

## = United States Numbered Highways =

The system of United States Numbered Highways ( often called U.S. Routes or U.S. Highways ) is an integrated network of roads and highways numbered within a nationwide grid in the contiguous United States . As the designation and numbering of these highways were coordinated among the states , they are sometimes called Federal Highways , but the roadways have always been maintained by state or local governments since their initial designation in 1926 .

The route numbers and locations are coordinated by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials ( AASHTO ) . The only federal involvement in AASHTO is a nonvoting seat for the United States Department of Transportation . Generally , north @-@ to @-@ south highways are odd @-@ numbered , with lowest numbers in the east , the area of the founding thirteen states of the United States , and highest in the west . Similarly , east @-@ to @-@ west highways are typically even @-@ numbered , with the lowest numbers in the north , where roads were first improved most intensively , and highest in the south . Major north ? south routes have numbers ending in " 1 " while major east ? west routes have numbers ending in " 0 " . Three @-@ digit numbered highways are spur routes of parent highways but are not necessarily connected to their parents . Some divided routes exist to provide two alignments for one route , even though many splits have been eliminated . Special routes , usually posted with a banner , can provide various routes , such as an alternate , bypass or business route , for a U.S. Highway .

Before the U.S. Routes were designated , auto trails designated by auto trail associations were the main means of marking roads through the United States . In 1925 , the Joint Board on Interstate Highways , recommended by the American Association of State Highway Officials ( AASHO ) , worked to form a national numbering system to rationalize the roads . After several meetings , a final report was approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in November 1925 . They received complaints from across the country about the assignment of routes , so the Board made several modifications ; the U.S. Highway System was approved in November 1926 . As a result of compromises made to get the U.S. Highway System approved , many routes were divided , with alignments to serve different towns . In subsequent years , AASHTO called for such splits in U.S. Routes to be eliminated .

Expansion of the system continued until 1956 , when the Interstate Highway System was formed . After construction was completed , many U.S. Routes were replaced by Interstate Highways for through traffic . Despite the Interstate system , U.S. Highways still form many important regional connections , and new routes are still being added .

## = = System details = =

In general , U.S. Routes do not have a minimum design standard , unlike the later Interstate Highways , and are not usually built to freeway standards . Some stretches of U.S. Routes do meet those standards . Many are designated using the main streets of the cities and towns through which they run . New additions to the system , however , must " substantially meet the current AASHTO design standards " . As of 1989 , the United States Numbered Highways system has a total length of 157 @, @ 724 miles ( 253 @, @ 832 km ) .

Except for toll bridges and tunnels , very few U.S. Routes are toll roads . AASHTO policy says that a toll road may only be included as a special route , and that " a toll @-@ free routing between the same termini shall continue to be retained and marked as a part of the U.S. Numbered System . " U.S. Route 3 ( US 3 ) meets this obligation ; in New Hampshire , it does not follow tolled portions of the Everett Turnpike . But US Routes in the system do use parts of four toll roads :

US 51 uses part of the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway in Illinois ; the old road is Illinois Route 251 .

US 278 uses the tolled Cross Island Parkway in South Carolina ; the old road is US 278 Business .

US 412 uses the Cimarron Turnpike in Oklahoma ; the old road is US 64 .

US 412 also uses the Cherokee Turnpike in Oklahoma ; the old road is Alternate US 412 .

== = Numbering == =

The two @-@ digit U.S. Routes follow a simple grid in the contiguous United States , in which odd @-@ numbered routes run generally north to south and even @-@ numbered routes run generally east to west . ( US 101 is considered a two @-@ digit route , its " first digit " being 10 . ) The numbering pattern for U.S. Routes was established first : U.S. Routes proceed from low even numbers in the north to high even numbers in the south , and from low odd numbers in the east to high odd numbers in the west . Numbers ending in 0 or 1 ( and US 2 ) , and to a lesser extent in 5 , were considered main routes in the early numbering , but extensions and truncations have made this distinction largely meaningless . For example , US 6 was until 1964 the longest route ( that distinction now belongs to US 20 ) .

In the 1950s , the numbering grid for the new Interstate Highway System was established as intentionally opposite from the US grid insofar as the direction the route numbers increase . Interstate Highway numbers increase from west @-@ to @-@ east and south @-@ to @-@ north , to keep identically numbered routes geographically apart in order to keep them from being confused with one another . Both highway systems still number the routes ending in odd numbers north ? south and the even @-@ numbered highways run east ? west .

