

U.S. 93 Reaching For The Border

Series: FHWA Highway History Website Articles

June 30, 2023



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Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

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U.S. 93 Reaching For The Border

Until the mid-1920's, the Nation's main interstate roads carried names such as the Lincoln Highway, the Meridian Highway, the National Old Trails Road, the Pacific Highway, the Yellowstone Trails, and hundreds of others. The names were applied by private booster groups, each of which acted as a "chamber of commerce" for its route. With traffic increasing in the 1920's, State and Federal highway officials combined to replace this haphazard and confusing method of designation with a new, uniform method. The result was the U.S. numbered highway system of interstate highways. It was unveiled in October 1925 when the Federal-State task force, called the Joint Board on Interstate Highways, released its report.

The Joint Board identified the Nation's main interstate roads and devised a plan for numbering them. East-west routes would be assigned an even number, with the transcontinental and main routes given a number ending in zero (U.S. 10 through U.S. 90, with U.S. 2 in the north to avoid having a U.S. 0). North-south routes were given an odd number, with the main routes ending in "1" (U.S. 1, U.S. 11, U.S. 101, etc.) and multi-State routes of lesser length ending in "5." Other routes were fit within the resulting grid. The original plan worked out by State and Federal highway officials did not employ "93."

Because the States owned the roads, the Joint Board's report was forwarded to their national organization, the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), for approval. Over the next year, AASHO approved many changes proposed by the States. As a result, U.S. 93 was included when AASHO adopted the U.S. numbered highway plan by ballot of the State highway agencies on November 11, 1926. When the first official log was printed in 1927, it described the route (spellings as in the original):

United States Highway No. 93.

Total Mileage, 768

Montana Beginning at the United States-Canadian International Boundary at Gateway via Eureka, Whitefish, Kalispell, Polson, Ravalli, Missoula, Hamilton, Corvallis to the Montana-Idaho State line near Gibbonsville.

Idaho Beginning at the Montana-Idaho State line near Gibbonsville via Challis, Stanley, Hailey, Shoshone, Twin Falls, Jerome, Rogerson to the Idaho-Nevada State line south of Rogerson.

Nevada Beginning at the Idaho-Nevada State line south of Rogerson via Contact to Wells.

On June 8, 1931, AASHO approved an extension of U.S. 93 via Currie, Ely, Pionche, and Caliente to a connection with U.S. 91 at Glendale, Nevada. According to the AASHO log, U.S. 93 was now 1,158 miles long.

AASHO's Executive Committee considered but rejected an extension of U.S. 93 during its meeting on June 17, 1935. Executive Secretary W. C. Markham advised T. S. O'Connell, Arizona's State Highway Engineer, of the decision on June 25. The rejection, however, was based on a misunderstanding, as Markham explained in an August 29 letter to members of the Executive Committee. During a visit to his office, O'Connell had explained to Markham "that I evidently confused two requests in reference to the extension of U.S. 93, when I presented the matter for your consideration at the meeting of the Committee in June." He outlined the confusion:

The request from the State Highway Department of Arizona was to extend U.S. 93 from Boulder Dam to Kingman, Arizona, over what is now a part of U.S. 466. This also will make a junction with U.S. 66. This request was not to be confused with other requests which I had to extend U.S. 93 into California to the southern limit at El Centro - which request was not from Highway Departments directly to this office.

Markham requested permission to alter the minutes of the meeting "to show that this short extension of U.S. 93 is approved." He added that Arizona planned to extend U.S. 93 further south at some time.

The Executive Committee approved the change. On September 7, 1935, Markham informed O'Connell and State Highway Engineer Robert A. Allen of Nevada of the approval:

Please be informed that the Minutes of June 17 show that U.S. 93 has been ordered extended from its present southern terminus at Glendale, Nevada, to Las Vegas, Nevada, and then to coincide with present U.S. 466 from Las Vegas, Nevada, to Kingman, Arizona.

