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John Paul Hammerschmidt and the Early Struggle for the Construction of Interstate 49

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John Paul Hammerschmidt and the Early Struggle for the Construction of Interstate 49

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History

by

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Abstract

In order to understand the development of the Interstate 49 corridor, which began almost a half century ago, it is necessary to analyze the complex nature of federal aid highway legislation. For nearly one-hundred years politicians struggled to create a comprehensive highway program, and many felt this had been achieved with the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. However, the focus on the construction of interstate highways often overlooked the needs of important secondary and primary highways. Although John Paul Hammerschmidt, the first Republican Congressman to serve Arkansas since Reconstruction, believed the social and economic success of the United States relied almost entirely on the continued development of a national system of interstate highways, he understood the difficulties faced by constituents located in isolated rural areas off the interstate highway grid. The discontinuance of privatized passenger railroads in the late 1960s and early 1970s, hit the people of western Arkansas especially hard. The most serious blow occurred when service ended on the last remaining passenger trains between Kansas City and New Orleans, which left a significant transportation void. Hammerschmidt used his power as a member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee to cosponsor the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972 which would have allowed Highway Trust Fund monies to continue to be used for both interstate and other federal highways. The 1972 act also included a provision for the establishment of a priority primary route system, which would insure federal funding for the improvement of key arterial routes throughout Arkansas. Unfortunately, the bill died, and it was not until 1991 with ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) that Hammerschmidt was in a position to secure funds for a major North-South interstate highway through Arkansas. ISTEA made

possible the construction of Interstate 540 through Northwest Arkansas. Since that time, politicians and various interest groups continued to advocate for the development of a major North-South interstate between Kansas City and New Orleans. Their plans were realized with Interstate 49, now estimated to be almost eighty percent complete. When finished, it will connect the Gulf Coast to Winnipeg, Canada.

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In addition, Dr. Jeannie Whyne deserves my special thanks for her unfailing encouragement and continual reassurance during my times of doubt.

Dedication

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this work to my family. This project may never have reached completion without their unwavering love and support. To my son Rad, I hope this will inspire you to pursue your dreams. May you learn the lessons of history, the value of education, and the rewards of perseverance.

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Introduction

Infrastructure development played a key role in the expansion of the United States. Central to the movement of goods and people, a modern transportation system became essential to the growth of the national economy in the late nineteenth century. The railroad provided the first transcontinental infrastructure system. The success of American railroads made it impossible to conceive that rail travel would one day become obsolete, replaced by the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways that now define transportation, infrastructure and the United States as a whole. While an east – west corridor was crucial, visionary policy makers, businessmen, and citizens understood the importance of a north—south corridor linking Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, but little consensus existed over the precise route it would take. This was compounded by the controversies within individual states reflecting the same question.

My research and writing is essentially based around the history of highway legislation, the decline of passenger railroads, the impact this had on rural Arkansans, and the role John Paul Hammerschmidt played in highway development and policy, particularly in the 1970s. The construction of Interstate 49 through Arkansas has become increasingly relevant over the past year, but few understand the history of the development of this major north – south corridor from the seventies to the present day. While a larger goal of linking Canada to the Gulf was always important, it often faded into the background as regional interests and issues prevailed. Renewed demand for an interstate highway system between Kansas City, Missouri and New Orleans, Louisiana, began in the late 1960s after the discontinuance of the *Southern Belle*, the last remaining passenger rail service connecting these two major cities, which left a major transportation void through the middle of the country.

John Paul Hammerschmidt, in seeking to address the interests of his Arkansas constituents, focused much of his energy on the completion of the corridor within Arkansas. He was hampered in his efforts by a restriction on the overall interstate mileage approved by Congress. No additional mileage was available for the construction of the important north—south corridor so Hammerschmidt decided to pursue a complicated strategy of securing “primary priority route” designation, essentially the next step down from an interstate designation. He may well have had it in mind to transition this primary priority route to an interstate highway at the first opportunity. His strategy appears to have paid off. He focused his attention on developing the primary priority route U.S. 71 – a federal highway that runs through Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana. Recently, several segments of that upgraded federal highway have been designated as Interstate 49: From Kansas City to near the Arkansas border; from just south of Bella Vista to I-40; and from Texarkana through Lafayette, Louisiana. Despite Hammerschmidt’s efforts to develop an interstate through Arkansas, the I-49 project has yet to reach full completion, with the largest unfinished segment located along the existing U.S. 71 route through southern Arkansas. There are unfinished segments in other states as well, but when this entire interstate corridor is completed, it will connect New Orleans to Winnipeg Canada. After almost half a century, the transportation void created when the last two passenger railroads in this area were discontinued will finally be filled.

For many Arkansans the connection between Hammerschmidt and the development of a north – south interstate highway between Kansas City and New Orleans may be common knowledge. However, younger generations and those new to the area most likely have no idea who Hammerschmidt was or the significant role he played regarding the construction of I-540, and subsequently the expansion of the I-49 corridor. His influence over this major transportation

route is not information that has been made widely available to the average citizen. As I-49 is finally nearing completion, it is important to recognize Hammerschmidt's overall impact on the development of this project and its various effects on Arkansas and the nation as a whole. The current construction along this route, especially in Northwest Arkansas, can be quite deceptive. Drivers stuck in traffic due to ongoing roadwork may find it hard to believe that development of this seemingly new infrastructure system first began almost half a century ago.

The construction of this important corridor moved along at an excruciatingly slow pace. The reasons for this are infinite, but can be condensed into a few specific issues that are largely the result of federal-aid highway legislation. In 1956 Congress voted in favor of a highway bill which authorized an extraordinary amount of federal funds for the construction of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. While it would initially appear that this would benefit the development of a major north – south transportation corridor from Kansas City to New Orleans, this legislation actually proved to be extremely detrimental to its inclusion as part of the interstate highway system as it was not an original route designated within the initial 41,000 mile plan. After several deadline extensions and a burgeoning controversy between urban and rural interests, interstate completion became the primary focus of the federal government. It quickly became clear that it would be next to impossible for states to receive any additional interstate mileage that was not included as part of the original system.

Hammerschmidt realized this but also understood that several arterial routes throughout Arkansas desperately needed significant improvements. Instead of pursuing interstate mileage designation for these roadways, he used his position as a member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee to cosponsor highway legislation in 1972 that would authorize federal funding for the construction and improvement of priority primary roadways up to interstate

highway standards without being included as part of the interstate highway system. The 1972 highway bill failed to be passed into law, and while the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 included a provision for the funding of the priority primary system, this legislation dealt a major blow to the nation's highway systems. The 1973 highway bill opened the Federal Highway Trust Fund to finance urban mass transit. Road user taxes would no longer be designated specifically for highway development, which drastically limited the priority primary routes that would receive federal financing.¹

The debate over the location of a north – south interstate through Arkansas was complicated by competing local interests. The controversy over the exact route placement of this proposed transportation corridor through Arkansas began with the 1956 highway bill, which did not designate a major north – south connection between Kansas City and New Orleans, as part of the original interstate system. The discontinuance of the last remaining passenger railroads in the late 1960s intensified this debate. As a result, regional disputes broke out between central Arkansans who supported the development of U.S. 65 and western Arkansans that believed U.S 71 was the most logical location for this significant transportation corridor. Throughout the history of highway legislation the main policy objectives have always been defined by increased social and economic prosperity and the alleviation of traffic problems. These were common themes used by Hammerschmidt's constituents and other Arkansans in favor of the development of the north – south interstate highway through specific areas across the state. While these

1. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*, Richard F. Weingroff, July/August 2013 Vol. 77 No. 1, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/13julaug/03.cfm> (accessed March 30, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*).

reasons helped bolster support, they also contributed to the intense arguments over route placement, which ultimately prolonged the planning and construction of I-49 in Arkansas.

In order to understand the delay in the construction of the I-49 corridor through Arkansas, it is necessary to examine the history of transportation legislation. Marked by many ups and downs, the federal-aid highway program has led policy makers down a long road of trial and error, while never quite eradicating fundamental issues such as logistics, funding, and contention among special interest groups. The solution to all of these problems and more appeared in the form of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 which is unquestionably the United State's most influential piece of transportation legislation. However, as it became increasingly controversial over the years, this landmark highway bill only served to hinder the development of a major north – south transportation corridor between Kansas City and New Orleans. Yet, together with legislation outlined in 1972, 1973, and 1991, the 1956 highway bill directly affected the eventual evolution of Interstate 49.

The amount of time it took to develop a route connecting Kansas City and New Orleans shows the difficulties surrounding highway legislation. Since the first federal-aid highway act in 1916, politicians and other special interest groups have struggled to create a federal highway system that meets all the nation's transportation needs. In 1956 policy makers thought this goal had finally been achieved only to realize in less than twenty years that the interstate highway system had some major flaws. To complicate matters, in the early 1970s, a rift arose between urban and rural states regarding the continued construction of interstate highways versus new development of mass transit systems. These issues remained at the forefront of transportation legislation in the 1990s and are still common themes today.

The first chapter of this thesis serves to highlight the historical complexity surrounding highway legislation in the United States from its inauguration as part of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, until the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Several pieces of transportation legislation are crucial to understanding this evolution. The establishment of the first national system of highways was included as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921, which allocated a significant increase in federal funds and authorized a provision to standardize the classification and designation of roadways within this transnational system.² A network of limited access expressways was finally incorporated into the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 which outlined the development of a 40,000 mile National System of Interstate Highways. However, due to America's involvement in World War II, the United States government was unable to provide much in the way of federal aid funding, specifically for the construction of this system. As a result of his war experiences and the unwavering convictions of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, in little over a decade, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 authorized the federal government to provide ninety percent of funds for the development of the National System of Defense and Interstate Highways.³ While policy makers, highway engineers, special interest groups, road agencies, local citizens and businesses, had always argued over the direction of a modern infrastructure system, it appeared an agreement had finally been made in 1956. In reality, this could not have been further from the truth. While this coalition may have

2. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939: The Federal-State Partnership at Work*, Richard F. Weingroff, Summer 1996 Vol. 60 No. 1, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su7.cfm> (accessed April 18, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*).

3. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System*, Richard F. Weingroff, Summer 1996 Vol. 60 No. 1, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su10.cfm> (accessed April 18, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*).

existed for a brief period of time, the convoluted nature of highway legislation has continued well into the present day. As these various factions have continued to multiply over the past fifty years, it has become increasingly evident that the majority of transportation advocates are simply unable to reach an agreement regarding federal aid highway policy.

Chapter Two introduces John Paul Hammerschmidt and his role in highway development, specifically a north – south interstate highway. Throughout Hammerschmidt’s time in Congress he worked to assuage the antagonism between transportation lobbies in order to create the types of legislation needed to fund the development of a major corridor between Kansas City and New Orleans. At an early age Hammerschmidt was introduced to an extremely diverse infrastructure system; he gained more knowledge as a young adult traveling across country and serving as a pilot in World War II.⁴ Yet despite these experiences, Hammerschmidt made it quite clear during his Congressional career, that he believed the future of America’s social and economic prosperity depended upon the continued development of a national highway network. This was particularly true in his home state of Arkansas where many essential transportation arteries were in dire need of improvements, especially the north – south routes. In 1972, Hammerschmidt used his position as a member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee to cosponsor a highway bill which authorized federal funding for the immediate renovation of three major Arkansas highways.⁵ However, the bill did not pass and

4. John Paul Hammerschmidt, interview by Scott Lunsford, March 30, 2009, Arkansas Memories Project, The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. URL: <http://pryorcenter.uark.edu/> (accessed May 6, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Hammerschmidt, interview).

5. Representative Hammerschmidt of Arkansas, speaking for the consideration of The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1972, on October 5, 1972, to the Committee of the Whole House, H.R. 16656, 92nd Cong., 2nd sess., *Cong. Rec.* 118, pt. 26: 34081-82. (Hereafter cited as: Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972).

the following year, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 authorized the diversion of trust fund monies to be used for the development of urban mass transit.⁶ Hammerschmidt and his constituents feared that this legislation would have a devastating impact on the future of Arkansas's entire infrastructure system, particularly the construction of an interstate highway connecting Kansas City to New Orleans.

The third chapter explains why the demand for this major north – south corridor was so intense for Arkansans and outlines the debate that ensued over route placement. In the late 1960s, Hammerschmidt's constituents and other concerned citizens across the state became especially concerned about the state's transportation situation when the Kansas City Southern Railway Company ended passenger service on the *Southern Belle*, after almost thirty years. With the discontinuance of this last remaining connection between Kansas City and New Orleans, an 800-mile area was left without adequate transport. A number of Arkansans appealed for the revival of the *Southern Belle*, but the impossibility of this quickly became apparent with the end of privatized railroads and the advent of the Amtrak system as part of the Rail Passenger Act of 1970 which did not provide any passenger service through Arkansas for well over a decade. Hammerschmidt, of course, understood that the nation's infrastructure had moved from railways to roadways. He was also fully aware of the rapidly deteriorating conditions of several of the state's major arterial highways. Hammerschmidt's constituents soon realized the importance of highway development and the need for the construction of a north – south interstate highway. Even though the federal government refused the approval of additional interstate mileage designation, state and local officials, regional businesses, concerned citizens, and special interest groups argued over the placement of this proposed route. As with the

6. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

railroads the development of any major transportation route would undoubtedly lead to economic prosperity. The aggregation of regions across the state soon led to an intense debate over the possible location of this north – south route from Kansas City to New Orleans.⁷

Hammerschmidt attempted to settle this dispute as cosponsor of the 1972 highway bill which would include a priority primary route system, an intermediate network of federal aid highways, just below the interstate in importance. Despite the failure of the 1972 legislation the priority primary system was incorporated into the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973. However, as a result of the highway trust fund being opened for the use of non-highway purposes, Hammerschmidt’s original vision for this intermediate interstate system was largely unsuccessful due to the lack of federal aid.

The fourth and final chapter provides a brief summary of the development of a north – south interstate highway from the time between the 1973 legislation and the present day. The seventies and eighties represented a “lost decade” in regards to interstate development, as controversies erupted between rural states in favor of the additional designation of interstate mileage and urban areas that supported the development of mass transit systems. The federal government felt the original interstate system as outlined in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 should be completed before considering the allocation of additional interstate mileage.⁸ However, during this time there were a few exceptions to this rule, and Louisiana received the first Interstate 49 designation. Federal funds were authorized for 200 miles of interstate development to provide for the much needed north – south connection between Interstate 20 in

7. John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville. (Hereafter cited as: Hammerschmidt Papers).

8. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

Shreveport, and Interstate 10 in Lafayette.⁹ While Arkansas lacked a north – south transportation corridor, it also did not have two major cities located along existing interstate highways that needed to be directly linked to one another. This only contributed to the ongoing debate across Arkansas regarding the route placement of this proposed corridor. Throughout this “lost decade” Hammerschmidt used any available federal funds for the development of U.S. 71 in Northwest Arkansas. However, the area was rapidly growing and these meager funds could not support the necessary infrastructure development. A breakthrough came in the early nineties with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). As the top ranking Republican member in the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation, Hammerschmidt was finally in a position to significantly influence highway construction in Arkansas. Along with three other senior congressmen, Hammerschmidt drafted legislation that included the development of a National Highway System, which outlined specific High Priority Corridors that were to receive immediate federal aid. The U.S. 71 route from Kansas City through Arkansas and into Louisiana was listed as High Priority Corridor Number One. As a result of ISTEA, Northwest Arkansas received 400 million dollars. This ultimately contributed to the development of Interstate 540, which was officially opened to traffic as the “John Paul Hammerschmidt Highway” in 1999 from Alma to Northwest Arkansas. Even though Hammerschmidt retired from Congress the year after ISTEA, he became chairman of the Northwest Arkansas Council, a nonprofit established for the improvement and development of

9. Interstate Guide: Interstate 49, History, <http://www.interstate-guide.com/i-049.html#history> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Interstate Guide: Interstate 49, History).

the region's infrastructure systems from 1993 to 2006, and was thus strategically placed to ensure the completion of this project.¹⁰

In 2014, I-540 finally received official designation as part of the Interstate 49 corridor, which will eventually connect Canada to the Gulf Coast. An estimated eighty percent of the total 1,700 mile route has already been finished; however, the Arkansas portion between Fort Smith and Texarkana is still the largest incomplete segment. A significant amount of federal funding is necessary to complete construction on this project, and Congress is currently struggling once again to create a long-term, comprehensive highway bill.

