Primary Source 1:

When I consider the magnitude of the subject which I am to bring before the House—a subject, in which the interests, not of this country, nor of Europe alone, but of the whole world, and of posterity, are involved: and when I think, at the same time, on the weakness of the advocate who has undertaken this great cause—when these reflections press upon my mind, it is impossible for me not to feel both terrified and concerned at my own inadequacy to such a task. But when I reflect, however, on the encouragement which I have had, through the whole course of a long and laborious examination of this question, and how much candour I have experienced, and how conviction has increased within my own mind, in proportion as I have advanced in my labours;—when I reflect, especially, that however averse any gentleman may now be, yet we shall all be of one opinion in the end;—when I turn myself to these thoughts, I take courage—I determine to forget all my other fears, and I march forward with a firmer step in the full assurance that my cause will bear me out, and that I shall be able to justify upon the clearest principles, every resolution in my hand, the avowed end of which is, the total abolition of the slave trade. I wish exceedingly, in the outset, to guard both myself and the House from entering into the subject with any sort of passion. It is not their passions I shall appeal to—I ask only for their cool and impartial reason; and I wish not to take them by surprise, but to deliberate, point by point, upon every part of this question. I mean not to accuse any one, but to take the shame upon myself, in common, indeed, with the whole parliament of Great Britain, for having suffered this horrid trade to be carried on under their authority. We are all guilty—we ought all to plead guilty, and not to exculpate ourselves by throwing the blame on others; and I therefore deplore every kind of reflection against the various descriptions of people who are more immediately involved in this wretched business.

Having now disposed of the first part of this subject, I must speak of the transit of the slaves in the West Indies. This I confess, in my own opinion, is the most wretched part of the whole subject. So much misery condensed in so little room, is more than the human imagination had ever before conceived. I will not accuse the Liverpool merchants: I will allow them, nay, I will believe them to be men of humanity; and I will therefore believe, if it were not for the enormous magnitude and extent of the evil which distracts their attention from individual cases, and makes them think generally, and therefore less feelingly on the subject, they would never have persisted in the trade. I verily believe therefore, if the
wretchedness of any one of the many hundred Negroes stowed in each ship could be brought before their view, and remain within the sight of the African Merchant, that there is no one among them whose heart would bear it. Let any one imagine to himself 6 or 700 of these wretches chained two and two, surrounded with every object that is nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling under every kind of wretchedness! How can we bear to think of such a scene as this? One would think it had been determined to heap upon them all the varieties of bodily pain, for the purpose of blunting the feelings of the mind; and yet, in this very point (to show the power of human prejudice) the situation of the slaves has been described by Mr. Norris, one of the Liverpool delegates, in a manner which, I am sure will convince the House how interest can draw a film across the eyes, so thick, that total blindness could do no more; and how it is our duty therefore to trust not to the reasonings of interested men, or to their way of colouring a transaction... As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, I confess to you sir, so enormous so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might,—let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.
Primary Source 2:

FORCED from home and all its pleasures
Afric’s coast I left forlorn,
T increase a stranger’s treasures
O’er the raging billows borne.
Men from England bought and sold me,
Paid my price in paltry gold;
But, though slave they have enrolled me,
Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever,
What are England’s rights, I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexionCannot
forfeit nature’s claim;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in white and black the same.

Why did all-creating nature
Make the plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, tears must water, Sweat
of ours must dress the soil.
Think, ye masters iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial boards,
Think how many backs have smarted
For the sweets your cane affords.
Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
Is there One who reigns on high?
Has He bid you buy and sell us,
Speaking from his throne, the sky?

Ask him, if your knotted scourges,
Matches, blood-extorting screws,
Are the means that duty urges
Agents of his will to use?

Hark! He answers!—Wild tornadoes
Strewing yonder sea with wrecks, Wasting
towns, plantations, meadows, Are the
voice with which he speaks.
He, foreseeing what vexations
Afric’s sons should undergo,
Fixed their tyrants’ habitation
Where his whirlwinds answer—“No.”

