

# The Interstate Highway System

ANNCR: THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM – Today on Congressional Moment

On July 7th, 1919, the U.S. Army assembled 81 motorized vehicles and 288 men in Washington, D.C. Their mission: to drive across the country.

This transcontinental convoy dealt with all the poor driving conditions of the time.... incomplete or non-existent roads of dirt or sand, unsteady bridges, and treacherous conditions from bad weather. They arrived in San Francisco 62 days later, averaging a cross-country speed of 5 miles an hour. One volunteer observer on the arduous journey was a 29 year-old soldier named Dwight Eisenhower.

Twenty years later, the Bureau of Public Roads had identified to Congress the need for a national road system to improve connections between cities and states. After World War II, Congress was able to fully address this massive undertaking.

There were many concerns: states wanted assurance that the government would pay its fair share of construction costs. Rural residents thought the new highways might limit access to small communities.

In 1953, Dwight Eisenhower became President, and developing the interstate highway system was one of his top priorities. Three years later, with construction and financing approved by Congress, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 was signed into law.

Creating over 35,000 miles of roadway connecting all parts of the nation, the Interstate Highway System was completed in 1975. And in 1990, Congress renamed it the "Eisenhower Interstate System."

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