

HISTORIC ROUTE 20

Massachusetts



A Study by the Historic US Route 20 Association, INC September 2017



1926 US HIGHWAY SHIELD



1960 - Present US HIGHWAY SHIELD



HISTORIC ROUTE 20 SIGN

Welcome!

Since 2013, the Historic US Route 20 Association has traveled across Massachusetts, meeting with various Visitors Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Cities, Economic Development offices and more to discuss traveling US Route 20 and the designation of the original 1926 highway alignment as Historic Route 20.

This study is a outcome of our recent visits, follow-ups and details for the future.

Prepared by Bryan Farr - President, Historic US Route 20 April 24, 2017

Cover: Copy of the 1929 Massachusetts State Highway Map.



INTRODUCTION



- **Purpose** - to designate and recognize the original 1926 alignment of US Route 20 as a State "Historic Route/Highway" in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- **Objective** - to promote travel & tourism and economic development by placing wayfinding signs (Historic Markers) on the original 1926 alignments of US Route 20 in Massachusetts.
- **Goals** -
 - To work with the 31 towns and cities on the current & former alignments of US Route 20 in Massachusetts to erect Historic Route 20 signs on their respective sections of highway.
 - To increase travel and tourism on the US 20 across Massachusetts
 - Bring people back into the small towns
 - To connect with other communities and states that are on US Route 20
 - To make Historic Route 20 a tourist destination, similar to the iconic Route 66



The Historic US Route 20 Association, Inc.

- A 501 (c) 3 Non Profit organization founded in 2012, recognized Public Charity and Economic Development
- Federal EIN 46-0837490
- We aim to promote travel & tourism and economic development on the original 1926 alignment of US Route 20 across the United States by working with local communities, economic development offices, visitor's bureaus and chamber's of commerce.
- We work in a grassroots effort by visiting and encouraging locations to become a part of the organization
 - Historic US Route 20 would act as the organization to work with each town in Massachusetts
 - We promote the highway via social media, brochures and working with other travel and tourism associations
- Economic development tool – We offer our signs as a uniform tool to tie in Historic Route 20 across America
 - Towns, Businesses, Organizations
- Our research indicates tourists want to take the original 1926 Historic Alignment and not bypasses or 4 lane highways



A BRIEF HISTORY



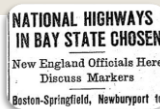
Pre- 1925

- Native American Trail (Bay Path) used for migration from Boston inland to Springfield
- Trails became the Boston Post Road in the 1700s to deliver mail between NYC and Boston
- George Washington & Henry Knox use Post Road in Revolutionary War.
- Washington & Knox establish Springfield Armory
- Greenwood Road (current road between Lee and Pittsfield-NY Border) opens in 1790s to allow easier travel between Hartford and Albany.
- Western RR built over mountains in Western MA to connect Boston to Albany – 1820s
- Jacob's Ladder Trail - Est 1910 – first over mountain auto route in US. Lee-Russell
- Yellowstone Trail – A designation in 1912, connecting existing road to guide tourists to Yellowstone National Park on the route. Boston to NY Border.



1925-Present

- Congress approves Federal Highway Act to improve roads
- Massachusetts designates the Boston –Albany Route to become a Federal Highway (June 1925)
 - Route 20 was not built, but connected existing routes.
- US 20 designation given in November 1925
- Approved in 1926, new shields placed on route.
- Weston votes to build bypass to redirect traffic from downtown in 1929
- Funds to improved US Route 20 redirected to build 4 lane Route 9 highway between Boston & Worcester - 1929.
 - Towns fight back and Win.
- Route 20 moved between Northborough – Worcester and Palmer in 1932
- Mass Pike opens parallel to Route 20 – 1958
- Springfield bypassed in 1972



