Celebrating 50 Years of the Interstate Highway System

Linking the power of the past to the promise of the future.
Today, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Interstate. This system – the largest public works project in modern U.S. history – has transformed our lives. We would be hard-pressed to think of another development in the United States in the past 50 years that has had a greater impact on American society or our economy.
It was after World War I that America began to seriously consider a national highway system. In 1919, then-Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower took part in the U.S. Army’s motor convoy to gauge the challenges of moving a military convoy across the United States. The caravan of 81 vehicles and 300 people traveled 3,251 miles – from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco – and learned that the existing road and bridge system couldn’t handle the heavy military equipment. The trip took 62 days. In the late 1930s, national leaders began to consider the feasibility of building a series of interregional highways across the country.

Kansas’ own President Eisenhower, having experienced the 1919 convoy and having seen the efficiency of the German Autobahn, signed legislation in 1956 authorizing the Interstate system.

**Paving the Way**

As the Interstate was built into today’s remarkable system, it gave Americans greater choices about where they lived, worked, shopped and spent their leisure time. Travel times and the cost of shipping goods were reduced, saving both time and money. The Interstate’s multiple lanes, separation
from other roads, gentler curves and paved shoulders have made travel safer.

Events like this one spotlight the impact of the Interstate system on our country. And, while it’s important to recognize our history and the system we have created, it’s equally important for us to look toward the future.

**Future Mile Markers**

Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel have continued to grow. As a result, we face a major challenge of modernizing an Interstate system that is aging and increasingly congested. Increased traffic congestion will affect all of us by increasing the cost and reducing the reliability of shipping goods.

And congestion isn’t the only issue. We must maintain the valuable resource we already have. While it is more fun to advocate for the next new highway, bridge or bypass, we must be mindful of the need to protect the investment we have already made.

**As our partners in the transportation industry, you have helped to make this great system a reality. We look forward to working with you for the next 50 years!**
Interstate Highway System Anniversary Program

June 23, 2006
Kansas Speedway
Arrival of Commemorative Convoy

Welcome

The Honorable Joe Reardon
Mayor, CEO, Unified Government
Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kan.

Remarks

The Honorable Dennis Moore
Kansas Congressman – Third District

Mary Peters
Former Administrator,
Federal Highway Administration

The Honorable Dan Stanley
Chief of Staff and Senior Vice President,
American Trucking Associations

Dick Landis
President and CEO, Help, Inc.
Special commendation presentation
to Kansas and Missouri

Pete Rahn
Director, Missouri Department of Transportation

Deb Miller
Secretary, Kansas Department of Transportation

Luncheon
Thank You to our Sponsors