

US-16 and I-96 parallel each other across the state from Detroit to Muskegon.

## I-96 makes cross-state trip quicker

Remember old US-16?

Many years, from the 1920s into the 1950s, it was the main highway between Lansing and Grand Rapids.

In between were Lansing and Grand Rapids and a dozen or so small towns, some of them notorious speed traps where village cops routinely nabbed scores of unwary motorists for pressing down a mite too heavily on the accelerator.

It was mostly a three-lane highway, and driving its full length took the better part of a day.

US-16 "disappeared" from the map in 1962 with the opening of the final link of the Detroit-Muskegon freeway, better known as I-96.

But the old highway is still there, and not doing too badly now that the great bulk of inter-city traffic uses the parallel freeway.

Most of it the state turned over to the various county road commissions. Today it mainly serves local traffic.

There are advantages to traveling the old highway, especially for the motorist who is in no hurry to get to wherever he's going. Parts of it, especially the stretch that courses through the gently rolling farmlands between Lansing and Grand Rapids, are a pleasure to drive. Passing through towns and villages and an occasional woods, it's certainly a more interesting drive than the freeway.

UNDENIABLY, the newer four-lane highway is safer, smoother, easier to drive and faster, too, even holding to the 55-mile-an-hour speed limit rather than the 70 miles an hour that was the limit when the freeway opened.

It's also more energy efficient.

One motorist, making a round trip on

the old and new highways, counted no less than 112 traffic lights between downtown Lansing and downtown Detroit on old US-16. He stopped at 32 of them and the 86-mile trip took exactly 2 1/2 hours.

The 92-mile return trip, following the most direct route via the John Lodge Freeway, I-696 and I-96, took one hour and 43 minutes traveling at 55 miles per hour.

ACCIDENT RECORDS repeatedly confirm the greater safety of limited access highways, free of intersections, driveways and traffic lights and with opposing lanes separated by a median.

In 1961, the year before I-96 was completed between Muskegon and Detroit, 895 accidents on old US-16 killed 16 persons and injured 593 others.

In the year following the opening of the final link between the two cities, 339 accidents on the freeway killed 14 persons and injured 207. The accident rate has been declining since then.

There is no way the old highway could safely handle the volumes of

traffic traveling between Detroit and Muskegon today. There were 3.13 million more cars, trucks, trailers and motorcycles registered in Michigan last year than in 1962, an 83 percent increase.

THE MICHIGAN Department of Transportation's traffic counters show the average daily traffic on I-96 midway between Lansing and Williamston to the east is 23,000 vehicles.

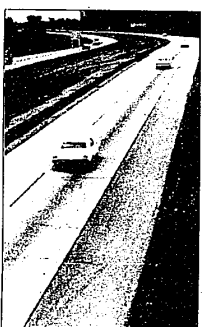
The old highway a couple of miles away carries some 8,000 vehicles daily, only 3,000 less than it carried in 1957 before the freeway opened.

Following are the average daily traffic counts at other locations on Old US-16 in 1957 and the parallel point on I-96 in 1977:

Near Fruitport in Muskegon County, 8,500 in 1957; 13,400 in 1977.

West of Brighton in Livingston County, 11,000 in 1957; 29,000 in 1977.

Between New Hudson and Novi in Oakland County, 18,000 in 1957; 46,500 in 1977.



Old US-16 (left), with its rolling three lanes, was the main highway between Detroit and Muskegon until 1962. It carries much local traffic today as a county road. Modern I-96 freeway (right) carries double or triple the traffic the old road handled at its peak.

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