

State and Local Coordination of Highway Planning in Indiana

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Just as the Highway Department is involved in a partnership with the Bureau of Public Roads for the improvement of the several federal-aid systems throughout the state, in both rural and urban areas, so is this true, perhaps to an even greater degree, in the coordination of highway planning effort throughout the state, at all levels of government. It has not always been of such great importance as it is today.

In the early years of the 1900s we were involved in the tremendous task of improving a highway system that would provide us with more adequate transportation facilities connecting our rural communities, one with the other, within the scope of our needs as we then visualized them. Little did we realize the tremendous growth that would create the expensive urban developments of the larger communities, the great industrial and commercial centers, and the tremendously increased demands for adequate highways throughout our rural areas.

Our early accomplishments in highway improvement was of the township scale. Each township highway commissioner gravelled the roads with bank-run material hauled in wagons with dump boards and then perhaps did a little grading in the spring of the year with a horse-drawn grader. Sometimes we worked out our poll taxes on the roads. Thus, our early road improvements were small in scope and certainly very haphazard, with little or no continuity beyond township lines.

Then with the advent of the automobile county highways came into being. The old water-bound macadam road flourished in many counties.

It was then that the federal government began to realize, as a result of the activities of good roads groups and their investigations, the need for a coordination of road improvement efforts across the country. Many states had made certain efforts to develop some uniformity of improvement, largely thru advice to counties, and, in some instances, the making of grants in aid for short sections of road not

well connected. Money for such improvements came largely from property taxes.

All of this increasing demand gave rise to the enactment of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1916 which established the Bureau of Public Roads under the U. S. Department of Agriculture and provided that in order to obtain federal-aid a state must have a State Highway Department as the federal government would recognize no other state agency in its dealings and contractual arrangements with a state. This partnership operation has continued down thru the years with a never expanding program that has developed the greatest road building ability and talent in the entire world.

Financing was at once a problem and the federal government went into the gasoline tax field with a 1 cent per gallon tax in 1932. The federal tax was raised to 1½ cents in 1939 and to 2 cents in 1951. These moneys, however, were put into the General Fund until the creation of the Highway Trust Fund in the Highway Act of 1956. This Act also raised the federal gasoline tax to 3 cents. It was later raised to 4 cents in 1959.

Indiana created its first Highway Department in 1917. However, because some question as to constitutionality of the legislation resulted in injunctive proceedings, it was repealed in 1919 and new legislation enacted, from which time, with certain internal reorganizations, it has continued to the present.

From 1919 until 1933 the Highway Department was privileged to use its own discretion as to whether state highway improvements were to be made thru towns and cities. If they were made, the improvement could only be to the same width and design as that of the highway leaving and entering such town or city, and any greater improvement had to be financed by the locality. As property tax was the only important source of revenue for such communities, it is easy to understand why these improvements were none too frequent.

In the meantime Indiana enacted its first gasoline tax, 2 cents per gallon, in 1923 and created a State Highway Fund for its deposit. The Highway Department's activities, in the meantime, were largely those of improving routes within existing rights-of-way, thru rural areas and between centers of population. The operations were not large in comparison with today's programs and much less warrant existed for coordinated effort than is the situation today.

Even as late as 1940 the annual appropriation amounted to only \$14,200,000. During the past ten years, however, and particularly since the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, the highway improvement

program has become "big business." We have become a nation on wheels and our entire economy today is dependent to a very large measure upon our transportation facilities and particularly highway facilities. When one realizes that one-seventh of our gross national product results from the highway industry, either directly or indirectly, and that likewise one out of every six gainfully employed persons is in some way associated with the highway industry, it is easy to understand why the public in general have become in the last few years very conscious of their highway facilities. It is essential that all of us, either at the state highway level or at other levels of government, must recognize the importance of coordination. In Indiana we are developing more and better methods by which such coordination can be carried out.

This is even further emphasized when we realize the extreme diversification of interest throughout the state, the great expansion of industry, the development of shopping centers in the fringe areas of our larger metropolitan developments, and the continual subdividing and expansion of urban and suburban areas.

