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Trinity College  
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

Kevin Estela  
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American Studies 802  
Professor Elizabeth Rose

## **The History of the Development of Strategic Highways in Hartford, CT.**

The development of Interstate highways in the United States is a lengthy and complicated process. Unlike a child's toy car set, highways cannot be simply laid out at a moment's notice in any location. Great planning is involved and years of careful development have resulted in modern highways capable of supporting astronomical numbers of automobiles, trucks and other motorized traffic. Hartford, Connecticut is home to both Interstate 84 and Interstate 91. Many times, motorists, including myself, have been stuck behind miles of congested traffic on these roads with little to do except wonder, "why?" It is my intention to discuss the history of highway development in the Hartford area based on findings from research into the early history of roadways, relevant legislative acts, early planning documents and reports, and community feedback found in local newspapers. I intend to relate my argument to the larger scope of city planning with respect to transportation and how lessons learned from Hartford's section of I-84 can be applied to future developments.

Before looking at the development of the Hartford Highway system in the twentieth century, an understanding of the history of roadways in Connecticut is essential to comprehend how the need for the highway system evolved. The history of roads in Connecticut canvasses a period of over 300 years and, like the study of highway development, can easily be discussed in great length. Many tangential topics arise all of which are significant to the greater understanding of road development. I began my research looking for information that would summarize the transformation of roads over

the years in a concise manner before analyzing the twentieth century in greater detail with emphasis on primary documents.

I looked to contemporary regulatory agencies such as the Connecticut Department of Transportation (C.T.D.O.T.), I intended to begin my research with the present day and work my way backwards trying to locate the earliest example of a documented road in Connecticut. From this earliest date, I would then proceed forward summarizing the time that leads up to the beginning point that is the start of my analysis when most of the major construction of modern highways occurred. I contacted the C.T.D.O.T. regarding the history of roads in Connecticut and was directed to view their **website** located at [www.dot.state.ct.us](http://www.dot.state.ct.us). that provides a historical profile of roads in Connecticut and the economic and political factors involved in their development.

The earliest known roadway in Connecticut was known as the “Connecticut Path.” Little more than a blazed trail used by settlers to explore the Connecticut River Valley, this road was known of and marked out in 1633.’ These early roads were maintained by two court-appointed men who were required to work on the roads at least two days a year under penalty of law. The 1643 A.D. orders of the court empowered the men with the ability to,” . . . **call** out every **teeme** and person fitt for **labour**, in their course, one day every **yeare**, to mend said highways wherein they are to have a spetiall to those Common ways which are betwixt Towne and Towne.” <sup>2</sup> The roads were the responsibility of these men and the powers that controlled the development of roads had an early decentralized beginning. The lack of a centralized governing authority to control

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<sup>1</sup> ““Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895.” Located at [www.dot.state.ct.us/about/100/chptr1.htm](http://www.dot.state.ct.us/about/100/chptr1.htm). Accessed on 2/19/03.

<sup>2</sup> “Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895.”

and develop the roads resulted in slow progress in the development in the Hartford area and throughout the United States for many years.

The early roads in Connecticut were prone to mudding, washing out and caretaker neglect. Travel on these roads required carrying emergency equipment to counter the problems that faced any travelers. Emergency food and water, tire repair kits, tow ropes, spare parts and tools were all common items found in wheeled vehicles that traveled over these dirt **roads**.<sup>3</sup> The general reoccurring trend in roadway development that still exists is a direct corollary between population and better transportation routes. Also, the improvements in road conditions occurred largely because of military need and observations of mobility made during military engagements. For example, in 1701 the population of the Connecticut Colony was approximately 30,000 and the American Revolution highlighted a need for better bridges to accommodate troop **movement**.<sup>4</sup> During the latter years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many bridges were constructed and 1400 miles of interstate roads, characterized by tolls that would help subsidize the cost of maintenance and development, were laid out that linked major **cities**.<sup>5</sup>

Interstate roads, such as Interstate 84 (formerly known as the East West Expressway) were not a primary concern of the state of Connecticut until the early part of the twentieth century for a few reasons. Alternative methods of transportation, such as privately owned railroads, trolley cars and waterways, allowed many travelers to avoid the interstates **entirely**.<sup>6</sup> Also, Motor vehicles were a luxury item that the affluent could afford and were not as prevalent as other non-motorized transportation. Bicycles started

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<sup>3</sup> Weingroff, Richard. "Building the Foundation" Located at [www.tfsrc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm](http://www.tfsrc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm). Accessed on 4/25/2003

<sup>4</sup> "Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895."