10. Arkansas State Senator Uvalde Lindsey, e-mail message to author, June 19, 2015. (Hereafter cited as: Lindsey, email); U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark: The Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991*, Richard F. Weingroff, November/December 2001 Vol. 65 No. 3, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/01novdec/istea.cfm> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark*).

Chapter One

Although it certainly did not happen overnight, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 marked a significant turning point in American highway legislation. Central elements included the alleviation of traffic congestion along major transportation corridors, increased economic prosperity and development, and urban renewal projects designed to support the suburbanization of major cities. While the themes regarding modern expressway development remained similar to highway policy goals established in the 1920s, the 1956 legislation authorized a significant increase in federal funding that would finally enable the materialization of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. For decades, politicians, engineers, road agencies, businesses, concerned citizens, and other special interest groups grappled for a way to create a highway program that encompassed all the complexities surrounding the logistics and funding of road construction and development. During this time, several landmark Federal Aid Highway Acts led up to and shaped the 1956 legislation.

Federal highway funding originated within the Federal Aid Road Act in 1916. Following the United States involvement in World War I, the first national highway system was founded as part of the Federal Highway Act of 1921. This led to what has been termed by scholars as the ‘golden years’ of highway building.¹ As early as 1939, engineers with the Bureau of Public Roads, then part of the Department of Agriculture, had begun to plan a 30,000 mile express highway system that would traverse the United States and ultimately assuage traffic problems

1. Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*.

while simultaneously improving the nations economy.² It took five more years before Congress officially sanctioned the development of the National System of Interstate Highways in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944. However, the legislation did not offer any incentive for interstate development and included no provision that required a portion of federal funds to be used exclusively for the construction of the interstate system.³ So, of course, we must ask why it took the nation over ten additional years to finally install a progressive and predominately federally funded express highway program? Unfortunately, the answer to this is more complex than the network of interstate highways that span the American landscape today.

Throughout the course of highway development special interest groups continually fought amongst themselves in regards to the planning, construction, and financing of roadways. Civil engineers, city planners, farm proponents, and advocates within the trucking industry all had different expectations for highway development. Furthermore the attempts of legislators to appease all interest groups while creating a functional highway program quickly manifested into an impossibly difficult task, thus road construction lagged well behind traffic demands.⁴ As can be expected, contrasting interests defined the goals of almost everyone involved in road development. Scarcely concerned with the nation's highway system at large, the focus of state engineers remained at the local level as opposed to connecting state highways. The jurisdiction and financing of rural farm-to-market roads was primarily left in the hands of the counties while city officials directed their attention towards the improvement and funding of urban roadways. Meanwhile, federal engineers focused their attentions on building a connecting network of primary or trunk roads and, therefore, largely ignored the needs of rural and urban highway

2. Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1939-1989*. Rev. ed. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), 4. (Hereafter cited as: Rose, *Interstate*).

3. Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

4. Rose, *Interstate*, 2.

development.⁵ Thus, it is an understatement to say that no clear uniformity in highway placement, construction, and funding existed until the 1956 legislation.

Although federal financing of the nation's roadways first began in 1916, it took forty years for an extensive and almost entirely federally funded highway program to be put into place. Until 1921 local and state governments paid for their portion of highway funds through property and other taxes, while the federal government used general revenue funds to contribute to its half of highway funding. By 1929 almost every state began to tax fuel in order to assist with the financing of road construction and improvement. It took only a few short years before the United States government imposed a federal gas tax on motorists in 1932.⁶ Nevertheless, the revenue gathered from both state and federal taxes on fuel was not used strictly for road construction. This caused contention between highway engineers and policy makers. The engineers believed that the funds received from those taxes should be devoted to the construction and improvement of roadways. Still, state and federal highway officials continued to use these funds for purposes other than highway development.⁷ It was not until the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 and the creation of the Federal Highway Trust Fund that road user fees became exclusively designated for the sole purpose of financing the interstate system, and established a uniform set of standards for highway construction and development.⁸

A long and rocky road led up to the historic 1956 highway legislation, but forty years earlier the wheels finally began to turn when the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 became the nation's first attempt at creating a federal highway aid program. "This act was approved July 11, 1916, and provided for the participation of the Federal government in road building under the

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 4.

7. Ibid., 9.

8. Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

direction of the Secretary of Agriculture, and appropriated funds for such participation.”⁹ Over the course of five years, seventy-five million dollars in federal funds would be allocated to the states for the much needed improvement and construction of rural delivery routes and post roads. Based on a fifty percent cost sharing ratio, the state and federal governments equally divided the financing of road construction with every state matching half of what federal funds they received. To determine the proportional allocation of funds, highway engineers and legislators devised a formula based on the ratio of one-third of each individual state’s land area, population, and road mileage, together with the national total of these three specifications.¹⁰

In order to officially gain eligibility for the obtainment of federal highway funds as part of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, the Office of Public Roads (OPR) required every state to set up a road agency for the purpose of selecting the highway projects and route plans in need of the greatest improvement. These selections along with engineering specifications were to then be submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for approval. Upon completion of new and improved roadways, the states would assume the responsibility of upkeep and maintenance.¹¹ The 1916 legislation left the jurisdiction of route selections almost entirely in the hands of state highway officials, which resulted in varying levels of road construction and improvements. Disconnected roadways dominated the highway landscapes of individual states while

9. State of Arkansas, Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements, *Eighth Biennial Report*, For the Period Ending June 30, 1928, 11. (Hereafter cited as: Department of State Lands, *Eighth Biennial Report*).

10. Ibid., 11-12; Rose, *Interstate*, 8; U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *Federal Aid Road Act of 1916: Building the Foundation*, Richard F. Weingroff, Summer 1996 Vol. 60 No. 1, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su2.cfm> (accessed April 18, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *Federal Aid Road Act of 1916*).

11. Department of State Lands, *Eighth Biennial Report*, 12; Rose, *Interstate*, 8; *Federal Aid Road Act of 1916*.

development of connecting routes between states was virtually nonexistent. The Arkansas State Highway Commission addressed these inconsistencies in its *Eighth Biennial Report*:

Five years of operation under the Federal Aid act of 1916 indicated to the Federal authorities that this act, with its subsequent amendments, was too loosely drawn, in that it allowed aid in the construction of practically any road which might tend to develop the country, whether or not it was purely local in character, and did not provide definitely and specifically for a correlated and unified system of highways in the several States.¹²

These issues quickly became apparent and as always an inescapable rift arose between certain interest groups; some favored the continued development of farm to market roads, while other groups propositioned for the seamless linkage of national, long distance, primary routes.¹³

The Federal Highway Act of 1921 established the first national system of highways. Compared to the previous legislation “[t]his act was much more restrictive in character and provided for a road system, national in scope, to consist of a definite connected system of highways in each State”.¹⁴ In order to appease all opposing interest groups, as was becoming the trend in highway legislation, it only required that each state use up to seven percent of its total road mileage for the development of the national highway system. Three percent of these were to be primary routes and four percent secondary roadways. However, the act also stated that three-sevenths of the federal aid must be applied to the construction of a uniform system of nationally connected state highways. Federal funds were again to be based on a fifty percent cost sharing formula with the states. In addition, the government allocated sixty percent of federal aid specifically for the development of the national highway system. Another drastic

12. Department of State Lands, *Eighth Biennial Report*, 12.

13. Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*; Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 46-51. (Hereafter cited as: Seely, *Building the American Highway System*). Seely argues that the OPR, renamed the Bureau of Public Roads in 1918, actually controlled the specification of highway development instead of working together with the states.

14. Department of State Lands, *Eighth Biennial Report*, 12.

deviation from the 1916 road legislation included the allotment of seventy-five million dollars in federal highway funding per year, instead of spread out over the course of five years.

Furthermore, the Federal Highway Act of 1921 contained a provision to create a standardized method for the classification and designation of routes within the national highway system.¹⁵

By 1923, almost 170,000 miles had officially been designated as part of the national system of highways. Engineers in both the Bureau of Public Roads and state highway agencies worked together to determine this mileage. Two years later in 1925, a systematic method of route markings was put into place. It designated odd numbers for north and south roadways and even numbers for roads running east and west. The 1920s certainly marked a new era in the history of national highway development. However, it was not until 1939 that the Bureau of Public Roads published an interregional highway plan outlining the development of a network of express highway systems that would connect the nation.¹⁶

Publication of a newer but almost identical national highway plan officially became part of American highway policy with its inclusion in the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944. The development of a 40,000 mile interregional network of expressways, known formally as the National System of Interstate Highways, would be incorporated within the federal aid highway system. The 1944 legislation charged the Bureau of Public Roads, which was now called the Public Road Administration, with the task of determining route placement and design standards. State and local highway officials, engineers, and members of the American Association of State Highway Officials were to assist the Public Roads Administration with this project.¹⁷

15. Ibid.; Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*; Rose, *Interstate*, 8; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 62.

16. Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*; Rose, *Interstate*, 4, 9.

17. Rose, *Interstate*, 16, 26; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

Because the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 incorporated the National System of Interstate Highways, it appeared that policy makers and special interest groups had finally agreed on a progressive, transcontinental highway program. In reality this could not be further from the truth. Due to America's involvement in World War II, "[t]his period was characterized by: an acute shortage of men, material and equipment, with highway construction suspended except for war projects".¹⁸ Not seen as a priority, the legislation provided no additional funding for the interstate system and no real commitment was made to accelerate its construction.¹⁹ Federal aid was of course allocated for the development of rural and urban roadways but interstate highways did not receive an exclusive share of the funding. This enabled state road engineers to use federal funds as they saw fit. Thus, The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 still left the planning, routing, and construction of roadways at the local level, where the individual needs of each state were dictated by state road agencies and engineers.²⁰

Ultimately, proponents of the limited access highway network simply became another force at odds with other interest groups that wanted road development and construction to fit their own needs. Trucking industry advocates felt that federal aid should go towards the improvement of urban highways, while leaders of farm groups pushed for the funding needed to improve local and rural roads. Policy makers again attempted to placate all special interest groups.²¹ Therefore, as part of the 1944 highway legislation, the national government assumed the responsibility of partially financing four federal aid road networks. These included primary

18. State of Arkansas, Arkansas State Highway Commission, *Seventeenth Biennial Report*, For the Period July 1, 1944 – June 30, 1946, 7. (Hereafter cited as: Arkansas State Highway Commission, *Seventeenth Biennial Report*, 7).

19. Rose, *Interstate*, 26; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

20. Rose, *Interstate*, 16, 26; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

21. Rose, *Interstate*, 16, 26; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

routes, urban highways, farm-to-market or secondary roads, and the interstate system. Five hundred million dollars in federal aid was allocated for the use of road development over the course of three years. The state and federal governments would match funds on a fifty percent ratio as they had always done. Distribution of funds, as outlined in the legislation, followed a formula similar to what had been used for over twenty years.²²

The undeniable magnitude and complexity that defined federal aid highway policy for almost half a century continued unabated as Congress began to outline the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Numerous politicians, engineers, federal and state road agencies, along with special interest groups, helped to shape this historic highway program. However, the convictions of President Dwight D. Eisenhower ultimately led to the creation of the intricate network of interstate highways that crisscross the nation today.

Eisenhower's interest in roadways first began only three years after the origination of the first federally aided highway legislation. As a young man he participated in a transnational motor convoy with the United State's Army in 1919. This prolonged journey alerted the future president to the disastrous condition of America's roadways. Years later during World War II, Eisenhower witnessed the ease of mobility experienced by the Allied troops as they entered Germany by way of the German autobahn network. The advantages this type of highway system provided did not go unnoticed. The German example impressed upon Eisenhower the importance of modernizing American highway legislation in order to expedite the completion of the National System of Interstate Highways.²³

22. Rose, *Interstate*, 26; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

23. Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

However, during his first year as United States President, the Eisenhower Administration primarily focused on the situation in Korea. In 1953 President Eisenhower simply did not have the time to explore his aspirations regarding interstate highway development. The following year in 1954, Congress again examined highway legislation, and now Eisenhower turned his attentions toward the accelerated construction of a safer, faster, multilane express highway system. Unfortunately, the logistical and financial aspects of interstate development still perplexed many policy makers who continued to work towards creating legislation that satisfied all interested parties.²⁴

For decades, issues such as highway administration, financing, and apportionment had caused contentions with just about everyone involved in road construction. Like previous highway legislation, the 1954 Act attempted to appease special interest groups that had always been at odds over the actualization of the federal aid highway program. Politicians, farm group executives, leaders of state and national road user associations, as well as federal, state, and county engineers each had their own ideas regarding the financing, placement, and development of the nation's roads. The push for better highways came from all directions, yet the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1954 once again emphasized the gridlock in American highway politics.²⁵ In order to create Eisenhower's idea of a successful interstate highway program, these conflicting interest groups had to reach an agreement.

Disappointed with the outcome of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1954, President Eisenhower voiced his frustration in a speech he prepared to be delivered by Vice President

24. Ibid.

25. Rose, *Interstate*, 69.

Richard M. Nixon at the National Governors Conference. In this address, Nixon outlined Eisenhower's goals for creating an advantageous national highway program:

For example, the top priority in our planning must be given to transportation, and to health and efficiency in industries to the national defense and the national economy. A Cabinet committee has just been established by the President to explore and to help formulate a comprehensive transportation policy for the Nation, taking into account the vital interests of carriers, shippers, the States and communities, the public at large. But more specifically, our highway net is inadequate locally, and obsolete as a national system.²⁶

According to Eisenhower the United States needed to find a way to quickly construct and easily finance a vast network of interstate highways that would increase national security and improve the economy. His goal was to create a fifty billion dollar highway program to be completed in ten years and to find a method of financing the system that would not put the nation in debt.²⁷ In order to make his vision of American roadways a reality, in August of 1954 President Eisenhower created two separate road study committees tasked with coordinating the acceleration and restructuring of the national highway program. Representatives of several federal government departments served as members of the Federal Interagency Committee. While the President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway System consisted of apolitical highway experts.²⁸

The Federal Interagency Committee examined the road construction, financing and economic requirements necessary for the establishment of an innovative highway program.

26. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Highway History, *Address of Vice President Richard Nixon to the Governors Conference Lake George, New York July 12, 1954*, Richard F. Weingroff, 50th Anniversary, Updated October 8, 2013, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/rw96m.cfm> (accessed April 18, 2014).

27. Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 214.

