The Twilight of Route 66: Transitioning from Highway to Freeway, 1956–84

*By Frank Norris**

On Friday, June 29, 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower was a patient at Walter Reed Hospital outside Washington, DC, recuperating from an intestinal infection. There were no congressmen, reporters, or photographers around—just his press secretary—when he signed a bill that, according to one legal source, was one of the forty most important pieces of legislation in American history.[1] The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, the tenets of which Eisenhower had been backing since taking office three years earlier, authorized the expenditure of billions of dollars over thirteen years to build the Interstate Highway System.[2]

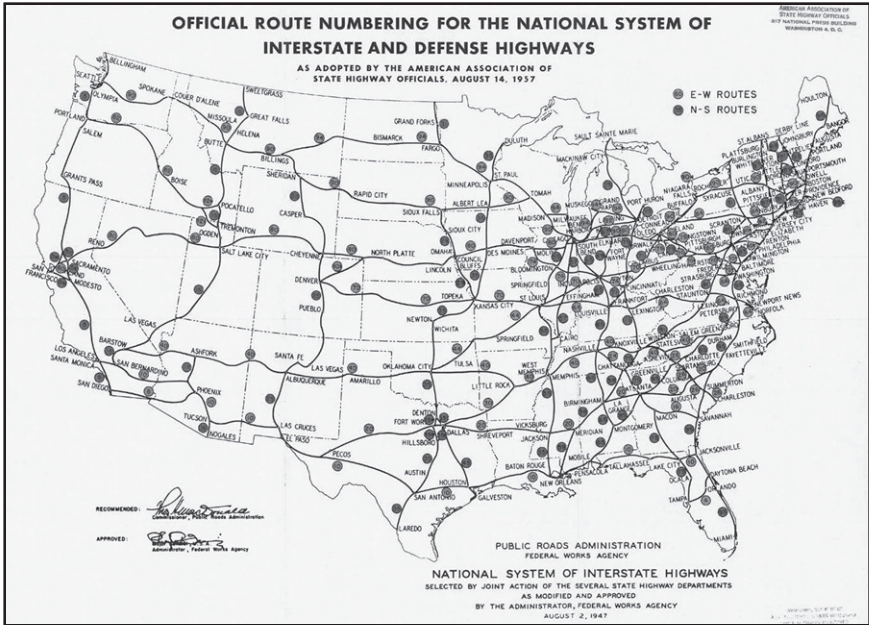
The most widely available Route 66 literature suggests that the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 brought forth the long, inexorable fading away of a once-proud highway. Michael Wallis, for example, noted that during this period, "The bright lights of fame and fortune that had shone on the highway for so many years [began] to

dim," and critic Helen Leavitt intoned that the bill brought on the "wanton and often purposeless destruction of . . . communities by the mania for more highways."[3] Indeed, the literature suggests the highway fell into an undifferentiated death spiral—one that proved long and slow because replacing Route 66 with interstates took more than twice the time the government had predicted. It was not until fall 1984 that a completed freeway segment around Williams, Arizona, snuffed out the last gasps of US Highway 66 as a primary highway route.[4] The existing Route 66 literature, which tends to emphasize the romantic, the quirky, and the iconic, sheds little light on the specific events of that twenty-eight-year transition period, and the myths about Route 66 are so popular and pervasive that much of the complexity of this period has been obscured. A closer look at this period, however, spotlights five key characteristics that help provide a more nuanced understanding about the closing days of Route 66.

First, the congressional passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 did not signal a radical change in highway building. Instead, it was one event of many that marked the transformation of the US highway system, both along the Route 66 corridor and elsewhere, from a reliance on two-lane, full-access highways to multilane, limited-access highways.

The idea of having limited-access, high-speed highways to circumvent congested city traffic had been an engineering reality for more than half a century. Around 1905 members of the wealthy, speed-happy Vanderbilt family reluctantly recognized, for reasons of safety, that they needed an alternative to racing along the streets of New York. In response they purchased the necessary property and self-funded the construction of the nation's first limited-access highway. The first ten-mile section of the Long Island Motor Parkway was opened in October 1908.[5] Twenty-five years later, at the other end of the continent, Los Angeles traffic engineers tried to counter ever-worsening traffic congestion by proposing, in November 1933, the "Ramona Air Line Route," a four-mile-long freeway connecting the downtown area with the southern San Gabriel Valley. That highway, which later became part of the San Bernardino Freeway, a major route by which Route 66 passengers often drove to and from Los Angeles, was opened in April 1935.[6] Three years later, construction began on the Arroyo Seco Parkway between Los Angeles and Pasadena. That route was opened, amid much fanfare, on December 30, 1940. It was immediately christened as a new segment of US Highway 66.[7]

At the eastern end of Route 66 during this period, highway officials were hard at work on their own ways to speed up traffic. Starting just



