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"Harmony in
Diversity"

PORTLAND CITY CLUB BULLETIN

"Active
Citizenship"

VOLUME IV

PORTLAND, OREGON, AUGUST 29, 1924

NUMBER 46

FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 1924

Hotel Benson, 12:10

What Is Your Local Government Doing?

A CITY CLUB SERIES

BY CITY CLUB MEMBERS

FOURTH IN SERIES

JAMES H. POLHEMUS

*Chief Engineer and General Manager
Port of Portland*

SUBJECT

"How Portland's Harbor Competes with World Ports"

- September 5*— BEN H. RICE, Assistant Secretary, Columbia Basin Irrigation League.
STEREOPTICON LECTURE, "The Columbia Basin."
- September 12*— DR. THOMAS E. GREEN, American Red Cross,
"Reconstruction Work."
- September 19*— DR. JEREMIAH W. JENKS, Publicist and Economist
"Europe's Need—America's Opportunity."

Report on Highway Development Concluded

The second part of the Highway Development report, prepared by a special committee of the Port Development and Public Utilities Section, is presented in this issue of the *Bulletin*. The first part of the report describing the highway system of the state, and showing the relation existing between railways and motor vehicles was printed in the last issue of the *Bulletin*.

The Board of Governors had approved the report which will be presented to the Club for adoption at the regular meeting Friday, August 29th.

The report follows:

SECTION II

Highways the Natural Forerunners of Railroads

Highways have always been the forerunners of railroads in development of the West. They

have been the means of opening up the country until traffic attained sufficient volume to justify construction of a railroad. When a railroad was to be extended into a section where not even a trail had been made, the contractor's first step was to build a road for transportation of men and material. These facts suggest the course which highway construction should take hereafter.

State and Federal Aid Highway Systems Should Be Pushed To Completion Rapidly

Populated sections of Portland's territory are now or soon will be completely served by modern highways. This has been the purpose of construction of trunk highways connecting the centers of population. Ninety per cent of the population of Oregon and Washington is within ten miles of a highway and as 50 per cent of the population of these states is rural, highways are

Continued on page 2

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initiation fee.

CITY CLUB PURPOSE

*"To inform its members and the community in
public matters and to arouse them to a realization
of the obligations of citizenship."*

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HIGHWAY REPORT

Continued from page 1

the speediest means of connecting it with trade centers. Formerly the practice was to build short sections of road from farms to market centers. The policy of state construction with federal aid is to establish a system of trunk highways to connect with which local roads are built by local authorities, either simultaneously with construction of the trunk highways or soon thereafter. Being relieved of the cost of main highways, counties can now apply their funds to completion of local roads, which may now be pushed forward more rapidly. In Oregon 74 per cent, in Washington 83 per cent of the federal aid system is completed.

Undeveloped Sections of State Should Be Made Productive Through Highway Construction

But there remain large sections of country that have no railroads and no highways in the modern sense, and in which population is sparse or non-existent. These areas contribute nothing to the wealth of the state, have no funds for road construction and often are a barrier to use of the shortest routes between centers of population. In many instances they have great natural wealth, development of which awaits means of transportation, in a few cases they are deserts but must be crossed in order that residents on their borders may travel and trade together. It often happens that travel across these deserts leads to discovery of cultivable or irrigable land or mineral wealth which induces settlement.

These conditions suggest that the next stage in state highway construction should be extension through the large undeveloped and unpopulated areas. Settlement is almost shut out of the valleys of the Siletz, Nestucca, Smith, upper Siuslaw and Rogue Rivers through the coast counties of Oregon by lack of either roads or railroads. A road up the upper Umpqua river into the Cascade mountains also is needed. But the section that most urgently calls for action is the so-called high desert of central Oregon. From the southern base of the Blue Mountains on the north to the California line on the south, and from the Bend-Klamath road on the west to the Idaho line on the east, no highway in the modern sense of the word has been constructed, except for short disconnected stretches. In the eastern part of this area, which covers one-third of Oregon, are good grazing land and much timber and large tracts could produce rich yields of hay and grain under irrigation, as has been proved in some favored spots, but lack of roads cuts the country off

from markets. The same is true of considerable irrigable tracts in Lake county, which also has extensive pine forests, and of the northern part of the area described. Several of the lakes could yield commercial salts in great volume. That part of the desert around Fort Rock is said by geologists to be underlaid by an immense body of water which artesian wells would make available for irrigation.

For many years a demand has been made for construction of a railroad from east to west and from north to south across this area. At the recent hearing by the Interstate Commerce Commission on an application by the Oregon Public Service Commission for an order to the main railroad systems to build such lines much evidence was given as to potential traffic, but the railroad attorneys were at pains to prove that the lines could not be made to pay interest on their cost for many years. No doubt the railroad attorneys were over pessimistic and the advocates of the extensions were too optimistic. Predictions of the possibilities are doubtless subject to heavy discount, but the West has furnished so many examples of wealth produced in equally unpromising areas that they should not be dismissed as unworthy of attention.

Settlement of Undeveloped Areas Promoted By Highway Construction

When a concerted effort is being made to promote settlement of undeveloped sections of Oregon, it would seem to be a wise, forward-looking policy for the State to turn its attention to construction of roads through this vacant area. Natural roads already exist, but they are rough and in many places dangerous. If the state would grade the principal roads, which are already shown on its map, and surface them, with gravel or crushed rock, it would open the way for settlers to enter with automobiles and to haul their products to market with trucks so far as practicable. The pioneer spirit would lead them to discover resources not yet suspected. Irrigation would advance and the distance over which products can profitably be hauled by truck would increase as roads were extended and improved. In this manner traffic should gradually increase until it would be sufficient to induce construction of a railroad, which would carry products to distant markets. This has been the course of development in the West, especially since the days of speculative railroad building ended. Though railroads are no longer attracted by merely potential traffic, they are keen as ever for actual traffic which gives promise of steady increase.

