

# Klein Gives State Highway Program

(By ROY A. KLEIN)  
In the Oregon Motorist.

The State Highway program has an appeal to all because it touches the lives of everyone and is an ever-present problem. The State Highway System is a means by which many men have had a part. The pioneer work of such men as Simon Benson and John B. Yeon have laid the foundation of our present system. The program has brought to the state a lot of favorable publicity.

Rome laid its claim to fame for 2000 years to roads built in the early days of the empire. Today there are more roads in Oregon than the old Romans ever had. If the old Roman roads had been subject to the heavy traffic which the modern Oregon roads have, they would not have lasted as well as they have. To duplicate the Roman roads today would cost \$250,000 per mile. The little says the streets of Heaven are paved with gold and we are told that the roads to Hell are paved with gold intentions. Well, if these roads which are paved with gold intentions do not last any better than they do here, they must be in poor condition.

The Oregon State Highway System is 4450 miles in length. This distance would require 151 days traveling of 8 hours each day, at 20 miles per hour, to cover the system. Of the total, 350 miles are paved. 1500 are surfaced with crushed stone and 255 miles are graded but unsurfaced. These are all done to state standards. There are left 1715 miles of unpaved roads.

The State Highway Department was organized in 1915. It had a small beginning in directing the expenditure of county funds, and a small amount of state funds. In 1917 it was re-organized into its present form. There are three highway commissioners who serve without pay and who select the state highway engineer, who is the executive officer of the commission. The commissioners have the confidence of the people. Over \$6,000,000 has been spent by the highway commission to date in every county and in the most remote sections of the state. Everyone readily recalls the names of Benson, Yeon, Booth, Thompson, Kiddle, Barratt, who served the state well and faithfully. The highway program is the greatest economic work the state has ever undertaken.

Considering the delays in getting started due to two war years, the progress has been remarkable. The peak of expenditures was reached in 1921 with \$18,000,000, and the total in 1922 was \$12,000,000 and \$11,000,000 in 1923.

The work accomplished has been the paving of the Pacific highway and the Columbia River highway from Seaside to The Dalles, the completion of the Old Oregon Trail, a great deal of progress on the John Day and Hooey-Swit highways, competing roads from the Pacific highway to Central Oregon and access in winter to Coos Bay, Tillamook, Newport and across the Blue Mountains.

There were 45,000 motor vehicles registered in the state in 1917, 166,000 in 1923 and there will not be less than 180,000 in 1924. Last year's registration would make a line of cars, each one touching the other and extending the length of the Pacific highway from Portland to the California state line, 445 miles, and another line extending from Portland through McMinnville to Monmouth on the west side. At \$200 each the total value of these is in excess of \$45,000,000. This is more than has been spent in the state highway system to date. The increase of 21,000 last year alone would extend from Portland over the Columbia River highway to Mosier. To provide roads for this great number of our home cars and the tens of thousands of visitors' cars is the task of your highway commission in construction and maintaining the state highway system.

The highway commission does other than strictly road work. There is the preservation of trees along the roadside. In a tree planting campaign between The Dalles and Pendleton, 2000 trees were planted in one day in Sherman county by the school children. Then there is the preservation of forest resources. It may be made possible to exchange private timber holdings along the highway for timber holdings in the national forests. We hope for legislation to make this possible. We want to preserve the forest south of Bend and the timber on the Blue mountain and near Wallawa lake as noteworthy examples.

Then there are park sites acquired by the state as gifts from public spirited citizens such as the Bradley, Holman and Mayer park sites.

Roads have been built to such scenic resorts as Crater lake, Oregon caves, Wallawa lake and the

Mount Hood loop will soon be completed.

Advertising signs are a hind on the landscape and the commission is doing its best to eliminate them from the state highways. They are not permitted within the right of way limits, but there is no way to prohibit them from private property outside the road limits. This is a growing evil and must be fought. A tax is suggested on advertising signs on roads, which may be used as a road fund.

The commission has provided distances and direction signs on practically the entire improved portions of the highway system. Last winter all state highways were kept open. Snow plows have been placed at strategic points.

Oregon was one of the first states to capitalize motor license fees. Due to the great increase in registration figures, the returns have far exceeded the most extravagant claims of the first advocates of the plan. The license fees are based on weight for autos and on the width for trucks. This is an equitable plan—a license or privilege tax. There is no property tax on motor vehicles in this state, and this is often overlooked in comparing schedules with other states. The average license fee in 1923 was \$24.46 per car, or a total of \$4,069,000. In 1922, after deducting administrative costs three-fourths of the total goes into the state highway funds and the balance to the county road funds. The state's share was in excess of \$2,500,000 last year.

