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# Annual Report of Director of Traffic

OF THE

District of Columbia :: 1928

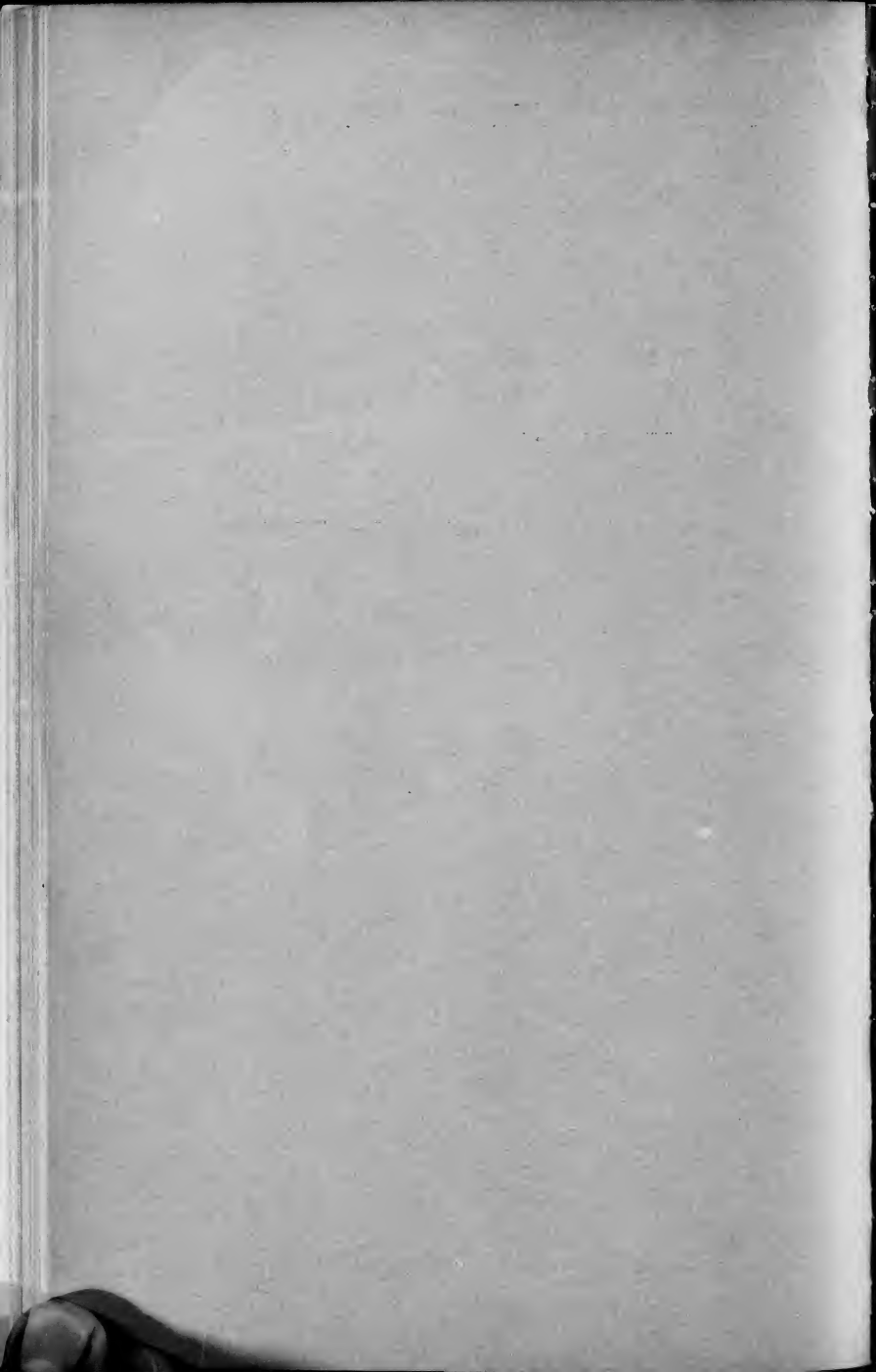
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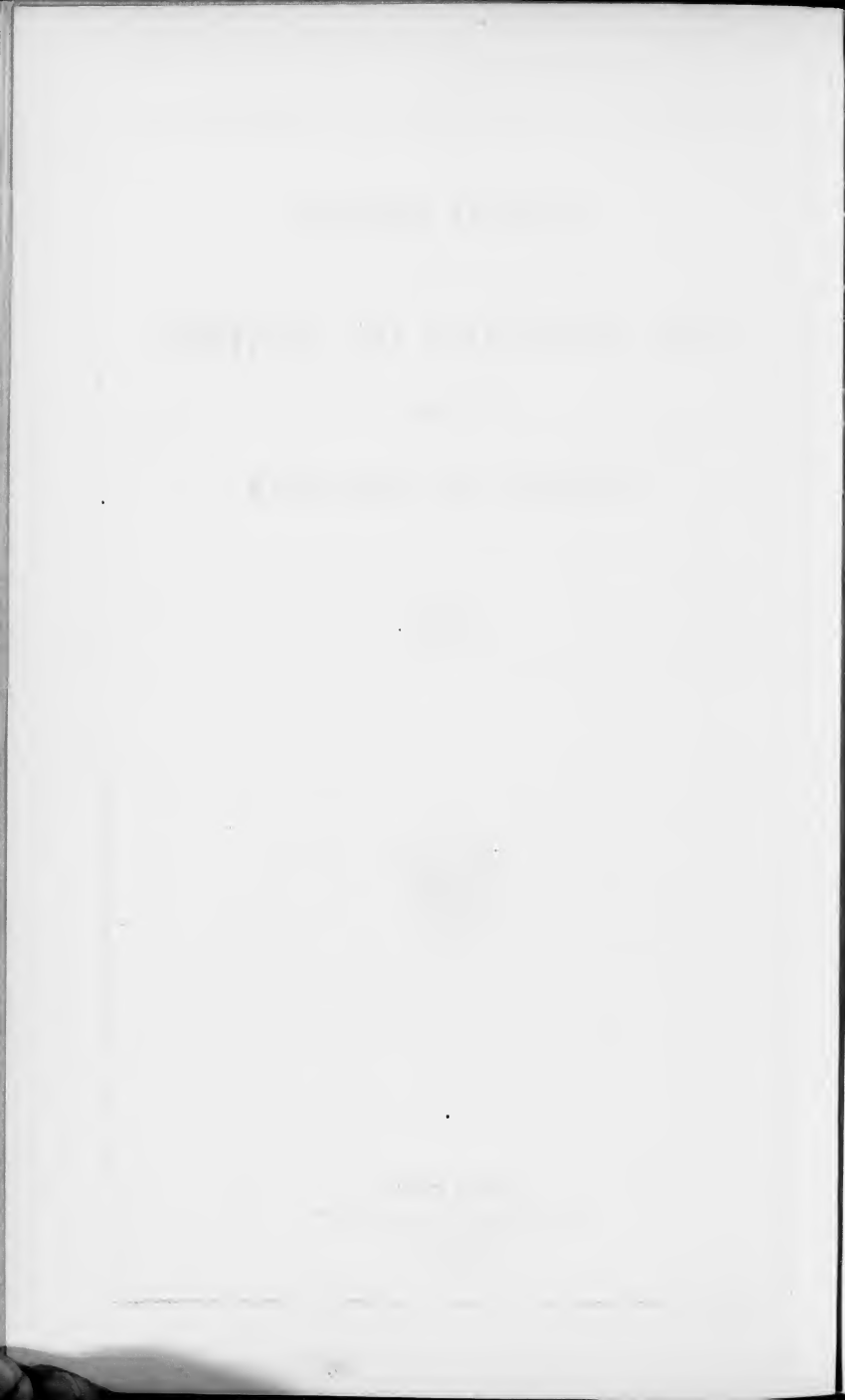