<sup>5</sup> "Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895."

<sup>6</sup> "Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895."

emerging in urban areas as a form of recreation and motor vehicles allowed independent travel on roadways at the leisure of the owner. The price of a motor vehicle was significantly lowered by the introduction of the Ford Motors Model T in 1908 that allowed the average person to own one.’ Bicycles were produced largely by Pope Manufacturing Company based in Hartford, Connecticut, and soon they too filled the streets.<sup>8</sup> Automobile and bicycle clubs established and formed a strong political presence that lobbied for the paving of roads. The precursor of the Federal Highway Administration, the Office of Road Inquiry, buckled under their pressure and made an effort to improve dirt roads by using planks and eventually paving.’

Centralizing authority for the development of roads did not occur until the United States Supreme Court decision of *Wilson v. Shaw* in 1907.<sup>10</sup> The opinion of the court, written by Justice David Brewer for majority in the 8-1 decision, stated,

“These authorities recognize the power of Congress to construct interstate highways. A fortiori, Congress would have like power within the Territories, and outside of state lines, for there the legislative power of Congress is limited only by the provisions of the Constitution, and cannot conflict with the reserved power of the states.”

This judgment established the legal precedent needed for future legislation to be enacted that would develop the roads more thoroughly. This, along with the rise of the automobile and bicycle and the decline of trolley car and private railroads would lead to more emphasis placed on road development and construction. At this point, I established a rough outline of the history of roads and began to research the twentieth century more closely.

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<sup>7</sup> Weingroff, Richard. “Building the Foundation” Located at [www.tfhr.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm](http://www.tfhr.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm). Accessed on 4/25/2003

<sup>8</sup> Corrigan, Dave. Slideshow presentation on 1/28/03 History of Hartford Seminar. Trinity College.

<sup>9</sup> “Early Travel in Connecticut: Before 1895.”

<sup>10</sup> Weingroff, Richard. “Building the Foundation” Located at [www.tfhr.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm](http://www.tfhr.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su2.htm). Accessed on 4/25/2003

<sup>11</sup> *Wilson v. Shaw* 204 U.S. 24

Having established the history of roads in Connecticut, as previously set out to, I shifted my focus to analyzing the details of the legislation that helped design the Hartford highway system and the layout of interstate highways across the United States. The legislation passed to facilitate highway development is voluminous. Finding the most relevant legislation was a time-consuming process that involved reading through the indexes of United States Code at the law library at the Connecticut State Library. Starting with 1907, the year of *Wilson v. Shaw*, I looked for any legislation that granted funds, laid out highway development guidelines or made reference to advancements in road quality. The first major legislation encountered that met these criteria is the July 11, 1916 United States Congress Act H.R. 7617.<sup>12</sup> This act states,

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to cooperate with the states, through their respective state highway departments, in the construction of rural post roads..”<sup>13</sup>

This act set the parameters of construction and maintenance such as,

“‘properly maintained’ as used herein shall be construed to mean the making of needed repairs and the preservation of a reasonably smooth surface considering the type of road, but shall not be held to include extraordinary repairs, nor **reconstruction.**”<sup>14</sup>

While this legislation provided for the construction of a postal road system and establishes a schedule of maintenance, the issue of funding places little federal assistance into the hands of the states. Therefore, the construction and development remained slow for many years until the 1940’s when more financial assistance was apportioned to the

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<sup>12</sup> 39 Stat. 355. “An act to provide that the United States shall aid the States in the construction of rural post roads, and for other purposes.” July 11, 1916 [H.R. 7617]

