AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY
AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

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1989

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PREFACE

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) is responsible for maintaining the official records of the United States Numbered Highways. The initial system was adopted in 1926 and has undergone many changes since. The AASHTO Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering meets twice each year to consider applications from state highway and transportation agencies for changes to the Interstate, U.S. Numbered Highway and U.S. Bicycle Route Systems. The Special Committee screens all applications and make recommendations to the AASHTO Executive Committee which administers the system.

This 1989 edition of the United States Numbered Highways introduces a change in format. It is published in a looseleaf notebook and three-hole punched in order to print and distribute updates on an annual basis. When the changes become extensive, as they may within a period of five or more years, a new book will then be published.

We believe that this new format will better meet the requirements of the users of this book. Any comments, corrections, or noted inconsistencies are welcomed. Such should be addressed to the Secretary of the Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, 444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 225, Washington, D.C. 20001.

The Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering gratefully acknowledges the technical assistance of Bob Simpson in the preparation of this edition.

AASHTO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON U.S. ROUTE NUMBERING

Hal Rives, Georgia, Chairman
Leno Menghini, Wyoming
Robert H. Johnson, Massachusetts
Ralph C. Wehner, Illinois
Donna J. Tamburelli, AASHTO, Secretary
INTRODUCTION

In order to bring some order out of route designation over the Nation, the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) in the early 20’s requested the Secretary of Agriculture, under whose offices the Bureau of Public Roads at that time operated, to name a Committee for the purpose of formulating a plan or system of numbered highways, principally for the assistance of motorists engaged in Interstate travel. Subsequent to that action, this Association was asked by the Secretary of Agriculture to develop such a system.

After much study and deliberation, the system was developed and officially adopted in 1926, and the administration and maintenance of records is kept in the offices of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, as AASHO is now called.

For the benefit of those reading this book who are not familiar with the organization of the AASHTO, it is made up of the 50 State Highway and Transportation Departments, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In addition, a number of public highway and transportation agencies in other nations belong to the Association as affiliate members, and a number of substate transportation agencies in the United States belong as associate members. This system, as it was initially laid out for all practical purposes, is still in effect. It is administered by the Executive Committee of this Association. It is all a cooperative effort, and stands as a monument to the several states in their adherence to the Purpose and Policy, as adopted by the Association, and revised in September 1970. Following this introduction in this book there appears this Purpose and Policy.

Between the 1955 and 1969 editions, the Executive Committee approved changes in the system. As a result, the total mileage over all U.S. Numbered Routes in 1969 was 167,231 miles. In 1955, this was 169,760. In 1974 it had been reduced to 163,198. It was further reduced in 1979 to 159,645. The mileage as of this book is 157,724 miles.

It is of interest to note that beginning in 1955, the Executive Committee, which is the governing body of the AASHTO, approved the use of a standard form for the purpose of submission of petitions in the matter of requesting changes in the given state. In view of the fact that the system, as now established, does not need extension but rather improvement, the new form has been prepared with the idea of giving the maximum amount of information as to the traffic need and the road conditions to the Committee in order to better serve them in their deliberations.

Specific attention is requested to the matter of supplemental routes. In the instance of alternate routes, the parent route is broken at the point of beginning of the alternate route, and the alternate route is inserted in the log. At the conclusion of the alternate route, the parent route continues from the point the alternate route started and mention is made under the remarks column at the point the alternate route rejoins.

Mileage on the alternate, by-pass and business routes starts from zero. In the case of divided routes, such as North and South, or East and West, the accumulated mileage from point of beginning of the route is based on the North Section or the West section. This information is noted on each route where it applies.
PURPOSE AND POLICY

IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF
UNITED STATES NUMBERED HIGHWAYS
(Revised September 15, 1970)

The purpose of the U.S. road numbering and marking system is to facilitate travel on the main interstate lines, over the shortest routes and the best roads. To serve that purpose a system of main interstate routes was designated, and a uniform system of guide and warning signs was adopted for use in all the States, on such designated routes. This system was established in 1926. It has passed the preliminary development state. It has reached the period of review, revision, and consolidation. The U.S. road system now needs perfecting rather than expansion.