**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**OF**  
**THE DIRECTOR OF TRAFFIC**  
**OF THE**  
**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**1928**



**UNITED STATES**  
**GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE**  
**WASHINGTON**  
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## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TRAFFIC OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, 1928

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*To the Commissioners of the District of Columbia:*

Traffic accidents continued to show improvement during the past year notwithstanding the increase in the number of cars and drivers.

There were 4,138 accidents reported during the year, as compared with 5,911 during 1927, 8,049 during 1926, and 9,378 during 1925. In other words, since 1925 accidents have been decreased about one-half.

Of the total number of accidents during the past year, 2,386 resulted in personal injuries, as compared with 2,892 during 1927.

The principal causes of accidents where the motorists were presumably at fault were as follows:

- Reckless driving.
- Failure to yield right of way.
- Careless driving.
- Turning in street.
- Driving under influence of liquor.
- Skidding.
- Lost control.
- Backing.
- Failing to give signal.
- Exceeding speed limit.

Among other chief causes of accidents may be mentioned:

- Cutting in when passing other cars.
- Defective brakes and steering apparatus.
- Cutting corner.
- Driving through safety zone.
- Improper parking.
- Driving on car tracks.
- Failure to stop for "Stop" signs.
- Failure to obey traffic signals.
- View obstructed by fixed object.

The chief causes of accidents where the pedestrians were presumably at fault were as follows:

- Crossing not at crosswalk.
- Stepping from behind parked car.
- Playing in street.
- Walking in street.
- Inattentive to traffic conditions.
- Crossing at crosswalk against signal.
- Intoxication.

It is believed that the majority of accidents are due to inattention on the part of those who drive as well as those who walk. Accidents do not happen; they are caused. It is, therefore, the duty of every driver and every pedestrian to exercise the greatest care in order to prevent accidents.

## COMPARISON OF ACCIDENTS ON STREETS

Details regarding each accident are recorded on Hollerith key-punching cards, from which it is possible to make any kind of an analytical study of all accidents. By this method of accident record keeping it is possible to ascertain in a short time the number of accidents which have occurred on any street or at any intersection over any particular period.

In this connection it is interesting to study the number of accidents which have taken place on all of the principal streets during the past two years. A tabulation of these accidents for the calendar years 1926 and 1927 follows:

Street	1926	1927	Street	1926	1927
Fourteenth Street.....	322	151	Ninth Street.....	85	92
Pennsylvania Avenue.....	256	226	Q Street.....	85	35
Connecticut Avenue.....	251	181	G Street.....	84	43
M Street.....	219	137	H Street NE.....	80	23
Sixteenth Street.....	159	50	Sixth Street.....	76	30
Thirteenth Street.....	156	109	Pennsylvania Avenue SE.....	75	35
Seventh Street.....	149	110	Eye Street.....	73	16
Seventeenth Street.....	148	43	R Street.....	71	40
Georgia Avenue.....	112	170	E Street.....	65	30
Wisconsin Avenue.....	108	114	Rhode Island Avenue.....	60	25
H Street.....	102	52	North Capitol Street.....	58	16
Eighteenth Street.....	101	34	New York Avenue.....	56	49
K Street.....	97	61	Thirty-second Street.....	56	23
Florida Avenue.....	95	50	Florida Avenue NE.....	54	23
L Street.....	90	22	Maryland Avenue.....	51	14
Fifteenth Street.....	90	48	Columbia Road.....	38	36
F Street.....	88	73	Rhode Island Avenue NE.....	37	32
Massachusetts Avenue.....	87	49	K Street NE.....	33	13
Fourteenth Street SW.....	86	37	Bladensburg Road NE.....	29	15

The reduction in the number of accidents on Fourteenth Street and on a number of other important streets during 1927 is due to the erection of "stop" signs and to the vigorous enforcement of traffic laws and regulations. The remarkable reduction of accidents on Sixteenth Street and on Massachusetts Avenue is largely due to the traffic-light signals and to better observance of the amber light following a red light.

Studies are now in progress to determine why accidents increased on Georgia Avenue, Wisconsin Avenue, and Ninth Street with a view to determining the proper remedy to reduce accidents on these thoroughfares.

