

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Carol A. Murray, Commissioner

For Immediate Release

June 29, 2006

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NH CELEBRATES 50th ANNIVERSARY OF INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM
THE "OPEN ROAD" BEGAN WITH IKE'S SIGNATURE ON JUNE 29, 1956

One of the biggest engineering projects in history has reached the half-century mark. The New Hampshire Department of Transportation, along with the NH Good Roads Association and the Associated General Contractors of NH, today marked the 50th anniversary of the nation's Interstate Highway System with recognition of the milestone and a call to reinvest in this vital transportation network for New Hampshire and the entire country.

"The 225 miles of Interstate highway in New Hampshire have served us well, dramatically increasing mobility, fueling our economy and making our state an even more appealing place to live and visit," NHDOT Commissioner Carol Murray said today at a Concord event celebrating the anniversary. "It's also a heavily used highway system rapidly approaching middle age that's in serious need of repairs and rehabilitation."

It was on June 29, 1956 that President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 that paved the way for the construction of an Interstate System that today totals approximately 47,000 miles. This colossal engineering challenge forever changed the way people and freight moved, putting everyone in America within a few days drive of each other and redefining the relationship between urban and rural America.

By 1963, sections of Interstate 93 from Salem to Manchester and from Bow to Tilton, and I-293 from I-93 in Manchester to the Queen City Bridge were completed and opened to traffic. The last remaining section of I-93 passing through Franconia Notch, dedicated on June 2, 1988, was a project through an environmentally fragile corridor that was considered to be a significant engineering achievement.

While only totaling 1.2% of all roadway lane miles in the country, the Interstate System carries 24% of all vehicle traffic. Since Interstate construction began in 1956, the number of vehicles has increased by 250% and the total vehicle miles traveled have increased by 350%. Between 1991 and 2003 alone, travel on the Interstate System increased by 43%.

Today's recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Interstate System also features a caravan of vintage cars that headed north on Interstate 93 with several scheduled stops, including another celebration at the Exit 44 Welcome Center in Littleton at 5:00 pm.