

New Investigation Sites Sought By A&M Institute

Off-the-road accident investigation sites should be considered for urban freeways with heavy traffic demand, according to a study by A&M's Texas Transportation Institute.

The research by Mary Ann Pittman and Roy C. Loutzenheiser of TTI was a part of a major study for development of urban traffic management and control systems sponsored by the Texas Highway Department in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration.

Sixteen accident investigation sites were designed along the Gulf Freeway in Houston to provide a place out of view of the freeway motorists where police officers can investigate accidents.

Eight of the sites are located on city streets adjacent to the freeway; two are located on city streets under the freeway; one is located off a city street on freeway right-of-way; and the other five are on unused space under freeway structures.

Officers from the Houston Police Department collected data through supplementary accident report forms that each investigating officer filled out. During the first year of operation, 851 accidents were reported in the study area, and the sites were used for 339 investigations. Another 176 investigations were

conducted at other off-freeway locations.

Benefits of the system in terms of daily savings were evaluated for the peak travel periods. Annual savings from usage of the investigation sites and other off-freeway sites amounted to \$203,000.

Additional benefits were realized through a reduction of secondary accidents during the first year of operation which resulted in a savings of \$25,000. Construction costs were prorated, and the annual cost plus maintenance costs were estimated at \$8,000. For the first year of operation, the benefit/cost ratio was 21:1.

The research also developed certain design criteria for acceptable accident investigation sites. The TTI researchers found that the sites must be easily accessible, well-marked, concealed from the freeway motorists, located near a high accident area, constructed at a low cost, allowing an area of at least 1,000 square feet of space and well lighted for night use.

Texas Climatology Office Moves Here From Austin

The Texas Office of Climatology, which provides weather-related information to agricultural, industrial and governmental groups and individuals throughout the state, is being re-established at A&M.

TAMU President Jack K. Williams said the university offered to assume responsibility for providing the climatological service following announcement that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is discontinuing its state climatology programs. The Texas office has been in

Austin.

Dr. Williams noted TAMU's assumption of the responsibility has been endorsed by Gov. Dolph Briscoe and encouraged by the National Weather Service, a division of NOAA.

The new office will be operated by TAMU's Center for Applied Meteorology, headed by Dr. Horace R. Byers, distinguished professor of meteorology.

Prof. John Griffiths, who has been instrumental in activities to re-establish the office, will serve as state climatologist.

Illinois Teacher Fights For Job After Loss Due To Class Graffiti

WASHINGTON, D.C.—An Illinois social studies teacher who lost his job for permitting his high school students to express themselves in graffiti on a classroom bulletin board will file suit in federal court in Chicago Monday (May 21), the National Education Association announced.

Robert S. Berman, whose contract to teach in Lake Zurich High School, Lake Zurich, Ill., was not renewed for school year 1972-73, will bring action in the U. S. District Court against the Lake Zurich Board of Education; Supt. Ronald R. Eastman; and Kenneth Miller, high school principal. He will seek immediate reinstatement, back salary, and attorney's fees.

The NEA, through its DuShane Emergency Fund, and the Association's state affiliate, the Illinois Education Association, will support Berman's lawsuit.

Berman, who began his teaching career in the northeastern Illinois community in fall 1970, put up two large sheets of paper on the classroom walls in January 1972 as a graffiti board for student comments and expression. The teacher, who has a master's degree, notes in the brief that this method was suggested in professional journals. He explained that his objectives were to improve communication with his students, ascertain their criticisms, and avoid defacement of desks and other facilities in the new classroom.

Berman said he checked the board every day or two, immediately deleted any foul language, and then cautioned the class against writing such expressions in the future.

In late January, a custodian in the Lake County school advised the principal, Miller, that the sheets contained offensive language. After Berman talked with Miller, the teacher removed the papers and discontinued use of the graffiti board. The following day, he received a letter from Superintendent Eastman advising him he would be called before the Board of Education to explain his permitting "a display of filthy, foul, pornographic language and pictures on the walls."

The teacher had an informal discussion with the school board in February, and in March he was notified his teaching contract would not be renewed for a third year. He never received detailed reasons for the nonrenewal.

Berman's complaint alleges there was "no evidence . . . that the conduct in question would produce any disruption, interference with or impairment of discipline or order of the classroom, the teaching or education process, school activities, the operation of the school, or the attainment of the educational objectives."

Furthermore, the brief states, there is no evidence but that Berman's future teaching techniques

and classroom performance would conform to the desires of the school board and administration.

Because of the nonrenewal of his teaching contract, the complaint charges, Berman was deprived without due process of "property" and "liberty" rights under the First and Fourteenth Amendments. Also, the brief

notes, Illinois statute requires "specific and valid reasons" for nonrenewal. The brief declares that the teacher had an expectancy of reemployment, and his inability to obtain other employment as a teacher since his dismissal is evidence of the substantial adverse effect of the non-renewal.

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