

**NEWS RELEASE**

California Department of Transportation, District 7, 120 South Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist07/>

Contact: Patricia Reid
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 20, 1999

MEDIA ADVISORY**"FIRST FREEWAY" TO BECOME A NATIONAL LANDMARK**

WHAT: PASADENA FREEWAY (ARROYO SECO PARKWAY 110) TO RECEIVE
NATIONAL HISTORIC CIVIL ENGINEERING LANDMARK DESIGNATION

WHEN: FRIDAY, JULY 23, 1999
10:30 A.M.

WHERE: CASA DE ADOBE - 4605 NORTH FIGUEROA STREET - HIGHLAND PARK
*PARK ON FIGUEROA STREET IN FRONT OF THE CASA

WHO: ASSEMBLYMAN JACK SCOTT, 44TH DISTRICT
DR. DELON HAMPTON, PRESIDENT-ELECT, AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
CIVIL ENGINEERS
TONY V. HARRIS, CALTRANS CHIEF DEPUTY DIRECTOR

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: TONY V. HARRIS AND DR. DELON HAMPTON WILL LIFT A
BLACK, FELT CLOTH TO UNVEIL THE 45 POUND, BRONZE LANDMARK PLAQUE.

BACKGROUND: Opened in 1940, the Arroyo Seco Parkway was the first freeway in the West and it launched the freeway age. It is the first transportation facility to receive this special national designation. There are only 11 other Public Works projects that have been designated "landmarks" by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The Los Angeles section of ASCE nominated the parkway. The plaque will be permanently installed in a public open space near the Pasadena Freeway.

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First Freeway in the West Launched the Freeway Age

ARROYO SECO PARKWAY RECEIVES NATIONAL DESIGNATION

California's first freeway, the Arroyo Seco Parkway, which was the catalyst for a freeway network that is unparalleled in the world, was designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) during today's ceremony in Highland Park.

Dr. Delon Hampton of Washington, D.C., who is President-elect of ASCE, presented Caltrans Chief Deputy Director Tony V. Harris with a bronze plaque which designates the pioneering Arroyo Seco Parkway (Pasadena Freeway) a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

"We are deeply honored to have the historic Arroyo Seco Parkway designated as a National Civil Engineering Landmark by the History and Heritage Committee of the Los Angeles Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers," Harris said.

"This recognition from the civil engineering profession is a wonderful tribute to the men and women whose vision, talent and hard work turned an intermittent stream into an engineering marvel. The people of California have enjoyed the fruits of their labors for over half a century. Today, their families, and thousands of motorists share in their triumph."

Referring to the West's first modern freeway as a "symbol of determination," Harris praised the spirit of cooperation between the federal, state and city governments of Los Angeles, Pasadena and South Pasadena, which made the project possible.

Colorful dedication celebrations in 1940 marked the opening of this six-lane, landscaped and divided superhighway, one of the most beautiful drives in the West. With bridges eliminating cross traffic, the roadway reportedly cut motoring time between Los Angeles and Pasadena to 13 minutes.

Eleven other California Public Works projects have been awarded the "landmark" designation.

The 6.7-mile parkway received the landmark designation because it was the first fully grade-separated, limited-access, landscaped freeway that was built as a non-toll state highway within an urban area. It was built at a cost of \$5.7 million and it paved the way for over 4,000 miles of California freeways that came after it thus becoming the prototype for subsequent urban freeways in the United States.

The parkway was constructed between January, 1938 and December 1940. It extends from the I-5 Interchange in Los Angeles to Glenarm Street in Pasadena. The Arroyo Seco, a dry wash lying just west of Pasadena and curving south and west toward downtown Los Angeles, had been considered an ideal location for a road as early as 1895. However, for various reasons, construction did not begin for another 45 years. A bicycle speedway that was constructed in the early 1900's preceded the parkway as the first transportation artery in the Arroyo Seco Channel.

The Arroyo Seco Parkway was the first limited access highway to be adopted by the state and built through an already urban environment. The parkway proved to highway engineers nationwide that a fully grade-separated highway in an urban area was feasible, that such a highway would be popular with motorists and that substantial user benefits could be realized from such a highway.

