

National Conference on Street and Highway Safety

Report of the
**COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

Appointed by
The Secretary of Commerce

This report is one of eight issued for consideration in advance of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety. The reports are: I. Statistics; II. Traffic Control; III. Construction and Engineering; IV. City Planning and Zoning; V. Insurance; VI Education; VII. The Motor Vehicle; VIII Public Relations

Washington, D. C.
November 18, 1924

**National Associations cooperating with the Department of
Commerce in organizing and financing the Conference
on Street and Highway Safety**

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AMERICAN ELECTRIC RAILWAY ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN MUTUAL ALLIANCE
AMERICAN RAILWAY ASSOCIATION
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES
NATIONAL AUTOMOBILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
NATIONAL BUREAU OF CASUALTY & SURETY UNDERWRITERS
NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

Conference on Street and Highway Safety

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Conference on Street and Highway Safety

Committee on Public Relations

*The Honorable Herbert Hoover, Chairman,
Conference on Street and Highway Safety,
Washington, D C*

SIR: Your committee created to consider the questions of public relations involved in the problems of street and highway safety has, with the assistance of your valued suggestions, been able to reach certain specific conclusions

The committee has had the opportunity to familiarize itself with the reports of the seven other committees of the Conference and in preparing its own recommendations has kept in mind the scope and tenor of their recommendations

The action recommended by these other committees may be classified under the following headings:

- 1 Uniform reporting, assembling, and publication of statistical and other information regarding the extent and character of street and highway accidents
- 2 Definite fixing of responsibility for needed action by various elements of government and other social units
- 3 Legislation, regulation and measures for the enforcement thereof
- 4 Nation-wide uniformity of practices
- 5 Technical research and development of improved methods.
- 6 More adequate provision of funds for facilities, enforcement, etc
- 7 Education and other influences to secure voluntary cooperation of all concerned in the traffic problem

After considering the measures within the field of public relations which can most effectively contribute to obtaining the vitally needed improvements with respect to all these phases of the problem, your committee submits in this report its recommendations in three parts covering the following points:

I A sound program for assigning responsibility to the proper governmental agencies—Federal, State and local—and for organizing the other elements of society, to bring about the solution of the inter-related problems of traffic and traffic safety

II A program of cooperative action for obtaining prompt and

effective nation-wide attention to, and application of, the recommendations of this Conference

III. A temporary committee to assist in furthering the campaign for putting the recommendations into effect, and certain similar committees and technical experts to develop further special phases of the problem the need for which has been brought up by the studies of the other committees, such as uniformity of laws, regulations, statistics and practices

Part I

Your committee believes that the brunt, of responsibility for street and highway safety rests, and must continue to rest, upon the public officials—Federal, State and local. Each group is charged with its own particular responsibilities

Federal Responsibility

The Federal Government's relation to the safety program is one of encouragement, of assembly and distribution, of information and the development and use of best practices, assuming that it is possible to secure uniformity by voluntary action of the various States

State Responsibility

A State department or bureau should administer the laws applying to motor vehicles, including the issuing and revocation of licenses for both cars and drivers and also the enforcement of regulations on the highway. This may be either a separate department or a division of some existing State department. The motor department or bureau should have an adequate staff not only to handle licenses but to examine drivers, police the highways and investigate accidents

Regulatory legislation should be for adoption by States and not by cities. The State enforcement division must have sufficiently broad powers to formulate the regulatory provisions necessary to the detailed control of traffic, leaving, however, to municipal authorities the formulation and enforcement of ordinances covering local conditions such as the establishment of parking areas, etc

Municipal Responsibility

There should be an adequately manned traffic division in the police department with traffic safety a major function of such bureau. In cities the common practice of enforcement by the police department is

recognized and the police should enforce the State law within the city limits.

Traffic Planning

In all States and municipalities there should be specific provision for adequate and timely planning of traffic facilities and traffic control measures. These activities should be closely coordinated nationally, between adjoining States, between States and their political subdivisions, and between the several agencies charged with the provision of facilities and control of their use.

