

HERPIC Progress Report

1959-1972

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INTRODUCTION

HERPIC is an acronym that stands for Highway Extension and Research Project for Indiana Counties. This project was established at Purdue University in 1959 to implement legislation by the Indiana General Assembly authorizing programs of extension and research for county highway departments throughout the state.

The financial support for these programs of extension and research is derived from one-eighth of one percent of the funds made available to the 92 counties from the gas taxes and license fees collected by the State of Indiana. The legislation by the General Assembly also designated Purdue University, through its Engineering Experiment Station and School of Civil Engineering, to develop and coordinate these programs.

The HERPIC program of extension and research provides for the preparation of manuals and bulletins setting forth recommended procedures and for regional workshop conferences with county road officials throughout the state to review typical road problems for their area. All of these activities are designed to assist and guide county highway officials in their problems of management, planning, design and operation of county highways and highway departments.

With this brief outline of the HERPIC program, it is our purpose here today to review progress of the past 14 years and to weigh future needs and goals of HERPIC.

HERPIC ADVISORY BOARD AND STAFF

The HERPIC project operates as a cooperative effort between the county commissioners of Indiana and Purdue University. The law authorizing the HERPIC project (Chap. 331, Acts 1959) also provides for an advisory board composed of six elected county commissioners and six Purdue University faculty members. The six commissioners are selected by the Indiana Association of County Commissioners with

the approval of the governor. The six faculty members from the University are appointed by the director of the Engineering Experiment Station. The appointments to the advisory board are for two-year terms and the members may be re-appointed.

The present Herpic Advisory Board, listed below, was appointed for the period July 1971—July 1973. This is the seventh board appointed since the organization of the HERPIC project in 1959.

HERPIC ADVISORY BOARD

(July 1971—July 1973)

Virgil King, Chairman—Porter County Commissioner
 Eldon Yoder, Vice-Chairman—Purdue University
 Joy Brown, Member—Wells County Commissioner
 Michael Bunyard, Member—Fayette County Commissioner
 Robert Carroll,* Member—Daviness County Commissioner
 Howard Gibbs, Member—Hendricks County Commissioner
 William Goetz, Member—Purdue University
 Robert Lee, Member—Purdue University
 James McConnell, Member—Gibson County Commissioner
 (regretfully now deceased)
 John McLaughlin, Member—Purdue University
 Harold Michael, Member—Purdue University
 Gilbert Satterly, Member—Purdue University
 Jean Hittle of our civil engineering staff serves as secretary to the board.

The HERPIC Advisory Board meets four to five times per year. The board's principal duties and functions include that of selecting the priority of extension and research projects to be pursued, approving proposed working plans, reviewing progress reports on active study projects, approving completed projects for publication and budgeting of HERPIC funds. Each meeting of the advisory board is truly a working session that follows a prepared agenda covering progress reports on current extension and research

The HERPIC staff consists of Professor Jean Hittle and Professor D. G. Shurig, plus a number of graduate and undergraduate students who assist in the compilation of statistics and other phases of research.

* Carroll along with Mr. King are no longer county commissioners; however they have consented to continue to serve on the board until new appointments are made.

HERPIC EXTENSION PROGRAM

The HERPIC extension program includes the following activities: (a) consultation with individual county highway departments, (b) organizing and conducting area road schools for county road officials and (c) developing program sessions for conferences of county road officials.

Herpic Extension to Individual Counties

Initially, a substantial portion of the HERPIC extension effort was devoted to assisting individual county highway departments in specific problem areas. On request, consultation and advice is given on a wide range of problems involving construction, maintenance and administration. Besides supplying information for specific problems, the HERPIC extension program has attempted, where feasible, to promote uniformity in county road policy and practice from county to county. Likewise, the extension effort has been used to promote better communication and cooperation between the counties, as well as between counties and other departments and agencies of federal, state and local governments.