28. Rose, *Interstate*, 72-73.

Proposals from road user groups, farm-to-market advocates, highway officials and engineers, state governor associations, and trucking industry leaders also contributed to an extensive collection of data. The Interagency Committee combined their findings with those presented by the special interest groups and submitted them for consideration by the President's Advisory Committee on a National Highway Program.²⁹

Eisenhower's longtime friend, an engineer and retired United States Army General Lucius D. Clay, acted as head of the Presidential Advisory Committee. Known in short as the Clay Committee, this highway study group used the information gathered by the Interagency Committee and compiled a report for President Eisenhower outlining the requisite logistics for the development of a massive federally funded interstate highway system. The Clay Plan was officially published in January 1955. However, committee members were only publicly perceived as being impartial and individual interests regarding the future of American highway policy led to numerous disagreements. Thus, even with Eisenhower's endorsement of the Clay Plan, when Congress adjourned in August of that year, Lucius Clay's highway bill had been defeated in both the House and Senate. Any hopes for a reconstructed federal aid highway program seemed slim.³⁰

After progress appeared impossible, the House voted in favor of an extensive highway bill cosponsored by Congressmen George Fallon and Hale Boggs in April 1956. Fallon focused on fund distribution, control of construction and apportionment of funds, while Boggs provided a method for financing the interstate system. The success of this bill stemmed from the amount of federal aid allocated to the program and its distribution. Since the beginning of the Federal Aid

29. Ibid., 73.

30. Ibid., 73-82.

Highway System there had always been issues with the money allotted for specific roadways.³¹ This highway bill apportioned record high sums for all areas of road construction with “[c]ontract authorizations totaling \$24,825 million for interstate highways and \$1,850 million for the Federal primary, secondary, and urban systems”.³² If it passed in the Senate, an unprecedented amount of federal aid would be provided for the development of the interstate system as well as primary and secondary roadways.³³

Fallon’s portion of the 1956 highway bill called for a 40,000 mile system of interstate highways to be built over a thirteen year period and included an extraordinary allotment of federal aid to finance the interstate system. The federal government provided ninety percent of these funds, leaving the remaining ten percent to be matched by the states. A cost to complete formula, used to determine the allocation of funds, took the estimated cost for each state to complete their portion of the interstate and compared that to the total cost of the national completion of the Interstate Highway System. The Bureau of Public Roads would be responsible for conducting the studies necessary to determine these cost estimates.³⁴ Fallon also outlined a pay-as-you-go method to finance the highway program, but left the details to be resolved by The House Ways and Means Committee. Representative Hale Boggs took on this responsibility and created a bill to supplement Fallon’s in regards to the financing of the interstate system. This

31. Ibid.; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

32. Executive Office of the President, Bureau of the Budget, *Letter to President Eisenhower, To Amend and Supplement the Federal-Aid Road Act*, Roger Jones, Assistant Director for Legislative Reference, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 28, 1956), http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/interstate_highway_system/1956_06_28_Jones_to_DDE.pdf (accessed April 18, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: *Letter to President Eisenhower*, Roger Jones, Assistant Director for Legislative Reference).

33. Rose, *Interstate*, 73-82; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

34. Rose, *Interstate*, 88-89; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

became known as the Highway Revenue Act of 1956. Boggs came up with the idea to create a Federal Highway Trust Fund, which provided industrial and professional standards for highway finance and construction. Revenue generated from fuel, tire, new vehicle, and other road user taxes would go directly into the Trust Fund where it could not be used for any purpose other than to finance the construction and development of the federal aid highway program.³⁵

The Senate Committee on Finance largely accepted the Boggs version of the highway bill. Still, concerned that funding levels might surpass the Federal Highway Trust Fund revenue, the Senate decided to add the Byrd-Humphrey amendment to the House bill in order to prohibit a possible Trust Fund deficit. The amendment stated that if the Secretary of the Treasury believed the Trust Fund balance became too low to adequately cover highway costs then the Secretary of Commerce would have to reduce the funds allocated to each state in order to eliminate the estimated deficiency. Other than the Byrd-Humphrey amendment, where the Senate version of the bill differed most from the House bill was in regards to the formula for the distribution of funds. The Senate felt that the money allocated to each state should be based on the ratio of two-thirds population, one-sixth land area and one-sixth road mileage. The revised version of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 was debated in the Senate on May 28th and 29th before being approved by a voice vote.³⁶

A House-Senate Conference Committee then met to iron out the differences between the two versions of the bill. The House conferees agreed to keep the Byrd-Humphrey Amendment. Yet, the proportional allocation of funds became a major issue among conference members. Nonetheless, an agreement was reached to use portions of both House and Senate versions. For

35. Rose, *Interstate*, 90; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*; Seely, *Building the American Highway System*, 217.

36. Rose, *Interstate*, 91; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

the next three years the Senate formula would be applied to the legislation, and between 1957 and 1959 funds would be distributed to the states based on land area, population, and road mileage. Then starting in 1960 until completion of the interstate system in 1969, the House version would take over. In order to ensure the timely and uniform completion of the interstate system, each state's share of interstate costs consisted of a percentage of total interstate costs. The Conference Committee also added a small amount of additional mileage to the interstate system. A total distance of 41,000 miles would be explicitly designated for the development of interstate highways across the country. Committee members also decided to change the name of the interstate system, which would now officially be known as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.³⁷

The crucial importance and ultimate success of the 1956 highway bill can be attributed to the significant increase in federal aid financing where “[i]n the case of interstate highway projects” the matching ratio dictated “the Federal share . . . to be 90 percent and the State share 10 percent.”³⁸ It also emphasized the rapid completion of an interstate system that “will connect . . . principal cities, and will be built to the highest modern standards.”³⁹ While the 1956 legislation overwhelmingly advocated for the development of the interstate system, it still managed to appease most special interest groups. Substantial funds were allocated exclusively for the improvement of primary, secondary, and urban roadways. However the traditional, “[e]qual matching” fifty percent ratio between state and federal governments still remained, “in

37. Rose, *Interstate*, 91-92; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

38. *Letter to President Eisenhower*, Roger Jones, Assistant Director for Legislative Reference).

39. *Ibid.*

the case of primary, secondary, and urban systems.”⁴⁰ On June 25, 1956 the House-Senate conference committee submitted their report, and the revised version of the bill passed in both the House and Senate the following day. President Eisenhower then signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 into law on June 29, 1956.⁴¹

Almost half a century after the inception of a federally funded highway program, highway policy finally included the immediate construction and primary financing of a connecting network of express highways across the nation. In the forty years it took from the first federally aided highway legislation in 1916 until the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, American highway policy and road development underwent an incredible transformation. The lessons learned throughout this period by policy makers, engineers, and special interest groups eventually helped to advance and shape American highway legislation.

In summary, over the course of five years the problems and issues that arose with the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 soon became apparent, and ultimately led to the inclusion of a coherent system of national highways in the Federal Highway Act of 1921. This act signaled a great era of road building in the United States, a time dominated by extensive highway construction. State and federal highway engineers worked together to determine a definitive method for the classification and designation of national highway mileage. Less than twenty years later in 1939 plans were well underway for the development of a 30,000 mile national network of connecting highways. This proposal officially entered the political scene as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944, which established the National System of Interstate Highways. Seemingly fundamental to American highway policy, the goals and plans outlined in

40. Ibid.

41. Rose, *Interstate*, 92-93; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

the 1944 legislation proved inefficacious within the context of the United States involvement in the Second World War.⁴²

Over the years federal aid highway legislation has provided an indispensable insight into the advancement of the nations roadways. However, the legislative history can only take us so far. Throughout the progression of the federal aid highway program, the opposition between special interest groups juxtaposed with the conciliatory nature of policy makers, increasingly impeded highway development. Issues regarding funding, route placement, and construction, led to heated debates between members of the trucking industry, farm proponents, city planners, state and federal highway engineers, as well as the general public.

Until 1956 and the establishment of the Federal Highway Trust Fund, no true uniformity existed in regards to highway financing and development. Traditionally based on a fifty percent cost sharing ratio, both state and federal highway funding originated primarily from general revenues. Between 1929 and 1932, first state and then federal governments began to impose a gas tax in order to assist with financing the national highway system. However, to the consternation of highway engineers these funds were continually diverted to other causes and not used exclusively for roadway development and construction. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 attempted to forever change this restriction with the creation of the Federal Highway Trust Fund. Across the nation road user fees were to be collected and deposited into a specific fund for the sole purpose of financing federal aid highway projects. State and federal taxes on motorists would finally be used explicitly for highway development.⁴³

42. Public Roads, *From 1916 to 1939*; Rose, *Interstate*, 4; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

43. Rose, *Interstate*, 4-9; Public Roads, *Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956*.

Less than twenty years later, dissension and division once again became central themes regarding the future of federal aid highway legislation. Policy makers, special interest groups, and state highway officials were at odds over the use of highway trust fund monies. In urban areas interstate construction had become controversial and many felt the trust fund should be opened to finance mass transit systems. Others believed that interstate highway development remained crucial to rural areas across the country, and therefore opposed the diversion of trust fund monies. By the early 1970s the debate over this conflict intensified, and seriously impacted the foundation of federal aid highway legislation well into the future.

Arkansas Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt strongly supported the continuation of the nation's highway program and felt that the trust fund should be used specifically for this purpose. He understood that major transportation corridors, especially through rural areas, could significantly effect the social and economic development of an entire region and the country as a whole. Hammerschmidt worked tirelessly as cosponsor of the 1972 highway bill in order to protect highway funds for highway purposes. In addition, he proposed that a new highway program be included within the bill, which would authorize federal funding for an intermediate system of priority primary routes. Unfortunately the 1972 highway legislation died during a House – Senate Conference Committee. The following year Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, which included a provision for the financing of urban mass transit through revenue generated by the Federal Highway Trust Fund.⁴⁴

44. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

Chapter Two

Between the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 and the controversy over the 1972 and 1973 highway bills, John Paul Hammerschmidt became the first Republican from Arkansas elected into the United States House of Representatives since Reconstruction. Elected to the Ninetieth Congress, Hammerschmidt officially began his twenty-six year stint as Arkansas's Third District Congressman on January 3, 1967. Almost immediately he became an active member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee where he gained extensive legislative expertise in infrastructure development. Particularly acknowledged for his work regarding all aspects of the Federal-aid highway program, Hammerschmidt endeavored to improve the nation's secondary, primary, urban and interstate systems.¹

Esteemed by colleagues and constituents alike, his role in infrastructure development has undeniably had a lasting impact that continues to benefit Arkansas and other areas across the United States. As a member of the House Public Works Committee, Hammerschmidt was well situated to express his ideas concerning the nation's roadways and turn his objectives into legislation designed to advance the federal highway system. His dedication to highway construction and improvement ultimately represented his unwavering commitment to his home

1. Felicia Thomas, University of Arkansas Libraries, "John Paul Hammerschmidt (1922-)," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, (The Central Arkansas Library System, December 2, 2013), <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4169> (accessed May 6, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"); "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*, (2014), <http://www.northark.edu/about/jph.aspx> (accessed May 6, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*).

state of Arkansas.² He shaped federal aid highway policy in order to best serve the transformation and modernization of Arkansas roadways. He believed in the prevalence of the national network of federal aid highway systems and their ability to serve as the most crucial form of transportation for both people and goods well into the future. According to Hammerschmidt,

[u]nless the crops and other diverse products of our farms, our mines, and other rural enterprises can be quickly and economically transported to the city markets, the rural economy, as well as that of the urban areas, will be adversely affected. That is one of the reasons, in this period when the trackage of our railroads is shrinking, that an adequate road program for rural America can and must be established.³

These beliefs led Hammerschmidt to devote an enormous amount of time and energy to insure the continuation of the federal aid highway program and the many benefits it offered Arkansas.⁴

Born on May 4, 1922 in the rural town of Harrison in Boone County, Arkansas, one of Hammerschmidt's earliest memories as a child was riding in his father's Model T Ford. He laughingly recalls that these antiquated automobiles "had a peculiar clutch and all that apparatus . . . on the floor" and remembers how often in the Model T "somethin' would stall out, and he [Hammerschmidt's father] would blow in the gas tank, and then he'd put a match or somethin' there to hold the air in."⁵ John Paul Hammerschmidt's experiences with this type of car undoubtedly impacted his views regarding the modernization and improvement of transportation and infrastructure development.

2. Ibid.

3. Representative Hammerschmidt of Arkansas, extension of remarks for the consideration of A Federal-Aid Rural Off-System Highway Program, *Cong. Rec.*, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Subs-series 2, Box 35, File 15.

4. Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"; "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*.

5. Hammerschmidt, interview, 19-20.

While the Model T Ford served as his first introduction into the world of transportation, the Model A sedan functioned as the family's primary car during most of Hammerschmidt's upbringing. He recollected how often he and his four brothers and sisters went out driving with their dad who "always had a good Model A sedan where he could put all of us kids in and get us outta the house and outta Mother's hair."⁶ Even in the winter John Paul's father would take the kids out sledding behind the family car by hooking up a homemade sled to the Model A and driving it around through the snow on the family's ten acres of land.⁷ In those days the roads around Harrison and most of Northwest Arkansas were gravel or dirt roads. According to Hammerschmidt, during his childhood the highways were "gravel to Eureka Springs – and Eureka Springs to Fayetteville," and in "different segments . . . they began to pave roads in Arkansas."⁸ Due to these types of road conditions, passenger trains provided a much more comfortable and quicker method of travel, especially over longer distances.

Sometime in the early 1930s Hammerschmidt first traveled by train when he began to accompany his father on trips for the family lumber business to Kansas City, Missouri. While a passenger train ran through Harrison for a period of time, it mainly offered regional transport, and the town's railroad was primarily used as a freight line connecting the surrounding rural areas with major trading centers. Therefore, in order to travel to Kansas City, the Hammerschmidt's first drove to nearby Bergman, Arkansas, and from there caught the Missouri Pacific Railroad. John Paul remembers the luxuriousness of trains during that time period. They were "very nice" and had "a white tablecloth diner" accompanied by "[t]he porter and the

6. Ibid., 20.

7. Ibid., 20-21.

8. Ibid., 37.

waiters and all that.”⁹ His family “used that train till they quit running it.”¹⁰ For the people of Northwest Arkansas, passenger railroads provided an invaluable means of transportation to destinations across the country, especially those trains running the major north – south route through Arkansas from Kansas City, Missouri to New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Hammerschmidt Lumber Company also exposed the young John Paul to other aspects of transportation. While primarily a lumber business, the family-owned company played a role in the manufacture of busses and trucks since in those days they had a “[s]teel base, but . . . largely wooden bodies.”¹¹ In his recollection of this aspect of the business, Hammerschmidt recalled that “J.B. Hunt always told me the story about he bought some of his early truck bodies out there. I never did see him there, but he’d always mention that to me, that he remembered that.”¹² Thus, despite his rural upbringing, Hammerschmidt had numerous experiences early on with the many different modes of transportation available to the American people throughout the first part of the twentieth century.

He continued to gain more insight into the nation’s infrastructure after he graduated from Harrison High School at the young age of fifteen and went on to attend the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina between 1938 and 1939. For the 1940 to 1941 school year, while awaiting his appointment at the Annapolis Naval Academy, Hammerschmidt returned home to attend the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. During this time he put in a request to transfer his

9. Ibid., 36.

10. Ibid., 36-37.

11. Ibid., 26.

12. Ibid.

appointment from Annapolis to West Point, but this would all end with a spontaneous trip to California over his Christmas break.¹³

In the winter of 1941 Hammerschmidt began his journey into the larger world of transportation and witnessed the extent of American infrastructure firsthand. Without the knowledge or consent of his parents, he chose to visit a cousin in Bakersfield, California. The attack on Pearl Harbor had just happened and California seemed like an exciting place to be for the young John Paul who decided to stay instead of returning to school in Fayetteville at the University of Arkansas. After a short while he got a job just outside of San Francisco at the Mare Island Naval Ship Yard where he worked, lived, and learned many life lessons.¹⁴

In order to finance his journey from Bakersfield to Vallejo, California to start his new job at Mare Island, he took the Pacific Electric Railroad from Bakersfield to Long Island where he pawned his valuables. During this time the Pacific Electric was a very inexpensive and convenient way to travel around southern California's coastal areas. A more traditional, long distance passenger train transported Hammerschmidt to his final destination, and once settled in Vallejo he rode a ferry over to the Mare Island Naval Shipyard for work everyday.¹⁵

While living in California John Paul Hammerschmidt decided to buy himself a Model A Ford. He recalled that "it cost a hundred and twenty-five dollars" and that he and his friends "drove that Model A everywhere."¹⁶ This automobile also provided partial transportation from California back to Arkansas a year later when Hammerschmidt felt he needed to take his life

13. Ibid., 73-76; Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"; "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*; "Hammerschmidt, John Paul, (1922-)," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=H000124> (accessed May 6, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: "Hammerschmidt," *Biographical Directory*).

