Maryland's Interest in Washington Plans

By ALBERT C. RITCHIE

Governor of Maryland

From Review of Reviews

THE future of that large part of Maryland which lies contiguous to the District of Columbia is in a very real way linked with the future of Washington. These sections of Maryland are not now independent or self-sufficient, in the sense that they can plan ahead without regard to the plans and the conditions on the other side of the District line.

Good roads and the automobile have affected more completely the rural life of America in twenty years than all the occurrences of generations before put together. Primarily because of these two things, the American farmer is no longer isolated or economically self-supporting; he has become an integral part of our vast national economic life.

In the same way good roads and the automobile have contributed immeasurably to make common cause of the development policies and opportunities of the District of Columbia and that section of Maryland which is adjacent to the District. Neither of these sections can work out its future plans without regard to the plans of the other.

The boundary line between Maryland and the District cannot be considered as a barrier separating one from the other. In a legal sense, of course, the development policies of both sections must be separately formulated, but the interests of both require that this be a matter of form only. The plans and hopes and possibilities of this part of Maryland and of the District must be cooperatively worked out for the common good of both, because they are interdependent.

Similar considerations with respect to the portion of Virginia adjacent to the District, make Virginia a natural third partner in our common undertakings.

I am happy to say that during my administrations as Governor of Maryland, my state has recognized all this, and has contributed measurably to the fulfilment of our joint interests.

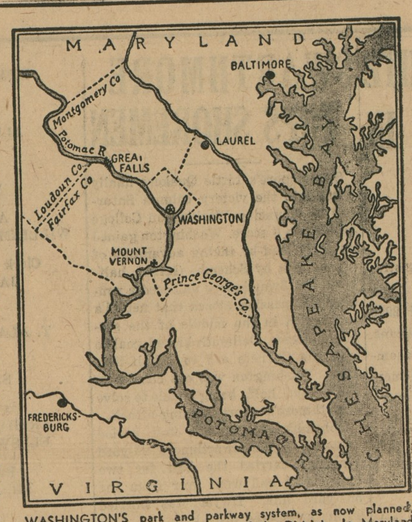
In 1927 we created the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and gave it jurisdiction over zoning, parking, a permanent system of highways, and other public works and utilities necessary to the proper and adequate physical development of the area extending for an average distance of ten miles from the District line into Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

That Maryland commission cooperates with the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. It first zoned the suburban portions of these two counties, and for almost two years the property in all this rapidly growing area has been enjoying the benefits and the protection of intelligent zoning. That this has been effected in a way acceptable to the communities concerned, is shown by the entire absence of any serious attacks either upon the law or its administration.

Along with this work the commission has proceeded with plans for an extensive park system.

As a practical recognition of the very vital importance of this, I recommended to the Maryland Legislature of 1927 an appropriation of $100,000, which was provided for the acquisition of park lands in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. In addition to this, local taxation in those two counties is making available several hundred thousand dollars more for park purposes and an adequate amount for park maintenance.

The parking program has been tied in with the Regional Plan, and it has progressed to the point where existing parks are now about to be extended and new parks established. Rock Creek Park will have an extension into Maryland, and Sligo Valley, the valley of Cabin John Run, and the valley of the Northwest Branch will be added to the system.



WASHINGTON'S park and parkway system, as now planned, extends far beyond the boundaries of the District. In Maryland it includes ambitious projects in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. In Virginia it provides for improving the Potomac shore from Mount Vernon to Great Falls.

One of the great opportunities along this line which should receive cooperative consideration is the main valley of the Potomac River. This, with its glorious scenery, is the natural setting for a park unsurpassed in all the world.

The Cramton bill, passed by the last Congress and signed by President Hoover, provides adequate funds for the immediate creation of the park system recommended for Washington City by the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, at a total cost of $16,000,000. It also makes available a federal gift of $1,500,000 for the purchase of park lands in the seven main valleys of suburban Montgomery and Prince George's counties, in Maryland, extending from the District of Columbia; and it provides a further federal loan of $3,000,000 for eight years without interest to those counties.

