

U.S. Highway 90 History



From "Old Spanish Trail" to Modern Mississippi Highway



"U. S. Highway 90 has been an important transportation route both economically and historically in Mississippi. This beach corridor must be maintained to the highest standards, in a way that does not jeopardize its legacy here along the coast."

Wayne Brown
Southern District
Commissioner,
Mississippi
Department
of Transportation



Projects Along U.S. Highway 90/Old Spanish Trail

1900

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1920

U.S. Highway 90 was once a primitive Mississippi coastline roadway known as Beach Drive. It began as a trail that connected six small rural coast towns. By 1908, state and local governments joined with private citizens to fund upgrades along the roadway. Crews placed shells along the roadway and constructed bridges. Improvements to the scenic roadway continued, although the next decade of construction was plagued by a series of interruptions, including hurricanes, war and lack of funds. ***

1920

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1930

In 1921, Jackson County sold bonds to finish construction and pave their stretch of roadway. Four years later, the roadway was designated as United States Highway Route 90 from Texas to Jacksonville, Florida. In 1926 the bridge over Pearl River at Honey Island Swamp was completed and cars were allowed to pass freely over into Louisiana. In a few short months, the new concrete D'Iberville Bridge over the Back Bay in Biloxi was opened. The Back Bay Bridge replaced the old wooden drawbridge of 1901 and in turn allowed cars more access to the gulf highway. In May of 1927, a stretch of 22 ft. wide paved highway opened from Gulfport to Biloxi. That next year, the four-lane concrete Watson-Williams Bridge opened, allowing travelers to cross the five-mile neck of Lake Pontchartrain south of Slidell, into the City of New Orleans. One month later, the two mile long wooden bridge connecting Bay St. Louis with Henderson Point was open for business. In August of 1928, the Pascagoula River Bridge project was completed and open for traffic. U.S. Highway 90 was now a continuous route through Mississippi. ***

1930

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1960

Over the next quarter century the route continued to be improved from the addition of new bridges, to the various upgrades to the roadway itself. In the late 1940's, Harrison County lead the way for the first four-lane project along U.S. Highway 90, which set in motion several four-lane projects in the other coastal counties over the next five years. By 1960, U.S. Highway 90 was a four-lane highway from the Bay of St. Louis to Biloxi Bay. In addition to the new four-lane projects, the outdated bridges were replaced with new structures. The four-lane drawbridges over Bay of St. Louis, East Pascagoula River, and Biloxi Bay were built in 1952, 1954, and 1959 respectively.

*** In 2003, MDOT published a document written by Charles L. Sullivan entitled, *Building the 'Old Spanish Trail': The Story of a Modern American Highway*, which detailed the origins of the Old Spanish Trail, now known as U.S. Highway 90.

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1960

In 1968, MDOT added left turn lanes at median cross-overs from Henderson Point to Biloxi Bay. In August of 1969, Hurricane Camille made landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. In 1970, MDOT reconstructed U.S. Highway 90 to repair damages caused by Camille.

1970

By 1969, U.S. Highway 90 was a four-lane highway east of Pearlington to the Bay of St. Louis.

By 1974, U.S. Highway 90 was a four-lane highway from Biloxi Bay to the Mississippi/Alabama line.

From 1975 to 1976, U.S. Highway 90 was overlaid with asphalt and parking bays were reconstructed from Henderson Point to Biloxi Bay. In 1976, MDOT installed traffic signals at 29 intersections on U.S. Highway 90 in Harrison County. Those intersections were:

Market Avenue	Coliseum Drive	Jeff Davis Avenue
Beauvoir Avenue	Cleveland Avenue	Broadwater Beach Drive
Broad Avenue	Sheraton Drive	30 th Avenue
Camellia Street	20 th Avenue	Veteran's Avenue
15 th Street	Rodenberg Avenue	Hewes Avenue
White Avenue	Courthouse Road	Porter Street
Teagarden Road	Buena Vista	Cowan Road
Caillavet Street	Debuys Road	Reynoir Street
Edgewater West	Main Street	Edgewater East
Oak Street	Myrtle Street	

1970

2005

Interstate 110 was built in 1988 that connected U.S. Highway 90 to Interstate 10. The new interstate included a loop over the beach and Mississippi Sound at U.S. Highway 90.

From 1988 to 1994, U.S. Highway 90 from Henderson Point to Biloxi Bay was overlaid with asphalt and parking bays were reconstructed. Work was also done on these projects to improve drainage.

U.S. Highway 90 from Oak Street to Myrtle Street was widened to a six-lane roadway in 1995.

In 2000, the U.S. Highway 90 bridge over the CSX railroad at Henderson Point was replaced, and the intersection at U.S. Highway 49 was reconstructed.

In 2003, the four-lane drawbridge over the East Pascagoula River was replaced with an eight-lane high-rise bridge.

In 2004, U.S. Highway 90 in Ocean Springs was widened to six-lanes from the CSX railroad to Vermont Avenue.

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September 2005 – December 2005:

MDOT made emergency repairs to U.S. Highway 90 to repair damages caused by Hurricane Katrina.



February 2006:

MDOT awarded project to replace the U.S. Highway 90 bridge over the Bay of St. Louis. Two lanes of the new bridge were opened to traffic on May 17, 2007. Final completion is scheduled for January, 2008.

2005

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2007



June 2006:

MDOT awarded project to replace the U.S. Highway 90 bridge over Biloxi Bay. Two lanes of the new bridge are scheduled to be opened on November 1, 2007. Final completion is scheduled for April, 2008.

July 2007 – September 2007:

MDOT awarded projects to reconstruct U.S. Highway 90 from Henderson Point to Myrtle Street. The projects will include milling & overlaying the roadway, removing and replacing the curb and sidewalk, and the installation of new traffic signals.

From its humble beginnings as a sandy coastal trail, to the much depended on Scenic Parkway, U.S. Highway 90 is a vital route along the Mississippi Gulf Coast to this day.

After more than a century of design, construction and growth, U.S. Highway 90 has become a thriving corridor, benefiting all Mississippians.