Interstate Highway System plan published in 1957, based largely on a route structure approved in 1947 (map courtesy of the author).

seven miles southwest of the Chicago Loop, a forty-mile segment called Highway 66 Bypass was opened in 1940 with the goal of avoiding Joliet and its traffic congestion. This was not a freeway; instead, it was a four-lane, divided highway with a few at-grade intersections.[8]

At the same time these early highways were being conceived and built, national leaders were envisioning a broad, bold plan for a network of high-speed, limited-access highways. Early in Franklin D. Roosevelt's second term, the president "repeatedly expressed interest in construction of a network of toll superhighways as a way of providing more jobs for people out of work," and in April 1939 he transmitted a report to Congress in which he recommended a "special system of direct interregional highways . . . designed to meet the requirements of the national defense and the needs of a growing peacetime traffic."[9] The onset of World War II—and the widespread recognition that Germany had already developed a sophisticated autobahn system—dramatically demonstrated the need for an improved US highway network.[10] When Congress passed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944, the bill contained a section authorizing designation of a forty thousand-mile "National System of Interstate Highways," and by August 1947 the various state highway departments had finalized the adoption of the

specific routes that would comprise that system.[11] Not much actual freeway construction resulted from this bill, but the proposed 1947 highway network was the blueprint for the system that was later implemented beginning in June 1956. All that was needed to make the system a reality was financing, and it took the efforts of Senator Al Gore Sr. of Tennessee, Representative George Fallon of Maryland, and other legislators to work out the bill's details. Gore and Fallon did their work so effectively that the resulting bill breezed through the US House of Representatives on a voice vote and the US Senate with but a single dissenting vote before President Eisenhower signed it at Walter Reed Hospital.[12]

Although the 1956 bill seemingly gave the green light to freeway construction, many states had been building limited-access highways well before that date. As noted above, Illinois and California had taken the lead among the Route 66 states during the prewar era, and to some extent these trends continued. In Illinois quite a few limited-access highways with occasional intersections were built as a result of a law passed by the 1943 Illinois Legislature, so by 1946 segments were complete around Lexington, the Bloomington-Normal area, Lincoln, and a substantial mileage approaching the Mississippi River near Saint Louis, Missouri.[13] In 1948 the Illinois Highway Department completed a bypass around Pontiac, and over the next six years bypasses also were built around an additional dozen or more Illinois towns and villages along this highway corridor. The net effect of this ongoing construction was that, by the end of 1954, the Chicago motorist could drive Route 66 all the way to the Saint Louis suburbs on high-speed, divided highways, largely avoiding the congestion of cities and towns and encountering just a few stoplights.[14] To some extent, similar projects were also taking place in Missouri. By 1946 bypass routes had been built around the Saint Louis area, Rolla, Lebanon, Springfield, Carthage, and Joplin, and by fall 1954 Saint Clair, Stanton, Doolittle, and Waynesville had all been bypassed as well.[15]

By far the largest Route 66 construction projects during this period were in Oklahoma. On April 30, 1947, Governor Roy Turner signed a bill creating the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, the sole purpose of which was to authorize and build an eighty-six-mile-long turnpike between Oklahoma City and Tulsa. By March 1949 an Oklahoma Highway Department study had declared that the idea was economically feasible, and in December 1950 the first construction contract was awarded for the $38 million project. At 3 p.m. on May 16, 1953, the Turner Turnpike was opened to traffic.[16] While that project was still in the construction stage, the Oklahoma Legislature authorized an

equally challenging highway project that would connect Tulsa east to the Missouri border. In December 1954 bonds were issued for what became known as the Will Rogers Turnpike, and work got underway the following year. The eighty-eight-mile turnpike was opened to the public on June 28, 1957.[17]

In southern California, highway construction by 1946 had already bypassed San Bernardino, and the Arroyo Seco Parkway eased traffic between Pasadena and Los Angeles. A year later, in June 1947, highway construction throughout the state began to accelerate after the California legislature passed the monumental Collier-Burns Act.[18] Intended to relieve urban traffic congestion, the act unleashed a torrent of freeway building. By 1949 the Santa Ana Freeway was already under construction, and by 1955 portions of the Hollywood, Santa Monica, and San Bernardino freeways were open to traffic, primarily near downtown Los Angeles. East of Los Angeles, so much of the San Bernardino Freeway had been opened to traffic by 1955 that only a four-mile gap remained to complete a thirty-eight-mile segment out to the Pomona-Ontario area. Because the San Bernardino Freeway was less than four miles away from Route 66, which it paralleled, most highway travelers after 1955 between San Bernardino and Los Angeles shirked Route 66 in favor of the San Bernardino Freeway corridor.[19]

