

Picking Routes For Freeways Giganitic Task

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman

California's millions of motor vehicles and the hundreds of thousands driven into the state annually by visitors must have enough roads and highways to move around effectively. But providing highways and freeways to facilitate movement at today's speeds is developing into a pretty frustrating experience for your legislature, state highway authorities, and local agencies involved.

A major source of this frustration is the difficulty of deciding upon exact location of freeways and other major highway structures. The problems involved are legion, and patience and understanding on the part of all concerned are vital to successful solution. But sometimes these essential qualities have been lacking just when most needed. Stale and frequently bitter disagreements have arisen between various elements which can delay prompt decisions on badly needed routes.

SEVERAL YEARS ago, the Assembly committee on conservation, planning, and public works made an intensive study of the whole situation and recommendations made then resulted in a much better climate as far as state and local relationships are concerned in this very complex problem of freeway location. Recently, new complications have arisen which again threaten peace in freeway development, so the committee is again holding hearings so that all involved can be heard and practical solutions to the various difficulties worked out.

It's a job of staggering size to determine the need for a new freeway, lay out its tentative route, buy the rights of thousands of different items must be anticipated, planned for and timed, then taken care of properly so as not to delay the whole project. The interests of communities, individual property owners and business, public and private utilities of all kinds must be kept in mind. All of them must be given adequate time to investigate their own problems as created by the project, and to make their views known to the highway planners.

AS IS the case in every other field of human activity, decisions as to highway routes must be made by someone, and the law must support a decision properly made in accordance with its provisions. Under our California law, the authority to fix the communities between which state highways will be constructed is reserved to the legislature, but the determination of the precise routes is delegated to the state highway commission. Its decisions are final, provided it has followed completely the procedure established by law.

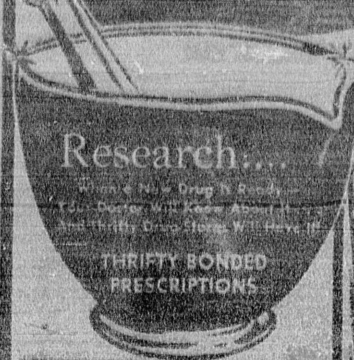
The problem of relocating or extending utilities because of freeway construction or reconstruction continues to be a serious one, the committee was informed at its first hearing, especially the matter of cost. Present law differentiates between publicly-owned and private utilities so far as participation in the cost of such relocation is concerned. It was suggested that the committee might investigate this problem thoroughly so that absolute fairness to all parties can be assured.

One thing is certain, that there can be no stopping in building new and better highways in California. Whatever may be the difficulties in deciding on their exact locations, the law must keep pace with our needs, and yet protect the interests of all concerned. The current hearings will help keep it that way.

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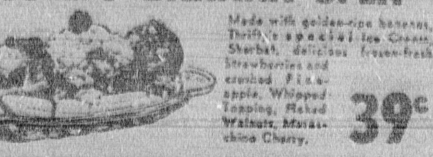
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