By our blood in Africa wasted
Ere our necks received the chain;
By the miseries that we tasted,
Crossing in your barks the main;
By our sufferings, since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart,
All sustained by patience, taught us
Only by a broken heart;

Deem our nation brutes no longer,
Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard and stronger
Than the colour of our kind.
Slaves of gold, whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted powers,
Prove that you have human feelings,
Ere you proudly question ours!

The Negro’s Complaint
by William Cowper
I OWN I am shock’d at the purchase of slaves,  
And fear those who buy them and sell them are knaves;  
What I hear of their hardships, their tortures, and groans  
Is almost enough to draw pity from stones.

I pity them greatly, but I must be mum,  
For how could we do without sugar and rum?  
Especially sugar, so needful we see?  
What? give up our desserts, our coffee, and tea!

Besides, if we do, the French, Dutch, and Danes,  
Will heartily thank us, no doubt, for our pains;  
If we do not buy the poor creatures, they will,  
And tortures and groans will be multiplied still.

If foreigners likewise would give up the trade,  
Much more in behalf of your wish might be said;  
But while they get riches by purchasing blacks,  
Pray tell me why we may not also go snacks?  
Your scruples and arguments bring to my mind  
A story so pat, you may think it is coin’d,  
On purpose to answer you, out of my mint;  
But, I can assure you, I saw it in print.  
A youngster at school, more sedate than the rest,  
Had once his integrity put to the test;  
His comrades had plotted an orchard to rob,  
And ask’d him to go and assist in the job.
Primary Source 3, cont.:

He was. shock’d, sir, like you, and answer’d -- “Oh, no
What! rob our good neighbour! I pray you, don’t go;
Besides, the man’s poor, his orchard’s his bread,
Then think of his children, for they must be fed.”

“You speak very fine, and you look very grave,
But apples we want, and apples we’ll have;
If you will go with us, you shall have a share,
If not, you shall have neither apple nor pear.”

They spoke, and Tom ponder’d -- !I see they will go:
Poor man! what a pity to injuro him so
Poor man! I would save him his fruit if I could,
But staying behind will do him no good.

“If the matter depended alone upon me,
His apples might hang till they dropt from the tree;
But, since they will take them, I think I’ll go too,
He will lose none by me, though I get a few.”

His scruples thus silenc’d, Tom felt more at ease,
And went with his comrades the apples to seize;
He blam’d and protested, but join’d in the plan;
He shar’d in the plunder, but pitied the man.
Primary Source 4:

I. ‘Whereas the Two Houses of Parliament did, by their Resolutions of the Tenth and Twenty-fourth days of June One Thousand eight hundred and six, severally resolve, upon certain Grounds therein mentioned, that they would, with all practicable Expedition, take effectual Measures for the Abolition of the African Slave Trade in such Manner, and at such Period as might be deemed advisable, And whereas it is fit upon all and each of the Grounds mentioned in the said Resolutions, that the same should be forthwith abolished and prohibited, and declared to be unlawful’;

II. Be it therefore enacted by the King’s most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the First Day of May One thousand eight hundred and seven, the African Slave Trade, and all and all manner of dealing and trading in the Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer of Slaves, or of Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as Slaves, practiced or carried on, in, at, to or from any Part of the Coast or Countries of Africa, shall be, and the same is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; and also that all and all manner of dealing, either by way of Purchase, Sale, Barter, or Transfer, or by means of any other Contract or Agreement whatever, relating to any Slaves, or to any Persons intended to be used or dealt with as Slaves, for the Purpose of such Slaves or Persons being removed or transported either immediately or by Transshipment at Sea or otherwise, directly or indirectly from Africa, or from any Island, Country, Territory, or Place whatever, in the West Indies, or in any other part of America, not being in the Dominion, Possession, or Occupation of His Majesty, to any other Island, Country, Territory, or Place what ever, is hereby in like Manner utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful; and if any of His Majesty’s Subjects, or any Person or Persons resident within this United Kingdom, or any of the Islands, Colonies, Dominions, or Territories thereto belonging, or in His Majesties Occupation or Possession, shall from and after the Day aforesaid, by him or themselves, or by his or their Factors or Agents or otherwise howsoever, deal or trade in, purchase, sell, barter, or transfer, or contract or agree for the dealing or trading in, purchasing, selling, bartering, or transferring of any Slave or Slaves, or any
Primary Source 4, cont.:

Person or Persons intended to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as a Slave or Slaves contrary to the Prohibitions of this Act, he or they so offending shall forfeit and pay for every such Offence the Sum of One hundred Pounds of lawful Money of Great Britain for each and every Slave so purchased, sold, bartered, or transferred, or contracted or agreed for as aforesaid, the One Moiety thereof to the Use of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and the other Moiety to the Use of any Person who shall inform, sue, and prosecute for the same.