Because of the flurry of construction activity that took place at both ends of Route 66 during the immediate postwar years, Route 66 looked far different in June 1956 than it did at the end of World War II. Michael Wallis noted that "in the 1950s, Route 66 was a genuine celebrity," while a similar volume noted that "the heyday of the Mother Road [was] in the 1950s and 1960s."[20] In reality, that golden age hardly existed in Illinois, where bypasses had circumvented most cities and towns along the way, and the trend toward bypasses held, to some extent, in Missouri as well. In Oklahoma, fully half of Route 66 already had been replaced by a tollway or was in the process of being replaced. In California during the mid-1950s, the highway across the vast Mojave Desert was still largely the same as it had been since the 1930s, but in the Los Angeles area so much freeway mileage had been built that Route 66 west of San Bernardino had been effectively abandoned by long-distance traffic.[21] That left Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as the only states where the classic, two-lane elements of Route 66 still were the primary roadway.[22]

Second, state highway departments often chose unusual tactics in the way in which freeway construction contracts were awarded. These departments, which were politically controlled by state highway commission members, stepped gingerly into the business of replacing

Route 66 and other major highways. As a result, bypass routes around cities and major towns were not completed for fifteen years or more after Congress authorized the Interstate Highway System.

The passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 seemed to usher in a new era in interstate highway construction. The bill authorized the expenditure of $25 billion—a huge amount by the standards of the day—and federal highway planners predicted that a 41,000-mile interstate highway system would be in place by 1969.[23] Given that financial windfall, 90 percent of which would be paid for by the federal government, state highway departments around the country raced to be the first to award contracts and lay concrete. On August 13, 1956, for example, Missouri awarded the first contract based on new interstate highway funding, and just a month later construction workers in Kansas started paving a stretch of what later became a section of Interstate Highway 70.[24] Neither of these segments replaced Route 66 mileage; the surge in new concrete and asphalt, however, was a precursor of things to come along the Route 66 corridor and elsewhere.

A few months after the new freeway system was announced, a map was widely distributed showing the main route numbers. Under the new configuration, the principal routes were based on either east-west or north-south travel. But because much of Route 66 was oriented in a northeast-southwest direction, Route 66 backers were dismayed to learn that there would be no single interstate number that would take the highway's place. Instead, Route 66 lost its unified identity, and it was split up into portions of five different interstate highways: Interstates 55, 44, 40, 15, and 10.[25]

Under the new law, the federal Bureau of Public Roads, part of the Department of Commerce, was responsible for funneling more than $1 billion in interstate highway funds to the states during fiscal year 1957. Among Route 66 states, this distribution brought $13 million to Arizona, more than $10 million to New Mexico, and so on.[26] The design and construction projects, however, were overseen by the various state highway commissions, which had spent decades building and improving primary and secondary roads mostly financed by a fifty-fifty federal-state match.[27] The landmark 1956 highway bill, while emphasizing the importance of multilane, limited-access freeways, had certain loopholes; for example, it authorized the construction of two-lane highways, as well as at-grade intersections, on lightly traveled rural interstate segments.

Based on these standards, it appears that several state highway commissions spent the first years after 1956 spending superhighway dollars on routine upgrades of existing rural highways rather than

State	Interstate Mileage	Earliest Segment Completion	Construction Midpoint	Last Segment Completion
Illinois	295	1955	1972-73	1978
Missouri	292	1957	1967-68	1981
Oklahoma	353	1953 (turnpike)	1957-58	1975
Texas	177	1961	1968	1984
New Mexico	374	1958	1964	1981
Arizona	359	1959	1967-68	1984
California	284	1935 (Ramona Air Line Route)	1967	1973
Total	**2,134**	**1935**	**1966-67**	**1984**

Interstate construction progress along the Route 66 corridor by state, 1935–84 (table courtesy of the author).

on the construction of full-fledged, limited-access freeway segments.[28] New Mexico highway officials, for example, issued their first two interstate highway contracts along Route 66 in early 1957, for isolated segments between Moriarty and Santa Rosa. In a similar fashion, Arizona's first interstate highway contract along Route 66 was a remote, nine-mile segment, awarded in December 1957 near Petrified Forest National Monument. The contracts in one, or perhaps both, of these states were completed without constructing a freeway interchange.[29]

Although some states started issuing freeway construction contracts along the Route 66 corridor before others (the first Texas segment, for example, was not completed until five years after Eisenhower signed the highway bill), most state highway commissions followed a similar historical pattern: freeways first were built in empty, rural areas, followed by a move into the big cities before, as a final step, bypassing small- to medium-sized towns.[30] Beginning in 1966, interstate standards required that all new freeways be four lanes or more, and at-grade intersections were prohibited. A year-by-year perusal of highway maps during the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, quixotically shows that several highway segments were shown for a few years as freeways, only to revert back to divided-highway status a few years later.[31]

Third, the construction and completion of the Interstate Highway system—along the Route 66 corridor and elsewhere—turned out to be more contentious than either federal or state highway engineers had predicted. Although upgrading selected rural highways to interstate

highway standards was relatively uncontroversial, state highway commissions recognized that the construction of interstates around both small towns and large cities was a potential threat. A primary rationale for the new interstate highways, after all, was the promise of being able to drive hundreds of miles without encountering a stoplight.

