

**Frank W. Buffum**  
Highway Commissioner  
1913 - 1917

In 1913, the 47th General Assembly eliminated the Department of Agriculture's highway responsibilities by passing a law creating a State Highway Department. The law also mandated the governor to appoint a highway commissioner, and F. W. Buffum was named to the position.

Buffum's duties were largely advisory, and his principal responsibility was to encourage counties to make road improvements, but his duties were expanded to include devising specifications and design plans for road construction, including “standard gauge roads” which would be designated by a given name or number.

Other legislation allowed for inter-county seat “state roads” which would be selected and established by the proper county officials, with Buffum’s approval. The State Highway Department had a limited role, which included furnishing tools and equipment for state road construction.

Since road improvements still depended on local initiative, additional legislation created three-member county highway boards appointed by the county courts, to help guide the county engineers.

Counties also received \$15 per mile per annum for road dragging, paid out of the road fund. In 1914, Buffum estimated that unimproved dirt roads still totaled some 63,000 miles, but improved dirt roads had increased to about 54,000 miles. Gravel or macadam roads were still comparatively rare.