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### Transcriber's Note

One obvious typographical error ("poulation" for "population") was corrected, but the remainder of the text was left as originally printed.

BULLETIN NO. 2

MAY, 1918

# THE RURAL MOTOR EXPRESS

TO CONSERVE FOODSTUFFS AND LABOR AND  
TO SUPPLY RURAL TRANSPORTATION

HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C.



RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.

*"The Council of National Defense approves the widest possible use of the motor truck as a transportation agency, and requests the State Councils of Defense and other State authorities to take all necessary steps to facilitate such means of transportation, removing any regulations that tend to restrict*

WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1918

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**COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.**

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**HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE.**

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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## **THE RURAL MOTOR EXPRESS.**

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The transportation burden on the railroads and highways of the country has been tremendously increased by the war. There is a larger load to be carried, of manufactured goods, raw materials, and foodstuffs. Not only has production of manufactures, raw materials, and farm products increased, but it is now necessary to transport a much larger proportion of these goods over long distances.

The burden is further increased by the fact that we have removed across the sea, 3,000 miles away, a considerable part of our population, which must be provisioned and maintained. These men were in our Army camps last winter. This year there are other men in these camps, and we must handle goods and foodstuffs not only to these 30 new cities but to a great population 3,000 miles away.

It is absolutely necessary to utilize our facilities to the maximum and to extend the use of the highways by the more efficient use of motor vehicles which can operate independent of fixed lines or terminals where congestion of traffic is likely to occur. The motor truck can help the railroad by reducing the short-haul load, and also act as a feeder line in sections far removed from market.

Added to the increased loads of goods to be transported is the fact that man power must be conserved. Heretofore the farmer has done his own hauling to market, but adoption of the rural motor express will enable him to delegate his hauling and to devote his own time to farm operations. An enormous waste of time and labor of both men and teams can be prevented by consolidating the small loads from a number of farms into a single load to be carried by a motor truck.

In many localities local food supplies are in need of development. A better use must be made of agricultural lands in the immediate vicinity of population centers. It improves the business of the local community and adds to the total food supply of the country. The improvement of marketing facilities through the opening of regular daily traffic to market centers and shipping points is a most effective agency in encouraging food production.

We have, therefore, three outstanding facts that demand especial attention be given to the increased use of the highways for rural transportation:

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1. The increased volume of foodstuffs to be hauled.
2. The need for more labor on farms.
3. The need to encourage local food production.

### **The Purpose of Rural Motor Express.**

The motor truck has demonstrated its adaptability to the hauling of farm products. It is dependable wherever the roads are capable of carrying its load. The use of the motor truck for farm transport is growing rapidly and in the vicinity of many cities regular routes are now maintained. The purpose of the organization of rural express on a national scale is to bring to agricultural communities throughout the country an understanding of the greater benefits to be derived from regular daily service over the main highways from farm to city and from city to

farm.

By "Rural Motor Express" is meant the use of the motor truck in regular daily service, over a fixed route, with a definite schedule of stops and charges, gathering farm produce, milk, live stock, eggs, etc., and delivering them to the city dealer and on the return trip carrying merchandise, machinery, supplies, etc., for farmers and others along the route. This service amounts to a collection and delivery that comes to the farmer's door with the same regularity that the trolley car passes over its tracks.

## **The Plan of Organization.**

The Council of National Defense adopted the following resolution on March 14, 1918:

The Council of National Defense approves the widest possible use of the motor truck as a transportation agency, and requests the State Council of Defense and other State authorities to take all necessary steps to facilitate such means of transportation, removing any regulations that tend to restrict and discourage such use.

The highways transport committee of the Council of National Defense is charged to carry out the purpose of this resolution. The several State councils of defense have been asked to appoint highways transport committees, or to delegate the organization of rural express to some committee which will have charge of the development of the work within the State. These State committees will in turn further the work through local organizations.

## **Indorsements of Rural Express.**

The Council of National Defense approved the widest possible use of the motor truck in its resolution of March 14, 1918.

The Post Office Department has demonstrated the value of motor-truck transportation through experimental lines of parcel-post trucks now in operation in several of the Eastern States.

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## **The Need.**

The United States Food Administration has approved the plan in the following statement by the Food Administrator:

The development of the rural motor express idea, in my opinion, is in the line of progress and should redound to the benefit of the producer, the consumer, and the railroads. This means of transportation should facilitate delivery, conserve labor, conserve foodstuffs, and should effect delivery of food in better condition.

The United States Department of Agriculture through its bureau of markets has inaugurated an investigation of the efficiency of motor-truck transportation in the marketing of farm produce.

The United States Department of Labor through its employment service urges the adoption of motor-truck transportation facilities in order to conserve the time of men in farming neighborhoods during the period of planting, cultivation, and harvest, so as to relieve the farm labor shortage.

The preliminary surveys by the highways transport committee in sections of Maryland and Virginia have shown that farmers and merchants enthusiastically indorse the plan and wherever rural motor express lines have been properly developed they have received the support of the communities which they serve.

## **Present Development of Rural Express.**

The rural express is in successful operation in the vicinity of many of the larger cities. The development of this system of transportation has been particularly rapid in Maryland and a survey of existing routes in this State has been made by the highways transport committee and shows the general possibilities of the idea.