County highway extension to individual counties frequently points up a new, improved or unique practice in one county that can be reported to other counties. Likewise, the pitfalls and problems of a particular county may suggest a word of caution to others or may suggest a study project for correction.

While extension visits to individual counties is a continuing activity or HERPIC, our main effort has shifted to area meetings and schools.

Area Road Schools

Early in the HERPIC extension program it was recognized that area meetings with groups of county road officials would be an efficient use of time and effort, and would also be an effective method of presenting extension information. Therefore, area road schools have been the major effort of the HERPIC extension program. Besides being an efficient and effective method of communication, the area road schools also provide an opportunity for opening discussion and exchange of ideas on specific road problems between the people attending the school.

Normally the area road schools are scheduled as a series of six schools over the state, with each school presenting the same program and covering a 14 to 17 county area. Even though attendance is voluntary, the total state-wide attendance for a complete series of

one-day schools range from 200 to 300. County road officials participating in these area road schools include county commissioners, county auditors, county highway engineers, supervisors, clerks and bookkeepers.

Each year the HERPIC extension program has presented three to four series of area road schools. To accommodate the needs of county road officials, the topics for the schools cover a correspondingly wide range of subjects, including construction and maintenance practice, equipment operations, traffic safety, planning and programming, public relations, cost records, as well as other administrative procedures required by statute. In addition many of the subjects deal with new current programs available to or required of county highway departments.

As an example, HERPIC organized a series of area road schools during September and October 1972 to review the responsibilities and procedures for making bridge safety inspections as now required by federal legislation. Because the administration and funding of the bridge inspection program cuts across four different agencies and highway authorities, the counties' bridge inspection program was making a slow, erratic start, caused mainly by lack of understanding and poor communication.

The series of HERPIC Area Road Schools on bridge inspection standards brought together speakers from both state and federal administrative agencies, along with some 225 county commissioners, auditors, highway supervisors, highway engineers and engineering consultants. As a result county road officials, and consultants alike, gained a better understanding of their responsibilities, how to proceed with the inspection program, and how to apply for federal funds to support the bridge inspection effort. As a result the county bridge inspection program has been activated and we now have some 40 counties that have a bridge safety inspection program in progress, with the remainder of the counties planning for such a program in the near future. We like to think that the HERPIC area meetings has furthered the cause of bridge safety inspection with the county highway departments here in Indiana.

Only last week, another series of area road schools was completed which brought together some 300 county highway clerks, bookkeepers, supervisors and county auditors to review new accounting and cost records procedures recently prescribed by the State Board of Accounts, in accordance with legislation passed by the Indiana General Assembly. This series of schools presented detailed instructions from the State Board of Accounts along with sample forms required for keeping the new system of accounts and records. We are indeed grateful for the assistance provided by the State Board of Accounts in presenting this series of schools.

The organization and conduct of these HERPIC Area Road Schools accounts for a sizable portion of our budget. The HERPIC Advisory Board has given priority to this activity since it provides an effective means of keeping county road officials, new and old alike, updated on their responsibilities and the existing or new programs available requiring action. Besides the information program of the particular area road schools, these meetings afford an opportunity to distribute HERPIC publications and other extension materials to the county road officials in attendance.

State Conferences

Another phase of the HERPIC extension activity, which is worthy of note, includes program development for county road officials at state-wide conferences. The HERPIC staff, working with the cooperating county associations, assist in the program development, selection of topics and arrangement of speakers. Since the inception of the HERPIC project, considerable effort has been directed to the program development for the separate sessions of county highway groups at this annual Purdue Road School. Likewise, for the past several years, HERPIC has assisted in program development for the annual county commissioners' December conference held in Indianapolis.

HERPIC RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

In the process of selecting and approving study projects, the advisory board considers the need for the results and whether or not the results will have general application throughout the state. Obviously, a study project that attempts to deal with a problem of a single locality does not warrant a high priority on a state-wide county road program.

