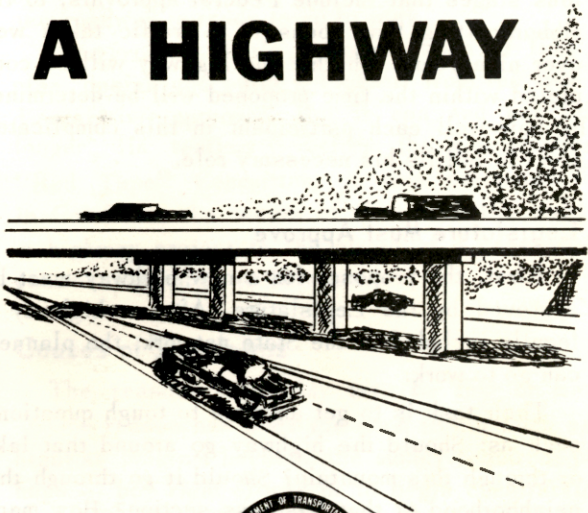


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BUILDING A HIGHWAY



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When Will The New Highway Be Opened?

It's a simple question, often asked, but without a simple answer.

Highways are born because there is a need for them--either to overcome existing traffic problems or to meet anticipated future needs. New Jersey highways are born in the State Legislature. Unlike Topsy, they don't just grow. They must be shaped by planners and designers, given substance by builders and, all along the way, must be nourished with enough money at the right time.

This may sound quick and easy, but it isn't.

From the time a highway is conceived as a rough pencil line on a road map, through the various stages that include Federal approvals, to the ribbon cutting that opens it to traffic takes well over nine years. Whether the highway will be completed within the time proposed will be determined by how well each participant in this complicated process fulfills his necessary role.

Legislature Must Approve

First, the proposal for a new highway must be approved by the Legislature. After a highway is legally included in the State network, the planners can go to work.

Their task is to get answers to tough questions such as: Should the highway go around that lake or through this mountain? Should it go through this neighborhood or that business section? How many lanes should it have? How will it affect the environment? Who would benefit the most and who would be hurt the least?

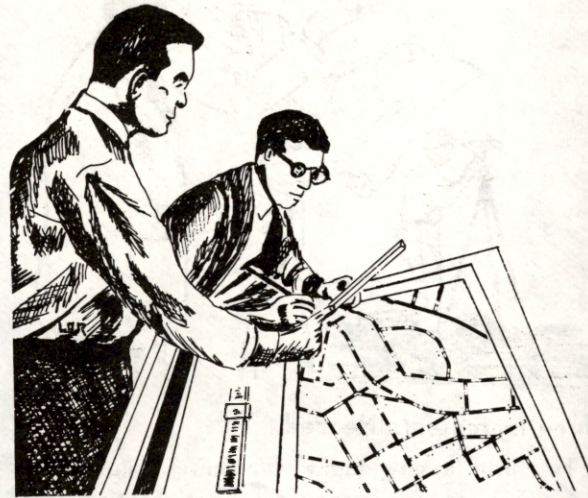
This is called the "Route Location Study." Its purpose is to try to find the best corridor for the highway. The corridor, or general location for the proposed highway, could be as much as 1,000 feet wide.

Corridor Selected

As many as 33 corridors have been considered for a single highway. The initial number is reduced to those corridors--usually from two to five--which

appear to most nearly meet all of the objectives while also overcoming most of the objections.

This study takes an average of two years and 10 months. The reason so much time is needed is that more than maps and charts and statistics are required to find the answers. Meetings must be held with local officials and citizens so that the planners can be as sure as possible that what's best for designing and building the highway also is best for the people who will live with it. And there must be coordination with other agencies of government--Federal, State, County and Municipal--to be sure that all of their requirements are met.



From among the several corridors considered, the Department selects the one favored on the basis of all the information available up to that point. This recommendation, along with the other alternate corridors, is presented to the public for discussion first at an informal preview meeting and then at a formal public hearing. The objective is to provide the fullest opportunity to bring to light any questions or problems that might have been overlooked so that they can be considered before final approval.

