

# (Part I)

## Indiana State Highway Report 1971-1972

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### INTRODUCTION

I do not believe in swan songs, but this is probably the last time I will appear here because this year I am winding up my term as chairman of the Indiana State Highway Commission.

While frustrating at times it has been a wonderful experience. The associations and friendships—if nothing else—would have made it all worthwhile.

I feel it is a good time to review briefly with pride the accomplishments which I feel the record will show has been made and view with alarm some danger signals which appear on the horizon.

Let me say at the start, as I have said so often in the past, the Indiana State Highway Commission is a great department of government. We have had a great three years. Our accomplishments—if you will excuse my pride—are something we all can share. I feel we have raised the image of Indiana State Highway Commission. We have had three all-time banner years of highway construction in Indiana.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN ROAD CONSTRUCTION

At the start of Governor Whitcomb's Administration, we promised—perhaps with tongue in cheek—that we would attempt to get to contract the four-laning of the three principal routes in the 157-mile killer program—State Road 37 from Bedford to Martinsville, U. S. 41 from Vincennes to I-70 south of Terre Haute, and U. S. 31 from Kokomo to South Bend. I do not have to tell you that we have made great strides in this rather ambitious goal, but its complete accomplishment is almost within our grasp, and we think we are going to make it. We have even exceeded this in several instances by awarding three additional contracts on State Road 37 between Martinsville and

Indianapolis, and one sizeable additional project on State Road 63 north of Terre Haute.

In addition to this, we have four-laned and modernized many more miles of highways in our primary system. We have made great strides in construction of our interstate program I-65, completed and opened to traffic all the way from Chicago to Indianapolis. I-65 will be opened to traffic this summer from Indianapolis all the way to Louisville. I-64 which had very little progress at the start of this administration is now well on its way. I-70 has been opened clear across the state of Indiana with the exception of the remaining portions of the innerbelt at Indianapolis. I-69 opened down to the outerbelt. I-465 is completed and open to traffic for its entire 56 miles around our capital city. I-94 missing links in Calumet area into Michigan are now all under contract.

All the engineering is done, all relocation accomplished, and all right-of-way purchased for the entire remaining interstate mileage in Indiana with the exception of the 14-mile leg of I-164 in the Evansville area, the corridor of which has not been firmed.

Now, all of this has been accomplished in spite of drastic cuts in federal funds to Indiana—a 50-million dollar cut, just during this administration, compared to the immediate preceding four-year period.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE LEGISLATIVE FIELD

This leads me to the conclusion that perhaps the greatest accomplishments we have made in this administration—over and above our record construction accomplishments—have been in the legislative field. Certainly, these will be the most lasting. In the three sessions of the Indiana General Assembly we have gone through, we never lost a major piece of legislation which we sought to enact.

### *Passage of Two-Cent Gas Tax*

This construction record in Indiana would not have been possible in light of the huge cuts in federal funds, had it not been for the passage of the two-cent gas tax in the 1969 session.

### *Establishment of Arterial Road and Street Board*

In addition to the fact that it has been a great boon to the state highway construction program, it has equally been great for every city, town and county in Indiana.

It has been my privilege, as well as my job as the first and only chairman of the new Indiana Arterial Road and Street Board to date, to organize this board and to see that it worked, and to see to it that the 45 percent of this new two-cent gas tax (which goes to cities,

towns and counties) actually got back to them to build their much-needed roads and streets without undue delay and red tape. We have accomplished this. Not one project application has failed to receive consideration and action within the month in which it was filed!

Up to March of this year, 1,381 projects have been approved from these ARS funds at an estimated cost of \$78 million of which \$50 million came from the state ARS fund.

This has resulted in the construction or reconstruction of 860 miles of streets and roads and 184 structures in our local arterial systems.

Perhaps more important, they have all been constructed according to approved minimum engineering standards, and there has not been, nor can there be, any diversion of these funds for other governmental functions such as is permitted and has long been practiced with the local communities' share of the regular six-cent gas tax.

So, this was our greatest legislative accomplishment. It didn't just happen, but was aided by the four-year effort of the Indiana Legislative Need Study Committee—and our sincere thanks go out to that committee and to Professor Michael who chaired and largely directed its efforts.

#### *Bill Prevents Political Exploitation of Most Highway Personnel*

Then, we have been able to de-emphasize politics and political control of our State Highway Department.

