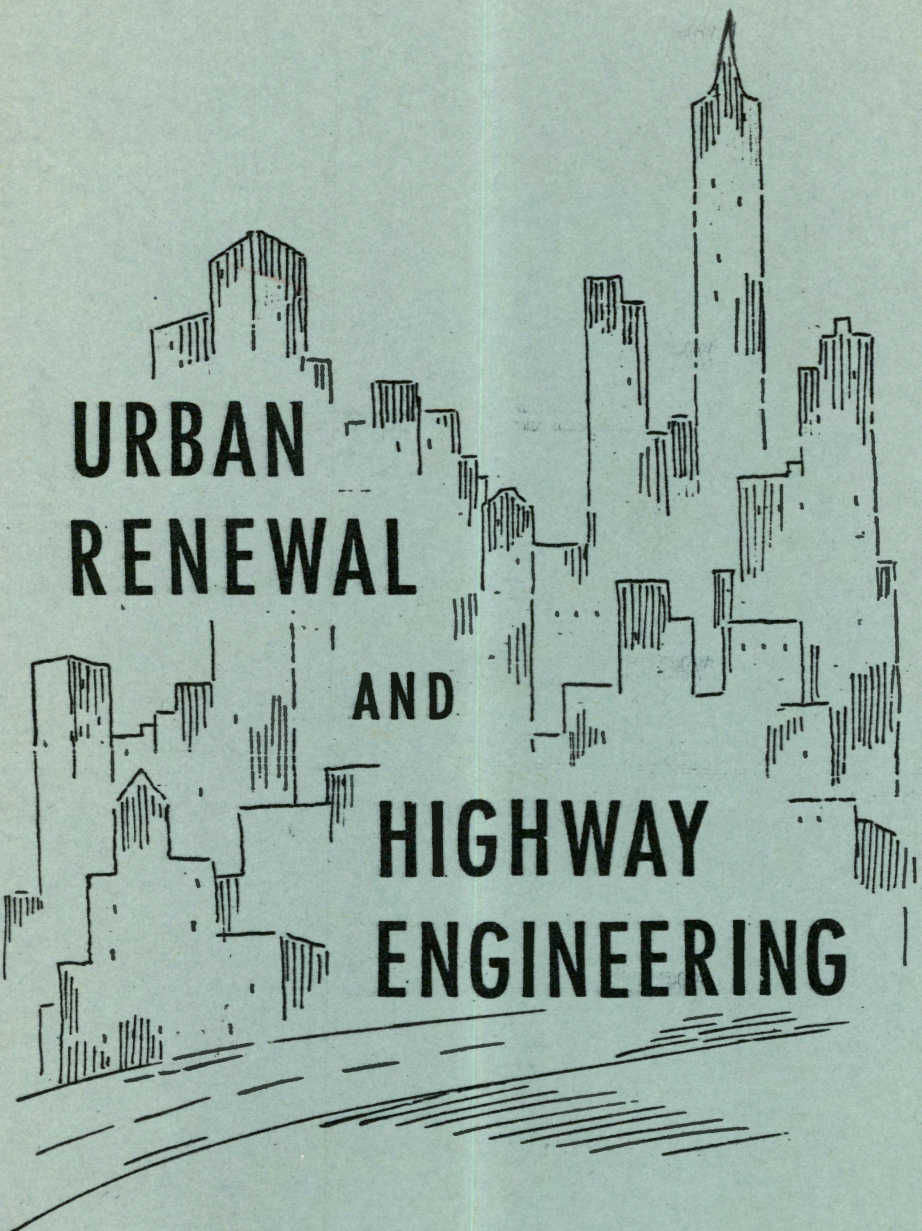


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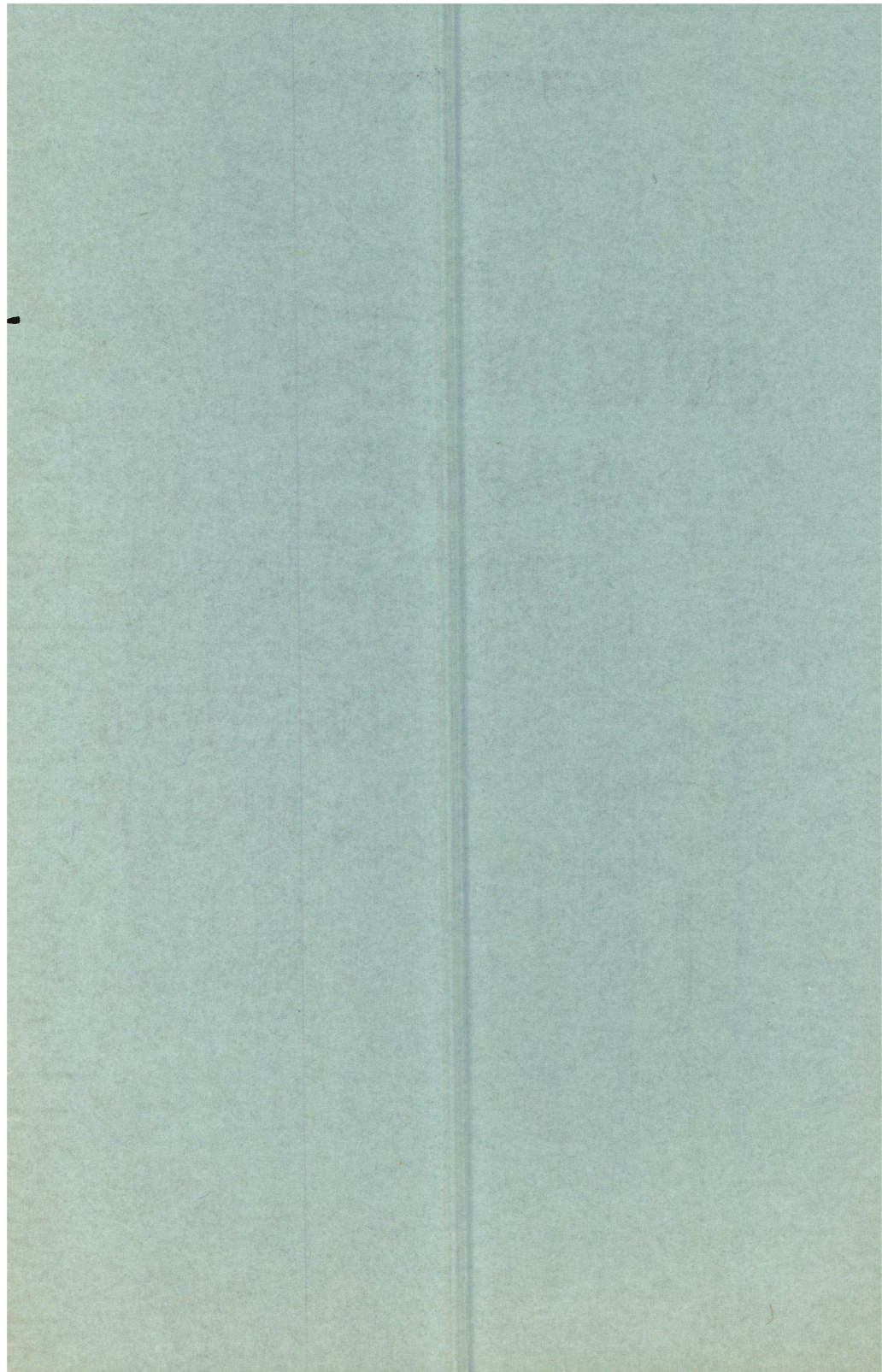
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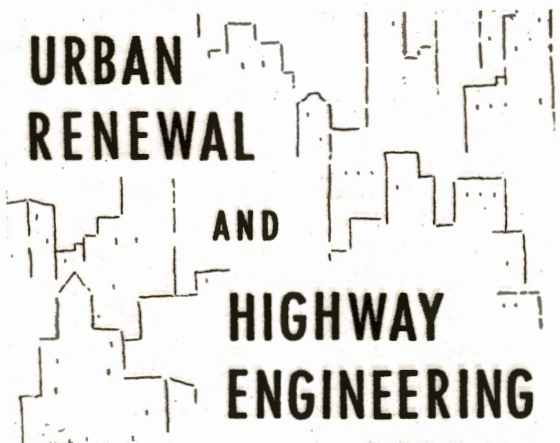


**URBAN
RENEWAL
AND
HIGHWAY
ENGINEERING**

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A stylized, black-and-white line drawing of a city skyline with various building shapes and heights, serving as a background for the title text.