FACTS OF US ROUTE 20



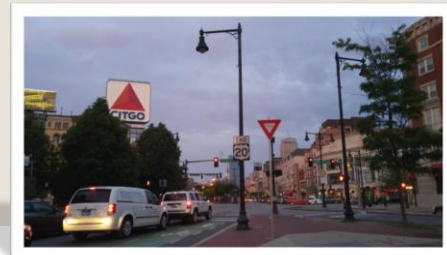
National

- Length – 3,365 Miles
- Longest highway in USA
- 12 States
- Eastern End – Boston, MA
- Western End – Newport, OR
- Lowest Elevation – Hudson River at Albany, NY – 0 Feet
- Highest Elevation – Sylvan Pass, Yellowstone NP 8350 Feet

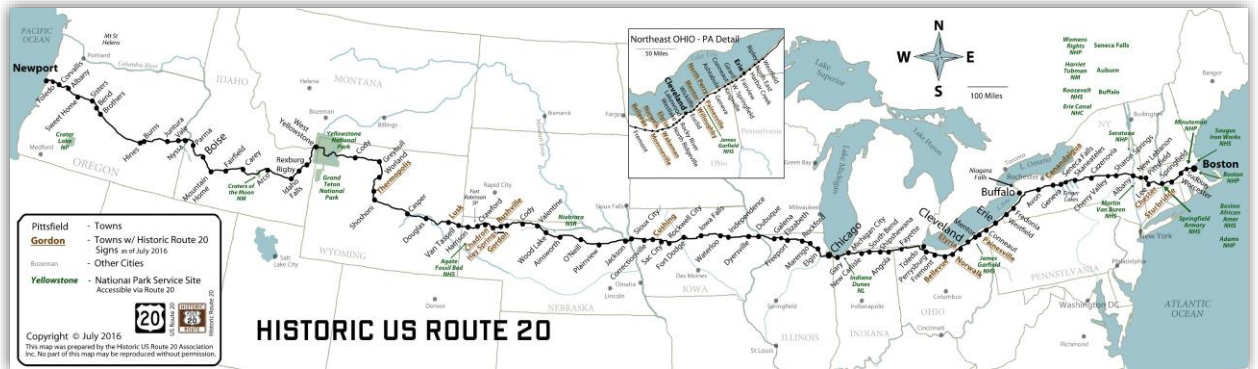


Massachusetts

- Length – 153 Miles
- Longest highway in MA
- 31 Towns and Cities
- Eastern End – Kenmore Sq, Boston
- Western End – Hancock/NY Border
- Lowest Elevation – Charles River at Watertown – 13 feet
- Highest Elevation – Jacob's Ladder Sum., Becket – 1776 feet



US ROUTE 20 ACROSS THE UNITED STATES



WHY HISTORIC ROUTE 20 IN MASSACHUSETTS?



- The longest highway in Mass.
- Route 20 perceived as a “local” road & “Not reaching across the state”.
- Historic Routes are bypassed and not identified in many towns.
- Brings people back into downtowns – both small and large.
- Creates a new Tourist Destination & Economic Development opportunities
- Route 20 is “overlooked” for other Routes, i.e. Routes 2,9, etc.
- Connects other Historic Route 20 locations in 12 states.
- Great for hikers, bikers and motorists who are not in a hurry.



HISTORIC ROUTE 20 SIGNS



Historic Photo in Marlboro showing 1926 style shields.



Features

- Original 1926 Shield design
- Brown Background - Historic
- Highly Reflective
- Highway Grade

Top Photo" From 1927 State Road Map showing "Typical Route Markers".

Sizes

- 24"x 36" or 24"x30"
 - Min of 2 per Town
 - Facing East/West
 - Major Turns/Intersections
- 12"x 24"
 - for reassurance in towns & local highways
 - display in storefronts, shops, etc.

The state name for Massachusetts was always abbreviated and never spelled out on US Highway Shields – the organization continues this tradition.



CURRENT HISTORIC ROUTE 20 SIGNAGE IN MASSACHUSETTS

Town of Sturbridge

Town of Chester

- Placed on Town Maintained Roads
- Approval granted by Town Selectmen or planning board

MassDOT Approval

Mass DOT has a strict sign placement policy and such signs cannot be placed on the Public State Highway without permissions. Many towns are on the state highway controlled part of 20 and therefore cannot place such signs on the route.