Then the second phase--designing the highway--can begin. But not until the highway has been given nourishment by the Legislature in the form of money to pay for the design work.

Design Work Begins

The design engineers then get out their drawing boards and slide rules to find out how the highway will look--where interchanges should be located, whether there should be a bridge here or a jughandle there, whether the highway should be depressed or whether the community through which it passes would be better served by an elevated roadway. Somehow, they must try to weigh benefits against costs. They must try to protect the natural environment against any harmful effects and at the same time meet the many Federal and State requirements for highway design. This work will consume another two years.

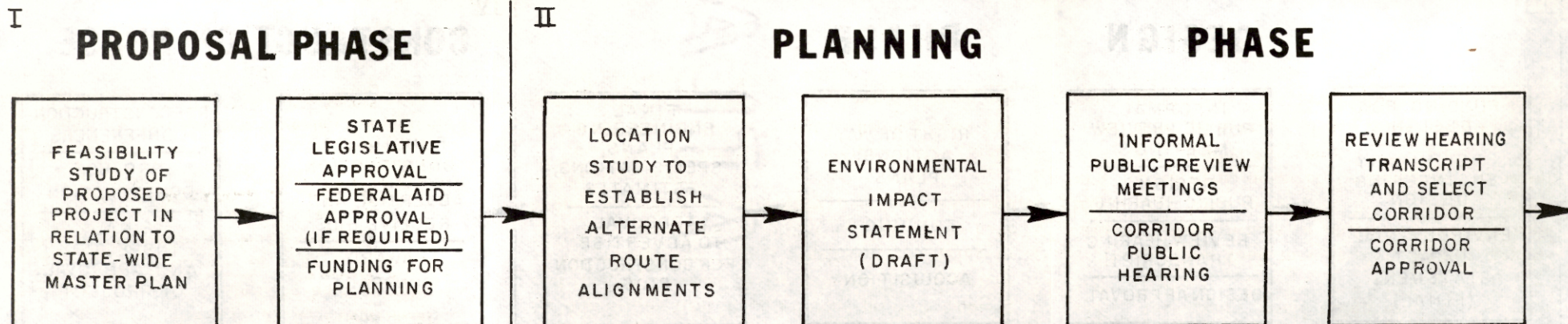
After the design engineers have drawn their blueprint picture of the highway within the approved corridor, the people who live and do business where the highway is to be built are given a full preview of the design plans. This is to enable them to comment knowledgeably on the proposed design at a public hearing.

Comments from the public in design public hearings have resulted in such important changes as the location or shape of an interchange or the curve or elevation of a roadway. The Department knows that constructive participation in hearings by interested citizens can be extremely valuable.

When the highway's general design has been approved and while detailed engineering drawings are being prepared, the Department's real estate experts acquire the land, or right-of-way, needed for the highway. The Department has no special fund with which to purchase right-of-way in advance, so any delay by the Legislature in providing this money could delay work on the highway.

Buying this land may involve lengthy negotiations. If homeowners or apartment dwellers must move, they have to be provided with decent, safe and sanitary replacement housing. All of which adds up to another two years.

By now, an average of six years and 10 months have passed since the Legislature added the highway to the State system.



Construction Final Phase

Two years--and possibly more--are needed to construct the highway and open it to traffic. Millions of dollars have been invested and additional millions must be provided so that the land can be cleared and the road paved.

The construction work may affect residents and businesses along the right-of-way. So before the work begins, a meeting is held with local officials and the construction contractor to find the best way to handle traffic and avoid other possible problems during the construction period.

Hopefully, toward the end of the ninth year, for the average project the highway signs are in place, trees and shrubs have been planted and the new roadway is ready to go to work.

Nine years. That's a normal span of time to plan, design and build a highway from the time of Legislative approval. But it can and has taken longer. (In testimony before the Congressional "Red Tape" Committee, it was estimated that in California the length of time from the start of a highway project to the award of a construction contract ranged up to 13 years.)

