

📖 Topic Page: [Highways](#)

Definition: **highway** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1.

a main road, as one between towns.

highways

2.

any public passage, either a road or waterway.

highways

3.

any main or ordinary route, track, or course.

highways

4.

phrase my way or the highway



/ˈhaɪweɪ/ /ˈhɪjweɪ/

Colloquial an expression conveying an ultimatum to someone that they do what the speaker says or leave.



Image from: [The global growth of automobile use is... in Green Health: An A-to-Z Guide](#)

Summary Article: **Highways**

From *Encyclopedia of Environment and Society*

HIGHWAYS ARE MAJOR roads used by the public that connect cities, historic or natural sites, or rural locations. There have been trails or rough roads throughout the world for thousands of years. The Roman Empire built highways that in a few cases are still in use. Other empires built similar road systems to aid communications and the movement of troops. In the 20th century, highways were built to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and military forces. The invention and development of gasoline engines that powered trucks, cars, buses and other vehicles led the United States to build highways.

The United States has the most extensive highway system in the world, some of which are county or state roads. Others are part of the numbered highway system. Even-numbered highways start in the east coast and grow in number toward the west coast, such as old Highway 66 (Route 66) one of the first such highways. U.S. Highway 1 runs from Maine to Florida. U.S. highways that run north and south, such as U.S. Highway 11 or 41, are odd numbered. U.S. Highway 101 runs along the California coast from Mexico to Canada.

Other highways in the United States are interstate highways, which are limited-access roads that are fenced to keep animals from crossing and being killed. Every year, millions of animals are killed on the roads in the United States. In Pennsylvania, the number of deer killed by traffic on the highways has in

some years exceeded the number of deer killed by hunters in hunting season. The interstate highway system has been built with road grades that allow for high-speed travel. They have multiple lanes of traffic that are separated by a median to reduce the possibility of deadly head-on collisions. However, thousands of people are killed in highway traffic accidents every year around the world.

Highways in the United States are usually funded by gasoline taxes or tolls. Consumers pay two taxes when purchasing gasoline. The federal tax is uniform throughout the whole country and is applied to the Federal Highway Trust Fund, which supports road building in the states and public transportation. State gasoline taxes vary from state to state, and is distributed in the states in a variety of ways. The highway system has been a great boon to travelers, opening regions that can be seen by tourists. However, highways are also an ecological challenge. Every highway covers vast acreage with paving, which is lost to the environment. Highways also use great quantities of materials for paving—crushed gravel, cement, asphalt, fill dirt, metal, and plastics for rails and markings, as well as glass for lighting.

The design of highways is similar in that most have a dividing median and at least two lanes of traffic flowing in opposite directions. However, some have multiple lanes, and use various access controls such as entrance and exit ramps. Some of the world's most magnificent bridges are part of a highway system. In mountainous areas, tunnels permit easy movements where historically travel over high mountains passes was treacherous.

ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT

Highway development is increasing across the world, with China seeing the most rapid expansion. Some highways cross international boundaries. The Alcan Highway (Alaska-Canadian) runs from the United States through Canada to Alaska. It was built during World War II to provide a viable land route to provide protection to Alaska. Many American highways have been built for defense reasons. The law authorizing the interstate system in the United States is officially the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, modeled after the German Autobahn. Highways have been beautified in many ways. On some, vast beds of flowers have been planted. However, the great increase in highway building has opened many primitive or rural areas to development, in some cases for vacation homes, hunting, or fishing. The opening of a new highway usually attracts businesses to service the needs of travelers, which then causes growth in areas that were previously undeveloped.

In addition to the direct impacts of highways on the environment, roads have far-reaching impacts on wildlife and their habitat. Passing vehicles create noise and chemical pollution that reach far beyond the pavement. By altering the physical environment, roads and highways modify animal behavior. To avoid them, many species shift home ranges, change movement patterns and even reproductive and feeding behaviors. Perhaps the most pervasive, yet insidious impact of roads is providing access to natural areas and encouraging further development. As our cities and towns sprawl across the landscape, more and more wildlife habitat is forever lost to strip malls and parking lots.

SEE ALSO:

Development; Runoff; Transportation; Urban Sprawl.

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