

Indiana's Federal-Aid Secondary Road Program

HERMAN C. LIST

Engineer of County Relations
State Highway Commission of Indiana
Indianapolis

In discussing Indiana's Federal-aid Secondary Road Construction Program it would be, perhaps, desirable to review briefly what has occurred in the past. It will be remembered that the program was brought about by the Act of Congress called the "Highway Act of 1944", setting up a fund of \$500,000,000 for each of the three years immediately following World War II, \$150,000,000 earmarked to be used in construction on the roads in the Federal-aid Secondary Road System all over the United States.

The allotment to the various states was based on area, population, and the amount of road mileage so that all states would profit equally, and not be penalized because of individual advantage which would have occurred if allotment had been based on only one category. Indiana's allotment was roughly \$3,600,000 per year.

Since the state has about one-half the road mileage in the Federal-aid Secondary System, and the counties have about one-half, the State Highway Commission elected to divide Indiana's allotment equally with the counties. This division gave the counties roughly \$1,800,000.

The program was put into effect during the 1946 fiscal year; and since there was so little time to explain the program to the counties and to put it into practice without the possibility of losing the funds, the State Highway Commission elected to use all the first year's allotment on state roads in the Secondary System.

The allotment to the counties was determined by the same formula the government used in determining the individual states' share, namely one-third on a basis of population, one-third on a basis of area, and one-third on a basis of rural road mileage.

Those of you who attended Road School last year will remember that Mr. J. T. Hallett, Engineer of Roads for the State Highway Commission, made an excellent presentation of the program. At that

time, it was still very new, and while we had made the initial contacts with some of the counties, there were many who were hearing about the program for the first time.

I had the privilege last year of talking with the county commissioners of every county in the state, practically all as individual county units, and it has been a pleasure to have enjoyed the close cooperation that has been extended to me by the commissioners. We have set up projects in a great many counties which I shall describe more fully later.

COUNTY HANDICAPS

It was very natural and expected that all the counties would not be interested in the program in the first year. Since they had to match the federal allotment on a 50-50 basis in order to get these funds, many counties found themselves in such a financial situation that it was impossible to do so. Many counties had such a non-elastic budget set up that the inclusion of funds for this purpose was impossible. This, of course, was the first requisite and inability to qualify from this standpoint automatically put them out of consideration for the first year.

It is unfortunate that many counties found the shortage of funds their chief obstacle, and it is sincerely hoped that this handicap may be overcome in succeeding years.

Some of the other counties were handicapped in other ways. Some found themselves with a system of Federal-aid Secondary Roads that needed no improvement, where it was necessary to add to the system first before they could set up a justifiable, acceptable project. Some of these counties have already laid the groundwork, namely the recommendation of additional mileage to the system, in order to be able to utilize this allotment to their advantage next year. Other counties had individual situations that kept them from participating, and these were so individual and diversified that none should be mentioned without discussing them all.

STATUS OF COUNTY PARTICIPATION

But let us get into the actual 1947 fiscal-year program and see how it shapes up. We find 27 counties actually participating in the program, or about 30 percent of all the counties. Eighteen of these have elected to use their funds on road construction, seven on bridge construction, and two on a combination of both. The program cost is approximately \$1,157,000, one-half to be paid by the counties and one-half by the federal government. We hope to improve about 130 miles of all types of roads with a total expenditure of \$682,000. This would average

about \$5,400 per mile, but it should be remembered that these improvements cover the range from strengthening with additional stone or gravel to the application of blacktop.

The program embraces the construction of 14 bridges at a total cost of \$352,000, or an average of \$25,000 per structure. This range, too, is wide, extending from structures 20 feet in length to those 150 feet or more in length.

I thought you might like to know how your particular county stands from a population standpoint. Of all the counties up to 20,000 population, 30 percent are participating. In the population group from 20,000 to 30,000, 19 percent are participating. In the group from 30,000 to 50,000, this percentage increases to 50 percent. In the group from 50,000 to 75,000 population, 80 percent of the counties are participating. Of the counties over 75,000 population, 25 percent are participating.

This can be summarized in another way. Of all the counties under 30,000 population, only 27 percent are participating; while in the counties of over 30,000 population, 50 percent are participating. This may only emphasize the inability of the less populated counties to take advantage of assistance where matching of funds is required.

I have analyzed this first year's participation in the program from many different angles. For instance, we will divide the state at U. S. Highway 40. That would be a line through Vigo, Clay, Putnam, Hendricks, Marion, Hancock, Henry, and Wayne counties. Of all the counties north of this line, 27 percent are participating; and south of this line, 37 percent are participating.

We may fully admit that we have had many and varied obstacles to overcome during this first year. A great many of the counties had individual problems that had to be worked out. Several points of policy had to be clarified. But we have taken these difficulties in stride, and have endeavored to keep things progressing at all times. Some of the problems were relatively small and were disposed of in a short time. Some of the problems, however, were rather elaborate and required constant contact with the Public Roads Administration. As an example, take the matter of making the survey and the preparation of the plans and specifications. The Government insisted this work be done by a qualified engineer. Some of the counties do not have registered engineers for county surveyors. This rather complicated the program for a while, but the Public Roads Administration made an exception of Indiana, and are making it possible for these counties to hire outside engineering help. It was necessary to draw up some kind of agreement

between the counties, the state, and an engineering firm to cover this phase. It has taken quite a lot of time to get it drawn up and concurred in by all parties concerned. For the benefit of the counties that are to use someone other than the county surveyor to do their engineering, may I say that the agreement is just about ready to be mailed to you for your signatures. This is only one of the many things that have arisen, and my only purpose in mentioning it is to show that we have had our problems. I am sure we all realize that in any new program the first year is always the hardest.

For the fiscal year of 1948 I am sure everything will move more rapidly and more smoothly, and it can be more pleasant for all. The contacts between the counties and the State Highway Commission, and between the Commission and the Public Roads Administration should transpire in an accelerated way as compared to this year. Everything should move faster since we know more of the answers now. I sincerely hope many more of the counties can participate and use this federal grant in the fiscal year of 1948.

I appreciate the considerate attitude most of the counties have taken during the past year, and hope that the counties, the State Highway Commission, and the Public Roads Administration may continue to cooperate to the mutual benefit of all concerned.