In the gasoline tax Oregon also pioneered. The first tax of one cent per gallon became effective in 1917 and was increased to two cents in 1921 and three cents in 1923. This is the most equitable of all taxes because the user pays in proportion as he uses the road. The tax is paid at the source of importing companies. The cost of collection is negligible, about \$2,000 per year, and the tax is paid willingly. The income from four cents from this source is a large item. Refunds are provided for gasoline used for industrial uses, such as pumps, farm tractors, boats, etc. Thirty-seven states now have gas taxes ranging all the way from one to four cents. Arkansas has four cents, several now have three cents, although Oregon was the first to go in three cents. The average motorist per car in Oregon is \$4.20, for each one cent tax, or \$12.20 per registration. This tax produced nearly \$2,000,000 for the state highway fund in 1923.

The constitutional limit of bonded indebtedness for state highways is 4 per cent of the total assessed valuation of the state and is equal to \$4,000,000. The first issue in 1917 was \$6,000,000, other issues since that time being the total sold to date to \$23,700,000, of which \$250,000 has matured and been paid. The bonds are serial bonds maturing 1-20 each year, beginning with the sixth year.

A one-fourth mill general state levy produces \$250,000 annually. This is the only direct property tax for state highways, and is used for administrative purposes. It was taken away for two years, but was restored by the legislature for last year.

Federal co-operation has played an important part in carrying out the state highway program. The total federal aid for post roads apportioned to Oregon, including 1923, is \$8,500,000. Our share for 1924 is \$1,025,000 and for 1925, \$1,182,000. This money is spent on the federal aid highway system which includes the principal highways of the state. This system is 2588 miles long and embraces roads of interstate and intrastate importance. The federal aid for post roads is spent in cooperation with state funds and subject to the approval of the Bureau of Public Roads. This bureau required high standards which has assisted greatly in raising the quality of road construction in this state. The bureau is to be complimented on their high standards. Our relations with the bureau have been extremely pleasant. The federal forest funds allotted to Oregon including 1925, are \$2,900,000. Forest funds are spent in cooperation with state and county funds under supervision of the Bureau of Public Roads. Such roads as the Mount Hood Loop, McKenzie highway, Crater Lake road, Claves road, Austin, Unity, Crooked, Post Skummi and others are the result of this federal aid. It has been an important factor in state highway development in this county cooperation with the state has totaled to date \$9,000,000.

Corporation cooperation is obtained mostly from railroad companies and used principally in the elimination of railroad crossings. It has amounted to approximately \$24,000 to date.

In 1924 bond principal and interest will amount to approximately \$2,100,000 which will increase annually until 1927 when a figure of \$2,500,000 will be reached, then it will remain about stationary until 1931 after which it will decline.

Maintenance is an increasing item with the increase in the traffic on the roads. The road surfaces will wear out, particularly macadam, and must be renewed. They must be kept smooth. Rides must be removed and ditches must be kept open for drainage, wood bridges must be renewed, shoulders maintained, etc. Our estimate for 1924 for this feature is \$1,000,000.

Administration costs about five and a half per cent of the total funds available. A large amount of surplus war equipment, trucks, tractors, machinery, tools, has come to this state and has been used to good

advantage in construction and maintenance.

The present highway situation may be summed up thus: With the exhaustion of bond funds which is to be done must be paid out of current funds. Under the present increase of motor vehicles the proceeds of the motor license fees and gasoline tax, together with the present one-quarter mill state tax and federal cooperation, equal to the present act, and also such county cooperation as may be secured, will be sufficient to pay maturing bond obligations and insure necessary maintenance and betterments and provide a modest sum for new construction. The program must slow up under these conditions.

It is rumored that an attempt will be made in the next legislature to reduce the license fees on second hand or old cars. Such a course is ill advised because it will reduce the income materials, and thus reduce the amount of possible new construction in that ratio.

When motor license fees are transmitted into paved highways, even the high fees in Oregon are the most productive investment the motorist can make. This cost is only a fraction of the increased cost of tires, gasoline and repairs necessitated by bad roads.

The actual accomplishment of work during the present year has been somewhat less than during the two or three years previous because of the lesser amount of funds available. However, the year's work has been very gratifying to the state highway commission for the reason that it will effect the final coupling up of many completed sections of highway which heretofore have not been available for complete service by reason of uncompleted sections adjacent. The completion of these units will bring closer the completion of that comprehensive system of state highways toward which the supporters of the highway program have been working since 1917 and as one highway after another has been opened up, the realization has come to all extensive users of the roads that the millions of dollars which have been invested in highway construction during the past seven years have been wisely invested, and that the point has now been reached where these millions are coming back to the dividends of increased business, better markets, higher property values and the many other benefits that go hand in hand with good roads and economical transportation.

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enced in the Philippines and adjacent islands have driven the sharks into less disturbed waters. It is said that in the days when Dewey's ships were lying in the bay near Cavite, "swimming cat" for the crew was sounded each day, but now crews of the American fleet are forbidden to swim in the deep water unless they remain within the wire screening at Cananoy Bay, where the Cavite naval station is located.

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