

HIGHWAY SAFETY, DESIGN, AND OPERATIONS

Roadside Hazards

TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1967

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY
PROGRAM OF THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to recess, at 10:10 a.m., in room 2167, Rayburn Building, Hon. John A. Blatnik (chairman) presiding.

Present: Messrs. Fallon (chairman), Blatnik (subcommittee chairman), Kluczynski, McCarthy, Howard, Cramer, Cleveland, Clausen, McEwen, Duncan, and McDonald.

Staff present: Same as previous day, and John P. Constandy, assistant chief counsel.

Mr. BLATNIK. The Special Subcommittee on the Federal-Aid Highway Program will please come to order.

Today we resume public hearings on the design and operational efficiency of our highways, roads, and streets.

The testimony we have received thus far has emphasized the roadside hazard problem. In that connection, the Chair would like to point out at this time results of a recent study of fatal accidents on certain sections of the Interstate System, which will be discussed at a greater length later on in the hearings. This study shows that approximately 60 percent of such accidents involved the single car, "ran off the road," category. In this group of accidents, vehicles left the traveled roadway and either overturned or, as in most cases, struck some type of fixed object, with fatal results.

With 53,000 Americans killed—men, women and children—in traffic accidents last year alone, in the year 1966, and another 1,900,000 injured, many of them crippled permanently for life, it becomes more important than ever that the causes of highway crashes be identified and corrected wherever possible and wherever they may be.

We are all aware of the danger that stems from the presence on our highways of the unskilled or reckless driver, sometimes referred to as the "nut behind the wheel." We are also aware of some deficiencies in the vehicle. We have two important factors, the driver and the vehicle. The testimony in these hearings has shown that rather little, if not far too little, attention has focused on the third source of danger; that is, the road itself.

It is not surprising to hear that many of our older roads which, like Topsy, "just grew" as the population grew, are a conglomeration of design deficiencies. It is understandable that many of these old roads, which date back many years, would require almost complete recon-