REMARKS
by
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It is a pleasure to participate in your conference which this year comes at a unique time in the nation's highway program.

Since the earliest days of the program, highway builders at many periods have been confronted with challenging problems that arose as the program expanded in scope and direction to meet the nation's ever-growing highway needs. Our superb system - the safest, most efficient and most economical in the world - is evidence that the challenges have been met successfully and are being met successfully.

Today, we are faced with what I prefer calling an exciting opportunity, rather than a problem; an opportunity to beautify our highways and roadsides which have been permitted to deteriorate into dreary, depressing arteries of travel.

For a long time, highway people have bemoaned the fact that well designed and constructed highways were cluttered with roadside blight not too long after they were opened to traffic. What at the outset had been attractive roads soon became billboard and junkyard corridors. The loveliness of the countryside was obscured by unsightliness.

Because in most instances the eyesores were outside the right-of-way, highway people were helpless to do much about the situation. They felt frustrated because their efforts to build with beauty were negated by forces beyond their control.

But a new era has dawned. The Highway Beautification Act of 1965, sponsored by President Johnson, furnishes the tools needed to wage an effective battle against highway ugliness. Appearance of the roadside flanking the right-of-way now becomes our responsibility--a responsibility which should be viewed as a golden opportunity and not a burden.

The legislation proposed by the President and enacted by Congress will control billboards within 660 feet of the right-of-way of our main highways, and will screen or remove junkyards within 1,000 feet. Funds will be provided for the protection and the landscaping and scenic enhancement of the roadsides.

The Bureau of Public Roads has allocated funds to the States for carrying out provisions of the Act, and several projects already have been approved. The swift submission of projects is an indication of the States' anxiousness to proceed as rapidly as possible with the implementation of the Act. It substantiates what I have always believed: That highway builders want to see an end to highway uglification.
My belief also was confirmed by the alacrity with which the States moved to carry out the President's highway beautification program even before the legislation was enacted. In his message on Natural Beauty to Congress outlining the task confronting the nation, he stated:

"More than any other country, ours is an automobile society. For most Americans, the automobile is a principal instrument of transportation, work, daily activity, vacation and pleasure. By making our roads highways to the enjoyment of nature and beauty, we can greatly enrich the life of nearly all our people in the city and countryside.

"Our task is twofold. First, to ensure that roads themselves are not destructive of nature and natural beauty. Second, to make our roads ways to recreation and pleasure."

The President's leadership struck a responsive note throughout the country and spurred immediate action. The public's reaction was electric because the President was articulating what they had long felt. The U.S. Bureau of Public Roads called on State highway departments to expand landscaping, screen junkyards and other unsightly areas, and increase the number of safety rest areas on the Federal-aid Interstate and primary systems.

The results thus far have been extremely gratifying. Since the President announced his program, Kentucky has completed 35 miles of landscaping and has authorized or planned an additional 868 miles. In the same period, 277 screening projects were completed, and 67 authorized. Sixty-seven major rest areas with full complement of facilities and eight small rest areas have been planned or authorized.

Now that the Bureau of Public Roads and the State highway departments are armed with the weapons they formerly lacked, the beautification program undoubtedly will move forward speedily. The significance of the beautification bill, both as a giant step forward and as only a first step, was well expressed by President Johnson when he signed it. He pointed out:

"This bill does more than control advertising and junkyards along our major highways. It does more than give us the tools to landscape those highways.

"This bill will bring the wonders of nature back into our daily lives.

"This bill will enrich our spirits and restore a major source of our national greatness.

"This bill does not represent all we want, or all we need, or all the national interest requires. But it is a first step. There will be other steps. For though we must crawl before we walk, we will walk."
Congress did not see fit to act this year on a recommendation for a national program for the construction of scenic roads and parkways leading to recreational or scenic areas.

Some members of Congress indicated they first wanted to see the results of a scenic roads and parkway study conducted by the Department of Commerce for the Recreation Advisory Council. The Recreation Advisory Council is made up of the secretaries of Agriculture; Commerce; Defense; Health, Education and Welfare; and the Interior; and the Administrators of the Housing and Home Finance Agency and the TVA.

This study in all likelihood will be submitted to Congress by the President next year as the basis for a national program of scenic roads and parkways to meet the nation's growing outdoor and recreational needs. States were asked to nominate routes for possible inclusion in the program, and the submissions already have been made.

The enthusiastic response by the States is proof that they recognize the need and desirability of such a program. The Commonwealth of Kentucky has proposed that 2086 miles of scenic routes and parkways be developed within her borders.

