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PRELIMINARY REVISED

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON  
**MOTOR VEHICLE  
ADMINISTRATION**

*The President's* HIGHWAY  
SAFETY CONFERENCE

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## FOREWORD

A motor vehicle administration program fully geared to highway safety objectives includes four basic elements which can effectively assist in preventing traffic accidents:

1. Through driver examination and licensing, it requires motorists to develop the driving skill and the knowledge of traffic laws essential to safe use of the public highways. Such a program, properly administered, will encourage license applicants to take advantage of opportunities for driver training and safety education.

2. Through suspension or revocation of licenses when driving records warrant such action, it removes from the highways those who cannot or will not assume individual responsibility for highway safety. Thus it multiplies the effectiveness of enforcement agencies by making accidents and repeated violations a factor which the licensed driver must constantly guard against.

3. Through motor vehicle inspection, it provides a periodic check on the operating condition of the vehicle and serves to make motorists more keenly aware of the importance of safe driving attitudes and of their individual responsibilities in accident prevention.

4. Through the use of sound financial responsibility laws, it provides a further incentive for safe driving.

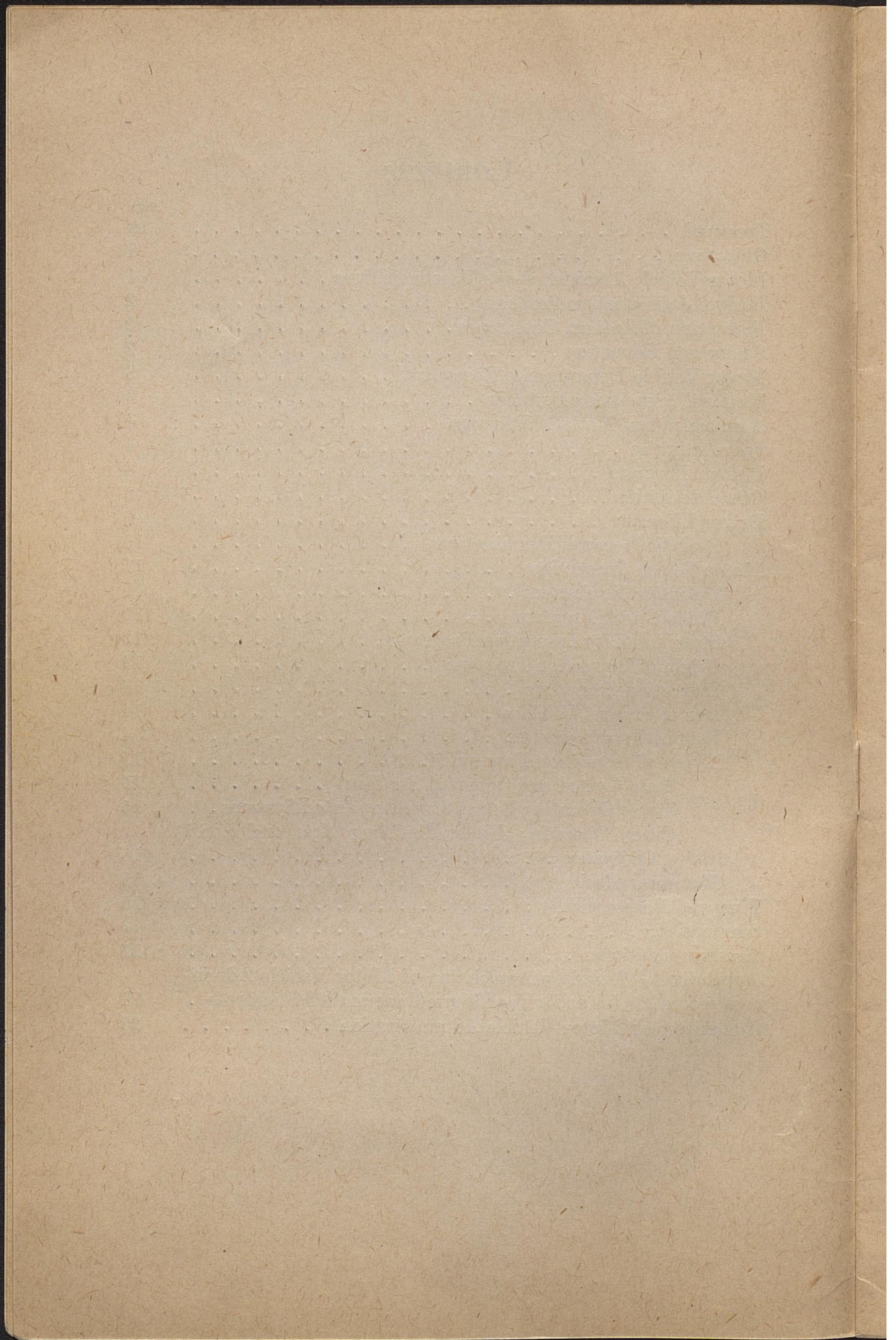
To be effective, motor vehicle administration must be guided by facts concerning particular accident problems of the region or locality, and facts as to the best practices in administration and law. Further research to establish these facts, and better dissemination of the information, is of growing importance.