## TRAFFIC FATALITIES

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 1928, a total of 89 persons were killed in traffic accidents as compared with 78 during 1927, 82 during 1926, and 86 during 1925. Of the total number killed during 1928, 78 were caused by automobiles, 8 by street cars, 2 by bicycles, and 1 by motor cycle. A further classification is as follows:

Automobile—pedestrian.....	40
Street car—pedestrian.....	8
Automobile—automobile.....	7
Truck—pedestrian.....	7
Taxi—pedestrian.....	6
Automobile—truck.....	4
Automobile—tree.....	3
Automobile—bicycle.....	2

Automobile—noncollision (driver killed).....	2
Bicycle—pedestrian.....	2
Automobile—steam shovel.....	1
Automobile—child's express wagon.....	1
Automobile—telephone pole.....	1
Taxi—street car.....	1
Automobile—street car.....	1
Bus—pedestrian.....	1
Truck—police motor cycle.....	1
Motor cycle—noncollision (driver killed).....	1
Total.....	89

Thus it appears that a total of 64 (72 per cent) of the persons killed were pedestrians who were struck by vehicles and that 25 (28 per cent) of the fatalities were due to collision and noncollision accidents.

Of the total number of fatalities 7 were under 14 years of age and 13 were over 65. Sixty-nine persons killed were white, 19 colored, and 1 Chinese.

Of the persons killed 62 were males and 27 females. All of the drivers involved in traffic fatalities during the past year were males, of which 73 were white, 11 colored, and 5 unknown. Four were under 18 years of age, and of this number 3 were white and 1 was colored.

Verdicts of the coroner's juries involving traffic fatalities during the past year were as follows:

Accidental.....	63
Held for grand jury.....	15
Carelessness of deceased.....	5
Killed by unknown driver.....	5
No inquest—driver killed.....	1

Of the total number of cases held for the grand jury 13 have been ignored, 1 is still held for trial, and 1 was tried and found not guilty.

Thus it appears that of all traffic fatalities which occurred in Washington during the fiscal year 1928 no convictions have been obtained in the courts on manslaughter or criminal negligence charges.

Of the automobile drivers involved in traffic fatalities 12 permits were suspended, 11 were revoked, and the right of 1 nonresident to operate in the District was suspended.

Based on traffic fatalities per 100,000 population Washington continues to occupy a favorable position as compared with other cities throughout the United States, according to reports of the United States Census Bureau. Traffic fatalities in Washington during the 52 weeks ended June 16, 1928, amounted to 15.4 per cent per 100,000, which is lower than any other city having a population equal to or greater than Washington, as indicated in the chart below:

*Traffic fatalities per 100,000 population*

Washington, D. C.....	15.4	Dayton.....	16.6
Boston <sup>1</sup> .....	15.8	Nashville.....	16.7
Tacoma.....	15.9	Dallas.....	17.1
Philadelphia <sup>1</sup> .....	16.2	Birmingham.....	17.1
Baltimore <sup>1</sup> .....	16.3	Omaha.....	17.4
St. Louis.....	16.4	Seattle.....	17.6

<sup>1</sup> Cities having a population greater than Washington.

*Traffic fatalities per 100,000 population—Continued*

El Paso.....	17.7	Camden.....	21.1
Jersey City.....	18.1	San Antonio.....	21.3
New York <sup>1</sup> .....	18.2	Pittsburgh <sup>1</sup> .....	21.4
Indianapolis.....	18.2	Milwaukee.....	21.5
Trenton.....	18.3	Salt Lake City.....	22.2
Yonkers.....	18.6	Cleveland <sup>1</sup> .....	23.5
Kansas City.....	18.6	Fort Worth.....	24.5
Buffalo <sup>1</sup> .....	19.5	Columbus.....	24.8
Paterson.....	19.5	Detroit <sup>1</sup> .....	25.0
New Orleans.....	20.1	Chicago <sup>1</sup> .....	25.4
Cambridge.....	20.2	Newark, N. J.....	25.6
Toledo.....	20.4	San Diego.....	27.0
San Francisco <sup>1</sup> .....	20.7	Cincinnati.....	27.0
Memphis.....	20.7	Youngstown.....	27.2
Atlanta.....	20.9	Wilmington, Del.....	27.8

## OPERATORS' PERMITS

During the fiscal year 44,682 applicants applied for examination for operators' permits. Of this number 32,457 were approved and 12,225 were disapproved.