In the US Highway system , three @-@ digit numbers are assigned to spurs of one or two @-@ digit routes . US 201 , for example , splits from US 1 at Brunswick , Maine , and runs north to Canada . Not all spurs travel in the same direction as their " parents " ; some are connected to their parents only by other spurs , or not at all , instead only traveling near their parents . As originally assigned , the first digit of the spurs increased from north to south and east to west along the parent ; for example , US 60 had spurs , running from east to west , designated as US 160 in Missouri , US 260 in Oklahoma , US 360 in Texas , and US 460 and US 560 in New Mexico . As with the two @-@ digit routes , three @-@ digit routes have been added , removed , extended and shortened ; the " parent @-@ child " relationship is not always present . For example , several spurs of the decommissioned US 66 still exist . US 191 travels from border to border although its parent , US 91 , has been largely replaced by Interstate 15 ( I @-@ 15 ) .

In addition , US 163 , designated in 1970 , is nowhere near US 63 . The short US 57 , approved c . 1970 , connects to Federal Highway 57 in Mexico , and lies west of former US 81 .

Several routes approved since 1980 do not follow the numbering pattern :

US 400 , approved in 1994 , has no " parent " since there is no US 0 or US 100 .

US 412 , approved c . 1982 , is nowhere near US 12 .

US 425 , approved in 1989 , is nowhere near US 25 .

While AASHTO guidelines specifically prohibit Interstate Highways and U.S. Routes from sharing a number within the same state ( which is why there are no Interstates 50 or 60 ) , the initial Interstate numbering approved in 1958 violated this with I @-@ 24 and US 24 in Illinois and I @-@ 40 , I @-@ 80 , US 40 and US 80 in California ( US 40 and US 80 were removed from California in its 1964 renumbering ) .

Some recent and proposed Interstates , some of them out of place in the grid , also violate this : I @-@ 41 and US 41 in Wisconsin ( which will run concurrently ) , I @-@ 49 and US 49 in Arkansas , I @-@ 69 and US 69 in Texas , and I @-@ 74 and US 74 in North Carolina ( which run concurrently ) .

Some two @-@ digit numbers have never been applied to any U.S. Route , including 39 , 47 , 86 and 88 .

== = Divided and special routes == =

Since 1926 , some divided routes were designated to serve related areas , and designate roughly @-@ equivalent splits of routes . For instance , US 11 splits into US 11E ( east ) and US 11W ( west ) in Bristol , Virginia , and the routes rejoin in Knoxville , Tennessee . Occasionally only one of the two routes is suffixed ; US 6N in Pennsylvania does not rejoin US 6 at its west end . AASHTO has been trying to eliminate these since 1934 ; its current policy is to deny approval of new split routes

and to eliminate existing ones " as rapidly as the State Highway Department and the Standing Committee on Highways can reach agreement with reference thereto " .

Special routes ? those with a banner such as alternate or bypass ? are also managed by AASHTO . These are sometimes designated with lettered suffixes , like A for alternate or B for business .

= = = Naming = = =

The official route log , last published by AASHTO in 1989 , has been named United States Numbered Highways since its initial publication in 1926 . Within the route log , " U.S. Route " is used in the table of contents , while " United States Highway " appears as the heading for each route . All reports of the Special Committee on Route Numbering since 1989 use " U.S. Route " , and federal laws relating to highways use " United States Route " or " U.S. Route " more often than the " Highway " variants . The use of U.S. Route or U.S. Highway on a local level depends on the state , with some states such as Delaware using " route " and others such as Colorado using " highway " .

= = History = =

= = = Early auto trails = = =

In 1903 , Horatio Nelson Jackson became the first documented person to drive an automobile from San Francisco to New York using only a connection of dirt roads , cow paths , and railroad beds . His journey , covered by the press , became a national sensation and called for a system of long distance roads .

In the early 1910s , auto trail organizations ? most prominently the Lincoln Highway ? began to spring up , marking and promoting routes for the new recreation of long @-@ distance automobile travel . While many of these organizations worked with towns and states along the route to improve the roadways , others simply chose a route based on towns that were willing to pay dues , put up signs , and did little else .

= = = Planning = = =

Wisconsin was the first state in the U.S. to number its highways , erecting signs in May 1918 . Other states soon followed . In 1922 the New England states got together to establish the six @-@ state New England Interstate Routes .

Behind the scenes , the federal aid program had begun with the passage of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 , providing 50 % monetary support from the federal government for improvement of major roads . The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921 limited the routes to 7 % of each state 's roads , while 3 in every 7 roads had to be " interstate in character " . Identification of these main roads was completed in 1923 .

The American Association of State Highway Officials ( AASHO ) , formed in 1914 to help establish roadway standards , began to plan a system of marked and numbered " interstate highways " at its 1924 meeting . AASHO recommended that the Secretary of Agriculture work with the states to designate these routes .

