

STATE OF THE SYSTEM

BIKING AND WALKING IN WEST VIRGINIA



The importance of bicycle and pedestrian trails and supporting infrastructure continues to rise on both a local and national level, providing significant beneficial alternatives to motorized transportation. The abandoned wagon pathways and railroad corridors of the industrial revolution continue to be vital assets to West Virginia, providing pathways for residents and tourists to explore the mountain landscapes. Community members of all ages have become more reliant on using these modes of active transportation for travel to residential and commercial locations, as well as important destinations such as workplaces or educational institutions.

BICYCLE ROUTES

In 2019, West Virginia ranked 34th for bicycle friendliness by the League of American Bicyclists. WVDOT has identified the need to provide bicycle trails that connect major activity nodes including employment centers, universities and colleges, state and national parks and forests and major local parks or recreational areas, and passenger rail stations.



TRAIL NETWORK

West Virginia offers over 5,000 miles of trails that support various uses and economic and quality of life benefits. The following trail classifications are found in West Virginia: Long distance, Recreational, Interpretive Educational, Historical and Rail Trails.



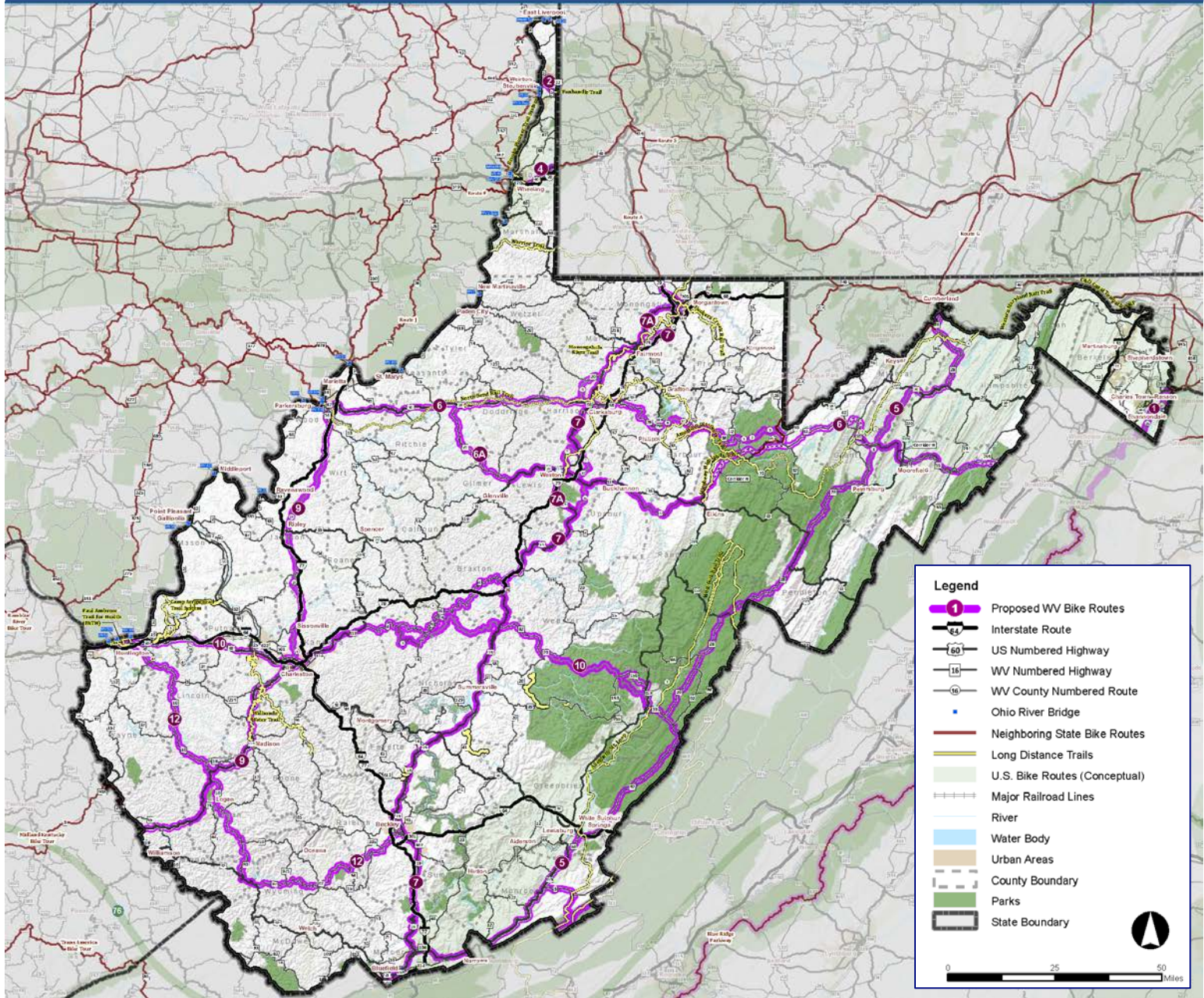
COMPLETE STREETS

The Complete Streets concept promotes safer, more livable streets. Complete Streets improvements reduce crossing distances for pedestrians and bicyclists, highlight conflict zones, create dedicated roadway space for non-motorized users, reinforce safe roadway behavior, and/ or actively reduce speeds through geometric roadway changes. The Complete Streets Advisory Board provides and facilitates communication, education and advice to WVDOT and localities on complete streets topics.



