

100-YEAR-OLD HIGHWAY IN SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA, STILL STANDING STRONG

South Dakota's first concrete highway was built in Sioux Falls in 1923, and 100 years later, it is still in use. When it was first constructed from October to December 1923 by what was then called the Bureau of Public Roads—now the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT)—the highway project began on the north side of Sioux Falls and eventually stretched to Dell Rapids.

The roadway is 18 feet wide and 25 feet wide at the curves, narrow by today's standards for highway width. Twelve years after construction, the highway was partially rerouted to make way for a new railway bridge. However, 400 feet of the original pavement still exists, the north section serving as parking for the South Dakota State Penitentiary, and the southern section as the driveway to the Iglesia de Jesucristo church. The highway was included in the original plans for the King of Trails Highway that extended from Winnipeg, Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. When the King of Trails Highway was built, it ended up not going through South Dakota, but the South Dakota section is still immortalized in the 1918 plans.

The 400 feet of original pavement have had very little maintenance and have never been overlaid. The only maintenance that is apparent is the asphalt-like material that was used to fill in transverse cracks that spread across the width of the road, as joints were not sawed in the original pavement. The road was made with a 1:2:4 concrete mix: one part cement powder, two parts sand, and four parts rock. Sioux Falls experiences both hot summers and cold winters, including many freeze and thaw cycles annually. Not only is it impressive that the concrete has not required more extensive maintenance, it is also commendable that the state recognized the pavement's longevity and allowed it to remain in place.

East of the section of road used for penitentiary parking, there is a greenspace with a low wall, a bench, and a plaque placed there in 1990 commemorating the section of road as the first concrete state highway in

South Dakota, as well as a historic civil engineering landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers. On September 27, 2023, Jason Reaves, the Executive Director for the South Dakota Chapter

of the American Concrete Pavement Association (ACPA), gathered a group of state and local officials to celebrate the road's 100th birthday. The fact that the concrete has survived so long and is still in operation goes to show how durable concrete can be and why it is an economical choice in paving. Concrete paving is an investment in the future of road infrastructure that has the capacity to last over a century, long after its expected longevity.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

While the roadway is not a main thoroughfare anymore, Sioux Falls can take pride in having the first paved highway in the state. Despite being 100 years old, the concrete is still in good shape and provides two important side streets in the city.



KEY BENEFITS

The long life of this pavement:

- Saved taxpayer dollars
- Was a point of pride for the city
- Saved on maintenance costs
- Served as repurposed roadway without needing to be altered