

= Interstate 70 in West Virginia =

Interstate 70 (I @-@ 70) is a portion of the Interstate Highway System that runs from near Cove Fort , Utah , at a junction with Interstate 15 to Baltimore , Maryland . It crosses the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia through Ohio County and the city of Wheeling . This segment is the shortest of all states ' through which I @-@ 70 passes , crossing West Virginia in only 14 @.@ 45 miles (23 @.@ 26 km) . The longest segment is Colorado 's , which measures 451 @.@ 04 miles (725 @.@ 88 km) . The Fort Henry Bridge carries I @-@ 70 from Wheeling Island across the Ohio River and into downtown Wheeling before the freeway enters the Wheeling Tunnel . I @-@ 470 , a southerly bypass of Wheeling and the lone auxiliary Interstate Highway in West Virginia , is intersected near Elm Grove . Before crossing into Pennsylvania , I @-@ 70 passes The Highlands , a major shopping center in the panhandle , and the Bear Rock Lakes Wildlife Management Area . On average , between 27 @,@ 000 and 53 @,@ 000 vehicles use the freeway every day .

The first road that entered Wheeling was a post road completed in 1794 that connected Wheeling to Morgantown . The National Road was the first interstate road , completed in 1818 , that connected Wheeling to Cumberland , Maryland . When the United States Numbered Highway System was created in 1926 , the National Road was designated U.S. Route 40 . The I @-@ 70 designation was brought to the Northern Panhandle with the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 , and it was built as a controlled @-@ access highway , bypassing portions of the old National Road . The first portions of I @-@ 70 in West Virginia were opened in 1963 , and construction was completed in 1971 .

= = Route description = =

Entering West Virginia from Ohio , I @-@ 70 crosses the western channel of the Ohio River onto Wheeling Island , the most populated island along the Ohio River . The freeway passes above a light commercial zone , and has an interchange with Zane Street . US 40 and US 250 become concurrent with I @-@ 70 at this interchange , before traveling east toward the Fort Henry Bridge . The bridge crosses the main channel of the river and the Greater Wheeling Trail , a rail trail that parallels the eastern banks of the river . Elevated above the city of Wheeling , a complex interchange provides access to the downtown area and Benwood . Traveling eastbound , US 40 departs the freeway at this interchange and becomes concurrent with West Virginia Route 2 (WV 2) northbound . US 40 and WV 2 travel through downtown Wheeling on a one @-@ way pair , the southbound lanes passing under I @-@ 70 and the northbound lanes passing over I @-@ 70 . After the interchange , I @-@ 70 enters the approximately 1 ? 4 @-@ mile @-@ long (400 m) Wheeling Tunnel which passes through Wheeling Hill . Immediately east of the tunnel , a directional T interchange provides access to WV 2 southbound near homes north of the highway . US 250 departs I @-@ 70 at this interchange . A stub ramp present at this interchange would have carried WV 2 north of I @-@ 70 had it been extended .

As I @-@ 70 curves to the south , it intersects US 40 and WV 88 with the ramps from the eastbound lanes of US 40 and WV 88 crossing underneath I @-@ 70 , parallel to Wheeling Creek . The interchange just west of the Wheeling Tunnel and this interchange are complicated by the fact that both are abutted by hills . Wheeling Jesuit University 's southeastern border is formed by the freeway as I @-@ 70 approaches the neighborhood of Elm Grove . Washington Avenue provides access to the college as the highway continues south before meeting the eastern terminus of I @-@ 470 , which is a bypass of Wheeling and the only auxiliary interstate highway in West Virginia . Between the directional T interchange and I @-@ 470 , I @-@ 70 is paralleled by the eastern branch of the Greater Wheeling Trail . A final interchange within Wheeling city limits provides access to US 40 and WV 88 . Leaving the city , the highway turns further east and enters a deep valley . The highway climbs over Two @-@ Mile Hill , and intersects Cabela Drive (County Route 65) , which provides access to The Highlands , a large shopping destination . Past The Highlands , I @-@ 70 continues northeast through woodlands to an interchange with the Dallas Pike (County Route 41) . I @-@ 70 passes north of the Bear Rock Lakes Wildlife Management Area before

crossing the Pennsylvania state line into Washington County southwest of West Alexander .