Persons resident within this United Kingdom, or any of the Islands, Colonies, Dominions, or Territories thereto belonging, or in His Majesty’s Possession or Occupation, to fit out, man, or navigate, or to procure to be fitted out, manned, or navigated, or to be concerned in the fitting out, manning, or navigating, or in the procuring to be fitted out, manned, or navigated, any Ship or Vessel for the Purpose of assisting in, or being employed in the carrying on of the African Slave Trade, or in any other the Dealing, Trading, or Concerns hereby prohibited and declared to be unlawful, and every Ship or Vessel which shall, from and after the Day aforesaid, be fitted out, manned, navigated, used, or employed by any such Subject or Subjects, Person or Persons, or on his or their Account, or by his or their Assistance or Procurement for any of the Purposes aforesaid, and by this Act prohibited, together with all her Boats, Guns, Tackle, Apparel, and Furniture, shall become forfeited, and may and shall be seized and prosecuted as herein-after is mentioned and provided III. And be it further enacted, That from and after the said First Day of May, One thousand eight hundred and seven, it shall be unlawful for any of His Majesty’s Subjects, or any Person or persons, resident in this United Kingdom, or in any of the Colonies, Territories, or Dominions thereunto belonging or in His Majesty’s Possession or Occupation, to carry away or remove, or knowingly and willfully to procure, aid, or assist in the carrying away or removing, as Slaves, or for the purpose of being sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as Slaves, any of the Subjects or Inhabitants of Africa, or any Island, Country, Territory, or Place in the West Indies, or any part of America whatsoever, not being in the Dominion, Possession, or Occupation of his Majesty, either immediately or by Transshipment at Sea or otherwise, directly or indirectly from Africa or from any such Island, Country, Territory, or Place as aforesaid, to any other Island, Country, Territory, or Place whatever, and that it shall also be unlawful for any of His Majesty’s Subjects, or any
Person or Persons resident in this United Kingdom, or in any of the Colonies, Territories, or Dominions thereunto belonging, or in His Majesty’s Possession or Occupation, knowingly and willfully to receive, detain, or confine on board, or to be aiding, assisting, or concerned in the receiving detaining, or confining on board of any Ship or Vessel whatever, any such Subject or Inhabitant as aforesaid, for the Purpose of his or her being so carried away or removed as aforesaid, or of his or her being sold, transferred used, or dealt with as a Slave, in any Place or Country whatever; and if any Subject or Inhabitant, Subjects or Inhabitants of Africa, or of any Island, Country, Territory, or Place in the West Indies or America, not being in the Dominion, Possession, or Occupation of His Majesty, shall from and after the Day aforesaid, be so unlawfully carried away or removed, detained, confined, transshipped, or received on board of any Ship or Vessel belonging in the Whole or in Part to, or employed by any Subject of His Majesty...
Today, we give little thought to the significance of our national system of interstate highways—that is until we are inconvenienced by road construction, tied up in rush hour traffic jam, or miss our intended exit. How many Americans realize that 45,000 miles of uniform design features like 12-feet-wide, multiple lanes in each direction, access and exit ramps, and underpasses and overpasses—all engineered for travel at 50-70 miles per hour—might have turned out quite differently? Some of the original interstate highway plans considered called for traffic lights, intersections, and two-lane highways, especially in lightly traveled areas. What if each state had been left to design its own sections of the interstate highway system and set its own standards? Worst of all—imagine paying toll fees at every state line or at intervals all along a travel route. In large part, our national interstate highway system, despite its now-apparent flaws and unintended consequences fifty years later, remains a monument to mid-twentieth-century engineering and construction. Even more importantly, the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways is a lasting legacy to the vision and determination of a president who recognized that its timely completion was in the national interest.

