

THE GREAT GLOBAL HIGHWAY
Linking Five Continents and
More Than 100 Nations

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Long before the beginning of recorded history, men ventured as far as they could, limited only by the conveyances they had and the routes open to them. Using camel caravans and crude ships, they covered great distances and opened exciting new trading opportunities.

So it is today. New routes now under development promise to give the people of the world unprecedented new opportunities to visit one another and trade. The Great Global Highway will make such dreams come true.

Imagine a vacation trip that might be taken by a Scandinavian family following the new route: They would drive from Sweden across the new bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen, then cross to Germany via new bridges, tunnels, and causeways.

After crossing France, the Swedish family would drive through Spain and take the much-discussed Gibraltar tunnel to Tangier. Using long-proposed trans-African highway links, they would drive down the west coast of Africa to Cape Town, then go back up the east side to Egypt.

Having circled the African continent, the touring Swedes would drive over the Suez on a new bridge, and proceed across historic eastern Mediterranean lands to Istanbul. Then, taking the new Silk Road, they would cross southern Asia, while retracing the ancient caravan routes.

Fascinating sites in China would command the attention of the travelers as they drove another two thousand miles to Shanghai. Then, they would turn north past Beijing along the Siberian coast to the Bering Strait. The long-planned Bering tunnel would allow them to cross under the icy sea and move into Alaska.

Next, they would use the well-known Pan-American Highway to cross Canada, the United States, Mexico and Central America. Driving over the futuristic elevated highway, which will span the Darien Gap, they would arrive in Colombia.

Again, a long-planned highway link would permit them to drive down the West Coast of South America to Tierra del Fuego, then move up the East Coast to the shores of the Caribbean. The venturesome Scandinavians will have visited five continents and more than 100 world-class cities. They will have seen more rare and unique places than could ever be reproduced by Disney.

Someday the news media will document the first such tour. Meanwhile, many families will enjoy unprecedented travel and educational experiences on portions of the great highway as they are finished. Important new trade opportunities will appear with the completion of each segment.

Most important, the global highway will bring the people of the world together as never before, promoting peace and prosperity and enhancing quality of life for billions.

Pessimists will say that the highway will never be built. They will argue that even if all financial and technical problems could be solved, social and political opposition will block the project.

The nay sayers have always asserted that big global transportation projects could not be done. They said that about the Rhine-Danube Canal, the Suez Canal, the Panama Canal, and the EuroTunnel, to mention just a few.

Of course, there are many obstacles. Some segments of the road may not be opened for decades. It may take longer to bring some of the links up to global construction standards and to provide ample security and control for motorists.

But, it will be done. Progress is being made every year. The great highway is slowly emerging, link by link. Some additional parts of the route are under construction. Others will be on a slower schedule.

The Gibraltar crossing has been in the planning stage for several years. The trans-Africa routes have been studied. They now await financing and political approval.

Perhaps the most important link to be built in the years just ahead will be the Asia/Europe connection heralded as "the new Silk Road."

Actually, there are several routes being promoted: a Southern route from the Mediterranean to Singapore; a middle route from Turkey around the Black Sea across China to Shanghai; and a Northern route from Berlin to Moscow across Siberia and Mongolia to Beijing.

All are important and eventually all will be built.

These developments will come long before the most challenging link – the route that runs up the Pacific coast from China across Eastern Siberia along an Arctic path to the Bering Strait. Because of the high construction cost and the sparse population to be served, it will require substantial funding from outside sources.

However, representatives of North-latitude nations are already meeting to promote a tunnel under the Bering Strait to connect Asia and North America. They argue that there will be great long-term economic benefits. (*See George Koumal's presentation on this project in this session.*)

Once in Alaska, the global highway can track along the existing Pan American highway across Canada, the USA, Mexico, and Central America. The route is interrupted now between Panama and Colombia by the Darien Gap – some 150 kilometers of rain forest. Construction has been delayed for several years pending solution of environmental questions.

South of Darien, the global highway moves along the West Coast of South America. Chile has already committed to a 3,000-mile north-south link. After reaching Tierra del Fuego, the highway then will travel northward along the east coast of South America all the way to cities along the Caribbean shore. Many miles of this route are already in place.

What we need today is for cities, nations, and international organizations to give priority to projects that can be a part of the global highway system. They will find that being linked to the new global system opens great new opportunities for them.