URBAN RENEWAL

AND

HIGHWAY ENGINEERING

The time-worn question of whether the chicken or the egg made the first appearance is dimmed these days in major metropolitan areas which have created a new variation on the old theme: Which comes first—the city planner or the highway engineer? Here are some specific examples of how the State of New Jersey has managed to coordinate these two basic urban perplexities.

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About the Author . . .



Mr. Fritzsche

Otto H. Fritzsche, P.E., an engineering graduate of Lehigh University, joined the New Jersey State Highway Department 36 years ago and was made State Highway Engineer in 1956, directly responsible to the State Highway Commissioner for all phases of location, design and construction of state highways. He is now serving as president of the Association of Highway Officials of the North Atlantic States. Among his many awards have been the "Career Merit Award" of the New Jersey Association of Chosen Freeholders, and the 1961 "Engineer of the Year" award of the New Jersey Society of Professional Engineers, of which he is a member.

By

O. H. FRITZSCHE, P.E.

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AFTER many years of patient effort on the part of highway engineers in every state to locate and design highways through urban areas in the best interest of all residents, we suddenly hear a great clamor from various groups concerned with other aspects of urban redevelopment.

The complaint appears to be that engineers concerned with highway construction focus their attention solely on transportation—the safe and easy flow of people and goods from one area to another—without due regard for other equally valid objectives of city planners.

Is this a case of the cart before the horse? Should highway officials wait for the planners to agree on an ideal combination of residential, commercial and industrial areas, parks, playgrounds and schools, and the many other requirements of

urban life before fixing the location of the modern express roads which are a well recognized necessity in any congested and growing community?

In New Jersey, the most densely populated state in the nation, we have not allowed this "conflict of interest" to become a major problem. We have recognized that the objectives of city planners and highway engineers are intertwined to such an extent that they are inseparable.

Cooperation with local officials has been based upon mutual realization that existing conditions in our urban areas, as evidenced by the tremendous swing to suburban living, are clearly the result of inadequate transportation facilities. The logical conclusion is inescapable—deteriorating urban areas which are laboriously and expensively redeveloped from the standpoint of housing or industry alone,

without properly located and designed transportation facilities, will not require too many years to sink back into a slough of despondency and decay.

Robert H. Pease, when asked what importance he attached to good transportation in appraising a city, an area or even a property, stated, "Transportation is equal with shopping and schools as the three corner stones on which real estate values are built. Transportation is what makes a city. Mortgage people are reluctant to make loans on property that is not served by good transportation." Who, then, is better equipped to determine these transportation facilities?

The solution to the over-all problem of urban renewal lies in the pooling of many skills. The highway industry, faced with infinite variations on the theme of harmonizing functional and esthetic values, has over the past many years perfected the techniques such tasks require.

There is no other group of professional men better versed or trained in the collection and analysis of the basic facts needed in the planning of transportation and related facilities necessary to over-all planning.

When this training and profound background knowledge is pooled with that of the urban planner, the industrial redevelopment expert, the sociologist, and all of the other professional men involved in the effort to save our urban areas, the best type of planning presently available results.

Why is it then, that at the Hartford Conference in September, 1957, it was suggested that the national effort to bring our highways up to present and future transportation needs be delayed two whole years so that the urban planners could develop their ideas? This suggestion could not be based on any factual knowledge of what highway engineers, as individuals and as a group, have been and are doing every day to combat urban deterioration.

A conference sponsored by the Highway Research Board, the American Association of State Highway Officials and Syracuse University, with a grant from the Automotive Safety Foundation, was held at Syracuse University's Sagamore Center almost three years ago which had for its main purpose creation of a guide to be followed by the various state highway departments. Since then, AASHO has held a series of planning seminars throughout the country to alert and indoctrinate highway engineers to the development of techniques on urban problems and their importance. Presently the American Association of State Highway Officials has established a committee on urban transportation planning to develop criteria for relating transportation to land use and development on a scientific basis.

EVEN before all of this was initiated, we in New Jersey were faced with urban problems under the less fancy nomenclature of "slum

clearance" and "housing". It was the highway engineer's responsibility, oftener than not, to aid in municipal planning. Local officials realized that for them to undertake collection and analysis of the necessary factual data would have set them back 18 to 20 years, to the point where the highway engineer stood when he began his first transportation study.

The New Jersey Highway Department, anticipating problems in highway engineering and construction because of the lack of sound planning in all areas, encouraged the formation of planning boards throughout the state in 1948.

