

## Outlook for Highway Beautification

# TAKE A RIDE ON

*"What worth is beauty if it be not seen?"*

**H**IGHWAY PLANNERS of the Seventies and beyond can be expected to employ that Italian proverb in magnitude and with frequency. Their hope is to generate public enthusiasm for their continuing primary function of providing a modern, safe, and convenient transportation system.

But a beauty pitch isn't just icing to sell the cake.

"There is a new philosophy underlying the highway program," says Ralph R. Bartelsmeyer, deputy federal highway administrator. "It is predicated on the fact that social responsibility is an important aspect of highway building. We must constantly ask ourselves if we are seeking to satisfy transportation needs at the expense of other vital needs of the American people."

One of those high priority needs, kindled anew by Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson, blessed by President Nixon, and almost demanded by the public is environmental improvement and beautification.

Short and intermediate term objectives of the highway program are to transport people to witness the beauty of the land without disrupting it.

Landscape treatment of trees, shrubs and ground cover always will be important, believes George H. Andrews, chairman of the Roadside Development Committee of the American Association of State Highway Officials. "We can make a drive on the highway a pleasant experience," he said. "We can make the highway appear that it belongs where it has been constructed, in-

stead of a foreign element forcing itself through the community."

What planners dream about is not presently within the scope and responsibility of the Federal Highway Administration. Planners hope to see the day when highway construction will be the motivating force for massive, multiple-use land development and beautification.

Highway acts of 1965, 1968 and 1970 express their desires and measure their progress. They are having some success.

### Traveling on Interstate 00

Take a ride, for a moment, on a composite, though in part fictional, Interstate 00, illustrating some successes to date and thinking of the future.

Interstate 00 begins by tackling and finding a solution to the complex problem of passing through the nation's major metropolitan center, New York City.

"Urban land is too scarce and valuable for highway rights-of-way to be devoted solely to the movement of vehicles," says Harter M. Rupert of FHA's Environmental Development Division.

Therefore, the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, as our composite interstate is called there, incorporates a highway, a pedestrian mall-park, and the existing waterfront and commercial activities.

Rather than constructing a surface arterial that would slice through and destroy an educational institution at Troy, N.Y., the highway was built in such a way that has instead spurred the college's growth.

A depressed section 514 ft. long with two lanes and a 10-ft. emergency lane was built, with Russell

Sage College picking up the tab for the difference in cost of the tunnel as opposed to the surface arterial. Now the college has a campus with no vehicles, unified with a curving walkway upon which the buildings front.

Early in its continental S-curve route, Interstate 00 meets the criticism of conservationists that charge roads with upsetting and destroying wildlife ecology. In Tioga County, New York, ducks and birds have found a quiet nesting place in the median strip. A stock fence protects the sanctuary, and provision has been made for motorists to view the area.

### Widened Corridors

Across Ohio and Indiana, Interstate 00's conventional corridor widens from 300 feet to 3,000 ft. at one point to take in an area with historical significance. Where the small community had objected to a major highway but lacked funds to develop the historical site, the two parties came to a satisfactory compromise.

Other 3,000 ft. bulges incorporate picnic areas and even golf courses. Through corn-rich Illinois, farmers are allowed to continue planting on easements, thereby reducing to a minimum the amount of valuable land taken out of food production.

Through the scenic Ozarks, Interstate 00's access control fence is moved to the toe of the slope and to the top of slopes adjacent to the roadway to permit the construction on rights-of-way of foot, bicycle, and bridal paths. Communities were encouraged to develop small parks or "sitting areas" along the outside edges of the right-of-way.

# INTERSTATE 00

Through downtown Oklahoma City, the interstate takes an elevated route and provides beneath the roadway 1,189 much needed parking spaces.

Curving northward into Nebraska, the highway is responsible for the development of lakes for fishing and boating, creating recreational facilities where they never before existed. In South Dakota, an embankment gives the Rosebud Indian Reservation a lake for fishing, swimming and boating. The lake also serves as a watershed storage facility.

In Utah the highway's horizontal and vertical alignment was adjusted to incorporate within the median a railroad and a creek. This simple and functional effort often goes unnoticed, yet it avoids a multitude of problems that could be encountered if rail, stream and roadway had followed different alignments.

## Viaduct Space Utilized

Spokane, Wash., is using the viaduct area for parking, maintenance and recreation facilities. A building is being considered and would be constructed by the Associated General Contractors for use during weekends and evenings as an industrial training center. During the daytime, the facility is planned as a industrial training shop for Lewis and Clark High School. Business district parking spaces will be used by nearby churches on Sunday.

Construction has begun on a pedestrian plaza over the Interstate in the central business district of Seattle. This project, involving private enterprise through the construction of a 20-story office build-

ing and adjoining underground parking garage, will be constructed partly on private land and partly on the outside edges of the interstate right-of-way through a long-term lease arrangement.

The Department of Highways will build a platform over the depressed 12-lane freeway section, with the City of Seattle, through general obligation bonds, building public parking facilities on the east side of the freeway opposite the privately-developed office building. Users of the public parking facilities will be able to cross over the freeway, and the top surfaces of both the public and privately-developed garages will be landscaped and maintained by the Seattle Park Department.

All along Interstate 00, travelers would not see a single outdoor advertising billboard or junkyard. These would either be removed or screened from view by landscape plantings. At regular intervals, there would be publicly owned and controlled information center buildings and an increased number of rest areas.