It is interesting to note that as our country becomes more urbanized, the demand for outdoor recreation opportunities grows. At present, over 63 per cent of our people live in metropolitan areas. By the year 2000, that figure will climb to 73 per cent.

As people move to the cities, as they more and more are engaged in occupations that are remote from the soil, they are increasingly dependent upon highways for their access to nature - to the beauty of America. They depend on highways as they look to the outdoors as a temporary escape from the environment of city living. It is therapy for them to break away from their every day tensions and pressures, and millions seek the healing powers of nature and the outdoors.

This new and growing need is just another challenge in a series of challenges which have confronted the builders of our roads.

If highway builders are to serve the needs of this growing number of Americans, they must build highways which enable the maximum number of city dwellers to enjoy the recreation opportunities within reasonable driving times of where they live.

The routes leading to these facilities must be of a scenic character or should traverse areas of relatively high aesthetic or cultural values. Such roads will provide pleasant access to facilities for picnicking, camping, fishing, boating, hiking, and similar outdoor recreation activities.

To you in Kentucky, scenic highways are no innovation. In a State where scenery is in such abundance, it is difficult to name specific
highways of scenic quality. However, three which stand out particularly are the Old Frankfort Pike, State Route 77 in Powell and Menifee Counties, and State Route 90 in McCravy and Whitley Counties. These highways traverse areas of breath-taking beauty. They truly are the windows through which nature's bounties can be viewed and enjoyed.

But then, Kentucky is a fortunate State that has been blessed by God with mountains, forests, streams and lakes of extraordinary beauty which are enjoyed not only by your own residents, but by visitors from near and far.

The natural resources of your State act as a magnet, luring visitors seeking the pleasure of the outdoors. Last year, 22 million persons visited Kentucky and spent $238 million while traveling in the Commonwealth. This is no small amount of money, and it points up that tourism is of primary importance to your State's economy.

These same visitors traveled 4.2 billion passenger miles in Kentucky, mostly by automobile, which clearly delineates the role of highways in a State that attracts tourists. Here in Kentucky you have a fantastic potential for increasing tourism by providing more highways to places of beauty now inaccessible to the traveler. The Appalachian program which calls for the construction of about 430 miles of highways in the mountainous region of eastern Kentucky, as well as a number of local access roads, will make this area readily accessible to tourist, commercial and industrial development. However, you will hear more of Appalachia from other speakers at tomorrow's session.

What I would like to emphasize now is the magnificent opportunity Kentucky has to make a beautiful State even more beautiful. The Highway Beautification Act has elevated aesthetics to one of the forefront positions among the many considerations that must be evaluated in highway construction and maintenance. There is no doubt that the American people for whom highways are built want it that way.

And there is no doubt in my mind that motorists are as willing to pay for highway beauty as they are to pay for highway safety and capacity because it is an integral part of the highway program. To highway users whose taxes make our highways possible, beauty that they can see and appreciate probably is of greater conscious importance today than most of the other considerations. They have made it sufficiently clear that they are fed up with the clutter along the roadside; that they prefer seeing a tree to a billboard, or a pastoral vista to a junkyard.

The cost of beautification is recognized today as a legitimate highway cost. Even before this new act was passed it was, and still is, a recognized and authorized part of our highway construction costs. While Congress, in the legislation just passed provided that general treasury funds be used, and did not provide any specific new revenues...
to match the beautification demands on the general fund, the question of funding these new beautification costs will eventually have to be considered by the Congress.

In any event, highway builders are now embarked on a course which will restore, preserve and enhance the beauty and grandeur with which we were blessed but which, unfortunately, we have neglected too long. We owe it to future generations to turn over to them the heritage of a beautiful America. We have a responsibility we must not shirk.

In closing, permit me to quote Secretary of Commerce John T. Connor who told a recent meeting of chief administrative officers of State highway departments:

"I hope that as you implement the provisions of this Act, you will recognize it as an expression of our national commitment to beauty. I hope you will include beauty in everything you do - in the planning, in the location, in the building and in the maintaining of highways. As important as the Highway Beautification Act is, little will be accomplished through it, unless a concern for beauty is reflected in your every decision."

And he expressed the importance of doing that as follows:

Winning the battle for beauty will yield benefits far beyond the obvious aesthetic dividends. Much of the concern expressed on some quarters over further expansion of the nation's highways is based on a fear that highways and beauty are incompatible. By incorporating considerations of beauty into the design of highways, you will do much to alleviate this attitude, and will gain broader acceptance for the vital highways the nation needs.

Highway builders must continue -- as they have done in the past -- to serve the public interest as it exists today. We have every confidence that you will.