Causes of Slowdowns

The reasons for delay may be few or many.

One reason has been the need to cut back on a highway program because the money required, perhaps to buy right-of-way or to begin construction, has not been provided.

Another is the need to find in problem areas the proper replacement housing for persons who must move out of the path of the highway.

Another has been the increased public concern over protection of the environment. While the Department has been mindful of this concern and has sought to respond to it in each phase of planning, design and construction, new Federal and State reporting requirements have resulted in additional delays.

And still another reason is the wait after wait to receive approvals from various Federal agencies at different steps along the way. It is estimated

that almost 2½ years is lost when the Federal Government is involved in a highway project. With the elimination of this waiting time, the average time to complete a non-federal project is 6½ years.

The inevitable result of meeting the environmental concerns and of the various delays is that financial costs rise. The higher costs place a further burden on the Department's limited resources. The result is that the construction of other highways may be delayed until additional money is provided.



Three Ingredients Needed

To build a new highway requires engineering. It requires enough money at the right time. And it requires numerous approvals from other agencies of government.

The Department of Transportation provides the engineering skills. The citizens of New Jersey, through their interest and support, provide the money. The Federal Government principally, but local and other State agencies as well, provide the necessary approvals.

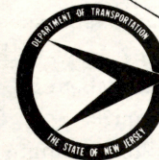
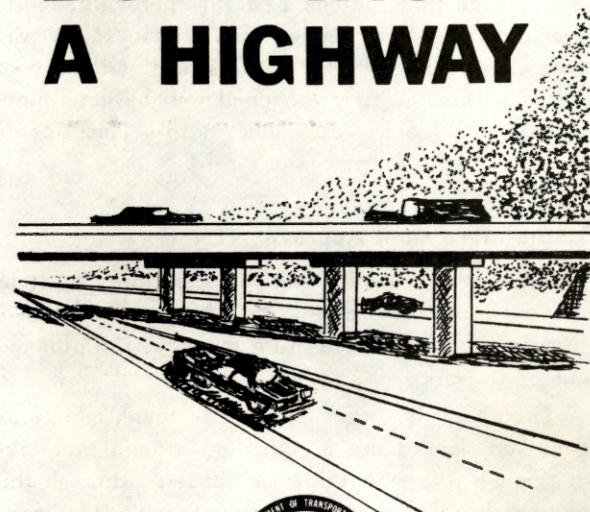
The efficiency and dispatch with which they make their contributions to a project determine to a substantial degree how long it takes to build a highway.

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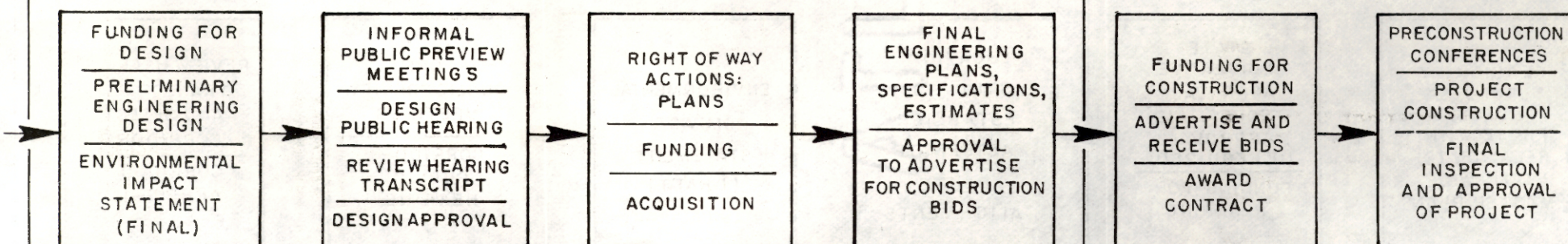
III

DESIGN

PHASE

IV

CONSTRUCTION PHASE



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