This total of four and a half million dollars is the estimated cost of the entire park system in the Maryland valleys extending from the District of Columbia.

It seems probable that Montgomery and Prince George's counties will combine to avail themselves of this loan from the Government in order that this great park system may be brought into immediate realization. In such event, title to the park lands in these Maryland valleys will continue in the state, with recreational improvements and maintenance paid for and administered by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

One of the principal agencies we have established to protect the health and meet the necessities of the Metropolitan District is the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission. The purpose was to acquire the existing municipal and quasi-public water and sewerage systems in the area, to coordinate them, and to see that water and sewer service keeps pace as far as possible with the growth of the area.

This commission has jurisdiction over about ninety square miles in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. At the time of its organization, eleven years ago, there were about 100 miles of water and sewer facilities in the area, serving less than 2000 houses. Today the commission has acquired or constructed almost 500 miles, serving nearly 11,000 houses. This work represents a bonded indebtedness of about $7,000,000.

We also have a national water and sewer committee functioning with the National Commission, and the Maryland State Department of Health and the Suburban Sanitary Commission contribute efficient engineering services to this work.

Zoning, parking, water and sewerage are not all. Maryland is now in the midst of the most extensive highway construction program ever undertaken since the good roads movement was started by Governor Austin L. Crothers twenty years ago.

A large part of this program directly benefits not only the people of Montgomery and Prince George's counties, but also the great number of people who live or work in Washington and its environs.

The Baltimore-Washington Boulevard has already been widened to forty feet from Baltimore to Laurel, and the widening is being continued this summer from Laurel to Hyattsville.

The extension of Rhode Island Avenue from Hyattsville to the District gives a direct and much shorter entrance to the Northwestern section of Washington, and is a connecting link between the towns of Mount Rainier, Brentwood, North Brentwood, and Hyattsville. The road which is being completed from a point near Laurel to connect with 16th Street, at the District line, will enable people in this area to reach their destinations without going through the crowded business section of Washington.

The elimination of the Hyattsville grade crossing is a major undertaking of the greatest importance, which will not only remedy what has frequently been an intolerable inconvenience on the Baltimore-Washington Boulevard, but will make impossible for all time the tragedies which have occurred at that point.

The grade crossing at Silver Spring has also been eliminated, and it is also expected that others at Rockville, Kensington, and Gaithersburg will be removed this year. The crossing at Gaithersburg is of great importance, because it is on the main highway between Washington and the West.

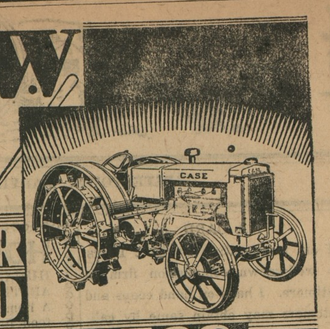
The communication between Washington and its surrounding territory and the part of the state known as Southern Maryland is also of great interest because of the business and social relations which exist between these sections.

The Robert Crain Highway and the National Defense Highway, together with the new road now practically finished in the lower part of Southern Maryland, bring all that section of Maryland into much closer and better comunication with both Washington and Baltimore.

We should not overlook the benefit to the public schools which such an extensive highway program affords. Better roads make better schools. They furnish improved facilities for getting to the schools, and thus increase the convenience and the attendance of the pupils, and facilitate the consolidation of elementary schools in proper cases. The progress of the public school system all over Maryland—including, of course, Montgomery and Prince George's counties—has been recognized as notable throughout the country.

The spirit of cooperation which Maryland is anxious to manifest in all these regional improvements is not confined to the subjects I have specifically discussed. New undertakings will be proposed from time to time, and we want to consider and do our part in all of them in the same spirit of mutual help.

NEW



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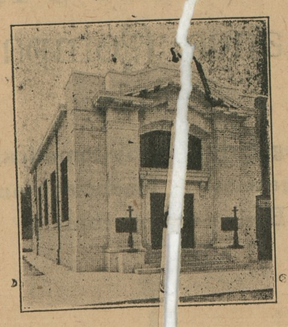

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