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# *Report of Committee on* **Motor Vehicle Administration**

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## **OBJECTIVES**

This Committee has been assigned the responsibility of presenting to The President's Highway Safety Conference a report on motor vehicle administration.

This report is confined to the relation and relative importance of the pertinent elements of motor vehicle administration, or more specifically, driver licensing, motor-vehicle inspection, and financial responsibility, to the prevention of street and highway accidents. The Committee has evaluated the techniques and standards that have been developed and the extent to which these have been applied in the several States and has made specific recommendations for inclusion in an effective accident-prevention program.

## **MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

The responsibilities of the motor-vehicle administrator today include not only assistance in the reduction of traffic accidents on the highways, but other very necessary and time-consuming jobs such as registration and classification of thousands of vehicles of all types; maintenance of files on transfer of vehicle ownership; financial accounting of taxes collected; and a huge volume of miscellaneous correspondence in response to inquiries by the general public.

These multitudinous problems have the tendency to shift the attention of the Administrator from his responsibilities in the field of highway safety to his responsibilities in these other directions.

While this Committee has concerned itself only with those responsibilities and duties that fall within the jurisdiction of State motor vehicle departments and are germane to the subject of street and highway safety, it is believed that the historical background of the development of motor vehicle administration should be traced briefly.



### EARLY ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

Shortly after the turn of the century the motor vehicle became an instrument of taxation and the State fixed the responsibility for the levying of a tax and for vehicle identification in the hands of that State department which in the minds of the legislature was most suitable to undertake this assignment.

For a number of years the problem of the motor vehicle arose principally in its relationship with the horse-drawn vehicle. In those early days it was not generally believed important to undertake a police power in the regulation of these vehicles. The motor vehicle was following substantially the rules of the road practiced at the time for horse-drawn vehicles. As the number of motor vehicles increased certain elementary regulations were inaugurated but it was not until after the end of the First World War and the extensive development of our highway systems, that the motor vehicle became an interstate as well as a State regulatory problem.

With the beginning of interstate movement of motor vehicles the lack of uniformity of State and local motor-vehicle laws and regulations developed into a complex problem. States set up barriers which actually prevented a vehicle from one State from entering another State unless certain requirements were met.

### FORMATION OF EASTERN CONFERENCE

The impact of this impossible situation was one of the underlying reasons for the banding together in 1921 of the State motor vehicle departments in the eastern section of this country for the purposes of "considering the question of guiding future legislation and administration of motor-vehicle laws so as to procure uniformity and reciprocity."

Because of the similarity of problems, additional States in the east came into the conference the following year. At the first meeting of the newly organized conference consideration was given to such problems as operators' licenses, right-of-way, rules of the road, regulation of commercial motor vehicles, uniform lighting, and the high increase of persons operating vehicles while under the influence of liquor.

### SAFETY AND EDUCATION

Resolutions at subsequent meetings of this group were directed to the increasing accident problem and the Department of Commerce was urged to call a national conference in 1924 to consider the matter of uniform traffic laws. Reference is made to the work of this Na-



tional Conference of Street and Highway Safety in the report of the Committee on Laws and Ordinances.

As early as 1925 these motor-vehicle administrators were advocating the principle that safety could be realized only through education, and they pledged themselves to further every type of broad educational work in which their official duties would permit them to enter.

Vision standards for drivers were agreed upon which resulted in the establishments of practices that are now generally accepted. Most State laws, for example, require persons lacking visual acuity to wear glasses under certain conditions while driving.

### MOTOR VEHICLE DEPARTMENTS RECOGNIZED

Meanwhile, in other sections of the country, identification and regulation of motor vehicles was more or less hodgepodge, and the interstate movement of motor vehicles had grown to the extent that people were traveling from coast to coast by motor vehicle with complete lack of knowledge by nonresidents of various State laws.

One of the first recommendations of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety was to recognize motor vehicle departments as such and define their jurisdiction. This particular recommendation was helpful in drawing together within the respective States those elements which had been decentralized under various State departments.

### NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FORMED <sup>1</sup>

In October 1932 the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators had grown to include 22 States, the District of Columbia, and Provinces of Canada. At a meeting held at that time in Detroit, Mich., the group recognized the need for an organization national in scope to meet the many problems that were developing in motor vehicle administration throughout the country.

The officials in attendance agreed by resolution to form a national conference of motor-vehicle administrators and the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators agreed to reorganize as Region 1 of this national conference. The Southern States organized themselves into Region 2; the Mid-Western States became Region 3, and the Western States Region 4. All the Provinces of Canada became members and fitted themselves into Regions 1, 3, and 4, geographically.

Officers of this national body were elected from the four established regions and it was through the leadership and support given this early movement by Thomas H. MacDonald, then Chief of the Bureau of

<sup>1</sup> All references made to the origin, development, and programs of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators is based on information available at the Association's national headquarters, 840 Woodward Building, Washington 5, D. C.



