WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF OHIO’S LOCATION AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS?

Ohio’s location in the United States and its transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products and ideas.

In this activity, you will learn about Ohio’s roads, canals, railroads, highways, and air travel. After completing this activity, you will see how Ohio’s central location and transportation systems have influenced the movement of people, products and ideas.

**Key Terms**

- National Road
- B.F. Goodrich
- “Gateway to the West”
- John D. Rockefeller
- Standard Oil of Ohio
- Road Map

The Governor of Ohio has announced a state contest to promote Ohio’s transportation systems. Your teacher has decided that your class should participate in the contest. Here are the rules of the contest:

**Contest Rules**

- Any student living in Ohio can submit a design for a travel brochure.
- The focus of the travel brochure should be the benefits of Ohio’s central location and its transportation systems.
- The travel brochure should present information about Ohio’s early roads, canals, railroads, highways, and air travel.
- Brochures should be either two or three pages. All brochures must have at least one drawing, photograph, or illustration. Each brochure must include a map showing some of the locations mentioned in the brochure.
- Contestants must also submit an essay explaining how Ohio’s central location and transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products, and ideas in the United States.
- The best brochure in each class will be submitted to the Governor’s Office.
Your teacher passes out to each student a group of pages with all the information about Ohio that students will need to create their travel brochure.

**OHIO’S CENTRAL LOCATION**

Ohio’s central location places the state in a unique position in the United States. Even in colonial times, the Ohio River was recognized for its importance as a waterway. Without roads and before the invention of trains, the Ohio River provided the safest and easiest way to travel to the West. The Ohio River was seen as the major route into the interior part of North America. Settlers from the Northeast headed to the Ohio River to board barges and flatboats. They could travel the length of the river faster than they could go the same distance on foot or by wagon.

Ohio was the first territory in the West to be admitted to the Union as a state. Ohio’s pathway from a territory to state pointed the way for all future states to follow. Ohio became the “**Gateway to the West**.” Ohio’s location served to connect the eastern and western parts of the United States.

Today, Ohio’s geographic location continues to be an important part of its economic growth. Ohio is within 600 miles of 60 percent of all U.S. and Canadian manufacturing. The state continues to link the Northeast to the Midwestern part of the nation. People and goods pass through the state between these two regions.
CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

How did Ohio’s location make the state an important gateway to the West?


EARLY ROADS

In the early nineteenth century, Ohio’s untamed landscape made travel very difficult. Cities were connected by roads that were little more than dirt trails. Only a few roads were covered with logs or planks. Most short travel was done by walking. For longer trips, people rode on horse-drawn wagons.

In 1802, the federal government promised Ohioans a road connecting them to areas east of the Appalachians. The government began construction of the National Road to fulfill that pledge. Trees were cut, stumps were pulled out, and brush was cleared. In some areas, entire hills were leveled and rocks and debris were hauled away to build the first paved road to cross the Appalachian Mountains. To cover the cost of maintaining the 228 miles of the National Road, Ohio began collecting tolls along the road.

The National Road greatly advanced transportation, linking the frontier with the East Coast. Thousands of travelers took the road heading west to settle the lands of the Ohio River Valley. All along its path, the National Road saw cities begin to grow and prosper. Later, as canals and railroads grew in importance, traffic along the National Road declined. Today a highway, U.S. Route 40, follows the path of the original National Road.
What role did Ohio’s early roads play in the state’s development?

Ohio’s canals

Even with the National Road, Ohio suffered from the absence of a good transportation system for the first two decades of statehood. Ohioans had difficulty getting their products to eastern markets. Although the National Road was completed, there were toll stations that travelers needed to pay along the roadway. This made travel along the road too expensive for most Ohioans.

In 1817, the opportunity to connect Ohio with eastern markets became a reality when New York broke ground on a canal connecting Lake Erie with the Hudson River and New York City. In 1822, Ohio set aside funds to build its first canal in an attempt to bring a modern transportation system to the state. Their goal was to create a waterway connecting the Ohio River with Lake Erie.