While new freeways in urban areas offered the promise of minimizing traffic congestion, they also bypassed the roadside businesses that often provided a community's primary economic base. It was not at all surprising, therefore, that when highway commissioners announced plans for interstate highway construction around cities and towns, they often ran into a wall of opposition from municipal governments, chambers of commerce, and the owners of a variety of roadside businesses. At an Arizona public meeting, for example, a speaker who represented motel owners protested that a proposed freeway was "not only a threat to their livelihood but a menace to the economy of the state and the community."[32] In some communities along Route 66, there were long, protracted fights over rights-of-way and the timing of construction contracts. These fights never became full-fledged freeway revolts such as San Francisco, Miami, and Memphis endured, but local opposition in a number of communities delayed freeway construction for months if not years.

Perhaps the most orchestrated opposition to freeway construction took place in New Mexico, where state lawmakers in 1963 moved to protect small communities from the freeway builders by enacting a law prohibiting freeway bypasses without local approval.[33] Similar laws, by this time, had been enacted in Wyoming and perhaps elsewhere.[34] That 1963 law, which according to one observer "caused delay of [highway] projects and resulted in a general slowdown of the program in New Mexico," was partially rescinded in 1965.[35] A year later it was fully repealed after federal highway officials threatened to withhold their 90 percent funding share for all future freeway projects in the state.[36]

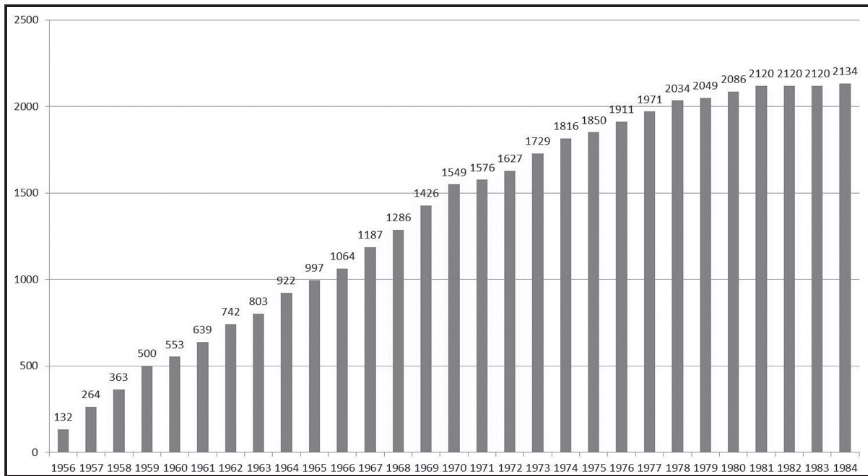
In a few local areas, highway plans were announced that promised to entirely isolate a community. In eastern New Mexico, for example, the route initially proposed for Interstate 40 would have bypassed Tucumcari and San Jon by five miles; farther west, a proposed interstate route west from Kingman, Arizona, would have bypassed Needles, California, to the north by more than forty miles. But in both cases, local and state officials complained until the proposed right-of-way was moved much closer to these towns.[37] Highway officials made similar plans along Interstate 40 in Oklahoma, and it took the patient persuasion of Jack Cutberth from the US Highway 66 Association to have the right-of-way realigned so that it followed the old road more

closely.[38] Highway planners sometimes proposed too few interchanges—as in Flagstaff or Williams—or they proposed intersections in such poorly situated locations—as in Cuervo, New Mexico—that long-established roadside businesses would have been rendered effectively inaccessible.[39]

Freeways could be delayed for any number of reasons. In Shamrock, Texas, the state highway commission delayed construction for five years because local ranchers were unwilling to sell their land along the proposed freeway right-of-way.[40] In other highway-dependent communities, local officials pressured state highway commissions to delay the issuance of highway bypass construction contracts.[41] In Flagstaff, Arizona, officials and local residents spent two years grappling over whether the interstate would go through the middle of town or loop around its southern edge; once the southern route had been chosen, the question of whether businesses could legally locate on freeway connecting routes was submitted to a public vote, further delaying the process.[42] After eight more years of delays, Interstate 40 opened around Flagstaff in early October 1968. The lack of adequate freeway signage, however, caused the business community to complain so loudly that the interstate was shut down after being open for just one day. For the next few weeks, highway traffic reverted back to the old Route 66 right-of-way until the signage was improved.[43] In a few cases, such as at Williams, Arizona, the threat of legal action delayed the awarding of construction contracts.[44] Behind all of these delaying actions was a common denominator, which was the fear that the completion of freeway bypasses would bring catastrophic economic consequences to both large and small communities.