The United States into which David Dwight Eisenhower was born in 1890 was but one step removed from its frontier days. Most Americans lived and died not far from the isolated communities into which they were born. Travel and destinations considered common today, were exotic and generally unattainable to the average American of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Until he was twenty years old, young Dwight Eisenhower had never ventured more than 90 miles from his home, the distance from Abilene, Kansas, to the state capital, Topeka. For the citizens of this typical Midwestern town, population 3500, the whistles of arriving and departing trains, the latest wires from the telegraph office, and newspaper headlines printed in cities far away were daily reminders of distant places and people about which they could only imagine. Local distances were measured by the time it took to walk them or by the swiftness of the horse. Beyond city streets—mostly unpaved until the first decade of the twentieth century—county roads were dusty, pockmarked with ruts and holes, dissolving into morasses of impassable mud when it rained.

The first roads in early America simply retraced Indian trails and trade routes. Improvements in the first two centuries of American history were measured and long in coming. In short, road travel was time consuming and physically punishing. With the arrival of the railroads, long-distance travel and the shipping of goods were improved, but travel by road remained limited. By 1880, bicycling
had become so popular across the country that the focus, once again, turned to travel by road, so much so that clubs of cycling enthusiasts formed the League of American Wheelmen, an organization which promoted good roads and bicycle paths. When the first American-made automobile with a gasoline engine was introduced to Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1893, support for a good roads movement gathered momentum. That same year, the Office of Road Inquiry was established by the federal government, tasking the Secretary of Agriculture with assessing the state of the nation’s system of roads. The study resulted in the Good Roads National Map, which outlined the web of grave roads and roads paved with layers of broken stones and asphalt or tar—the macadamized roads. In 1905, the Office of Road Inquiry was renamed the Office of Public Roads—and not long after—the Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering, with the primary goal of improving rural roads for farmers.

Though automobiles were still a novelty in 1909 when Wayne County, Michigan, paved the first public road (a one-mile stretch between Detroit and the County fair grounds) with Portland cement; it was evidence of the emerging era of modern transportation. In 1916, a road-building partnership—which continues to operate today—between the states and the federal government was established with the first federal aid to highways program. The shared funding formula ratio, set roughly at 50-50, was based on a state’s population, land area, and road mileage. States assumed responsibility for maintaining roads with review and oversight remaining at the federal level. Three years later, in 1919, the Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering became the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR). The United States now boasted 3.6 million automobiles. The growing popularity of the automobile and the substandard condition of most roads converged to galvanize the Good Roads Movement. Americans began to discuss, with a new earnestness, the necessity for better roads.

In 1919, Lt. Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, a twenty-eight-year-old Army officer, volunteered as an official Tank Corps observer for the first ever Transcontinental Motor Convoy—a truck train of 81 motorized Army vehicles, which would transport a party of nearly 300 soldiers, enlisted men and officers, more than 3000 miles across the continental United States. For most participants, horse power—quite literally—was a concept more familiar than the intricacies and mysteries of the gasoline engine. Setting off from the south lawn of the White House, and following a route—euphemistically called the Lincoln “Highway” (today U.S. 30)—the convoy arrived in San Francisco 62 long days later. Dirt
roads and trails made up more than half the distance, slowing travel to an average six miles an hour. Mud, quicksand, collapsed bridges, and steep mountain trails required pressing shoulder to metal to order to advance. There were more than 230 accidents; mechanical breakdowns were a daily occurrence. In all, approximately 3,250,000 Americans came out to cheer on the convoy party as it inched across the nation. In a number of states, the convoy was a catalyst for passage of bond issues for road improvements. Eisenhower would recall his experiences as a participant, as well as his observations of the German autobahns twenty-five years later in World War II, as he considered solutions to improve America’s highways in the first years of his presidency.


Though most city streets were paved in brick, stone, asphalt, or concrete by the 1920s, the public roads beyond the city limits remained little changed. It was during this decade, however, that policy-makers began to explore the feasibility of a national interstate highway system, introducing terms like “interregional” and “superhighway” to the national lexicon. There was a practical reason for the interest, within five years of the end of the Great War the number of automobile registrations across the nation had more than quadrupled to 16 million. (By the eve of World War II, that number would nearly double to 29.5 million.) Nonetheless, it would be the collision of competing “road” interest—truckers, automobile associations, the auto industry, engineers and road contractors, among them—that would stand in the way of any changes to the existing federal aid to highways formula.

