National Road Timeline

1752 The Nemacolin Trail is marked by Nemacolin, a Delaware Indian, and Thomas Cresap. It led from Wills Creek on the Potomac River (present day Cumberland, Maryland) to the Monongahela River.

1754 Washington's Road is built by George Washington troops along Nemacolin's Trail during a campaign against the French.

1755 Braddock's Road, built by troops under the command of British General Edward Braddock, improves and extends Washington's road from the year before. Eight miles from Fort Duquesne (present day Pittsburgh) the British are defeated.

1802 The law that allows Ohio to become a state in the United States is passed. The law says that money from the sale of land in Ohio will be used to build a road from the east to the new state of Ohio.

1806 President Thomas Jefferson signs the law establishing the National Road.

1808 Congress approves funding for surveying the National Road.

1811 Construction begins on the National Road and the first 10 miles of road built.

1818 National Road is completed to Wheeling, Virginia. Mail stagecoach use of the road begins.

1830s The federal government turns over responsibility of the National Road to the states through which the road runs.

1835 Pennsylvania accepts the National Road from the federal government. They have the federal government repair the road and provide money for the construction of tollgates and tollhouses.

1839 The National Road reaches Vandalia, Illinois, where construction of the road stops.

1852/1853 The Pennsylvania Railroad reaches Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad reaches Wheeling, Virginia. This new form of transportation will lead to the decline of the National Road.

1880 The safety bicycle is introduced, and the League of American Wheelmen push for better roads.

1926 The National Road becomes part of U.S. Route 40 as a coast-to-coast highway. In most places Route 40 is right on top of the National Road.

1960s Route 40 is bypassed by Interstate 70.