Ohio’s canals directly affected the lives of its residents. Built between 1825 and 1847, these canals provided Ohioans with a new less expensive transportation system. The canals opened new markets for Ohio’s agricultural and industrial products. They also helped to attract thousands of immigrants to the state. The canals transformed Ohio from an isolated frontier region to an area with a growing economy.

At its height, Ohio’s canal system included about 1,000 miles of canals. But starting in 1855, the spread of railroads began to challenge Ohio’s canal system. Travel on railroads was faster and easier than along the canal system. Today, only a few of the canals remain as reminders of Ohio’s first attempt at a modern transportation system.
THE RAILROADS IN OHIO

The first railroad locomotive was introduced when a steam engine was placed on a wheeled wagon that moved along a track. The invention of the railroad revolutionized land transportation.

Throughout the later 1800s, Ohio’s industrial growth was closely tied to the expansion of the railroads. Railroads affected almost every aspect of life in Ohio. They connected raw materials to factories, and connected factories to consumers across the nation. Railroad construction also stimulated Ohio’s iron, steel, and coal industries.

Railroads promoted the settlement of the Western frontier. They brought settlers across Ohio to the farmlands of the Midwest. They linked Ohio farms to markets in the East. Moving goods by train was cheaper than using roads and faster than canal transportation.

As early as the mid-1820s, Ohioans began railroad construction to reduce travel time and to make shipping products easier. Track could be laid almost anywhere, including areas where canals could not be built. Ohio lay between the major East Coast cities and the cities on the Great Lakes and in the West. Many of Ohio’s early railroads connected cities that lacked access to a canal.
Ohioans also demanded a better way of transporting people and products from northern to southern Ohio. The earliest railroads in Ohio were local ones. By 1853, 22 railroad companies were operating in Ohio.

Railroads remained the main method of transportation in Ohio for more than a century. Only after World War II (1939–1945) did trucks and automobiles take away much of the railroads’ business. The greater use of automobiles took many railroad passengers off of the trains. The final blow to train travel came when airplanes presented an even faster alternative to trains.

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

What role did railroads play in the growth of Ohio’s economy?

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HIGHWAYS COME TO OHIO

In 1956, Congress passed the Federal Highway Act. This act created the largest public works project in American history up to that time. This act paid for the construction of thousands of miles of interstate highways, connecting the different regions of the nation. The highways also resulted in many economic benefits for America. It connected cities all across America, becoming the link for interstate commerce to this day.
With 49,000 miles of highway lanes, Ohio today boasts the seventh largest highway system in the nation. The highways of Ohio carry the fifth largest amount of traffic by vehicle miles and the third largest in the value of its commercial goods. Ohio also has the second largest number of bridges in the nation.

Ohio’s interstate highway system has greatly contributed to the economic growth and quality of life in Ohio. The interstates and other super-highways continue to contribute to Ohio’s economic growth and quality of life. The interstate highway system has given Ohioans the ability to move easily to any destination within their communities and to travel inexpensively throughout the nation.

What role did highways play in the growth of Ohio’s economy?
AIR TRAVEL

Ohio could be considered the birthplace of air travel. The first successful flight of a powered airplane was conducted by two brothers from Dayton, Ohio: Orville and Wilbur Wright. The first air travel was dangerous, and there were numerous crashes. Americans viewed flying as something exciting to watch, but not something that average people would do themselves.

After World War I (1914–1918), there were many advances in airplane design. These made flying much safer. Planes came to be used for military and commercial purposes. They were used to carry passengers and freight.

Aviation is very important to Ohio and its economy. With 175 airports, aviation contributes over $10 billion in economic activity to the state’s economy.

About 142,000 jobs are connected with aviation in Ohio. Two of the top reasons a business selects a location for expansion is the closeness of commercial aviation, and local community airports. The Cleveland-Hopkins International Airport serves almost 12 million passengers every year. The Port Columbus International Airport is another important airport in Ohio.