Public Roads and now Commissioner of the Public Roads Administration, that a secretariat was supplied this national organization.

The American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators was the name given this national group and it adopted substantially the same program that was being carried forward at that time by the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

### ADMINISTRATORS' NATIONAL PROGRAM

In the field of highway safety the Association provided for the promotion of uniform laws and regulations governing drivers' licenses, and equipment and operation of motor vehicles; uniform standards and practices of enforcement by police and uniform statutes for enforcement by judicial authorities; educational campaigns in the interest of public safety; technical studies of causes and prevention of traffic accidents; special studies in the development of traffic control standards; proper selection and training of department heads in the various fields of motor-vehicle administration; and cooperation with Federal agencies and private organizations in studies relating to safe highway transportation.

In 1938 the Association was able to establish national headquarters to carry forward its objectives. The financial contributions made by the member States and the Provinces of Canada fell far short of being sufficient. It became necessary for the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators to seek financial support outside of its own administrative group in order to effectuate its program, and that condition continues today.

### WAR ACTIVITIES

In December 1940, the Administrators, at the request of the Secretary of War, joined together with State highway officials, State police officials, and the Public Roads Administration in forming the National Highway Traffic Advisory Committee to the War Department. The complete facilities of the Association's national headquarters in Washington as well as the State motor vehicle departments throughout the country were made available to the War Department to carry out a program of conservation of motor vehicles and facilitation of essential traffic.

### PRESENT PROGRAM

In 1944, looking forward to the end of the war, the Association developed and agreed upon a 10-point program which is its program today. With its adoption, the then President of the Association called attention to the fact that if the Association were to accomplish its purposes and produce the necessary results each member individually



must assume the responsibility for the successful effectuation of the program in his respective jurisdiction. The members, he declared, must liberalize their individual viewpoints and work for the benefit of the whole, and be willing to accept and conform to the majority rule.

He emphasized that the need for group thinking and group action in the administrative field had brought about the formation of the Association and that group thinking and group action were still needed to carry out the program of the Association.

The Committee makes this 10-point program part of this report:

1. Adoption of the Uniform Vehicle Code by all member departments.
2. Uniform reciprocity between all States for vehicles in interstate operation.
3. Adoption in States where needed, of approved minimum flooring of maximum sizes and weights for commercial vehicles.
4. Adoption of Association's approved standards for driver examinations and examination procedures by all States.
5. Adoption of uniform vehicle inspection law by all States.
6. Members to provide leadership in pedestrian regulation and control program in each State.
7. Members to procure establishment of training courses in normal schools and colleges for driver-training teachers in all States.
8. Members to procure incorporation of required driver-training courses in all high schools in all States.
9. Close cooperation between State administrative and State enforcement officials.
10. Cooperation of all States with the State and Local Officials' National Highway Safety Committee, Public Roads Administration, and other agencies.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to the program as outlined, the national headquarters of the Association in Washington gives direct service and assistance to the State members in matters of uniform practices and procedures, departmental organization and planning, research and studies currently needed, and selection of training of personnel. It acts as liaison with Federal agencies and other associations working in the field of highway transportation, publishes monthly bulletins, and disseminates related information and statistics.

The Association work is divided into committee activities both within the national structure and within the regional groups and meetings are held periodically, regionally and nationally, to review its programs and evaluate the progress made.



The Committee believes that it is necessary to lay this foundation for an acceptance of the recommendations of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators by the Conference. The Committee is impressed by the work so far done by this Association in the area of street and highway safety.

Confining its discussion to those elements of this program that fall within the scope of highway safety, the Committee has divided its assignment into the three subjects to be considered, namely, driver licensing, motor-vehicle inspection, and financial responsibility.

### DRIVER LICENSING

This committee recognizes the important part that driver licensing plays in the control of drivers and the reduction of traffic accidents. For the purposes of this report the following is a statement of the overall problem; minimum driver license examination standards of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators are given in Appendix A of this report.

The Committee, in carefully reviewing the problem of licensing, has found basic elements essential to the proper functioning of a driver license law. The continued lack of any one of these basic elements has been found sufficient to cause any driver license law to become a nuisance, a mail-order proposition, or a revenue measure. These elements are:

A. Driving a motor vehicle on the highway is a privilege granted by the State and may be taken away from the licensee by the State for cause. The granting of this privilege is a function of the police power of a State through which the State exercises the right to establish reasonable standards for examination and the authority to revoke or suspend licenses of drivers who do not comply with traffic laws.

B. Legislation creating a driver-license law must be so drawn that provisions are made for adequate fees, limited duration of license, centralized administration, mandatory revocation for certain offenses, examination of all new drivers, broad discretionary power to suspend licenses of drivers for cause or to exercise the power of suspension or revocation in certain stated cases.

C. The license law must be administered on a broad, efficient basis by an adequate number of trained personnel employed by the State for the single purpose of carrying out the duties prescribed in controlling drivers through licensing.

D. There must be a strong public support of a character that will insure the permanence of strict examinations and impartial suspension and revocations when warranted.



