

HISTORY



# The Interstate System



Central 70



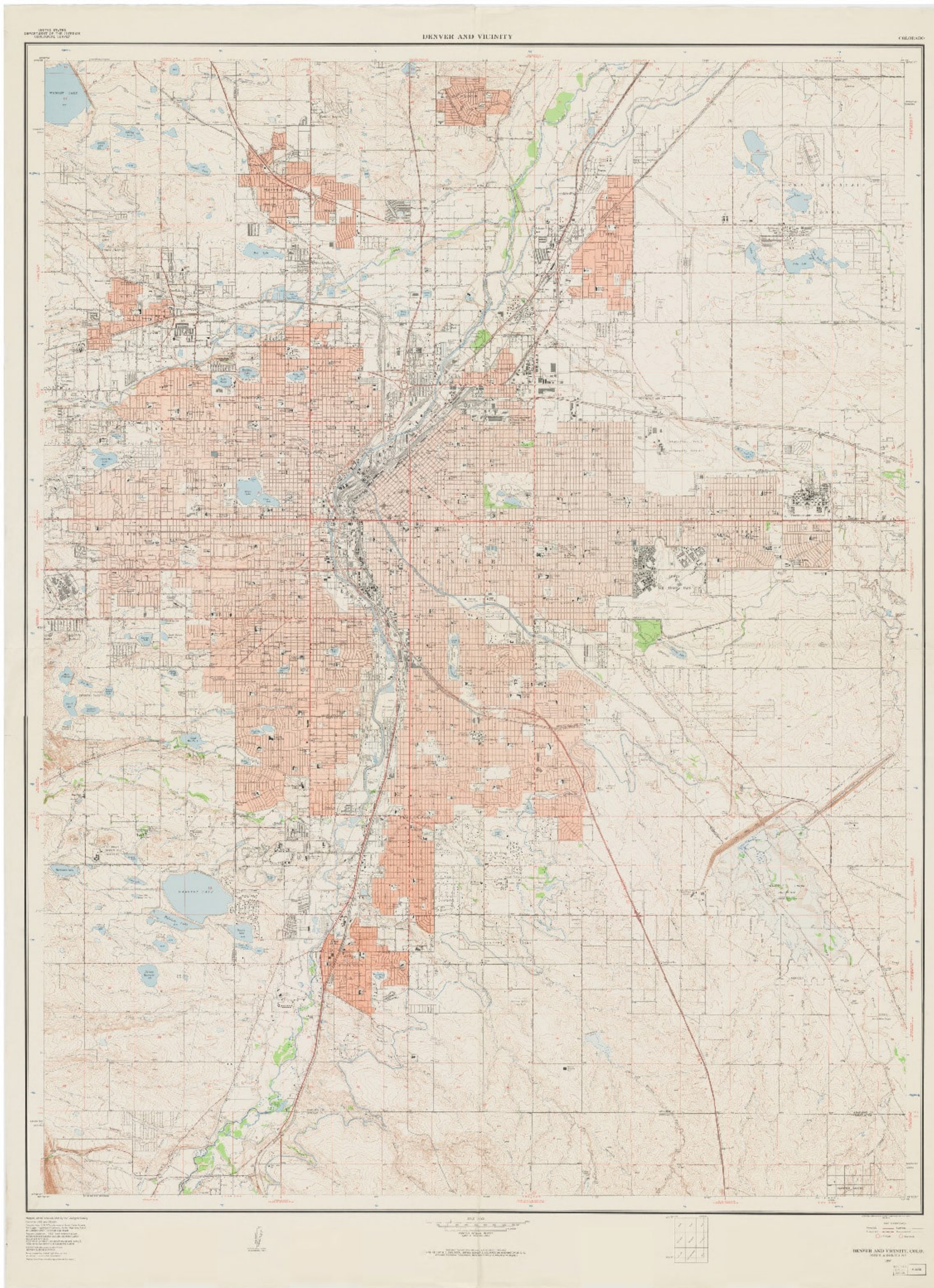
**STANDING BENEATH** the busy Central 70 viaduct today, it is hard to imagine a world without interstates. On June 29, 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation for what has been called the Greatest Public Works Project in history: the construction of the U.S. Interstate Highway System. The System was designed to provide a high-speed, high-capacity network of highways without stoplights and with exits spread at least one mile apart.

What began as a legislative push from Washington has become an integral part of the American way of life. From road trips to daily commutes to the very items on our grocery store shelves, we all have come to depend on the interstate system. President Eisenhower considered the Interstate Highway System to be one of the most important achievements of his term, and through the far-reaching impacts of the System today, historians agree.



**Jan. 11, 1955:  
Dwight D.  
Eisenhower  
receives  
members of  
the National  
Advisory  
Committee  
to discuss  
a national  
highway  
program.**

*National Archives,  
Eisenhower  
Presidential  
Library,  
Abilene, Kan.*



Map of  
Denver  
in 1957,  
before the  
Interstate  
System.

*Provided  
by Harvard  
University,  
Harvard Map  
Division*

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The primary reason for the Interstate System was defense. President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported the Interstate System because he wanted a way of evacuating cities if the United States was attacked by an atomic bomb.



# Vehicles traveling on the brand new I-70 viaduct in 1964.

*Colorado Department of Transportation*





## **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Interstate System unintentionally led to the rise of the modern suburbs. In 1950, more than 75% of Denver's population lived within city limits. By 1970, that number had dropped to 42% as the middle class established new communities in outlying areas where they had access to more land.