

## \$85,000,000 FOR ROADS

### Recent Legislation Provides for System of Improved Highways How states May Secure Them.

The Weekly News Letter of the United States Department of Agriculture contains the following:

The sum of \$85,000,000 of Federal funds is made available for the construction of rural roads, by the passage of the Federal aid road bill which became a law on July 11. Of this sum \$75,000,000 is to be expended for the construction of rural post roads under co-operative arrangements with the highway departments of the various states, and \$10,000,000 is to be expended for roads and trails within or partly within the national forests. The act limits the Federal Government's share in road work in co-operation with the states to 50 per cent of the estimated cost of construction. Federal aid may be extended to the construction of any rural post road, excluding all streets or roads in towns having a population of 2,500 or more, except the portions of such streets or roads on which the houses are, on an average, more than 200 feet apart.

Five million dollars is made available for expenditure during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1917, and thereafter the appropriation is increased at the rate of five millions a year until 1921, when the sum provided is twenty five millions, making a total of seventy five millions. In addition, an appropriation of \$1,000,000 a year for ten years—a total of \$10,000,000—is made available for the development of roads and trails wholly or partly within the national forests.

The class of roads to be built and the method of construction are to be mutually agreed upon by the Secretary of Agriculture and the state highway departments.

Project statements setting forth the proposed construction of any rural post road or roads in a state are to be submitted by the state highway department to the Secretary of Agriculture, and upon approval by the Secretary all necessary surveys, plans, specifications, and estimates must be furnished. The roads projected must be of a substantial character, and items covering engineering, and unforeseen contingencies are not to exceed 10 per cent of the total estimated cost of the work.

Upon completion of the work as approved by the Secretary, the amount set aside for the project is to be paid to the proper state official. The Secretary of Agriculture is given authority, in his discretion, to make partial payments as the work progresses, but not in excess of the Federal Government's pro rata share of the labor and material which have been actually put into the construction work nor in excess of \$10,000 per mile, exclusive of the cost of bridges of more than 20 feet clear span. All construction work is subject to the inspection and approval of the Secretary of Agriculture.

The various states securing aid under the provisions of this act are charged with the making of needed repairs and the preservation of a reasonably smooth surface, considering the type of the road, but are not obligated to make extraordinary repairs or undertake reconstruction. If, after due notice, a state fails to maintain a Federally aided road properly, the Secretary is required to refuse further aid until the road has

been properly repaired at state expense.

The sum of \$10,000,000 is made available in yearly appropriations of \$1,000,000 for the co-operative construction and maintenance of roads and trails within or partly within the national forests by the United States, states, territories or counties in which the forests lie. Expenditures for this purpose are not to exceed 10 per cent of the value of the timber and forage resources available for income upon the national forests where the roads or trails are constructed. Beginning with the next fiscal year after the agreement is made between the Secretary of Agriculture and a state, territory, or county for the co-operative construction of such roads, 10 per cent of all revenues from such forests are to be applied toward reimbursing the United States Government for funds expended for road work until the whole amount advanced shall have been returned.

The objects sought through Federal aid to roads in the national forests are thus explained by the Secretary of Agriculture in his annual report for 1915, in which he recommends such legislation as well as Federal aid to rural post roads:

"The real agricultural problem within and near the forests is to make possible the successful occupancy and development of the lands that already have been opened to entry or have been patented. The mere private ownership of land does no insure successful use of it. In Oregon and Washington alone there are about 3,000,000 acres of logged-off land, much of it agricultural in character, now lying idle. In this condition speculative holding of the land for higher prices plays a large part. Another cause is the lack of transportation facilities. A settler may clear land and raise crops upon it, but he is helpless if he cannot market them. There are great areas of fertile land unused today on this account. In many sections near the national forests pioneer conditions still exist. The population is small, and the task of road building is beyond the means of the residents. There is little or no demand for timber, and the receipts from the forests which go to the community are small. The fact that the public property is not subject to taxation makes such communities feel, and very justly, that the forests are not contributing enough to local development.

"This situation should be changed. Assistance should be given in the building of roads to bring into productive use the resources of such regions. Therefore, the suggestion contained in the last annual report is repeated, that upon a showing of public necessity appropriations be made for specific roads and similar improvements, to be charged against the state's future share of receipts from the forests. Such action would promote the local development of agriculture and other resources.

"To secure the maximum use of the lands still remaining in Federal ownership, further legislation is needed. There must be a constructive program which will promote development and safeguard public interests. The aim should be to make these properties more useful, available to greater numbers, and effectively instrumental in building up industries."

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