The number of permits issued and amounts received during the year were as follows:

	Issued	Amount collected
New permits.....	23,684	\$71,052.00
Duplicates.....	4,867	2,433.50
Learners' permits.....	9,465	.....
Total.....	38,016	73,485.50

There were also issued during the year 89 permits to members of the diplomatic corps. These permits were issued free of charge in accordance with international comity.

## REVOCATION AND SUSPENSION OF OPERATORS' PERMITS

A total of 959 permits were revoked or suspended during the year for the following reasons:

Driving while under influence of liquor.....	411
Leaving after colliding.....	166
Reckless driving.....	97
Speeding.....	95
Persons mentally unfit.....	1
Obtaining permit by fraud.....	11
Involved in traffic deaths.....	26
Bad records.....	44
Miscellaneous offenses.....	50
Rights of foreign motorists to operate in the District of Columbia for various offenses.....	58
Total.....	959

There were 482 permits restored during the year.

The cancellation and suspension of operators' permits is one of the most effective means for bringing about improvement of traffic conditions.

<sup>1</sup> Cities having a population greater than Washington.



## RENEWAL OF PERMITS

During the fiscal year 1926-27 all outstanding permits were called in for renewal, suspension, or cancellation. All of these permits (90,802), together with all new permits issued during that year (17,669), are again subject to renewal during the fiscal year 1929-30. Plans are now being made for this work, and funds have been requested in the appropriation act for 1929-30 to take care of this work.

## TRAFFIC LAW ENFORCEMENT

Full and complete cooperation of the police department has been received in traffic law enforcement during the year. Arrests for various traffic offenses have increased from 36,128 during the fiscal year 1927 to 42,621 during 1928. A comparative list of arrests for various traffic violations during these two years is as follows:

	Fiscal year 1927	Fiscal year 1928		Fiscal year 1927	Fiscal year 1928
Colliding.....	137	136	Parking abreast.....	2,258	2,844
Colliding and failing to stop.....	369	353	Parking overtime.....	7,205	5,497
Dazzling lights.....	26	84	Passing signals.....	1,123	1,211
Dead tags.....	289	374	Passing street cars.....	328	300
Driving on wrong side of street.....	203	255	Reckless driving.....	1,971	2,397
Driving while intoxicated.....	642	430	Violating light regulation.....	2,914	5,995
Failing to show permit.....	882	932	Violating one-way street regula- tion.....	126	158
Loitering (public vehicles).....	46	78	Violating speed regulation.....	5,049	7,126
No District of Columbia tags.....	65	77	Violating other regulations.....	10,794	11,742
No District of Columbia permit.....	1,433	2,109			
Obstructing crosswalks.....	248	418			
Obstructing fire hydrant.....	120	215	Total.....	36,128	42,631

<sup>1</sup> The usual charge for colliding is reckless driving.

It is to be noted that the increase in the number of arrests for traffic violations is in the classes such as driving without a permit, passing signals, parking abreast, reckless driving, violating light regulations, and speed.

As long as motorists continue to violate these important regulations, which are framed in the interest of safety, traffic arrests will tend to increase.

## ELECTRIC TRAFFIC SIGNALS

Bids have been awarded and contracts let during the year for 820 traffic-light signals with control apparatus and other necessary equipment, involving a total cost of \$50,995.93 for the signals and control apparatus and an estimated cost of \$146,422.85 for the installation, or a total estimated cost of \$197,418.78.

Following is a list of the streets and intersections to be controlled by traffic signals as provided for in the program completed during the past year:

## STREETS

Rhode Island Avenue—Twelfth to First Street.

E Street—Twelfth to North Capitol.

K Street—Ninth to Eighteenth Street.

Sixth Street—Louisiana Avenue to Rhode Island Avenue.

K Street and Florida Avenue—Fifth to Fifteenth and H Streets NE.