<sup>13</sup> 39 Stat. 355. “An act to provide that the United States shall aid the States in the construction of rural post roads, and for other purposes.” July 11, 1916 [H.R. 7617]

<sup>14</sup> 39 Stat. 355. “An act to provide that the United States shall aid the States in the construction of rural post roads, and for other purposes.\*” July 11, 1916 [H.R. 7617].

construction reluctant states. The United States War Department designated specific roadways as “strategic highways” needed to ensure the mobility of military convoys.<sup>15</sup> Roads were to be designed to sufficiently allow the safe transport of war materials throughout the United States during WWII. However wartime restrictions of materials used in the construction along with the economic impact of the Great Depression accounted for the slow progress made until the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944.<sup>16</sup>

With WWII over, the improvement of roadways and the development of highways to accommodate the needs of the military could continued at a more rapid rate across the country and in the **Hartford** area. The suspension of highway construction allowed the highway department to develop plans without the pressure of completing road construction.<sup>17</sup> The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 calls for, “...a National System of Interstate Highways” and defined the land used as either rural or urban but did not stipulate which areas of the country should be prioritized for development.<sup>18</sup> At this point in the development of Hartford’s highway system, in particular the East West Expressway, initial plans were set forth but no real action was taken since the cost of the project proved difficult to fund. More federal assistance became available in the Eisenhower administration and legislation from his Congress created a stimulus to develop more.

In researching the legislation passed after the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944, I looked for more amendments made to the initial 1916 act. What I was able to discern was the gradual increase in the amount of federal money granted to the states for use in

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<sup>15</sup> “World War II 1941-1945” Located at [www.dot.state.ct.us/about/100/chptr5.htm](http://www.dot.state.ct.us/about/100/chptr5.htm) accessed on 2/19/03.

<sup>16</sup> “World War II 1941-1945

<sup>17</sup> “Connecticut’s Road Program” Connecticut State Highway Department Published November 1946. Page 16.

<sup>18</sup> “Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944” United States Code Chapter 626 Public Law 521.

constructing the interstate highway system. For instance, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1954 provided for an increase in highway development with a ratio of ~~60/40~~ of federal and state spending to fund the project.” Further improvements in the amount of federal assistance characterized this period between the 1940’s and 1960’s. Incentive for the states to develop came in generous offers by the federal government to relieve the burden of financing the construction of the strategic highway system.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 granted the most federal assistance (90% of total cost) and created the means of achieving the rapid growth of the Interstate highway system. 1956 was the first year of ~~the~~ Dwight D. Eisenhower administration. Eisenhower had long advocated a system of roads with the capacity to quickly move military vehicles and equipment because of his military experience as a ~~General~~. In 1919, General Eisenhower participated in a transcontinental motor convoy from the nation’s capitol to San Francisco, CA. During this time, the vehicles frequently became stuck and travel was extremely **treacherous**.<sup>20</sup> Eisenhower’s experience in transcontinental travel continued during WWII but with the opposite results as he easily traveled across the German countryside on the autobahn network. He noted the enhanced mobility of Allied force soldiers’ ability to quickly mobilize and push their way into Germany using the country’s highway **network**.<sup>21</sup> From his experience, Eisenhower knew of the importance of a similar highway system in the United States and aggressively campaigned for its establishment.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1954’ United States Code Chapter 181 Public Law 350.

<sup>20</sup> Weingroff, Richard F. “Creating the Interstate System” Located at [www.tfhrcc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su10.htm](http://www.tfhrcc.gov/pubrds/summer96/p96su10.htm) Accessed on 4/23/03

<sup>21</sup> “National Defense Highway System” [Globalsecurity.org](http://Globalsecurity.org) Located at [www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/ndhs.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/ndhs.htm) Accessed on 2/6/03



The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 carried out Eisenhower's goal to develop an autobahn inspired highway network in various ways. The act provided for the 90% federal funding by creating a trust fund composed of taxes on diesel fuel and special motor fuels, tread rubber and **gasoline**.<sup>22</sup> The act suggested the highway system, renamed and designated "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways", be completed in a time period of 13 years and the completion should be near simultaneous. The early design recommendations included uniform measurements that would almost guarantee continuity in design from state to **state**.<sup>23</sup> With attractive funding under this legislation and numerous design plans, Hartford was ready, like the rest of the country, to move ahead and begin construction of the highway system.