14. Hammerschmidt, interview, 75-76; Thomas, "Hammerschmidt".

15. Hammerschmidt, interview, 78-79, 81.

16. Ibid., 91-92.

more seriously and become more actively involved in World War II. While the return trip began with the Model A Ford, Hammerschmidt and life long friend Frank Lee Coffman ultimately traveled by various modes of transportation in order to eventually reach their hometown of Harrison, Arkansas.¹⁷

Hammerschmidt and Coffman first took a ferry east from Benicia, California and then drove north of Bakersfield across the Tehachapi mountain range. The young men continued their journey on into the Mojave Desert where they were forced to drive at night due to the extreme heat and the obvious lack of air conditioning in the Model A Ford. Hammerschmidt recalled that “we didn’t know where we were. . . . we just got lost really out in that desert, but we kept goin’ on roads” and eventually “hit a blacktop road” in Wickenburg, Arizona.¹⁸ From there the duo traveled to Carlsbad, New Mexico where Coffman had family they could stay with. At this point in the cross-country excursion, Hammerschmidt decided to sell his Model A and with this money the two friends were able to ride to Kansas City, Missouri on the El Capitan train. From Kansas City they took the Missouri Pacific Railroad to Bergman, Arkansas and then caught a ride into Harrison on the back of a truck.¹⁹

Hammerschmidt’s California adventure allowed him to experience the multitude of transportation options available in America during the early 1940s. This was also when he witnessed first hand the extent of the country’s infrastructure, or lack thereof, on a truly national scale. However, his insight into more modern modes of transportation began on October 16, 1942, when Hammerschmidt signed up as a volunteer with the Army Aviation Cadet Program. He probably traveled by train to begin his flight training in Texas where he prepared for his role

17. Ibid., 94-96.

18. Ibid., 94-95.

19. Ibid., 95-96.

in World War II by learning to pilot various types of airplanes ranging from fighter-bombers to cargo jets.²⁰ After receiving his wings, John Paul Hammerschmidt served as a pilot in the Second World War between 1942 and 1945. He flew overseas in the China – India – Burma Theater as a member of the United States Army Air Corps in the Third Combat Cargo Mission. The majority of his two hundred and seventeen combat missions took place over the eastern Himalayan Mountains.²¹ Known as the hump, this has always been an area considered dangerous to fly over, even during peacetime and with good weather. Yet Hammerschmidt’s cargo drop missions were plagued by monsoons and Japanese ground fire.²² Luckily, he made it through these treacherous flights unscathed and by the time America dropped the atomic bomb in Japan, Hammerschmidt had been decommissioned at Fort Chaffee.²³

His involvement in the war undeniably broadened Hammerschmidt’s understanding of the world, exposed him to new and different methods of transportation, and introduced him to the varying levels of infrastructure development in countries halfway across the globe. This insight, together with his prewar cross-country travels through the United States and his rural Arkansas upbringing certainly had a significant impact on his future in Congress as an active member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. These early life experiences undoubtedly led Hammerschmidt to consider the continued development of America’s infrastructure a top priority.

Hammerschmidt’s involvement in politics began after the war when he once again settled in his hometown of Harrison, Arkansas for the first time since leaving at the age of sixteen. He

20. Ibid., 96, 106-107.

21. Thomas, “Hammerschmidt”; “Hammerschmidt,” *North Arkansas College*; “Hammerschmidt,” *Biographical Directory*.

22. Hammerschmidt, interview, 119-120.

23. Ibid., 147-148.

quickly assumed an active role within the community and served as a member of the Harrison city council for a number of years. This eventually led to Hammerschmidt's participation within the Arkansas Republican Party although he primarily remained behind the scenes. John Paul also took over as head of the family lumber business and while managing the Hammerschmidt Lumber Company, he met and married Virginia Ann Sharp in 1948; shortly after they had one son, John Arthur Hammerschmidt.²⁴

By 1966 Hammerschmidt started to become more publically affiliated with the Republican Party in Arkansas. Republicans across the state hoped this would be the year for a GOP win in the race for governor as well as in Arkansas's Third District Congressional seat, both held by Democrats since Reconstruction. While Hammerschmidt became actively involved in Winthrop Rockefeller's 1966 gubernatorial race, Arkansas Republicans soon became greatly concerned when their 1964 Third District candidate announced his decision to no longer run in the upcoming 1966 elections²⁵ Jerry Hinshaw's decision to withdraw came as a crushing blow to the Grand Old Party which quickly resolved to find a suitable candidate to run for the Congressional seat in Arkansas's Third District. Despite his active participation in aiding the liberal Republican nominee for governor, many agreed that John Paul Hammerschmidt was the most logical choice for Arkansas's Third District candidate for the United States House of Representatives. This became the crucial moment when Hammerschmidt made the fateful decision to truly enter the public realm of politics.²⁶

24. Ibid., 151-152, 157; Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"; "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*; "Hammerschmidt," *Biographical Directory*.

25. Hammerschmidt, interview, 166-167; Thomas, "Hammerschmidt".

26. Hammerschmidt, interview, 166-167; Thomas, "Hammerschmidt".

Hammerschmidt “thought about it very seriously” and agreed to run against Democrat James Trimble who had served as Third District Congressman for twenty-two years. He devised and ran his whole campaign, and while still helping Rockefeller behind the scenes, Hammerschmidt worked to distance himself in order to create an independent message to the voters in his district. Hammerschmidt wanted to keep the two campaigns publically separate because he felt the people of Arkansas might think of Rockefeller as too liberal. Even though he supported these progressive ideas, Hammerschmidt believed that in order to win in the Third District he needed to take a more neutral stance.²⁷

On November 8, 1966 John Paul Hammerschmidt was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He narrowly defeated longtime Democratic incumbent Jim Trimble by only fifty-three percent of the votes to become the first Republican Congressman elected in Arkansas since Reconstruction. Winthrop Rockefeller also won his campaign and was elected as the first Republican governor to serve the state since Reconstruction. Together the success of these two elections signified a major turning point in Arkansas politics.²⁸

Almost immediately after being elected into the Ninetieth Congress, Hammerschmidt’s early experiences in the world of transportation and infrastructure quickly became paramount as he threw himself into the House Public Works and Transportation Committee. Hammerschmidt’s past experiences led to his passionate involvement within this area of national politics and he worked to gain extensive legislative expertise in regards to the modernization and

27. Hammerschmidt, interview, 167, 169; Thomas, “Hammerschmidt”.

28. Hammerschmidt, interview, 181; “Congressman Hammerschmidt,” *North Arkansas College*; Thomas, “Hammerschmidt”.

improvement of the American infrastructure and the methods of transportation necessary for these proposed developments to become a reality.²⁹

Well recognized for his extraordinary commitment and dedication to his constituents, Hammerschmidt maintained a remarkable level of communication with these individuals. He spent most weekends in his district where he would often meet with up to seventy-five constituents in just one day. Whether in person or by mail, telegraph or telephone, Hammerschmidt himself or members of his staff provided prompt and sincere assistance by corresponding not only with the people of Arkansas's Third District but with any other concerned citizens or special interest groups.³⁰

Specifically in regards to infrastructure development, state and local level government officials, business leaders, the general public and highway user groups, all expressed varying levels of apprehension about several different aspects of the federal aid highway program. These included the discontinuance and abandonment of passenger and freight rail lines, cutbacks in highway funding, the diversion of Federal Highway Trust Fund monies, and especially the need for a north-south express highway corridor running through Arkansas. Between 1969 and 1970, the Kansas City Southern Railway Company ended service on the *Southern Belle*, the last remaining passenger train between Kansas City and New Orleans. This soon led to a major call for the construction of a North-South interstate highway connecting these two cities.³¹

29. Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"; "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*.

30. Thomas, "Hammerschmidt"; "Congressman Hammerschmidt," *North Arkansas College*; Hammerschmidt, interview, 184-185.

31. Letter from Arkansas House of Representatives to J. William Fulbright, John Paul Hammerschmidt and John L. McClelland, April 20, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 1; Alice Scott to JPH, July, 28, 1972; Morris Henry to JPH, July 31, 1972; Telegram, Richard F. Morton to JPH, September 28, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 5; Telegram, Ward Goodman to JPH, October 5, 1972; Frank M.

Many of Hammerschmidt's constituents felt that Arkansas's highways were in deplorable condition and that immediate improvement of several north-south roads in the state was necessary for a number of reasons. The two main highways that caused the greatest concern were U.S 71 in the western part of the state, and the centrally located route U.S. 65. According to the Arkansas State Highway Department each of these routes were considered high priority construction projects. Controversy swirled around the development of a major north –south transportation corridor, specifically the proposed location. Unfortunately, while Arkansans clamored for a direct route between Kansas City and New Orleans, the federal government had no available interstate mileage and did not seem likely to add more.³²

Hammerschmidt's constituents were also concerned about the threat of Highway Trust Fund money being diverted away from the Federal-aid highway program for the use of urban mass transit. Many Arkansans felt that if highway money was used for the development of urban mass transportation systems then Arkansas, a largely rural state, would not receive the funds necessary for much needed road improvements. Hammerschmidt agreed with his constituents on all these matters. He recognized the transportation void left by the discontinuance of railroads,

Potter to JPH, September 22, 1972; Potter to JPH, September 25, 1972; *Arkansas Gazette*, September 14, 1972; JPH to Constituents, including Capital Report 292, V. 3, No. 89, September 15, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 6; Floyd P. Gilbert to JPH, November 20, 1969, letter forwarded by JPH to Interstate Commerce Commission, received on November 25, 1969, Robert L. Oswald (ICC Congressional Liaison Officer) sent response to JPH, December 10, 1969, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub-series 2, Box 17, File 9; Xerox copy of Interstate Commerce Commission, Finance Docket No. 25346, December 31, 1968, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub-series 2, Box 17, File 9.

32. Jeta Taylor to JPH, October 3, 1972; Aubrey J. Pinkston to JPH, October 2, 1972; *Springdale News* September 25, 1972; Phil J. Miller to JPH, September 18, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 6; DuBose Murry to JPH, November 20, 1972; Jerry Montgomery to JPH, November 21, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 7; Xerox copy of Speech made by John C. McClinton to the Subcommittee on Roads and House Public Works Committee, published in the *Congressional Record*, March 23, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 22, File 8.

understood the need for a major north-south corridor through Arkansas, and was also adamantly against the diversion of trust fund monies. Hammerschmidt used his position in the House Public Works Committee to address these issues and continuously attempted to create legislation that would support Arkansas's transportation needs.³³

Five years after he officially began his twenty-six years as Arkansas's Third District Representative, Hammerschmidt cosponsored the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972, a bill he believed would ultimately "prove to be as important to modernizing and improving our Nation's transportation network as was the interstate highway legislation of the mid-1950's."³⁴

Hammerschmidt felt that the provisions outlined in H.R. 16656, the House version of the 1972 highway bill, offered a comprehensive analysis of an advantageous federal aid highway program that would help the United States meet all of its future transportation needs.³⁵

The House version of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972 authorized funding for the completion of the interstate system over the course of three years. To provide a quicker method for improving the standards of all federal aid systems other than the interstate, H.R. 16656 gave more power to the states in order to simplify and expedite the road building process. While this highway bill also recognized the need for vast improvements in regards to the urban program, it did so in a way that would not reduce the importance of rural highway needs. It created a

33. Leland DuVal, *Arkansas Gazette*, February, 1972; Associated Construction Publications, Statement to the Roads Subcommittee, included several articles from the *Arkansas Gazette* January 13-16, March 22, 1972, in Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 22, File 1.

34. Hammerschmidt, Capital Report 292, V. 3, No. 89, September 15, 1972; Hammerschmidt Papers, Series 5, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 6; Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34081.

35. Hammerschmidt, Capital Report 292, V. 3, No. 89, September 15, 1972; Hammerschmidt Papers, Series 5, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 6; Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34081-82.

division between rural and urban areas yet authorized an equal increase in funding for both. Therefore Federal funding allocated for primary and secondary roadways could only be used in rural areas while funds for urban systems and extensions could only be used in urban areas. Hammerschmidt strongly supported this aspect of the legislation because it would have such a positive impact in Arkansas.³⁶

In addition, a new priority primary route system was outlined in section 126 of H.R. 16656. While this program deviated from traditional highway bills, Hammerschmidt anticipated its importance for the future of the federal aid highway system and pushed for its inclusion in the final version of the 1972 legislation. The 1968 national highway needs report designated 66,000 miles as part of an intermediate system of highways just below the interstate and just above the federal aid primary system in terms of importance as compared to the entire national network of all federal aid highways. Strongly in favor of this program, John Paul Hammerschmidt expressed his unwavering support for the establishment of a priority primary route system in his remarks made during the whole House debate over H.R. 16656. On October 5, 1972 Hammerschmidt rose before the House and made the following statement:

I am especially gratified by the committee's recognition that within this intermediate system there exist some 10,000 miles of highest importance, which appear logically to be eligible for immediate funding under the \$300 million authorized in this section for each of 1974 and 1975 fiscal years.

Among the worthwhile projects within the 10,000 miles singled out by the committee for priority attention are Highways 67, 65, and 71 in Arkansas. I know from firsthand knowledge that these are principal arterial routes, which would substantially upgrade the highway network in our State and significantly affect the economic and social development of Arkansas. I am pleased that as a member of the subcommittee . . . I was able to bring the critical needs of these particular routes to the Public Works Committee's attention.³⁷

36. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34081-82.

37. *Ibid.*, 34082.

Obviously Hammerschmidt was well aware of his constituents concerns and the needs of his community, and worked diligently to support and create legislation that would have a positive impact on the people of Arkansas and the state as a whole.

Unfortunately the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972 died at the end of the 92nd Congressional session after a House-Senate Conference Committee was unable to reach an agreement regarding the two versions of the bill. The Senate primarily supported trust fund diversion for urban mass transit, while the House remained committed to maintaining the highway trust fund for the continued development of the nations roadways. Hammerschmidt and the majority of the House felt that even though completion of the interstate system was nearing its end, that the nation still relied almost entirely on the federal aid system of highways as the country's predominate means of transporting goods and people well into the future. Supporters for the preservation of the Federal Highway Trust Fund believed the money should only be used for its original purpose; to fund the construction, improvement and development of a seamless national highway network that emphasized speed, safety and convenience.³⁸

These same issues remained at the forefront of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 and Hammerschmidt felt that very little had changed since the 1972 highway bill was brought before the House. Still, after numerous committee meetings and hearings the House Public Works Committee reported its amended version of S.502, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, to the Committee of the Whole House where it was debated for three consecutive days. It again included the authorization for financing the completion of the interstate highway system, separated the funding allocated to rural and urban areas with each receiving an equal share of

38. Ibid., 34081-82; Potter to JPH, September 22, 25, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 22, File 6.

federal aid funding, and allocated trust fund money for upgrading the 10,000 mile supplementary system of interstate highways.³⁹ Thus, the 1973 highway bill also noted the necessity of financing this 10,000 mile priority primary route system that Hammerschmidt so passionately outlined as part of the 1972 legislation. Between the interstate system and the federal aid primary system, this intermediate network of roadways had “become deteriorated, congested and hazardous.”⁴⁰ In his remarks on the House amended version of S.502, Hammerschmidt pointed out that “[a]lthough these primary routes are predominately rural, they, along with the Interstate System, could serve as access to over 90% of the urban population in the country.”⁴¹ However, he did not mention the three main arterial routes that the 1972 highway bill designated to Arkansas.

Members of the Arkansas State Senate and House of Representatives, along with local Chamber of Commerce leaders and many others, all pushed for the improvement of the highways Hammerschmidt outlined in his 1972 statement to the House. People realized the “urgent need for additional funds to construct, improve and maintain principle arterial highways in the State of Arkansas, such as U.S. Highway 71, U.S. Highway 65, and other highways on the Federal Aid Highway System in Arkansas and other states.”⁴² The development of a major north-south corridor connecting Kansas City to New Orleans also remained a primary concern for a number of Arkansans, and the controversy regarding the placement of this hypothetical

39. Representative Hammerschmidt of Arkansas, speaking for the further consideration of The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, on April 18, 1973, to the Committee of the Whole House, S.502 amended, 93rd Cong., 1st sess., *Cong. Rec.* 119, pt. 10: 13104-05. (Hereafter cited as: Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1973).

40. *Ibid.*, 13243.

41. *Ibid.*, 13243.

