

Colby to be part of Interstate 70 anniversary celebration

Colby will be a part of the 50th anniversary of the day President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act that began the world's largest public works project: the U.S. Interstate Highway System.

One of the main activities across the U.S. is the reenactment of the 1919 transcontinental Motor Convoy, said Leilani Thomas, director of the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau.

As part of the celebration, Thomas said everyone is asked to join in at 3 p.m. Tuesday, June 21 at Exit

54 overpass.

"It will display our banner and you will be given flags to cheer on the convoy. They tell us to expect about 40 vehicles passing though Kansas escorted by the Highway Patrol," Thomas said.

Part of the parade will be antique trucks and Eisenhower's great-grandson Merrill Atwater is to be one of the passengers.

The original convoy did not pass through Kansas, but due to Eisenhower's Kansas connection of Abilene, a significant portion of the group will be coming to cel-

brate this historic occasion.

Communities are working together to welcome the swing convoy to Kansas June 21-23. Banners will be placed at 13 overpasses along Interstate 70 to welcome the national convoy. Other activities will take place in Abilene and at the Kansas Speedway.

Thomas said in the early- to mid-1900s, two main things convinced Dwight D. Eisenhower of the need for good roads — his time during World War II when he saw the speed and efficiency of the German Autobahn and his experience in the

1919 Transcontinental Convoy.

Eisenhower was a lieutenant colonel in 1919 when he participated in the military convoy from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco. The convoy consisted of 81 motorized Army vehicles and about 300 people.

It took 62 days to complete at an average speed of 6 mph. He signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act on June 29, 1956, authorizing the federal government to pay 90 percent of the cost of constructing the interstates.

"The interstate system has revo-

lutionized transportation, boosted the economy and help shape our lifestyles and has provided freedom through mobility," Thomas said. "We know 1-70 is vital to the economy and infrastructure of our community. Colby would look very different without the Mainstreet of Kansas traveling through it."

Kansas Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller and Michael Johnston, president and chief executive officer of the Kansas Turnpike Authority, are also encouraging people to get involved.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the country's Interstate Highway System. In honor of the anniversary, the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Kansas Turnpike Authority in conjunction with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials will sponsor several events.

The capstone event is the reenactment of the first Transcontinental Motor Convoy of 1919. In the original convoy, Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower participated with a group of 81 Army vehicles and about 300 people from Washington D.C. to San Francisco. The 2006 convoy will reverse the route, be-

ginning in San Francisco and ending in Washington D.C.

During the initial convoy, Eisenhower witnessed firsthand the poor conditions of the nation's highway system. Later, as President, he established a priority to develop an Interstate system that could efficiently move people and goods throughout the country.

As a special tribute to Eisenhower's vision of an Interstate Highway System, a part of the national convoy will break off from the main reenactment route and swing through the entire state of Kansas.

This means Kansans will be in an enviable position to enjoy three days of the convoy and the planned activities.

The convoy has scheduled stops at the Eisenhower Center in Abilene (June 21-22) and culminates with a golden anniversary victory lap and celebration event at the Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kansas (June 23). All of these exciting events provide you with opportunities to be a part of celebrating the past and the future!

For more information, visit www.interstate50th.org to learn more about the national events.

Kansas mumps outbreak allowed time to prepare

LAWRENCE (AP) — This year's mumps outbreak in Kansas has allowed health officials to prepare for a more serious emergency, state and local agencies say.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment said as of Monday, the state had 761 confirmed and probable cases in 68 counties. Overall, cases in the state have started to decline in recent weeks, department spokeswoman Sharon Watson said, but she's not sure why.

"The decline may have more to

do with the timing of the virus in a typical cycle for an outbreak. (The typical cycle) is for it to last a few weeks, peak and then start to taper off," she said.

Watson said the outbreak has allowed the department to use its federally mandated incident command structure to relay information to different government agencies in Kansas. It was the first time the state has implemented the structure, which would be used during a flu pandemic or bioterrorism attack, she said.

The most common symptoms of mumps are fever, headache and swollen salivary glands under the jaw. It can lead to more severe problems, such as hearing loss, meningitis and testicular damage that can result in sterility.

Sheryl Tirol-Goodwin, spokeswoman for the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, said the mumps outbreak was more of an inconvenience for those infected, as opposed to a more severe or life-threatening illness.

"This is obviously something that

will help us practice if something bigger should happen," she said.

The median age for those infected with the mumps has been 21 in Kansas, and 74 percent of those infected in the state had received at least one measles, mumps and rubella vaccination.

Douglas County, home to the University of Kansas, was particularly hard-hit by the outbreak.

The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department said Douglas County has had 274 confirmed or probable mumps cases.

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