After researching the major Congressional legislation that allowed for the development of the Hartford, Connecticut **highway** system, my focus shifted to looking at the early design proposals and how they responded to the legislation enacted over the years I chose to focus on. In addition to early design plans, State-produced documents that reported progress and addressed concerns provided valuable information about the development in its various stages. The needs on the state level were much like the needs of the United States that prompted federal legislative action. From these documents, the broader picture of highway development in the United States can be analyzed on a local level.

"A Report of an Engineering Study for Expressways in the Hartford Metropolitan Area", published in 1945 by the Bureau of Highway Planning Studies by the Connecticut State Highway Department, detailed the economic and social conditions that existed in

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<sup>22</sup> "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956" United States Code Chapter 462 Public Law 627.

<sup>23</sup> "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956" United States Code Chapter 462 Public Law 627.

the Hartford area that created a need for the East West Expressway and other roadways in the **state**.<sup>24</sup> The trend of improving transportation with growing populations occurred in Hartford at this time and can be found in this document where it is noted, “The major element in any plan to bring order into what has been a wasteful trend is to provide relief to the intolerable traffic **congestion**.”<sup>25</sup> At this stage in Hartford’s history, central property values were falling, taxes were increasing and businesses were moving to outlying districts. Traffic congestion in Hartford was largely due in part to the heaviest traffic coming in on two-lane surface streets from the west and **southwest**.<sup>26</sup> The proposed highway development, as suggested in this study, would provide for highway access for West Hartford where most of the congestion in Hartford originated from.

To alleviate concerns about the character of the neighborhoods that the highway system would run adjacent to, the document provided diagrams calling for a 300’ setback in rural areas and 120’ in urban areas.\*’ The proposed resulting benefits from developing the highway system are provided and include greater safety, comfort of travel, savings in time and great community benefits.\*\* While the benefits to the community are outlined in this document, little is mentioned about the possible adverse effects of highway development on individuals. Problems such as taking of property and displacement of families were alluded to and the layout of the highway system was stressed. Problems arising from development will be addressed later in my research utilizing different sources.

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<sup>24</sup> Bureau of Highway Planning Studies. “A Report of an Engineering Study for Expressways in the **Hartford** Metropolitan Area” Connecticut State Highway Department Publication. 1945.

<sup>25</sup> Bureau of Highway Planning Studies. Page 4.

<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Highway Planning Studies... Page 6.

<sup>27</sup> Bureau of Highway Planning Studies. Page 54.

<sup>28</sup> Bureau of Highway Planning Studies. Page 66-68.

The central purpose of this document was to persuade city planners to approve of the silver bullet that would end the problem of congestion in Hartford, Connecticut. The end all solution to the problem being proposed was a highway system. The importance of the highway system in Hartford depicted by this study was easily recognized by emphasis placed on words with exclamation marks. In my research, I discovered this was the only state-produced document that attempted to be more persuasive than informative. I felt the use of exclamation marks detracted from the importance of the study and did not present the study as objective but rather subjective. Rather than presenting the study with arguments for and against the development and leaving the decision to develop to the city, this document clearly exhibited preference for developing over not developing.

The 1946 report by the Connecticut State Highway department titled, "Connecticut's Road Program" presented a more equal-sided analysis of the problems facing the Hartford area to city planners. This document does not show biased arguments but does utilize black and white photos, graphs and cartoons to present information about the current conditions. According to this study, "In the two decades between 1920 and 1940, traffic volumes doubled, redoubled and then almost redoubled again in Connecticut, and state highway improvements just failed to keep **pace**."<sup>29</sup> This coincides with the reoccurring theme of improvements in transportation following an increase in population. The information found in the various reports and planning documents provides complimentary arguments for one another and paints a clearer picture of the situation of transportation in Hartford during this time. For instance, reference was made to Congressional hearings before the approval of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 that

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<sup>29</sup> "Connecticut's Road Program" Connecticut State Highway Department Published November 1946. Page 7.

pointed to Connecticut as ranking among the states with the most secondary insufficient roads.<sup>30</sup> This was in part due to the decentralization of control over the development of highways in the 50 states that progressed at different rates and the dominant role alternative methods of transportation provided.

