

Good Roads

It can safely be said that there is no question before the people of this country which more vitally concerns the community in general than the question of good roads. The failure of the old township road system is apparent to all and very few people can be found today, who will not accede to the fact that the construction of permanent highways is of much greater importance to the welfare of the general public, from a financial, social and economic standpoint than any other issue of national interest.

Situated in close proximity to the City of Detroit, three of the main arteries from that city passing through its boundaries, Oakland County is confronted with a problem greater than that of any other county in the state.

At the time the million dollar bond issue was presented to the people, traffic conditions were such that the gravel road was considered good construction. Under present conditions, however, with heavily loaded trucks carrying an ever-increasing volume of freight, this type of improvement is no longer sufficient for our main routes of travel.

Progress is dependent to a large extent upon necessity and sound business principles require that only such expenditures be made for any particular project, which are necessary to meet the situation economically. Hence the construction of gravel roads can in no wise be considered a mistake from the engineer's standpoint nor lack of foresight on the part of the public at large. It was one step in the development of our highway program, and no one will deny the fact that these roads have served well the purpose for which they were built.

When we note the great change which has taken place in traffic conditions within the last few years and consider further development which will undoubtedly be made along this line in the near future, we are convinced that roads must be built not only for today and tomorrow but also for the years that are to come. It is much cheaper, in the long run, to build a road upon an enduring foundation than to be continually adding to, repairing and at no time possessing the proper kind of a highway.

The big question in this county today is the handling of traffic between Pontiac and Detroit. While a definite solution to this problem has not as yet been reached, it would seem that a dual highway with one-way traffic will be necessary. The problems which interpose are many and some of them serious in their nature. However, this matter is a very urgent one and there is little doubt but that definite arrangements will soon be made to handle this question in an adequate manner.

The proper design of a concrete pavement to withstand heavy truck traffic is a matter of much study among engineers. Were there only touring cars or light trucks to consider, the design would be greatly simplified. On the contrary, however, we are confronted with trucks weighing many tons, passing and repassing over our highways in an almost endless stream, in fair weather and foul. The wonder is that even our concrete roads have stood so well the tremendous shock and vibration incident to this great traffic. And yet the truck is here to stay. It is an important and indispensable element in our transportation program.

The question arises—Shall we limit the weight of our trucks and the loads which they shall carry? An attempt has already been made to regulate weights by requiring extra wide tires proportionate to the load, but the evil has not been cured. It has been suggested that eventually the truck owner will realize that, as a business proposition, overloading of trucks is a poor policy. We are not convinced that this is true. The tendency is rather to load the truck far beyond its proper carrying capacity and grasp the present dollar rather than to prolong the life of the truck.

Viewed from the practical standpoint, we must adopt one of two plans.

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We must either construct a road for trucks alone or else we must build all our highways to sustain the truck burden. As an economic problem it would seem that the establishment of a truck highway was the better plan. Since a road designed for truck traffic is essentially a business consideration, it would naturally follow the most direct route. This means that, between Pontiac and Detroit, such a route would coincide practically with Woodward Avenue. Touring cars might take the longer route and could be compelled to do so for the general good. To condemn land parallel to or near the present highway for a truck route would entail an expenditure almost prohibitive, but the problem must be met. This is a matter of concern not only to the county and state, but to the nation as a whole. Hence it is probable that a scientific solution of this problem will soon be forthcoming.

Proper legislation must first be enacted to permit the building of wider roads. However, there are certain features of our existing highways which could be greatly improved and which would do much to relieve the congestion. All of the roads leading out of Detroit should be widened to permit the establishment of double highways.

Ultimately the road known as the John R. road in the eastern portion of the county will be a main thoroughfare and will play an important part in relieving congestion on lower Woodward Avenue. This road, when improved, should be constructed sufficiently wide to care for future traffic. The City of Detroit will grow, while the arteries of travel leading out of Detroit are naturally limited as to number. The same is true of the proposed outlet by Livernois Avenue and its extension through Oakland County.

Another feature which is now receiving due consideration is the elimination of right angle turns. In many places, bad corners and sharp curves are being removed and easy curves constructed in their stead. This not only renders the roads safer for travel but also improves their appearance to a considerable extent.

Taken as a whole, the program for good roads represents a huge task, but, like every other large undertaking, is well worth all the effort necessary to carry it to completion. Co-operation is the keynote to success. Let everyone in the community continue to boost good roads in the future, as they have in the past, that Oakland County may maintain its rank as one of the most progressive counties in the state.