42. Arkansas State Senate Resolution, Senator Morris M. Henry, March 31, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 34, File 10. (Hereafter cited as: Resolution, Henry, Hammerschmidt Papers).

route created a division between different regions across the state. It resulted in local businesses and the general public each vying for federal funding and support of highway development in their specific areas.⁴³ In early 1973, Arkansas State Senators highlighted the impact of road construction in a resolution which stated that “motor vehicle transportation has played a major role in the economic growth and development of this Nation in the post World War II period, and that the continued expansion and improvement of the Nation’s motor vehicle transportation system is essential to the continued economic progress and development of the Nation.”⁴⁴

However, like in 1972, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 could not be agreed upon and the legislation again went to a House-Senate Conference Committee. After ironing out numerous details, the revenue from gas and other highway user taxes was ultimately diverted from the Federal Highway Trust Fund for the use of urban mass transit. This represented a major departure from the 1956 legislation that designated the trust fund strictly for highway development alone. On August 13, 1973, President Nixon signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 into law.⁴⁵ The repercussions from the passage of the 1973 highway legislation would be felt throughout Arkansas and many other rural areas for decades to come. Yet Hammerschmidt continued to work tirelessly for his constituents and their concerns regarding Arkansas roadways. Over the next twenty years until he retired from the United States House of

43. Ward Goodman (director of Arkansas Highways) to Owen A. Smith, copy to JPH and Governor Dale Bumpers, February 29, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 1; W.G. Brandon (president of Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce) to JPH, February 22, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 3; Arch Troxell (Arkansas House of Representatives) to Congressman Wilbur Mills, copy to JPH, June 28, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 4.

44. Resolution, Henry, March 31, 1973, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Sub Series 2, Box 34, File 10.

45. American Automobile Club to JPH, May 31, 1973, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Sub Series 2, Box 34, File 13; Speech by Senator Wilbur G. Mills, May 18, 1973, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Sub Series 2, Box 34, File 13.

Representatives, Hammerschmidt made every effort to create and support any bill that would provide Arkansas with as much money as possible to improve many of the state's major highways. Through his hard work and dedication to his constituents, Hammerschmidt laid the groundwork that would ultimately lead to the construction of a north-south interstate connecting Kansas City to New Orleans. Unfortunately the development of this did not come to fruition during his time in Congress.⁴⁶

46. Hammerschmidt, interview, 212-219.

Chapter Three

The demand for a major north – south transportation route connecting Kansas City to New Orleans intensified in the early 1970s. The demise of passenger rail service across the country and poor roadway conditions ultimately fueled America’s need for the swift completion of the interstate highway system. In rural areas especially, the discontinuance of passenger railroads crippled the economy, and the transportation of people and goods practically screeched to a halt. Local communities in Arkansas began to push for the allocation of additional interstate mileage, which led to regional controversies over highway development, funding, and route placement. Dedicated to his constituents and his home state as a whole, John Paul Hammerschmidt was well aware of the dire situation of Arkansas’s infrastructure. He recognized that a number of roadways required vast improvements in both his district and throughout the state. Thus, Hammerschmidt used his influence in Congress and as a member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee to push for the development of Arkansas highways, specifically a north – south corridor from Kansas City to New Orleans.¹

Up until the middle of the twentieth century railroads reigned as the primary means of transport for goods, people, and information. The rail system that crisscrossed the United States was the foundation of the nations infrastructure.² While the decline of railroad domination

1. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34081-82; Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1973, 13104-05, 13243.

2. Paul F. Barrett, Mark H. Rose, and Bruce E. Seely, *The Best Transportation System in the World: Railroads, Trucks, Airlines, and American Public Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 1, <https://books.google.com/books?id=r5I2mfc5kt4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=the+best+transportation+system+in+the+world+mark+rose&hl=en&sa=X&ei=xjy-VKeeLcKeggSo64CgAg&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=the%20best%20transportation>

began soon after the First World War as automobiles became more affordable for the average middle class family, its demise was not truly felt by Americans until half a century later. The reasons for the downfall of the railroads cannot solely be attributed to the advent of the automobile, and are in fact so extensive and complex that entire historical narratives have been devoted to this topic alone.³ However, in the late sixties and early seventies the main issue was not necessarily why the railroads quit running. Instead, most Arkansans were much more concerned with how to remedy the negative effects. While the answer seemed obvious, the solution proved to be more difficult as the federal aid highway system became increasingly entangled in bureaucratic red tape and political battles between rural and urban interests.⁴

For well over a century, railroads represented the fastest and most reliable mode of transportation. This transcontinental network created the first, truly modern, national infrastructure. Largely responsible for both the expansion and consolidation of the United States, passenger rail services increasingly connected people and places across the nation. Thus, railroads played an invaluable role regarding American industry and its remarkable evolution over a relatively short period of time. At the turn of the twentieth century many railroads received public subsidies from local governments hoping to reap the economic benefits that

[%20system%20in%20the%20world%20mark%20rose&f=false](#) (accessed January 20, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Barrett, Rose and Seely, *The Best Transportation System*).

3. Ibid.,1; Robert E. Gallamore and John R. Meyer, *American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014); John F. Stover, *American Railroads*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), <https://books.google.com/books?id=aPNQXN9Onv4C&printsec=frontcover&dq=american+railroads+stover&hl=en&sa=X&ei=9UO-VJjbPMOnNtSYgsAJ&ved=0CB0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=american%20railroads%20stover&f=false> (accessed January 20, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Gallamore and Meyer, *American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance*).

4. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34081-82; Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1973,13104-05, 13243.

derived from connecting to the growing railway network. As the major form of transcontinental transportation, the railroads proved to be equally important in regards to national defense, and became crucial to domestic involvement in several major wars.⁵

The railroads completely revolutionized the American way of life and had become a seemingly permanent fixture in the country's landscape. However, the foundation of the nation's transportation system began to slowly decline in the 1920s. The deterioration of passenger rail service especially, became alarmingly evident in the years following the Second World War. The United State's involvement in World War II represented a time that ultimately signified the last great boom for American railroads. The atrophy of private passenger lines during the post war period led to their near extinction within little more than a decade. Many fundamentals contributed to the mid twentieth century decline of railroads. These included lost market share, abandoned track mileage, numerous bankruptcies, and loss of employment.⁶

Additionally, the introduction of more viable transportation options increasingly threatened railroad stability. The most significant example of this was the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, which allocated the development of the interstate highway system. This legislation devastated the railroad industry and ultimately caused the dissolution of privatized passenger railroads. By this time most railroads depended almost entirely on freight revenue. However, a significant amount of this income was lost to large motor carriers traveling on the newly developed portions of the interstate highways and thus provided a far more flexible delivery method than freight trains could ever have hoped to achieve. The loss of revenue made it financially impossible for the railroads to continue running their passenger lines, and this combined with the continued evolution of highways and automobiles enabled people to

5. Gallamore and Meyer, *American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance*, 3,101, 123.

6. *Ibid.*, 13; Barrett, Rose, and Seely, *The Best Transportation System*, 30.

comfortably and quickly travel long distances, which ultimately led to the end of privatized passenger rail service.⁷

During the 1960s and early 1970s, railroads across the country sought to discontinue passenger services by any means possible. Many simply assumed a blatant disregard for the train traveling public. Passenger railways became increasingly unreliable, and no longer provided adequate customer service.⁸ The negligence did not go unnoticed and ultimately helped to achieve the desired result as people began to realize that railway “passengers have gone to other methods of transportation due to being discouraged by the railroad companies themselves.”⁹ The deficit from passenger rail services had become so great that railroads could no longer supplement lost revenue through freight transport.

However, for a time World War II revitalized passenger train service in the United States and this could not have been more beneficial for the Kansas City Southern Railway Company (KCS). In 1939 KCS purchased the Louisiana and Arkansas Railway Company (L&A) and thus acquired what would become one of its most important routes. Ownership of the L&A provided Kansas City Southern, the smallest of the major American railroads, with a vital link between Kansas City, Missouri and New Orleans, Louisiana. Less than a year later amidst much fanfare, KCS inaugurated the *Southern Belle*, a new streamlined passenger train which offered luxury service from the heart of the Midwest to the Gulf Coast’s largest port.¹⁰

7. Gallamore and Meyer, *American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance*, 97-99; Barrett, Rose, and Seely, *The Best Transportation System*, 100-102, 109.

8. Thad Hills Carter, *Images of Rail: Kansas City Southern Railway* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 60-61. (Hereafter cited as: Carter, *Images of Rail*).

9. Floyd P. Gilbert to JPH, November 20, 1969, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub Series 2, Box 17, File 10.

10. Tom Duggan, Lowell, Arkansas, “Kansas City Southern Railway,” *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, (The Central Arkansas Library System, February 29, 2012), <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4169> (accessed

The location of the KCS *Southern Belle* not only provided a direct link between Kansas City and New Orleans, but it also served as a major north – south transportation corridor for numerous people throughout portions of Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana. Covering a distance of over 800 miles, the track of the *Southern Belle* never strayed too far from U.S. highway 71 but moved back and forth across the Missouri – Kansas border and then followed the Arkansas – Oklahoma border to Texarkana, and continued south with U.S. 71 into Louisiana. The proximity of the *Southern Belle* to U.S. 71 is quite significant for numerous reasons, especially regarding the eventual discontinuance of the last two remaining KCS passenger trains, and the ensuing arguments over route placement for a major north – south interstate highway.¹¹

While the railroad boom brought on by the Second World War was short lived, the Kansas City Southern Railway Company was one of the few major railroads that attempted to continue providing upscale service to its customers during a time when many other railroad companies purposefully neglected their passenger lines in order to expedite the processes of discontinuing these routes. KCS tried to remain positive despite losses and felt that the *Southern Belle* in particular provided a necessary public service to the people along its route. In fact, in

October 10, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Duggan, “Kansas City Southern Railway”); The Kansas City Southern Railway Company, “History of Kansas City Southern,” Kansas City Southern, <http://www.kcsouthern.com/en-us/AboutKCS/Pages/History.aspx> (accessed October 10, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Kansas City Southern, “History of KCS”).

11. “The Southern Belle,” American-Rails.com, <http://www.american-rails.com/southern-belle.htm> (accessed October 10, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: American-Rails.com, “The Southern Belle”); “The Southern Belle: Kansas City Southern Lines: May 11, 1941,” Streamliner Schedules, <http://www.streamlinerschedules.com/concourse/track1/soubelle194106.html> (accessed October 10, 2014). (Hereafter cited as: Streamliner Schedules, “The Southern Belle”).

1965 Kansas City Southern became the last private railroad in the United States to invest in passenger rail cars.¹²

All passenger trains including the *Southern Belle* took another major financial blow when the Post Office Department announced the cancellation of all Railway Post Office (RPO) services. Mail would now be processed by machines in regional centers instead of by United States Postal Service employees in RPO cars on passenger trains. Subsidized largely by RPO's, this decision had a profoundly negative impact on passenger railroads. For the *Southern Belle* RPO service ended in 1967 and less than a year later the railroad was faced with another crisis when the Railway Express Agency (REA) responsible for package and parcel transport and delivery followed in the RPO's footsteps and rescinded all express carrier business from most passenger trains.¹³

The revenue lost with these two services was devastating and forced Kansas City Southern to rethink its continuation of passenger trains. Even before KCS lost its REA contract the company had already filed with the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to discontinue all remaining passenger rail lines in December of 1967. The ICC allowed all KCS passenger services to be cancelled except for the *Southern Belle*, which was considered to be of too great importance to the public good to be discontinued. However, on November 15, 1968, after more financial hardships KCS again reached out to the ICC for permission to drop its last remaining passenger trains between Kansas City and New Orleans. Surprisingly, less than two months later KCS withdrew their application to terminate trains number one and two of the *Southern Belle*.

12. Duggan, "Kansas City Southern Railway".

13. Ibid.

Regardless of lost revenue both the ICC and KCS recognized the importance of this route and what it meant to the public.¹⁴

For close to thirty years the KCS and the *Southern Belle* profoundly impacted the people and communities it serviced. Throughout western Arkansas the possibility of passenger services being discontinued caused significant concern. Mrs. Newton Smith from a small town just north of Texarkana described how much she and her husband depended on the *Southern Belle*, “[w]e travel on it always when visiting our children up north, as do many people in this area. We are too old to drive and its too expensive to fly. It’s been the standby for travel through the years and its simply not right for them to remove it now.”¹⁵ In Fayetteville, Mrs. Rachel Stout voiced her support for passenger rail service, “[s]peaking for myself and others that live in this part of the country, it means a lot to us. I always travel by train I intend to as long as the trains go.”¹⁶ Alice Starr, a school teacher from Mena, Arkansas wrote to Hammerschmidt that she hoped he was “still working to keep our passenger train service on the Kansas City Southern from Kansas City, Mo. to New Orleans, La. We need the passenger train service and it would be tragic to stop them.” She also remarked that “[w]e had good mail service when the passenger trains were used. I hope they will be used again soon.”¹⁷ These women and countless other people used the *Southern Belle* as their primary means of travel, yet even so, KCS could no longer handle the passenger trains deficit.

14. Ibid.

15. Mrs. Newton Smith to JPH, December 2, 1968, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub Series 2, Box 17, File 9.

16. Rachel Stout to JPH, February 21, 1969, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub Series 2, Box 17, File 9.

17. Alice Starr to JPH, July 18, 1969, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series IV, Sub Series 2, Box 17, file 9.

Thus KCS was forced to reapply with the Interstate Commerce Commission for the discontinuation of the *Southern Belle* due to more financial difficulties. This time around the ICC granted permission for the Kansas City Southern Railway Company to discontinue its last two remaining passenger trains with service from Kansas City to New Orleans. After decades of providing luxury passenger rail service the *Southern Belle* officially stopped running on November 3, 1969 and left an area of over 800 miles with few transportation options.¹⁸

Since many rural states relied heavily on train travel, their roadways received far less attention than the more densely populated, urban states across the country. Out of the 41,000 total miles designated for the interstate highway system as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956, the Arkansas segment consisted of roughly 500 miles. The original route proposed for the construction of interstate highways “from Memphis to Little Rock, from Little Rock to Fort Smith, from Little Rock to Texarkana and from West Memphis to the Missouri line.”¹⁹ No interstate mileage was designated to the western part of the state, and with the discontinuance of the *Southern Belle*, Arkansas lost one of its most important transportation arteries. Unfortunately, at this time the federal government was unwilling to add any additional mileage to the interstate system, which essentially resulted in a major transportation void between Kansas City and New Orleans.²⁰ The distance between the originally designated north – south

18. Duggan, “Kansas City Southern Railway”.

19. Arkansas State Highway Commission, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report*, For the Period Ending July 1, 1954 Through June 30, 1956, 15. (Hereafter cited as: Arkansas State Highway Commission, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report*).

20. Owen A. Smith corresponded with a number of individuals regarding the Razorback Expressway and sent copies to JPH. Among Smith’s correspondents were the following: Joe Lipsey, Jr. of COFLEX (Committee for the Louisiana Expressway) to Smith, February 13, 1972; Ward Goodman (Arkansas Director of Highways) to Smith, February 29, 1972; Roy L. Mitchell (Channel 4 News) to Smith, March 3, 1972; Lieutenant General Patrick F. Cassidy, to Mr. G.E. Cox, February 10, 1972, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 22, File 1.

interstates left hundreds of miles in the middle of the country with few transportation options, and the new Amtrak system did not help to address this discrepancy. In 1971 the closest north – south Amtrak routes ran through either Memphis or Oklahoma City, the entire state of Arkansas had been excluded.²¹

Almost immediately following the discontinuance of passenger rail service Arkansans began to more fully appreciate the poor quality of the state’s outdated roadways. The existing two-lane highways had not been designed to withstand high traffic volumes and were quickly becoming overcrowded and dangerous. By 1972 the majority of Hammerschmidt’s constituents were not only clamoring for the improvement of Arkansas’s most heavily traveled primary road systems, but also for the construction of a major north – south corridor that would connect Kansas City to New Orleans like the *Southern Belle* had just three years prior. Support for the development of such a major project was overwhelming and came from businesses, large and small, local and state government officials, and the general public. However, the location of this proposed route was hotly disputed. People in the central part of the state argued that it should follow U.S. highway 65, while western Arkansans felt a more logical placement would be along U.S highway 71. Yet while this controversy raged at the local and state level, the reality remained that the federal government refused to designate any additional mileage to the interstate highway system.