The parkway established the practice of building state highways in urban areas as freeways in landscaped strips. Before the Highway Act of 1943, which established the Federal-Aid Urban

classification, and following the model of the pioneering California freeways, roughly 15,000 miles of limited-access highway were constructed within urban areas in the United States.

The pioneering Arroyo Seco Parkway was followed by Route 163 in San Diego (1942), the Terminal Island Freeway (1943), the downtown extension of the Hollywood Parkway (1946-48), the San Bernardino Freeway (1950) and the Santa Ana Parkway (1949-52). These wartime and early postwar projects were designed for general traffic use and were later renamed as "Freeways." The Arroyo Seco Parkway was extended after World War II to connect (in 1953) with the Hollywood and Santa Ana Parkways at the Four-Level Interchange in Downtown Los Angeles. In 1954, it was redesignated the "**Pasadena Freeway.**"

Traffic engineers learned a lot from the Arroyo Seco Parkway – they gained knowledge about the value of having speed-change lanes at the access points on limited-access urban highways and the minimum practical width for a planted median. To compare asphalt and Portland Cement Concrete pavements, one traffic lane of each of the three-lane roadways was paved with asphalt concrete pavement while the other two lanes of each roadway was paved with Portland Cement Concrete pavement.

Last month an international team of college students began a unique summer program to document the parkway. Caltrans provided \$100,000 funding for the program that is sponsored by a division of the National Park Service. When completed by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) team, the report, drawings and photographs of this renowned engineering landmark will be available to future generations at the U.S. Library of Congress.

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REMARKS FOR TONY HARRIS

ARROYO SECO PARKWAY (PASADENA FREEWAY)
DESIGNATION CEREMONY
NATIONAL HISTORIC CIVIL ENGINEERING LANDMARK
JULY 23, 1999 -10:30 A.M.
CASA DE ADOBE - HIGHLAND PARK

•Thank you, Dr. Hampton (President Elect of the American Society of Civil Engineers) for honoring the achievements of our engineers by naming the Arroyo Seco Parkway as a National Civil Engineering Landmark – a designation that has been given to only 11 other engineering works in California.

•I accept this honor in the name, first, of the engineers who saw the extraordinary potential for mobility in a roadway that would flow, unimpeded, like a river, and secondly in the names of the thousands of Caltrans engineers who came after them and who have extended this concept to the greatest system of roadways in the world.

•You can go around the country and look at a lot of landmarks that sit around and do nothing. But it is a hallmark of Civil Engineering landmarks that they still work -- and this one certainly does. It still carries more than 120 thousand vehicles a day. It will still zip you on a trip from Pasadena to downtown in less than 15 minutes.

•This public work has been yielding benefits of safety, mobility and convenience for almost 60 years – and as a living transportation laboratory, it has provided Caltrans with information for six decades about how to design better roadways.

•The Arroyo Seco Parkway paved the way for the more than 4,000 miles of California Freeways that have come after it, and it was the prototype for urban freeways

throughout the United States and the rest of the world.

- This pioneering, 5.7-mile route proved to highway engineers nationwide that a fully grade-separated highway in an urban area was feasible and that it was immediately popular with motorists. It was the first of a long, long string of highways whose lanes were fully utilized shortly after they were opened.

- We learned something else from the Arroyo Seco Parkway. That is that cooperation between our agency and the local jurisdictions through which our facilities pass is absolutely essential. This highway was possible only because the federal government, the State and the city governments of Los Angeles, Pasadena and South Pasadena got together and made it happen.

- This is a historic road in more ways than one. Everyone, it seems, has a lot of affection for this stretch of road – so much so that there is every likelihood that it will stay the same for the indefinite future – tight curves, no shoulders, entrances from a dead stop, and wooden median barrier. We have joked that it might operate more effectively if we only allowed cars on it that were built before 1940!

- The parkway is getting some special attention this summer – a talented team of college students is working on a special project sponsored by the National Park Service to document its history and development for the U. S. Library of Congress.

- So I accept this handsome plaque proudly for all who had a hand in its planning and construction – the federal government, the cities of Los Angeles, Pasadena and South Pasadena, and the men and women of the California Department of Transportation.

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We will make sure it is displayed prominently nearby .