In the late 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed a plan to crisscross the nation with three east-west and three north-south routes. Congress showed an interest in the discussion. The result was the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1938. The Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) was charged with a feasibility study for a six-route toll-financed highway network. Findings stated that tolls alone would not create enough revenue (due to insufficient traffic) to pay for the construction. The study also recommended non-toll highways with controlled access and multiple lanes where traffic would support them. Roosevelt sent a report to Congress suggesting a new national highway program, but political opponents dismissed it as just another New Deal “scheme.”
Three years later, Roosevelt appointed a National Interregional Highway Committee to investigate the need for a limited system of national highways which resulted in "Interregional Highways," released in 1943. But old highway interest rivalries again resisted any change to the status quo in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944. Areas of disagreement arose over formulas to finance construction, urban versus rural interests, and federal versus state authority, with a result that status quo was maintained with a few notable exceptions. Approximately 40,000 miles of four-lane highways (except in lightly traveled areas) would be designated a “National System of Interstate Highways,” though no funds were earmarked to pay for them and no real design criteria or standards were established. In 1947, construction began—very slowly—and for the first time in 1952, Congress authorized a token expenditure of $25 million with a 50-to-50 ratio of federal and state funds.

During World War II, the number of automobile registrations actually dropped to 25 million, but by 1950, registrations had soared to 40 million. Highway maintenance deferred during the war, teamed with a heady post-war consumer prosperity—including home and automobile ownership by more Americans than ever before—to create a renewed concern over a seriously deficient highway system. The growing exodus from cities to the suburbs and the explosion in numbers of automobiles on the road—in 1953, more than 500,000 were purchased each month—ushered in a crisis of traffic jams in heavily populated regions.

In 1952, for the first time in 24 years, a Republican was elected to the presidency. Dwight D. Eisenhower had earned acclaim as Supreme Allied Commander in the European Theater in World War II. As early as 1942, his name had been linked with a presidential run—a notion which he had ignored for nearly a decade.

But in 1952, he had finally acquiesced, winning the hotly contested Republican nomination at the GOP National Convention. In October 1952, “Candidate Eisenhower” had promised that his first priority as president would be to end the war in Korea. The Korean Armistice successfully negotiated in July 1953, Eisenhower turned his attention to other foreign and domestic priorities, among them a national system of interstate highways. Aware that new federal-aid highway legislation must be addressed in 1954, the President intended to be ready.
In Eisenhower’s view, it was long past time for the federal government to increase spending for the nation’s highway system, particularly the interstate highway program. The President recognized that a continued rise in the standard of living for the American family was closely linked to automobile ownership and highway travel. It was clearly in the national interest that America’s highways catch up and keep pace with postwar economic prosperity and consumer demand. Eisenhower preferred what he called a “dramatic” plan of $50 billion ($131.5 billion today) over a period of ten years for construction of “self-liquidating” highways. He was determined to avoid deficit spending at all costs. His first efforts, aimed at reorganizing the federal government’s road-planning bureaucracy, were met with resistance and any perceived compliance was only a mirage. Shifting his approach, Eisenhower next directed his advisors to draw up one, and then another, highway construction plans in the summer of 1954. Yet again, entrenched highway bureaucrats refused their support to either. Undeterred, Eisenhower redoubled his efforts. He was determined to design a grand strategy, one that would successfully advance his vision of a modern interstate system for the people of the United States.

To be Continued. . . by You!

BIBLIOGRAPHY


It is now 50 years later. Did President Eisenhower prevail in his goal for a national system of interstate highways? And, if he did, to what degree was he successful? You are the historian, and it is your turn to write the rest of the story.

A number of resources, including documents, are provided with this lesson to assist you in assembling the pieces of this puzzle. A “Timeline of Events” on page XX points out highlights in the chronology of this story. Excerpts from Eisenhower’s State of the Union Message, pages XX and XX, are also included. Online documents that fill in the details of the interstate Highway story may be accesses by consulting the list of “Research Resources” on page XX. In addition, there are a number of web site pages provided which contain relevant information on this topic.

