

SUMMARY

In closing I would like to express my own philosophy with regard to the role of the highway engineer in the general field of safety. A highway accident, we must agree, has to be caused by one or a combination of three circumstances; namely (1) the driver, (2) the motor vehicle, (3) the highway.

Under present laws the ability of the driver can range all the way from a physical or a mental weakling with low IQ, poor eyes, slow reaction time, etc., to a perfect physical specimen with high mentality. Nearly every state permits vehicles on its highways ranging all the way from one with poor steering apparatus, slick tires, etc., to perfectly operating machines. The driver and the automobile cannot, and it is my prediction will not, ever come under the purview or jurisdiction of the highway designer or traffic engineer. However, there is something we can do to improve the design and operational characteristics of all highways. It is believed that such meetings as this can provide the very best forum for an exchange of views among experts in this field. We are obligated to not only be sure that the facilities we are now constructing are designed as safely as possible, but we are further obligated to ceaselessly point out to administrators in our field the need to take corrective measures on the many, many miles of highways now in use which are just as backward as the driver with low mentality or the automobile with poor steering apparatus and slick tires. We should carefully study all accident reports and design features to determine whether they may have been the cause of accidents. Only in this way can we eliminate those highway design features which contribute to our rising accident rate.

Mr. CONSTANDY. Mr. Wilkes.

Mr. WILKES. Some of my remarks will repeat comments made before. The highways we saw would meet the existing design standards, and the bridges could comply with the governing specifications. I think I can make this statement safely.

This would then suggest that either our standards need revising or they need to be expanded to cover the deficiencies that we observed and were so apparent. However, I believe there is a greater need for highway engineers at all levels, the designers, supervisors, construction men, maintenance men, inspectors, to be made aware of the need for their respective responsibilities to produce the highway facility that will provide maximum safety by the elimination of these hazards.

This can only be done by the chief administrative officer of each State. He must impress on all employees the importance and the high priority for producing this total design for highway safety.

We have seen in this presentation evidence of the lack of attention to details of design and construction which are necessary to produce this safest environment for the users of the Interstate Highway System.

In many cases the deficiency could be corrected with little or no increase in construction costs. In other cases, the initial cost may be substantially increased. However, as Mr. Constandy has pointed out, if consideration is given to the total cost, the initial construction, the maintenance, the accidents, the tragic loss of life and limb, the additional expenditure and money may well be justified.

The greatest deterrent to the correction of existing deficiency of bridge width and the inadequate side clearance is the lack of adequate financing. I am confident that future designs will incorporate the several features that have been found to provide the maximum safety to the highway users. The efforts made with the AASHO traffic committee and the expressions of genuine concern at all levels of government, and especially the hearings held by this special subcommittee,