Because of these protests, and others like them that were staged throughout the country, the construction of new freeways dragged on far longer than planners and legislators had predicted when the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 was passed. By the close of the 1969 construction season, when Congress had originally stated that the system would be complete, only two-thirds of the 2,134 freeway miles that would replace Route 66 had actually been completed. Indeed, it would take another fifteen years before the last one-third of that freeway mileage—what Michael Wallis called that "passionless slab of monotony"—would be open to traffic.[45]

Fourth, the widespread fears about the economic impact of the interstates proved to be only partially realized, with cities and larger towns largely avoiding significant losses. The root cause of many freeway delays was the widely-held fear by businesses up and down Route 66 that the new freeways would destroy small towns along the way, particu-



Completed interstate mileage along the Route 66 corridor, 1956–84 (table courtesy of the author).

larly those towns that were heavily dependent on motels, restaurants, service stations, and similar tourist services. In the weeks and months after the passage of the 1956 highway act, various newspaper articles chronicled a pervasive dread of the highway's anticipated economic impacts. This was expressed not only by the owners of roadside motels and restaurants but also by state highway officials. For example, one Holbrook, Arizona, resident pleaded with federal officials, "If you could just leave the 2–3 miles of Holbrook alone."[46] Local newspapers printed when a new freeway bypass opened often reflected that fear. Motel owners were quoted as being genuinely worried, while chamber of commerce officials typically expressed guarded optimism that the town's visitor sector would somehow persevere.

As it turned out, the economic impacts that the freeways brought were mixed. According to one book on the subject, "Since the road was decommissioned, these [Route 66] towns have struggled to define their identities and economies."[47] Some, however, weathered the transition better than others. The most hard-hit businesses were the isolated businesses, such as curio shops, small-scale theme parks, and the combination filling stations, cafes, and tourist courts that were scattered so plentifully along the route. Also hard hit were the many small clusters of buildings—mere wide spots in the road—that had a filling station or store but not much else. Mid-twentieth-century urbanization doomed thousands of these building clusters across the country, and those located along Route 66 were no exception.[48]

Town	Pre-Freeway # of Motels (Date)	Town Bypass Date	Post-Freeway Inventory #1 (Date)	Post-Freeway Inventory #2 (Date)
Gallup	Mar. 1979 - 32	Oct. 8, 1980	Mar. 1981 - 32 (2 new)	Mar. 1984 - 30 (5 new)
Grants	Mar. 1974 - 14	Sept. 4, 1974	Mar. 1976 - 13 (0 new)	Mar. 1979 - 17 (5 new)
Santa Rosa	Feb. 1971 - 14	Nov. 29, 1971	Feb. 1975 - 13 (1 new)	Feb. 1978 - 16 (3 new)
Tucumcari	Feb. 1979 - 30	Apr. 30, 1981	Feb. 1982 - 29 (4 new)	Feb. 1984 - 27 (4 new)

Impact of freeway bypasses on the number of motels in selected New Mexico towns (table courtesy of the author).

The great majority of towns, however, appear to have weathered the transition from highway to freeway fairly well. Among these were four major highway-dependent communities in New Mexico: Gallup, Grants, Santa Rosa, and Tucumcari. In each of these towns, a motel inventory was taken using telephone directories during the years just before each town was bypassed by Interstate 40, and these were compared with two follow-up inventories that took place one to seven years after the towns were bypassed.[49]

Given the admittedly significant assumption that each town retained a fairly static population and had consistent traffic volumes throughout the survey period, a comparison of the number of motels during the survey period shows only a slight variation between these four towns. Both Gallup and Tucumcari, which had relatively large numbers of motels, lost 10 percent or fewer of their motels during the period surveyed in this study. Grants and Santa Rosa, however, each with a relatively small number of motels, increased their number of motels during the same survey period. Without further social and economic analysis, and without supporting data pertaining to motel profitability, therefore, it appears that the coming of the freeways had a minor if not negligible impact on the number of motels in New Mexico's most tourist-dependent small towns along Interstate 40.[50]

Fifth, the transition from Route 66 to the interstate had only a small, incremental impact on the survival rate of independent businesses versus those of nationwide chain operations. The literature about Route 66 suggests that before the interstates were built, the various towns along the route were bastions of free enterprise, full of independent, locally-owned businesses, but that the coming of the interstates ushered in a dramatic drop in the number of those businesses, which were in large part replaced by franchise operations of large national chains. The available data partially reinforces those notions, but in most areas the data challenges the prevailing stereotypes.

