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News Contact: Steve Swartz, (785) 296-3585 or Kim Stich, (785) 296-3127

**Kansas to join in celebrating 50th anniversary of
Interstate**

The Federal Highway Act of 1956, signed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, created the Interstate system and transformed America. Next month, as it turns 50, the Interstate system and its broad impact on the nation will be celebrated.

Kansas will join the national celebration June 21-23 as it hosts events at Abilene and Kansas City, Kan. The featured event of the celebration will be a convoy of vehicles crossing the country to recreate one of the influential events in American transportation history.

“It’s difficult to think of another development over the past 50 years that has had a greater impact on the nation than the Interstate system,” said Kansas Department of Transportation Secretary Deb Miller. “We’ve come to depend on the Interstate and good highways in a way that makes them almost invisible to us.”

On June 29, 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the legislation authorizing the Interstate system. The former Kansan had learned the value of a strong, national highway system during World War II by observing the efficiency of moving armies on the German autobahn. Eisenhower also drew on his experience as part of a historic 1919 U.S. Army motor convoy to assess the difficulties of transporting soldiers and military equipment across the United States. On that cross-country expedition, which took 62 days, he realized the potential value of an interconnected, quality road system across the country.

Beginning June 15 in San Francisco, a convoy of historic and modern-day vehicles will begin a trip across the country to recreate the 1919 military convoy and celebrate the Interstate anniversary. Although the convoy route to

Washington, D.C., is along Interstate 80, a swing group will detour across Kansas on Interstate 70 for events at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum, and at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan. The trip will conclude June 29 in Washington, D.C., which was the starting point of the 1919 convoy.

The convoy, which will be joined by vehicles in Kansas, will enter the state the afternoon of June 21 and stop in Abilene for two days of events. Activities in Abilene include:

- Remarks on June 21 from the front porch of Eisenhower's boyhood home by Dan Holt, the director of the Eisenhower Center; Merrill Atwater, Eisenhower's great-grandson; Dan McNichol, author of "The Roads that Built America: The Incredible Story of the U.S. Interstate System"; and Secretary Miller.
- A panel discussion on the Interstate on June 22.
- An antique car show, ice cream social, band performance, parade and Interstate exhibits.

On June 23, the convoy will depart Abilene at 7:30 a.m. for events at Kansas Speedway just off I-70. Events at the Speedway include a "victory" lap around the track by the convoy and a safety carnival for children. The keynote speaker will be Mary Peters, who served as Federal Highway Administrator from 2001 to 2005.

A complete schedule of events and a map of the convoy route are included below. The schedule, convoy route, Interstate history, photos, a link to the national 50th Anniversary web site and more can be viewed at the KDOT web site, www.ksdot.org.

Events in Abilene:

June 21

6-9 p.m. – Evening Social at the Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum (Eisenhower Center)

“Celebrate Ike and the Interstates” with an ice cream social, a performance by the Abilene City Band, an antique car show, and Interstate exhibits outdoors and in the Library building.

Welcome convoy about 7:30 p.m., followed by remarks from the front porch of Eisenhower’s boyhood home. Eisenhower Center Director Dan Holt, Secretary Deb Miller, Interstate Author Dan McNichol, and Merrill Atwater, Eisenhower’s great-grandson, will speak.

Rain contingency –Visitor’s Center

June 22

6 p.m. – Vehicle parade around Abilene

Vehicle parade with convoy and other participants starts/ends at the Eisenhower Center.

7 p.m. – Interstate Panel discussion

Panel discussion will highlight Eisenhower’s impact on the nation’s Interstate system.

Welcome remarks by Secretary Deb Miller and President of the Kansas Turnpike Authority Michael Johnston. Panelists include: **Moderator Dan Holt**, Director of the Eisenhower Center; **Mary Turkington**, chair of the Kansas Turnpike Authority; **Jim Brewer**, KDOT Engineering Manager; **Constance Achterburg**, attorney who handled land condemnation for the original interstate construction; **Mike Lackey**, former Assistant Secretary/State Transportation Engineer; and **Dan McNichol**, author of “The Roads that Built America: The Incredible Story of the U.S. Interstate System.”

June 23

7:30 a.m. – Farewell parade

Citizens and visitors in Abilene bid farewell to the convoy as it heads to I-70 and travels to Kansas Speedway.

Event at Kansas Speedway

10:45 a.m. - Kansas Speedway

The convoy arrives at Kansas Speedway for a Kansas/Missouri bi-state event and will make a “victory” lap around the track. Mary Peters, former Federal Highway Administrator, will be the keynote speaker. Other speakers will also participate. The convoy will then leave Kansas and travel through Missouri to Iowa.

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