

The Federal Highway Administration Today— New Challenges, New Opportunities

★ 1983

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act adds a nickel to the gas tax (first increase since 1961) to expand highway and bridge repairs.

★ 1984

The Motor Carrier Safety Act is approved, setting procedures for determining the safety fitness of carriers.

★ 1986

The Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Act gives FHWA new tools to enhance commercial vehicle safety.

★ 1987

The Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act is approved, making important changes in highway, highway safety, public transit, and relocation assistance programs.

★ 1990

The National Transportation Policy provides a blueprint for the future of surface transportation programs. The FHWA Environmental Policy Statement is released.

★ 1991

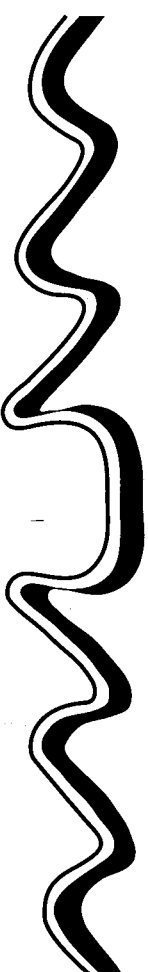
The landmark 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act restructures the Federal-aid highway and transit programs. The Act calls for the creation of a National Intermodal Transportation System. The challenge is to create a seamless, integrated network with the Nation's highways serving as the backbone of that system.

★ 1992

The Commercial Driver's License (CDL) requirement becomes effective on April 1, 1992. The CDL ensures that truck and bus drivers across the country meet uniform standards.

★ 1993

Today, the FHWA administers an 18 billion dollar highway program, and approximately 3.9 million miles of roads serve the Nation's traveling public.



Highway Excellence— 100 Years And Beyond

Federal Highway Administration

1893-1993

Historical Highlights



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Looking Back... Moving Ahead

The United States Congress established the first Federal road agency in 1893. Over the next 100 years, this organization evolved into the Federal Highway Administration—an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation. Developing a road network across the Nation demanded vision, commitment, partnership, and the never-ending quest for better technology. Even today, a single goal guides this mission: continuing to provide the American people with the world's best surface transportation system. It is this century of service that the Nation commemorates, honoring past achievements while moving ahead to challenges of the future.

Early Rural Roads Hinder Travel for Most Americans— and Even Hazardous

At the turn of the century, rural roads are often not surfaced, poorly drained, and become impassable rivers of mud following a heavy rain. Farmers seek good roads to move their crops to market, and bicyclists want roads they can ride on for relatively long distances. The American "Bicycle Craze" in the late 1800s sparks the "Good Roads Movement." Not content to ride only on smooth city streets, bicycle enthusiasts wage a successful campaign for improved rural roads. Congress responds—creating the predecessor to today's Federal Highway Administration.

The Early Years—A Growing Demand For Roads

★ 1893

The Office of Road Inquiry is established under the Department of Agriculture on October 3, 1893.

General Roy Stone leads the first Federal road agency—the Office of Road Inquiry.

Stone commands a staff of one clerk and an annual budget of \$10,000. His mission is to investigate methods of road building and distribute information.

★ 1905

In 1905, the agency becomes the Office of Public Roads.

Director Logan Waller Page heads the Office of Public Roads, with an annual budget of \$50,000 and 10 employees. Page solidifies the agency's reputation for technical research and development, creating the Nation's leading laboratory for testing road materials.

★ 1913

As early as 1905, the Office of Public Roads furnishes occasional advice on forest trails to the Forest Service. In 1913, a formal arrangement is made to manage road work in National Forests.

★ 1914

Director Page joins with States in founding American Association of State Highway Officials (now the American Association of State Highway And Transportation Officials).

★ 1915

In 1915, the Office of Public Roads becomes the Office of Public Roads And Rural Engineering.

★ 1916

The Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 provides the foundation for the Federal-aid highway program as it exists today, strengthening the Federal-State partnership.

★ 1918

The agency is renamed the Bureau of Public Roads.

Thomas H. MacDonald is appointed Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads. He heads the agency from 1919 to 1953.

MacDonald helps create the Advisory Board on Highway Research, which becomes the Highway Research Board in 1924 and the Transportation Research Board in 1974.

★ 1921

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1921 reinforces the Federal-Aid Program, first introduced in 1916. The 1921 Act adds a new concept: the idea of providing construction funds to States for roads designated as part of an interconnected national system.

★ 1922

At the Bureau's request, the U.S. Army produces the "Pershing Map," the first map of the main roads of prime importance in the event of war.

★ 1925

The Bureau joins with States to create the U.S. numbered highway system for marking the main interstate highways.

★ 1935

With the closing of the last gap in Nebraska, U.S. 30 becomes the first paved transcontinental highway.

The Interstate Era— Linking America

★ 1939

The Bureau of Public Roads is transferred from the Department of Agriculture to the Federal Works Agency and renamed the Public Roads Administration.

The 1939 Report to Congress on "Toll Roads and Free Roads" contains the first formal conception of the Interstate System.

★ 1944

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 approves a "National System of Interstate Highways" and establishes a Federal-aid system of principal, secondary, and feeder roads. On August 2, 1947, the Public Roads Administration announces the first 37,700 miles of the system. Today, the Interstate System encompasses 42,795 miles.

★ 1949

The Public Roads Administration is transferred to the Department of Commerce and becomes the Bureau of Public Roads.

★ 1956

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs the Federal-Aid Highway Act and Highway Revenue Act of 1956, creating the Highway Trust Fund, which finances the Interstate System and substantially increases funding for improving other federally aided highways. In 1990, in honor of the former President's vision and commitment, the system's name is changed to the Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways.

★ 1966

The Highway Safety Act provides new support for Federal-State safety programs.

★ 1967

The Bureau of Public Roads joins the newly created U.S. Department of Transportation and becomes the Federal Highway Administration.

★ 1970

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970 establishes the Federal-aid urban system and includes measures dealing with environmental considerations, noise standards, and air quality.

★ 1976

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1976 establishes the Interstate 3R program (resurfacing, restoring, and rehabilitating).