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APPROVED  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
DATE JAN 23 1968

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Executive Committee, James R. Pratt, Chairman

SUBJECT: Guidelines for the selection of a new Minnesota Highway Commissioner

BACKGROUND

In the process of filling the vacancy which currently exists in the office of State Highway Commissioner, the Governor of Minnesota will make an appointment of enormous significance, not only to the state and to the road construction program, but also to the Twin Cities area and to the program of comprehensive metropolitan development. We believe it is of the utmost importance that this critical appointment be made after the most careful search for potential candidates, and after a thorough reappraisal of the responsibilities of the post itself.

Changing Role of the State Highway Department

Until a relatively few years ago, the man in charge of the State Highway Department supervised a large but basically straightforward and relatively slow-changing engineering operation, whose construction program took place very largely in rural areas. Such improvements as were built within the corporate limits of major cities tended to be widenings and reconstructions of major commercial streets, with perhaps an occasional complex and expensive grade separation.

With the arrival of the Interstate Highway Program in 1956 all this changed -- suddenly and radically, in Minnesota as in every other state. With practically no time to adjust either the administrative organization or the traditional way of doing business, the State Highway Department was thrown into vastly more complex right-of-way negotiations, into a whole new problem of relocating large numbers of people, into new relationships with local planning agencies, and into a whole new world of public relations -- with local governments and with neighborhood groups.

This new situation has required three general changes in the role of the State Highway Departments:

First: It has become less and less possible to look at its job simply as a job of building roads. It must, more and more, be regarded as a job of building transportation facilities. The need is to look broadly at the development of a system of facilities for the movement of people and goods -- with emphasis on the inter-relationships between (for example) the "highway" and "transit" systems within a metropolitan area. The creation of the federal Department of Transportation is a reflection of this trend in thinking -- as is the creation of counterpart departments in a number of states, and, in a sense, the recent decisions of the Legislature here in Minnesota to assign to the Highway Department a substantial role in the development of any new transit system for the Twin Cities area.

Second: It has become less and less possible to think of a road-building program apart from a total program of state or urban development. Here, as everywhere, highway commissioners and highway departments are being pulled by the growing

commitment to comprehensive development into closer and closer relationships with the public and private agencies developing land and building other utility systems . . . and with the comprehensive planning agencies that are coming to have a stronger and stronger role in supervising this whole development process. It seems likely that increasingly, in the future, decisions on the location and timing of highway construction will be made less as a response to "growing traffic demands," and more as steps in a conscious effort to bring into existence an agreed-upon pattern of state or urban development. This is a radical change in the nature of the road program, but it does appear to be the implication of the recently enacted planning requirements, both in the federal highway act and in the general urban development legislation.

Third: As a consequence of the other two changes, new operating procedures and new attitudes are required on the part of a state highway department and of the men who lead it. More and more, certain "non-engineering" considerations are entering into decisions about highway location and design. While a number of these probably cannot be accommodated under present highway planning law and procedures, the department is nevertheless caught up in a kind of discussion and negotiation with local governments and community groups which make new planning procedures and new public relations policies imperative.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Governor ought to redefine the nature of the job, and of the Highway Department, in the process of setting out to find a new commissioner.

The establishment of an effective state planning program, and the new responsibilities for urban mass transportation assigned to the Minnesota Highway Department by the 1967 Legislature, have moved the department across a major watershed. It is beginning to evolve toward a transportation department, and is likely to become increasingly involved with the effort to carry out overall state and urban development objectives. It would help the new commissioner know what to expect of his assignment, and help the public to know what to expect of the new commissioner, if the need for this redirection of the department were clearly spelled out by the appointing authority at the beginning of the search.

2. The search for a new State Highway Commissioner should be fully nationwide.

The highway program operates, and encounters the same essential problems, in all the states. While knowledge of the local situation is always important, the differences from state to state are not so great in this program -- as they are in some others -- as to set up a major bar to a candidate who has worked outside Minnesota. Indeed, in some of the states where the highway planning problems have been more acute, new ideas have come into the program . . . new approaches to design, experiments with traffic control, and new relationships with transit . . . which it would be highly advantageous for Minnesota to tap if possible. Simply the process of making the search would be of considerable value. And there is time: Even on the assumption that the new commissioner ought to be on the job six months in advance of the beginning of the next legislative session, there remains something like five months in which to search out and interview candidates, and come to a decision.

3. The search for a new commissioner ought to range beyond persons presently involved in the road-building program.

The qualities being sought are management ability -- meaning experience in the administration of development programs -- a sensitive understanding of local officials and of public relations, and above all an imaginative grasp of the need for the long-range planning of major public works. These qualities are not to be found exclusively within highway departments, although the search might well begin there. They are to be found also in other agencies handling large capital expenditures -- in private as well as the public organizations, in the federal as well as in state government, and also in the large regional authorities.

4. We urge that in defining the new responsibilities of the post and in conducting the search for potential candidates, the Governor secure the assistance of individuals broadly representative of the major groups now involved with transportation generally; and knowledgeable about the organization and conduct of large development programs outside the transportation field.

Such a committee might involve: Engineers, planners and policy-makers at the municipal, county and metropolitan levels of local government; representatives of professional engineering societies; persons working professionally with mass transit planning and operations; persons active with the road-building industry; state officials concerned with state and metropolitan planning and development; engineers, planners and executives in major private corporations, including public utility organizations; and persons familiar with the process of selecting top-level executives for large organizations.

5. Every effort ought to be made to raise the present limit on the salary that can be paid to the man who holds this post.

The present \$21,500 salary is significantly below what ought to be paid to the individual directing a program now involving the expenditure of almost \$250 million a year, and affecting profoundly the development of both the state and the metropolitan area. Even if a qualified man can be secured at the current figure, the salary should be raised at the 1969 legislative session. Should it prove impossible to secure a man at the current figure, the Governor should consider deferring a final selection until after the 1969 Legislature has had an opportunity to raise the salary to a competitive level.