

be included in automobile construction to guarantee the automobile purchaser with the maximum amount of safety features in the automobile. That is one side of the coin. The other side of the coin is the building of safety features into the highways themselves and, as I understand, that is the subject matter of these deliberations.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, enacted nearly 11 years ago, imposed a tremendous task upon the State highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads, in that they were asked to build the greatest public works project in history—41,000 miles of high-speed, access-controlled highways, in addition to the regular Federal-aid highway program, and to do this within a limited period of time.

The Interstate System will not be completed on schedule, but this is largely because of lack of adequate financing, not because of failure of our highway builders. In terms of production, the location and building of highways, the State highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads have done a magnificent job.

Despite this fine work, or more likely because of it, not enough attention has been given to making our highways as safe as possible. The sheer magnitude of the job of locating, designing, and building a 41,000-mile system of high-speed highways within a limited time may have so occupied the time and attention of our highway builders that they overlooked some safety measures which now appear obvious.

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that there are many unnecessary hazards within the rights-of-way of our most modern highways. Any observant driver can point out some of these hazards, such as culverts, bridge piers, unnecessary signs, improperly placed guardrails, deep ditches, and steep cut and fill banks, and trees and boulders which "beautify" the highway. Collision with any of these can kill a motorist who has the misfortune to drive or be forced off the paved roadway.

Drivers veer off high-speed highways for a variety of reasons. In some cases the driver is at fault; he may be drunk, speeding, careless, or asleep. In other cases careful, law-abiding drivers may swerve to miss a child or an animal or a disabled car, may hit a slick or icy spot, or be forced off the highway by another car.

Regardless of the reasons why a driver may leave the paved portion of a high-speed highway, roadside areas should be sufficiently clear of obstructions to give him an opportunity to regain control of his car. He and his passengers should be given a reasonable chance of survival and not be faced with the death penalty for a comparatively minor error.

Drivers and their passengers have not been given that chance in many instances in the past. According to figures published by the National Safety Council, out of 49,000 traffic fatalities in 1965, 17,100—or 35 percent—were the result of single-car accidents in which cars left the roadway and overturned or collided with something. A substantial number of these 17,100 people—and thousands killed in other years—might be alive if more attention had been paid to clear, unobstructed roadside areas.

Past investigations and hearings of this subcommittee have resulted in the highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads focusing increased attention on important elements of the Federal-aid highway program, and I congratulate the subcommittee for getting those results. I am satisfied that these hearings will prove equally as valuable as any