

Interstate Highway System Building Said in High Gear in Most States

Editor's note: What progress is being made on the projected 41,000-mile nationwide network of superhighways? Following is the first of two dispatches telling what has been done so far—and of the problems that lie ahead.

By DAYTON MOORE
Washington—UPI—Construction of the 41,000-mile interstate system of superhighways, off to a slow start in 1956, is in high gear in most states today.

But it is lagging badly in a few. And it is threatened with a nationwide slowdown in 1961 unless Congress provides more money this year. As of last Nov. 30, 2,788 miles had been completed. Another 3,710 miles were under construction. The states have either spent or obligated nearly all of the 7.4 billion dollars in Federal funds apportioned to them so far.

Federal Highway Administrator Berttram D. Tallamy considers this progress satisfactory on an overall national basis. An aide said the end of "the tooling up period" has just about been reached.

But Chairman Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) of the Senate Highways Subcommittee expressed concern at the lag in some states. The subcommittee is investigating the matter.

"Some states have made satisfactory progress," he told United Press International. "But the tardiness of some others is quite disturbing."

Five states—Delaware, Georgia, Massachusetts, Tennessee and West Virginia—have blanks in the latest progress report. So has the District of Columbia.

Seventeen other states had completed less than 20 miles. They and their completed mileage were: Arkansas 9.6, Connecticut 18.3, Florida 4.1, Indiana 4.6, Kentucky 3.8, Louisiana 5.6, Maine 8.3, Maryland 11.5, Nebraska 0.5, Nevada 11.8, New Hampshire 10.2, New Jersey 5.8, New York 16.8, Rhode Island 8.7, South Carolina 12.7, Utah 17.4 and Vermont 5.3.

To Link Most Cities
However, most of these states showed up much better on the basis of funds obligated or construction underway.

Upon completion, the network of trunk-line, multi-lane highways will link together 90 per cent of the nation's cities with population of 50,000 or more as well as many smaller cities and towns. It also will serve about half the rural population.

Although it will comprise only 1.2 per cent of the nation's total mileage of roads and streets, it is expected to carry 20 per cent of all highway traffic.

But it will be several years before motorists will be able to drive over any long stretches of the superhighways marked by special red, white and blue shield-shaped signs. Most of the mileage completed so far has been in disconnected stretches of between five and ten miles each.

Construction got off to a slow start. But this wasn't unexpected because it takes from 18 to 24 months of preliminary work before a contract can be awarded. And most states didn't have much of a head start on planning work.

During the first year of the program, which got underway July 1, 1956, only 58 miles were completed out of 1,987 contracted for.

In the second year, construction began to pick up momentum. At year's end, 792 miles had been completed and 3,102 miles were under construction. Projects totalling 974 additional miles

had reached the contract stage.

The pickup quickened last summer after Congress provided for a temporary speed-up as an anti-recession measure. Congress increased authorizations for Federal aid for the interstate network by 800 million dollars for fiscal years 1959, 1960 and 1961.

The apportionments for 1959 and 1960 were made promptly. But those for 1961 are being delayed until Congress backs them up with money.

The Federal government is bearing nine-tenths of the cost of construction of the system. But, nevertheless, some states have had difficulty in raising their shares.

Other factors slowing down the program in some states have been inadequate laws on acquisition of right-of-ways and a shortage of engineers.

Billboard Bonus Due
It is too early to determine to what extent the states will comply with the new Federal regulations for control of billboard advertising along the superhighways. States will receive a one-half of one per cent bonus on projects on which the regulations are followed.

Four states—Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Virginia—already have enacted necessary legislation or have signified an intention of doing so.

Extent of observance of the regulations is entirely up to the states. The Federal law is such that the result could be a patchwork with some stretches with controlled billboards running into others with billboards as thick as ever, even within an individual state.

(Next: The Financial Problem.)

Cuban Executions Not Likely To Affect Americans

Washington, (Science Service) — The recent wave of war-crime executions of the supporters of Batista in Cuba is not thought here to be likely to have any deterrent effect of future counter-revolutionary activity in the island republic.

Except for the persons executed, who are naturally effectively removed from political activity, the executions are thought to be more to incite hate and later attempts at retaliation.

In any event, it is a dangerous precedent. In view of the history of repeated revolutions in Latin American countries, it is entirely possible that the new leader Castro may one day find himself among the long line of ousted heads of state. If that happens, his own example may be seized upon as an excuse for more war-crime executions, but it will then be the Castro followers who will be the victims.

No Psychological Effect
Although the American public is shocked by the display of violence and bloody retaliation, the executions here do not anticipate any real psychological effect on the people of the United States.

It is true that the example of one spectacular suicide of a prominent person may set off a wave of suicides, often making use of the same means of self-destruction. When one person dramatically jumps from the top of the Washington Monument, you are likely to read later of other persons who jump from high public places. Nevertheless, the bloody executions in Cuba are not thought likely to incite violence in this country.

The American people do not feel so close to the people of Cuba that they are likely to identify themselves with either the victims or those who point the guns.

Unfortunately, (or fortunately, according to the point of view) Americans are more likely to forget the whole thing with a shrug and an "Oh, well, those Latinos are always killing each other instead of voting them out of office as we do."

Swiss Men Reject Votes for Women
Bern, Switzerland—UPI—The men of Switzerland decided Sunday, 654,924 to 323,306, that woman's place is in the home—not in the voting booth.

By that vote, the men who are Switzerland's only legal voters turned down a government proposal which would have given women the vote in federal elections. Similar local propositions have been rejected repeatedly.

Welfare, Pension Audits
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