

Ike's Grand Plan

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Ike's Grand Plan

President Dwight D. Eisenhower's "Grand Plan" is sometimes misunderstood as recommending construction of the Interstate System. His vision was far grander than that.

The President intended to present the Grand Plan to the Governor's Conference meeting at Bolton's Landing in Lake George, New York, on July 12, 1954. However, following the death of his sister-in-law, the President was unable to attend. Instead, he provided notes to Vice President Richard M. Nixon for delivery to the Governors.

The "Grand Plan," as Nixon informed the Governors, was that each level of government, Federal, State, county, and municipal, would contribute to an upgrading of the Nation's entire road network over a 10-year period. The goal of this Grand Plan was "a properly articulated system that solves the problems of speedy, safe, transcontinental travel - intercity communication - access highways - and farm-to-market movement - metropolitan area congestion - bottlenecks - and parking." The benefits would be improved safety, reduced traffic jams, less traffic-related litigation, increased economic efficiency, and elimination of "the appalling inadequacies to meet the demands of catastrophe or defense, should an atomic war come."

The President believed the "properly articulated system" should be financed based "on self-liquidation of each project" (i.e., each project would pay for itself) through tolls or "the assured increase in gas tax revenue." He also supported "a cooperative alliance between the Federal government and the States" so that the most efficient level of government would be the manager of its own area.

Finally, the Grand Plan included "very probably, a program initiated by the Federal government, with State cooperation, for the planning and construction of a modern State highway system . . . to construct new, or modernize existing highways." That was as close as President Eisenhower came to mentioning the Interstate System in his Grand Plan speech.