This study aims to work with legislative leaders, tourism officials, local towns and MassDOT to gain approval of designating Historic Route 20 across Massachusetts.



Historic US Route 20 sign on original highway - Chester, MA

Sign is placed on Town Maintained highway



HISTORIC ROUTE 20 SIGNAGE

Meant to be Historic Markers and not replace current DOT Shields

Large sign is 24" x 36" on highway grade aluminum with reflective façade.

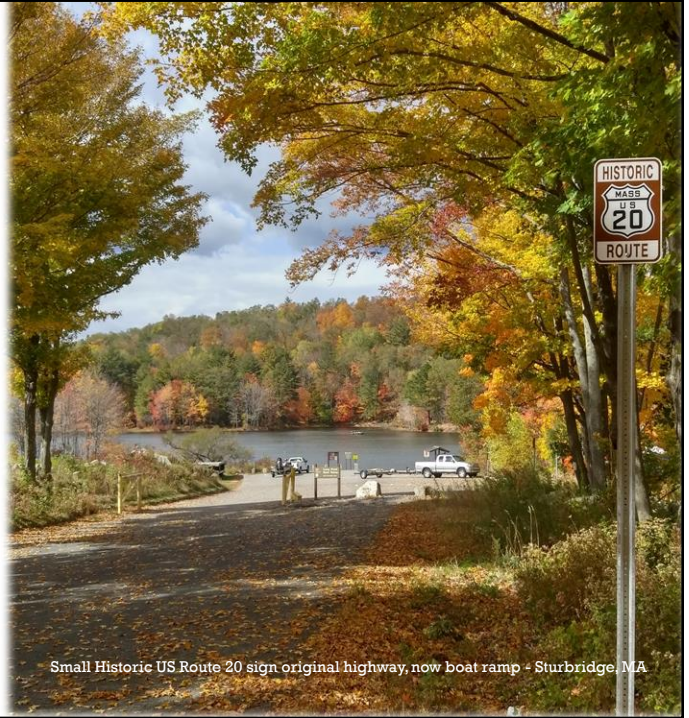
The shield represents the original 1926 US Highway Shield, with state name.

Signs are purchased or funded by grants, donations, or other entities* and NOT by state funds or Mass DOT.

Permissions to erect signs would be agreed upon and granted by individual towns.

Signs need to be placed to ensure complete continuity, to get back to main Route.

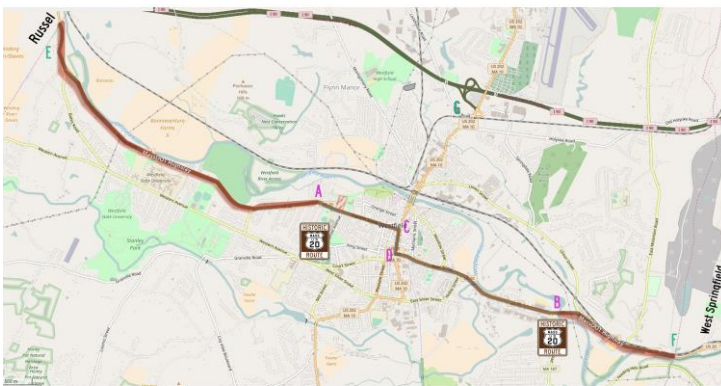
* Signs in other locations have been funded by Visitor's Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Offices, Local Businesses, Town Funds, Historical Societies, Private Donations, Grants



Small Historic US Route 20 sign original highway, now boat ramp - Sturbridge, MA

HISTORIC US ROUTE 20

City of Westfield
1926 Alignment



Modern map with highlighted Historic US Route 20

The original alignment of US Route 20 through Westfield has not changed since the 1926 designation. For continuity across the US, this alignment is considered the Historic Route.

