

# Whose Highways?

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Which highways are whose is often a question for great discussion by chambers of commerce, especially in smaller communities. Many of them feel their sole concern is the roads and highways in their immediate vicinity. Others feel that roads even at a distant point are also important, and take an interest in them, sometimes only to be criticized by the other chambers of commerce for "butting into" their territory.

True, you want to get as many people as possible interested in visiting your community, both from within your own State and from distant States. To do this you must have good roads. I do not mean super-duper high-speed highways to carry people through your territory as fast as possible without even a glance at what you have to look at, but just good standard highways on which they can travel with reasonable speed and comfort. BUT it is not going to do you much good if your neighboring county or State, or even a State two or three times removed from you, has a piece of highway in such poor condition that the traveler who might come to see you will not do so because of that bad road.

Not long ago I lived at Salida, Colo., on U. S. Highway 50, and was Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce there for 8 years. Many people in other communities, in States from the east to the west coast, often criticized me because of my interest in the condition of the whole length of U. S. Highway 50. But I was convinced, and our chamber also, that to get the most people to visit "The Heart of the Rockies," U. S. 50 had to be good all the way.

Salida, like Alamosa "at the Crossroads of Trans-Americas Highway and the Navajo Trail," where I am now secretary of the chamber of commerce, is located on what we call Trans-Americas Highway. It is U. S. 285 and, for a short distance from north of Alamosa, State Highway 17. It runs from way up in Canada south into Mexico. It is not as yet getting the travel it should have, and Salida and ourselves, as well as towns and cities north and south of us who want to see as much travel as possible rolling their way, are anxious to see this highway completed.

There is a short stretch here in Colorado on State Highway 17 just north of us—10 miles of it—that is still not surfaced, and on U. S. 285 south of us in New Mexico

some 50 miles, and those stretches of road are of interest, not only to us but to others.

Some of the best help we have had in promoting the improvement of this highway, especially between Santa Fe and Denver, has been from General Manager Chris P. Fox, of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce.

The money spent on highways does not all come from the local community. Gasoline and oil taxes paid by the fellow driving the car from California or New York as he goes through Colorado help to pay for our highways, and the same thing works in reverse when we are traveling in other States. Then the traveler spends lots of money for food, accommodations, and often for trinkets, clothing, and other items, which in turn goes into the pockets of businessmen in the local communities, who drive their automobiles, pay taxes on their gasoline and oil and their ad valorem taxes, part of which also finds its way into our road systems, so our highways are of interest to all of us wherever we are; first, because they will help to bring visitors to our own communities and, second, because they will allow us to visit other communities on good highways anywhere in the country.

Another important factor, is that good highways everywhere are needed for the ever-growing commercial use vital to every hamlet, town, and city in the United States. So it behooves all of us, wherever we are located, especially those of us in chamber of commerce work, to recognize this fact and cooperate with other communities in other parts of our own and other States in helping to see that the highway program for the whole country, as well as our local community, is pushed as rapidly as possible.

Few things are of greater importance to the welfare of our country than having our entire highway system as good as possible. And just good highways are more important than high-speed highways, except in exceptional cases for traffic between large cities.

Finally, we should not be afraid to place the necessary ad valorem or excise taxes where necessary to get good roads. They are worth it. People do not stay away from places they want to go because of the gasoline or oil tax. But they will stay away if the roads are poor because of inadequate tax funds.