

U.S. ROUTE 50

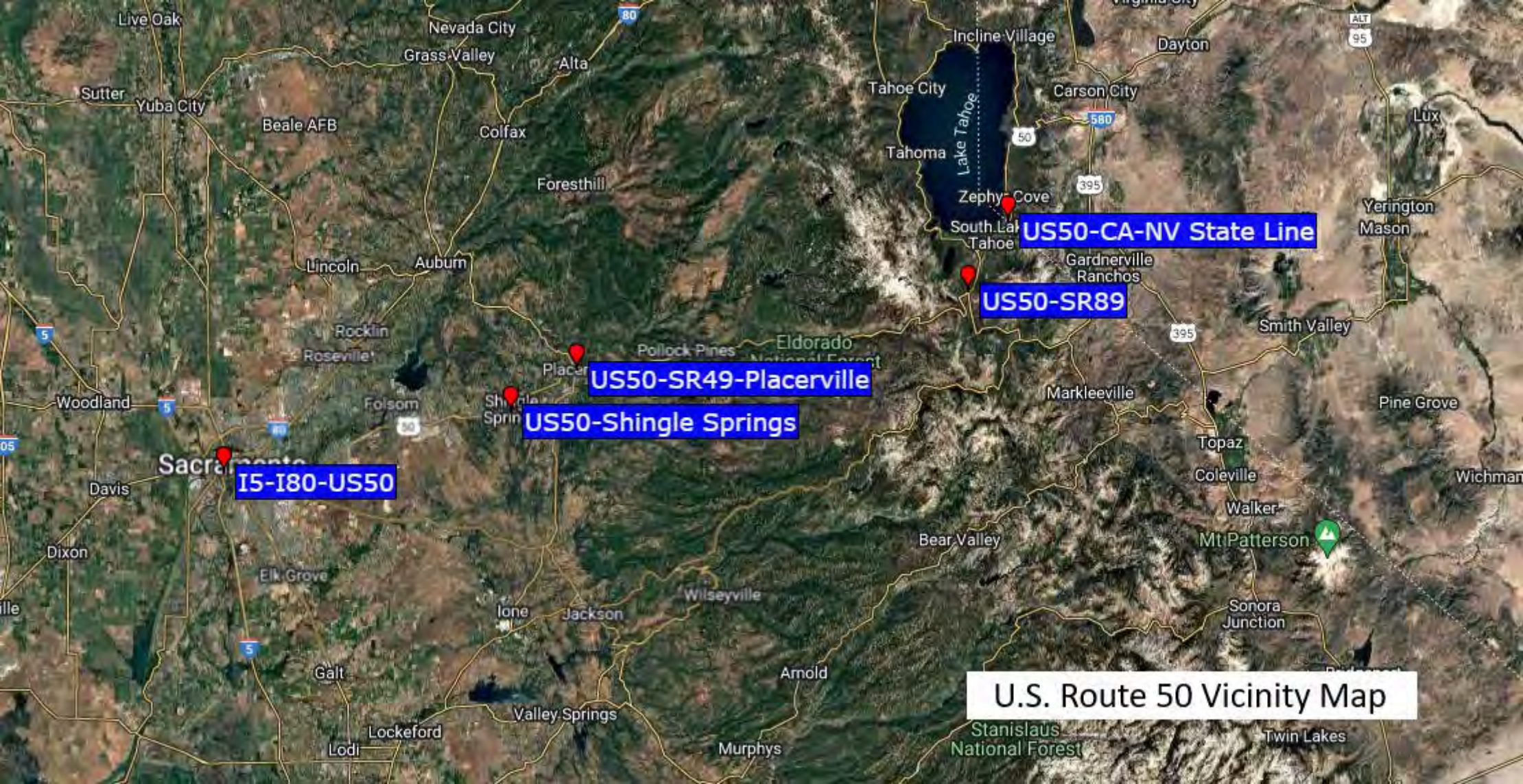
The route from Placerville to Carson Valley, now known as U.S. Route 50, was developed and used not to bring men and supplies into California, but rather to carry them out of the area. In July and August of 1848, the Mormons opened this wagon route from Placerville over the Sierra as they were leaving California. Further development of the trail followed the discovery of silver in the Comstock Lode, in what was then Western Utah Territory. The various improvements were made by private companies which created a toll road for the freight and passenger traffic to the Virginia City area. From 1860 to 1865, this Placerville route served as the most important route to the Comstock. The route reached its peak use in 1863, and then continued to be economically important until 1866, when competition from the Central Pacific Company, coupled with a depression in the mining area, ended its importance. Tolls were collected from users of this road, however, until the rights were purchased by El Dorado County and it was declared a public highway in 1886. On March 26, 1895, an act was approved creating the "Lake Tahoe State Wagon Road," which included the Placerville Road from the junction of the Newton and Placerville roads, near Smiths Flat, to the Nevada County line. On February 28, 1896, it became the first State Road in California.

During the legislative session of 1899 the sum of \$25,000 was appropriated for the improvement of the road and structures thereon. The first major work done on this road, other than ordinary repairs, was the construction in 1901 of an 80 foot stone arch bridge over the South Fork of the American River at Riverton. In 1917, the road was incorporated into the State Highway System. The most important changes to the road were the replacing of the old Meyer's Grade on the east side of the summit and the Slippery Ford Grade between Strawberry and Camp Sacramento.

The highway runs east out of Sacramento, and continues into the foothills to Placerville. From Placerville it winds through the Sierra and then down the steep escarpment from Echo Summit to South Lake Tahoe. From South Lake Tahoe the road continues to Carson City, then across Nevada and Utah to Salt Lake City.

Early transportation over the mountain passes.





15-I80-US50

US50-Shingle Springs

US50-SR49-Placerville

US50-SR89

US50-CA-NV State Line

U.S. Route 50 Vicinity Map

American Society of Civil Engineers
Sacramento Section

Local Historic Civil Engineering Landmark

U.S. Route 50

References

U.S. Route 50 in California Wikipedia	Phelps Store, U.S. Highway 50, Shingle Springs, El Dorado County, CA Library of Congress	Shingle Springs History Shingle Springs Community Center
U.S. Route 50 wikiwand	U.S. 50 - A Brief History of America's Backbone Alvin Edlund, Jr.	U.S. Route 50 wikiwand