We strongly backed and were able to get passed HB 1081 in the 1971 session of the General Assembly which prevented political exploitation of all but 700 persons in our 2500 salaried employee classifications.

More important we did it by job classification extending protection from political firing to those people in the semi-professional positions whose continuity of employment in these key jobs was deemed vital to a good, professional and aggressive highway department. The effect has been great, the moral is high, and more important, the public has backed this all over the state. So has the news media. I am sure the public felt that it was long past due.

#### *60-40 Patronage Bill Passed*

Then in the same session we were able to get enacted HB 1082 which provided that no political party could employ more than 60 percent of its political affiliates in any administration. This is generally known as the 60-40 patronage bill. This will make it possible for future administrations to keep good and experienced employees in the

all-important maintenance jobs, which are so important to the motoring public, and really not highly desirable jobs because of the wages we pay.

#### *Protection Extended to District Engineers—1972*

Then in the 1972 session we were able to extend this same protection to our district engineers which we had lost from the bill when they were amended out in committee in the 1971 session. True, a governor can remove them even now but they can not be reduced more than one step if they choose to remain in that district.

This will give any future governor a chance to keep good district engineers when otherwise the political pressure to make political changes would be great. I think any governor will appreciate this. It will give incentive to district engineers to do a better job. It should provide continuity and professional experience at the important district level. After all, district engineers are not and should not be politicians.

#### *Passage of Housekeeping Bills*

We have been fortunate in securing the passage of many additional housekeeping bills which will make for a better department. Time prevents me from going into all of these measures but again, let me say our legislative record has been great and unprecedented in the history of our state.

### ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAM AND RECRUITING

I am sure that the improved image of the Highway Commission brought about in large measure by the enactment of these important personnel bills have helped us in our engineer recruiting program which was at a disastrous level at the start of this administration. This, together with our on-the-job training program adopted in this administration, has had gratifying results.

In 1969, we were able to recruit only seven graduate engineers. In 1970, we were able to recruit 39; 1971—54; and it appears in 1972 that we will equal or exceed last year's number.

Again, we are deeply indebted to the Indiana highway construction industry for their support and urgency in establishing our on-the-job training program for beginning engineers and to certain persons in this industry who have spent their own money in our stepped-up recruiting program to provide financing for dinners and meetings with these graduate engineers which the State Highway Commission does not have funds budgeted to provide and could not provide. The new on-the-job training program for these new engineers has not only been received

with enthusiasm but it is bringing great results. Seventy-three are now in this engineer development training program. Twenty-three have completed it. Only nine have dropped out feeling they had not found the field most enticing to them.

This was a completely new experiment in the history of Highway Commission. It started as a 66-week training program providing for the graduate engineers to work in and observe the functions of every division, including right-of-way, construction, planning, design, maintenance, testing, and traffic.

Experience has taught us that a 50-week period was more realistic and that has now been adopted. So you see, the program is now practically a one-year program. It not only provides these young engineers a chance to determine which field is most desirable to them, it will pay back dividends in the future by providing well-rounded knowledge which will be not only beneficial to them in the years to come, but to the Indiana State Highway Commission.

#### LEGISLATURE AND OTHER GROUPS THANKED

I thus want to thank the members of the legislature from both parties for their help and cooperation which made all this possible. I like to feel that this cooperation was at least partly enhanced by the confidence of the members of the legislature in our Highway Commission and in our sincerity.

I want to also thank Senator Keith McCormich, chairman of the Senate Roads Committee, and Steve Ferguson, chairman of the Roads Committee in the House, throughout this administration.

Since most of these bills originated in the House, Steve's understanding, his cooperation, and even his guidance and assistance in helping to get these measures through the Senate has gone far beyond the realm of duty. I shall be forever grateful to him, and Keith, and the other members of the Indiana General Assembly, as should each of you who are interested in a good, professional, dedicated, and aggressive highway department.

I can never thank all of the people who have helped bring this all about. Their numbers are legion. But the Indiana highway construction industry and its affiliate organizations must be given special recognition and thanks, as must Indiana Highways for Survival.

We have marched arm in arm with these groups the entire way. Their moral support and financial assistance cannot be measured and without it, I do not believe we would have succeeded. We have fine highway constructors in Indiana, many of them third generation in the

same family. They want, above all others, a fine and professional highway department not just now, but for years to come.

