

# FRANCE OPENS THE FIRST SOLAR HIGHWAY

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France has inaugurated, in the Normandy town of Tourouvre-au-Perche, a 1km-long road covered with power-generating panels on an area of 2,800 square meters, according to [Science Alert](#). The highway, which is used by 2,000 vehicles daily, is expected to produce more than enough energy to supply the public lighting of the commune, with 3,400 inhabitants.

The highway, called [Wattway](#), is a pilot project launched by the engineering company Colas and financed with 5 million of euros by the Ministry of the Environment, to observe in the

next two years the electricity it can generate, its profitability, and the resistance of the surface to motorized traffic. The pilot project is part of the plans of Environment Minister **Ségolène Royal**, who announced a [programme](#) to cover 1,000 kilometers of roads in the French country with photovoltaic surface in a period of 5 years.

Critical voices doubt the efficiency of the technology used, [argued that the energy generated costs 13 times more than that of rooftop solar panels, and they point out that there are more priority alternatives in which to invest within renewables. Royal counters that the cost will drop considerably as more roads are laid.](#)

In 2014, the Netherlands pioneered the construction and inauguration of the world's first solar cycle path, a 70 meter long section paved with innovative panels called [SolaRoad](#).

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