There you have Interstate 00; some of it reality, some still a dream. This composite of ideas comes from three speakers who appeared on the program of the 29th annual short course on roadside development, co-sponsored by the Ohio Department of Highways and Ohio State University's Department of Landscape Architecture.

## Formula for Achievement

How will this new dimension in highway construction come about? Speaker Harter Rupert offered the formula.

It will take "civic" responsibility,

he said, explaining that the word civic is an acronym for five principles:

- Consideration of social, economic, and environmental effects.
- Interdisciplinary approach to these environmental problems.
- Value added through multiple use and joint development.
- Intergovernmental action.
- Citizen participation and community involvement.

"A most important aspect of this subject is that it is not so much **what** effects or factors that you consider, as much as it is **how** you study them, and **who** is involved in the study," he emphasized.

Rupert reported on two FHA activities that he felt would be helpful in carrying out the first principle. One is a set of written technical guidelines that would identify many of the social, economic and environmental elements likely to be encountered in highway projects. The second is a set of illustrated lectures to be distributed to highway personnel to "broaden backgrounds and promote greater awareness of environmental concerns."

Subject coverage will include ecology, traffic noise, architecture, pollution, recreation and parks, landscape architecture, and others.

Rupert defined the interdisciplinary approach as one bringing together a variety of professional disciplines and interests to develop in concert a wide range of alternatives and analyses for review and selection by the responsible public officials.

The Troy, N.Y., project involving Russell Sage College was cited by Rupert as an illustration of the

## Federal Spending Trend For Highway Beautification Is 'Definitely Up'

value added through multiple use and joint development. A recent FHA publication, he said, listed more than 700 multiple-use projects that are proposed, in progress or completed. These projects, he added, range from mini-parks and parking lots to wildlife refuges, schools, and high-rise buildings.

As an example of intergovernmental action, Ruper pointed to a committee in Miami, Fla., area. It includes representatives from 10 city and county groups that would be affected by Interstate Highway 395.

To get citizen involvement in a constructive way, FHA intends to try a process labeled "Charrette," developed by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. It has been used to get citizens' ideas for building educational facilities; hopefully it will work for building highways as well.

The technique is applied to study and resolve facility development problems within the context of total community planning. It requires major representation of community residents. The principal purpose is to arrive at implementable plans and solutions in a compressed time period, perhaps in about two weeks.

"The enthusiasm and imagination of ordinary citizens," says Rupert, "can succeed in opening up possibilities the experts had not thought of, or had not thought feasible—or in ways of overcoming budgetary and political constraints that had been taken for granted."

### AAN Suggestions

F. Raymond Brush, secretary of the American Association of Nurserymen, called for greater cooperation of highway departments with the nursery industry. He offered suggestions that would encourage more efficient highway landscaping:

1. All highway landscaping should be done under separate prime contracts.
2. All landscape contractors

should be prequalified based on a firm's proved experience in landscape contracting with special emphasis on highway landscaping.

3. A performance bond should be required just as for any other prime contract.

4. Pre-bid conferences should be held on any contract where special requirements or abnormal site situations are a problem.

5. Greater uniformity in inspection procedures.

6. More emphasis on the establishment and care of newly landscaped highway sites.

"Emphasis can be placed on this by requiring that highway bids be broken down in two parts," he said. "The first part would be for the establishment and care during the guarantee period. If you are going to require care and maintenance for more than 30 days from planting, then you should make sure that every bidding firm is making proper allowance for this."

### View at the Money Level

How much business can the landscape contracting and maintenance industries expect next year, or in the near future? Congress is presently wrestling with the key to the bank—appropriations. It has been a vigorous match since passage of the 1965 Highway Beautification Act.

Landscaping and roadside development has been considered a normal part of construction since 1938. But the act of 1965 included a provision for controlling billboards within 660 feet of Interstate and federal-aid primary highways. It also included a provision for the removal or screening of junkyards. Beautification was the motive. The federal government shares the cost of removal. States lose a portion of federal-aid highway funds for non-compliance.

"Virtually no other federal program of the size and scope of outdoor advertising control has en-

gendered a like amount of comment, controversy, and debate," said FHA deputy Bartlesmeyer.

Sign companies responded to the law (which didn't call for removal until 1970) by building bigger signs just outside the 660-ft. limit. FHA has responded by proposing in the 1970 Act an amendment to the 1965 Act that would extend the control "to the limits of visibility" for both billboards and junkyards.

While controversy raged over billboards, another section of the beautification act involving the most funds appropriated to date has been most successful, Bartlesmeyer said. "This is the phase involving landscaping, scenic enhancement, and the construction of roadside rest areas.

"Of the \$135 million in Federal funds appropriated under the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, \$125 million has been spent on landscaping and scenic enhancement."

The 1970 Act, approved by the Senate and presently being considered by the House, calls for landscaping and scenic enhancement of \$1.5 million for fiscal year 1972 and \$10 million for fiscal year 1973, Bartlesmeyer reported.

Funds earmarked under the Highway Beautification Act are in addition to those allocated as a normal part of highway construction, pointed out George MacInturff, chief of FHA's scenic enhancement division.

Since 1966, he said, within construction fund authorizations, some \$117.2 million has been approved for landscaping; \$315.7 million for erosion control; and \$107.8 million for roadside rest areas.

"Keep in mind, these are federal funds only," he said. State funds must be added to these figures to arrive at a total that might be spent for beautification. There is no way to determine just what the state figures will be, he added, but at the federal level the spending trend for beautification "is definitely up."