The two reports examined thus far in my analysis of the development of highway in the Hartford area did little to respond to questions concerning funding. The studies published by the state avoided producing numbers representing how much the project would cost. The 1949 "Arterial Plan for Hartford", compiled by the consulting engineering firm of Andrews and Clark was the first document I found that presented a definitive stance on how much it would cost for construction, removal of families and business, and the taking of property. This proposed plan not only offered its design for the East West Expressway in Hartford but also how much changing the profile of the neighborhood would cost. It offers the suggestion for the state to begin the process of acquiring the land needed for the highway before any construction began.<sup>31</sup>

As the other documents offered, the Andrews and Clark document compiled by Robert Moses, had its own unique recommendations for the design of the East West Expressway. Included in their proposal were adding parking garages in close proximity to congested downtown areas to alleviate the amount of cars parked on roads and provide for ample parking within walking distance of areas of interest.<sup>32</sup> The Moses document offered city planners suggestions in the form of development concepts for the problems of urban congestion, land use and funding estimates. In these suggestions, reference is

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<sup>30</sup> "Connecticut's Road Program" Page 9.

<sup>31</sup> Moses, Robert. "Arterial Plan for Hartford" Andrews and Clark Consulting Engineers. Copyright 1949.

Page 5.

<sup>32</sup> Moses, Robert. Page 12.

made to the Federal Slum Clearance and Housing Act of 1949 that provided for the ability to remove tenants from subsidized housing but did not provide replacement housing. It was interesting to note that despite the suggestion for the use of this legislation that displaced many families developing the Hartford highway system, this consulting firm had reservations about their involvement in the project. This was found in the following excerpt from the plan, "Doctors, we are told, bury their mistakes, planners by the same token embalm theirs, and engineers inflict them on their children's children. Of these three types of error, the engineering variety is in the long run the most costly to the community."<sup>33</sup> For this reason, great consideration must be given to different institutions before carrying out any construction. These institutions are made up of families, businesses, ethnic groups and schools.

The state was already involved in segmented highway projects by the 1950's and was taking every step provided by federal and state statutes to avoid any problems arising from development being carried out without any public input. These steps included conferencing with municipal officials, holding public hearings, assessing future access possibilities such as future on and off ramps and having complete cooperation among all other State Agencies involved providing the best balance between developing and preserving forested areas.<sup>34</sup> However, despite the good intentions of the state in taking every available measure before developing, the highway system was constructed and opened to the public by the late 1960's and was receiving harsh criticism.<sup>35</sup> The development of the East West expressway endured criticism in all its stages of

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<sup>33</sup> Moses, Robert. Page 5.

<sup>34</sup> "Report on a Modern Highway between New London and Hartford" Produced by Alfred Kaehrle Associates for the Connecticut State Highway Department. December 1958. Page 37.

<sup>35</sup> Oglesby, Scott. "I-84: the route" Taken from Connecticut roads website. Located at <http://www.kurumi.com/roads/ct/i84.html>. Accessed on 2/24/03

development with arguments for and against construction made in editorials and throughout the local periodicals.

“...no matter where you put an artery as vital as this one to the city’s economy, and to the citizens’ convenience, it is going to hurt **someone**.”<sup>36</sup> This quote from an anonymous editorial in The Hartford Courant summarizes best the lesson that can be learned from studying the public feedback. When a decision is made, some will benefit and some will not. In other words, “No route for the highway is going to please everybody, and hurt **nobody**.”<sup>37</sup> The letters found in the editorial sections of the local newspapers best represented the public approval of the overall construction of interstate highways in Connecticut. I approached the issue of Highway Development on the national and statewide level by presenting my research findings in Congressional legislation and the city-wide level by reviewing early designs and studies. To focus on the personal level, I researched newspapers for insight into the public approval of the highway project.