Secretary Howard M. Gore appointed the Joint Board on Interstate Highways , as recommended by AASHO , on March 2 , 1925 . The Board was composed of 21 state highway officials and three federal Bureau of Public Roads officials . At the first meeting , on April 20 and 21 , the group chose the name " U.S. Highway " as the designation for the routes . They decided that the system would not be limited to the federal @-@ aid network ; if the best route did not receive federal funds , it would still be included . The tentative design for the U.S. Highway shield was also chosen , based on the shield found on the Great Seal of the United States .

The auto trail associations rejected the elimination of the highway names . Six regional meetings were held to hammer out the details ? May 15 for the West , May 27 for the Mississippi Valley , June

3 for the Great Lakes , June 8 for the South , June 15 for the North Atlantic , and June 15 for New England . Representatives of the auto trail associations were not able to formally address the meetings . However , as a compromise , they talked with the Joint Board members . The associations finally settled on a general agreement with the numbering plans , as named trails would still be included . The tentative system added up to 81 @,@ 000 miles ( 130 @,@ 000 km ) , 2 @.@ 8 % of the public road mileage at the time .

The second full meeting was held August 3 and 4 , 1925 . At that meeting , discussion was held over the appropriate density of routes . William F. Williams of Massachusetts and Frederick S. Greene of New York favored a system of only major transcontinental highways , while many states recommended a large number of roads of only regional importance . Greene in particular intended New York 's system to have four major through routes as an example to the other states . Many states agreed in general with the scope of the system , but believed the Midwest to have added too many routes to the system . The group adopted the shield , with few modifications from the original sketch , at that meeting , as well as the decision to number rather than name the routes . A preliminary numbering system , with eight major east ? west and ten major north ? south routes , was deferred to a numbering committee " without instructions " .

After working with states to get their approval , the committee expanded the highway system to 75 @,@ 800 miles ( 122 @,@ 000 km ) , or 2 @.@ 6 % of total mileage , over 50 % more than the plan approved August 4 . The skeleton of the numbering plan was suggested on August 27 by Edwin Warley James of the BPR , who matched parity to direction , and laid out a rough grid . Major routes from the earlier map were assigned numbers ending in 0 , 1 or 5 ( 5 was soon relegated to less @-@ major status ) , and short connections received three @-@ digit numbers based on the main highway from which they spurred . The five @-@ man committee met September 25 , and submitted the final report to the Joint Board secretary on October 26 . The board sent the report to the Secretary of Agriculture of October 30 , and he approved it November 18 , 1925 .

= = = Disagreement and refinement , 1925 ? 26 = = =

The new system was both praised and criticized by local newspapers , often depending on whether that city was connected to a major route . While the Lincoln Highway Association understood and supported the plan , partly because they were assured of getting the US 30 designation as much as possible , most other trail associations lamented their obsolescence . At their January 14 ? 15 , 1926 meeting , AASHO was flooded with complaints .

In the Northeast , New York held out for fewer routes designated as US highways . The Pennsylvania representative , who had not attended the local meetings , convinced AASHO to add a dense network of routes , which had the effect of giving six routes termini along the state line . ( Only US 220 still ends near the state line , and now it ends at an intersection with future I @-@ 86 . ) Because US 20 seemed indirect , passing through Yellowstone National Park , Idaho and Oregon requested that US 30 be swapped with US 20 to the Pacific coast .

Many local disputes arose related to the committee 's choices between designation of two roughly equal parallel routes , which were often competing auto trails . At their January meeting , AASHO approved the first two of many split routes ( specifically US 40 between Manhattan , Kansas and Limon , Colorado and US 50 between Baldwin City , Kansas and Garden City , Kansas ) . In effect , each of the two routes received the same number , with a directional suffix indicating its relation to the other . These splits were initially shown in the log as ? for instance ? US 40 North and US 40 South , but were always posted as simply US 40N and US 40S .

The most heated argument , however , was the issue of US 60 . The Joint Board had assigned that number to the Chicago @-@ Los Angeles route , which ran more north ? south than west ? east in Illinois , and then angled sharply to the southwest to Oklahoma City , from where it ran west to Los Angeles . Kentucky strongly objected to this designated route , as it had been left off any of the major east @-@ west routes , instead receiving the US 62 designation . In January 1926 , the committee designated this , along with the part of US 52 east of Ashland , Kentucky , as US 60 . They assigned US 62 to the Chicago @-@ Los Angeles route , contingent on the approval of the

states along the former US 60 . But Missouri and Oklahoma did object ? Missouri had already printed maps , and Oklahoma had prepared signs . A compromise was proposed , in which US 60 would split at Springfield , Missouri , into US 60E and US 60N , but both sides objected . The final solution resulted in the assignment of US 66 to the Chicago @-@ Los Angeles portion of the US highway , which did not end in zero , but was still seen as a satisfyingly round number . Route 66 came to have a prominent place in popular culture , being featured in song and films .

