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**ARKANSAS STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

Eureka Springs  
Rotary Club  
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# History



# Prior to 1913

*“We are always yapping about the ‘Good Old Days’ and how we look away back and enjoy it, but I tell you there is a lot of hoey to it.”*

– Will Rogers





# The Teens

- ***First Commission Created***
  - ✓ ***No Highway Department***
  - ✓ ***No Highway System***
- ***3,600 Vehicles - \$72,000 Total Budget***
- ***36,000 Miles of Public Roads***

Highway 71 near Bella Vista



# The Twenties



Repair Shop of State  
Highway Department,  
Little Rock, early 1930s



- **Highway System Created**

Highway Districts 1923



- **Highway Department Created**

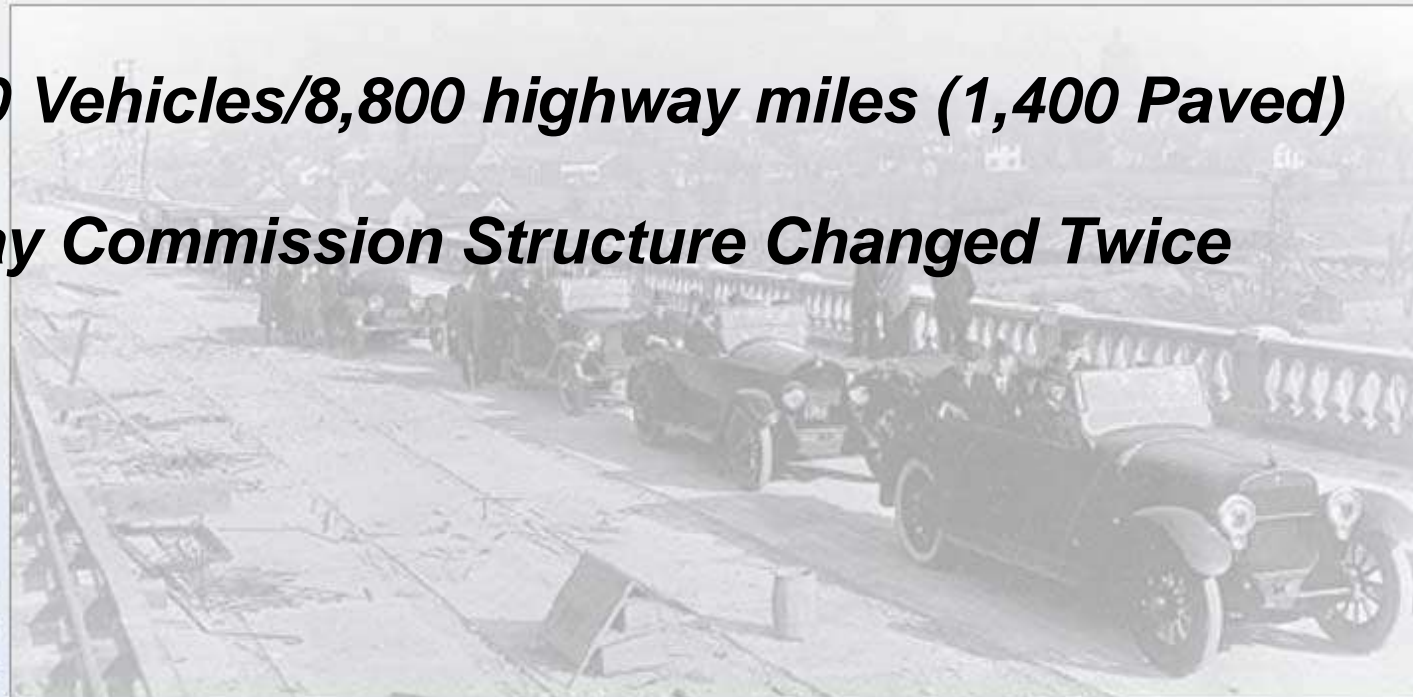
- **First Gas Tax – 1 cent per gallon**

- **200,000 Vehicles/8,800 highway miles (1,400 Paved)**

Highway Districts 1925



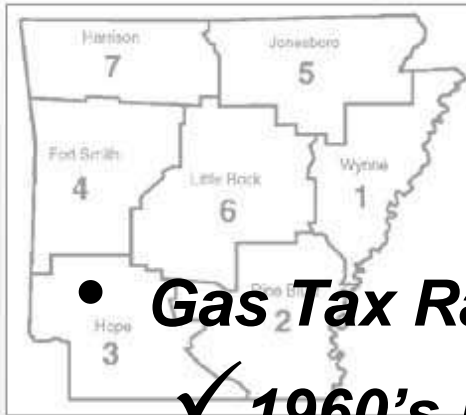
- **Highway Commission Structure Changed Twice**