We also adopted a policy of contacting local officials and planning boards before beginning location studies for new highways. In this way, local problems are discussed and local needs considered during the studies so that better service can be afforded the municipalities affected by new construction.

This contact is continued all during the study, with the result that the problems of both the state and the locality are thoroughly understood, and if possible solved or compromised. Through these conferences many of the objections normal to a public hearing are overcome, generally leaving only minor objections and those of property owners whose homes will be taken, to be considered.

At the present time there has been excellent team work in all cases where full time directors are employed by local planning boards.

These officials are thoroughly cognizant of their obligations and have worked hard in acting as intermediaries between the highway department and the local officials.

As an example of how this works to the benefit of all, the City of New Brunswick was faced with a problem of slum clearance in 1951 before a park could be established along the Raritan River. Further development was planned from the river toward the center of the city.

Since the highway department contemplated an improvement in the area we, as is our practice, met with the city officials to describe our objectives and to see how we could coordinate our plans with those of New Brunswick. These meetings resulted in an agreement whereby the highway department acquired all the property needed for both the new highway and the park development, as well as the construction of a new Municipal Public Safety headquarters building. The city in turn paid its share for the lands required by it to the department.

Through the years New Brunswick has cleared the remaining properties toward the city center and is now proposing development of the area as a shopping and business center with central parking facilities.

Because we have always felt that redevelopment of any area without proper entrances and exits would only help history to repeat itself and result in the area becoming depressed all over again, we are still collaborating with the officials of

New Brunswick to develop proper circulation in the area and assure the permanency of the investment. The same collaboration was developed in Newark with the Housing Authority in 1955.

On a broader scale, the Pennsylvania Department of Highways and the New Jersey State Highway Department, with participation from Philadelphia and its surrounding counties, the Bureau of Public Roads and the New Jersey counties of Camden, Gloucester, Burlington and Mercer are now conducting a transportation survey which includes all phases of transportation and includes land use studies with sociological factors given thorough analysis. This field work is practically completed. The remainder of the project involves analysis of material collected and recommendations for improvements.

Now plans are being developed for an eight-county Northeast New Jersey study covering Bergen, Passaic, Hudson, Essex, Union, Middlesex, Morris and part of Somerset Counties.

This study of the densely populated urban area of New Jersey will be carried over a three-year period at an estimated cost of \$3,500,000, distributed as follows: \$2,300,000—U. S. Bureau of Public Roads; \$800,000—New Jersey State Highway Department, and \$400,000 divided on a per capita basis among the eight counties.

The objective of this study will be to obtain data calculated to

place in the hands of the engineers and planners basic statistical facts for the intelligent future development of this metropolitan area.

Since New Jersey has the unique distinction of being the only state highway department with a division of railroads, its objectives must be widened to include the safe and efficient movement of people and goods by rail as well as rubber. To this end, the Northeast New Jersey Study will include the many problems of rapid transit. It is hoped that this study will provide statistical data which might point the way toward solving the critical problems now facing New Jersey commuters and the railroads.

To assure itself that this study will not take the course of many previous efforts and become a one shot, soon obsolete affair, the highway department intends to establish a group within its Bureau of Planning and Traffic which will have full knowledge of the original survey and be in a position to periodically continue the collection of data to accommodate changing times and conditions.

To date we have established and received Federal approval of Interstate routes through the urban areas of Bergen and Passaic Counties, Essex and Union, Camden, Middlesex and Somerset Counties. Curiously, our greatest opposition was raised in Essex County. Here location was conscientiously made to conform to municipal plans and no one objected to the alignment. Rather, the opposition was to the

profile of the highway which was based on costs, as required by Federal conditions. In this case the problem was solved by finding the necessary funds to depress all but two thousand feet of this seven and one half mile section of the highway.

The over-all problem of urban renewal is made difficult only by those few who fail to recognize that it exists and by many who recognize the problem but fail to admit that some phases of it are beyond the capabilities of their own fields of specialization.

The solution of the urban problem requires very much the same technique as was applied to the problem of controlling the atom. Just as the first conversion of the atom's tremendous disruptive power to a controlled force was accomplished by experts trained in many different disciplines working together, so can the accelerating decay of urban areas be halted and reversed. Economically, the degeneration of our cities is just as destructive as an uncontrolled atomic reaction. It just takes longer to appreciate the result.—End.

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