

RURAL SECONDARY AND COUNTY ROAD AID PROGRAMS

by

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The primary responsibility of the Division of Rural Roads is that of assisting the Deputy Commissioner for Rural Roads and the Commissioner of Highways in planning and administering the Rural Secondary and County Road Aid Programs. The Rural Secondary Program and the County Road Aid Program, although frequently confused, are distinct and different programs. The County Road Aid Program is devoted to county roads and County Road Aid funds cannot be spent on any other roads. After a period of evolution, the Rural Secondary Program is now dedicated to State-maintained roads in the Rural Secondary System.

I will discuss the County Road Aid Program first. The Commonwealth originally assumed some responsibility for county roads in the early 1930's. It was then apparent that the growing demands of traffic simply could not be met by county government from its own resources. The short-lived sales tax of that time allotted some of its proceeds directly to county government for road programs. When the Legislature ended the sales tax, it recognized the continuing need for assisting county government and, in 1936, created the program we now call the County Road Aid Program. For many years, it was familiarly known as "The Rural Highway Program". Recently, the Department decided to end the confusion occasioned by its old name and officially labeled it "the County Road Aid Program".

The first appropriation for this program was \$2 million in 1936. Over the years we have seen it rise to \$12 million for the 1968-69 fiscal year. The Biennium appropriation as authorized by the Legislature provides for a \$1 million increase, to \$13 million, for the 1969-70 fiscal year. Although the formula has been adjusted more than once, County Road Aid funds are now as always allocated to the various counties on the basis of a formula chosen by the Legislature. This formula currently is: one-fifth of the total divided equally among the 120 counties, one-fifth based on relative rural population, one-fifth on rural mileage, and two-fifths on rural area.

A notable increase in rural road mileage maintained through this program helps point up the importance of the County Road Aid Program. In 1936, approximately 3,000 miles were included in the program. Today, it totals more than 16,000 miles. During the same period of time, the condition of county roads has improved immensely. The trend has been from narrow,

crooked, bottomless roads to wider and straighter paved roads. Slowly but surely rural Kentucky is coming out of the mud.

In 1948, the Legislature again responded to the needs of rural roads by creating the Rural Secondary Program. At that time, the State tax on motor fuels was raised from five cents to seven cents and the additional two cents was dedicated to improvement and maintenance of rural secondary roads. These roads were originally described as farm-to-market roads. The Rural Secondary System is now made up of 9,800 miles of roads and bridges and forms a large segment of the State-maintenance system, about 40 percent.

With the increase of vehicular use and expansion of the road systems within the Commonwealth, funds for the Rural Secondary Program have grown steadily - from \$8 million in 1948 to an anticipated \$27 million in the fiscal year 1968-69. Rural Secondary funds are allocated to the counties of the Commonwealth by the same formula used for County Road Aid funds.

The law requires that the Department of Highways meet with the various fiscal courts once a year for the purpose of receiving their recommendations on projects to be included in the County Road Aid and Rural Secondary Programs. The County Road Aid Program is formalized by a contract between the county fiscal court and the Department of Highways. While the law also requires that the Department receive recommendations from the fiscal courts for Rural Secondary Programs, the final responsibility for planning and administering them is that of the Commissioner of Highways.

In addition to conferring with the fiscal courts as we are legally required to do, the Department solicits advice and recommendations from other officials and interested citizens. At the present time we are engaged in making appointments with the fiscal courts so we can discuss the 1969-70 County Road Aid and Rural Secondary Programs. I encourage all of you here to give serious thought to projects which you believe should be included in next year's programs. Be in a position to make your wishes known to the district engineer and his representatives when they visit your county.

May I stress two points. First, your recommendations for Rural Secondary projects should be on the Rural Secondary System. The Department has identified the roads in each county that can be maintained and improved with funds available under the Rural Secondary Program. To attempt to expand this system or to spend substantial amounts of Rural Secondary money on improvement of county roads will ultimately result in a substandard and deteriorating Rural Secondary System. Second, an all-out effort should be made to program for the reconstruction or repairs of all bridges classified as "dangerous" under our recent bridge inspection program. The accelerated inspection program was initiated by Governor Nunn after the Silver Bridge failure on the Ohio River between West Virginia and Ohio.

I have mentioned sums of money here that, I am sure, impress all of you. At first thought, you might feel that these funds should be sufficient to make all needed improvements on rural secondary and county roads. As a matter of fact, these funds will only finance a small portion of all needed projects. I, therefore, urge all of you to select projects to be included in your recommendations on a priority basis. In this way we will be sure to build the projects where they are most needed.