

= Interstate 81 in Maryland =

Interstate 81 (I @-@ 81) is a part of the Interstate Highway System that runs from Dandridge , Tennessee to Fishers Landing , New York . In Maryland , the Interstate highway runs 12 @.@ 08 miles (19 @.@ 44 km) from the West Virginia state line at the Potomac River in Williamsport north to the Pennsylvania state line near Maugansville . I @-@ 81 is the primary north ? south Interstate highway in Washington County , connecting Hagerstown with Chambersburg and Harrisburg to the north and Martinsburg , Winchester , and Roanoke to the south .

The idea of a north ? south bypass of Hagerstown to relieve congestion on the contemporary main highway through the Hagerstown Valley , U.S. Route 11 (US 11) , predates the Interstate system . Construction on the Hagerstown Bypass began in the mid @-@ 1950s and was completed in 1958 from US 40 north to the Pennsylvania state line . I @-@ 81 was assigned to the new freeway in 1959 . The southern section of the freeway from the Potomac River to US 40 was built starting in 1962 and completed in 1966 . Beyond interchange improvements , I @-@ 81 has changed very little from the four @-@ lane freeway of the 1960s . Long @-@ range plans call for widening I @-@ 81 to six lanes and effecting further interchange improvements along what is a major commuting and trucking corridor .

= = Route description = =

I @-@ 81 crosses the Potomac River from West Virginia and enters Maryland as a four @-@ lane freeway with a speed limit of 65 miles per hour (105 km / h) . The Interstate curves to the northeast around Williamsport , where the highway meets MD 68 and MD 63 (Lappans Road) at a diamond interchange (Exit 1) to the south of the town and US 11 (Virginia Avenue) at a five @-@ ramp partial cloverleaf interchange (Exit 2) to the east . Beyond US 11 , I @-@ 81 's speed limit drops to 60 miles per hour (97 km / h) . The Interstate passes along the edge of the Hagerstown suburb of Halfway , where the highway meets I @-@ 70 (Eisenhower Memorial Highway) at a cloverleaf interchange (Exit 4) with collector @-@ distributor lanes on both I @-@ 81 and I @-@ 70 . Traffic for I @-@ 68 is advised to use I @-@ 70 west . I @-@ 81 meets Halfway Boulevard , which leads to several shopping centers including the Valley Mall , at a six @-@ ramp partial cloverleaf interchange (Exit 5) .

I @-@ 81 continues northeast along the west edge of Hagerstown . The Interstate crosses CSX 's Lurgan Subdivision and passes under MD 144 (Washington Street) with no access before reaching a cloverleaf interchange with US 40 (National Pike) (Exit 6) . The freeway intersects MD 58 (Cearfoss Pike) at a partial cloverleaf interchange (Exit 7) . Immediately to the north , I @-@ 81 has a partial interchange with Maugansville Road (Exit 8) featuring a loop exit ramp from southbound I @-@ 81 and a straight entrance ramp to the northbound direction . The Interstate curves to the north and crosses Norfolk Southern Railway 's Lurgan Branch . The speed limit increases to 65 miles per hour (105 km / h) as the Interstate passes along the eastern edge of Maugansville , where the highway meets Maugans Avenue at a diamond interchange (Exit 9) . I @-@ 81 meets Showalter Road , which is used to access Hagerstown Regional Airport , at a cloverleaf interchange (Exit 10) as the freeway gently curves around the airport 's runway . The Interstate heads northeast to the Pennsylvania state line , on top of which the highway meets PA 163 (Mason Dixon Road) at Exit 1 of the Pennsylvania exit sequence . The southbound exit ramp to and entrance ramp from PA 163 are in Maryland and the northbound ramps are in Pennsylvania .

I @-@ 81 , like all Interstate highways , is a part of the National Highway System for its entire length . It is the shortest mainline Interstate in Maryland and contains the shortest portion of I @-@ 81 of all six states through which the Interstate highway passes . The Interstate was dedicated as Maryland Veterans Memorial Highway in 1987 .