City Maintained MassDOT Maintained

Map Copyright © 2017 - The Historic US Route 20 Association Inc.
Basemap © OpenStreetMap contributors

SIGN STUDY

- The Historic US Route 20 Association will complete a sign study for an entity interested in promoting Historic Route 20.
- Membership to the organization is appreciated to complete the study.
- The sign study will detail:
 - The original 1926 alignment
 - Recommended sign locations
 - Turn by turn directions
 - History of the road/changes
- The original 1926 alignment connects the most towns. Other later alignments may be considered.

Note: Letters on this map indicate placement of signs, detailed further in study



IDENTIFYING ALIGNMENTS



- Where multiple alignments exist OR to avoid confusion with the present US Route 20 alignment – a historical year marker can be placed under the shields.
- Examples:
 - 1926-1932 Northborough to Palmer
 - Originally Route 20 was aligned from Northborough, Shrewsbury and to what would be come Route 9 through Worcester.
 - This alignment should be recognized by appropriate signage.
 - Culturally the 1932 realignment via Sturbridge/Brimfield is known as Route 20 and will be addressed as such.
 - 1926-1940 Beacon Hill, Boston
 - The original highway went to the State House.



Signage used in Illinois on Historic 66

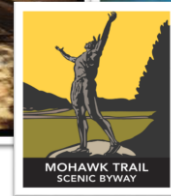
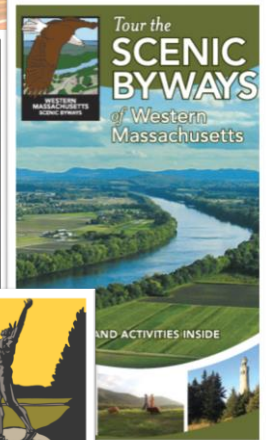
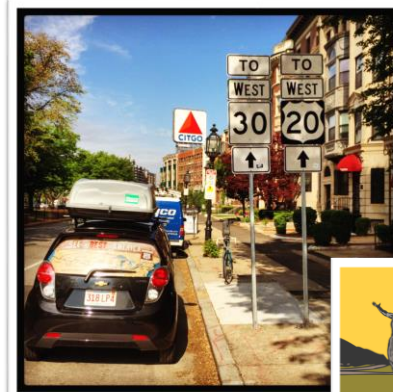
POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Over 4.3 million visitors spent \$1.06 billion in 2015
- 55% are first time visitors
- 79% stay overnight
- 84% stay in hotels, B&Bs or campgrounds
- 2.9 nights is the average stay along the route
- Typical party is one to 2-3 adults & 3 children
- 51% of visitors come from outside the highway area
- 40% of visitors come from other states
- 3% come from outside the country
 - Historic Route 20 has recorded travelers coming from Canada, UK, Australia, Germany, Austria.

* Information from the 2015 Economic Impact Study of the Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corridor. Based along the 427 mile long, 11 county PA Route 6 Alliance.
Route 6 is the second longest highway in the United States. It shares similar cultural ideals and is used as a model for Historic Route 20

CREATING TOURISM

- Route 20 is not recognized as a tourist route in most locations in the Commonwealth.
- Historic Route 20 can easily tie in and connect with other tourist routes & destinations.
 - Jacobs Ladder Scenic Byway
 - Connect with Mohawk Trail
 - National Parks, The Berkshires.
- Route 20 in Massachusetts is perceived as a local highway - needs new perspective.
 - The road from Boston to Worcester or Springfield.
- Create the first transcontinental Historic Highway!
- Boston is the eastern *Beginning* point for Route 20
 - Tourists arrive in and leave from Boston.
 - International tourists fly into Boston to take Route.
- Work with local and state tourism to promote 20 as a destination locally and nationally.



DISTANCES BETWEEN BOSTON & OREGON RECOGNIZED



- In December 2016, Mass DOT and Oregon DOT worked to place distance markers between Boston and Newport on their respected ends of the highway.
- Spearheaded by a Newport, OR town councilman.
- Mass DOT followed suit to place similar sign in Kenmore Square.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE SITES ON OR NEAR US 20



- Boston NHP
- African American NHP
- Blackstone Valley
- Springfield Armory
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Minuteman NHP – 4 miles North



**3.6 Million Visitors to NPS sites
on or near US 20 in FY 2016**



POLE BANNERS

- Pole Banners are used in nearly every community.
- Conversation Piece
 - Town Name
 - Distance Between
 - Boston, MA
 - Newport, OR
- Can be made into larger signs, posters, magnets, etc.



