THE GREATEST PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM IN HISTORY

Celebrating our 50th anniversary

Alan E. Pisarski
AN IMPORTANT DATE IN THE NATION’S HISTORY

• On June 29th this year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Interstate.
• Major events planned for all year.
• What we actually are celebrating is the 50th anniversary of the financing plan to build the Interstate.
• The story goes much farther back in time.
The Clay Commission and Ike
The Clay Commission and Ike
1996 – HAPPY 40TH
300 men; 81 trucks; 3200 miles and 2 months across America! A great story
At the Firestone Homestead, Columbiana, Ohio

Sunday, July 13, 1919, A Rest Halt

Major Brett
Colonel Eisenhower
Harvey Firestone, Jr.

76.520.3
Interstate Highway System
50th Anniversary Reenactment Route
June 15–29, 2006

Route of 1919 Convoy

Host Cities:
1. San Francisco
2. Reno
3. Elko
4. Salt Lake City
5. Rawlins
6. Cheyenne
7. North Platte
8. Omaha
9. Des Moines
10. Walcott
11. Chicago
12. South Bend
13. Columbus
14. Pittsburgh
15. Gettysburg
16. Frederick
17. Washington, DC

Swing Route
Host Cities:
1. Denver
2. Abilene
3. Topeka

STOPS AND DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE
In your neighborhood too

- **SOUTH BEND, INDIANA**
  - Arrive 1 p.m. June 26
  - The convoy will be met by an escort of vintage cars, race cars, and alternative fueled vehicles and escorted to the Studebaker Museum for a lunch event sponsored by local contractors.
  - Depart to Akron, Ohio, time at 2 p.m.

- **AKRON, OHIO**:
  - Arrive at 7 p.m. for dinner event sponsored by Firestone at the site where. ODOT is planning a route for the convoy that will closely follow the Lincoln Highway.
  - Overnight stay in Akron, possible media event before departure on June 27.

- **GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**
  - Arrive 4:30, June 27
The Interstate story begins with a sketch by FDR in 1937
By Public Law 146, Seventy-eighth Congress, section 5, Commissioner of Public Roads Thomas H. MacDonald, was authorized and directed to make a survey of the need for a system of express highways throughout the United States, the number of such highways needed, the approximate routes which they should follow, and the approximate cost of construction, and to report to the President and to Congress, within 6 months after the date of the act, the results of the survey, together with such recommendations for legislation as deemed advisable.
To the Congress of the United States

“The report, prepared at the request of the Congress, is the first complete assembly of data on the use being made of our national highway network. It points definitely to the corrective measures of greatest urgency and shows that existing improvements may be fully utilized in meeting ultimate highway needs.

It emphasizes the need of a special system of direct interregional highways, with all necessary connections through and around cities, designed to meet the requirements of the national defense and the needs of a growing peacetime traffic of longer range.

--- In its full discussion of the whole highway problem and the wealth of exact data it supplies, the report indicates the broad outlines of what might be regarded as a master plan for the development of all of the highway and street facilities of the nation.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
The White House, April 27, 1939
The FDR system they tested

Figure 1.—The 14,300-mile system investigated by the Public Roads Administration in connection with the report, Toll Roads and Free Roads, sent to Congress by the President in 1939.
They examined design ideas.
A dramatic new toll system was tested and rejected.
And proposed this free system

Figure 2.—The 26,700-mile system tentatively proposed as an interregional highway system by the Public Roads Administration in the report, Toll Roads and Free Roads.
The War Years

- The proposal was well received by the President and the Congress
- The war years intervened and plans had to be shelved for a while
- But the defense implications were recognized
- During the war years planning went on
- In 1941 FDR asked for more study
The Blue Print that FDR wanted

This report, prepared for the President and the Congress by the National Interregional Highway Committee, Chaired by Chief MacDonald and with Fairbank as Secretary, evaluated a range of highway systems from 14,300 miles to almost 79,000 miles and recommended what ultimately became the Interstate System.
One of systems tested

FIGURE 4.—The 48,300-mile system, consisting of the more important routes of the 78,800-mile system.
They tested the system alternatives against population, the economy and defense needs.
How did they do that?

Figure 22.—Relief traffic map of the recommended interregional system. The height of the traffic bands indicates approximately the average density of traffic to be expected at all points on the system. The mounting spires at the principal cities picture the great increases of traffic to be expected on sections of the routes traversing the cities.
In counties traversed by the system the density of motor-vehicle ownership in 1941 was 18.7 per square mile and 1 for each 3.9 persons. In all other counties the density was 5.5 per square mile and 1 for each 4.5 persons. These facts, shown graphically in figures 12, 13, and 14, give further evidence of the appropriate choice of routes included in the system. Table 7, which shows the same relations by geographic regions, indicates that the choice is similarly appropriate in all regions.
And arrived at a system

Figure 1.—The general location of routes of the recommended interregional highway system. Total length of the system is 33,020 miles.
PLATE VII.—A grade crossing on a four-lane rural section of the interregional system as it would be designed in conformity with the standards proposed. Note widening of the median strip on approach to the intersection, tapered acceleration and deceleration space and left-turning deceleration and standing areas adjacent to the median strip. In the distance the two roadways appear on different levels where the alignment follows the side of a steep hill.
Plate VIII.—An elevated section of the interregional system as it might be built according to the standards proposed, with central exit ramps and lateral entrance ramps. The sketch suggests the manner in which new properties might conform to curving lines of the expressway in widened sections at access points, and a show window at the elevated level dressed appropriately with the kind of large display that would be needed for comprehension by express traffic.
NATIONAL HIGHWAY PROGRAM