Ohio, the birthplace of manned-flight, is also home to 26 astronauts. The Armstrong Air and Space Museum is located in Ohio. It is named after Neil Armstrong, the Ohioan who became the first person to set foot on the moon.

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

How is air travel important to Ohio’s economic well-being?

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THE IMPACT OF LOCATION AND TRANSPORTATION ON OHIO

Because of its central location and the excellence of its transportation systems, Ohio has long been a center of industry and manufacturing. Heavy industry grew quickly in Ohio in the years after the Civil War. Because of its location on Lake Erie, Ohio was able to use iron and coal from nearby states. This helped Ohio to become a major center for making steel, iron, machinery, tools, and other metal products. Cleveland, Lorain, and Sandusky produced iron. Youngstown was a center for steel. Dayton became known for manufacturing cash registers. Toledo excelled at making glass products. Cincinnati became home to Proctor & Gamble, a multinational maker of personal care products, household cleaning goods, laundry detergents, prescription drugs and disposable diapers.

In 1870, Benjamin F. Goodrich opened a rubber manufacturing plant in Akron. Akron quickly became known as the “Capital of the Rubber Industry.” Ohio was also an important source of oil. John D. Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company of Ohio in the 1870s. Rockefeller opened Ohio’s first oil refinery. His company refined the crude oil coming out of the ground, turning it into useful products such as kerosene for lamps and gasoline for cars. Rockefeller’s company soon became the world’s largest oil company.

Today, Ohio continues to be home to many important national and multinational corporations, major banks, insurance companies and retail stores. People around the world buy and use goods made by Ohioans. These include chemical, rubber and agricultural products. Ohioans also manufacture trucks and cut stone products. Fifty-seven of the largest companies in the United States are based in Ohio. Ohio is also home to nine major banks. Six of the America’s largest insurance companies are headquartered in Ohio.
COMPLETING YOUR BROCHURE

Now that you have read about Ohio’s central location and transportation systems, it is time for you to create your brochure. Here is a checklist for your brochure:

- Does your brochure have at least two to three pages?
- Does your brochure contain illustrations?
- Does your brochure describe each type of transportation system?
- Does your brochure include how people used that type of transportation when it was first used?
- Does your brochure explain what transportation is still used in Ohio today?

In the space below, create an outline or plan for your brochure. Indicate where you will have your introduction, illustrations, and what type of transportation systems you will show on each page.

PAGE 1

PAGE 2
The second part of the Governor’s contest asks participants to write an essay. In this *Making Connections*, you will write an essay about what you learned in researching your brochure. Use the space below to describe how Ohio’s transportation systems continue to influence the movement of people, products and ideas in the United States. You may want to conduct additional research on the Internet or in your school library before writing your essay.
After you complete your essay and travel brochure, your teacher will decide which essay and brochure are best. Those should be sent to the Governor’s office. Who knows, maybe one of your ideas will find its way into being a part of Ohio’s next official travel brochure!

**Ohio’s Location**

How is Ohio’s central location beneficial to its economy?

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Ohio’s Canal System

What effect has Ohio’s system of canals had on its economy?

Ohio’s Railroad System

What impact did the expansion of railroads have on Ohio’s economy?

Air Travel in Ohio

Why is air travel so important to Ohio’s economic well-being?
**Directions:** Complete the graphic organizer below by explaining Ohio’s impact on the movement of people, products, and ideas in the United States.

**Central Location:**

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**Roads and Canals:**

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**Railroads:**

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**Air Travel:**

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**How Ohio’s location, roads, canals, railroads and air travel influenced the movement of people, ideas and products.**
Ohio’s transportation systems include its waterways, roads, canals, railroads, highways, and air travel. Throughout history, these transportation systems greatly affected the lifestyles of Ohioans. For example, the Ohio and Erie Canal linked Ohio to New York as well as to New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. This connection stimulated westward expansion and the growth of a national economy.

Choose any two methods of transportation mentioned above. For each one chosen, explain one way it has changed and how it has altered the lifestyle of Ohioans.