



Orange County's Freeways

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Presented by Archivist Phil Brigandi
to the Orange County Board of Supervisors
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- ✦ Transportation has always played an key role in the history of Orange County, whether it has been stage routes, railroads or paved highways. But since the 1950s, freeways have led the way.
 - ✦ The term “freeway” dates back to about 1930. It was coined to suggest a *free* flow of traffic – a highway free from cross streets, free from traffic lights, free from homes and businesses, and free from pedestrians.
 - ✦ The development of our freeway system goes back to at least the 1920s when projects like Manchester Boulevard and Imperial Highway were getting underway.
 - ✦ Manchester Boulevard was completed down to Santa Ana in 1935 and it wasn’t long before they contemplated transforming it into a freeway.

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- ✦ In 1939, the State of California authorized the route of the Santa Ana Freeway. The Orange County Board of Supervisors began changing the zoning along the way to allow for its eventual construction.
 - ✦ By the 1950s, the federal, state and county governments had mapped out an extensive freeway system for all of Southern California.
 - ✦ In the next slide you'll see how the grid was laid out then. If you look closely, you'll notice a few freeways that were never built: the Pacific Coast Freeway paralleling Coast Highway, the Huntington Beach Freeway along Beach Blvd and a freeway through La Habra and Brea.
 - ✦ Work on the Santa Ana Freeway began on the Los Angeles end in 1944, but they didn't get down to Orange County until 1950 when construction began in Buena Park.



FREEWAYS

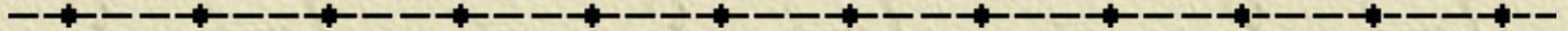


✦ By 1953, construction of the Santa Ana Freeway was completed through Santa Ana. The Chamber of Commerce held a big ribbon-cutting ceremony.

✦ In the following slide you can see First District Supervisor Cye Featherly on the left in the white hat; on his right is Sheriff Jim Musick. I expect he was there because they started the celebration with a motorcade led by some of his officers.

✦ Construction of the I-5 continued through the 1950s, and by 1960 it was complete all the way through Orange County – from Buena Park to San Clemente.

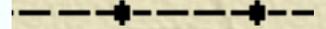




- ✦ During the 1960s, there were five different freeways under construction in Orange County. Construction started on the 55 in 1961 and the first segment opened a year later.
- ✦ By 1973, the 55 had been extended south of the 405, but the final segment wasn't completed until 1990. By the way, the 55 was the first freeway in Orange County to have carpool lanes back in 1985.
- ✦ Work on the 405 started on the Los Angeles end in 1957 and the final segment through South Orange County was completed in 1969 when they created the El Toro Y junction at the I-5.
- ✦ The first segment of the Garden Grove Freeway opened in 1964 and the final stretch to the 55 was completed in 1967.
- ✦ In the next slide you can see work being done on the Chapman Avenue interchange in Orange.



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- ✦ The first segment of the Riverside Freeway opened on 1958, but it wasn't completed all the way out to the Santa Ana Canyon until 1971.
 - ✦ Then, in 1996, the toll lanes were added down the center of the 91 Freeway. Those lanes were operated by a private company until 2002 when they were purchased by the Orange County Transportation Authority.
 - ✦ The fifth freeway to start construction in the 1960s was the Orange Freeway (57) and the first segment opened in 1969. It was completed in 1976.
 - ✦ During the 1970s, only one freeway was built – the Corona Del Mar Freeway which opened in 1979.





✦ In the 1980s we made the switch from traditional freeways to toll roads. The Transportation Corridor Authority was formed in 1986 to build several new toll roads in Orange County, starting with the Foothill Transportation Corridor, the 241, which opened in stages between 1995 and 1998.

✦ The TCA also built the Eastern Transportation Corridor – the 261 – to connect up with the 241, and extended the 73 south to become the San Joaquin Hills Transportation Corridor. And they extended the 133 north to meet up with the 241.

✦ The next slide shows the toll plaza on the 241 at Windy Ridge above Irvine.



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- ✦ But the story doesn't end there. During the 1990s we began expanding our existing freeways – first the I-5 and then the 22. And now, plans to extend the Foothill South are being considered.
 - ✦ It is hard to underestimate the impact the freeways have had on the county's development. Freeways, along with imported water, certainly have done more than any other factor to fuel the growth of South County.
 - ✦ For better or worse, freeways allow people to commute all over the Southland. During the 1950s and 60s people drove north, to Los Angeles, to jobs. Now they commute both ways, as well as east to west.
 - ✦ Freeways have helped to make Orange County what it is today. What we do about them now is going to help shape our future.



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