Your version of the “Rest of the Story” should be 500-750 words in length and address the following questions.

Using President Eisenhower’s February 22, 1955, address to Congress, explain his reasons for supporting a new highway system.

Describe specific elements of President Eisenhower’s “grand strategy” for pushing through legislation for a modern interstate highway system?

Relate the course of major events related to this issue from 1953 to 1956.

To what degree was the President successful in accomplishing his goal? How long did it take? What were the pitfalls and setbacks along the way? Were there compromises?

What characters can you identify? List them and describe how and what they contributed to the discussion and the process.

While investigating this issue, what evidence did you uncover that illuminates constitutional principles like the separation of powers, checks and balances, federalism, in investigating the rest of the story?

As you followed the course of the legislative process for the interstate highway system, what did you discover about the significance of the roles of the president, congress, and special interest groups in the development of public policy?
### Timeline: Interstate Highway System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 4, 1953</td>
<td>President Eisenhower directs a study on the feasibility of an interstate highway program as a hedge against a possible economic downturn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1953</td>
<td>The President is presented with the report on the interstate highway system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 7, 1954</td>
<td>President’s State of the Union Message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12, 1954</td>
<td>White House meeting, attended by President Eisenhower, Sherman Adams, and Arthur Burns, to coordinate efforts among government officials to find ways to increase federal highway building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1954</td>
<td>President Eisenhower directs Bertram D. Tallamy and Robert Moses (New York highway officials) to study the nation’s highways. They are to identify problems and propose solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 1954</td>
<td>President Eisenhower announces proposal for two trans-continental “superhighways,” funded by tolls wherever possible and built over a 10-year period at a cost of $50 billion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 1954</td>
<td>“Plan M” and Administration “Plan D” are proposed by the Eisenhower Administration. Neither is acceptable to federal highway bureaucrats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 12, 1954</td>
<td>Vice President Richard Nixon delivers the President’s interstate highway system “Grand Plan” speech to the national governors’ conference. Invites governors’ help and support. Governors form committee to study issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 7, 1954</td>
<td>President Eisenhower creates an Interagency Committee and a President’s Advisory Committee on a National Highway program (the “Clay Committee,” named for its chairman, General Lucius D. Clay). Francis C. “Frank” Turner, a highway engineer and high-level highway administrator, serves as subject specialist and secretary for the committee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
October 7-8, 1954  President’s Advisory Committee holds hearings to collect input from individuals and associations with a vested interest in roads and highways.

December 3, 1954  Governors’ Highway Committee plan submitted to President Eisenhower.

January 11, 1955  The Clay Committee issues its final report. Its findings will form the basis for Eisenhower Administration’s interstate highway bill.

January 1955  Francis V. Du Pont resigns as Commissioner of Bureau of Public Roads in order to assist the President in moving the highway program forward. Advises the President and his staff.

January 6, 1955  President’s State of the Union Message.

February 16, 1955  Genera Clay meets with legislative leaders to discuss his committee’s report.

Morning of February 17, 1955  President Eisenhower meets with General Clay to discuss previous day’s meeting with member of Congress.

February 21–May 1955  Hearings, Senate Subcommittee on Public Roads, chaired by freshman Senator Albert Gore, Sr. (D), Tennessee.

Afternoon of February 21, 1955  President Eisenhower meets with bipartisan group of ranking members of Congressional committees and subcommittees with authority over public works and roads.