With these basic elements in mind, the Committee has evaluated the techniques and standards that have been developed and the extent to which these have been applied in the several States.

A. *Driving is a privilege.*—Supreme courts in practically every State have upheld this principle. Not once has a license law been invalidated or repealed. It seems necessary only to emphasize that the public must be constantly reminded that a license to drive is a privilege—not a right.

B. *Proper Legislation must be enacted.*—The model for driver licensing legislation is the Uniform Vehicle Code, Act II, Uniform Operators' and Chauffeurs' Licensing Act. Adopted first in 1924 and revised every 4 years, it is the accepted standard. Basically, Act II, provides for the following:

1. Centralized administration of licensing.
2. Periodic renewal of licenses and adequate fees.
3. Examination of all new applicants for licenses.
4. Mandatory revocation of license by department when licensee commits certain antisocial acts.
5. Discretionary suspension of license by department when licensee's driving record warrants such action.

Other sections in the Uniform Vehicle Code found desirable are provisions for:

1. Reexamination of drivers with bad records.
2. Restrictions upon licensee for cause by department.<sup>2</sup>
3. Instruction permit for beginning drivers.
4. Minimum age limit for drivers.
5. Parental consent and responsibility for minors.

Until there is included in a State driver-license law at least these sections, it does not comply with the Uniform Vehicle Code. In the light of the foregoing, there is a lack of uniformity in the various driver license law requirements as follows:

1. One State does not have an operator's license law.
2. Seven States do not have centralized driver-license administration by one State department.
3. Three States have licenses good until revoked.
4. Thirty States charge fees less than \$1 per driver per year.
5. Three States do not examine drivers applying for a license.

<sup>2</sup> The Motor Vehicle Administrators, in cooperation with others, have developed plans and special equipment to facilitate operation of motor vehicles by amputee war veterans.



6. Twelve States do not have license laws containing standard provisions relating to revocation of licenses.

7. Six States do not have license laws granting administrators sufficiently broad discretionary authority to suspend a driver's license in accordance with the practice recommended in the Uniform Vehicle Code.

The Committee strongly urges revision of those State laws that require driver licensing procedures at variance with the Uniform Vehicle Code, specifically those providing for split administration, local examiners, good-until-revoked licenses, inadequate fees, and limited suspensions power.

*C. The driver-license law must be administered by an adequate number of trained, interested personnel.*—In measuring the extent to which this basic element has been applied in the several States, the Committee was guided by the following premises:

1. The applicant for a driver's license has a right to expect that the examiner is so well trained that he knows more about driving than applicants.

2. The department should have sufficient trained personnel to administer to all original applicants a comprehensive, unhurried, impartial, and courteous examination which should be required by law.

3. The licensee with an accumulated bad driving record generally will continue to be a bad driver unless he receives expert diagnosis and corrective advice.

4. The public has a right to expect the department to give immediate attention to the licensee whose bad record is evidence of unsafe practices, to the extent of removing from the highways that driver if all other corrective measures fail.

The Committee lists the following practices which are a source of public criticism, and are reasons why driver licensing does not contribute to traffic safety to the extent possible:

1. Examiners are selected on a political basis rather than on the basis of fitting the job to the man and the man to the job.

2. Examiners are often highway patrolmen or State police who are not selected for the duty and do not have the time or interest to examine properly.

3. Examiners are local citizens or public officials who are neither qualified by training or supervision as examiners nor free from political domination or other consideration in the conduct of the test.



4. Examiners generally are given no formal training. When such training is provided it often is of 3 days or less duration.

5. Examiners are so few in number that they cannot give a complete examination. In many localities it is reported that an examiner must examine an average of 50 to 100 persons daily.

6. Examiners are not supervised by chief examiners but are often dependent on such supervision as may be given by district tax supervisors, or patrol or police subordinates whose interests are mainly in other fields.

7. Examiners are provided with poor tools and must conduct examinations in crowded quarters.

8. Driver improvement personnel interviewers, hearing officers, and special examiners do not exist in all the States.

9. Driver records are not centralized or of a permanent character, and not readily available to enforcement and court officials.

10. Driver records in all States are not used by the driver license division to search out and correct accident and violation repeaters.

11. Driver license divisions do not make systematic attempts to secure arrest and conviction reports from local enforcement and court officials, or reports from drivers involved in accidents.

12. Driver license divisions are made impotent in the use of driver control and improvement techniques by the lack of adequate personnel to search and post records of accidents, arrests, convictions, and complaints.

13. Fees charged for driver licenses are generally not adequate and where sufficient often are not used for that purpose, but are diverted into the general fund without provision being made to carry on recommended examination, driver control, and improvement programs.

Until such practices are eliminated, driver licensing will not be the potent force it is capable of being in the prevention of traffic accidents. These are practices that can be corrected by the States themselves and if corrected would make unnecessary a Federal driver license law.

D. *There must be strong public support of a character that will insure the permanence of strict examinations and impartial suspensions and revocations when warranted.* That 47 States and the District of Columbia have driver license laws is known. But the Committee recognizes that the enforcement of the provisions of these laws varies from excellent to worthless. In many instances State legislatures have passed standard laws but have neglected to provide



proper funds or authority for their administration. No law is worth the paper it is written on unless actively and fairly administered.