Broadway Bridge dedication,  
1922. View is looking towards  
North Little Rock



# The Thirties



- **Gas Tax Raised to 6.5 cents per Gallon**  
✓ **1960's Before Next Increase**



Magnet Truck. Picked up an average of 20 lbs of metal per mile

- **255,000 Vehicles; 9,300 Highway miles (3,000 Paved)**
- **Commission Structure Changed Two More Times**



State Highway Department HQ, 1939





# The Forties

- ***World War II – Major Influence***
- ***455,000 Vehicles; 9,700 Highway Miles (4,900 Paved)***
- ***Commission Structure Changed Two More Times***
- ***Too much Political Influence on Highways – Growing Discontent***

Operation of the Henderson Ferry at Norfolk Lake cost \$117,981 for 1947-48. During this period 189,856 vehicles were ferried over at an average cost of 62¢

Dillard's Ferry, a hand-cranked operation, crossed the Buffalo River at Highway 14 from 1929-1958.





# The Fifties



- **1951 - Highway Audit Commission Report**

- ✓ **“the advice, counsel and expert know-how which is available from the Department’s own technical and administrative staffs bear scant weight indeed when they are in conflict with the political pressures and political promises of the moment.”**
- **Interstate Era**
- **750,000 Vehicles**
- **11,000 Miles State Highways (8,800 Paved)**

- **9 Legislative Acts Restructured Commission since 1913**
- **1952 – Mack Blackwell Amendment**

Widening Hwy 67 near Malvern, 1956







# The Sixties

- ***No changes to Commission Structure***
- ***Arkansas - National Forefront in Interstate Construction/Completion***
- ***Legislature transferred 3,400 miles of County Roads to Highway System***
- ***1.1 million Vehicles; 14,500 Highway Miles (13,000 Paved)***

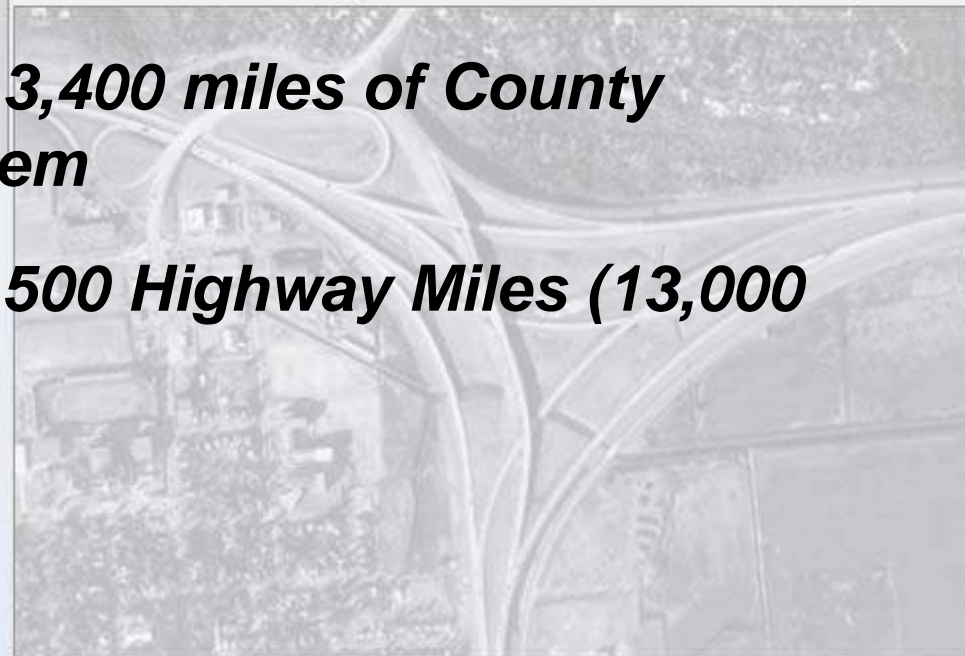
Highway  
Department  
Complex at I-30  
/ Hwy 338, late  
1960s



Highway 144, South of Lake Village



Weights & Standards Division, AHD



North Terminal Interchange, 1962



# The Seventies

- **Department became Debt Free**
- **Legislature transferred nearly 1,000 more miles of County Roads to Highway System**

South Terminal Interchange



AHC Lawrence Blackwell burning hands at a ceremony in 1975.

