The functional classification schema developed by the Federal Highway Administration classifies roadways by their function within the State’s network of public roads. The three basic categories of functional classification are local roads, collectors, and arterials. Local roads serve homes, businesses, farms, and small communities, and provide access to collector roadways. Collectors channel traffic from the local roads to the arterials, which provide safe, reliable, and efficient travel between larger towns and major cities.

The key purposes of all roadways are to provide access and mobility. Local roads chiefly provide access, while mobility is the primary function of arterials. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the relationships between classes of roadways and their relative functions.

Data Source: Figures 1-1 and 1-2 are redrawn from Figure II-1 and II-4 of FHWA Functional Classification Guidelines, 1989, Office of Planning, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/fcsec2_1.htm).
Figure 1-1. Hierarchy of Our Highway System

Figure 1-2. Access and Mobility
Figure 1-3. The National Highway System
Our National Highway System (NHS) is a network of roadways that is important to the Nation’s economy, defense, and mobility. The NHS includes all Interstate highways (arterials), the Strategic Highway Network (defense purpose), intermodal connectors (roads connecting to major intermodal facilities), and other principal arterials. Currently, the NHS includes more than 160,000 miles of highway.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
Figure 1-4. National Truck Network
The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 authorized the establishment of a national network of highways designated for use by large trucks. On these highways, Federal width and length limits apply. The National Network (NN) includes almost all of the Interstate Highway System and other, specified non-Interstate highways. The network comprises more than 200,000 miles of highways.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Note: Figure 1-4 is for illustrative purposes only. It shall not be interpreted as the official National Network nor shall it be used for truck size and weight enforcement purposes.
By the late 1980s, the U.S. highway network was near completion. Now, virtually all population centers are linked by paved roadways. Although there has been little construction of new roads and highways since 1980, the number of lane miles has been increasing as highways are widened with additional lanes to carry more vehicles. That is to say, for the most part, that we are adding capacity to existing highways rather than building new ones.

Note: After 1998, forest development roads ceased being treated as public roads. This is why Figure 1-5 (above) indicates significant drops in both centerline and lane mileage in 1999.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Statistics
Not surprisingly, the majority of public roads (about 76 percent) are owned by local governments. The approximately 3 percent of roadways owned by the Federal government are located mainly in national parks and forests, military garrisons, and Indian reservations. State governments own the remaining 21 percent of public roads, including most of the interstate highways.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Statistics
Figure 1-7. High Occupancy Vehicle Facilities by Type and State, 2006

By reducing travel time and increasing reliability, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes increase the number of people who can move through a congested corridor. While carpoolers, vanpoolers, and bus patrons benefit directly from a time-saving standpoint, we all share the benefits of cleaner air and lower energy use that are linked to HOV operations.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Performance Monitoring System
A TOLL HIGHWAY is a road that drivers pay fees to use. Toll roads may also be known as turnpikes or toll ways. The fees collected are used to repay money borrowed for construction of the road. As the debt is repaid, the toll is also used for ongoing operations and maintenance.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Performance Monitoring System