**CHESTER
HISTORIC**



ROUTE

**BOSTON, MA
118 MILES**

**CHESTER
HISTORIC**



ROUTE

**NEWPORT, OR
3,247 MILES**

MAJOR HISTORIC REALIGNMENTS OF ROUTE 20 MASSACHUSETTS

- The Historic US Route 20 Association's mission is to identify all the original 1926 alignments of US Route 20.
- If the route has not been moved or realigned – it is considered the original historic route.
- Tourists indicate they wish to travel the original highway



Original alignment on right in Brimfield

- Beacon St/State House – Boston
- Commonwealth Ave – Boston
- Boston Post Road – Weston
- Wayside Inn – Sudbury
- Various Sections - Marlborough
- Various Sections - Sturbridge & Brimfield
- Old Boston Road – Wilbraham
- State Street – Springfield
 - Includes Memorial Bridge into W. Springfield
- Woronoco Road – Russell
- Old State Hwy – Huntington & Chester
- Main Street – Lenox



CENTENIAL CELEBRATION - 2026

- 2026 will mark the 100th anniversary of the US Highway system.
- States such as Illinois are preparing major tourism plans to promote travel on Route 66 in 2026.
- Route 20 is a viable alternative to Route 66
- Massachusetts should embrace Route 20's historic significance in the state and country
- Completed Historic Route 20 signage would enhance and allow for a larger celebration in Massachusetts and across the United States
- Events across 20 could be planned to encourage travel in conjunction with other states.
- Potential for great marketing ideas



EMBRACE HISTORIC ROUTE 20

- Historic Route 20 is just not a road sign on the side of a highway. We aim to remain active in the community and have the community embrace their location on the historic route.
- Promotional materials should include:
 - Phrases such as - "We're on Historic Route 20"
 - Highlighting the route on maps & guides
 - Place small signs in windows, buildings
 - Create their own brand of Historic 20
 - Kiosks with town & route history
 - Participate in a passport program
 - Re-create the culture of being on Route 20
- Contribute and update events calendar on the Historic Route 20 webpage - www.historicUS20.com

#historicroute20 #route20



Signs placed on a winery that was a gas station in New York.



Signs placed in window of a shop in Ohio.



SUMMARY

- US Route 20 is the longest highway in the United States between Boston and Newport, OR
- US Route 20 is the longest highway in Massachusetts
- Many towns and locations are seeking a tool to increase tourism and to spend locally.
 - Historic US Route 20 wayfinding markers are a tool to connect 31 communities across Massachusetts
 - Tourism studies indicate that wayfinding markers are overall lacking in towns, but help increase visitation and added tourism
- To facilitate uniform and continuous sign placement across the Commonwealth, legislation is required to designate the former and present alignments of US Route 20 as a Historic Route on State DOT highway sections.
- The Non Profit Historic US Route 20 Association works in a grass roots effort with towns and other entities to place Historic Route markers on their sections of Route 20.
 - **There is Zero \$\$ cost to the Commonwealth or State DOT for the Historic Route program – unless specified otherwise**
- Towns embrace the creation of a historic route designation.
- Towns and cities would be responsible for placement of signage at the recommendation of the Historic Route 20 Assoc.
- Mass DOT has recognized the significance of US Route 20 by placing signs in Kenmore Square.
- 2026 is the Centennial of the US Highway System – Massachusetts should see value in promoting the longest US Highway as a tourist destination.

▪ Study Prepared by Bryan Farr – President Historic US Route 20 Association INC. 108 Skyline Trail, Chester, MA 01011 (617) 733-5796 bfarr@historicUS20.com

This study can be printed at www.historicUS20.com/massstudy.html