It is with this thought in mind that public hearings are required on all projects that pass thru or bypass an urban area, whether it be incorporated or unincorporated. These hearings must of necessity have a two-fold purpose, first to explain the improvement which the Highway Department is proposing to undertake, and secondly to bring forth from those attending such meetings their local observations both pro and con as to the effect upon the economy of the area and the benefits that may or may not accrue from such an effort.

Hearings are held only after preliminary studies have been made by the State Highway Department. The inherent value of these hearings is many times superseded by the value gained from discussions with local groups of bi-partisan make-up such as those developed thru metropolitan planning commissions, Chambers of Commerce acting in cooperation with local government, and other similar arrangements wherein the needs for area improvements are discussed. These then are considered by the Highway Department in proper sequence and in the order of approach that insures continuity of the system and considers the relative deficiencies of existing facilities.

Following the survey on location for a specific project, it is often essential that meetings with local groups be held before detailed location and plans are undertaken. This is particularly true in urban and industrial areas where land use and community developments must be taken into account if they will be affected by highway improvement

or vice versa. The extent and control of access of such highway improvements are important in their relation to other area developments, as well as the ease of access facility provisions that can be built into the design, and other similar features.

In some of our metropolitan areas it is essential that we have what we like to refer to as an Engineering Committee consisting of representatives of the Highway Department and local government who are qualified to approach detailed consideration on a professional basis. They must be able to deal with such things as assignment and projection of traffic, limitations of design as controlled by the standards accepted for such work, and designation of one-way streets and arterial thoroughfares, all of which have a major effect upon the final efficiency of any new improvement.

Likewise, in the development of rural improvements it is essential (and a policy of the Highway Department) to meet with county commissioners or city government, as the case may be, to discuss the salient features of new improvements. This is particularly true in the development of the design of the Interstate System. In this latter instance, after having determined in a preliminary way the location of interchanges, grade separations, service roads, and other pertinent features of the design, the representatives of the Planning Division meet with the city or county representatives, as the case may be, and preferably go over the ground to determine the feasibility of the proposed design. Many times this results in the need for further study, as well as for certain changes in the proposed construction. It is the usual practice in such meetings to also have a representative of the Bureau of Public Roads. In my opinion this is coordinated effort at its best, to have all levels of government sitting around a table and going over the ground together, with the Highway Department explaining the proposals, the reasons therefor, and listening to the observations of local government.

Aside from the Interstate System we are equally involved in the continued improvement of the Primary and Secondary routes and their urban connections. Many times these involve relocations and require a similar approach between local government and the Highway Department.

It is the policy of the Highway Department that at the time of such discussions of the improvement when it involves a relocation wherein a portion of the old road will no longer remain as a part of the new facility, understanding is to be reached with the local government as to the abandonment of the section of highway no longer needed. Particu-

larly in those instances where the improvement is the result of a request of the local area, an understanding is to be reached as to the responsible local government's accepting the return of such abandoned section of the old facility into their system, with the responsibility of its future maintenance and operation.

However, prior to the time of opening the new facility it is the responsibility of the district engineer to again meet with local government and review the condition of that section of the existing facility that is to be returned to local jurisdiction. At that time it is the intention that an understanding will be reached as to the extent of maintenance that is to be put upon the highway to be abandoned. Thus it may be returned to local jurisdiction in a good usable condition that is equal to that which may be expected of the type of highway under consideration—not a betterment but an equal facility in good repair. In some instances it may be necessary to determine whether the old facility should be abandoned and a reasonable time allowed for observation as to the volume of traffic that may still need the existing facility after the new section is open to use.

Another evidence of coordination on the part of the Highway Department has been the creation a little over a year ago of the joint committee involving representatives of the Highway Department and the various utilities throughout the state. This committee has functioned with a great deal of success and much information has been made available to the utilities concerning the Highway Department's future improvement intentions and thus affording opportunity to plan the necessary changes in utilities to accommodate the highway improvement.

