This road started what was to become a vast, 42,000-mile network of interstate and defense highways across the United States.

Other notable undertakings illustrate the evolution of Americans' mobility. By 1825, the Erie Canal opened the Great Lakes to commerce; its success spurred a huge inland waterway system, including the St. Lawrence Seaway. By 1850, more than a thousand steamboats plied our rivers, and clipper ships came to dominate trade with China. By 1869, the transcontinental railroad was completed. Technological advances of the late 19th and early 20th centuries brought the automobile and the airplane, and further developments resulted in space flight.

Our land, water, and air transportation systems provide us with fast, efficient, and safe personal and commercial travel. They are vital not only to our economy and our personal mobility, but also to the defense of our Nation. Our ability to transport people and materials in time of emergency is a critical aspect of our national security.

In recognition of the importance of transportation and of the millions of Americans who serve and supply our transportation needs, the Congress has requested, by joint resolution approved May 16, 1957 (36 U.S.C. 160), that the third Friday in May of each year be designated as "National Defense Transportation Day"; and by joint resolution approved May 14, 1962 (36 U.S.C. 166), that the week in which that Friday falls be proclaimed "National Transportation Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Friday, May 15, 1987, as National Defense Transportation Day and the week of May 10 through May 16, 1987, as National Transportation Week. I urge the people of the United States to observe these occasions with appropriate ceremonies that will give full recognition to the importance of our transportation system to this country.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

RONALD REAGAN

Proclamation 5637 of April 23, 1987

Seventy-fifth Anniversary Year of the Department of Labor

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

March 4, 1988, will be the seventy-fifth anniversary of President William Howard Taft's signing into law an act establishing the United States Department of Labor. In celebrating this milestone, we honor both the mandate of this ninth Executive department and the men and women who have made that mandate a reality through the years.

Recognition of the need for a Department of Labor began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Labor organizations such as the Knights of Labor
and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) urged the creation of a Federal department to deal with matters affecting working people. A Bureau of Labor was established in the Department of the Interior in 1884. This Bureau was made an independent, but not Executive-rank, Department of Labor in 1888. When the Department of Commerce and Labor was created in 1903, the Department of Labor returned to bureau status within it. The famed labor leader Samuel Gompers and others then campaigned for a Cabinet-level Department of Labor.

That campaign bore fruit with President Taft’s bill-signing in 1913. The mandate of the Department of Labor was “to foster, promote, and develop the welfare of the wage earners of the United States, to improve their working conditions and to advance their opportunities for profitable employment.” That immense task has inspired the Department ever since.

The Department has fulfilled its duties during war and peace, during depression and prosperity. Through the years, the Department of Labor has improved the lives of working people and benefited all Americans through its contributions to the success of our economy.

Among other tasks, the Department helps workers find and train for jobs; monitors changes in employment, prices, and other economic measures; oversees the broad range of working conditions and safeguards working people’s rights; assures and strengthens collective bargaining; and ensures freedom from discrimination. Seeking to help business and industry achieve economic growth and stability, the Department also promotes cooperative relationships between labor and management and encourages collaborative efforts with trade unions and employer organizations.

The Department has played a significant international role as well, cultivating understanding among labor organizations throughout the world and fostering free unions and efficient governmental labor institutions in other nations.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the year 1988 as United States Department of Labor Seventy-fifth Anniversary Year. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this Anniversary Year with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities. In order to enhance participation in this important observance, I call upon the Secretary of Labor to establish an Honorary Committee for the Department of Labor Seventy-fifth Anniversary Year, and to invite all living former Secretaries of Labor and the Presidents of the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce to act as Co-Chairs of the Committee. I also call upon the Secretary to invite other distinguished persons to serve as Committee members, including representatives of the Congress, labor, management, and academia.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-third day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

RONALD REAGAN