New construction has opened up newer, better and shorter routes. Demands of interstate traffic have increased and are more exacting. Public acceptance of the U.S. numbered system has made possible the rectification of early concessions made for the purpose of getting the system established and marked.

In harmony with the improved condition of State roads, the State route markers of the several States have more and more become a dependable trade mark of quality in those routes.

The establishment of a U.S. number as a guide for interstate travel over certain roads has no connection with federal control or the designation of Federal funds for road construction. These numbers may recognize a State road which has been constructed entirely by the use of State funds.

Often the U.S. marker is interpreted by the public as identifying a “federal highway” whereas the routes making up the U.S. numbered system are under State jurisdiction and not under Federal jurisdiction.

It was never intended that the U.S. numbered system should absorb or supplant the State numbered routes. It is intended by uniform marking of a U.S. route in two or more States, to facilitate the movement of Interstate traffic. Thus, with a relatively limited mileage, the U.S. numbered road system must meet the changing conditions if it is to endure and serve the purpose for which it was intended.

The routes comprising the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways will be marked with its own distinctive route marker shield and will have a numbering system that is separate and apart from the U.S. numbered system. The Interstate system marking and numbering is not to replace that of the U.S. system, but is, in reality, a separate system of a limited mileage of modern expressways to accommodate major streams of traffic between the Nation’s major traffic generating areas and the two numbered systems will complement each other. A large extent of the Interstate system is developed on new location. Those sections where the Interstate system is developed over an existing U.S. numbered route, both the U.S. and the Interstate system shields and route numbers shall be used to mark those sections which are coincident. Otherwise, it is assumed that in the majority of instances the U.S. markers and numbers will remain on the routes as now established or as determined by subsequent Executive Committee action, as new construction makes available new and better routes.

Special Route Definitions

In connection with the U.S. numbering plan, as evolved and perfected, it has been found necessary and expedient to recognize and establish “Business Routes,” “By-Pass,” “Alternate Routes” and “Temporary Routes,” which have been defined as follows:

Business Route: A “Business Route” is a route principally within the corporate limits of a city which provides the traveling public an opportunity to travel through that city, passing through the business part of the city; while the regular number is used to obviate passing through the congested part of the city. This “Business Route” connects with the regular numbered route at the opposite side of the city limits. “Business Route” numbering shall be established by the placing of a standard strip carrying the words “Business Route” on the staff above the U.S. shield.

By-Pass: A “By-Pass Route” or a “Relief Route” is a route which is established for the purpose of designating a route which entirely by-passes a city or congested area and joins in with the regular numbered route beyond the city or congested area.
This enables the regular number to be carried both through the city and around the city without either designation carrying any other sign or lettering showing a preference.

The "By-Pass Route" or "Relief Route" shall be designated by the erection of a standard strip on the staff carrying the U.S. shield, on which are the words "By-Pass" or "Relief Route," as local preference may dictate.

Alternate Route: An "Alternate Route" shall be considered a route which starts at a point where it branches off from the main numbered route, may pass through certain cities and towns, and then connect back with the regular route some miles distant. Since it is the purpose of the U.S. numbered system to mark the best and shortest route available, an alternate route should be designated only where both routes are needed to accommodate the traffic demand, and when the alternate route has substantially the same geometric and structural design standards of the main marked routing.

It is recommended that in case an alternate route is marked, that the shorter and better constructed route be given the regular number and the other section designated as the "Alternate Route". It is further recommended that the Highway Department erect signs at the junction points of the regular and alternate routes giving the distance between the cities or points concerned.

The State Highway Departments involved in the establishment of "Alternate" routes shall adopt the same procedure with the Executive Committee of the Association as applied to the creation of a new route.

The "Alternate Route" shall be marked by the erection of signs bearing the same U.S. number as the regular route and above the shield shall carry a standard strip with the words "Alternate Route".