February 22, 1955  Washington’s birthday. President Eisenhower delivers his highway message to Congress.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 1955</td>
<td>Eisenhower Administration’s highway bill is introduced in Senate by Senator Edward Martin (R), Pennsylvania. Freshman Senator Prescott Bush (R), Connecticut, chief Senate advocate for the Administration’s bill. Competing bills and amendments are introduced. Senate Public Works Committee votes to kill the Administration’s bill. Votes to substitute the Gore bill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June-July 1955</td>
<td>House and Senate versions for highway legislation compete until final proposal defeated on July 27.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2, 1955</td>
<td>Congress adjourns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 24, 1955</td>
<td>President Eisenhower suffers near-fatal heart attack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30, 1955</td>
<td>President Eisenhower directs Cabinet-level committee to discuss another approach to interstate highway legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 6, 1956</td>
<td>President’s State of the Union Message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 31, 1956</td>
<td>President Eisenhower endorses “pay-as-you-go” in place of “self-liquidating” financing for new interstate highway system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January–June 1956</td>
<td>Representatives Hale Boggs (D), Louisiana, and George Fallon (D), Maryland, collaborate to write compromise highway legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27, 1956</td>
<td>Federal Highway Act of 1956 passed by House of Representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19, 1956</td>
<td>Senate’s version of Federal Highway Act of 1956 is passed by voice vote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 26, 1956</td>
<td>Senate and House pass Federal-Aid Highway Act 1956 following conference committee agreement on legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 29, 1956</td>
<td>President Eisenhower (in the hospital, recovering from...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
January 7, 1954:

To protect the vital interest of every citizen in a safe and adequate highway system, the Federal Government is continuing its central role in the Federal Aid Highway Program. So that maximum progress can be made to overcome present inadequacies in the Interstate Highway System, we must continue the Federal gasoline tax at two cents per gallon. This will require cancellation of the ½ ¢ decrease which otherwise will become effective April 1st, and will maintain revenues so that an expanded highway program can be undertaken.

When the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations completes its study of the present system of financing highway construction, I shall promptly submit it for consideration by the Congress and the governors of the states.

January 6, 1955:

A modern, efficient highway system is essential to meet the needs of our growing population, our expanding economy, and our national security. We are accelerating our highway improvement program as rapidly as possible under existing State and Federal laws and authorizations. However, this effort will not in itself assure our people of an adequate highway system. On my recommendation, this problem has been carefully considered by the Conference of State Governors and by a special Advisory Committee on a National Highway Program, composed of leading private citizens. I have received the recommendations of the Governors’ Conference and will shortly receive the views of the special Advisory Committee. Aided by their findings, I shall submit on January 27th detailed recommendations which will meet our most pressing national highway needs.

In further recognition of the importance of transportation to our economic strength and security, the Administration, through a Cabinet committee, is thoroughly examining existing Federal transportation policies to determine their effect on the adequacy of transportation services. This is the first such comprehensive review directly undertaken by the Executive Branch of the government in modern times. We are not only examining major problems facing the various modes of transport; we are also studying closely the inter-relationships of civilian and government requirements for transportation. Legislation will be recommended to correct policy deficiencies which we may find.
waking moment and much more, Eisenhower took great care to organize his staff and the workings of his office. To preserve his energy and time for the most pressing matters of state, Eisenhower selected capable and trustworthy subordinates to whom he could delegate real responsibility. The President was well aware that “things” did not just happen. Worthy results demanded a principled vision, clearly defined goals, and complete and detailed plans.

Over the decades, Eisenhower had developed a personal model for decision making that served him well, most evident during the intense weeks and days leading up to D-Day. His foundations for decision making included a shared sense of responsibility, a discussion informed and guided by facts and rational thinking, and an atmosphere infused with a spirit of respect and cooperation. In an effort to fully develop and assess any issue, he insisted that participants do their homework, openly express their viewpoints, argue their differences, and work toward a bona fide consensus—all in good faith. He had little patience for long-winded usurpers or what he called “speechifying.” Frequently, he returned the discussion to its touchstone: What is best for the nation as a whole? Once a decision had been made, however, Eisenhower expected nothing less than absolute loyalty and support for the work that had been accomplished and the decision that had been made.

January 6, 1956:

Many measures of great national importance recommended last year to the Congress still demand immediate attention legislation for school and highway construction; . . . .

Legislation to provide a modern, interstate highway system is even more urgent this year than last, for 12 months have now passed in which we have fallen further behind in road construction needed for the personal safety, the general prosperity, the national security of the American people. During the year, the number of motor vehicles has increased from 58 to 61 million. During the past year over 38,000 persons lost their lives in highway accidents, while the fearful toll of injuries and property damage has gone on unabated.

In my message of February 22, 1955, I urged that measures be taken to complete the vital 40,000 mile interstate system over a period of 10 years at an estimated Federal cost of approximately 25 billion dollars. No program was adopted.

