

—such expensive obstacles—that the States refused to adopt them. Rather than build bridges, they clung to the old barging ferry river crossing. At Mobile Bay, for example, in order to traverse its fourteen miles of water, auto travelers submitted to the inconvenience of conforming to the schedule of a barge that ran one direction in the morning and the opposite direction in the evening. If there were more cars than the barge could accommodate, the late-comers waited until the next day with what grace they could summon. There were 125 miles of delta formation east and west of the Mississippi River. At Biloxi, Mississippi, where the highway followed the beach, twenty miles of sea wall were required, which, exclusive of paving, would cost \$3,400,000, or approximately \$170,000 per mile. In Louisiana there were swamps that offered obvious barriers to road construction. Five hundred miles of projected Old Spanish Trail roadbed through Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana crossed rivers that carry about half the drainage of the entire United States. Five large rivers would cross the Trail within a hundred and forty miles. Two-thirds of the drainage waters of the entire United States would flow through Old Spanish Trail bridges. There were districts subject to almost yearly recurrence of floods which presented their own peculiar difficulties.

In addition there were psychological forces working against the idea of a southern route which were even more stubborn to combat. The northern route, now United States Highway Number 80, was being favored in official circles for reasons of economy, convenience and easy construction, while the southern route was considered impractical. There were other highway promotions, chiefly roads running north and south. Large cities opposed the east-to-west highway on the grounds that it would diffuse their original plan to draw custom from northern vacationists. The Louisiana State Highway Department would not cooperate because it pronounced road construction east of New Orleans impracticable.

In June of 1922, Mr. Ayres went to Washington, D. C. Within two months, a majority of the senators and congressmen from the territory along the Old Spanish Trail had signed a declaration which stated in effect that the Trail was "one of the basic trunklines of the United States system and anything that