Town	Gallup (1980)	Grants (1974)	Santa Rosa (1971)	Tucumcari (1981)
Mid-1950s	7/55=0 of 30 (0%)	12/55= 0 of 8 (0%)	12/60 = 0 of 14 (0%)	9/55 = 0 of 32 (0%)
Mid-1960s	3/65=2 of 36 (5.5%)	3/65 = 1 of 14 (7.1%)	2/65 = 0 of 17 (0%)	3/66 = 3 of 41 (7.3%)
Mid-1970s	3/76=6 of 31 (19.4%)	3/76 = 2 of 13 (15.4%)	2/75 = 3 of 15 (20.0%)	2/75 = 6 of 39 (15.4%)
Mid-1980s	3/85=7 of 30 (23.3%)	3/85 = 5 of 15 (33.3%)	1986 = 4 of 17 (23.5%)	10/85 = 9 of 32 (28.1%)
Mid-1990s	3/95=12 of 40 (30.0%)	3/95 = 3 of 9 (33.3%)	1995 = 7 of 17 (41.4%)	10/95 = 14 of 28 (50.0%)
Mid-2000s	3/04=13 of 33 (39.4%)	3/04 = 4 of 8 (50.0%)	2000 = 10 of 19 (52.6%)	10/06 = 10 of 20 (50.0%)

Historical growth of chain motels versus all motels in selected New Mexico towns, 1955–2006. The years in the top column are the freeway bypass dates for each community (table courtesy of the author).

Indeed, during the period that immediately followed World War II, available telephone directories verify that the businesses that prevailed along Route 66 such as motels, tourist courts, and cafes were independently owned; these ownership patterns were doubtless reflected on long-distance highways throughout the United States. Many if not most filling stations, however, were corporately controlled, either as company-owned or franchised operations.[51]

Over time, motels representing various lodging chains began to appear along the US highway network, including Route 66. The period between 1940 and 1954, for example, witnessed the founding of the TraveLodge, Best Western, Holiday Inn, and Howard Johnson lodging chains. These chains were founded elsewhere and did not establish their first Route 66 locations until the early 1960s, but a competing chain, the Ramada Inn, opened its first facility in 1954 in Flagstaff, Arizona.[52]

An analysis of four highway-dependent towns along Route 66 in New Mexico shows a long, slow growth in the number of chain lodging establishments. During the mid-1950s, all of the eighty-four motels in these four towns were independently owned. By the mid-1960s, however, at least one establishment owned or operated by a national lodging chain was located in three of these four towns, although they constituted only 5.6 percent of all lodging establishments in these four towns. The first of these towns, Santa Rosa, was bypassed by Interstate 40 in 1971, and the last, Tucumcari, in 1981. By the mid-1970s, when two of the four towns had been bypassed, lodging chains consti-

Auction of US 66 signs by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, c. 1985 (20729.3, Oklahoma Department of Transportation Collection, OHS).

tuted 17.3 percent of all lodging businesses. A decade later, after all four of the towns had been bypassed, this percentage had risen to 26.6 percent. More recent tallies gauging this growth—38.3 percent in the mid-1990s and 46.2 percent in the mid-2000s—appear to confirm that the growth of chain lodging establishments was part of a long-term historical trend in which the completion of the freeway network was only an incidental element.

The transitional period between 1956, when the Federal-Aid Highway Act was passed, and 1984, when Route 66 finally gave way to an uninterrupted stretch of freeway between Chicago and Los Angeles, is a far more complex, turbulent period than has been generally perceived. There is little to suggest, however, that the mechanics of this twenty-eight-year-long process was unique to the Route 66 corridor. As seen through the nostalgic prism of some Route 66 devotees, the "Mother Road" offers a refreshing brand of uniqueness that no longer exists in today's freeway-reliant culture. That uniqueness, in evidence up and down the highway corridor, is an economic boon to many businesses and communities. This study, with its focus on a single road corridor, provides few historical examples that compare Route 66 with other long-distance routes that underwent a similar transition from highways to freeways. In all probability, however, the political battles and economic impacts that took place along Route 66 served as a rough template for what took place along other long-distance highway corridors.

Endnotes

[*] Frank Norris is a historian for National Trails Intermountain Region (National Park Service) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he assists with the congressionally designated Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program. The author wishes to thank Carl and Mary Norris for their assistance with the research effort. The photograph on the title page is the Rio Motor Hotel, US Highway 66 on Interstate 44 bypass, Tulsa (19687. TO.T080.72.1.8, Chester R. Cowen Collection, OHS).

[1] Richard F. Weingroff, "President Eisenhower's Big Day, June 29, 1956," US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/bigday.cfm; "The Most Important Cases, Speeches, Laws, and Documents in American History," Nolo, www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/content/american-legal-history.html#act.

