

National Green Highways Mission (NGHM)

What is the National Green Highways Mission?

The National Green Highways Mission (NGHM) was launched in 2015 to establish green corridors along the national highways in the country. The mission was launched by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

- The mission aims at planting trees/vegetation along the national highways and also providing employment to people.
- The features of the project are plantation, transplantation, beautification and maintenance.
- The objective behind having tree-lined highways is not just to improve the aesthetics of the roads but also to mitigate the biodiversity degradation caused from highway development.
- The mission also envisages creating jobs for the local youth through tree planting.
- The mission is in line with the Green Highways Policy which was released by the Ministry in 2015.
- The mission envisions creating green belts along the highways for sustainable development and inclusive growth.
- Greening highways can reduce carbon emissions, conserve biodiversity, increase agroforestry and develop carbon sinks while providing jobs and generating resources at the local level.

Significance of the National Green Highways Mission

In view of the rising climate change-related adverse events, unabated infrastructure and road development for economic prosperity without regard to the environmental consequences, such a scheme by the government holds significance since it aims at mitigating the loss of vegetation that is inevitable with developmental works.

- According to the [National Highways Authority of India \(NHAI\)](#), the national highways account for about 2% of the Indian roads and 40% of the automobile traffic is on this network.
- The current carbon dioxide emission on this network is 391 million tonnes which is expected to reach 966 million tonnes by 2030.
- Creating green corridors along this network is expected to help India achieve its commitment at CoP 21 in Paris in 2015 of achieving a 35% reduction in carbon emissions.
- Creating green highways is also a good post-COVID management strategy in light of its socio-economic impact and environment contributions.
 - These green highways can serve as hubs for agroforestry and repository of raw materials for plantation-based industries.
 - This will generate plenty of employment and entrepreneurship and can create an innovative green highways-based MSME (micro, small and medium) ecosystem.

- Another important aspect of the mission is that it is not about indiscriminately planting trees. A plantation species matrix was drawn for each area so that native species and those trees that suit the terrain and weather could be planted there.

Green Highways Policy, 2015

The government of India promulgated the Green Highways Policy in 2015 with the aim of promoting the greening and development of eco-friendly National Highway corridors across the country with the participation of farmers, private sector and government institutions including the Forest Department.

The objectives of the policy are:

1. To evolve a policy framework for plantation along National Highways
2. To decrease the impact of air pollution and dust as shrubs and trees are known to be natural sink for air pollutants
3. To provide the much needed shade on glaring hot roads during the summer months
4. To lessen the impact of noise pollution caused due to a rise in the number of vehicles
5. To arrest soil erosion at the embankment slopes
6. To prevent glare from the headlight of incoming vehicles
7. To moderate the effect of wind and incoming radiation
8. To generate employment opportunities for local people

Under the policy, the contract for creating green highways would be given to government organisations, private companies, NGOs, agencies, etc. They will be responsible for the survival and health of the trees planted.

Get a list of the [major national highways in India](#) in the linked article.

Green National Highways Corridor Project

In December 2020, the government of India and the World Bank signed a \$500 million project called the Green National Highways Corridors Project. This Project will support the National Green Highways Mission in implementing the National Green Highways Policy. The project will also enhance the capacity of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in mainstreaming safety and green technologies.

There are three components of the Project:

1. Green Highway Corridor Improvement and Maintenance: Five years upgrading and maintenance of about 783 km of selected existing National Highways in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.
2. Institutional Capacity Enhancement: Supporting the Ministry's capacity building to preserve natural resources and enhance climate vulnerability of the National Highways network and minimise [Greenhouse Gas](#) emissions.
3. Road safety: Providing support to improve road safety data analytics and highway safety monitoring and implementation.