In cities or metropolitan areas faced with highly complicated traffic movement, it is desirable that there be established a special traffic planning commission whose duty it is to study the flow of traffic, make recommendations as to the elimination of hindrances to this flow, formulate plans for the correction of unsatisfactory and unsafe traffic conditions, etc. Local conditions may make it desirable for this commission to be a division of an existing city-planning body.

Railroad Grade Crossings

Elimination of grade crossings, either by relocation of highways or by grade separation, constitutes the only perfect solution of the problem, which must be carried on under a proper program first eliminating the most dangerous crossings on thoroughfares carrying heavy traffic. This is made difficult by the enormous costs involved and if attempted on a wholesale scale would impose an impossible financial burden resting in the last analysis upon the public. It is, therefore, necessary that the program, having due regard to the relative costs and advantages of grade crossing elimination and other methods of protection, be given the most thorough consideration by proper authority. In laying out new highways the question of so locating them as to avoid railway grade crossings to the greatest possible extent should be carefully considered.

Relocation of highways offers many possibilities not yet fully developed which should be worked out by the State authorities in cooperation with the railways. Authority to order grade separations or proper protection at grade crossings should be vested in the State commission having jurisdiction over the railways, which should also determine and enforce a proper division of the costs between the railroads and the public. The State highway department should have the authority to plan the improvements and to initiate the proceedings for all highways.

under its jurisdiction. Time is an essential element and a prompt decision should be provided for in the law.

The committee is of the opinion that the elimination and protection of grade crossings are of such importance and involve to such an extent the public safety as to require that priority be given to them in the allocation of capital funds by the railroads, over expenditures for other safety measures designed to protect the public.

Traffic Violation Courts

Special traffic courts under State supervision should be established to insure uniformity of administration in handling traffic violation, both rural and city.

Associations of Officials

The value of the service rendered by such groups as the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators, American Association of State Highway Officials, International Association of Police Chiefs, and others of a similar standing and character, is well recognized, particularly as they act as a point of contact between the officials and the public or between the officials and agencies directly interested in special phases of the traffic problem. They contribute in the development of best practices and in securing for these practices the proper recognition from the officials concerned.

Unofficial Organizations

In all principal communities there are unofficial organizations affiliated with national bodies devoted wholly, or in part, to the promotion of street and highway safety, or able to serve as a nucleus for such work, including safety councils, chambers of commerce and automobile clubs. These groups, being unofficial, must be cooperative in their service, which is largely educational and of particular value in research, publicity and the collection and dissemination of information.

All State and local law-enforcing agencies are urged to make every possible use of the cooperation of unofficial agencies and organizations, both in laying out the most effective methods of enforcement and in securing public support therefor.

Part II

The assembly of data and the study of the best practices for the promotion of street and highway safety in all its aspects has been the work assigned to the seven technical committees of the conference.

Out of their deliberations has come a coordination of information applicable to the small as well as the large community. The Conference itself will pass upon the findings and recommendations of these committees and mark with mature judgment those worthy of consideration and adoption.

It is the task of this committee to outline a program of cooperative action for obtaining prompt and effective nation-wide attention to, and application of, the recommendations of this Conference.

To the end of securing maximum results from the distribution of these findings your committee recommends a classification of communities for this purpose of 5,000 population and less; 5,000 to 25,000; 25,000 to 100,000; 100,000 and over.

5,000 and Less

With regard to communities of 5,000 population or less, only those communities located on main traveled highways should be considered for purposes of distribution of the conclusions of the Conference on Street and Highway Safety.

A brief summary of the conclusions should be prepared for such communities and then sent to the political head of the community.

It is the opinion of your committee that communities of less than 5,000 population not located on main traveled highways do not have an acute traffic problem. While your committee has recommended that a summary of the findings of the Conference be sent to the political head of all communities of 5,000 population or less situated on main traveled highways, it wishes to call attention to the fact that many communities in this class have organizations which engage in civic work. This committee recommends the distribution of the summary to such organizations, either through their national headquarters or direct.

Communities of 5,000 to 25,000 Population

That with regard to communities of from 5,000 to 25,000 population a complete set of reports of the Conference on Street and Highway Safety be sent to the political head of the community and to the chamber of commerce, or, in the absence of a chamber of commerce, to some corresponding civic body.