[2] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway: The History and Culture of Roads in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2000), 166–68.

[3] Michael Wallis, *Route 66: The Mother Road* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 25; Helen Leavitt, *Superhighway—Super Hoax* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 53.

[4] By 1959 the date for completing the interstate system had been pushed back to 1972, a date that was repeatedly pushed back in later years. *Arizona Daily Sun* (Flagstaff), July 29, 1959; Susan Croce Kelly, *Route 66: The Highway and Its People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 181.

[5] Howard Kroplick and Al Velocci, "The Long Island Motor Parkway," Vanderbilt Cup Races blog, www.vanderbiltcupraces.com/about/detail/the_long_island_motor_parkway.

[6] Nathan Masters, "L.A.'s First Freeways," KCET Los Angeles, www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/history/la-as-subject/las-first-freeways.html.

[7] Ibid. A short segment of the Arroyo Seco Parkway had been opened earlier that year, on July 20, 1940.

[8] Philip Thomason and Teresa Douglass, "Alternate Route 66, Wilmington to Joliet," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, HARGIS Database, November 9, 2005, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Springfield, IL.

[9] Richard F. Weingroff, "The Genie in The Bottle: The Interstate System and Urban Problems, 1939–1957," accessed October 2, 2015, www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/00septoct/urban.cfm.

[10] Eisenhower was well aware of the autobahn's military value during World War II, and he strongly supported such a network in the United States—for defense as well as civilian purposes—once he became president in 1953. During World War II, however, the United States relied far more on its rail network than its highways for its logistical needs. As Helen Leavitt noted, "The automobile took a temporary back seat while public transportation moved masses of people and took over the job of getting them to work." Leavitt, *Superhighway—Super Hoax*, 25; Richard F. Weingroff, "The Reichsautobahnen," www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/reichs.cfm.

[11] David A. Pfeiffer, "Ike's Interstates at 50: Anniversary of the Highway System Recalls Eisenhower's Role as Catalyst," *Prologue* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2006), www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2006/summer/interstates.html.

[12] Kaszynski, *The American Highway*, 165–66.

[13] "Illinois" and "Missouri," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas* (Skokie, IL: Rand McNally and Co., 1945); Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1946, 1989 facsimile edition), 10–20.

[14] "Illinois," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas* (Skokie, IL: Rand McNally and Co., 1947–55). The only sizable Illinois towns that had not been bypassed by 1954 were Wilmington and Gardner, both south of Joliet, which were bypassed in 1956.

[15] "Missouri," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas* (Skokie, IL: Rand McNally and Co., 1947–55); Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*, 21–32.

[16] "History," PikePass, www.pikepass.com/about/History.aspx; Michael Dean, "Turner Turnpike Officially Opens as Toll Road, May 16, 1953," Oklahoma Journeys, www.okhistory.org/about/transcript.php?episodedate=2010-05-08.

[17] "History," PikePass, www.pikepass.com/about/History.aspx.

[18] Jeremy Rosenberg, "My Way or the Highway: Why Mega-Roads Rule the City," KCET Los Angeles, www.kcet.org/socal/departures/landofsunshine/laws-that-shaped-la/my-way-or-the-highway-when-mega-roads-took-over-the-city.html.

[19] "California," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas* (Skokie, IL: Rand McNally and Co., 1949–56). The four-mile gap in the San Bernardino Freeway was in the El Monte area between Valley Boulevard and Puente Avenue and was completed in 1957. Heading east from Ontario, a rural four-lane highway extended for more than twenty miles to the San Bernardino area, where the de facto extension of the San Bernardino Freeway intersected with US Highway 66.

[20] Wallis, *Route 66*, 24; Jane Bernard and Polly Brown, *American Route 66: Home on the Road* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2003), 9, 16.

[21] "California," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas*, 1956. By 1956 one major diversion had taken place outside of the Los Angeles area where a four-mile bypass in the desert community of Victorville circumvented the downtown businesses along Seventh Street.

[22] "Texas," "New Mexico," and "Arizona," in *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas*.

[23] Richard F. Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System," US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su10.cfm.

[24] "Missouri Celebrates the Interstate System," Missouri Department of Transportation, www.modot.org/interstate/; Kansas Historical Society, "Eisenhower Highway/Interstate 70," *Kansapedia*, www.kshs.org/kansapedia/eisenhower-highway-interstate-70/16894.

[25] Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956"; Wallis, *Route 66*, 26.

[26] *Phoenix (AZ) Republic*, April 12, 1956; *Phoenix Republic*, June 30, 1956; *Albuquerque (NM) Journal*, October 5, 1956, 1.

[27] *Amarillo (TX) Globe-Times*, October 25, 1960, 4.

