

ADDRESS PRESENTED AT COUNTY AND RURAL SECONDARY ROADS SESSION

by

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The Rural Secondary and County Road Aid Programs are by no means unfamiliar to me. Most of you know I have previously served as Commissioner of Highways and as Deputy Commissioner for Rural Roads. And - certainly - no boy reared on a Central Kentucky dairy farm can ever be indifferent to rural roads.

I am aware of the importance of these programs to county officials. Probably no programs of the Department of Highways concern them more.

While both of these programs are for the improvement and maintenance of local and farm-to-market roads - or "little roads" - as some may wish to call them - they differ substantially from the standpoint of responsibility.

The County Road Aid Program is a tool for the Department of Highways to aid the various counties in improving or maintaining roads which are entirely the responsibility of the counties. The legislature has provided \$10 million from the State Road Fund to support this program during 1965-66.

The program began with much less money. According to the auditor's report of public accounts - for the 1934-35 fiscal year - the receipts of the gross sales tax amounted to \$9 million. The County Road Fund - as the program was called at that time - received \$3 million from this tax. In its first year there are nearly 3,600 miles included for construction, reconstruction, or maintenance.

Over the years - the program has grown - not only in dollars - but in miles. The current program includes over 17,000 miles of county roads for maintenance - more than 100 miles of construction - 279 miles of bituminous surfacing and 33 bridges for replacement or major repairs. There are 45,000 miles of roads in Kentucky which are the responsibility of County Government. As can be seen from these statistics - the department is aiding the counties in maintaining more than one-third of their roads.

Hardly a day passes that the department is not asked to add new projects to the County Road Aid Program. Each time an additional mile is added to this program it means the level of service in that county - where the mile is added must be lowered - or the department must find a means of furnishing the same level of service at lower cost. Because of this - I have already directed the Division of Rural Roads to continue to study ways for making the rural road dollar go further. I am determined to make every effort to do so.

While there are \$10 million available to the department to aid the counties in carrying out their responsibilities - this program does not relieve the counties of their responsibilities - even for those roads included in the program.

Information in our possession indicates that about one-third of all Kentucky counties make no provision for a road program from their own funds. This is not intended as a criticism of any county - or any official. These are the facts - important in the consideration of the problem that faces us.

Now - the other program - The Rural Secondary Program - is a means for the department to maintain and improve a rural secondary system of roads. These roads are an obligation of the Department of Highways - the Commonwealth - and should not be confused with the county roads I have been discussing.

There are approximately 24,500 miles of roads in the classified and unclassified state primary system. For these the Department of Highways assumes full responsibility. The classified State Primary System will take care of 91% of all rural traffic in Kentucky. The State Primary System is master plan. By following this plan - the greatest number of people will be served.

The Rural Secondary System is that part of the State Primary System which bridges the gap between the so called "Big Roads" and the "County Roads".

Like the other components of this system - the Rural Secondary System was identified by the Department of Highways after several years of exhaustive study - taking into consideration traffic needs - the other systems of the Department of Highways - the availability of rural secondary funds - and the County Road Systems. The legislature - when it enacted the Rural Secondary Law in 1948 - directed the department to develop such a system. As a result of our studies - it has been determined there are 9,500 miles of roads properly assigned to the Rural Secondary System.

The current Rural Secondary Program provides for an expenditure of nearly \$7 million for the maintenance of roads in the Rural Secondary System - \$11 million for bituminous surfacing of over 900 miles - approximately \$7 million for construction of 200 miles, and \$2 million for major repairs or construction of 45 bridges. This does not include - of course - administration, engineering and emergency accounts.

Much of the current construction program has already been accomplished because the department was able to start it early in the spring of this year.

As Mr. Witt has already said - there is \$34 million available this year for the County Road Aid and Rural Secondary Programs. The \$10 million provided for the County Road Aid Program is an annual appropriation - taken from the State Road Fund - while the amount available to the Rural Secondary Program is - simply - two cents for every gallon of motor fuel sold in the Commonwealth.

In the 18 years the Rural Secondary Program has been in effect - its annual income has grown from approximately \$8 million to the present \$24 million. Because of the rapid growth of the automobile and truck population - and additional road mileage - it is safe to predict that Rural Secondary Income will continue to grow each succeeding fiscal year.

While each program - Rural Secondary and County Road Aid - has separate budgets for separate responsibilities - the formula for distributing funds for

use in the county - the development of programs - and their accomplishments - are for all practical purposes identical.

The formula for distributing funds provides for one-fifth of the total allocation to be divided equally among the 120 counties - one-fifth divided among the counties on the basis of the ratio the rural population of each county bears to the total rural population of the state, one-fifth apportioned on the basis of the rural road mileage and - finally - two-fifths apportioned among the counties on a basis of the rural square mile area.

Both acts provide for the Department of Highways to meet annually with the Fiscal Courts of the various counties to obtain their recommendations for these programs. The county may recommend any county road for inclusion in the County Road Aid Program. Recommendations for the Rural Secondary Program should be confined to the Rural Secondary System. The full responsibility for adopting and carrying out these programs is that of the Department of Highways.

As you are all aware - the District Office staffs have for several months been meeting with the Fiscal Courts to receive their recommendations for next year's programs. I am hopeful that the proposed programs will be completed in the near future for my decisions. This will allow the department to have its construction projects ready by the time the construction season arrives. From experience we know this will result in substantial savings to the Department of Highways and better service to the taxpayers of Kentucky.

You are assured that the Department of Highways will make every effort to work with local officials and interested citizens to produce the best kind of program - not only for the Rural Secondary and County Road Aid Programs - but for all the programs of the department - to derive the greatest possible benefit from the funds that are available. I earnestly seek your cooperation and pledge mine as well as the department's. Only through our mutual efforts can the needs of the Commonwealth best be served.