



U.S. Interstate Highway System Fast Facts

In 2006, the 46,000-mile Interstate Highway System—one of the greatest American achievements of the 20th century—turned 50! Here are some little-known “fast facts” about the Interstates:

- Construction of the Interstates was the largest earth moving project in the history of the world. Nearly 42 billion cubic yards of earth were moved. In comparison, “only” 362 million cubic yards were moved during construction of the Panama Canal. The concrete used to construct the Interstate System could build a wall nine feet thick and 50 feet high around the world’s equator.
- The Interstates comprise less than one percent of our nation’s roads, but they carry more than 24 percent of travel, including 41 percent of total truck miles traveled.
- If every man, woman and child in California, New York, Texas and New Jersey took a trip to the moon, it would be the same mileage that has been traveled on the Interstates.

Routes:

- There are 62 routes on the Interstate System. Of these, only three are transcontinental highways, running from coast-to-coast (I-10, I-80, I-90). Seven Interstate routes connect Canada and Mexico.
- The longest Interstate route is I-90. It stretches 3,020.54 miles from Seattle, Wash., to Boston, Mass. The shortest is I-73, which spans 12.27 miles in North Carolina.
- I-95 was the most expensive route, costing \$8 billion. It goes through the largest number of states, 16.
- Texas has the most Interstate mileage of any state, with 3,233.45 miles. New York has the largest number of routes, 29.
- The nation’s capital and 45 of the state capitals are connected by the Interstate System. Capitals not connected are Dover, Del.; Jefferson City, Mo.; Carson City, Nev.; Pierre, S.D.; and Juneau, Alaska.

Bridges:

- Nearly 25 percent of the 54,663 bridges on the Interstate System were built from 1965-1969.
- The highest elevation (more than 11,000 feet) on the Interstate System is in a tunnel—the Eisenhower Memorial in Colorado. It is also the longest bored tunnel on the Interstate System at 7,789 feet in length (1.5 miles).

Myths:

- One in five miles of the Interstate had to be straight enough to use as an airstrip. False! Although it was discussed many times that the Interstates could be used as emergency airstrips, there is not, nor has there ever been any sort of regulation mandating that the roads meet standards so they can be used as airstrips.
- I-76 in the Philadelphia area was given its number as part of the 1976 bi-centennial celebration of the Declaration of Independence. False! I-76 just happened to fall in the right place numerically to pretend to have historical significance.