The Committee recognizes the limitations of individual officials who wish to bring about desired improvements when executive chiefs, budget officers, State legislatures, and the general public are apathetic to traffic safety programs which cost money and require increased personnel. Yet in surveying the field of driver licensing, the Committee was made acutely aware of the large number of public spirited citizens and groups who earnestly desire an improvement in the control of drivers through licensing.

It is not in the province of this Committee to provide a program designed to foster public support for driver licensing. The Committee believes, however, that those groups should work for and support:

1. Adoption of a standard law patterned after the Uniform Vehicle Code.
2. Provision of an adequate number of trained examiners, properly supervised, giving examinations based on minimum standards adopted by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, to:
  - a. All new drivers applying for license.
  - b. Special classes of drivers such as physically handicapped or superannuated.
3. A driver improvement program consisting of:
  - a. Mandatory revocations of licenses for cause.
  - b. Discretionary suspensions of licenses for cause.
  - c. Diagnosis and treatment for drivers with bad records.

### ***Periodic Renewal Examinations***

With limited personnel available for re-examination of drivers, the greatest traffic safety values will be attained by emphasis on re-examination of those drivers who are involved in accidents and who repeatedly violate traffic laws or who have physical or mental disabilities or infirmities, or who, for any reason, are more than normally likely to be involved in accidents. Thorough re-examination of those most obviously in need of it is much more desirable than hurried, mass re-examination of dubious thoroughness or value. Public opinion and support warrants further extension of re-examination.

This Committee believes that public sentiment will strongly support efforts of the driver-license administrator to control and improve drivers with bad records, by exercising his authority to suspend and revoke licenses, and that the administrators should be active and



energetic, consistent with good judgment, in effecting a balanced program of driver improvement. In short, the administrator should not overlook any avenue available to the driver-license division for the protection of the public on the streets and highways.

## MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION

The Committee has carefully considered its assignment in regard to appraising and evaluating the matter of periodic motor-vehicle inspection and presents a digest of its findings.

### *Defective Equipment*

Four elements, singly or in combination, are responsible for all motor-vehicle accidents—the driver, the pedestrian, the highway, and the vehicle. Mechanical failure, it is generally agreed, is not the most important contributing factor, but it is important enough to merit serious consideration.

The National Safety Council in its 1948 edition of *Accident Facts* states that "Vehicle defects were reported as contributing causes in 16 percent of all fatal accidents in 1947. This compares with 18 percent in 1946 and 8 percent in 1941, the last prewar year." *Accident Facts* further points out that "defective brakes, improper lights and defective tires, constituted over one-half of all defects reported."

In considering these facts it must be noted that it is not always possible to determine the exact relation of mechanical failures to traffic accidents since the defective equipment becomes part of the vehicle wreckage and consequently may not reveal the precise accident cause.

### *Brake Check and Traffic Safety Check Programs*

Evidence developed by the National Brake Emphasis Program, sponsored in 1945 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and several hundred cooperating organizations, strongly indicates the need for periodic inspections. The success of this program led in 1946 to a National Police Traffic Safety Check Program providing for inspection of lights, steering mechanism, tires, and windshield wipers, as well as brakes.



During the 1945 program 1,664,317 vehicles throughout the Nation were subjected to brake inspections by police during a 6-week period ending June 1. Of these vehicles, 241,998 or 14.5 percent failed to meet successfully the prescribed brake check and owners were required to make repairs.

It is significant that one of the findings resulting from the brake check program is that in States with good motor-vehicle inspection programs, a low percentage of motor vehicles checked had inadequate brakes. In one State not requiring periodic inspection, for example, 27.7 percent of the vehicles inspected were found to have poor brakes. In contrast, in the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, where sound inspection programs are in effect, only 2.9, 3.7, and 5.6 percent, respectively, of the vehicles inspected were found to have poor brakes.

The more recent Traffic Safety Check Program in 1946, last of its kind held on a national basis, further emphasized inadequacies of brakes. Of the total of 2,718,076 vehicles checked by the police during the period May 15 to July 7, 872,290 or 32.1 percent had defective equipment. Faulty lighting, both front and rear, led the list of mechanical failures, with inadequate brakes in second place, followed by defective windshield wipers, horns, and tires in that order.

### *State and City Inspection Programs*

Prior to the active entry of our Nation into the second world conflict more than 8,500,000 motor vehicles were regularly inspected from 1 to 4 times a year in 17 States and 15 cities which then conducted periodic inspections.

At present the following States have inspection laws, although programs are currently inoperative in Maryland and Mississippi and are conducted on a voluntary basis in Connecticut:

State-owned-and-operated stations:

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, New Jersey, and Washington.

Private stations appointed by States:

Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia.