Though this policy would entail large expenditure by the state in counties which can contribute little or nothing, it would add to the taxable property of the county traversed. It would place population in empty spaces, to which the settlers would give a value. It would cause land now idle to yield revenue to the state and it might conceivably prove that the much discussed high desert is as fictitious as was the great American desert. It would provide one remedy for high taxation, namely more taxable wealth and more tax payers.

In connection with extension of the highway system into and across undeveloped sections of the country, suggestions from a member of the committee are worthy of consideration. These suggestions will be found in detail in the Appendix.

Present Highway Construction Policy Justified By Reduced Transportation Costs

The liberal policy of highway construction pursued by these two states has been fully justified by the economy in cost of transportation which it has afforded their citizens and by the great increase of travel by motor tourists that it has attracted. Each year a larger number of persons in the East and Middle West take their vacation by making a motor tour of the Pacific Coast, and, once here, are not content until they have seen all three of the coast states. Connection of the highways of these states tempts their people to travel by car for both business and pleasure. The result has been a steady increase in the number of visitors to the scenic wonders of the coast, in the business of hotels, restaurants and garages and of all merchants with whom they deal. The money thus distributed in trade channels throughout these states has grown into many millions and the market for products of the farm and orchard is materially expanded. To a yearly growing degree the playground and summer resort of the nation and facilities for travel in comfort and safety prove a profitable investment.

Conclusions

1. That construction of the state highway system of Oregon and Washington has already been proved by results to be fully justified as a public investment for the general welfare and should be continued chiefly by means of revenue derived from the vehicles that use the highway.
2. That care should be taken to maintain the highways in good repair and to improve them, especially those leading to the principal scenic attractions such as Mt. Rainier, Mt. Baker, Mt. Adams, Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Hood, Mt. Jefferson, the Sisters, Crater Lake. The Columbia River

Highway, the Oregon Caves, the Blue Mountains and Wallowa Lake.

3. That while motor vehicles have diverted much local traffic from railroads they have also developed much through traffic which only railroads can carry and that their advent suggests the wisdom of co-ordination rather than competition between motor and railroad transportation lines. This applies especially to collection and delivery of freight in less-than-carload lots within urban limits.

4. That future extension of the highways should cover large, thinly settled, undeveloped areas which are not traversed by railroads and the traffic of which is not sufficient to justify construction of railroads. Highways across these areas would stimulate settlement and development, would prepare the way for railroads and would unite communities which these vacant spaces now separate. A striking example is the great area of southeastern Oregon of which only the outer edges have been penetrated by railroads.

5. That funds for maintenance of highways and for further construction, without impairing the fund set aside for redemption of bonds, should be provided by taxation of motor vehicles and gasoline. Rapid increase in number of cars renders this practicable without raising the rate of taxation to such a point that it would be burdensome.

6. That a thorough study be made of the amount of use and wear to which the highways are subjected by busses and trucks operating as common carriers, with regard to weight of the vehicle, class and width of tire, speed, mileage run and character of traffic carried, with a view to imposing on such vehicles an equitable tax proportionate to the wear imposed on the highways and the benefits derived from their use. Incidentally such a tax would tend to place such vehicles on an equality with the railroads with which they compete.

7. That the basis of license fees on cars should be the extent to which they cause deterioration of the roads by wear, without regard to the age or value of the car itself. That any discrimination between new and used cars would be unjust by requiring owners of new cars to pay an inordinate proportion of maintenance cost, since the amount of this made necessary by old and new cars is about equal.

8. That service to the public would be improved by elimination of competition between bus or truck lines on any route over the highways through grant of exclusive franchise to one line, conditioned on adequate and continuous service and reasonable rates as required

by the state commission on compliance with regulations in all respects.

9. That attention should be given by the state highway commissions and by all communities along the highways to establishment of parking areas and comfort stations at convenient intervals.

CITY CLUB TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE,
L. K. Hodges, *Chairman*.

APPENDIX

The following suggestion from a member of the committee is worthy of consideration:

Only one existing railroad and one railroad under construction cross the Cascade Range in Oregon. The only highways which traverse the Cascade Range are the Columbia River Highway, the McKenzie Highway, the Crater Lake Highway and the Green Springs Mountain Pass road between Klamath Falls and Ashland. There is a project for the construction of a secondary state highway from Government Camp, on the Mt. Hood Loop Highway, to Wapinitia. The Pacific Highway and the Dalles-California Highway should be connected by at least three or more state roads crossing the Cascades. A road should be extended from Turner or Jefferson up the north fork of the Santium River, crossing the Cascades and down the Metolius River to a connection with the Dalles-California Highway. A state road should be constructed over the route of the old Oregon Military Grant Highway connecting Eugene with Crescent City. A road should be constructed from Roseburg up the north fork of the Umpqua River to Diamond Lake, where it should connect with the Federal road leading to Crater Lake. This latter road would offer scenic beauty far surpassing the present Crater Lake Highway from Medford and would shorten the distance from Portland to Crater and Diamond Lakes by approximately 100 miles.

The City Club desires to acknowledge its indebtedness to the following persons and organizations for their indispensable help and collaboration in the preparation of this report and for the statistics given:

- A. C. Rose, U. S. Bureau of Roads.
- W. D. Skinner, until recently Traffic Manager of the Portland, Spokane and Seattle Railroad.
- J. H. Mulchay, Assistant General Freight Agent, Southern Pacific Company.
- Secretary of State, Oregon.
- Department of Public Works, Washington.