Once the people of Arkansas realized that the passenger rail lines would not re-establish service, they began to understand the great necessity for improving a number of roadways throughout the state. Of course, this led to regional disputes over highway development. Local communities and businesses felt the need was greatest in their specific parts of Arkansas. Just

21.Gallamore and Meyer, *American Railroads: Decline and Renaissance*, 127.

like with the railroads, economic growth and prosperity followed the interstate highway system, which led community leaders to support the development of a major north – south corridor through Arkansas. The central issues surrounding this project included interstate mileage designation, route location, and whether the state would be able to receive the federal funding necessary for such an extensive project. These concerns would remain at the forefront of this debate for many long years to come.²²

John Paul Hammerschmidt recognized the negative impact that stemmed from the discontinuance of passenger trains and sympathized with his constituents concerning this loss. He grew up traveling by train, and as a child made numerous trips on the Missouri Pacific Railroad from Northwest Arkansas to Kansas City with his family who “used that train till they quit running it.”²³ Hammerschmidt understood firsthand how vital passenger train service was to the people of Arkansas but he also knew that the great era of railroads had come to an end. He believed that “the continued development of our Nation’s road systems is a matter of the highest priority, affecting the economic development of all regions and the lives of virtually all citizens.”²⁴ Limited-access super highways represented the future of American transportation and infrastructure, and Hammerschmidt worked tirelessly to insure that Arkansas would not be left behind.

22. Owen A. Smith corresponded with a number of individuals regarding the Razorback Expressway and sent copies to JPH. Among Smith’s correspondents were the following: Joe Lipsey, Jr. of COFLEX (Committee for the Louisiana Expressway) to Smith, February 13, 1972; Ward Goodman (Arkansas Director of Highways) to Smith, February 29, 1972; Roy L. Mitchell (Channel 4 News) to Smith, March 3, 1972; Lieutenant General Patrick F. Cassidy, to Mr. G.E. Cox, February 10, 1972; Dale Bumpers (Arkansas Governor) to Smith, February 28, 1972, Series V, Sub Series 2, Box 22, File 1.

23. Hammerschmidt, interview, 36-37.

24. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34082.

Just as the Second World War revitalized the railroads, the post war period of prosperity fueled automobile popularity and availability like never before. As passenger rail travel faded into the past, America's obsession with cars continued full speed ahead. Unfortunately, the highway system in Arkansas could not keep up with traffic demands. The 'golden era' of highway building had long since come and gone. Many of the existing roadways that made up the state's major transportation arteries were in various stages of disrepair and all required vast improvements. Hammerschmidt's constituents throughout the third district voiced growing concerns regarding the condition of these highways, specifically the main north – south arterial routes, which they felt were too heavily trafficked and thus unsafe and inconvenient.

Mrs. Harold C. Holmes from Bentonville, Arkansas wrote to Hammerschmidt as a “concerned citizen” in July 1971 about her family's recent cross country journey. She said that “[a]fter just traveling over 5,000 miles and in 11 states we came home to the deplorable road conditions which were not evident in other states.” Holmes went on to address the high accident rate in relation to road conditions; she informed Hammerschmidt that “[o]n a recent weekend 10 persons died on Arkansas highways” and that since moving to the area in 1968 she had not witnessed any “evidence of conditions improving.”²⁵ The following year Hammerschmidt received similar correspondence from another constituent, a Mr. Phil J. Miller who remarked that several summer trips to various places throughout the nation, led him to “form an attitude toward the disparity between the East-West and North-South highway systems.”²⁶ Miller's realization is most significant in terms of Arkansas. The plight of the highway system appeared to grow increasingly more desperate in the years following the discontinuance of the *Southern Belle*, yet

25. Mrs. Harold C. Holmes to JPH, July 28, 1971, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 2.

26. Phil J. Miller to JPH, September 18, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 6.

this also signified the beginning of Arkansas's fight for the designation and development of a north – south interstate highway.

However, in the early 1970s with the interstate highway system nearing completion it was unlikely that the federal government would add any additional mileage. Unfortunately the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 had one major flaw that slowly became apparent and ultimately ruined an almost perfect piece of highway legislation. The engineers and planners only thought in terms of a connecting system of transcontinental superhighways, and little consideration was given to the impact of interstate development in urban areas. The dynamic of many major American cities had long been established and these areas simply were not designed to allow for express highway construction. The interstate system cut through urban areas and caused the displacement of entire neighborhoods. From the beginning highway engineers and developers struggled to determine interstate route placement through major cities. In an effort not to negatively impact downtown homes and businesses, urban highways tended to be located along obsolete waterfronts or through city parks. However these route locations proved to be even more detrimental to interstate development and caused major urban blight, especially the expressways routed through low income inner-city neighborhoods with predominately black populations. The interstate highway system quickly became tied to the civil rights movement. Thus, by the early seventies the numerous controversies surrounding expressway development in urban areas became central themes for many policy makers in regards to highway legislation. This proved to be detrimental to interstate construction in rural states that still desperately needed improvement of all federal aid systems, as well as the designation of additional interstate mileage.²⁷

27. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

As a result, many Arkansas motorists simply pushed for four-lane roads instead of limited access highways. On July 31, 1972 Arkansas State Senator Morris M. Henry described the reality of transportation and infrastructure in his district, and appealed for Hammerschmidt's assistance. He reported that "[h]ere in Northwest Arkansas, we have a very deplorable situation in that Highway 71 North and South is the only main artery for transportation coming from Kansas City going south to New Orleans." According to Henry "[t]he large amount of traffic and the high accident rate on Highway 71" further emphasized the necessity to upgrade the existing U.S. 71 to a four-lane highway. In closing, he asked that Hammerschmidt do "anything you can do to help us gain a four-lane highway."²⁸ In the central part of the state "[a] group of public officials and other concerned citizens appealed to the Arkansas Highway Commission on January 26, 1972, asking that the entire length of U.S. 65 be constructed as a four-lane facility."²⁹ All across the state people solicited Hammerschmidt's influence in the hopes of developing new and improved highways, especially a major north-south corridor.

Within central Arkansas there were a number of proponents for the development of U.S. 65 as the major transportation corridor connecting Kansas City and New Orleans, especially since that route would not bypass Little Rock. State of Arkansas House of Representative member Mr. A.J. Troxell was a staunch advocate for "the expansion of the Highway 65 system from Kansas City, Missouri to New Orleans." He believed that "[n]o interstate route would be of more service to Arkansas" and that "[f]or every reason submitted for a different route location, there are three reasons why the central route would be most advantageous from every

28. Morris Henry to JPH, July 31, 1971, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 5.

29. "65 through Arkansas," [undated], Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Sub-series 2, Box 35, File 13.

standpoint.”³⁰ On February 17, 1972 a Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Faucet from Eureka Springs wrote to Congressman Hammerschmidt regarding Highway 65 and stated that the roadway “needs to be widened or made a super highway.” According to the couple, visitors often “complain that the roads are dangerous, narrow, winding, hilly, and poorly marked” they felt that improvements to this particular route “would increase the tourist traffic and income levels in this area.”³¹

Hammerschmidt expressed his agreement and assured his constituents that the development of highway 65 was a top priority.

Hammerschmidt was equally enthusiastic about the construction of a transportation corridor along the existing U.S. highway 71, a location that western Arkansans believed to be a much more logical choice for a north – south expressway. Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce President W.G Brandon spoke on behalf of the Chamber in a 1972 letter to Hammerschmidt. Brandon stated that a major highway should be constructed “parallel [to] U.S. Highway 71 and serve as a major artery between Kansas City and New Orleans.” He went on to explain the importance of developing such a route:

Those of us living in Washington and Benton Counties know that our area is just about the fastest growing area in the State of Arkansas. At the same time, we feel that we have been very much neglected in the field of transportation. There are two interstate systems traversing Arkansas. Naturally, both of these systems run through Little Rock. We feel that providing a 4-lane highway North-South through Central Arkansas would be completely disregarding the western portion of the state.³²

The Arkansas Director of Highways noted similar findings, and expressed to Hammerschmidt that an increasing number of citizens showed “considerable interest in the improvement of U.S.

30. A. J. (Arch) Troxell to Wilbur D. Mills, June 28, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 4.

31. Mr. and Mrs. Philip Faucet to JPH, February 17, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 1.

32. W.G. Brandon to JPH, February 22, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 3.

71 in northwest Arkansas.” He also made it clear that “[f]rom a practical standpoint, we realize that if improved highway service is not provided to northwest Arkansas, this fantastic growth area will strangle in its own prosperity.”³³ Thus began the battle over route placement for a major north – south corridor through Arkansas.

The correlation between highway development and local economies became increasingly apparent to Arkansans when the federal government began attempts to withdraw from highway development as the interstate highway system neared completion in the early seventies. They realized that the limited amount of interstate mileage originally designated to Arkansas would not be enough to address the growing needs of the state. Unfortunately, the state and federal ideas regarding the future of the Federal Aid Highway System were largely at odds during this time. Highway development progressed much quicker in states that were more densely populated and urbanized. Thus, many at the federal level believed it was time for the country to focus on the development of other modes of transportation.³⁴ However in Arkansas, Director of Highways Ward Goodman outlined the situation when he stated in early 1972 that “[h]ighways continue to be in vogue in Arkansas even though this might not be the case in some of our more populated States.”³⁵ The existing roadways in primarily rural states still required a significant amount of attention, not to mention additional interstate mileage. This issue became one of the major controversies addressed in the 1972 and 1973 federal-aid highway bills.

Arkansas undoubtedly lagged behind in regards to highway development and as more and more people began to realize the adverse affects of poor roadways on the economy there became

33. Henry Gray (Arkansas State Highway Commissioner) to JPH, May 21, 1973, Hammerschmidt Papers, Series VI, Sub-series 2, Box 35, File 11.

34. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

35. Ward Goodman (Arkansas State Highway Commission) to Owen A. Smith, February 29, 1972, Hammerschmidt Papers Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 1.

a number of highway advocate “groups actively supporting the development of select corridors in Arkansas.” According to Ward Goodman, “[i]n addition to...[the] “North-South Interstate” effort,” these included “the Western Arkansas Route, the U.S. 65 Route, the U.S. 67 Route from Little Rock to the Missouri Line, and the Northeast Arkansas Corridor, which is a part of the proposed Kansas City to Atlanta Route.”³⁶ While each of these groups focused on specific regions throughout the state, the underlying fact remained that for Arkansas economies to flourish more highways were needed, and federal support would be necessary in order for any of these proposals to possibly become a reality. J.D. Roebuck, the Executive Director of the Department of Industrial Development for the State of Arkansas outlined the dire situation in a letter to proponents of the Razorback Expressway, a north – south route from Kansas City to New Orleans. In this correspondence he stated that “[i]n reviewing industrial placement throughout Arkansas in recent years, we find an alarming trend which could destroy the distribution of economic activity. With the event of four lane-highways and the Interstate system, industry has tended to gather along these strips, placing us in a disadvantageous position in regard to other areas.”³⁷ Hammerschmidt understood this all too well but he also knew that the federal government would not designate the extensive amount of interstate mileage necessary to link Kansas City to New Orleans.

Therefore as a member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee and cosponsor of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972, Hammerschmidt worked to secure the future of American highways. He used his influence to put together legislation that he felt would “go a

36. Ibid.

37. J.D. Roebuck (Executive Director of the Department of Industrial Development for the State of Arkansas) to Mr. Ray Metzger Jr. (Publisher of The Construction News), [undated], Hammerschmidt Papers, Series V, Sub-series 2, Box 22, File 1.

long way toward meeting our Nation's transportation needs.”³⁸ This bill was significant for a number of reasons but largely because it focused on the different needs of all highways within the federal aid system. Funds were authorized for the deadline of the Interstate System to be extended by three years. Upon its completion the federal aid highway program would then turn its full attention on upgrading all other roads within the system. Meanwhile each state would be given more control over all highways other than the interstate in order to accelerate planning and development. Clashes between rural and urban interests led the committee to deviate from previous legislation regarding the allocation of the Highway Trust Fund. Now, for the first time the money would be divided and strictly specified for use in urban or rural areas, while equal, the funds were not interchangeable. The condition of rural roadways was obviously a concern for Hammerschmidt and his cosponsors and they designed their legislation to insure these highways could no longer be ignored.³⁹

The last and most significant aspect of the 1972 highway bill was its proposal of a new program, the priority primary system, which would enable the continued construction and development of 10,000 miles of federal aid primary roadways. In Capitol Report 292, Hammerschmidt informed his constituents that the “[d]esignated mileage would be improved beyond present standards, as the traffic situation warranted, up to as exacting standards as those for the Interstate Highways.” He felt that “[t]his provision gives realistic hope for the much-needed development of major north-south transportation corridors in Arkansas.”⁴⁰ However, Hammerschmidt made it very clear that while they “are not more interstate miles...[t]hese

38. Hammerschmidt *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34082.

39. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

40. JPH to Constituents, Capitol Report 292, V. 3, No. 89, September 15, 1972; Hammerschmidt Papers, Series 5, Subs-series 2, Box 22, File 6.

10,000 miles need priority consideration and should be built to high standards taking into consideration the heavy traffic volumes they handle.”⁴¹

With the priority primary system Hammerschmidt felt that a balance could be reached between the highway needs of certain rural states and the reluctance of the federal government to issue additional interstate mileage. As an added bonus, the program would directly impact Arkansas. Heavily trafficked and in drastic need of repair, U.S. highways 65, 71, and 67, would all be included as part of the 10,000 miles designated within the priority primary system. Hammerschmidt believed these were “principle arterial routes which would substantially upgrade the highway network in our State and significantly affect the economic and social development of Arkansas.”⁴² Since two of these were the roadways that many Arkansans had proposed as becoming a major north – south transportation corridor, the priority primary system appeared to be the best solution all around.

However, the 1972 highway bill died after a House-Senate Conference Committee was unable to reach an agreement regarding the terms of the bill, specifically the allocation of Highway Trust Fund monies and the development of urban transit systems. Since its creation the Highway Trust Fund was used strictly for the purpose of funding highway construction and development, yet, the Senate added an amendment to the 1972 bill allowing a portion of the trust fund to be used for the development of urban mass transit. The majority of the House was opposed to this amendment, especially Hammerschmidt, his cosponsors, and his constituents who were all adamantly against the diversion of trust fund monies. They felt that the nations economy depended on the highway system and that the Trust Fund should be used to upgrade

41. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1973, 13243.