In no instance should an alternate routing be used for the purpose of keeping an obsolete section on the U.S. numbered system after a new routing has been constructed and available to traffic.

Temporary Route: In the erection of signs for numbering routes, it is necessary in some cases to carry a number temporarily over a road that ultimately will not be the permanent location of that number. Great care should be taken by the State Highway Departments in seeing that when numbers of this character are permitted, that a standard strip carrying the words "Temporary Route" shall be placed on the staff above the number. This will obviate much hard feeling when it is necessary to change a number to the permanently established route.

The word "Temporary" on a standard strip above the regular U.S. numbered shield should also be used where it is necessary to establish a detour.

Established Policies

1. The Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials shall have full authority to review the U.S. numbered road system and the numbering and marking thereof, to make additions, changes, extensions, revisions or reductions in said road system and to revise the numbering or marking thereof.

2. Before approving any addition, change, extension, revision or reduction in the U.S. numbered road system or the numbering or marking of any U.S. numbered road, the Executive Committee shall consult the State Highway Department of the State or States through or within which such addition, change, extension, revision or reduction is located.

3. The State Highway Department, by a favorable vote on the adoption of this program and policy, agrees and pledges its good faith that it will not erect U.S. markers on any road or take down or change the U.S. markers on any road without the authorization, consent or approval of the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway Officials, notwithstanding the fact that the changes proposed are entirely within that State.

4. No additional road shall be added to the U.S. numbered road system, and no existing U.S. road shall be extended except where there is a definite showing of an adequately improved highway carrying an established and necessary line of interstate traffic not otherwise provided for by existing U.S. routes and for which traffic adequate service cannot be provided by State route numbers.

Extension of present U.S. numbered routes may be made only when the proposed extension is in the general direction of the present route.
Proposed extensions shall not be made when, to do so, it is necessary to
duplicate U.S. routes already established, unless the duplication is for a short
distance and the routes then diverge, ending in different terminal points.

5. No new U.S. route located wholly in one State shall be established. U.S. routes,
less than three hundred miles in length, heretofore established and located wholly
in one State, shall be eliminated either by consolidation with other U.S. routes
or by reverting to State routes, as rapidly as the State Highway Department and
the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway and
Transportation Officials can reach agreement with reference thereto.

6. The Executive Committee shall encourage the State Highway Departments in
the development of continuous State route numbers extending into two or more
States rather than the establishment of additional U.S. numbered routes, and
shall encourage the substitution of continuously numbered State routes for
relatively short U.S. routes now located in two or more States.

7. No new divided numbers (such as U.S. 96-W and U.S. 96-E, etc.) shall be
adopted. Existing divided U.S. numbers shall be eliminated as rapidly as the
State Highway Department and the Executive Committee can reach agreement
with reference thereto.

8. Existing U.S. routes shall be consolidated, improved and shortened.
   (a) By connecting two or more relatively short routes into one longer route.
   (b) By relocating portions of existing routes so as to follow newer, better or shorter
       roads.
   (c) By establishment of new numbers, following in general existing U.S.
       numbered routes but taking advantage of new roads or short cuts where the
       changing of present numbers is not practical.

9. A suitable highway legend, which may be copyrighted, shall be adopted by the
   Executive Committee. Such legend will be recommended for use to all travel
   map makers, also for use by the State Highway Departments. This legend is
to show, in a uniform manner, the suitability for travel not only of the U.S.
numbered routes but also of State routes.

10. Any proposal that would exploit the prestige of the U.S. numbered highway
    system to direct traffic over routes that are not the shortest and best available
    between major control points on the system, especially when it appears to be
    for the purpose of benefiting businesses located along such a proposed route,
    shall constitute reason for denying any application to make such an addition to
    the system.