The revised routing was shown in the next log (1939) as follows:

UNITED STATES HIGHWAY NO. 93

Total Mileage, 1311

Montana Beginning at the International Boundary north of Eureka 12, Eureka 55, Whitefish 16, Kalispell 55, Polson 35, Ravalli 38, Missoula 46, Corvallis 10, Hamilton 62.

Idaho Gibbonsville 33, Salmon 62, Challis 60, Stanley 78, Hailey 48, Shoshone 19, Jerome 13, Twin Falls 30, Rogerson 32.

Nevada Contact 52, Wells 85, Currie 73, Ely 109, Pioche 25, Caliente 110, Glendale 49, Las Vegas 23, Boulder Dam 81.

Arizona Kingman

The numbers indicate the distance to the next city.

In 1936, Arizona proposed the expected extension of U.S. 93 from Kingman to Phoenix via Ash Fork. Between Kingman and Ash Fork, this proposal would have carried U.S. 93 on U.S. 66. At the same time, Arizona requested designation of U.S. 193 south of Phoenix from Sacaton to Picacho via Casa Grande.

Arizona's proposal to extend U.S. 93 prompted protests from towns that believed U.S. 93 should run through their communities, such as Aguila and Wickenburg, to the west of the proposed routing. *The Wickenburg Sun* took up the cause in an editorial ("Prepare for 93") on May 15, 1936:

Ninety-three is the great north and south highway from Alaska to Patagonia, the most stupendous traffic artery project on the continent today. By designating 93 as far as Kingman this great road is brought a step nearer Wickenburg.

Now the state road project of paramount importance at this time is a new, direct route between Phoenix and Kingman, avoiding the long, circuitous swing up through Prescott and Ash Fork, linking up the capital and the important Kingman mining district and giving a direct route not only to Kingman, but to Boulder dam. The present road distance from Phoenix to Kingman would be shortened by a hundred miles. This new route could join 89 logically at Congress Junction and is the logical and inevitable tie between the capital and northwest.

This road is ALSO THE LOCAL AND INEVITABLE ROUTE FOR 93, in its swing south toward Nogales and Old Mexico. Wickenburg is the strategic meeting point for the vast traffic streams of 60-70 going east and west, and 89-93 going north and south.

This is a big stake to play for. The aid of the southern cities, of Phoenix and Kingman could be enlisted for the new Phoenix-Kingman route and every consideration of engineering and distance saving factors favor it.

Let us see whether the Yavapai [County] folks want to play dog in the manger on this project.

The objections prompted O'Connell to advise Markham that the Arizona State Highway Commission, at a meeting on May 20, 1936, had altered the proposal and now wanted AASHO to approve the route as "Temporary" U.S. 93. The commission also revised its U.S. 193 concept and asked AASHO to number it as "Alternate" U.S. 93.

The Arizona State Legislature intervened by passing House Bill No. 51 of Chapter 45 on March 13, 1957, directing the Arizona State Highway Commission to designate as a State highway and part of U.S. 93 "that certain road beginning at the terminus of highway 93 at Kingman, running thence to Wikieup, thence to near Signal, thence to the Alamo crossing, and then to connect with highway 60 near Aguila. The bill also indicated that the State should not begin construction of this route until construction on existing portions of U.S. 93 in the State was completed.

On June 7, 1937, O'Connell informed Markham that the commission had altered its proposal for extension of U.S. 93. O'Connell described the new routing:

From Kingman over U.S. Highway 66 east by way of Valentine, Peach Springs, Seligman, Ash Fork; leaving Highway 66 at Ash Fork Junction and thence going south over U.S. Highway 89 by way of Hells Canyon, Prescott, Congress junction, Wickenburg, Phoenix, and thence south over U.S. Highway 89 to Mesa, thence over State Highway 87 to Picacho, thence over State Highway 84 to Tucson, and thence over U.S. Highway 89 to Nogales.