A detailed survey was made of 22 routes, leading from agricultural sections into Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D. C. On these routes 30 trucks were found in operation; the total capacity of these trucks was 73 tons; the mileage traversed daily was 1,574 miles; the average length of the routes was about 50 miles for the round trip. Most of these routes are operated by truck owners living at the outer terminal, making daily round trips into the marketing center. Many of these routes are operated by farmers who first learned the advantages of motor-truck transportation by using trucks for their individual needs.

These lines have been developed on a sane, practical basis without any special promotion or encouragement from any state or national organization. The trucks start at a small town, gather the produce of farmers and merchants along the road to the city, deliver it at the market, secure

a return load from city merchants, including orders by farmers, and return to the country terminal, delivering the orders along the route. These lines have developed chiefly on the roads of the state road system where the condition of the roads facilitate the use of trucks. Many farmers living short distances away from the rural express route bring their milk and produce to a point on this route with horse-drawn buggies and wagons and these constitute feeders to the lines.

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A preliminary survey for the State of California has been made, showing an extensive use of motor trucks for passenger, freight, and express hauling throughout that state. Over 136 separate lines were found; some traversing routes as long as 125 miles on daily trips. Large quantities of farm produce are handled, and charges are made according to published rates. The excellent highways of California made it possible for these lines to develop rapidly.

The detailed survey among patrons of a number of these routes discovers the fact that there are three great economic advantages in this method of transportation:

1. Food production is stimulated since the regular outlet to market encourages many farmers to expand production which they would not be justified in doing if they were obliged to transport their own produce to market.
2. Shortage of labor is greatly offset from the fact that the system leaves the farmer on the farm and his time is not consumed in trips to market.
3. There is immediate improvement in the efficiency of the farm since supplies, machinery, and repairs can be secured promptly from city distributors of fertilizers and farm machinery.

From the national standpoint these routes aid in several ways:

1. They relieve the railroads of local freight which permits car-load lot of materials and foodstuffs from distant points to enter the terminals.
2. They help to avoid the necessity for local freight embargoes.

The need for the system of carrying goods to market without requiring men and teams is generally recognized by farmers and where production of the individual farmer has justified the purchase of a motor truck, the adoption has been very rapid during the past few years. On many farms, however, the quantity of production is not sufficient to justify the investment in a truck by the individual farmer if he must maintain his teams for farm power. The use of the rural express with its greater speed enables the farmer to operate the same or an increased acreage with fewer horses, making more land available for food production which was previously needed to grow grain and hay for teams. In many instances, the introduction of rural express has enabled farmers to engage in the production of milk which requires daily marketing.

The rural express greatly aids the country merchants in carrying more complete stocks of goods; in filling special orders promptly, and in avoiding temporary shortage of staples due to delayed shipments or embargoes on the railroad. In many instances the country merchants have reported that their business has been greatly improved because of the daily delivery service from wholesale centers.

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## **Expansion to a National System.**

The success of existing lines of rural express is convincing evidence that the expansion of the system is an immediate necessity, both for its value in meeting the present emergency and as a means of permanently improving rural transportation. What has already developed becomes an integral part of our national transportation system.

The present strain on our transportation facilities has emphasized our need for improved means of internal communication not only between cities, but also reaching out into every agricultural community.

The rural motor express is not, however, a development to meet an emergency only, but rather an expansion of transportation facilities to meet the growing demands, to bring the consumer in closer touch with the producer; to relieve the producer of the burden of marketing his produce and permit him to remain on the land where his labor is of highest value to the community.

## **The Organization of New Routes.**

The state highways transport committees are organizing local committees in all communities where there appears to be the need for improved rural transportation. The local committee first secures co-operation of the local press and leading organizations interested in transportation and food supplies. Among the various groups who might be interested are the following: Chambers of commerce, boards of trade, merchants' associations, local food administrators, farmers' clubs, county agricultural agents, dealers in farm implements, feed, fertilizers, grain, and other farm produce.

Meetings of the representatives of these organizations are held to explain the plan of rural

express and to make general survey of local needs. Among the facts that are brought out at such meetings are the following:

1. Experience of existing motor-truck lines in the locality.
2. Instances of localities now lacking such facilities.
3. Conditions of highways in such localities.
4. Labor shortage among farmers.
5. Transportation facilities of country merchants from wholesale centers.

After a general survey of the country or district has been made the local committee conducts an intensive survey by means of mailed questionnaires or personal visits among farms and merchants along route of prospective lines. Lists of names of farmers and merchants are secured through county agricultural agents or their local organizations.

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When the desirability of establishing a new route for a certain section has been determined the committee proceeds to consult owners of trucks, farmers, and other private owners to locate a man to establish the route. Questions of scale of charges, the schedule of the trips, character of produce to be carried, etc., are worked out by the committee on the basis of experience of existing lines in the same community, or other lines which have been surveyed by the state committee.

Detailed suggestions on conducting these local surveys, methods of making surveys through questionnaires, questions concerning roads, charges, etc., will be furnished by the highways transport committee of the Council of National Defense through the state committees. The plan of organization is to adapt the service as perfectly as possible to local requirements, utilizing at the same time the experience of communities throughout the country as gathered by state and national committees.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE RURAL MOTOR EXPRESS \*\*\*

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