

REPORT OF HARRAL B. AYRES, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL, TO THE CONVENTION,

New Orleans, March 26-28, 1923.

Members of the Convention:—

The program and printed matter before this convention set forth quite clearly the things accomplished, and the policies in force, or recommended. This report therefore will be held to brief statement.

The Old Spanish Trail today is mapped as a primary project. It is recognized as of primary importance by the Federal Road Bureau, and subject to Federal Aid in all its parts. It has been so well woven together as a national project that the War Department has issued a statement that it "is an essential element in the plans for national defense and should be completed without delay according to the best federal standards." The senators and congressmen of the border states have declared it a basic highway in the national system and ask for its prompt completion. The United States Bureau of Education has adopted it in its course of study recommended to the public schools. The American Automobile Association, and other national authorities, have declared it a nationally needed tourist route. The National Highways Association has classed it the basic trunkline of the South, and they offer in the public interest to prepare "the finest map of any transcontinental highway in the United States," and to indicate its important feeders.

Its recognition today as a great national project is so clear, all people and agencies of this southern borderland country should give the Old Spanish Trail administration their unreserved support that there may be no faltering in carrying on the work.

The highway is still far from being open. Millions are going into construction, more millions are available, but barriers exist that send cars to storage and travel by train. These barrier sections are the problems of today, and tomorrow, and for some time to come.

Many policies the past several years have been defined that are today generally accepted as sound. As the southern transcontinental trunkline, the Old Spanish Trail offers its co-operation to all nationally established trunkline highways from the North, and in turn the Old Spanish Trail reaches no arm north of its main trunkline, conceding that territory to all northern effort. By the same principle the Old Spanish Trail aims to develop all its territory south to the Gulf and the border that traffic delivered by the northern highways may be well served when it reaches the Old Spanish Trail territory.

The policy for development of OST territory embraces trunklines that correspond to military needs, and that have been carefully considered in conference with War Depart-

ment officials. Tourist Loops to places of tourist attraction are planned and marked southward subject to assurances of proper roadways. The whole Old Spanish Trail system furthermore has been woven together with due regard to historical consistency.

Texas and westward the Old Spanish Trail touches all important and Mexican border crossings. Texas members despite the burden of working out the problems of 960 miles across that pioneer state, have pushed the development of trunklines to and along the Mexican border. When Mexico develops her highways and automobile travel flows freely back and forth across the border, the two peoples will find social and trade relations that will remove many of the international complications.

The highway when completed from St. Augustine to San Diego, will be about 2850 miles. When all its trunklines are completed, the system will embrace over 4000 miles and will open a playground country to the nation greater than anything served by a single system on the American or the European continents. The romance and history that embellish its territory, its climatic and sport attraction and its national value, clothe it with unusual distinction.

The identity of this highway from sea to sea as the Old Spanish Trail only, and not a road of many names and many markings, should be jealously guarded by the people. In places where the people encourage the claim of various highway promoters to the same road, the divided support leads to neglect and prevents constructive effort.

The Old Spanish Trail system in the servitor of the southern borderlands. The trunklines from the North are its helmpates. For this reason a connecting system, not a conflicting system, is sought. At the Road Congress maps will be submitted in keeping with this idea with the hope that agreement can be reached upon a "Southern Trunkline System" which shall receive first attention, and get built. This will more quickly open the South as the playground of the nation's automobile travelers and will allow the tributary highway programs of the states to work out with more ease. Highway Commissions must be helped in their efforts to build main line arteries. Highway Associations of recognized standing have been invited to send representatives to this Congress.

Many proposals are offered for motion pictures of the highway. The historical lure offers fascinating appeal. A great picture will come. Historical manuscript is written of that romantic story of those three centuries preceding the American Revolution in the lands across the continent. But my answer has always been such a picture can only be made when contracts are possible that protect the people from unbusiness-like exploitations in the name of the Old Spanish Trail.

The time has come when organized agencies should be directing the work of highway beautification. The women are more capable of this than the man. The Women's Parliament has been called, and the eager, splendid co-operation given by the women gives promise that we shall see here in New Orleans organized effort that will establish