[28] *Phoenix Republic*, August 11, 1956, 1. As one Arizona newspaper noted after an August 1956 Highway Commission meeting, "For the next few years, the state will concentrate on building multi-lane, divided highways between communities involved."

[29] *Phoenix Republic*, December 21, 1957, 19.

[30] *Amarillo Globe-Times*, August 25, 1960, 1; *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas*, 1957–60.

[31] Weingroff, "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956"; *U.S.-Canada Road Atlas*, 1962–68.

[32] *Phoenix Republic*, February 28, 1957, 9.

[33] 1963 New Mexico Laws, Chapter 114, approved March 9, 1963; See also *Albuquerque (NM) Tribune*, March 9, 1963, A-2, and March 19, 1963, A-12.

[34] *Albuquerque Tribune*, March 9, 1963, A-2; "Wyoming State Statutes," State of Wyoming Legislature, http://legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/statutes.aspx?file=titles/Title24/Title24.htm.

[35] 1965 New Mexico Laws, Chapter 188 (approved March 25, 1965); William C. Bowers, "Constitutional Law—Delegation of Power—New Mexico Bypass Law," *Natural Resources Journal* 4, no. 1 (May 1964): 165; *Albuquerque Tribune*, March 16, 1965, A-11.

[36] 1966 New Mexico Laws, Chapter 16 (approved February 16, 1966); see also *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 12, 1966, B-2; *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 17, 1966, C-1.

[37] *Albuquerque Tribune*, November 24, 1969, B-3; *Pasadena (CA) Independent*, November 4, 1965; *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 1965, A10; *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1966, 3.

[38] *Winslow (AZ) Mail*, October 10, 1984, 7.

[39] *Phoenix Republic*, December 2, 1966, A-19; Andy Moseley, *Around the States in 90 Days* (Kingston upon Thames, UK: NoLogo Publications, 2009), 212; "New Mexico

Legends: Ghost Towns Beyond Tucumcari," www.legendsofamerica.com/nm-ghostwest-tucumcari3.html; "Cuervo, New Mexico—No Lodging . . . But Plenty of Vacancies," Architectural Afterlife blog, http://architecturalafterlife.com/2015/07/18/cuervo-new-mexico-no-lodgingbut-plenty-of-vacancies/

[40] *Amarillo Globe-Times*, February 23, 1961, 1.

[41] *Albuquerque Tribune*, November 24, 1969, B-3.

[42] *Arizona Daily Sun* (Flagstaff), February 29, 1960, 1; *Arizona Daily Sun*, March 10, 1960, 5.

[43] *Arizona Republic*, October 18, 1968, B-1; *Arizona Republic*, October 22, 1968, 17; *Arizona Republic*, October 26, 1968, 21.

[44] "Overview," Oklahoma Route 66 Association, http://oklahomaroute66.com/overview; Moseley, *Around the States in 90 Days*, 212; Kathy Anderson, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, "Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project 1926–70," 6, unpublished manuscript prepared for the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 2002.

[45] Norris, "Progress of Freeway Completion Replacing U.S. Highway 66, 1935–1984," chart, September 9, 2013, author's collection; Wallis, *Route 66*, 123. See also *New York Times*, September 24, 1995, 40.

[46] *Albuquerque Journal*, July 18, 1956, 9; *Albuquerque Journal*, October 11, 1956, 11; *Phoenix Republic*, February 28, 1957, 9; *Phoenix Republic*, August 11, 1956, 2.

[47] Bernard and Brown, *American Route 66*, 17.

[48] "The Sad History of Valentine," Arizona 100 blog, https://arizona100.wordpress.com/2011/08/12/314/, posted August 12, 2011; *New York Times*, September 24, 1995, 1, 40.

[49] See the following telephone directories: Gallup (March 1976, March 1979, March 1981, and March 1984); Grants (March 1972, March 1974, March 1976, and March 1979); Santa Rosa (February 1969, February 1971, February 1975, and February 1978); and Tucumcari (February 1977, February 1979, February 1982, and February 1984).

[50] This information was obtained from inventorying the number of motels in each of the telephone books cited in endnote 49. These results are consistent with those published in a January 1998 Wisconsin Department of Transportation study entitled "The Economic Impacts of Highway Bypasses on Communities—Summary," http://wigrants.gov/library/publications/topic/plans/bypass.pdf.

[51] Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66*.

[52] TraveLodge began operations in San Diego in 1940. Six years later the Best Western chain, which operated in its early years as an informal motel referral system, was begun in California. The first Holiday Inn chain appeared in 1952 in Memphis, Tennessee, and in 1954 Howard Johnson opened its first motor lodge in Savannah, Georgia. See "About Travelodge," www.travelodge.com/about-us/about-travelodge and "Best Western Timeline and Story," www.bestwestern.com/about-us/press-media/history.asp; Kaszynski, *The American Highway*, 165–66.