

Supervisors announced plans to build an 18-foot-wide concrete highway from Ocean Springs to the Alabama line clear across the county. Jackson County became the first county in the state of Mississippi to authorize a transcounty concrete highway.

On November 8, 1921, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors sold \$387,000 worth of road bonds for the effort. A

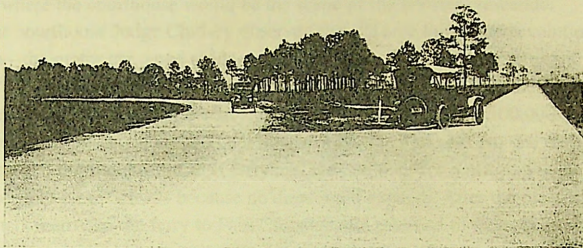
spokesman for the Board stated that federal aid would be available to augment the monies appropriated by the county. Ayers, in speaking of this action later said, "Jackson County, the poorest between New Orleans and Pensacola, became the most progressive."

On March 20-21, 1922, Ayers hosted the Old Spanish Trail Four State Conference in Mobile. Highway commissioners and engineers from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana attended.

Ayers then went to Washington and spent six weeks meeting with congressional leaders, War Department engineers, and with General John J. Pershing's staff. Ayers's work in the national capital resulted in several declarations. One of those, signed by congressional leaders, declared the Old Spanish Trail to be "a basic trunk line project essential to the United States system of highways." Another document signed by the Secretary of War declared that "this highway was an essential element in the plans being formulated by the War Department for national defense and should be completed without delay according to the best Federal standards including necessary bridges."

Ayers sent copies of these Washington Declarations to state highway departments along the Old Spanish Trail route. Mississippi State Highway Commission Chairman H. M. McBeath was the first to pledge his support. Now that Ayers had local, state, and national support, things really started to happen.

On Tuesday, August 22, 1922, a convoy of Old Spanish Trail boosters left Mobile at 7 a.m. bound for Pascagoula. Several automobile loads from Pascagoula-Moss Point joined them there. Among those were Pascagoula Mayor Frank Lewis, Old Spanish Trail Vice President Claude Delmas, Jackson County Supervisor Hermes Gautier, and Jackson County Road Commissioner Charles E. Chidsey. The members of the expedition crossed the East Pascagoula



*Two automobiles drive the Pascagoula to Mobile section of the trans-Jackson County concrete highway circa 1925. Jackson County issued the bonds to build the concrete highway on November 8, 1921, and completed the highway circa 1928. Photo courtesy of the Jon Richard Lewis Postcard Collection.*