Out of the ten states I @-@ 70 passes through , the 14 @-@ 45 @-@ mile @-@ long (23 @-@ 26 km) segment in West Virginia is the shortest . By comparison , the longest stretch of I @-@ 70 through a single state is the 451 @-@ 04 @-@ mile @-@ long (725 @-@ 88 km) segment in Colorado . Every year , the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) conducts a series of surveys on its highways in the state to measure traffic volume . This is expressed in terms of annual average daily traffic (AADT) , a measure of traffic volume for any average day of the year . In 2012 , WVDOT calculated that as few as 27 @-@ 000 vehicles traveled over the Fort Henry Bridge over the Ohio River , and as many as 53 @-@ 000 vehicles used the highway near its junction with US 40 in Elm Grove . These counts are of the portion of the freeway in West Virginia and are not reflective of the entire Interstate . As part of the Interstate Highway System , the entire route is listed on the National Highway System , a system of roads that are important to the nation 's economy , defense , and mobility .

= = History = =

The first recorded road to reach what was then Wheeling , Virginia , was a post road linking it with Morgantown , to the southeast . The post road was completed in 1794 . The National Road was the first interstate road that served Wheeling , linking the town to Cumberland , Maryland , in the east . The National Road started construction under order of then President Thomas Jefferson in 1806 and was completed in 1818 . In 1926 the United States Numbered Highway System was established , and the National Road through the Northern Panhandle was designated US 40 . US 40 linked Vallejo , California , in the west to Atlantic City , New Jersey , in the east . Passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 formed the Interstate Highway System , designating as I @-@ 70 a then unconstructed controlled @-@ access highway across the panhandle by 1957 . Since it was constructed as a separate controlled @-@ access highway , much of I @-@ 70 is separate from the old National Road and US 40 .

The first portion of what is now known as I @-@ 70 to be completed across West Virginia was the Fort Henry Bridge across the main channel of the Ohio River , built in 1955 . WVDOT began obtaining right @-@ of @-@ way for I @-@ 70 in 1961 . The Wheeling Tunnel , linking downtown Wheeling and the Fort Henry Bridge to the eastern suburb of Elm Grove , was completed in 1967 at a cost of \$ 7 million (equivalent to \$ 90 million in 2015) . The bridge that carries I @-@ 70 from the Ohio state line onto Wheeling Island was completed in 1968 . Construction of I @-@ 70 across the panhandle was almost completed in September 1971 , with only one of the two carriageways completed in the final one @-@ and @-@ a @-@ fifth @-@ mile @-@ long (1 @-@ 900 m) segment of freeway near Elm Grove . Then Governor Arch A. Moore , Jr. and Senator Jennings Randolph were present for the opening of this \$ 17 million (equivalent to \$ 169 million in 2015) portion of freeway . The second carriageway was completed by the end of 1971 .

The Fort Henry Bridge , the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge (which carries I @-@ 470) , and the Wheeling Suspension Bridge were all closed in January 2005 , stopping any traffic from Ohio or Wheeling Island from entering mainland West Virginia for a few days because barges broke loose during heavy flooding along the Ohio River . The Wheeling Tunnel was closed for reconstruction work in 2007 , 2008 , and 2010 , causing motorists who wished to travel through on I @-@ 70 to detour . The two detour routes were city streets in downtown Wheeling and the I @-@ 470 loop .

After traffic issues during the 2008 reconstruction work on the Wheeling Tunnel , local politicians suggested closing the twin tunnels altogether and building the freeway over Wheeling Hill instead . After opposition from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People , which represented the affected Wheeling Hill residents , the suggestions were dropped . The cost of completing the tunnel replacement project was estimated at between \$ 60 and \$ 80 million . The total \$ 13 @-@ 7 million cost of the tunnel reconstruction project was over double the original bid of \$ 5 @-@ 7 million , due in part to the work delays .

= = Exit list = =

The entire route is in Ohio County .