

HISTORY OF BEELINE HIGHWAY

- 1868 -** Construction begins on Reno Road to facilitate the transportation of military troops between Fort McDowell into Camp Reno in Tonto Basin.
- 1920s -** Bush Highway, an unpaved road that begins as an extension of Power Road in Mesa, is built across the Salt River to Fountain Hills. It becomes the first leg of what will become the Beeline Highway.
- 1937 -** A group of Rim country citizens, headed by Alf Randall, begins a nearly two-decade lobbying effort to widen and reroute portions of the old Bush Highway and create a paved road to Payson.
- 1950s -** Randall's group is joined by Maricopa County Supervisor Jim Hart. Hart interceded with the Salt River Pima and Fort McDowell Yavapai tribes to build a diagonal road running northeast of Mesa toward Payson. Hart was killed in a one-vehicle car accident returning from Payson in February 1960.
- July 19, 1958-**The newly paved highway from Phoenix to Payson opens and, despite its many twists and turns, is officially dubbed the Beeline. Until this date travelers were told to follow the ruts and "go wherever you can get through." The four-hour drive is cut down to two hours.
- 1969 -** A stretch of the Beeline south of Payson becomes the first to be widened into four lanes. Other stretches follow over the years, passing lanes are added, and dangerously narrow passages are widened.
- Sept. 5, 1970-**Officer Gib Duthie of the Department of Public Safety is killed in an automobile accident at the Sycamore Creek Bridge while attempting to assess flood damage.
- 1983 -** ADOT widens 2.3 miles of the Beeline 20 miles south of Payson at a cost of \$5.3 million.
- 1990 -** Another 5.2 miles are widened and improved, from State Route 188 to Rye, at a cost of \$15 million.
- 1991 -** The 5.7 miles from Shea Boulevard to the Tonto National Forest boundary north of Fountain Hills are widened at a cost of \$20 million.
- 1992 -** Nearly one and a half miles between Four Peaks Road and Sugar Loaf Road are widened at a cost of \$1.1 million, and three miles between Sugar Loaf Road and Mesquite Wash are widened at a cost of \$10 million.
- 1993 -** A second northbound lane is added to the 6.4-mile stretch from Mesquite Wash to Sycamore Creek at a cost of \$8.9 million.
- 1993 to 1996-** Thirty-eight automobile drivers and passengers died on the Beeline, earning it a distinction as one of the deadliest roads in the state. As traffic has quadrupled since 1980, accidents and injuries have increased by 25 percent every four years.
- Aug 15, 1995-**Department of Public Safety Officer Bob Martin, who spent the majority of his 27-year career on the Beeline, was shot and killed on the road he patrolled.
- 1996 -** The 11 miles between McDowell Road in Mesa and Shea Boulevard in Fountain Hills opens following an expenditure of \$14.7 million. Two new southbound lanes were created, and the northbound lane was rebuilt.
- 1997 -** Another 11 miles, between Four Peaks and Sycamore Creek, is widened to four lanes. New bridges are built at Mesquite Wash, Pine Creek and Sycamore Creek.
- 1998 -** A five-mile length of road winding north to Sunflower gets the four-lane treatment.
- April/May 2000 -** The last 7 miles of two-lane highway were widened to four lanes, bypassing Sunflower and completing the 133-year Beeline Highway project.