Quantitative data, like that found in State-produced reports such as the “Connecticut Highway Department Progress report Highway Construction Program: 1961 – 1965” can only provide statistics and numbers to represent various topics such as the number of houses demolished, the distance between exits and the number of miles completed. Reports like this one allow detailed analysis of numbers but do not aid in trying to discern what was shaping the public policy at the time. Editorials and newspaper articles, on the other hand, provide insight into the minds of the community and allow free expression in a forum more appropriate to vent frustration and feelings.

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<sup>36</sup> “Now is the time for the East-West Expressway” The Hartford Courant July 26, 1956.  
<sup>37</sup> “Talking isn’t going to build an East-West Highway” The Hartford Courant. August 5, 1956.

**As** with my previous research, I observed general trends while reading newspaper articles from the 1940's through the 1970's. The numerous issues addressed by Hartford constituents were presented within the editorials of the Hartford Times and Hartford Courant. For the purposes of this paper, I decided to focus on newspaper articles covering the various stages of development starting with the year 1944. For most of the editorials found in this time period, the overwhelming majority conveyed similar thoughts such as the September 7, 1944 Hartford Times anonymous entry which states,

“Citizens have reason to be disturbed about conditions that are sure to develop once the war ends and we return to a semblance of prewar life. We have inadequate highways and streets for the traffic that will come. We do not even have willingness on the part of some important city agencies to consider the immediate future in the light of the public needs. Changes, even radical ones, must be made if Hartford is to have convenient access to its environs, and if the business interests of this city are to be served easily and **quickly**.”<sup>38</sup>

Residents of Hartford wanted to improve the conditions of travel they experienced and make any preparation or construction necessary to support the growing needs of businesses and residential areas. Other headlines included subjects such as wartime restrictions and the details of highway plans. Awareness of the benefits of highways is evident but not the possibility of adverse effects on the community that would characterize many of the newspaper headings from the next year of newspaper articles I analyzed, 1956.

1956 marked the year when the most federal assistance in construction would be apportioned by the Federal Government to the states. City planners rushed to submit their plans within the time allowed for applying to receive it. As shown in frequent headlines, buildings and institutions such as the old Hartford Public High School were directly in the path of the East-West Expressway and posed a dilemma on the developers. H.P.H.S.

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<sup>38</sup> “Hartford’s Traffic Needs” The Hartford Times. September 7.1944.

was rebuilt in 1883 by George Keller and was considered to be one of the nation's finest secondary schools.<sup>39</sup> The standoff to save H.P.H.S. or tear it down to make way for the new interstate received frequent arguments both for and against each option in the papers. The school was dilapidated and required approximately \$3 million dollars to repair and according to a Lewis Fox, a member of the Hartford Board of Education, "Disrupting the second oldest high school in the nation could only be justified by an overwhelming good to the city."<sup>40</sup> The governor of the state at this time, Governor Ribicoff provided fierce opposition to the proposal to keep H.P.H.S. stating "I hate to think that merely to save Hartford High we might put 200 to 300 people out of their homes for highway construction. The school though it has a venerable name, still isn't as important to human life."<sup>41</sup> The stalemate encountered in the decision of whether or not to save H.P.H.S. lasted until 1963. While some people including the author of an editorial from the July 26, 1956 Hartford Times suggested, "Hartford can find room for both the new highway and its high schools"<sup>42</sup>, the school was ultimately demolished. Hartford Public High moved to a new location and was partially funded by the money available under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.

The clippings from the 1960's provide mixed reviews and acceptance to the East-West highway. Much like the arguments against the demolition of the high school, arguments regarding the overall layout of the highway began to surface. "I am still of the opinion that this route will dissect and tend to dissolve the cohesiveness of the town"<sup>43</sup>,

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<sup>39</sup> "Hartford Public High School: A Historic School" Taken from <http://users.ntplx.net/~hphs/hphshistory.html> Accessed on 4/23/2003]

<sup>40</sup> "Fox Alarmed at Highway School Plan" The Hartford Courant. July 27, 1956.