Massachusetts Avenue—Fifth Street to New Jersey Avenue.  
 Massachusetts Avenue—Twentieth to Twenty-second (including Twenty-second and P and Twenty-second and Q).  
 Maryland Avenue—Second to Fifteenth Street NE.  
 Eighteenth Street NW.—H to Massachusetts Avenue.  
 Fifteenth Street NW.—Vermont Avenue to Florida Avenue.  
 Fifteenth Street NW.—Euclid to Irving.  
 Tenth Street—E to Massachusetts Avenue.  
 Thirteenth Street—E to Massachusetts Avenue.  
 Fourteenth Street NW.—Harvard to Monroe.  
 Dupont Circle.  
 Thomas Circle.  
 Iowa Circle.  
 Connecticut Avenue—Calvert Street to Cathedral Avenue.  
 Seventh Street NW.—D to Massachusetts Avenue.  
 G Street NW.—Sixth to Fourteenth Street.

## ISOLATED INTERSECTIONS

Rhode Island Avenue and North Capitol Street.  
 Rhode Island Avenue and Fourth Street NE.  
 Connecticut Avenue, McKinley, and Morrison Streets.  
 Connecticut Avenue, S Street and Florida Avenue.  
 New York and New Jersey Avenues.  
 Park Road and New Hampshire Avenue.  
 Florida Avenue and Eckington Place NE.  
 H and North Capitol Streets.  
 Fourteenth Street and Park Road.  
 Rhode Island Avenue and Fourteenth Street.  
 Eighteenth Street and Columbia Road.  
 Pennsylvania Avenue and Eleventh Street SE.  
 Good Hope Road and Nichols Avenue SE.  
 Rhode Island Avenue and South Dakota Avenue NE.  
 Eighth and East Capitol Streets.  
 Eighth and H Streets NE.  
 Vermont Avenue and U Street.  
 Twelfth and L Streets.  
 Kalorama Road and Connecticut Avenue.  
 Georgia Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue.  
 Twelfth Street and New York Avenue.  
 Fifteenth and H Streets.  
 B Street and Delaware Avenue NE.  
 New Jersey Avenue and B Street SE.  
 First and B Streets SE.  
 Wisconsin Avenue and Macomb Street.  
 Thirteenth and Monroe Streets.  
 Thirteenth Street and Park Road.  
 Fourteenth Street south of B Street NW.  
 Fourteenth Street north of B Street SW.  
 New Jersey Avenue and H Street.  
 East Executive and Pennsylvania Avenues.  
 West Executive and Pennsylvania Avenues.  
 Fourteenth and B Streets SW.  
 Fourteenth and Water Streets SW.  
 Wisconsin Avenue and M Street.  
 Vermont Avenue and H Street.  
 Eleventh Street and New York Avenue.

The average cost of the signals purchased during 1925 and 1926 was \$61.42 each and \$205.50 for installation each. The average cost of the signals purchased for this installation was \$44.35 each, and the average cost of installation will amount to \$180.77 each.

The reduction in the cost of these signals is based on the design by this department of a special aluminum-body traffic-light signal of approximately the same exterior appearance as those now in use

in the District and to close competition in bidding by the manufacturers. The difference in the cost of installation is due to some changes in the design of the controlling circuits and lamp connection, which reduced the amount of cable required, and to a reduction in the cost of cable.

It is estimated that the saving due to the above changes is approximately \$33,000.

In addition to the above, arrangements have been made and material purchased for the installation of flashing beacons to be attached to the right-hand columns of the approach side of the following viaducts:

Water Street SW.  
H Street NE.  
K Street NE.  
L Street NE.  
M Street NE.  
Florida Avenue NE.  
Rhode Island Avenue NE.

### TRAFFIC SIGNS AND MARKERS

The traffic shop, which is operated by this department in cooperation with the police department, during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1928, erected 13,031 signs of various classes, including 4,884 emergency no parking signs, 3,812 parking restriction signs, 535 public vehicle taxicab signs, 482 school drive slowly signs, and 347 stop signs. Among other signs erected were detour, directional, wedding, funeral, load limits on bridges, speed limit, left turn, fire exit, no through street, one-way street, angle or parallel parking, quiet zone, and slow.