MESSAGE
FROM
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
RELATIVE TO
A NATIONAL HIGHWAY PROGRAM

FEBRUARY 22, 1955.—Referred to the Committee on Public Works
and ordered to be printed with illustrations

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON: 1955
TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Our unity as a nation is sustained by free communication of thought and by easy transportation of people and goods. The ceaseless flow of information throughout the Republic is matched by individual and commercial movement over a vast system of inter-connected highways criss-crossing the Country and joining at our national borders with friendly neighbors to the north and south.

Together, the uniting forces of our communication and transportation systems are dynamic elements in the very name we bear — United States. Without them, we would be a mere alliance of many separate parts.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

THE WHITE HOUSE,
The Nation's highway system is a gigantic enterprise, one of our largest items of capital investment. Generations have gone into its building. Three million, three hundred and sixty-six thousand miles of road, travelled by 58 million motor vehicles, comprise it. The replacement cost of its drainage and bridge and tunnel works is incalculable. One in every seven Americans gains his livelihood and supports his family out of it. But, in large part, the network is inadequate for the nation's growing needs.
He gave 4 key reasons for the need

First: Each year, more than 35 thousand people are killed and more than a million injured on the highways. To the home where the tragic aftermath of an accident on an unsafe road is a gap in the family circle, the monetary worth of preventing that death cannot be reckoned. But reliable estimates place the measurable economic cost of the highway accident toll to the Nation at more than $4.3 billion a year.

Second: The physical condition of the present road net increases the cost of vehicle operation, according to many estimates, by as much as one cent per mile of vehicle travel. At the present rate of travel, this totals more than $5 billion a year. The cost is not borne by the individual vehicle operator alone. It pyramids into higher expense of doing the nation's business. Increased highway transportation costs, passed on through each step in the distribution of goods, are paid ultimately by the individual consumer.
The defense implications had always been recognized
4 key reasons for the need

Third: In case of an atomic attack on our key cities, the road net must permit quick evacuation of target areas, mobilization of defense forces and maintenance of every essential economic function. But the present system in critical areas would be the breeder of a deadly congestion within hours of an attack.

Fourth: Our Gross National Product, about $357 billion in 1954, is estimated to reach over $500 billion in 1965 when our population will exceed 180 million and, according to other estimates, will travel in 81 million vehicles 814 billion vehicle miles that year. Unless the present rate of highway improvement and development is increased, existing traffic jams only faintly foreshadow those of ten years hence.
But the idea still had to be sold

Interstate highways will be numbered for public convenience. All State roads will be safeguarded by uniform direction and danger signs. Cooperation between States and the Federal government has made possible this National transportation system.

HITTING ON ALL FORTY-EIGHT
Support the AAA Motorists' Program!

FOR BETTER HIGHWAYS

WRITE YOUR CONGRESSMAN

Buchanan
DRAWN FOR THE AAA
That’s all it took!
SEC. 108. NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INTERSTATE AND DEFENSE HIGHWAYS.
(a) INTERSTATE SYSTEM.—It is hereby declared to be essential to the national interest to provide for the early completion of the "National System of Interstate Highways", as authorized and designated in accordance with section 7 of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 (58 Stat. 838).

(b) It is the intent of the Congress that the Interstate System be completed as nearly as practicable over a thirteen-year period and that the entire System in all the States be brought to simultaneous completion. Because of its primary importance to the national defense, the name of such system is hereby changed to the "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways".
What they were expecting!

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<th>1956</th>
<th>1965 FORECAST</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>169 million</td>
<td>180 million +</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vehicles</td>
<td>54 million</td>
<td>81 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMT</td>
<td>628 million</td>
<td>814 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>$357 billion +</td>
<td>$500 billion +</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1965 FORECAST</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>169 million</td>
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<td>888 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>$357 billion +</td>
<td>$500 billion +</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>$720 billion +</td>
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## What we got!

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<tr>
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<th>Design year 1965</th>
<th>2006</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>180 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vehicles</td>
<td>81 million</td>
<td>237 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMT</td>
<td>814 million</td>
<td>3 trillion</td>
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<td>Fatalities</td>
<td>36,000+</td>
<td>42,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>$500B+</td>
<td>$13,000B+</td>
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</table>
We also got:

- A system capable of attracting support
- And repelling diversions
- The “flag-ship” of the national program
- Now no such flag ship program exists
- And it shows in 3 “interim” reauthorizations
- A funding system without a clear national purpose
The Parallels are clear

- 1944 the plan
- Commissions formed
- 1956 the financing plan
- 12-14 years to develop
- The Interstate
The Parallels are clear

• 1944 the plan
• Commissions formed; 1955
• 1956 the financing plan
• 12-14 years to develop
• The Interstate

• 1995 the NHS plan
• Commissions formed; 2005
• 2009 the next reauthorization
• Just about 12-14 years
• Will we be ready?
Thank You!

Alan E. Pisarski