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This map presents a high-level summary of key bicycle routes and trail networks across West Virginia. Trail networks connect these routes and provide access to unique recreational opportunities. In urban areas, bicycle networks include painted bike lanes and signage to help motorists understand the importance of safely sharing the road with bicycle users.



In November 2019, The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) officially designated **US Bike Route 50 (USBR50)** through the northern panhandle of West Virginia, namely Brooke and Hancock Counties, closing a 9.2 mile gap that connects Indiana and Ohio to Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Washington DC. This is the first official designation of a USBR in West Virginia. Other conceptual routes include USBR 15 along the Allegheny Highlands and USBR 11 through the Eastern Panhandle near the I-81 corridor.

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WHY BIKING AND WALKING IS IMPORTANT

- West Virginia's natural rural landscape provides ample opportunity for tourists to visit historic and cultural attractions that also offer recreational opportunities. For example, popular trails including the American Discovery Trail and the Allegheny Mountain Loop attracts many visitors each year.
- By creating a network of interconnected recreational opportunities, West Virginia can increase the number of visitors to the state, which in turn will increase the length of their stays and the amount of money they spend.
- Transportation and safety benefits of increased bicycling include reduced traffic congestion, decreased need for parking, and enhanced safety by providing paved shoulders and wide curbed lanes.
- West Virginia has significant public health challenges, including issues associated with less active lifestyles. Lower public health leads to higher health care costs and lower worker productivity. Creating a better physical environment that encourages walking and bicycling is a key strategy to fighting obesity and has been shown to have substantial impacts with relatively limited public investment.

TRENDS IN BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- Across rural, suburban and urban America, there are opportunities to shift short trips from driving to walking and biking. By creating a safe transportation network, this mode shift can reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and create an environment that favors physical activity.
- National trends show an increased demand for bicycling and walking transportation options to remain economically competitive, attract major employers, provide a higher quality of life, promote tourism and encourage an active lifestyle.
- Several states are promoting projects that enhance mixed-use neighborhoods where destinations are within walking distance of one another to reduce motor vehicle trips and encourage physical activity.



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CURRENT PLANS AND PROGRAMS IN WEST VIRGINIA

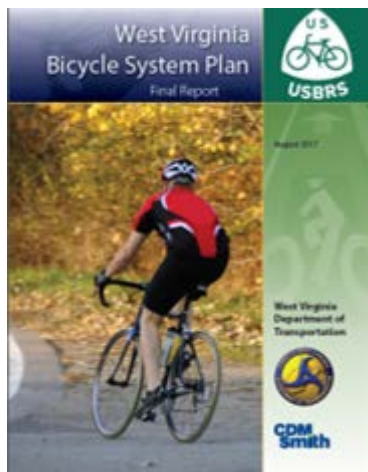
Pathways to the future:

The West Virginia Statewide Trail Plan

2002-2010



The development of the Statewide Trail Plan began in 1996, when the West Virginia Trails Coalition brought together the appropriate private and public entities needed to coordinate and promote the development of the state's land and water trails. The purpose of the Statewide Trail Plan was to provide a guide for making the wonders of West Virginia accessible to all kinds of people, for all kinds of uses, without compromising the natural, historical or cultural integrity of West Virginia. The mission included fostering the continued growth of the trail system, creating an inventory of existing trails and identifying needs, and addressing alternative transportation issues including the need for urban and community greenways.



The purpose of the West Virginia Bicycle System plan was to establish designated bicycle routes within the state, provide connections to other state and national routes, encourage bicycle transportation and its effects on the tourism economy, and improve quality of life. The plan identified a series of WV Cross State Bicycle Routes primarily on existing roadways that are relatively direct and easy to follow, and efforts were made to find routes with minimal interaction with corridors of high-speed traffic with heavy numbers of motorized vehicles. To best accomplish this, the project team utilized existing plans and available data layers to identify a grid of routes that crossed the state connecting key points of interest while attempting to minimize long and steep climbs.

LONG-RANGE PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

Providing access to bicycle and pedestrian facilities is a significant challenge particularly in rural areas given limited connectivity. The state is also seeing public health challenges associated with sedentary lifestyles. There is a need to improve quality of life for all West Virginians by providing multimodal travel choices and access to recreation, increased connectivity to destinations such as downtown and parks, complete streets design for safe bicycle and pedestrian activity on urban roads, and new bicycle facilities and trail networks to encourage economic development.

Bikeways and trails have been shown to have major economic impacts. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements are also proven to be more cost effective than motor vehicle infrastructure, while also helping to reduce dependence on personal motor vehicles. By increasing the number of pedestrians and bicyclists along a corridor, and network-wide, it creates a safer environment for these users while also increasing awareness of motorists. By establishing statewide bicycle routes, trails and complete street improvements West Virginia can enhance the quality of life.