The following cities also have had inspection programs:

Billings, Mont.	Memphis, Tenn.
Chattanooga, Tenn.	Miami, Fla.
Chicago, Ill.	Miami Beach, Fla.
Cincinnati, Ohio.	Norwood, Ohio.
Des Moines, Iowa.	Omaha, Nebr.
Evanston, Ill.	Portland, Oreg.
Knoxville, Tenn.	Sioux City, Iowa.
Lincoln, Nebr.	

Many of these States and cities discontinued or curtailed motor-vehicle inspection programs during the war. However, all of them plan to resume their full program or adopt expanded programs.

### *Origin of Inspection Programs*

Periodic inspections of motor vehicles grew out of campaigns to "Save A life," instituted by proclamations of State Governors, and sponsored by the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Administrators. All owners of motor vehicles during a stated period, ranging from 2 to 3 weeks, were asked to present their automobiles at designated garages for a complete inspection and repair, if necessary, of all safety equipment. Later, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Massachusetts, in 1929, were the first States to enact laws for State-wide periodic inspection of motor vehicles.

In the evolutionary process three major types of official inspection systems have developed: (1) State or municipality owned and operated stations, both fixed and portable; (2) private stations appointed by the State; and (3) combination of officially owned and operated and State-appointed stations.

### *Inspection Standards*

To guide this development and to provide for uniformity, the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety has included as a part of Act V of the Uniform Vehicle Code an article relative to vehicle inspection but this alone was not sufficient and as a result a significant milestone in the movement for periodic inspection was reached with development of the American Standards Motor Vehicle Inspection Code and Manual. The Code sets minimum standards for safe performance of motor vehicles and does not attempt to cover establishment of a motor-vehicle inspection system, with its numerous legal, organizational, and administrative aspects. The Manual, however, is designed to aid States and municipalities in putting the code into effect and to foster standard procedures for setting up and operating inspection stations.



### *Age of Present Vehicles*

In the discharge of its function to evaluate the techniques and standards that have been developed and the extent to which they have been applied, the Committee has recognized that the average age of motor vehicles being operated today is 8 years, whereas before the war the average life span of a passenger car from factory gate to scrap yard was 5.8 years. Since wartime restrictions on available replacement parts and manpower shortages limited the possibility of adequate service and repair and made it almost impossible to maintain motor vehicles in safe operating condition, the need now for periodic inspection is definite and urgent. Moreover, need for periodic motor-vehicle inspection is emphasized by the increased speed, as related to poor mechanical condition, with which motor vehicles are being operated since the lifting of wartime restrictions.

### *Essential Requirements*

National authorities recommend, and this Committee agrees, that no State or municipality should undertake establishment of an inspection system until there has been successfully developed an adequate overall accident-prevention program. This includes such essentials as standard driver licensing and examination, accident reporting, a program of highway construction and improvement, competent traffic engineering and safety education, all backed by efficient enforcement. Having once provided these basic requirements, however, full realization of the objective of accident prevention cannot be attained without the inclusion of periodic motor vehicle inspection as an essential part of the program.

In this connection, the Committee has examined carefully and critically Article XVII of Act V of the Uniform Vehicle Code, and The Code and Manual of Motor Vehicle Inspection, and finds them comprehensive and adequate as minimum standards. Moreover, it commends to any State or municipality ready for the adoption of periodic vehicle inspection these standards as the basis of its program.

In considering existing periodic vehicle inspection programs, there is wide variation in the quality of the inspection being given. In some States and cities the quality of the inspection job is equal to or better than that required by the minimum standards set forth in the "Motor Vehicle Inspection Manual." In the majority of cases, however, the quality of the inspection job being done is poor.



### ***Types of Inspection Programs***

This condition stems from a combination of factors and, in order to be understandable, requires segregation of the programs according to the types of legislation under which inspections are conducted.

*State Owned and Operated Stations.*—In general, stations operated under this type of legislation are doing the best job. In those instances where the job is not being well done, three main reasons for failure are apparent: (1) Failure to receive a fair share of revenues to perform the service for which its fees are collected; (2) salary scales inadequate to attract and hold personnel of the desired qualifications; and (3) lack of sufficient personnel.

*States Operating Under State Appointed Systems.*—Under this system whereby the State licenses garages, the quality varies with the degree of enforcement the State is able to exercise. In some cases enforcement is difficult to obtain while in other cases lax enforcement or no enforcement exists. The main reasons for failure are: (1) Inefficiency and inadequacy of this type of operation; (2) lack of fundamental honesty in the part of some segments of the licensed garages and its corrupting influence on others; and (3) inability to maintain responsibility commensurate with authority exercised.

*Cities Operating Under Enabling Acts and Local Ordinance.*—It has been our pleasure to note that for the most part the procedures have been better than average. City stations, however, are handicapped in much the same way as the State-operated station, that is by: (1) Failure to receive a fair share of operating revenues from the fee collected; (2) inadequate salary scales; (3) lack of adequate jurisdiction; and (4) lack of job security.

The Committee appreciates that many cities are doing an excellent job. Nevertheless, it is considered desirable, in the interest of safety, that city vehicle-inspection plans be absorbed or merged by one method or another into State owned and operated systems, in all States that can meet requirements for instituting periodic vehicle inspection and are prepared to meet the standards of the Association.

