Abstract

The interstate highway system blossomed with the passage of the FHA (Federal Highway Act) in 1956, but its seeds were planted early in 1944. A coalition of oil, vehicle, cement, steel, and union interests lobbied for the bill heavily. It was a national system that comprised of over 46, 000 miles of restricted access highway, the most expensive and most extensive public works to be ever undertaken (Mohl, 2002). The process of construction was greatly expedited by the utilization of advance condemnation and design of possessions along its way. Though the states engaged in the development of the roads, oversight, coordination, funding were from the federal government. The first part of the interstate highway system was unwrapped less than one year after the bill passed. It was targeted to be finished by 1969, but it ended up taking more than ten years longer before the whole system was complete (Mohl, 2002. Opinions of the HIS have changed over the past years, from celebrating to antipathy and apathy. But be that as it may, the interstate system has had the crucial impact on the communities in the United States mainly on their way of life.

This annotated bibliography summarizes both recent and past types of research that look at the impact of IHS (Interstate Highway System). It uses web articles, journals articles, books and research papers as sources. Furthermore, it mainly concentrates on the effects of the IHS to the rural communities, minorities and the development of the suburbs, new industries, towns, and cities. It also touches on the creation of new employment jobs as both a direct and indirect consequence of the IHS. Due to the multidisciplinary nature and extensive range of the topic, the materials have been retrieved from several academic disciplines including economics, geography, and politics. Most of the studies discuss both the negative and positive side of the Interstate Highway System to the communities in the United States. However, some emphasize more on the positive side and others on the negative side. The most emphasized benefits are ease of transportation and the growth of the suburbs which have continued growing ever since the system was entirely constructed. The expenditures in IHS have been seen to assist the increase rural migration and employment, especially in the retail industry and manufacturing. The highway benefited the rural-metro areas. Other benefits include a reduction in transportation cost and time, ease of trade, cost saving for producers and consumers alike, and reasonable prices for goods due to fewer mishaps in their transportation. Nonetheless, most research tends to emphasize the negative side of the IHS.

Apparently, despite the benefits the system had on most communities in the United States, it was a tool to sabotage and destroy the black and other poor minorities in the country. It is apparent that the policymakers used the interstate system and specifically black neighborhoods in an endeavor to reshape the racial and physical landscape of the postwar cities in America. The urban superhighways ripped through long-created inner-city residential communities in their passage towards the city centers, damaging low-income housing on an unprecedented and vast scale.

Annotated Bibliography

Mohl, R. A. (2002). The interstates and the cities: Highways, housing, and the freeway revolt. Poverty and Race Research Action Council, 109. Retrieved from <http://www.prrac.org/pdf/mohl.pdf>

This article first describes what the interstate system was all about then proceeds to explain its negative effects on the poor black communities. According to Mohl (2002), after the Second World War, the American cities encountered dramatic change. The changes were as a result of government policies like the 1956 construction of the interstate highway system. As explained in this article, the interstate system is a 42, 500 miles network of limited-access, high-speed highways that connected cities across the United States. Mohl posits that the decision to construct the interstate highway was both a purposeful and a fateful one. It is apparent, that the policymakers used the interstate system, particularly at the local and state level, to destroy low-income and specifically black neighborhoods in an endeavor to reshape the racial and physical landscape of the postwar cities in America. The author continues to emphasize that no other policy has had a lasting and dramatic effect on the urban communities as the interstate system. The interstates facilitated automobile commuting by connecting central cities with suburbs while damaging the inner-city mass transport. The urban superhighways ripped through long-created inner-city residential communities in their passage towards the city centers, injuring low-income housing on an unprecedented and vast scale. This source is important because it represents the negative side of the interstate system by comparing it with the positive side.

Lewis, T. (2013). Divided Highways: Building the interstate highways, transforming American life. Cornell University Press. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=rQ1OF84ekOsC&oi>

This book presents the story of conception and consequences of the longest and the greatest engineered structure ever constructed the interstate system. The earlier versions of the book have been criticized. However, the author has addressed all the errors in previous versions. According to the author, the interstate system connects communities and cities in an extensive road web that carry the nation's life but to build it, many Americans had to be evicted from their land and their neighborhoods and homes destroyed. The system gave the people of America almost full mobility but brought endless congestion. Many people in the 1960s and 50s regarded the interstates as a social and technological triumph. The network of roads provided those who lived in the city and walked to work in the factories an opportunity to have their homes in the relative, privacy, safety, cleanliness and quiet of the sub-urban country. The book also discusses the negative impacts of the system. In the mid-60s, people started to blame the system for several issues in the society. It led to the so-called "white flight," suburban sprawl and other issues in the communities. Nonetheless, the book focuses on the positive side of the interstate system. It mentions that despite everything, the interstate system has contributed to the growth of the country and creation of job opportunities for people in the community. It unites the people and makes commuting to any part of the country possible.