Although Markham informed O'Connell that the proposal would be considered by the Executive Committee during its June 21 meeting, the minutes of that meeting do not refer to the proposal. In fact, the southern terminus of U.S. 93 remained Kingman for many years.

By 1958, Arizona had developed the highway between Kingman and Wickenburg and designated it Arizona Route 93. The State proposed to extend U.S. 93 from Kingman over the new Route 93 to Arizona Route 71 then over a new location into U.S. 89 at Wickenburg. The AASHO Route Numbering Committee denied the request during its meeting on June 26, 1958. Although the minutes do not indicate why the request was denied, the condition of the road is the likely reason. The State's application, dated January 1958, stated that a portion of the proposed extension from Arizona Route 71 to U.S. 89 "is at the present a survey line only."

On April 30, 1965, Arizona asked AASHO to approve an extension of U.S. 93 to the International Boundary at Nogales via a road the State designated State Route 93:

The route would tie into U.S. 93 that runs from Eureka, Montana at the Canadian Border, south through Idaho, Nevada and Arizona to Kingman, Arizona. It would be a continuation of U.S. 93 from Kingman through Wickenburg, Phoenix, Mesa, Casa Grande, Tucson and Nogales to Mexico.

The letter discussed road conditions:

Much of the pavement and shoulder inadequacies, shown on the application, have developed in the last few years, when higher traffic volumes appeared on these roads. A roadway width of 34 feet was adequate for most of this route until two years ago, and up until that time this route was, for the most part, built to this width standard, but, with increased traffic, a 40 foot minimum roadway width was required. Therefore the deficiency was noted on the application.

Deficiencies of horizontal curvature and percent grade shown near mile 70 to 80 will be removed by present construction of the Burro Creek Bridge and other construction being presently designed. It may be noted that on the application, a red U.C. is placed to represent areas presently under construction. Burro Creek Bridge and approaches is one of these notations.

AASHO's U.S. Route Numbering Committee considered the extension on June 28, 1965, defined as:

Beginning at intersection with US 66, Interstate 40 and present US 93 northwest of Kingman, thence easterly on I-40 approximately 23 miles, thence south on new connection to State Route 93, thence southeasterly on SR 93 via Wikieup, Wickenburg, Morristown, Glendale, Phoenix, Mesa, Chandler, Casa Grande, Eloy, Picacho, Rillito and Tucson, thence southerly via Xavier, Continental, Amado and Carmen to the International Boundary between the United States and Mexico at Nogales.

The log of the meeting indicated the extension was "HELD IN ABEYANCE." A handwritten notation by AASHO Executive Secretary A. E. Johnson on the application indicates the reason:

Not completed into Wickenburg
Some is low traffic & substandard.
Improve

The committee considered the extension again on October 1, 1965. This time, the committee agreed on a compromise. The minutes of the meeting explained:

Approved extension from Kingman to Wickenburg with commitment that the deficiencies in section approved be eliminated as rapidly as possible.

In 1974, AASHO became the American Association of State Road and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). On October 11, 1991, AASHTO's Route Numbering Committee considered several requests from Arizona involving U.S. 89 and U.S. 93. Arizona proposed to eliminate U.S. 89 from I-40 east of Flagstaff to the International Border near Nogales, and to extend U.S. 93 along the former U.S. 89 roadway for 5.95 miles to the intersection with U.S. 60 south of Wickenburg. The committee deferred action on these proposals, but approved them at its next meeting on June 13, 1992. The minutes of the meeting show the action taken:

Eliminate the present U.S. Route 89 designation between the intersection with Interstate Route 40 east of Flagstaff and the intersection at the International Boundary.

Beginning at the present terminus of U.S. Route 93 at the intersection of proposed old U.S. Route 89 west of Wickenburg then southerly over old U.S. Route 89 for 5.95 miles to the intersection of U.S. Route 60 south of Wickenburg.

That is where the route ends today, at its junction with U.S. 60. The most recent log (1989) lists U.S. 93 as 1,457 miles long.
