

THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC WORKS IN THE UNITED STATES

1775

United States Army Corps of Engineers was founded by George Washington.

1811

Construction began on the National Road, the first major US highway built by the Federal Government.

1857

The first effectively planned sewer system in the country is constructed in Brooklyn, New York.

1872

Yellowstone National Park, said to be the first national park, was established by the US Congress and signed into law.

1914

The American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), which would later become AASHTO was founded.

1902

The US Reclamation Service was established to study potential water developmental projects in Western states.

1893

The Office of Road Inquiry under General Stone is established in the Department of Agriculture. Functions would later be expanded in 1905 into the Office of Public Roads, and then again expanded into the Bureau of Public Roads.

1920

The Federal Water Power Act, which coordinated the development of hydroelectric projects, was enacted into law.

1926

The Air Commerce Act was established to regulate aircraft, airmen, navigational facilities and air traffic.

1933

In response to the Great Depression, the Public Works Administration was part of the New Deal government agency.

1935



The Works Progress Administration employed millions to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings and roads.

1966

The United States Department of Transportation was signed into law.

1965

The Solid Waste Disposal Act addressed how to safely dispose of large volumes of municipal and industrial solid wastes.

1956

Also known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act, the Federal-Aid Highway Act was signed into law authorizing the original \$25 billion for the construction of 41,000 miles of the Interstate Highway System.

1972

The Clean Water Act was passed to restore and maintain the chemical, physical and biological integrity of the water in the US by preventing pollution sources.

1999

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board issues Statement No. 34 (GASB-34) that calls for the reporting of infrastructure assets.

2012

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), which places emphasis on risk-based asset management planning and the need for asset management systems, is signed into law.

What's Next?

An increasing focus on proactively maintaining and developing public works projects is likely to continue. Technology will be a huge driver as governments and citizens demand safer, efficient and cost effective infrastructure.

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