- **Department adds “Transportation” to its name – Authority Expanded**

- **1<sup>st</sup> State to Complete its Interstate System (1975)**
- **1.7 million Vehicles; 16,000 Highway Miles (15,000 Paved)**



Toad Suck Ferry on Arkansas River at Highway 60, 1970



I-430 River Bridge, 1973



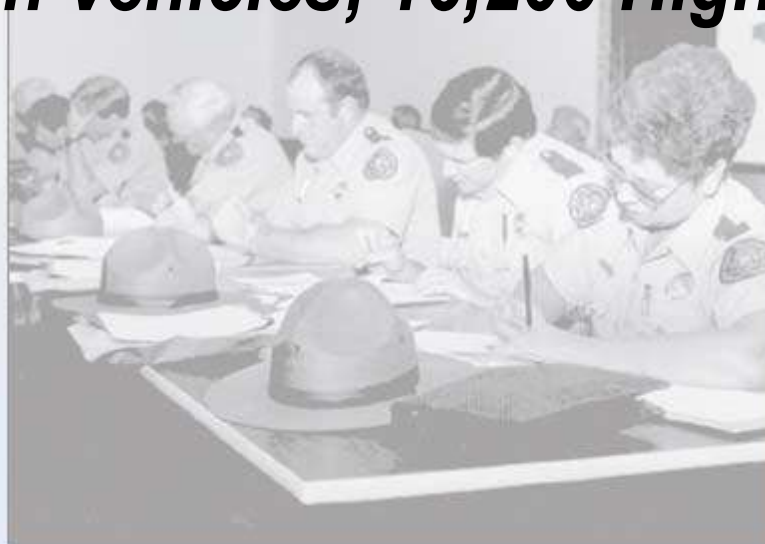


# The Eighties



- **1985 – Rural Road Program – out of the mud**
- **Early Retirements – huge workforce turnover**
- **2.0 million Vehicles; 16,200 Highway Miles**

East-West Alignment linking Hwy 270 W and Hwy 70 W in Hot Springs.



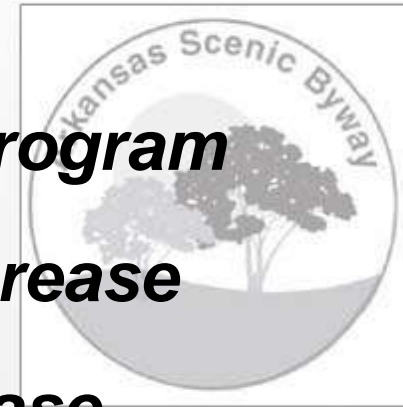
Removal costs reached \$4 M, 1984

Transportation Safety Agency, 1989



# The Nineties

- **1991 – Highway Improvement Program**
- **1993 – Last Federal Gas Tax Increase**
- **1999 – Last State Gas Tax Increase**
- **1999 – Interstate Rehabilitation Program –**



Section of Hwy 7  
named first Scenic  
Byway in Kansas.

## **First Highway Bond Issue in 50 years**

1991 Highway Improvement Program planned to improve or replace approximately 560 bridges.

- **I-540 (now I-49) and I-530 Completed**
- **2.1 million Vehicles; 16,400 Highway Miles**



Dedication of I-540 and Bobby Hopper Tunnel, 1999



# The New Millennium



- **2011 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Interstate Rehabilitation Program**
- **2012 – Connecting Arkansas Program**



Winter Weather in Dec 2000 and Jan 2001 cost almost \$40 M.

- **Governor's Working Group on Highway Funding**

- **3.0 million Vehicles; 16,400 miles State Highways**



New White River Bridge on Hwy 64 at Augusta opened in 2001.





- [ArkansasHighways.com](http://ArkansasHighways.com)
- [ConnectingArkansasProgram.com](http://ConnectingArkansasProgram.com)
- [Vimeo.com/AHTD](http://Vimeo.com/AHTD)
- [IDriveArkansas.com](http://IDriveArkansas.com)
- [Twitter.com @AHTD](https://twitter.com/AHTD)



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**Questions?**