= = History = =

The first section of I @-@ 81 to be constructed in Maryland was the pre @-@ Interstate

Hagerstown Bypass that was planned to provide relief to the existing north ? south highway through downtown Hagerstown , US 11 . The highway was planned to run from US 40 west of downtown Hagerstown to the Pennsylvania state line , where the Pennsylvania Department of Highways would continue the bypass north to tie into US 11 near Greencastle . Preliminary engineering on the Hagerstown Bypass began in 1954 and construction began in 1956 , by which time a southern extension was planned south to US 11 east of Williamsport . The freeway was completed from US 40 (now MD 144) to the Pennsylvania state line in 1958 , including an interchange with the present alignment of US 40 west of downtown Hagerstown , a highway that was completed around 1963 . Traffic from the Hagerstown Bypass followed Mason Dixon Road to US 11 until the bypass was extended into Pennsylvania and tied into US 11 around modern Exit 3 in 1960 . The new freeway was marked as I @-@ 81 beginning in 1959 .

Construction on the portion of I @-@ 81 south of US 40 began in 1962 to fill a gap between the portion of I @-@ 81 in Maryland and the portion of the Interstate completed between WV 9 near Martinsburg and US 11 southwest of Williamsport in West Virginia . MD 144 's bridge over I @-@ 81 was constructed in 1963 once the relocated US 40 opened . The cloverleaf interchange between I @-@ 81 and the future I @-@ 70 was constructed in 1964 , including the collector / distributor lanes . The remainder of the highway south to the Potomac River , including the bridge over the Potomac River , was under construction by 1965 . The southern section of I @-@ 81 from the West Virginia state line to US 40 opened in 1966 .

I @-@ 81 remains very similar to when it was completed in 1966 . Exit numbers were first marked in 1974 ; these exit numbers have not changed . The Maugansville Road interchange was originally a full interchange , but it was reduced to a partial interchange in 1968 . The interchange with MD 68 and MD 63 south of Williamsport originally only had a northbound exit ramp and a southbound entrance ramp ; ramps to and from the direction of Hagerstown were added between 1981 and 1989 . The junction with Halfway Boulevard was a diamond interchange until it was rebuilt as a partial cloverleaf interchange in 2001 .

= = Future = =

I @-@ 81 is heavily congested within Maryland due to the 1960s era freeway being used as both a commuter route within a rapidly growing metropolitan area as well as a major trucking corridor . In 2010 , the highway had a minimum annual average daily traffic of 43 @,@ 771 between Showalter Road and PA 163 and a maximum of 62 @,@ 181 between Halfway Boulevard and US 40 . The Interstate is often used by long @-@ distance traffic as an alternative to I @-@ 95 to avoid traveling through the major cities of the East Coast . As a result , in 2001 the Maryland State Highway Administration began developing long @-@ term plans to upgrade the entire length of I @-@ 81 in Maryland . The state completed the planning process for the eventual upgrades to the Interstate highway in November 2010 ; the next step is preliminary engineering work . The state plans to expand I @-@ 81 to six lanes to address capacity concerns . In addition , many of the interchanges will be rebuilt to reduce or eliminate weaving . In particular :

The collector @-@ distributor lanes within the I @-@ 70 interchange would be extended north through the Halfway Boulevard interchange .

The US 40 and Showalter Road interchanges would be changed from a full cloverleaf interchange to a partial interchange by removing the two loop ramps from the crossroad onto I @-@ 81 .

The MD 58 interchange may be converted from a partial cloverleaf interchange to a diamond interchange .

The Maugans Avenue diamond interchange may have a loop ramp added from westbound Maugans Avenue to southbound I @-@ 81 .

At almost every interchange , acceleration and deceleration lanes would be lengthened to modern standards . The ramps within the I @-@ 70 interchange would be modified to better handle traffic passing between two freeways . Auxiliary lanes would be added in both directions between the US 40 and MD 58 interchanges , and southbound between the Showalter Road and Maugans Avenue interchanges . In addition , there is an option to construct a truck weigh station somewhere along I

@-@ 81 within the state ; there are no weigh stations along either the Maryland or West Virginia segments of I @-@ 81 .

= = Exit list = =

The entire route is in Washington County .