Communities of 25,000 to 100,000 Population

That with regard to communities of from 25,000 to 100,000 population, where no safety organization is in existence, steps be taken

where practicable immediately after the Conference to bring about the formation of voluntary safety committees of which the nucleus shall be such representatives of the various cooperating organizations as may be located in the community with a permanent secretary either on part or full time and that the purpose of these committees shall be to organize the community to put into effect the conclusions of the Conference and to consider the continuation of an organized safety program

In many cities of this class there already exists one or more organizations with safety programs even though there may be no safety organizations as such. In such cases these organizations should be utilized to initiate the formation of the proposed voluntary safety committees to carry out the recommendations of the Conference and eventually effect a permanent safety organization

Cities of 100,000 Population and Upwards

Your committee recommends with regard to cities of 100,000 population or more, where no safety organization is in existence, that steps be taken immediately after the Conference to bring about the formation of a permanent organization to cooperate with the proper public authorities in the promotion of safety and in making effective the conclusions of the Conference

In the formation of such an organization, all civic bodies should be asked to join, such as chambers of commerce, other commercial or trade bodies, motor clubs, central labor bodies, women's clubs, and similar associations

Part III

There is considerable overlapping and duplication in the field of safety education, publicity, and the collection and dissemination of data. Such duplication is inevitable and will of necessity continue to be inevitable in connection with a subject so close to the public interest. It is especially desirable, however, that duplication as far as possible be avoided in the efforts of unofficial organizations which are more particularly concerned in the national field. Their combined facilities utilized in the furtherance of the conclusions of the Conference on Street and Highway Safety will contribute immeasurably toward attaining a common objective—increased safety on street and highway

Joint Committee

Your committee recognizes that the first step in this direction has been taken with the calling of the Conference on Street and Highway

Safety and earnestly urges that there be a continuation of these cooperative steps. It recommends, therefore, that a joint committee consisting of representatives of the cooperating organizations be appointed by the Secretary of Commerce for the purpose of coordinating the safety programs of national organizations and of carrying to a conclusion the recommendations of the Conference on Street and Highway Safety.

Your committee wishes to make it very clear that in submitting the above recommendation, it does not have in mind the setting up of a new permanent national safety organization. However, the cooperation of the various organizations in this effort to find a solution of the traffic problem must be carried to completion in such a way as to assure productive results. This can only be done through the medium of a joint committee of their representatives meeting periodically and conducting without interruption a steady drive through the local agencies provided for in the recommendations.

Voluntary Committees on Uniform Legislation and Other Subjects

It is also recognized by your committee that further development of certain special phases of the problem before this Conference is extremely desirable, and to that end your committee suggests the creation of voluntary committees of technical experts.

Perhaps most prominent among these special phases is the problem of securing uniformity of legislation, regulation, statistics and practices. The flow of street and highway traffic recognizes no political boundaries, and cannot be hampered by changing principles of control, even though local conditions may dictate the necessity for local changes of detail, without creating that confusion and uncertainty which is in itself a menace to the safety of motorist and pedestrian alike.

With regard to one phase of the problem—that is, the physical relationship of size, weight and speed of the vehicle to the highway—great progress has already been made by the cooperative efforts of the Bureau of Public Roads, the highway officials, and the manufacturers of the vehicles. On other phases tending toward the standardization of the rules of conduct, considerable progress has been made by the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators, the Bureau of Standards, and the American Engineering Standards Committee. An outstanding contribution to the attainment of uniformity was rendered during the war and directly following by a joint committee of representatives from the American Association of State Highway Officials, National Automobile Chamber of Commerce, American Automobile Association and

the Highway Industries Association These groups, after many meetings, formulated a proposed uniform vehicle law, many principles of which have since been incorporated in various State laws The Motor Vehicle Conference Committee has also been rendering valuable service in working for the adoption of uniform principles of regulating size, weights and speeds of vehicles

Your committee heartily approves of the progress already made, and urges upon the Conference that similar constructive work in the development of uniformity in other branches of traffic safety be immediately undertaken and pushed as rapidly as possible through the operation of voluntary committees

By the Committee,
GEORGE M GRAHAM, *Chairman*

Washington, D C ,
November 15, 1924