The Highway Department has, as a part of its organization, a section devoted entirely to the preparation of agreements with affected utilities on each project where the Highway Department is involved in participation in the cost of relocating or changing the utilities. The 1961 General Assembly passed legislation that authorized the Highway Department to participate in the cost of moving and relocating all utilities affected by the Interstate System. However, this does not apply to any other highway facilities and the previous statutes affecting those highways still prevail. This is to the effect that all utilities located within the highway right-of-way, either privately or municipally owned, are required to rearrange and relocate their facilities, at their own expense, when they interfere with highway improvements. However, in those instances where the utilities are on private easement or right-

of-way and such changes are necessary the Highway Department compensates the utility for the complete cost of the necessary relocations.

In the matter of bridge design, the Highway Department works very closely with the Indiana Flood Control Commission, particularly where our larger streams and rivers are concerned, and also cooperates with the local flood control agencies, where such are in existence.

Cooperation is extended by the Highway Department to the counties in the matter of federal-aid Secondary highway improvements. The Highway Department has extended its services in assistance to the county commissions in the determination of those county roads that are eligible to be incorporated in the county system and acts as liaison between the county and the Bureau of Public Roads in obtaining approval and recommendation of such routes. This section of our department is always available to counsel with the counties in the determination of the extent and type of improvement of any section of road or bridge which they may wish to improve under the federal-aid Secondary law.

The State Highway Department each year allocates to the counties 50 per cent of the moneys apportioned by the federal government for the Federal-aid Secondary System. This apportionment has amounted to approximately \$3-\$3½ million per year. It is available to the counties for a period of one year after apportionment and if not encumbered by that time the State Highway Department then adds the remaining balance to its share of the federal-aid Secondary funds to be used on the State Secondary System. These moneys are matched by the counties on a 50-50 basis and deposited with the State Highway Department.

Here again the State Highway Department acts as the administering agency covering approval of plans, the advertising and acceptance of bids, awarding of contracts and payment of all estimates, periodic inspection and final acceptance, and billing the federal government for the federal share as the money is earned. The cooperative efforts of the Highway Department in this regard have resulted in a material expansion of the federal-aid Secondary program amongst the counties throughout the state.

There are many towns and cities today which are undertaking the development of thoroughfare plans of their own as well as studies of other aspects of public improvement. The Highway Department is happy to work closely with these efforts, and we can say at this time that we have the full cooperation of private planning agencies operating within the state and are always glad to extend to them such information

as is available in our files that will assist in the development of their plans.

It is unfortunate that in some instances groups of local people have failed to understand the desire of the Highway Department to work with local government and to develop plans that are intended to be of greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. Selfish interest, of course, will always be with us, but from a public agency attitude the Highway Department is anxious to have the wholehearted understanding of local people throughout the state as to the intentions and the interest of that department in affording improvements that are for the welfare and safety of all our people.

The framers of the Constitution of the United States recognized the importance of highways when they provided for the establishment of post roads, the regulation of commerce, provision for the common defense, and promotion of the general welfare of the nation. Our entire highway system today is developed around this thesis, and the Indiana State Highway Department is anxious to carry this policy in its efforts throughout the state. We believe that by our having such a basic approach the groups that would object and attempt to delay the efforts of the Highway Department will become less in number and frequency.

As a part of our Planning Division and in the interest of long-range development, we are, in cooperation with certain cities of the state, doing what are referred to as origin and destination surveys. These are participated in by the federal government, the State Highway Department, and local government. While this type of work has moved rather slowly in the past, we now visualize a great improvement, a part of which will be brought about by the use of electronic devices to do a great amount of computations that are a part of such studies.

The Highway Department, as a result of legislation in 1959, has developed sufficiency ratings for the entire state highway system. These must be kept current year after year, and as such can be used as a tool in determining the priority of improvements that should be undertaken and the extent of each year's program, depending upon the finances available.

The highway inventory which was first established in 1936 is now being completely resurveyed, not only thru rural areas but thru the urban system as well. This work was started about two years ago and should be completed and entirely up-to-date in another year or two.