42. Hammerschmidt, *Cong. Rec.*, 1972, 34082.

primary roads, to interstate standards if necessary. Hammerschmidt understood that rural areas needed a way to transport goods and people following the decline of railroads.⁴³

The same issues outlined in the 1972 bill were at the forefront of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973. The Senate still wanted to divert a portion of the Highway Trust Fund for the development of urban mass transit. The majority of the House did not agree and felt that the deviation of the Trust Fund would further impede efforts to improve primary roadways in rural areas. The transportation needs within major metropolitan centers were vastly at odds with the nation's more agrestic states.⁴⁴

In 1973 the Senate began work on a new highway bill and by March, S.502 passed in the Senate by an overwhelming majority. This version of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, allocated eighteen billion dollars to be used over the course of three years for the federal funding of the highway program. However, the Senate bill also approved the diversion of the portion of Trust Fund money allocated for urban highway systems to be used for the development of rail transit. In addition, the bill enabled local urban officials the power to veto the construction of controversial interstate routes without forfeiting federal funding, and instead use the money to finance any transportation option deemed appropriate, including rapid rail transit. S.502 also increased Urban Mass Transportation Assistance (UMAT) funds by three billion, with four million per year set aside exclusively for transit operating subsidies.⁴⁵

Following Senate approval, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 moved on to be debated by the House, yet members continued to take a firm stance and opposed the diversion of the Highway Trust Funds for the financing of urban rail transit. Thus, the 1973 highway bill

43. Public Roads, *Busting the Trust*.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

approved by the House in April maintained that the Trust Fund could only be used for the development of federal-aid highway systems or highway oriented transit. The majority of the House believed that if cities wanted federal funding for urban rail transit, then this money should come from the general Treasury, not the Highway Trust Fund. Likewise, if local city officials did not support the construction of proposed urban interstate routes and instead favored non-highway transit options, they could cancel inner city portions of designated interstate mileage. However, if urban areas chose this alternative the federal-aid provided for such projects would be revoked and cities would need to apply for general Treasury funds in order to pursue alternative transportation options. The House bill also allocated three hundred million annually to be used for the improvement of interstate subsidiaries or priority primary routes. For Urban Mass Transit Assistance the House authorized three billion in federal funds but this would come from the general Treasury, not the Highway Trust Fund.⁴⁶

The extreme differences between the Senate and House versions of the 1973 highway bill were quite similar as in the previous year and from the beginning it looked as if the Conference Committee would once again be deadlocked. Conferees argued over the bill for close to three months before finally reaching a compromise proposed by House Representative James Wright Jr., which ultimately helped to ease House members into the idea of opening the Federal Highway Trust Fund for urban mass transit. According to Wright's plan, during fiscal years 1974 and 1975 cities that chose to develop rail and bus transit would have to use funds from the general Treasury. However, in fiscal year 1975 urban areas could use two hundred million of the designated eight hundred and fifty million allocated from the Highway Trust Fund for urban systems if the money was used only to acquire busses. By fiscal year 1976 all urban system

46. Ibid.

funds supplied through the Highway Trust Fund, could be used for any type of mass transit project that local city officials felt would be most beneficial, including rapid rail transit. However, “[w]hen a community withdrew a controversial urban interstate segment in favor of transit projects, bus or rail, the funds would come from the general Treasury, not the Highway Trust Fund.”⁴⁷ The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 as laid out in the Conference Committee, passed in the Senate on the first of August and was approved by the House just two days later. On August 13, 1973 President Nixon signed the highway bill into law, which authorized federal-aid highway funding for the next three fiscal years, and ultimately changed the course of highway policy.

47. Ibid.

Chapter Four

The primary focus of this paper has centered around the time between the late 1960s and the early 1970s. While the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 was a significant piece of highway legislation, the story does not end here for John Paul Hammerschmidt, or for the push for a major north – south corridor through Arkansas connecting Kansas City to New Orleans. In fact, the early nineties signify a crucial turning point in American infrastructure legislation, which many believe to be as important as the 1956 highway bill and its authorization of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) paved the way for the funding and construction of Interstate 540 from Alma to Bentonville and, ultimately led to the development of Interstate 49. Thanks to Hammerschmidt and his work on ISTEA, I-540 was completed in its entirety by 1999.¹ Less than twenty years later this segment received official designation as part of the new I-49 corridor. However, plans for Interstate 49 have greatly exceeded the original north – south route proposal to link Kansas City and New Orleans. The proponents of this major corridor have now begun to concentrate on

1. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark: The Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991*, Richard F. Weingroff, November/December 2001 Vol. 65 No. 3, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/01novdec/istea.cfm> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark*); Bill Bowden, “Northwest Arkansas Council: Paving the way for 20 years,” *Arkansas Democratic Gazette*, August 11, 2010, <ftp://www.ahtd.state.ar.us/Outgoing/PublicAffairs/News%20clips/2010/August%202010/Aug%2011%202010/NW%20Arkansas%20Council%20paving%20the%20way%20for%2020%20years.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Bowden, “Northwest Arkansas Council,” *Arkansas Democratic Gazette*); Lindsey, e-mail.

the continued expansion of I-49, and its future development as an international interstate highway between the United States and Canada.²

Following the discontinuance of the last remaining north – south passenger rail service through Arkansas in the late 1960s, Hammerschmidt’s constituents grew increasingly more concerned with the deterioration of existing highway conditions in Arkansas in the 1970s and 1980s. Many people felt that this area desperately needed a major transportation corridor connecting Kansas City and New Orleans. However, due to the lack of federal funds, and as a junior member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, Hammerschmidt was not in a position to make any significant changes in regards to infrastructure development at this time. From the information I have pieced together throughout the seventies and eighties, it appears that it was quite difficult for any great strides to be made concerning highway development, especially for the construction of a north – south expressway connecting Kansas City and New Orleans. For the most part, federal aid highway policy had shifted its focus to the completion of the interstate highway system but policy makers were opposed to designating any additional interstate highway routes.

Even though at this point in his Congressional career Hammerschmidt had little influence over highway development, he brought attention to the state’s infrastructure needs whenever possible. According to Arkansas State Senator Uvalde Lindsey, the 1980s almost represented a lost decade for Hammerschmidt in regards to his work with the development of transportation and infrastructure. He was able to secure only modest and varying levels of federal funding and, in fact, appeared to be more concerned with other issues. In 1972 Hammerschmidt sponsored a major piece of legislation, which made the Buffalo River the first free flowing stream added to

2. Interstate 49 International Coalition, History, <http://www.interstate49.org/index.php?page=mission-history> (accessed June 2, 2015).

the national park system. Then in 1974, Hammerschmidt faced his toughest campaign battle throughout his time in Congress, against future President Bill Clinton. The election was close, yet Hammerschmidt's relationship with his constituency ultimately led to his reelection. However, the campaign took up a significant amount of his time and energy. Thus, Hammerschmidt was tied up with other Congressional obligations and according to Lindsey the decade was lost in regards to infrastructure development.³

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the interstate highway system and the future of American transportation and infrastructure had become increasingly more controversial. Opposing forces lined up according to the following: (1) those who supported merely finishing the existing plan of interstate development; (2) those who wanted to add additional interstate corridors to the mix; and (3) those who believed highway funds should be devoted to development of mass transit in urban areas.⁴ In rural states like Arkansas the interstate system appeared incomplete in some areas and nonexistent in others. Federal funding and designation of additional interstate mileage was necessary in order to supplement the gaps left by the existing system.

During the "lost decade," the only appreciable advance in terms of the I-49 corridor occurred in Louisiana and for reasons that were peculiar to that states' needs. Interstate 20 through Shreveport and Interstate 10 through Lafayette were both included within the original route plans for the interstate highway system. However despite being located along major east – west transportation arteries, these two cities were separated by hundreds of miles of inadequate roadways, which many believed could be detrimental to the states' economic prosperity. It seemed as if the absence of a north – south connection between Shreveport and Lafayette would

3. Lindsey, e-mail.

4. Ibid.

ultimately undermine Louisiana's entire interstate system. Policy makers, highway officials, local citizens, and members of special interest groups appeared to work together to address these concerns and have them recognized at the national level. Their collective efforts paid off in 1977 when the original segment of Interstate 49, which followed U.S. 71 for roughly 200 miles through Louisiana, was approved for inclusion as part of the Interstate Highway System when the AASHTO officially designated extensive mileage for the development of I-49 in Louisiana.⁵

Similarly, at this time Arkansas had no north – south interstate highway, but also did not have cities like Shreveport and Lafayette along east – west interstate corridors that needed to be linked through a north—south corridor. In addition, it is quite likely that route placement played a significant role regarding interstate mileage designation in Louisiana as opposed to Arkansas. The initial two hundred mile segment identified as I-49 needed to follow a somewhat specific route in order to provide the most logical connection between the two major cities located along Louisiana's east – west interstate highways. The original purpose of I-49 was to provide a north – south transportation system to directly link Interstate 20 in Shreveport to Interstate 10 in Lafayette. As a result, the placement of this route was not necessarily open for debate.

In Arkansas, Hammerschmidt had an entirely different situation to deal with regarding the development of a north – south expressway. The location of this highly anticipated corridor caused heated discussions throughout various regions across the state, and became quite a controversial topic from the late sixties onward. Even though the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 opened the highway trust fund for the use of urban mass transit, it also included funding for the priority primary route system. The bill authorized between two and three hundred million dollars to be used per year for this supplementary system of roadways for the next three fiscal

5. Interstate Guide: Interstate 49, History.

years until it was time to renew the highway bill. Hammerschmidt recalled that Arkansas received around nine million the first year, and work officially started on what would become Interstate 540. This segment ultimately received designation as part of the Interstate 49 corridor from Kansas City to New Orleans.

While Hammerschmidt obviously believed this area needed a major north – south expressway, he appeared to realize that an interstate route through western Arkansas was highly improbable considering the position of the federal government during this time. It may be that Hammerschmidt had planned all along for U.S.71 in Arkansas to eventually become I-49 and connect Kansas City to New Orleans. The priority primary route system was first introduced in the 1972 highway bill. As cosponsor of the bill, Hammerschmidt was in a position to include U.S. 71 as one of the routes in need of immediate funding. Even though the 1972 bill did not pass, Hammerschmidt had effectively insured the inclusion of this highway within the priority primary route system. Thus, it appeared that he had begun to lay the initial groundwork for this segment to receive the necessary upgrades to one day be included as part of the interstate highway system. In the beginning federal funds were limited, but over the course of many years Hammerschmidt continued to push legislation through Congress that supported the redevelopment of the U.S 71 corridor. This enabled Hammerschmidt to receive federal aid funding of twenty or thirty million dollars at a time for Arkansas highways. However, because the money was not designated specifically for the interstate system, the state highway department was responsible for deciding the best use for these funds.⁶

From the beginning, Hammerschmidt felt that “[i]f we don’t get this road started, the Arkansas Highway Department and the way the commission’s structured, they’re never gonna

6. Hammerschmidt, interview, 212-214.

get that road down to Winslow and Alma built. I mean, they're never gonna get it replaced.”⁷

Despite his untraditional methods, Hammerschmidt recognized the importance of a north – south transportation corridor through northwest Arkansas and whenever he received federal funding he made sure to “put it in this northern part – north of Alma – I always said where it had to go. I wouldn't let the highway department move it or anything. And I'm – I just put it in there specifically. And that's where it had to go.” Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Hammerschmidt basically “forced that road on 'em, but – and they're glad I did, but Lord, I don't know what we'd do about that traffic.”⁸ Over the decades, traffic congestion continued to worsen along U.S. 71, and the number of accidents steadily increased. Many of Hammerschmidt's constituents were concerned with the hazardous driving conditions. Yet, even with the federal aid Hammerschmidt was funneling into the project, it was never enough, and progress was slow. By the late 1980s only small segments of U.S. 71 had been upgraded. Northwest Arkansas was growing rapidly, and did not have the infrastructure necessary to support this level of expansion.

Many assumed the Interstate era had finally come to an end, and that the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1987 would be the last highway bill to authorize interstate funding.⁹ However just four years later, one of the most significant pieces of highway legislation was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush. According to President Bush, The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) represented an “investment in America's economic future” and he considered it to be “the most

7. Ibid., 213.

8. Ibid., 215.

9. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Highway History, *President Ronald Reagan and the Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1987*, Richard F. Weingroff, October 15, 2013, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/rw01e.cfm> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Highway History, *President Ronald Reagan*).

important transportation bill since President Eisenhower started the Interstate System 35 years ago.” President Bush felt that “an efficient transportation system is absolutely essential for a productive and efficient economy” and that it was necessary for the nation to “start improving our roads and bridges and railways, our equal opportunities to the future.” As a senior ranking member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, Hammerschmidt played a central role in the creation of this bill and shared President Bush’s enthusiasm regarding its importance to the future of American transportation and infrastructure.¹⁰

After over twenty years in Congress, Hammerschmidt now had more influence than ever, which put him in a position to draft a bill that he believed would be crucial for highway development in Arkansas. Hammerschmidt realized that certain provisions outlined in ISTEA would be instrumental in regards to the construction of a major north – south transportation route between Kansas City and New Orleans. The legislation identified an area almost parallel to the U.S. 71 route from northern Louisiana to Kansas City as NHS High Priority Corridor Number One, and the segment between Lafayette to New Orleans, as High Priority Corridor Number Thirty-Seven. While this did not mean initial interstate highway designation, identification as High Priority Route Corridors within the National Highway System (NHS) meant significant funding for these highways. Through his work on ISTEA, Hammerschmidt forced the federal government to finally accept the existence of a major north – south transportation void through the heart of the country. This legislation helped provide the necessary funding to improve this route as well as a number of other inadequate principle arterial roadways across the nation.¹¹

In preparation for this landmark piece of legislation, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) along with the Federal Highway

10. Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark*.

11. Lindsey, e-mail; Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark*.

Administration (FHWA), created focus groups at the request of the Bush administration, to help determine the future of the United States transportation system and infrastructure development. In the late 1980s both the AASHTO and the FHWA published studies that proposed a need for the creation of a new National Highway System (NHS). This would offer similar benefits to those provided by the Interstate Highway System, while giving the states more power and flexibility to determine the necessary highway standards based on local needs. The NHS proposal would also avoid the controversy surrounding the additional designation of Interstate mileage.¹² President Bush responded to these findings with the creation of the Surface Transportation Act of 1991 (STAA). The bill highlighted NHS as a key component and stated that the “[f]ederal investment would be focused on maintaining and improving a national highway system that would serve interstate and interregional transportation.” However, STAA received criticism from urban officials, environmental groups, and those in favor of increased federal funds for the development of mass transit systems.¹³

The majority of the Senate also opposed STAA and in its place created S.965, the Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (STEPA). The original version of this bill did not include a provision for NHS. As a result, Hammerschmidt and other ranking members of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee enlisted the work of FHWA Administrator Larson to draw up a map highlighting preliminary NHS routes. “Larson, with his academic and intellectual roots, was not a “highway man”” yet he provided convincing testimony in favor of NHS:

12. Public Roads, *Creating a Landmark*.

13. Ibid.

To improve national productivity and make most efficient use of the limited resources available, and given that 98 percent of all surface passenger movement and 75 percent of all freight value today moves on highways, federal surface transportation strategy and investment must focus on a select, but integrated, network of principal highways. ... While we are moving to the post-Interstate construction era, we are not yet ready for a post-highway transportation economy.

Despite Larson’s testimony the Senate remained opposed to NHS. Yet ultimately the final version of the bill included a small provision which allowed for the proposal of a National Highway System to be submitted to and presented before Congress in two years.¹⁴

Following true to form, the House version of the highway bill was vastly different from S.965. The creators of this bill included Representative Robert A. Roe, Chairman of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation; Representative Norman Mineta, Chairman of the House Surface Transportation Subcommittee; Representative Bud Shuster, top ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee; and Representative John Paul Hammerschmidt, top ranking Republican of the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation. These four senior Congressmen designed this highway bill, which they felt was a significant piece of transportation legislation. It included an increase in gas tax, a provision opposed by both the Senate and the White House, but one that “did not deter the “Big Four” – Roe, Mineta, Shuster, and Hammerschmidt – from releasing the Intermodal Surface Transportation Infrastructure Act of 1991 (H.R. 2950).” Additionally it called for the identification of up to 155,000 miles of routes to be included in NHS and submitted to Congress by 1993, with the stipulation that “[p]rior to approval, any route classified on the basis of function as a principle arterial would be eligible for NHS funds.” The bill also introduced “long-range plans and feasibility studies for NHS “High Priority Corridors,” to require the states to give priority to their construction, and to

14. Ibid.

provide increased funding for them.” The ranking House Representatives, or the “Big Four” agreed that this legislation was not simply “about highway transportation” and instead argued that “[i]t would provide “an intermodal system for the next 10 years and the 21st century.”” However like many previous highway bills, this piece of legislation was destined for debate in a House – Senate Conference Committee.¹⁵

Just one day into the Conference, “the House passed a motion, 394 to 3, directing the House Conferees to insist upon the House provisions for NHS, which Rep. Hammerschmidt described as “the centerpiece of the restructured highway program that is being proposed for the post-Interstate era.”” Despite this stipulation, the House – Senate Conference Committee reached an agreement that became known as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Soon after, both the House and Senate voted in favor of the provisions outlined in ISTEA, which included a National Highway System, and additional funding for NHS High-Priority Corridors.¹⁶

ISTEA enabled Hammerschmidt to insure the availability of sufficient funds for the construction of what would ultimately become Interstate 540 through northwest Arkansas. In an article for the Arkansas *Democratic Gazette*, Hammerschmidt discussed his work on I-540 and said “[w]e received about \$400 million mostly for the 3rd District through ISTEA . . . [t]hat was all out of the highway trust fund, not from income taxes.” Even without extensive documentation from the 1970s and 1980s, it is obvious that Hammerschmidt struggled for years to help Arkansas receive funding for this project. He stated that “[g]etting I-540 built, however, actually had been in the works for about 23 years before it was completed.”¹⁷ Hammerschmidt

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Bowden, “Northwest Arkansas Council,” *Arkansas Democratic Gazette*.

understood the significant impact ISTEA would have on the construction of this long neglected transportation corridor.