During the year 120,617 feet of white lines have been painted in connection with crosswalks and safety zones, 383 stanchions erected, 3,850 lanterns placed to indicate obstructions in the street, and 44 semaphore lamps replaced.

All the signs and stanchions with a few exceptions were made in the traffic shop.

### TRAFFIC SURVEY

I desire to renew my recommendation of last year that funds be provided in the amount of \$5,000 a year for the purpose of making an annual traffic survey, as such a survey constitutes one of the outstanding features of a traffic department, and it is necessary that this department be informed regarding the traffic flow on the different streets. This information is also needed by various other groups in the city including the National Park and Planning Commission.

### CERTIFICATE OF TITLE LAW

During the past year a certificate of title law for automobiles was drafted, and I again desire to recommend that such a law be adopted. The District of Columbia is surrounded by States which have laws providing that every motorist shall provide himself with a certificate of title to his automobile before it can be registered. Over one-half of the States now have such laws, and the District of Columbia is

under obligation to the near-by States to enact certificate of title laws at the earliest possible date in order that the District of Columbia may not continue to be a dumping ground for stolen automobiles.

### PROPOSED CHANGES IN THE TRAFFIC ACT

#### SERIOUS ACCIDENTS SHOULD BE REPORTED

The act should be so amended as to provide that operators of motor vehicles involved in an accident resulting in death, personal injury, or property damage to the apparent extent of \$25 or more, shall within 24 hours make a report of such incident to the police precinct in which the accident occurred.

*Reason.*—Under the existing act all persons involved in an accident must stop and give their name, etc., before proceeding. There is nothing in the act requiring that accidents be reported, and consequently many serious accidents occur on which there are no records. It is exceedingly important that this department be informed when and where all serious accidents occur in order that the regulations may be so improved from time to time as to prevent such accidents in the future and that a record may be kept of all persons who may be negligent, careless, or inefficient as drivers. As the present act is worded it is doubtful whether a regulation covering this point would be construed as legal. Hence the need for amending the act.

#### PENALTY FOR THIRD-OFFENSE SPEEDING TOO SEVERE

It is recommended that the maximum penalty for third-offense speeding should be limited to offenses committed within a period of one year, and that it be left to the discretion of the court as to whether the offender should be sent to jail in addition to being fined.

*Reason.*—As the act is now written a jail sentence is compulsory for all third offenses of speeding, even though these offenses are 5 or 10 years apart. Under the present law it is difficult to secure convictions on third offenses of speeding, because juries and judges apparently feel that a compulsory jail sentence in some cases is too severe.

#### THE PENALTY FOR DRIVING WHILE INTOXICATED AND RECKLESS DRIVING SHOULD BE MODIFIED

For first offense driving while intoxicated and second-offense reckless driving the court should be allowed to exercise a greater degree of discretion than under the present act. It is recommended that on first offense driving while intoxicated and second-offense reckless driving it should be left to the discretion of the court as to whether the defendant is to be sent to jail or fined, but that in all subsequent cases the jail sentence should apply.

*Reason.*—Owing to the compulsory jail sentence for convictions of driving while intoxicated and second-offense reckless driving nearly all offenders arrested on these charges ask for jury trials, and experience has shown that it is difficult to secure convictions on account

of the compulsory jail sentence. It is believed that the ends of justice would be served if heavy fines were imposed for first offenses and the permits canceled as now provided by law, and that the present maximum penalty apply only to repeaters.

#### AUTHORITY TO PLACE SIGNS

It is recommended that section 6, paragraph (c) of the act be so amended as to provide that the director of traffic be authorized to place signs upon public highways and other public spaces in the District of Columbia as a guide to the particular thing permitted or prohibited at the particular location, and that failure to obey instructions placed on an official sign shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$25.

*Reason.*—Under the existing act temporary signs, such as must be placed on the street by the police department in connection with functions, parades, funerals, weddings, or fires are not legal, and neither the police nor the courts can enforce them, because the act provides that a sign placed on the street is a notice of a regulation. It is practically impossible to pass regulations which would cover all these situations and secure their enforcement in the courts under the existing act.

W. H. HARLAND,  
*Director of Traffic.*

AUGUST 27, 1923.



