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Memorandum for Governors' Conference: Highway Construction, Regulation, and Safety

Strom Thurmond

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MEMORANDUM FOR GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION, REGULATION, AND SAFETY

1. Financing

There is some ground for the contention that the federal excise tax collections from highway users is too far out of line with federal expenditures on highways. The federal government collects more than a billion dollars a year in excise taxes on gasoline, new car sales, oil, tires, and accessories. In return, it appropriates less than half a billion dollars a year for highway aid to states.

Despite this policy, the United States Public Roads Administration balks at any diversion of state highway funds to other purposes. In addition, the Public Roads Administration insists on telling the states how and where they shall spend federal highway funds and state funds used to match them.

The average highway user is not only willing, but glad to pay a fair use charge for good roads. He realizes that it is a cost he must meet, like his telephone bill or his electric lights. But he would rebel if he knew that for every dollar he pays in this way, only 50 cents is being returned to him in the form of good roads.
2. Rural Roads

It is recognized that funds available for highway construction in the next few years will provide only a fraction of what is needed to develop an excellent highway system. Out of this fact grows the assumption that highway funds should be spent on the primary system, which constitutes only 20% of the total mileage, but which carries 90% of the traffic.

However, the primary system itself is of value only insofar as it possesses an adequate system of feeder roads. It appears evident that the United States Public Roads Administration and other Washington control agencies have not fully recognized this fact.

The need for more paved mileage of rural roads deserves more attention on both federal and state levels. Our secondary roads are the life-lines of our trunk arteries, and they should be provided with an all-weather surfacing.

In South Carolina we have about 45,000 miles of rural roads, only 10,000 miles of which are paved. I am glad to say, however, that South Carolina recognizes the value and the need of such roads. Since World War II we have completed, or have under contract, 3,750 miles of hard surface roads which previously were dirt roads. This work is costing about $66,000,000, including bridge construction.
3. Sizes of Trucks

The importance of the trucking industry in American economy cannot be denied, and undue efforts to restrict the use of trucks will prove futile.

South Carolina is not one of those states which hold to the theory that the truck is nothing more than a menace on the highways. We have sought to arrive at the proper regulation of the size and weights of trucks to be employed, while at the same time protecting highway safety and the condition of our roads. With roads founded on the development of a useful addition to our economic and many of our communities would lose any form of modern transportation service were it not for trucks.

Much has been said about prohibiting trucks on the highways which have axle loads over 18,000 pounds. We know that there is a limit to the truck axle loads we ought to permit, but we have no evidence that 18,000 pounds is the proper limit. South Carolina now has an axle load limit of 20,000 pounds, which we believe to be proper.

Although heavy trucks are doing irreparable damage to highways all over the country, our highway engineers tell me that they are not certain that it is the 18,000 to 20,000-pound axle loads which are causing the damage. Our engineers are more inclined to believe that the real damage is being done by illegally-loaded trucks carrying more than the 20,000-pound axle loads. The answer, therefore, may lie in proper enforcement of present regulations, with increased cooperation from the truckers.
4. Safety

In the field of safety, South Carolina has taken a most progressive step this year. We have adopted, almost in its entirety, Act V of the "Uniform Code on Rules of the Road."

According to data recently published, South Carolina's accident rate was 11.2 per 100 million miles of vehicle travel in 1948, as compared with a national average of 8.1. We sincerely hope that our new uniform Rules of the Road Act will improve our standing in this respect.

The 32,000 traffic deaths in the United States last year are enough to demand that every possible step be taken to reduce the toll.

By adopting uniform rules of the road designed to effect the maximum safety, every state can make an immediate contribution to safety efforts.
### The South Carolina State Highway System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Road Mileage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary System</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stand. Paving</td>
<td>2,648.84 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bit. surf</td>
<td>4,615.51 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impr. earth</td>
<td>34.09 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unimpr. earth</td>
<td>551.11 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>total pri. system</td>
<td>7,849.55 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary System</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>stand. paving</td>
<td>124.79 miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>bit. surf</td>
<td>1,955.30 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impr. earth</td>
<td>70.29 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unimpr. earth</td>
<td>7,679.50 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total second</td>
<td>9,829.88 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Federal Aid**

**Roads and Bridges—Completed Projects**
- previous years: $177,412,504.29
- Year ending 6/30/48: $13,357,088.18
- Total: $190,769,592.47

**Maintenance Expenditures**
- Year ending June 30, 1948: $8,528,315.16

**Disbursements Year Ending 6/30/48**
- Total: $52,637,535.42

**Motor Vehicle Division**
- Licenses issued Yr. End 6/30/48: 473,810
- Increase over prev. yr: 13.49%
- Collections: $3,792,464.40
- Increase over prev. yr: 14.36%
- State Highway Patrol: 190 offc and men
- Fines paid 6/30/48: $699,721.25
THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Total Road Mileage.......................... 17,679.35 miles

Primary System............................

stand. Paving.............................. 2,648.84 miles
bit. surf................................. 4,615.51 miles
impr. earth............................... 34.09 miles
unimpr. earth............................. 551.11 miles
total pri. system.......................... 7,849.55 miles

Secondary System..........................

stand. paving............................. 124.79 miles
bit. surf................................. 1,955.30 miles
impr. earth............................... 70.29 miles
unimpr. earth............................. 7,679.50 miles
total second.............................. 9,829.88 miles

Federal Aid
June 30, 1947-June 30, 1948........... $13,334,868.10

Roads and Bridges-Completed Projects

previous years............................ $177,412,504.29
Year ending 6/30/48...................... 13,357,088.18
Total.................................. 190,769,592.47

Maintenance Expenditures
Year ending June 30, 1948............... $8,528,315.16

Disbursements Year Ending 6/30/48........ $39,031,562.11
Surplus.................................. 13,605,973.31
Total.................................. 52,637,535.42

Motor Vehicle Division
Licenses issued Yr. End 6/30/48........ 473,810
Increase over prev. yr.................. 13.49%
Collections................................ $3,792,464.40
Increase over prev. yr.................. 14.36%
State Highway Patrol.................... 190 offc and men
fines paid 6/30/48....................... $699,721.25