

The first paved road was constructed in 1926 and federal concessions for other highway routes were granted in 1932. In 1959, the *Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT)*, Secretariat of Communications and Transportation, was founded. Its responsibilities included overseeing Mexico's transportation development.

Commercial airline service began in Mexico in 1921. The Mexico City Airport was built in 1929, and the legal framework for the air transportation network was set between 1930 and 1940. By 1936, 12 private national companies provided airline service. Airline travel remains beyond the means of most Mexicans, however. In 1991, there were fewer than 700 commercial aircraft in use in Mexico.

ROADS

Road transportation is by far the most important mode for intercity passenger transportation, with about 97 percent of the market. The comparable figure for cargo is 59 percent.

The national road network consists of about 250,000 kilometres. This includes about 8,000 kilometres of toll roads. Other major roads include about 46,000 kilometres of federal trunk roads, mostly two-lane paved highways that cross state boundaries. There are also more than 60,000 kilometres of state roads of which just over half are fully paved.

Government plans call for the construction of a network of 12,000 kilometres of toll roads running the length of Mexico. The administration of former President Carlos Salinas concluded that the rapidly growing need for multi-lane highways could not be met through public resources. It initiated a concession program, which allowed private investors to build roads and temporarily operate them through tolls to recover their investment. A total of 6,000 kilometres of new private toll roads, mostly four-lane highways, was built between 1989 and 1994.

A large proportion of public road transportation consists of buses operating under the jurisdiction of the Federal Public Motor Transportation Service. It includes a large number of concessioned carriers operating on federal roads. The service carried more than 2 billion passengers and 318 million tons of cargo in 1991. In that year, the federal fleet included almost 700 bus companies, and about 3,500 trucking companies. The combined fleet was 39,000 passenger buses and 256,000 freight vehicles. At that time, routes were allocated by the government, and cargo shippers did not have a choice of carriers, but recent changes in legislation have encouraged competition.