these other sources of statistics which are quite independent of the Census Bureau—that is, the records of claims paid by the casualty insurance companies—we have these facts: An analysis of all those claims shows that in the states where there is centralized motor vehicle administration and a complete drivers' licensing system, the average hazard is 25 per cent less than in cities in the other states which have not an up-to-date system. The man who dug out these facts made a calculation as to the effect of these conditions in a given state. He took Massachusetts as an example and found that their lower accident rate was worth \$16,000,000 a year to the people of the state against a total

cost of \$1,000,000 for the administration of the motor vehicle law This was actual saving, and even from the most selfish standpoint of the motorist, leaving aside all the humanitarian factors, it is well worth while to effect this saving because it is reflected directly into the premiums that we pay for our liability accident insurance

A few days ago I spent the morning in the office of the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters, the central office of a great group of casualty insurance companies They have a room twice as large as this where there are a lot of people with tabulating machines and so on who do nothing but work up statistics, record the losses, the deaths, the injuries and the payments made, and calculate what ought to be the liability insurance rates in the various cities throughout this country Those insurance companies have their fingers on the pulse all over the land as reflected by the accident claims they have to pay, and you can be sure that your communities are paying for their neglect, if they neglect this question of motor vehicle regulation

We have still further information that has just come to hand that substantiates from another angle what I have said We have an analysis of the accident records of the states that have adopted a drivers' license system, before and after they adopted it This study was made by the Public Safety Division of the National Safety Council and the data have been thoroughly examined by some very competent traffic engineers and statistical experts

The study shows that in those states which have adopted the drivers' licensing system, automobile fatalities have ranged from four to 32 per cent less than before they adopted that system The average is 20 per cent improvement The comparisons were made for the period since 1916 and used as a base the record of the other states, the non-licensing states, so as to discount any changes that might have come in through increase in registration or accidental causes The states which show this improved record are: Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, California Those are the states in which there has for several years been an effective drivers' licensing system

supervised by a centralized state administration This is the first main subject which I wanted to draw to your attention; that is, the value of proper motor vehicle administration and the drivers' licensing system

Uniform Rules of the Road

The second is uniformity in our traffic laws and regulations which everybody has been calling for The North-eastern states haven't yet, as I mentioned before, secured full uniformity I think they have felt they have been doing pretty well in other lines, and while a few of the states, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, have taken a long step toward bringing their laws into complete uniformity with the uniform law, yet some of the other states haven't progressed as far as they might There has actually been more progress in some other parts of the country since the Uniform Code was proposed in 1926 Since that date, particularly in the legislative sessions of 1927, some fifteen states adopted or made changes in their laws based on the standard rules of the road act,* so we feel that considerable progress has been made

Recently there has also developed quite a demand for municipal standardization In addition to the state law, need was felt for a model municipal traffic ordinance, and that has actually been worked out during the past eighteen months The first step was a very thorough survey of the ordinances of cities and towns of all parts of the country (about a hundred of them), including the model ordinances of Michigan and California

A Committee of about 100 men was appointed by Mr Hoover in July, 1927 After several meetings of two to three days each, a tentative draft of a model ordinance was completed in May, 1928, and sent out to the number of 10,000 copies to municipal officials, traffic engineers, motor clubs, chambers of commerce, safety councils and other

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interested organizations throughout the country for criticism and comment. The comments received were brought together and put before the Committee at a three-day session held in Washington in July, at which the different questions raised were gone into in a thorough manner. Finally, in early August of this year, the Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance in final form was sent out and is now available for the use of cities and towns contemplating revision of their traffic laws.

Simultaneously with this work the American Engineering Council has been conducting for the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety a thorough study of the subject of street traffic signs, signals and pavement markings. Reports were secured from about 100 cities, prepared by local committees of engineers, stating what the cities have in the way of signs, signals and markings and their experience and opinions of traffic officials and engineers with regard thereto.

This report will shortly be ready for distribution and should be of great value to cities and towns throughout the country.

Progress with Model Ordinance

There has been considerable progress in regard to the Model Traffic Ordinance. The most notable development in this line is the enactment by the state of New Jersey (under a constitutional provision permitting the state to lay down traffic regulations for the municipalities of the state) of a state law which puts the major part of this ordinance into effect in all cities and towns of that state. There are minor differences, as the Model Ordinance was still in preliminary draft when the law was prepared. I might add that the Chamber of Commerce of the state of New Jersey has done a very nice piece of work in popularizing that Ordinance by drawing up in a simple four-page leaflet the principal points of the new Ordinance. They have printed several hundred thousand copies of that little document, which gives just the high spots that the average motorist needs to know.