### ***Recommendations***

The Committee recommends in all cases:

1. Adherence to the Uniform Motor Vehicle Code in the creation or revision of periodic inspection systems.
2. Acceptance of the Inspection Code and principles of the Inspection Manual of the American Standards Association as the basis of conducting all periodic motor-vehicle inspections.



3. Continued development and upgrading of the existing standards.
4. Payment of salaries commensurate with the importance of the job, and in all cases, adequate to attract competent personnel.
5. Adequate revenues to provide for the support of inspection systems.

For immediate results, the Committee recommends to States operating with licensed garages that:

1. Adequate controls be established to disclose dishonest and negligent inspection practices.
2. Enforcement officials be enlisted in reporting improper inspections to properly constituted authorities.
3. Training in detection of improper inspection be given police highway patrolmen and others concerned with the safety problem.
4. All violations of vehicle inspection codes by State-licensed garages be dealt with summarily through revocation of inspection authority.

### FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

At the present time 40 States and the District of Columbia have some form of Financial Responsibility and 1 State, Massachusetts, has a compulsory insurance law. A listing of State law provisions regarding financial responsibility is contained in the report of the Committee on Laws and Ordinances.

This Committee recognizes the economic aspects involved but consideration of financial responsibility for the purposes of this discussion relates only to its importance to street and highway safety.

Traffic authorities are in agreement that this law, along with others regulating drivers, serves an important function.

In considering the application of the law in the several States in which it has been adopted, it appears that much remains to be done to bring about the full effectiveness of financial responsibility. There are several reasons for this, the chief of which is failure on the part of State legislatures to provide adequate funds for carrying out the provisions of the law. Further, in a number of States, complete integration into the safety program has not been accomplished.

It is the sense of this Committee that the trend toward enactment of financial responsibility laws should have a wholesome effect for providing greater safety on the highways as well as safe settlements arising out of motor-vehicle accidents and give a greater control on the driver license aspect.



## SUMMATION

In reviewing nationally the work being done in the field of motor-vehicle administration, this Committee has come to the conclusion that the following undesirable conditions exist in some jurisdictions:

1. High turn-over of State personnel due to frequent elections and lack of adequate merit system or civil service.
2. Inadequate salaries in many jurisdictions result in qualified personnel seeking employment outside of State government.
3. Lack of training facilities, technical instructors, budget, and time, prohibit the development of well-trained technical staff in such essential work as driver-license examining and motor-vehicle inspection.
4. Lack of proper liaison between State departments resulting in competitive situations in which the general public is the ultimate loser.
5. Failure on the part of some departments properly to account to the general public for their activities and to solicit public support.
6. Failure on the part of some State officials to follow through vigorously on nationally recommended and accepted standards for adoption in their respective States.
7. This Committee is impressed with the fact that across the country the relative standings of motor vehicle departments in their respective State governments vary. Oftentimes the motor vehicle department is merely a "step-child" of some other State department with the result that proper consideration is not always given to the importance of the work of that department.
8. Legislative proposals in conflict with nationally recommended and accepted uniform standards are introduced and seriously considered without this conflict and the desirability of conformity with accepted standards being forcefully called to the attention of the legislators.
9. Failure on the part of some legislatures to provide adequate budgets to permit a good job to be done.
10. Indifference on the part of the public to the job the motor vehicle departments are endeavoring to do in the public interest.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

After full consideration of the many ramifications of the work of motor vehicle administrators, this Committee believes that the Conference should make certain recommendations for adoption by the sev-



eral States, if the public is to have the full benefit of the administrators' contribution to safety on the streets and highways.

The Committee has been impressed with the efforts that many administrators are making to do a good job. Many of the motor vehicle departments of this country are well equipped and are doing everything possible to make our highways safe.

Others are handicapped by lack of support from their superiors, failure on the part of the legislature to provide adequate budget and the "tools" with which to work, and public indifference to the important role of motor-vehicle administration in the public welfare.

It has been the purpose of this Committee not to criticize particular departments for failing to measure up to their responsibilities, but rather to appraise as a whole the work being done and to offer certain recommendations for improvement.

In making these recommendations, the Committee has also taken into consideration the results shown in the survey, "The Public's Attitudes on Traffic Safety," prepared by the Opinion Research Corporation in January 1946 for the National Committee for Traffic Safety. Based upon that survey the National Committee reports:

\* \* \* a generous majority (of the people) that does not fall too far short of being unanimous are of the opinion that:

1. Motor vehicles everywhere should be given periodic official inspections.
2. All drivers should pass not only a satisfactory vision test, but as to their general physical fitness also.
3. Driver licenses should be required.
4. Every applicant for such a license should pass a rigid test of his or her ability to drive and demonstrate a thorough knowledge of traffic rules and regulations. Forty percent of the people even stated that drivers should be re-examined regularly before having their license renewed.

This Committee recommends the adoption by the several States of sound driver licensing and financial responsibility laws, and further recommends that motor-vehicle inspection, subject to the qualifications contained in this report, be made a part of every well developed accident prevention program.

