President Eisenhower's message to the Congress of the United States, February 22, 1955
Third: In case of an atomic attack on our key cities, the road net must permit quick evacuation of target areas, mobilization of defense forces and maintenance of every essential economic function. But the present system in critical areas would be the breeder of a deadly congestion within hours of an attack.

Fourth: Our Gross National Product, about $357 billion in 1954, is estimated to reach over $500 billion in 1965 when our population will exceed 150 million and, according to other estimates, will travel in 81 million vehicles 811 billion vehicle miles that year. Unless the present rate of highway improvement and development is increased, existing traffic jams only faintly foreshadow those of ten years hence.

To correct these deficiencies is an obligation of Government at every level. The highway system is a public enterprise. As the owner and operator, the various levels of Government have a responsibility for management that promotes the economy of the nation and properly serves the individual user. In the case of the Federal Government, moreover, expenditures on a highway program are a return to the highway user of the taxes which he pays in connection with his use of the highways.

Congress has recognized the national interest in the principal roads by authorizing two Federal-aid systems, selected cooperatively by the States, local units and the Bureau of Public Roads.

The Federal-aid primary system as of July 1, 1954, consisted of 23,457 miles, connecting all the principal cities, county seats, ports, manufacturing areas and other traffic generating centers.

In 1954 the Congress approved the Federal-aid secondary system, which on July 1, 1954, totalled 158,977 miles, referred to as farm-to-market roads -- important feeders linking farms, factories, distribution outlets and smaller communities with the primary system.

Because some sections of the primary system, from the viewpoint of national interest are more important than others, the Congress in 1954 authorized the designation of a special network, not to exceed 40,000 miles in length, which would connect by routes as direct as practicable, the principal metropolitan areas, cities and industrial centers serve the national defense, and connect with routes of continental importance in the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Mexico.

This National System of Interstate Highways, although it embraces only 1.7 percent of total road mileage, joins 52 State capital cities and 90 percent of all cities over 50,000 population. It carries more than a seventh of all traffic, a fifth of the rural traffic, serves 65 percent of the urban and 65 percent of the rural population. Approximately 37,600 miles have been designated to date. This system and its mileage are presently included within the Federal-aid primary system.

In addition to these systems, the Federal Government has the principal, and in many cases the sole, responsibility for roads that cross or provide access to Federally owned land -- more than one-fifth the nation's area.

Of all these, the Interstate System must be given top priority in construction planning. But at the current rate of development, the Interstate network would not reach even a reasonable level of extent and efficiency in half a century, state highway departments cannot effectively meet the need. Adequate right-of-way to assure control of access; grade separation structures; realignment of present highways; all these, done on the necessary scale within an integrated system, exceed their collective capacity.

If we have a congested and unsafe and inadequate system, how then can we improve it so that ten years from now it will be fitted to the nation's requirements?

President Eisenhower’s message to the Congress of the United States, February 22, 1955
A realistic answer must be based on a study of all phases of highway financing, including a study of the costs of completing the several systems of highways, made by the Bureau of Public Roads in cooperation with the State highway departments and local units of government. This study, made at the direction of the 83rd Congress in the 1950s, Federal-aid Highway Act, is the most comprehensive of its kind ever undertaken.

Its estimate of need shows that a 10-year construction program to modernize all our roads and streets will require expenditure of $101 billion by all levels of government.

The preliminary 10-year totals of needs by road systems are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road System</th>
<th>(Billions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interstate (urban $11, rural $12 billion)</td>
<td>$ 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal-aid Primary (urban $10, rural $20 billion)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal-aid Secondary (entirely rural)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total of Federal-aid Systems (urban $11, rural $17 billion)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other roads and streets (urban $16, rural $17 billion)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of needs (urban $37, rural $66 billion)</td>
<td>$101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Governors' Conference and the President's Advisory Committee are agreed that the federal share of the needed construction program should be about 30 percent of the total, leaving to State and local units responsibility to finance the remainder.

The obvious responsibility to be accepted by the Federal Government, in addition to the existing Federal interest in our 1,644,000-mile network of highways, is the development of the Interstate System, with its most essential urban arterial connections.

In its report, the Advisory Committee recommends:

1. That the Federal Government assume principal responsibility for the cost of a modern Interstate Network to be completed by 1964 to include the most essential urban arterial connections, at an annual average cost of $2.3 billion for the ten-year period.

2. That Federal contributions to primary and secondary road systems, now at the rate authorized by the 1956 Act of approximately $233 million annually, be continued.

3. That Federal funds for that portion of the Federal-aid systems in urban areas not on the Interstate System, now approximately $3 million annually, be continued.

4. That Federal funds for Forest Highways be continued at the present $3.5 million per year rate.

Under these proposals, the total Federal expenditures through the ten-year period would be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road System</th>
<th>(Billions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interstate System</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal-aid Primary and Secondary</td>
<td>$2420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal-aid Urban</td>
<td>0.750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Highways</td>
<td>31.725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

President Eisenhower's message to the Congress of the United States, February 22, 1955
The extension of necessary highways in the Territories and high
way maintenance and improvement in National Parks, on Indian lands
and on other public lands of the United States will continue to be treated
in the budget for these particular subjects.

A sound Federal highway program, I believe, can and should stand
on its own feet, with highway users providing the total dollar
necessary for improvement and new construction. Financing of inter-
state and Federal-aid systems should be based on the planned use of increas-
ing revenues from present gas and diesel oil taxes, augmented in limited
instances with tolls.

I am inclined to the view that it is sounder to finance this
program by special bond issues, to be paid off by the above-men
cioned revenues which will be collected during the useful life of the roads
and pledged to this purpose, rather than by an increase in general revenue
obligations.

At this time, I am forwarding for use by the Congress in its
deliberations the report to the President made by the President’s Advisory
Committee on a National Highway Program. This study of the entire high-
way traffic problem and presentation of a detailed solution for its remedy is
an analytical review of the major elements in a most complex situation.
In addition, the Congress will have available the study made by the Bureau
of Public Roads at the direction of the 83rd Congress.

These two documents together constitute a most exhaustive
examination of the National highway system, its problems and their
remedies. Inescapably, the vastness of the highway enterprise fosters
varieties of proposals which must be resolved into a national highway
pattern. The two reports, however, should generate recognition of the
urgency that presses upon us; approval of a general program that will
give us a modern safe highway system; realization of the rewards for
prompt and comprehensive action. They provide a solid foundation for
a sound program.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

The White House,
84TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

H. R. 10660

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 19, 1956

Mr. Fallon introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Public Works

A BILL

To amend and supplement the Federal-Aid Road Act approved July 11, 1916, to authorize appropriations for continuing the construction of highways; to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 to provide additional revenue from the taxes on motor fuel, tires, and trucks and buses; and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 TITLE I—FEDERAL HIGHWAY ACT OF 1956

3 SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE FOR TITLE I.

4 This title may be cited as the “Federal Highway Act of 1956”.

5

H.R. 10660, Federal Highway Act of 1956

Records of the U.S. House of Representatives. National Archives and Records Administration
Photograph of cars from the 1940s

Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration
Map of National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, 1956

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