11. Since the U.S. numbered system was established by joint action of the State
    Highway Departments, only those applications for changes in or additions to the
    U.S. numbered system from the member State Highway Department involved
    shall be considered by the Executive Committee. Those local officials, organiza-
    tions, groups, or individuals interested in a change or in an addition to the system
    should contact their State Highway Department and not the Executive Committ-
    ee. The Executive Committee shall consider only those applications from State
    Highway Departments that are filed on the official form and are complete in all
detail to the degree that the Executive Committee can evaluate the need for and
adequacy of the proposed route from the application form submitted and without
a representative of the State Highway Department appearing before Committee
to supply additional information.

12. No person or group of persons shall be allowed to appear either before the
    Executive Committee or its Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering except
    in the case of a State Highway Department requesting reconsideration of an
    action by the Executive Committee in regard to an application filed by that
    Department.

13. In case a proposed change in or addition to the U.S. numbered system involves
    two or more States, the proposal shall be given official consideration only when
    all affected State Highway Departments have filed applications to cover the com-
    plete proposal.

14. No route should be considered for inclusion in the U.S. numbered system that
does not substantially meet the current AASHTO design standards.
15. Any toll highway facility may be included in the U.S. Numbered System when it meets all the criteria for inclusion, and when the request for the marking originates with the official authority having jurisdiction over the toll facility and the request is directed to AASHTO and supported by the appropriate Member Department. The word "Toll" shall appear over the official U.S. Route Marker and a toll free routing between the same termini shall continue to be retained and marked as a part of the U.S. Numbered System.

These purposes and policies, having been amended and approved by the State Highways Departments after individual State consideration, the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials hereby promulgates and makes effective these policies upon the authority of the State Highway Departments, beginning September 15, 1970.

It is realized that this work is a continuing obligation and that even reforms made evident from past experiences cannot be accomplished at once. It is the judgment of those to whom this obligation has been delegated, that all far-seeing citizens will aid the State Highway Departments in their efforts to make this numbering system of the greatest use to the traveling public.

In this connection it should be noted that while additional routes for U.S. numbering will be greatly limited, that stress will be laid upon the availability of many State numbered routes for interstate travel. Map makers will be urged to recognize U.S. numbered roads and well established State numbered roads as of equal importance—both to be printed in the same color.

IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MARKING SYSTEM OF THE ROUTES COMPRISING THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INTERSTATE AND DEFENSE HIGHWAYS

(Adopted August 14, 1957; Revised August 10, 1973)

The National System of Interstate and Defense highways known as the "Interstate System" will be a part of the State Highway systems of the several States and the District of Columbia and will therefore be maintained, operated and policed by those jurisdictions. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the several states to mark and number the System.

Since these highways join centers of population and defense establishments and join with the major international highways at the Mexican and Canadian borders, they constitute a nationwide network of the most important highways; therefore for the convenience of the motorist there must be continuity and a uniform pattern of marking and numbering these routes without regard to State lines.

In arriving at a route marking and numbering policy the following guides shall be used by the Association.

1. The Executive Committee shall determine and assign the numbers to be used in marking the routes of the Interstate System.

2. No new divided numbers (such as I-35W and I-35E, etc.) shall be adopted. Existing divided Interstate numbers shall be eliminated as rapidly as the State Highway Department and the Executive Committee can reach agreement with reference thereto.

3. That there will be no Interstate route bearing the same number designation as a U.S. Numbered Route in any State.

4. That sufficient room be left in assigning numbers to the routes of the Interstate System to allow for future expansion of the system and keep the numbering pattern in sequence.

5. That no area has any vested right to any route number.

6. That the routes be so marked as to give maximum continuity between major control points, and that dual Interstate numbering be held to a minimum consistent with proper travel guidance.

7. The U.S. Route numbers may be used in conjunction with Interstate Route markers where the U.S. Route leads into the Interstate Route, follows it for a reasonable distance, and then departs again from the Interstate Route.
8. That Interstate Highway patterns in urban areas be carefully numbered and marked for the safety and convenience of the traveling public, and to insure uniformity of practice that each State Highway Department is to submit its plan of numbering and marking of such urban areas to the executive committee for approval prior to the erection of markers.

9. That a distinctive, easily recognized route marker—shape, color and sizes be adopted and universally used.