

Way Is Cleared for Completion of Highway

Construction of Old Spanish Trail East of Mississippi Assured, Mobile Men Declare.

8/28
Last Tuesday and Wednesday a series of meetings were held between Mobile and New Orleans on the Old Spanish Trail under the lead of the Chambers of Commerce and civic clubs of that section the greatest meeting ever held along that coast, one report said.

Seven carloads left Mobile at 7 o'clock Tuesday morning, a car each representing the Chamber of Commerce, the Automobile Club, Rotary, Kiwanis, Civitan and Optimists, and each car led by the president of the organization. Two Alabama State Highway Commissioners were in the party and at all the cities and towns along the way meetings, receptions, dinners and banquets were arranged by the local organizations.

Cars joined the motorcade at every town and the New Orleans delegation joined at Gulfport.

The Chamber of Commerce of Mobile, telegraphed H. B. Ayres, managing director of the Old Spanish Trail, "Gulf tour successful beyond all expectations."

Last January the people of that section were discouraged. All road building efforts had failed and federal aid was being refused. Mr. Ayres then went east to give his personal attention to the problems. In March the four State conference was held at Mobile, where the Mobile Bay eight-mile bridge was ordered by the Highway Commission. The leaders of the four States (Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida), went home "sold" on the question of a "Gulf Coast Boulevard," instead of a mere highway from New Orleans to Pensacola.

Then followed the Washington work or Mr. Ayres, where the war department declared "the highway" from Pensacola to New Orleans of first importance and its early completion essential to the national defense. The people of the east paid for this Washington work, which, it will be remembered, resulted in the whole OST system being adopted "as essential to the plans being formulated for the national defense."

Following the Washington announcements the chairman of the Mississippi Highway Department wrote the OST director that the section across that State had been changed to a primary highway and the map accepted by the federal engineer and "that most of the Old Spanish Trail would be completed in 12 months as an 18-foot concrete road."

A constitutional amendment is now before the Mississippi people which includes the OST for State highway construction.

Louisiana announced a \$2,000,000 road and bridge building program to connect New Orleans to the Mississippi State line and Congressman O'Connor of New Orleans, who helped Mr. Ayres at Washington is following up the work at Washington and enlisting further support from the national authorities. Senators Pat Harrison and O. W. Underwood are also actively helping and were constantly assisting the Washington work.

There are 26 miles of water ways and drainage basins to be crossed by a highway from Pensacola to New Orleans. It was these fearful barriers that had stopped the people and highway departments.

Today a greater concentration of national State and local power is behind the Gulf Boulevard than in any similar section in the United States. In Florida the Supreme Court has just affirmed the validity of the gasoline tax and that State now has some \$3,000,000 annual road money.

With the OST across Florida also asked for by the war department and its importance emphasized by the congressional delegation, Governor Hardee and Chairman Phillips of the road department have acknowledged the major importance of this highway and the State will push construction.

Mr. Ayres, who is now back at San Antonio, says all administration expenses in the East were promptly

met by those people, including the Washington expenses and that funds there for continued work are all underwritten and that the various commercial and civic bodies have thrown the force of their organization behind the highway, as these remarkable gatherings between Mobile and New Orleans have just proven.

When the news reports and delegates told of the success of the two-days tour, Mr. Ayres sent Texas greetings to those people by wire, in which he offered congratulations for the wonderful accomplishments of the past few months.