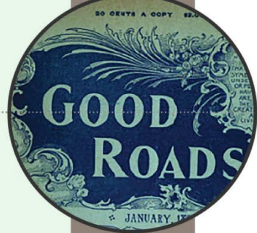


**History:**  
1880-1920's

The initial push to create improved roads began with cyclists on the heels of the bicycle boom of the 1880s.



**1888**



The League of American Wheelmen (L.A.W.) begins national "Good Roads Movement" to lobby for improved road conditions to make bicycling easier for the growing populations of cyclists nationwide.

1890 - Bicycle mania hits Minnesota

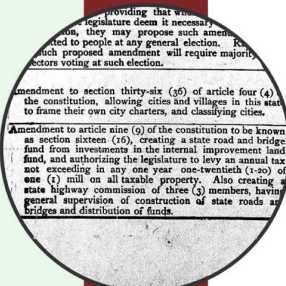
**1893**  
January 25



The state of MN's first formal meeting to discuss poor road conditions is held in Saint Paul. L.A.W. MN met with 200 delegates at the city's Chamber of Commerce in hopes to "devise a means to improve" substandard roadways, which had inhibited the "material growth and prosperity" of the state for too long.

"The two day event praised changing road building technologies and highlighted the states that used them well. It also laid out a series of issues that hindered the growth of Minnesota's road system. According to the delegation the three greatest inhibitors to success were current laws in the state, country farmers, and railroad companies."  
- Matt Reicher, "Minnesota's Earliest Good Roads Movement" (2015)

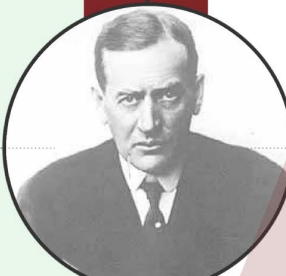
**1897**



An Amendment to the MN Constitution is proposed that would allow the state to help pay for "the construction and improvement of public highways and bridges."

1898 - The Amendment is passed by popular vote.

**1905**  
April 13th



A law creating a State Highway Commission in Minnesota was finally approved and signed by Governor Johnson on April 13, 1905. It gave "full authority to supervise the construction of roads" to a state commission instead of the Legislature. Appointment of a 3-member commission becomes official law the following year.

1906 - Twin City Rapid Transit Company's Selby-Lake Street line begins service on a route crossing the newly built Lake Street bridge over the Mississippi River.

**1908**



In the early 20th century, "automobilists" also began campaigning for better roads. In 1908 the call for better roads took on a national dimension as the affordable mass-produced Model T spurred an astronomical growth in automobile ownership.

**1912**



Throughout this period, Good Roads organizations formed across the country. Beginning in the 1910s, business owners and civic organizations banded together to improve their existing roads and promote local road travel between their towns. Eventually there were about 250 Good Roads highways, though most remained dirt, or at best dirt-and-gravel, and signage was poor to nonexistent. Over time, the crush of traffic and deepening mud turned public reluctance to be taxed for road paving into an overwhelming push for better roads. Political careers began to depend on support for better thoroughfares.

Construction of one of the first Good Road's highways and America's first transcontinental highway, The Lincoln Highway, begins to promote the idea of national tourism but also served to publicize the need for federal involvement in road building.

**1917**



1916 - President Wilson signed the Federal Aid Road Act, which provided matching funds for road paving in states with in-place highway departments

In compliance with the federal highway act, the Minnesota legislature passed a highway bill in 1917 that abolished the old highway commission and replaced it with the Minnesota Department of Highways (MnDOH). The bill also created the position of "Commissioner of Highways", which was filled by Charles Babcock, a merchant from Elk River who had risen to fame promoting the construction of good roads to aid commerce in his home town.

**1920**



The Babcock amendment is voted into law. This law provided a state-maintained network of 70 numbered trunk routes, referred to as "The Constitutional Routes" throughout this site.

1921 - During the 1921 legislative session, another highway bill was passed which provided the full legality for the construction of Minnesota's first trunk highway system. Grading and paving of the new system took place throughout the 1920's and early 1930's.

**The Dawn of the US Highway era**

**1925**



In 1925 the AASHO (American Association of State Highway Officials) created the U.S. highway system to provide consistent interstate routes, which would allow for national automobile travel, replacing the marked auto trails. Although the U.S. routes weren't officially approved until November 11, 1926, press releases from September indicate that the U.S. highway markers were already going up in Minnesota.

The original routes in Minnesota included: U.S. 2, U.S. 8, U.S. 10, U.S. 12, U.S. 14, U.S. 16, U.S. 55, U.S. 61, U.S. 65, U.S. 71, U.S. 75, U.S. 210, U.S. 212, and U.S. 218.

**1926**



The U.S. secretary of agriculture appointed a joint board of state and federal highway officials to develop a national system of highways out of existing roads and a national system of signage, resulting in the National Highway System of 1926. Good Roads Associations began to fade from the scene in the late 1920s having accomplished their primary objective as the federal, state, and county governments took responsibility for maintaining public thoroughfares.



Sources: <http://www.deadpioneer.com/articles/primer.htm>, <http://www.roadswerenotbuiltforcars.com/the-petition-that-paved-america/>, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Good-Roads-movement>, <https://medium.com/@mnhthen/minnesota-s-first-good-roads-highway-movement-871eb73f7279>