If we are ever to solve our mounting traffic problem, the whole interstate system must be authorized as one project, to be completed approximately within the specified time. Only in this way can industry efficiently gear itself to the job ahead. Only in this way can the required planning and engineering be accomplished without the confusion and waste unavoidable a piecemeal approach. Furthermore, as I pointed out last year, the pressing nature of this problem must not lead us to solutions outside the bounds of sound fiscal management. As in the case of other pressing problems, there must be an adequate plan of financing. To continue the drastically needed improvement in other national highway systems, I recommend the continuation of the Federal Aid Highway Program.

January 12, 1961:

The largest public construction program in history—the 41,000 mile national system of Interstate and Defense highways—has been pushed rapidly forward. Twenty-five percent of this system is now open to traffic.

Note: An online collection of State of the Union Messages from Washington to Bush may be accessed at: www.presidency.ucsb.edu.sou.php.
AUTHOR’S NOTE:
Interstate Highway 70 runs a mere three miles south of my home. Each workday, I access I-70 to drive to and from my job at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in my hometown (President’s Eisenhower’s as well) of Abilene, Kansas. When I-70 reached Abilene in 1959, I was very young, but I still recall very clearly its construction westward. Particularly vivid in my memory are the indelible changes it brought to familiar local landscapes.

WEBSITES:
- www.eisenhower.archives.gov/dl/InterstateHighways/InterstateHighwaysdocuments.htm
  Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum Website
- Eisenhower Memorial Commission Website, Searchable Presidential Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/50_splash.htm, Federal Highway Administration’s 50th Anniversary Website


SCANS:
  • Letter Of Transmittal
  • Summary Of Conclusions And Recommendations (3 Pp.)
  • List Of Associations That Contributed Testimony To The Clay Committee Hearings, Oct. 7-8, 1954.
  • Estimate Of Travel By Motor Vehicles 1921-1954

QUOTATIONS:
“More than any single action by the government since the end of the war, this one [the interstate highway system] would change the face of America.” (Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1963)

“It [the highway system] is obsolete because in large part it just happened. It was governed by terrain, existing Indian trails, cattle trails, arbitrary section lines. It was designed largely for local movement at low speeds of one or two horsepower.” (Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954)

“Eisenhower was well known in the military for having an uncanny ability to select the right men for the right job, and to listen to his advisors, all knowing that the final decisions were Ike’s.” (Dan Holt, 2006) (Director, Eisenhower Library)

“One of the measures of greatness in a President is the change he brings about that is permanent and that affects every citizen’s life forever after. . . with Eisenhower, it was the Interstate Highway program.” (Stephen E. Ambrose, 1990)
About the Authors

**Ann Claunch** is the Director of Curriculum for National History Day. She has been a classroom teacher and a university professor.

**Kim Barbieri** has judged for National History Day and is currently the educational director for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas.

**Lisa Fisher** is an administrator and a long time proponent of National History Day. Lisa has just completed her MA degree with a study of NHD.

**Lois Lisowski** has recently retired from a distinguished career at the National Archives. She is a co-founder of the Friends of National History Day.

**V. Chapman-Smith** is a regional administrator for the National Archives and Records Administration Mid-Atlantic operation. In addition, V. serves as a regional coordinator for National History Day Philadelphia.

**Joel Walker** is a National History Day state coordinator from South Carolina. He has also published a state textbook on South Carolina history for third grade.
Bring history alive in your classroom

Get the American History Multimedia Classroom series for just $849

Introducing the *Multimedia Classroom* from The History Channel®, a set of 21 interactive lesson plans on CD-Rom:

- Spans the American Revolution through Civil Rights
- Play hundreds of relevant video clips drawn from our award-winning documentary programming
- View, display, and print thousands of primary source documents, maps, classroom activities, and critical thinking questions
- Mac and PC compatible
- Each lesson is accompanied by the full-length documentary on DVD – that’s over 44 hours of additional content!
- Every lesson is correlated to individual state and national curriculum standards
- Call or email us for special volume pricing and deployment options!

Go to history.com/education to view our demo and review the curriculum standards for your state!

Web: history.com/education | Phone: 1-800-344-6336 | Email: educationsupport@history.com