



THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM



- In 1956, after six years of debate, Congress authorized the development of the "National System of Interstate and Defense Highways." North Carolina was originally allocated 714 miles, which were designated to become Interstates 95, 85, 40 and 26.
- As designated in the legislation, I-95 would enter North Carolina just north of Roanoke Rapids-Weldon and traverse the state for some 182 miles to just south of Lumberton, where it makes its way into South Carolina.
- The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1952 authorized \$25 million on a 50/50 federal/state ratio for construction of interstate-type highways. I-95 has the distinction of having the first interstate-funded project in North Carolina under this 50/50 ratio. This funding was for right of way (June 9, 1954) and construction (Oct. 10, 1955) for the relocation of US 301 in Johnston County.
- The first construction project funded under the 90/10 1956 National System of Interstate and Defense Highways Act was the paving of a section of I-95 in Harnett and Johnston counties let in May 1957, one month ahead of the paving on the I-85 Charlotte Bypass.
- An eight-mile section of the Lumberton Bypass (US 301) was completed in 1950 and became a part of I-95 in 1960 after modifications were made to meet interstate standards for complete access control.
- On Oct. 18, 1958, the first segment of I-95 opened in Harnett County for 8.81 miles and in Johnston County for 1.62 miles.
- A portion of I-95 from a point east of Benson to a point near Selma opened in June 1960. The project was 17 miles in length and consisted of two 24-foot-wide lanes of concrete pavement, nine inches in depth. The cost of the project was \$2,754,059. In 1960, a 7.5-mile segment of I-95 opened in Northampton County.
- A new rest area on I-95 near Selma also was completed in 1960. The rest area offered the use of picnic tables, outdoor furnaces, water fountains and rest room facilities to motorists.
- In 1960, the longest single section of interstate open to traffic in North Carolina was the I-95 route serving eastern North Carolina from Kenly southward to Eastover in Cumberland County. This portion of the road, which parallels US 301, is 51.7 miles in length.
- By 1964, a section of I-95 was opened from US 158 near Roanoke Rapids north into Virginia. Another section from St. Pauls to Lumberton was also completed.
- By 1966, 86.9 miles of the interstate were open to traffic across the Coastal Plain. Included were 16.6 miles from US 74 north of Lumberton to Hope Mills; 51.7 miles from Eastover to Kenly; and 8.6 miles from US 158 east of Roanoke Rapids to the Virginia border.
- The 15-mile section of I-95 around Gold Rock opened in 1967. This section of highway included eight experimental concrete pavement areas – six sections were nine inches thick and two sections of specially reinforced concrete were eight-inches thick. The results from these tests would help engineers determine the best concrete paving practices in the future.

- The N.C. General Assembly in 1967 appropriated \$167,000 to build the first welcome centers in North Carolina on I-85 and I-95 near the Virginia border.
- The I-95 Welcome Center would be the second to open in September 1968. The cost of the center was about \$85,000, exclusive of paving and grading, and contained about 2,800 square feet of floor space.
- By 1969, I-95 was opened from exit 145 (NC 4) all the way to the Virginia line, and by 1973, I-95 was completed from St. Pauls to the South Carolina line.
- On April 11, 1980, the last segment of I-95, 16.99 miles, opened in Cumberland County. I-95 was now completed from the Virginia line to the South Carolina line.

