

roadnotes

M *Measuring travel time.* In 1998, U.S. freight carriers transported over 15 billion tons of goods worth more than \$9 trillion. Truck carried about seventy percent of the tonnage and nearly eighty percent of the value. By 2020, the volume of freight moved on the U.S. transportation system is expected to increase to 25 billion tons, worth about \$30 trillion. This will substantially increase truck traffic on the Nation's highways.

The Federal Highway Administration's Freight Management and Operations estimates an annual increase of over three percent through 2020 in truck miles travelled, compared with two-and-half percent for passenger vehicles. Peak-period congestion affected twenty-eight percent of urban portions of the National Highway System in 1998; in 2020, forty-six percent will be affected. Intercity routes such as I-5 between southern California and the Francisco Bay area, I-95 in the Northeast, I-70 across Missouri, and I-10 between San Antonio and Houston are already experiencing serious congestions.



Research on the trucking industry indicates shippers and carriers value transit time at \$25 to \$200 per hour, depending on the product being carried. Because timely and reliable movement of goods is critical to the economy, FHWA initiated a Performance Measurement Initiative in 2002 with the American Transportation Research Institute. This study used location data from various technologies (including the Qualcomm satellite and GPS measurements, electronic toll collection, and weight-in-motion equipment) to derive average travel rates for five freight-significant corridors (I-5, I-10, I-45, I-65, and I-70 (Texas)). Preliminary results indicate that a trucker moving goods on I-5 from San Diego, Cal., to Blaine, Wa., would have about six hours of buffer time to ensure, with 95 percent confidence, that he will arrive on time. One full year of data for the five corridors was to be made available in January 2006. For more information, go to <http://fhwa.dot.gov>. [by FHWA]

T *ranscontinental I-10.* Running from Santa Monica and Greater Los Angeles, Cal., in the west to Jacksonville, Fla., in the east, the transcontinental I-10 is a high-priority transportation

artery in eight states with different environmental and economic demands.



The route, which is known as the Columbus Transcontinental Highway, and which links seven major U.S. Cities, is one of only three coast-to-coast interstates in the U.S.—the others are I-80 and I-90.

R *oute 50.* As a concrete metaphor of nation building, one can't do better than U.S. Route 50—a 3037-mile route that's older than the Nation. Indeed, parts of the route were surveyed by George Washington before he became a revolutionary. The highway starts at the beach in Ocean City, Md., crosses the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and heads due west. Sometimes a 65-mph four-lane, sometimes a stop-and-go commercial strip, the road passes right beside the Washington Monument, spans the Mississippi near St. Louis' Gateway Arch, tops the Continental Divide at 11,300 feet in Colorado, following in the southeast the precise route of the 18th-century Santa Fe Trail, and stretches through the vast emptiness of Nevada desert, where a road sign warns, "Cattle on highway, next 110 miles." Then, after crossing the Sierra Nevada, it gets the weary traveller to Sacramento.

Interestingly, Route 50 closely tracks the westward course of the cartographic concept known as the "mean center of population"—the point where the Nation would balance if the country were a flat tray and every American stood at his or her place of residence. As the



Nation expanded inland since the first census in 1790, this point has moved west and south, just as Route 50 does, from the banks of the Potomac to central Missouri.

The old highway has countless names. It is "Main Street" in some communities and "1st Street" in others. It is Constitution Avenue in the District, Wyatt Earp Boulevard in Dodge City, Kan., and Amb. Thompson Blvd. in Las Animas, Col. But for most, it's Route 50, the road that connects us. The idea of a connector has in recent years been re-inforced by the very successful national yard sale organized each year along Route 50. [by T.R. Reid, *The Washington Post*]