

Interstates are key commerce corridors fueling economic growth

ADOT

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Challenges exist as nation's interstate system turns 60 this week

PHOENIX – Arizona's interstate highways are key commerce corridors serving not only as the backbone of our transportation system but providing businesses and their customers with food, fuel and other essentials.

With the U.S. marking the 60th anniversary of the national interstate highway system that President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched in 1956, John Halikowski, director of the Arizona Department of Transportation, said this essential infrastructure requires adequate and sustained investment.

"By carrying many thousands of trucks each and every week, our interstates in Arizona are a critical lifeline for the health of our state's businesses and our economic well-being," Halikowski said. "If our interstate freeways are not reliable, high-quality corridors, Arizona will not be able to maintain our existing businesses and attract new business to the state."

With ADOT facing limited transportation funding as it safeguards Arizona's \$20 billion investment in highways and looks toward future improvements, the state's 1,169 miles of interstate highways anchor a reliable travel network vital to economic growth.

"Arizona is at the heart of the 10th-largest regional economy in the

world stretching from Southern California to Texas," Halikowski said. "We're reminding Arizonans, from business owners to policymakers to the traveling public, that interstates provide the links to this trillion-dollar market. The importance of these links cannot be overstated."

That applies to Interstate 10, the state's longest at 392 miles, and the 30 miles of I-15, Arizona's shortest stretch of interstate.

It's one of the reasons Halikowski earlier this month led efforts to establish an Interstate 10 Corridor Coalition with transportation leaders from California, New Mexico and Texas. An agreement, signed June 2, supports innovations that make travel on I-10 safer and more efficient.

ADOT also is looking to the future by laying the groundwork for another interstate. Although it's likely many years from existence, Interstate 11 is on the drawing board as a multimodal corridor improving travel not only between Phoenix and Las Vegas but also as part of a bigger vision for connecting southern Arizona, at Nogales, with the Intermountain West region, including Nevada.

Last December, Congress formally designated I-11 through Arizona as part of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. While that designation didn't come with funding, it does make the corridor eligible for future federal funding.

"When it comes to what I'll call the 'state of our interstates,' we need to

change our driving culture to avoid distractions, be patient and drive sober. ADOT will maximize and use available funding wisely to ensure that we get everyone home safely through road improvements, technology and driver awareness," Halikowski said. "Focusing on safety and the economy in our transportation infrastructure system will foster a better quality of life for all Arizonans."

Arizona's Interstate Highways

Interstate 8: 178 miles

Interstate 10: 392 miles

Interstate 15: 30 miles

Interstate 17: 146 miles

Interstate 19: 64 miles

Interstate 40: 359 miles

Total: 1,169 miles

About the history of the U.S. Interstate Highway System: June marks the 60th anniversary of the law that launched the funding and construction of the nation's 47,000-mile interstate highway system. It is officially known as the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The interstate highway system was authorized when, on June 29, 1956, President Eisenhower signed the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. The legislation passed by Congress called for 90 percent of the funding to come from a highway trust fund that received revenue from the federal gasoline tax.