### THE GREAT HIGHWAY LOBBY

They are referred to sometimes as the great highway lobby—but not necessarily in endearing terms. Yet, in over three years I have never been asked to do one thing that was not above the table by their organization or any single member.

The real highway lobby in Indiana and throughout the nation, is without any question, the motoring public who want to see their highway tax dollars spent for which they are collected—more and better and safer highways.

Not a week goes by that we are not visited by mayors, county commissioners, chambers of commerce, and many, many other civic groups pleading for highway improvements in their particular communities. And most of them are right—the improvement is needed and long past due. But, you do not build highways with mirrors, you do it with dollars.

### GUARD AGAINST DIVERSION OF HIGHWAY DOLLARS

Now while I have been pointing with what I hope is justifiable pride, I want to conclude by viewing with some alarm. There will always be some effort to undo much of this progress. I am leaving with you who are all interested in the future success of our highway progress, the challenge to guard these gains zealously. I know you will.

#### *Cuts and Losses in Federal Highway Trust Fund Money to Indiana*

Now finally, I mentioned earlier that we have been cut 50 million dollars in federal highway trust fund distribution to Indiana in this administration.

Indiana taxpayers, as you have so often heard me say, are sending 150 million dollars a year into this fund and getting back one-half of that.

#### *Mass Transit Groups Eye Highway Trust Fund*

And now there is legislation before Congress to divert approximately 12 billion dollars from this Highway Trust Fund in the next five-year period, to purposes other than highways—chiefly mass transit.

These cutbacks and diversions will not only disastrously impede the construction of our interstate, primary and secondary roads in the state system, but will be equally disastrous to the county federal aid projects and our city TOPICS programs.

*Mass Transit Costs High—Must Find Funds Elsewhere*

Look at these figures. Just a portion of the New York City subway system (the 2nd Avenue subway) is estimated to cost two and one half to three billion dollars. That amount alone would build two interstate systems equal to Indiana's entire 1,000-mile interstate system.

The Bay Area Transit system in San Francisco is estimated to cost eight billion dollars.

Five billion is being spent for the mass transit and subway systems now under construction in Washington, D. C.

What will the two and one half billion per year proposed to be diverted from the Federal Highway Trust Account actually accomplish in mass transit benefits to all the people of these United States whose users' taxes create and finance this fund?

How much do you actually believe will ever siphon down to meet the needs of Indiana's cities and towns?

I am not against mass transit. I know you are not against mass transit.

If the federal Department of Transportation wants to find other means of urban travel—that is all well and good; but, they should provide other means of financing it.

Why embezzle the Federal Highway Trust Fund of the moneys which have been paid into trust in that fund to build badly needed highways, and use it for other modes of transportation? Why use tax money derived from motorists for building highways, to provide other means of transportation for people who do not drive their cars and have not paid this tax?

*Indiana and Other States Should Say No to Federal Government*

Let us as one unanimous voice say to them, "Do not continue to take Indiana for granted by continuing to take money from us and other states in similar positions, when our needs are so great and demanding, and give it to other states to meet these other needs, while leaving us with our own problems and less of our own money."

A sizeable and representative group of us have just returned from Washington, D. C.—our third straight annual sojourn. We have met with the Hoosier delegation in Congress. I am thankful that most of our Congressmen appear to be with us.

But this is alarming! We were told on this last trip by the legislative assistant to one of our senators from Indiana, "You know, I think you are right. The senator thinks there is merit to your posi-

tion. The editorial support from Indiana that comes to our attention indicates this, but, surprisingly, we do not hear from the mayors, the county commissioners, the civic groups, or more importantly, the people of Indiana. We hardly ever have a letter expressing their views. It would help immensely if we did."

*Write Your Congressman and Senator*

So, in closing, let me throw a challenge to you. Write your congressman. Write our United States senators. Let them know how you feel. They are politicians. Their ears are tuned to the will and desires of the people. You are the great influence. If you will only exert the small effort it takes to make your wishes known.

You are all interested in more and better roads, not only at the state level, but in your local counties, cities and towns. Again, this cannot be accomplished with mirrors but with dollars—your tax dollars which are collected for this purpose, being arbitrarily cut back by administrative action are now proposed to be diverted for other purposes.

It is later than you think. Hearings are being conducted now before the Roads Committee of the U. S. House of Representatives. Senator Bayh who is chairman of the Roads Committee in the Senate will start hearings on the 1972 highway bills before Congress in May.

If you will write him and your congressman, my appearance before you will have been a success.