Despite his retirement from Congress the following year, Hammerschmidt continued to play a crucial role in the development of Interstate 540 until 1999 when the entire segment was officially opened to traffic. As chairman of the Northwest Arkansas Council from 1993 to 2006, Hammerschmidt was strategically placed to see the project through to completion.¹⁸ He worked closely with Uvalde Lindsey who served as the Council's first executive director from 1990 until 2005. Lindsey's "job was to build I-49" and together he and Hammerschmidt endeavored to achieve this goal. However, while still in Congress, and as a ranking member of the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, Hammerschmidt informed Lindsey that "the Committee was planning on conducting field hearings in preparation for the final writing of ISTEA" and that one of these meetings would be held in Springdale. Along with Hammerschmidt, the attendees

consisted of the most senior ranking members of the Committee, which gave the region and its leadership the unique opportunity to present testimony that could really make a difference in raising awareness of the region's need for surface transportation improvements. Mr. Walton, Don Tyson, JB Hunt, Alice Walton and others presented testimony attesting to the need and importance of such improvement to the economy of the region and the nation.

Lindsey believed that this hearing had a significant impact on the ISTEA designation of U.S. 71 as NHS High Priority Corridor Number One, "which opened the door for priority federal highway funding to develop [this] route as a future part of the Interstate System."¹⁹

18. Ibid; Lindsey, e-mail.

19. Lindsey, e-mail.

Hammerschmidt felt that ISTEA provided “a catalyst to get [corporate magnates] Sam Walton and Don Tyson and others involved” in the Northwest Arkansas Council.²⁰

The Council was established as a private, nonprofit in 1990 by local business leaders who felt that the individual cities and towns of Northwest Arkansas needed to come together as a whole, in order to support the continued progression of the region’s economic growth and prosperity. The improvement and development of the infrastructure systems within this area became the Council’s primary focus. Northwest Arkansas was home to three successful and rapidly growing corporations; Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Tyson Foods Inc., and J.B Hunt Transportation Services Inc. The need for adequate infrastructure became increasingly apparent for the expansion of these and other local businesses. According to Mike Malone, the current Executive Director of the Northwest Arkansas Council, the success and expansion of the major industries within “[t]his area was at a disadvantage because it was landlocked from other regions on the map.” Throughout its first decade in operation, Council members worked to acquire the funding necessary for the development of various infrastructure projects, including but not limited to the construction of Interstate 540 from Alma to Bentonville. The Northwest Arkansas Council’s early successes with infrastructure development derived from its ability to step back and view the area as one region, not multiple towns and cities. By addressing issues from a regional perspective, and looking at the bigger picture, Council members were able to advocate for the projects needed to improve Northwest Arkansas as a whole. According to Hammerschmidt, “[t]heir goal is not to serve themselves as individual members but to serve the entire community, to upgrade the quality of life for everyone there.”²¹

20. Bowden, “Northwest Arkansas Council,” *Arkansas Democratic Gazette*.

21. Ibid; Lindsey, e-mail.

During his time as chairman of the Northwest Arkansas Council, Hammerschmidt, along with executive director Lindsey, “and Senators Bumpers and Pryor, worked ... to secure federal ear-marks of about \$250-300 million ... in addition to the new NHS funding ... [which] prioritized and hastened the construction process,” along the U.S 71 route.²² In 1997 and 1998 the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) sought permission from AASHTO for construction on Arkansas 540 to be included within the Interstate Highway System as part of Interstate 49. However, this classification was denied. Instead, in 1999 the Alma to Bentonville portion of Arkansas 540 was designated as a northern extension of the existing I-540, and officially became named the “John Paul Hammerschmidt Highway”.²³

In June of 2014, Interstate 540 from Alma north through Bella Vista to the Missouri state line received official classification as Interstate 49. Throughout Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri, segments along this corridor are slowly nearing completion, with the ultimate goal extending far beyond the original plans to provide a direct link between Kansas City and New Orleans. Continued development of the Interstate 49 corridor will expand north to Winnipeg, Canada, and cover a total of 1,700 miles. “Along the way, this North – South Interstate route will intersect 9 existing East – West Interstate highways to create a comprehensive transportation grid that will enhance the movement of food, goods, energy and people to and from anywhere in mid-America and the rest of the world.” As of last year, it was estimated that eighty percent of I-49 had been completed, yet significantly more funding will be necessary to finish up the remaining twenty percent. Construction has not even begun on several large segments along the

22. Lindsey, e-mail.

23. Roadnow: I-540 AR, Interstate 540 Arkansas, <http://m.roadnow.com/i540ar/Arkansas-Route-Description.html> (accessed June 2, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Roadnow: I-540 AR).

corridor, and sections of completed highway have not yet been connected, especially along state lines.

The majority of work needed to finish construction on I-49 falls in the Arkansas where the “route stretches from Texarkana, up through De Queen, Mena and Waldron, into Fort Smith and on through Northwest Arkansas.” A 2009 newspaper article outlined the I-49 situation in Arkansas, “[e]fforts to fund and build a two-lane, interstate quality highway through western Arkansas date back more than five decades ... “[a]ll that stands in the way of this interstate reality is several small segments at the Arkansas-Louisiana and Arkansas Missouri borders and a large 185-mile segment between Texarkana and Fort Smith that posts a price tag of \$3 billion.”²⁴

In 2012 the Missouri section of U.S. 71 between Kansas City and Joplin was included as part of the Interstate 49 corridor; the only portion that remained incomplete “is a five-mile strip south of Pineville to the state line, where it will connect to a bypass around Bella Vista, Ark.” Missouri highway officials have said that the state will finish construction along the border when Arkansas has the funding it needs to do the same. The price tag for completion of the proposed Bella Vista bypass is much larger in Arkansas than in Missouri, as is the mileage. A 2012 state sales tax increase helped provide Arkansas with enough funding to get the project started. Construction is currently underway, yet a significant amount of federal aid is needed to complete this segment.²⁵

24. “Local, state and federal officials sound off on I-49,” *The City Wire*, <http://www.thecitywire.com/node/5689> (accessed July 15, 2015).

25. Todd Gill, “I-540 redesignated as I-49 in Northwest Arkansas,” *Fayetteville Flyer*, <http://www.fayettevilleflyer.com/2014/04/16/i-540-receives-new-highway-designation-in-northwest-arkansas/> (accessed July 15, 2015). (Hereafter cited as: Gill, “I-540 redesignated as I-49,” *Fayetteville Flyer*); “U.S. 71 Highway to become I-49 on Wednesday: Long-term plan calls for extension into Louisiana,” *KMBC*, <http://www.kmbc.com/news/U-S-71-Highway-to-become-I-49-on-Wednesday/17736398#ixzz2FWfA7GUh> (accessed July 15, 2015); Justin Bates, “Officials mark Interstate 49 designation, launch bridge campaign,” *Arkansas News*,

When the U.S. 71 north – south corridor in Arkansas finally received official designation as part of Interstate 49, the renamed segment covered roughly 65 miles in Northwest Arkansas from Alma to just south of Bella Vista. Essentially the existing Interstate 540 was now federally recognized “as part of a long-term plan to incorporate the stretch of road into a highway running from Kansas City to New Orleans.” However, at this time Arkansas was still “awaiting Federal Highway Administration approval to designate future sections of Interstate 49 between Interstate 40 and the Louisiana state line.”²⁶

Less than one year later in November of 2014, the I-49 segment connecting Arkansas and Louisiana was officially opened to traffic between Shreveport and Texarkana. This was a major step forward for the entire Interstate 49 corridor, now “a true Interstate from one state to another.”²⁷ Even though I-49 originated in Louisiana it did not include the U.S. 90 route between Lafayette and New Orleans. The state is still working to upgrade this section of highway to interstate standards. Once completed, the southern most portion of “I-49 will provide an additional hurricane evacuation route for the Louisiana gulf coast, as well as enhancing economic development for the Port of New Orleans and other ports and cities along the route.”²⁸ However, the benefits of I-49 will not be fully realized until Kansas City is directly linked to New Orleans.

<http://arkansasnews.com/news/arkansas/officials-mark-interstate-49-designation-launch-bridge-campaign> (accessed July, 15 2015).

26. Gill, “I-540 redesignated as I-49,” *Fayetteville Flyer*.

27. Adam Duvernay, “I-49 opens from Shreveport to Arkansas, beyond,” *Shreveport Times*, <http://www.shreveporttimes.com/story/news/local/louisiana/2014/11/10/opens-shreveport-arkansas-beyond/18835875/> (accessed July 15, 2015).

28. “Our greatest challenge continues to be construction funding,” Interstate 49 International Coalition, <http://www.interstate49.org/index.php?page=funding> (accessed June 2, 2015).

Unfortunately, the incomplete Arkansas section currently has close to 200 miles “without designated funding or engineering work.” The construction along this portion of I-49 has been completed in small increments. The most recent segment, just over 6 miles, officially opened in July 2015 through Chaffee Crossing east of Fort Smith. At the opening ceremony local Chamber of Commerce president Tim Allen expressed his hopes for the future “by saying a completed I-49 through western Arkansas would put the Fort Smith region at the “crossroads of America.”” Plans are already underway for the next phase of development which “is the 15-mile section between the I-40/I-49 interchange near Alma and across the Arkansas River into Barling.” Due to the lack of available funding for this project, the Northwest Arkansas Council has been asked to step in and help Fort Smith in efforts to “lobby state and federal officials for funding.”²⁹ Meanwhile, construction of the new Bella Vista Bypass has continued at a steady rate. An eight-mile segment was completed in 2014 and another section was scheduled for completion in August 2015. However, at this time the Bella Vista Bypass has yet to receive official I-49 designation. The next piece of federal aid highway legislation will ultimately dictate the progression of this project.

The future of federal highway funding has increasingly become more uncertain as Congress has struggled to create a comprehensive highway bill over the past year. In the quest to formulate a long-term plan that will generate the revenue necessary to adequately fund the nation’s highway system, Congress has issued a number of short-term extensions in order to continue highway funding until a more permanent solution can be agreed upon. However, this has caused several states to become wary about any major highway development plans. In June

29. Michael Tilley, “Gov. Hutchinson: New I-49 stretch a good start but more is needed,” *The City Wire*, <http://www.thecitywire.com/node/38162#.VbI1OpR4pIA> (accessed July 15, 2015).

2015, Oklahoma Senator Jim Inhofe stated that “[o]ur nation’s roads and highways have suffered under too many short-term extensions, which have led to higher costs, more waste, and less capability to prioritize major modernization projects to address growing demands on our interstates.”³⁰ Interstate 49, primarily the north – south route through Arkansas, may once again be dependent on what could possibly become another landmark federal aid highway bill.

30. Ibid.

Conclusion

A century ago the United States government began the first federally funded highway program, which ultimately led to the creation of well over 40,000 miles of limited access expressways that crisscross the nation today. While certain types of roadways had long been part of the American landscape, the details regarding construction, placement and funding were dealt with at the local level as needed. Railroads reigned as the predominate mode of transportation for goods and people across the country leaving no real necessity for a nationally connected system of highways, even when the first Federal Aid Road Act was passed in 1916. However with the advent of the automobile the government felt it needed to at least play a small role in assisting states with road development throughout the nation. The automobile became wildly popular during the roaring twenties and the need for a transcontinental highway network became increasingly evident. After dominating American transportation for close to a hundred years, the railroads reached their peak in the 1920s and then began to slowly decline as more travel alternatives became available. This trend continued until the late sixties and early seventies, and ended with the discontinuance of all private passenger rail services.

The end of passenger railways significantly impacted the transportation of goods and people, specifically in rural areas. When the Kansas City *Southern Belle* discontinued its last remaining passenger trains, a major north – south transportation void was left between Kansas City and New Orleans. Western Arkansans almost immediately realized the negative impact and in the early 1970s began to push for the development of an interstate highway connecting these two major cities. John Paul Hammerschmidt sympathized with his constituents and understood the importance of the continued construction and improvement of the federal aid highway

system. Except for the lost decade, Hammerschmidt worked tirelessly throughout his twenty-six years in Congress to further the funding and development of Arkansas's infrastructure. His hard work would eventually pay off with the designation of Interstate 540, named the "John Paul Hammerschmidt Highway" in 1999, and its inclusion as part of Interstate 49 in 2014, which linked Kansas City to New Orleans along a route very similar to that of the *Southern Belle*. However, the numerous issues surrounding federal aid highway legislation made this a long and difficult process.

From the beginning, policy makers faced problems creating a highway bill that would have widespread benefits across the United States and for almost half a century very little progress was made. However, in 1956 it seemed as if politicians, special interest groups, and highway engineers had finally agreed upon a predominately federally funded highway program that would completely modernize and transform America's infrastructure. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 authorized twenty-five billion dollars for the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highways to be completed over the course of thirteen years, with the federal government funding ninety percent of the newly named National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. However, by the early seventies numerous controversies surrounding expressway development in urban areas became central themes for many policy makers in regards to highway legislation. This proved to be detrimental to interstate construction in rural states that still desperately needed improvements on all federal aid highway systems, as well as the designation of additional interstate mileage. While Arkansans pushed for the development of a north – south expressway soon after the discontinuance of passenger railways, it took almost twenty more years for Hammerschmidt to get the legislation, logistics, and funding necessary to move forward with construction along the U.S. 71 corridor from Alma to Northwest Arkansas.

His greatest success came with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 which included a National Highway System and the designation of High Priority Corridors. Hammerschmidt made sure this north – south interstate from Kansas City, south through Arkansas, and on into Louisiana was number one on the list.

While considerable progress has been made, about twenty percent of the entire Interstate 49 corridor from Canada to the Gulf Coast still remains incomplete. In 2012 the majority of the Missouri section received I-49 designation from Kansas City to just five miles north of the Arkansas state line. Missouri is currently waiting on Arkansas to complete construction on their portion of the Bella Vista bypass in order to finish the last remaining miles necessary to connect I-49 between the Arkansas and Missouri border. In November of 2014, Interstate 49 was opened from Shreveport to Texarkana, linking the Louisiana and Arkansas portions of this route. The Louisiana segment currently under construction extends from Lafayette to New Orleans. However the longest stretch along the I-49 corridor that is still in need of federal funding and designation is in Arkansas, with the total cost of completion estimated at well over three billion dollars. This segment extends for close to 200 miles between Texarkana and Fort Smith. There are also smaller portions that are still under construction including a fifteen-mile section from Interstate 40 near Alma to the Arkansas River. Additionally work is still being completed along the Bella Vista bypass from Northwest Arkansas to the Missouri state line.

Once the remainder of the Interstate 49 route is completed, it will then connect with Interstate 29 in Kansas City and extend north into Winnipeg, Canada. “Along the way, this North – South interstate route will intersect 9 existing East – West interstate highways to create a comprehensive transportation grid that will enhance the movement of food, goods, energy and

people to and from anywhere in Mid-America and the rest of the world.”¹ The I-29 route between Kansas City and Canada has already been completed and once I-49 is finished this 1,700 mile expressway will become a major international “uninterrupted Interstate Trade Corridor from Canada through the heart of America to New Orleans - - and, through the Port System of Louisiana, to Central/South America and points beyond through the expanding Panama Canal.”² The transcontinental plans for this route offer a true testimony of Hammerschmidt’s unwavering dedication and support of interstate highway development, specifically a major north – south corridor through Arkansas. In the words of Uvalde Lindsay, “[w]e would not have I49 today but for JPH and his successful work and effort.”³

1. Interstate Guide: Interstate 49, History.

2. Ibid.

3. Lindsey, e-mail.

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