For the most part the research projects have been developed by first gathering the most current and authoritative information on the specific project and then compiling a concise summary or condensation of the salient features that directly affect the end results—in short a manual. In the preparation of these manuals special emphasis is placed on clarity, sequence and organization of write-up, illustrative examples, and recommended practices and procedures that are normally attainable by Indiana county highway departments.

Completed research projects are published as a HERPIC bulletin for distribution to county road officials throughout the state. To accommodate this particular area of information, Purdue's Engineering Experiment Station established a *County Highway Series of Engineering Bulletins*. The following is a list of HERPIC research projects that

have been completed, published as engineering bulletins and distributed to county road officials throughout the state:

1. Dust Control on Unpaved Roads
2. Roadside Weed and Brush Control with Chemicals
3. County Subdivision Control: Model Ordinance with Discussion
4. Principals of Highway Drainage and Erosion Control
5. An Analysis of Traffic Accidents on County Roads
6. Planning and Financing County Bridge Programs
7. Minor Maintenance of County Bridges—Guide Manual on Records and Reports for Indiana Highway Departments
8. County Bridge Painting
9. Annual Travel on County Highways of Indiana
10. Inventory of Indiana County Bridges
11. Railroad Crossing Protection on County Bridges
12. Guidelines for Traffic Counts on County Roads
13. Field Identification of Soils and Aggregates for County Roads

A number of other HERPIC research projects have been approved and are partially completed. These will be completed and distributed as soon as time and schedule permits.

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the publication of completed research projects, HERPIC also issues and distributes a few other miscellaneous items that are worthy of note. One of these is the *Handbook of Facts and Figures on Indiana County Roads*. This is an information pocket-piece that is a store-house of stastical data pertinent to the county road systems of the state. The handbook provides county information on road mileage, population, vehicle registration, gas tax distribution, cumulative bridge funds, FAS funds and also includes a directory of the 92 Indiana county highway departments. The handbook is published annually (however the 1972 edition was delayed by lack of up-dated official figures and data); it has proven a popular item and is widely distributed to all county road officials, departments and agencies throughout the state. While the principal value of the handbook is its use as a planning aid, it also serves as a convenient pocket reference for county road officials and other community leaders.

Another miscellaneous publication is *Highway Extension News* which is a newsletter that was established in Purdue's School of Civil Engineering many years ago. Periodic issues of this newsletter are devoted to new laws pertinent to the administration of county roads, recent legal opinions concerning county road officials, seasonal road

information and new programs available to county road officials. The *Highway Extension News* has been used as a vehicle for HERPIC bulletins giving in-depth treatment to new, current programs. For instance a ten-page HERPIC bulletin was released last spring, dealing with the many varied aspects of the National Bridge Inspection Standards. Later in the fall of 1972 a 15-page HERPIC bulletin was released on the subject of *Revenue-Sharing Funds—A New Source of Finance For Local Roads and Streets*. Such newsletter releases are of course a valuable asset to the extension effort since they put current timely information in the hands of county road officials throughout the state.

Other miscellaneous publications include county highway personnel and salary surveys, and such other releases that serve a specific need.

CONCLUSION

This is a brief summary of progress for the HERPIC project based here at Purdue. It is our goal to continue this program of extension and research for Indiana county Highway departments at the highest possible level consistent with time, schedule and resources.

Looking ahead, highway finance is likely to be a continuing problem. Inflation continues to nibble away at the road dollar; at the same time there is increased demand for road services and increased competition for road-user revenues. At the moment the outcome of the financing problem is uncertain and awaits solution in the political arena.

Regardless of the outcome however, we can be certain that highway officials—county, city and state—will be called on to produce the maximum possible results with the road dollars available to them.

To this extent, the HERPIC project and its program of extension and research will continue to serve a useful purpose and function by keeping county commissioners and other county road officials informed on current programs available to them and by charting ways and means of maximizing the use of the county road dollar.