Limit the Weight and the Speed

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LIMIT THE WEIGHT AND THE SPEED

The travel of motor vehicles over Wisconsin highways during 1918 has been estimated to have been about 700,000,000 miles. The best efforts of the highway repair and reconstruction forces of the state availed little against the onslaught of this intense traffic. True, many new sections of well constructed road were opened to the public last year, but few of the new pavements, especially on the routes of main travel, withstood the destructive influence of excessive speed and weight in a manner that guaranteed long life to them. The wear and tear on the best and most scientifically laid roadways has been so severe as to attract even the attention of public authorities. They are aware of the pressing need of a remedy.

What are we to expect in the present year? War-time restrictions are being withdrawn and we are entering upon an era of prosperity that will bring with it automobiles for everybody and for every purpose. The incentive of war and the transportation requirements in the army have developed the motor truck so that it is now rated like a ship by its tonnage. The rivalry of truck manufacturers to attain speed and capacity has blinded them to the interest the public has in its highways. It is evident that every pound added to the pressure against the road surface causes further abrasion. And when we add the pressure by tons and multiply it by increase of speed, we are subtracting from and dividing the days of our highways' existence. This condition is not confined to the traffic centers in our cities, for it is easy to see that a vehicle that would break down the best kinds of city pavement in the short space of a few months, will cause much greater damage to the rural highway and much more rapidly. The success of long distance hauling by truck in this country, coupled with the almost exclusive use of this method of transportation over large areas in the battle regions of France, are a guarantee of the adoption on a large scale this year of rural
motor cartage. We must take protective measures to save our roads.

Our present system of repair and reconstruction are good. But their success is always brief, like sweeping back flooding water with a broom. We can never even approach the ideal in road conditions unless we stem the tide of the aggressive agents of road defacing, excess weight and speed. The situation demands legislative regulation. A maximum weight limit must be set and the speed must be scheduled to decrease with the increase in burden. To properly frame such legislation, the following factors should bear consideration:

1. That the damaging effect of wheel loads on pavements is the result of,
   (a) the load,
   (b) the diameter of the wheel,
   (c) the breadth of the tire surface,
   (d) the material and construction of the tire, whether it is pneumatic, solid or steel,
   (e) the type, capacity and resilience of springs.

2. That the speed multiplies the force exerted against the road surface.

The legislature of Wisconsin is now in session. It is the earnest prayer of the taxpayers that this opportunity be made the most of by the passage of well framed legislation to protect the state highways and the pavements of our cities, so that we may enjoy a more lasting benefit from the ten odd millions of dollars we annually expend for highway maintenance and construction.

H. C. Hirschboeck.