TIMELINE of AMERICAN MILESTONES IN TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure has played a key role in our Nation's development. It connects and binds our economy, our communities, and our people. As President Eisenhower said, without the unifying force of transportation, "we would be a mere alliance of many separate parts."

THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, THERE ARE...

- 4 million miles of public roads
- 19,700 civil airports
- 138,000 miles of freight rail
- 1,700 miles of levees
- 383 major lakes and reservoirs
- 12,000 miles of commercial inland channels
- 75 hydropower generating facilities
- waterways leading to 926 harbors
- 241 individual lock chambers at 195 sites
- 650 dams

SO HOW DID WE GET HERE?

1776

Adam Smith, the father of modern economics, publishes *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith's famous book notes that one of the three fundamental duties of any successful government is to "erect and maintain" strong and stable "public works and public institutions."

1788

The Constitution of the United States is ratified. Article 1, Section 8, the Commerce Clause, gives Congress the power "to regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes." It also provides that "Congress shall have Power To... establish Post Offices and Post Roads . . ."

1789

The 9th Act of the First Congress transfers the twelve existing lighthouses in the country from the individual states to the federal government, and provides for the construction of a new lighthouse on the Chesapeake Bay as the first federal public works improvement.

1790

Congress authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, to create a maritime service to enforce customs laws, the Revenue Cutter Service – precursor to the United States Coast Guard.

1802

The U.S. Army establishes the Corps of Engineers, an Army command dedicated to strengthening the Nation's security by building and maintaining some of America's most critical infrastructure projects.

1807

Robert Fulton's steamboat, the Clermont, makes its debut. Fulton was the first to successfully utilize the steam engine as a means of commercial transportation. His forward thinking made steamboat travel a reality and helped usher in America's industrial revolution.

1811

Construction of the National Road, also known as U.S. Route 40, begins. The first federally funded road in U.S. history helped spur the development of small towns and cities along its path. In the 1830's, the federal government turns over responsibility of the NationalRoad to the states through which it runs.

1825

The 425-mile Erie Canal opens, allowing for cheaper and more efficient transportation of goods across the country. The canal was such an engineering marvel that, when it was completed, some called it the Eighth Wonder of the World.

1827

The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad becomes the first U.S. railway chartered for commercial transport of passengers and freight.

1869

The Transcontinental Railroad opens for through traffic – literally uniting the Nation. The railroad's completion transformed the economy of the American West and made transporting goods and passengers from coast to coast considerably more expedient and less expensive.

1887

The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) is created to oversee the railroad industry.
The ICC was the first federal regulatory agency in U.S. history.

1903

Wilbur and Orville Wright successfully fly the first powered aircraft, marking a significant change in American and international transportation.
The invention of the airplane revolutionized the transportation of people and goods, as well as methods of military combat.

1908

Production of Ford's Model T begins in Detroit, Michigan, setting a new standard for the automovie industry. Ford's introduction of the assembly line in 1913 helped transform automobiles from a luxury item to the most common method of transportation for Americans.

1914

The Panama Canal is completed Under the watch and with the support of President Teddy Roosevelt. At $350 million, the project was the most expensive construction project in U.S. history. The completion of the canal – which connects 160 countries and 1,700 ports – ranks as one of the greatest transportation achievements of the 20th Century.

1927-1928

Charles Lindbergh completes the first solo flight across the Atlantic, and just over one year later, Amelia Earhart becomes the first woman to make a solo trans-Atlantic flight.

1936

Construction of the Hoover Dam is completed, two years ahead of schedule and under budget. This engineering marvel required enough concrete to pave a road from San Francisco to New York City, and has provided water supply, electricity and flood control for much of the American southwest.

1956

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. The law created the 41,000 mile National System of Interstate and Defense Highways that dramatically revolutionized transcontinental travel. The Highway Revenue Act established the Highway Trust Fund.

1958

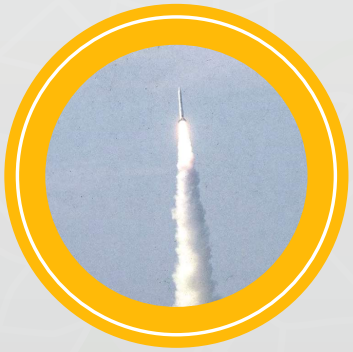
President Dwight D. Eisenhower signs the Federal Aviation Act of 1958, which created a new independent agency – the Federal Aviation Agency – responsible for civil aviation safety.

1962

John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit the Earth aboard Friendship 7. His history making 4 hour, 56 minute flight orbited the Earth three times at an altitude of 162 statute miles and speeds of up to 17,500 miles an hour.

1966

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is established by an act of Congress. DOT would be led by the Secretary of Transportation and consist of new and existing agencies.



1982

The Conestoga rocket successfully launches into space, making it the first commercial space launch in history. The commercial space industry has since expanded greatly, with multiple companies privately developing and operating launch vehicles and spacecraft.

1983

President Ronald Reagan signs the Surface Transportation Assistance Act. The law raised the user fees on gasoline and diesel by five cents, generating needed revenue to help restore highways and bridges. President Reagan remained convinced that “the bridges and highways we fail to repair today will have to be rebuilt tomorrow at many times the cost.”

1984

Carnegie Mellon University establishes the Navlab. Its goal is to apply computer vision, sensors and high-speed processors to create vehicles that drive themselves.

1986

President Ronald Reagan signs the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. The law fundamentally changed the financing mechanisms for water projects by granting greater control and economic responsibility to the nonfederal interest.

1986

Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager complete the first non-stop, un-refueled fixed-wing aircraft flight around the earth aboard the Rutan Model 76 Voyager. The flight took 9 days, 3 minutes and 44 seconds.

1993

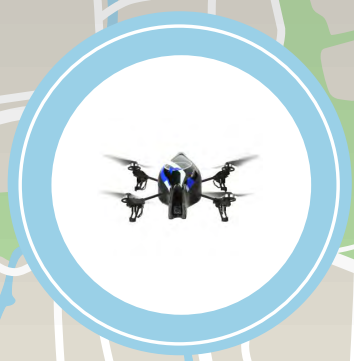
For the last time, Congress approves an adjustment to the Highway Trust Fund user fees, raising it to 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon for diesel fuel.

2008

With Highway Trust Fund revenues no longer able to keep up with infrastructure needs and rising costs of construction, in part due to the user fees remaining flat since 1993, Congress begins providing a series of periodic General Fund transfers to ensure continued Highway Trust Fund solvency.

2010

Parrot released their "AR Drone" at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The AR Drone is the first commercially successful ready-to-fly consumer drone, and the first able to be controlled solely by a Wi-Fi connection.



2018 & BEYOND

Revolutions in commercial space, drones, and autonomous vehicles continue to transform mobility for all Americans.

What comes next? Only time will tell.

The future is bright with untold innovations in mobility on the horizon. Congress must remain a strong partner in building a 21st century infrastructure for all Americans.

BUILDING
A 21ST CENTURY INFRASTRUCTURE

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