

for fifteen years or more, but the first active participation of our State was in 1932, when the State Roads Commission came into the picture with a report relating to a proposed bridge across the Potomac. After much consideration by various agencies, the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works tendered to the State Roads Commission of Maryland a grant offer in the amount of 45%, totaling \$1,766,900. This grant later was increased to \$2,351,970, as against the total cost of \$5,226,000. This was somewhat in excess of the original estimate, which was raised by several developments, chief among them, the requirements of the War Department that the main channel span be shifted to the eastward, thus increasing this span from 650 feet to 800 feet.

The length of the bridge, including the Maryland approach is, 11,477 feet, and its clear height above the water at the main channel span is 135 feet. The engineering difficulties encountered and overcome made construction of this bridge one of the engineering feats of the past decade.

With the opening to traffic now within the course of little more than a year of three great new spans, Maryland, indeed, has experienced a tremendous forward step in the modernization of its highways system. All three of these bridges contribute tremendously to the facilitation of traffic on important routes. The first of the three bridges, formally opened in October 1939 at Hancock, Maryland, brought us in closer contact with our sister Commonwealth of West Virginia. Less than four months ago, the opening of the Susquehanna River Bridge strengthened measurably the weakest link in the very strategic highway to the important centers in the North and East. Today, we have the pleasure of participating in the completion of the third great achievement of Maryland's ambitious program to bring its transportation system into complete accord with modern needs.

It seems to me that Marylanders can contemplate with deep satisfaction the tremendous advance indicated by the completion of these three bridge structures. Particularly is this so when it is borne in mind that development of our roads has not been allowed to lag, but on the contrary has been speeded to a tremendous degree.

Just as these three great bridges are serving well-designed transportation purposes, so the construction and projected construction under the present State Roads Administration is being geared carefully to changing and increasing needs of traffic throughout the various sections of our State.

No doubt many of the people of our State were staggered at the estimate of cost for projected road construction, as outlined in the five-year and twenty-year plans of the Highway Planning Commission. Nevertheless, the estimates prepared cover work on projects that are absolute necessities if Maryland is to take its place among the states with adequate roads systems. Unfortunately, in the years prior to this administration, the exigencies of the moment, and the diversion to other purposes of some millions of dollars that should have been spent on our roads, caused a lapse in road building that left our State far in the rear in the matter of transportation facilities.

Thus, today, the State is called upon not only to meet its formal construction requirements, but to "catch up", so to speak, on road building that should have been done in preceding years.

If there is one task, however, to which this administration will devote itself with all its vigor, it is in this most important matter of bringing our roads into step with present-day needs. You may rest assured that every avenue