Specifically, this Committee makes the following recommendations:

1. Motor vehicle departments in the several States should be set up as separate and independent units and have equal with other official segments of State government.
2. Motor vehicle departments should be given adequate budgets to carry out fully their responsibilities in this field.
3. The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators should be financed by its member States with sufficient funds to enable the Association to carry on its work in a positive and aggressive manner.



4. The relationship between motor-vehicle departments and State legislatures should be one whereby the motor-vehicle administrator becomes a technical advisor to the legislature in matters that pertain to nationally recommended uniform laws, standards and practices in this field.

5. Executives of the highest caliber should be selected as department chiefs and their term of office should be fixed.

6. Qualified personnel should be selected through a merit system or civil service and for key positions technically trained men and women should be selected who not only know their work but are fully conscious of their responsibilities.

7. Adequate compensation and assurance of job security are essential to attract capable personnel.

8. Training facilities, technical instructors, and adequate budget and time should be provided for the development of a well-trained technical staff.

9. Liaison between the several State departments is essential where overlapping of jurisdictions exists in highway transportation matters if the general public is to receive maximum benefits.

10. Motor vehicle departments should keep the general public fully informed of their activities for the purposes of gaining public support.

11. Motor vehicle administrators should assume the responsibility of bringing about the adoption of nationally recommended uniform laws and standards in their field.

12. Central files should be maintained by appropriate State departments providing for complete accident records of vehicle registration and operation.

13. Adequate facilities and personnel should be provided for analysis and driver control as well as development of information and statistical data of a research nature.

14. Federal, State and local governments should assume leadership in requiring their vehicles to be in good mechanical condition and their drivers to be skilled and competent.

15. Motor vehicle administrators should join with highway officials, law enforcement officers, and other groups in providing for their respective memberships the latest court decisions and statutory interpretations, attorneys general opinions, and departmental rulings, to the end that uniformity be promoted in the several States.

16. The need for a national authoritative guide for handling the problem of restrictions and prohibitions in driver licensing because of mental and physical defects is recognized. Driver experts,



physicians, and others should study the problem jointly for this purpose and to meet this need.

In the field of driver licensing this Committee makes the following specific recommendations:

1. All States should adopt and put into practice at least the minimum standards for the licensing of motor-vehicle operators and chauffeurs provided for in Act II of the Uniform Vehicle Code.

2. The minimum standards for driver examination recommended by the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators should be adopted by all States whose standards are lower; but where possible, this Committee recommends that higher than present minimum standards be adopted. It is urged that everything possible be done to implement research in the field of driver examinations.

3. Adequate funds should be provided for the establishment of necessary facilities where proper examination of applicant drivers may be conducted.

4. Drivers' licenses should be classified as to type of vehicle, such as motorcycles, passenger car, bus and truck by type and size, and applicants should be required to qualify by separate driving examination where necessary in each type of vehicle for which license may be desired.

5. Restricted drivers' licenses should be issued to qualifying applicants having physical disabilities, and on such licenses the special restrictions imposed for specific disabilities should be indicated.

6. Motor vehicle administrators should continue with their work in driver education and training and continue to maintain facilities in their respective departments to that end.

7. Driver license fees should be used for driver license administration, not for general revenue purposes.



## Appendix A

### AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MOTOR VEHICLE ADMINISTRATORS MINIMUM DRIVER LICENSE EXAMINATION STANDARDS<sup>1</sup>

The following minimum standards for the regular operator's license examination have been adopted by the members of the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators. Many States have much stricter regulations, but without the ones quoted herewith, the groundwork for effective control of the driver is missing.

*Road Sign Test.*—Every applicant shall be able to read and understand highway signs regulating, warning, and directing traffic in the English language.

*Vision Test.*—Visual acuity with or without glasses must be such that the person possess a rating of 20/40 according to the Snellen rating. An applicant who must wear glasses in order to receive a rating of 20/40 using both eyes shall receive a license permitting him to drive only while wearing proper glasses. Color vision should be tested and noted on the license.

*Law (Road Rules) Test.*—Every applicant for the driver license shall have a reasonable understanding of the traffic laws of his State. Every applicant should be required to take this test regardless of previous experience or licenses in other States. The applicant must answer correctly at least 70 percent of the questions asked.

*Road (Driving) Test.*—Every applicant should have sufficient ability to exercise ordinary and reasonable control in operating a motor vehicle over a standard course conforming as nearly as possible to the following conditions:

1. To be not less than one mile and a half in length.
2. To contain enough features for a test of from 12 to 15 minutes' duration.
3. To include:
  - a. Situations for shifting gears, applying brakes, turning around, and parking.
  - b. Three right and three left turns.
  - c. Two traffic signals.
  - d. Business or congested district.
  - e. Residential district.
  - f. If possible, stopping and starting on a grade.

<sup>1</sup> Based on "Standards and Procedures for the Examination of Applicants for Driver Licenses," 1948, American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, Washington, D. C.



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The final Conference-approved edition of this report will contain a complete list of the members of the Committee on Motor Vehicle Administration.