

HOW STREET CONDITIONS AFFECT THE PROGRESS OF A CITY

By Marcus Sulzer,
Mayor, Madison, Indiana

That poorly maintained, old-fashioned streets inconvenience the public and retard progress is so undeniable as to require no affirmation from me.

That improved hard surface streets are conducive to the progress, growth and happiness of a community, equally require no confirmation on my part.

The progress of a city is affected in many ways through improved highways. The merchants and manufacturers make deliveries much more rapidly and at less cost. The places of business become more attractive to the customer as there is no dust from the paved street to settle on the merchandise or product and no mud from the street to be tracked in on the floor. Therefore, the places of business can be kept in a more tidy and attractive manner, the merchandise and manufacturing product kept in better shape and a condition produced that adds greatly to the business and dignity of the buildings, stock and general surroundings.

The Advantages to the Private Citizen Whose Property Borders the Paved Streets

Without dust or mud, the citizens have more healthful conditions in which to live. The housekeeper will be much happier with the elimination of mud and dust which invariably finds its way into the house where streets are unpaved.

It is also a fact that when a street is paved before one's residence, it almost invariably follows that the householder or property owner will then begin beautifying his property. Lawns are graded and kept neatly mowed and fences and walks are usually repaired. This I found especially noticeable in the improvement on West Main Street in Madison. Before the street was improved abutting property had a slovenly, undignified appearance, but now the lawns have been graded and the entire surroundings beautified and improved. Indeed it appears like a different locality. A place previously poor and neglected has now become a residence center where most anyone would be proud to live.

Better Environment

Cleanliness and optimism which come with these progressive improvements are beneficial in the maintenance of law and

order. They make people of a locality optimistic and proud of themselves and their surroundings. Many who did not care how dirty or full of rubbish the old streets were, now kick things off the street instead of kicking them on.

Irrespective of the original degree of beauty surrounding all property bordering improved streets, it requires no legal edict to compel betterment after progressive improvements. One man improves, his neighbor in emulation follows suit and then another and another until the entire locality becomes new and modern.

Increased Capacity of Paved Streets

The capacity of a street is much greater after than before paving. You will observe on all unpaved streets, even those with an oil surface, the wheel tracks which traffic follows. These tracks are formed by the vehicles hunting out the smooth surface, therefore they soon become worn and uneven until finally a second best surface is sought. This in turn is worn out and therefore there would be a number of traffic lanes with a very indifferent surface to which the entire traffic of the street is confined until after being forced to other parts of the street on account of passing vehicles. The speed must be greatly reduced as the street becomes rougher.

After a street is paved, the entire width from curb to curb is available for traffic—one part as good as another. This not only increases the capacity of the street but also the speed of the traffic, thereby providing for greatly increased traffic.

The expense of oiling an unpaved street amounts to a considerable sum each year and, except as it aids to the comfort of the people by eliminating dust, it is an annual expense without permanent improvement. The city of Madison expended \$4,200 for oil in 1926 and \$1,400 in 1927. This shows a saving of \$2,800 on account of improved streets. The cost for upkeep for unimproved streets is continuous as they must virtually be rebuilt each year. This cost is eliminated with a paved street.

Paved roads to a city and a reasonable number of paved streets within a city will attract more tourists than any other one item. A tourist will willingly travel a few additional miles in order to remain on a good road. It is quite evident that a farmer living midway between two cities will travel to, and trade in, the city having well paved streets and approaches, other things being equal.

Other things being equal, manufacturers seeking a new location will select a well paved city in preference to one that is comparatively unpaved.

In the construction of improved streets in cities there should be a minimum of old-fashioned politics and a maximum of courage and honest business sense. Many improvements in

the past have been changed from the original ideas and the utility and perfection of the scheme as an entirety marred and weakened in order to satisfy some particular individual or individuals.

In such improvements the matter must be considered not alone in its relation to the abutting property owners but in relation to the general community. City administrations will find that the best politics is that which produces the most good to the largest number.

Future Planning

In this rapidly moving age it would be better in the matter of progressive street improvements if the mayor and city council of the new administration coming into power would make themselves thoroughly conversant with all the streets of their city, map out the improvements needed and from the beginning of their term of office proceed as far as practicable toward the completion of such improvements. Thus they could accomplish in one term of four years more than under the old style could be done in twenty and retire at the end of four years with a knowledge of more and better accomplishments than any of their predecessors. It makes no difference how unpopular at first a new improvement may be, if it is the right thing it finally becomes popular. Quite often the very people who were the most severe in their opposition are finally loudest in their praises.

There is another matter to which I desire to direct your attention. The last legislature passed a law making a large increase in salary for surveyors in every county in Indiana. Most of these officials, especially in the smaller populated counties, are not engineers. This increases the burden of taxation without any resultant benefit to the people and in most counties the law is very unpopular. This act should be amended so as to provide that the surveyor elected in a county should be a competent engineer, and that for salary allowed him by law he must without any extra compensation perform all engineering service for all towns and cities of less than 20,000 population in said county.

In my home city of Madison we have no regularly elected engineer and for the last three years in the improvements we have made we have expended for engineer's service in the neighborhood of \$15,000. The continuance of these improvements will necessarily keep up this class of expenditure all of which could be saved and devoted to further needed improvements if the amendment which I recommend were adopted by the general assembly of Indiana.

We are no longer living in the days of the old walled cities. Good roads, good streets, rapid locomotion have annihilated time and distance and virtually made the whole world kin.

So the old-fashioned place will be relegated to the rear and that community will loom up and be the greatest which with courage and modern methods proceeds boldly to the front.

MAINTENANCE OF CITY STREETS

By Claude Draper, City Engineer,
Lafayette, Indiana.

The repair of streets is usually made by some worker who is given a shovel and told to, "Fix 'em up, Tony," and Tony "fixes 'em up," not because he wishes to repair the bad spots in the street but because he wishes to get his pay on Saturday night. In other words, the repair proper is often done by men utterly incompetent for this important work.

Street repair with the enormous increase of heavy traffic has become an engineering problem of no little importance and is not a job for Tony. We city officials owe Purdue University and its Annual Road School a debt of gratitude for its splendid program and the many useful things we learn here.

The street commissioner has vastly different problems to meet in maintaining city streets than the county road superintendent. The county roads if supplied with plenty of metal and dragged will be kept in good condition but in the city the street commissioner has crossings, manholes and curb grades to contend with. In Lafayette with its hillside streets, if the street commissioner tried to keep an abundance of gravel on the streets he would have an endless job.

Every year we oil approximately 8 miles of streets. This oiling has saved many of our hillside streets from washing, but oiling is like feminine beauty, it is only skin deep. Oiled streets will soon become full of pot holes. Our street department, during the past season, has been very successful in filling these pot holes with oiled gravel. Early this spring road oil was mixed in the gravel and the holes were filled. We found that this pushed with the first auto traffic and was very disappointing, but our street department did not give up. They mixed up several yards of the material in the city yards and let it lay for several days.

The holes were next squared up, that is, the edges were made vertical and the loose dust was cleaned out. The oiled gravel was then deposited in the hole and well tamped into place with a hand tamp. Traffic was allowed to hit the patches and the next day they were again gone over and worked into place. It was found that after this careful attention it was