They obtained wide distribution, at a nominal cost, through the banks, insurance companies and the like

The Model Ordinance has been out only a short time, but we already have word from several smaller cities which have adopted it. Some of the larger cities, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago, already have substantially the same ordinance, while the new ordinances of Boston and New Orleans have been drawn up on the Model Ordinance. There are probably many other instances that could be cited, as our reports do not pretend to be complete.

The ultimate hope is that the Uniform Code, Model Ordinance and signs, signals and markings report will furnish the necessary material so that business organizations and motor clubs working together (there must generally be teamwork in this particular line of work) will, through their efforts with the municipal and state authorities, give this country a uniform system of traffic regulation.

Many national organizations are strongly behind this movement. The United States Chamber by resolution adopted at the annual meeting in 1927 has gone strongly on record for it. The National Automobile Chamber of Commerce has formally endorsed it. They have asked all their dealer organizations to cooperate. The motor clubs are doing the same thing, and there is quite a widespread movement throughout the country to put this into effect.

I have made note here of the different states from which we have information up to the present of activities looking to uniform state legislation by the 1929 sessions of their legislatures. They include: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

E J NOVAK, Secretary, Lake Charles Association of Commerce, Lake Charles, La : Louisiana has adopted that model law.

COLONEL BARBER: We will put Louisiana in that list too.

I said that I had figures here that gave some indication as to why this Model Ordinance and Uniform Code offer one of the biggest bargains on the counter before the American people today. A little calculation has shown that the traffic congestion in the city of Boston is costing \$81,000 a day or \$24,500,000 a year, over and above the \$2,000,000 loss due to accidents. In Chicago a similar estimate was made to the effect that it is costing that city \$600,000 a day or over \$200,000,000 a year. In New York, the estimate is that it is costing \$1,000,000 a day or \$300,000,000 a year.

One of the Committees of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety was requested by Mr. Hoover to make an estimate in order to get some idea of what it is costing the nation as a whole. The estimate, which was conservative, showed a cost of \$2,000,000,000 a year in losses due to accidents and congestion. If you will capitalize that \$2,000,000,000 a year, you will see that the amount runs up to a sum in excess of the total cost of all the railways in the United States, and the total cost of all the roads and all the motor transportation that we have up to date. We can afford to spend a part of that amount, but we would not have to spend more than a small fraction of it to straighten out these traffic conditions.

It is rather difficult to get a conception of what these large figures mean. Down at the recent National Councilors' meeting at Hot Springs, one of the fire prevention experts was talking about the amount of the annual losses due to fire. He was making a very fiery speech and he said, "We are burning up annually \$468,000,000. I will challenge any man in this audience to give us an idea of what that sum of \$468,000,000 represents." He didn't expect to be answered, but some gentleman from the side of the room, who evidently had been studying government statistics, stepped forward and said, "I happen to have been reading some figures, and it strikes my attention that the amount of this fire loss is almost exactly the same amount that the women of America are spending on their faces each year." I think we will all agree that there is considerable difference between those two cases. The \$468,000,000 that is burned

up is a complete waste, whereas, I think we will all agree that the ladies are making a very successful job of what they are doing. If we could do anywhere nearly as well in applying some money to the straightening out of our street and highway traffic, I think we could be greatly congratulated.

Just a few figures as to some of the savings that have resulted in some of these cities following the adoption of new traffic ordinances similar to the Model Ordinance

It Pays in San Francisco

In San Francisco, the work of surveying the situation and developing the new traffic ordinance was under the supervision of a committee of engineers and business men headed by Mr. Bentley, President of the California Packing Corporation. In the Summer of 1927 I had the privilege of meeting with that group and seeing how intensely interested those business men of San Francisco were in the work of regulation of traffic in that city. They put their ordinance into effect a little over a year ago and since that time they have made another check as to what the effects were. They got the figures from a number of companies operating large fleets, and found that the number of accidents occurring to the vehicles of those fleets since the adoption of the new ordinance showed an actual reduction of 30 to 40 per cent. The Market Street Railway Company reported a reduction of 24.7 per cent in the number of pedestrian accidents since the establishment of the new regulations. The Survey Committee of the Business Men's Committee made the statement that the motor vehicle owners were being saved \$2,000,000 a year due to the decrease in accident claims resulting from the new ordinance in San Francisco.

In Los Angeles, after they adopted a similar ordinance, a count showed that 30 per cent more traffic was moving through their streets simply because of the improved methods of handling it.