<sup>41</sup> "Fox Alarmed at Highway School Plan" The Hartford Courant. July 27, 1956.

<sup>42</sup> "Both Highway and High school" The Hartford Times. July 26, 1956.

<sup>43</sup> "Comments Pro and Con on E-W" The Hartford Times. 1/16/60]



Democratic Minority Leader Carl G. **Hurwit** opined in 1960. His beliefs became a reality as Federal highway construction divided neighborhoods by cutting off residents from local stores and their friends. Highway construction pushed residents away from the center of the city and to the **outskirts**.<sup>44</sup> Construction of highways created a barrier that physically segregated the community. Other articles from 1960 present a more optimistic projection of community feedback. "Connecticut's volume of traffic accidents could be substantially reduced if all of the older highways were rebuilt to modern **standards**"<sup>45</sup> claimed one article while the vehicle-mile investment is lauded in another. "On these city expressways, the vehicle-mile investment is about one-half cent. On other federal aid roads, not built as expressways, the investment figures out at about three-fourths of a cent per **vehicle-mile**."<sup>46</sup> The **arguments** to establish the East-West Highway as a benefit or a burden continue for much of the 60's until environmental issues replaced them as the main concern.

April 22, 1970 marked the first Earth Day and growing awareness of environmental concerns in highway development characterized the shift in public feedback in newspapers. The 1970's marked the end of the golden era of highway development when thousands of miles of highway were constructed in a relatively short time. The construction of highways following the golden era consisted of many circuit or belt highways that served to connect major routes. The 1970's is characterized by growing criticism of highway designs and suggestions as how the development could have resulted in less overall disruption. "Pressure from commercial interests was a factor

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<sup>44</sup> Ross, Bernard and Levine, Myron. Urban Politics: Power in **Metropolitan** America. (Itasca, Illinois F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc. 2001) Page 38

<sup>45</sup> "Records Show Super Roads Safe, Statewide Modernization Advocated" The Hartford Times (incomplete illegible date 2/60)

<sup>46</sup> "Urban Highways Seen Cheaper in Mileage Costs" The Hartford Courant 6/4/60

in turning the Interstate 84 expressway into an engineering “mess,” offered a prominent West Hartford highway critic.”<sup>47</sup> By this time, the highways were being utilized for a couple years and the benefits and major faults could be evaluated over time. What I discovered in reading through piles of newspaper articles was a morphing and compounding of interests of the community in response to the changes in legislation and highway plans that occurred over a number of years. Many of the problems from the period still exist and research of the public approval/criticism can determine what problems should be given the most priority in prevention.

There is no limit to what can be learned from the study of highway development in the Hartford area. Studying this history allows the lessons learned in Connecticut to be applied to the larger picture of the changing face of transportation in the United States and throughout the world. Just as the United States had to accommodate for motorized vehicles and bicycles at the turn of the century, it will have to change again in the future as technology will undoubtedly create highly sophisticated and advanced means of travel.

An ironic tangent, the National defense highways that President Eisenhower established to provide rapid deployment of U.S. soldiers and equipment for defense are now being guarded from terrorists. The ability to move quickly in and out of cities, once considered a strength of our defense system is now a weakness. Biological, chemical and nuclear weapons can easily travel in and out of cities hiding among the massive amounts of traffic. The once defensive highway system is now on the offensive.

The concerns found in the newspaper research I compiled **morphed** over time, and so do the concerns in contemporary society. The need for highways as solutions to congestion and traffic will continue and information like that which I have presented will

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<sup>47</sup> “Business pressure blamed for I-84 Engineering ‘Horror.’ The Hartford Times 1/22/70.

be vital to the continued success of alleviating transportation problems. The highways were created as a defense system and more defenses must be added now to filter out any terrorist attacks. Technology is advancing day after day and the development of future roadways, regardless of their location, will require the same consideration as the Strategic Highways in Hartford were given in years past. While humans do not have the ability to predict the future and thus the consequences of building roadways, they can study the past and learn from previous mistakes.

## **-Supplemental Sources-**

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