Nall, C. (2015). The political consequences of spatial policies: How interstate highways facilitated geographic polarization. The Journal of Politics, 77(2), 394-406. Retrieved from <https://www.stanford.edu/~nall/docs/nall--ident9.1.pdf>

Polarization is not a new phenomenon in the United States. The Democrats and the republican are shifting more and more away from each as days proceed. According to Nall (2015), like other forms of polarization, suburban-urban polarization has several causes. Most research has focused on income and race while other focus on policies like redlining, zoning and racially exclusive agreements that limit residential opportunities. In his article, Nall shows that spatial policies (the ones that shape geographic area through shaping the fabricated environment, have similarly influenced the residential decision by impacting mobility as well as the scope of residential choices available to people. Such policies like the interstate highway Act have reshaped American political layout, with effects for both policy and elections. The article focuses on the impact of interstate highway system on the people of America. Nall (2015), affirms that drawing on the US highway construction database since the ratification of the highway legislation of 1956, it demonstrates that interstate highways in the suburban made counties in these areas less Democratic, particularly in the southern parts where the highways were constructed earlier. Also, metropolitan places with denser networks of the interstate also became more and more polarized. This source is important because the author has supported his postulations with a study.

Winslow, C., (2007). The Impact of the American Interstate Highway System. Retrieved from <http://fubini.swarthmore.edu/~ENVS2/S2007/wjohnso2/essay3.htm>

This web article was authored by Winslow and it comprehensively discusses negative and positive impacts of the interstate system. The author states that the HIS (interstate highway system) has immensely changed the manner in which Americans decide to live their lives and has had a crucial environmental effect on the country. One of the impacts discussed by this article is that the IHS has increased the number of individuals driving in America. However, the cost of driving is the emissions of pollutants, carbon dioxide, and greenhouse gases. This negatively affects the community. Additionally, according to the article, population change patterns can be connected to the interstate highway completion. The counties with interstates consistently developed more than those that did not. However, it is not known whether clear whether the construction of highways promoted growth or that growth promoted highway construction. The environmental effect of a population increase is clear: increase motor vehicles emissions, runoff, water runoff and usage, and waste tied to a reduction in open space as well as another uninhabited habitat. The IHS has also increased the number of people living in the suburban. In the 1960s, only a third of the population lived in these areas. However, the fraction has increased to more than half and is still growing.

Impact | The History of the Interstate Highway System. (2018). Highway.umwblogs.org. Retrieved from <http://highway.umwblogs.org/impact/>

Though the author of this web article is not mentioned, it contains some useful insights on the impacts and history of the interstate highway system. However, it purely focuses on the positive impacts of the system. It begins by explaining how the interstate highway system eased travel for people in America. The capability to transport manufactured goods and raw materials between suburb and rural areas resulted in a decline in the time and cost for producers and consumers. Every person in America benefited from speeder and less expensive services and goods. The farmers immensely benefited because their produce could reach the market before spoiling. The extensive connections of the highways necessitated ease of travel and thereby attracting new industries to rural and new areas, encouraging expansion. Subsequently, it resulted in the development of new cities and expansion of the existing one. It also increased the rate of employment with the availability of travel for the daily commute. Also, the construction of the highways gave people in the local community’s jobs to build as well as maintain the roads. Lastly, the interstate system leads to the development of the automobile industry in the United States. The likes of Ford and General Motors developed as a result of demand for new cars because with the IHS everyone in the family wanted to drive their car. This source contains a lot of useful information.

Michaels, G. (2008). The effect of trade on demand for skill: Evidence from the interstate highway system. The Review of Economics and Statistics, 90(4), 683-701. Retrieved from <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/19767/1/The_Effect_of_Trade_on_the_Demand_for_Skill_-_Evidence_from_the_Interstate_Highway_System.pdf>

Notably, the author of this article uses the interstate highway system to understand the impact of decreasing trade barriers on the skilled labor demand. However, the article presents important information on the effect of the interstate highway system on the communities in the United States. For starters, the author explains that the IHS was initially created to connect the main metropolitan areas in the United States and serve as a national defense to link the US to Mexico and Canada. As an implication, although not the primary objective, many counties in the rural areas were connected by the system. Besides, the linking benefited the communities living in these rural areas, in that they experienced a drastic increase in activities related to trade, like retail sales and trucking, by roughly seven to ten percentage points for every person. Most significantly, by enhancing trade, the highways increased the relative demand for workers skilled in manufacturing activities in counties with high human capital. This, as mentioned above benefited the local communities. The livelihood of people in these areas increased, and new towns and cities started developing as a result. Furthermore, it helped decongest the cities as people began moving out to rural areas where jobs began growing.