One of the best examples from several angles of what can be done with regard to regulation of traffic is to be found in

Chicago, and it also is a fine example of what a commercial organization can do. For several years the Chicago Association of Commerce has had a Street Traffic Committee headed by one of the leading retail merchants. They have been in very close touch with the municipal authorities and have shown a very cooperative attitude toward them at all times. As a result, the Chicago City Council, by formal resolution, requested the Chicago Association to undertake a survey of street traffic conditions in Chicago. The Chicago Association appropriated of their own funds \$50,000 for the conducting of that survey. They added some more money later, because the total cost ran up to about \$70,000. They realized that Chicago merchants might be seriously affected by restrictive measures and gave special attention to this problem.

As part of the survey, 96,000 customers of the retail stores of Chicago were interviewed, and it was found that only 1.57 per cent or less than one in sixty of the customers of those stores were using any parking space in the city of Chicago. As you know, one of the features of Chicago's new ordinance has been the prohibition of parking in the loop district. Anyone who has been there knows that traffic conditions have been so much improved that we can be well sure that, of the \$600,000 a day estimated loss that Chicago was incurring before the adoption of the ordinance, they probably have already done away with half because of the greatly improved conditions. But as Mr. William R. Dawes, President of the Chicago Association, speaking at the Hot Springs meeting, said a few days ago, "That Chicago ordinance should not be regarded as simply a no-parking ordinance. It is much wider in scope than that. In fact, the no-parking feature is only a small fraction of that ordinance, and a large part of the benefit that Chicago has derived would have come irrespective of whether they had no-parking restriction in the loop or not."

With regard to the effect of the parking restrictions they have made a count but have not yet published the figures, as they are waiting to see what the effect will be during the holiday season. From what I gather, they seem to be very

confident that the result will be good Mr Dawes said at the Hot Springs meeting that one of their large retail merchants had reported a 15-per cent increase in the business of his establishment in February of this year as compared with the preceding February, and it doesn't look as if he were going to be very gloomy after such a record

MR NOVAK: The ordinance is a very popular thing in Chicago

COLONEL BARBER: There seems to be a mixed feeling among the retail merchants My understanding is that generally they are growing more favorable toward the ordinance Many of them feel that by relieving congestion and letting more people come in on public vehicles their business has been improved

Future Plans of Conference

Our Chairman asked me to say a word about the present situation of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety and what it is intending to do The Conference consists of ten or eleven national organizations, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the American Automobile Association, National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, American Electric Railway Association, American Railway Association, National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters, National Safety Council, American Mutual Alliance (which is an organization of the mutual insurance companies), National Association of Taxicab Owners, and the Motor and Equipment Association This group of associations has recently decided to renew the activity which was carried on in 1924, 1925 and 1926 They have established a moderate budget for this work, and I have just made arrangements for a small staff, just one man and an assistant, to come in to help with that work The arrangement is that we will continue to direct the work with this additional assistance

The Executive Committee of the Conference is holding a meeting about once a month, and is at present devoting attention principally to promoting adoption of the Uniform

Code and Model Ordinance We have materials to send to any who are interested Some are ready now, and we will shortly have more that have already been outlined and are in the process of preparation containing the figures which I have given you in a rather cursory manner

I should say also that if there are local problems that you are confronting, either with regard to state legislation or municipal situations, we should be delighted to hear from you For example, Grand Rapids recently sent me a copy of their municipal traffic ordinance We have in the office the man who served as secretary of the Committee which prepared the Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance, and in two hours he was able to go down through the Grand Rapids ordinance and point out where it differs from the Model Ordinance So when I was at Grand Rapids last week I was able to give them a clear statement of the difference between their ordinance and the Model Ordinance and the reasons which led the Model Ordinance Committee to believe that the provisions of the Model Ordinance are better than those adopted locally This does not refer to the details, which vary in each community There are many details which must vary according to conditions That brings to me one point which I should like to mention in closing

Just as in the case of city planning, street traffic work is going to require more and more continuous attention In most places it will probably be necessary to have a traffic survey to aid in working out and putting into effect this Model Ordinance or any new ordinance A traffic survey is now recognized as being different from a city planning survey The two tie in together in some respects, but any community with a traffic problem needs to have a special traffic survey Furthermore, if you follow the recommendations of the Model Ordinance Committee you will see that there is set up in your Police Department, your Bureau of Public Works or somewhere in your city administration the office of traffic engineer, somebody specialized on the job of studying traffic conditions, making the traffic counts, improving your local regulations, improving the application of your ordinance

By the various measures which we have discussed, I am confident you can benefit your traffic situation by 25 per cent or perhaps 50 per cent. I personally feel that there is good hope that before many years the present national accident toll of 25,000 people dead and 500,000 or 600,000 people seriously injured each year can be cut in half. Thank you.

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