With 32 states already marking their routes , the plan was approved by AASHO on November 11 , 1926 . This plan included a number of directionally split routes , several discontinuous routes ( including US 6 , US 19 and US 50 ) , and some termini at state lines . By the time the first route log was published in April 1927 , major numbering changes had been made in Pennsylvania in order to align the routes to the existing auto trails . In addition , U.S. Route 15 had been extended across Virginia .

Much of the early criticism of the U.S. Highway System focused on the choice of numbers to designate the highways , rather than names . Some thought a numbered highway system to be cold compared to the more colorful names and historic value of the auto trail systems . The New York Times wrote , " The traveler may shed tears as he drives the Lincoln Highway or dream dreams as he speeds over the Jefferson Highway , but how can he get a ' kick ' out of 46 , 55 or 33 or 21 ? " ( A popular song later promised , " Get your kicks on Route 66 ! " ) The writer Ernest McGaffey was quoted as saying , " Logarithms will take the place of legends , and ' hokum ' for history . "

= = = Expansion and adjustment , 1926 ? 56 = = =

When the U.S. numbered system was started in 1925 , a few optional routings were established which were designated with a suffixed letter after the number indicating " north " , " south " , " east " , or " west " . While a few roads in the system are still numbered in this manner , AASHO believes that they should be eliminated wherever possible , by the absorption of one of the optional routes into another route .

In 1934 , AASHO tried to eliminate many of the split routes by removing them from the log , and designating one of each pair as a three @-@ digit or alternate route , or in one case US 37 . AASHO described its renumbering concept in the October 1934 issue of American Highways :

" Wherever an alternate route is not suitable for its own unique two @-@ digit designation , standard procedure assigns the unqualified number to the older or shorter route , while the other route uses the same number marked by a standard strip above its shield carrying the word ' Alternate ' . "

Most states adhere to this approach . However , some maintain legacy routes that violate the rules in various ways . Examples can be found in California , Mississippi , Nebraska , Oregon , and Tennessee . In 1952 , AASHO permanently recognized the splits in US 11 , US 19 , US 25 , US 31 , US 45 , US 49 , US 73 , and US 99 .

For the most part , the U.S. Routes were the primary means of inter @-@ city vehicle travel ; the main exceptions were toll roads such as the Pennsylvania Turnpike and parkway routes such as the Merritt Parkway . Many of the first high @-@ speed roads were U.S. Highways : the Gulf Freeway carried US 75 , the Pasadena Freeway carried US 66 , and the Pulaski Skyway carried US 1 and US 9 .

= = = Interstate era , 1956 ? present = = =

The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 appropriated funding for the Interstate Highway System , to construct a vast network of freeways across the country . By 1957 , AASHO had decided to assign a new grid to the new routes , to be numbered in the opposite directions as the U.S. Highway grid . Though the Interstate numbers were to supplement , rather than replace , the U.S. Route numbers , in many cases ( especially in the west ) the US highways were rerouted along the new Interstates . Major decommissioning of former routes began with California 's highway renumbering in 1964 . The 1985 removal of US 66 is often seen as the end of an era of US highways .

A few major connections not served by Interstate Highways include US 6 from Hartford , Connecticut , to Providence , Rhode Island ; US 101 from Los Angeles to San Francisco ; and US 93 from Phoenix , Arizona to Las Vegas , Nevada . Three state capitals in the contiguous U.S. are served only by U.S. Routes : Dover , Delaware ; Jefferson City , Missouri ; and Pierre , South Dakota .

In 1995 the National Highway System was defined to include both the Interstate Highway System and other roads designated as important to the nation 's economy , defense , and mobility .

AASHTO is in the process of eliminating all intrastate U.S. Highways less than 300 miles ( 480 km ) in length " as rapidly as the State Highway Department and the Standing Committee on Highways of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials can reach agreement with reference thereto " . New additions to the system must serve more than one state and " substantially meet the current AASHTO design standards " . A version of this policy has been in place since 1937 .

= = The 1925 routes = =

The original major transcontinental routes in 1925 , along with the auto trails which they roughly replaced , were as follows :

US 10 , US 60 , and US 90 only ran about two thirds of the way across the country , while US 11 and US 60 ran significantly diagonally . US 60 's violation of two of the conventions would prove to be one of the major sticking points ; US 60 eventually was designated as US 66 in 1926 , and later it became popular in the culture . US 101 continues east and then south to end at Olympia , Washington . The western terminus of US 2 is now at Everett , Washington .