

US Bicycle Routes

Expanding the Vision

Presentation for National Bike Summit - March 2004

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History Of US Bike Routes

- **Initial concept of transcontinental bicycle routes established in 1970s**
- **M1-9 route marker added to 1978 MUTCD**
- **First AASHTO policy on US Numbered Bike Routes developed in 1979**
- **Current AASHTO policy in place since 1982**
 - similar to AASHTO US Highway policy

History Of US Bike Routes

- **Two US numbered routes established by state DOTs & AASHTO in 1982**
 - **76 - Illinois to Virginia**
 - **1 - North Carolina to Virginia**
 - ...but no new routes or extensions established since 1982

Benefits of Route Designation

- **Connectivity**
 - Officially recognizes a network of connected routes across the US for bicycle travel
 - Improved guidance for bicyclists through the use of standardized signs
 - AASHTO process allows for the coordination of these routes among several states
 - Can help to formalize relationship between state DOTs and local & private route organizations

Benefits of Route Designation

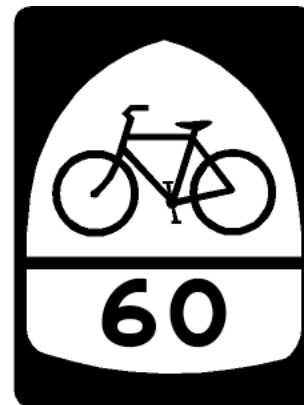
- **Economic Development**
 - Tourism
 - Commerce in local communities

Partners

- **AASHTO**
- **States**
- **County and local agencies**
- **National & regional bicycle route organizations**

AASHTO

- **“Owners” of the US Bicycle Route system**
- **US Bicycle Routes are administered by AASHTO through same committees and processes as the US Highway System**



State and Local Agencies

- **Routes may follow roads under varying jurisdictions**
 - State
 - County
 - Local / municipal
 - Intergovernmental agreements may be needed
- **State DOTs will need to serve as liaisons with AASHTO**
 - **State tourism organizations may also want to be involved**

Bicycle Route Organizations

- **Adventure Cycling Association**
- **East Coast Greenways**
- **Mississippi River Trail**
- **... and others**
- **These organizations perform a role similar to the one filled by national auto trail associations in the 1920s prior to the US Highway System**

Recent Developments

- **March 2003 - meeting at US DOT**
 - FHWA, AASHTO, Adventure Cycling, East Coast Greenway, and state DOT representatives
- **June 2003 - AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering meeting**
 - State traffic engineers drafted a resolution endorsing the expansion of the US Bicycle Route Network
- **September 2003 - AASHTO Task Force on Nonmotorized Transportation meeting**
 - State coordinators are very receptive to concept

AASHTO Resolution

- **WHEREAS**, Thousands of bicyclists every year engage in multi-state and long-distance bicycle travel; and
 - **WHEREAS**, AASHTO has an established policy on the designation of US Bicycle Routes; and
 - **WHEREAS**, A number of US Bicycle Routes have been established by several States in accordance with this policy; and
 - **WHEREAS**, The establishment and signing of US Bicycle Routes provides important route guidance for bicycle travel; and
 - **WHEREAS**, US Bicycle Routes can provide tourism and economic development opportunities for States and local jurisdictions; and
 - **WHEREAS**, National and regional bicycle route organizations for over two decades have spent considerable effort in researching, mapping, and developing networks of continuous national routes for bicycle travel for over two decades; now therefore be it
 - **RESOLVED**, That the AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering will work in partnership with the AASHTO Task Force on Nonmotorized Transportation and national and regional bicycle route organizations to encourage the establishment and extension of US Bicycle Routes; and be it further
 - **RESOLVED**, That the AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering will work in partnership with the AASHTO Special Committee on Route Numbering in reviewing and recommending updates and changes to AASHTO's policy on US Bicycle Routes; and finally be it
 - **RESOLVED**, That the AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering recommends adoption of this Resolution by the AASHTO Standing Committee on Highways (SCOH).
- **Approved by the AASHTO Standing Committee on Highways (SCOH) on September 6, 2003.**

So far...

- **Considerable official support has been demonstrated for addition & expansion of new US Bicycle Routes across the nation**

however,

- **agencies do have some very serious concerns!**

Agency Concerns - Liability

- **Agencies are very concerned about liability**
 - 1986 study indicated that designation of a roadway as a bicycle route didn't affect liability of agency
 - Study for WSDOT in 2003 did show correlation between route designation and increased incidence of claims/litigation
 - More studies needed to update legal research on bicycle facility designation and liability

Agency Concerns - Operations

- **Public agencies may NOT be willing to designate routes if:**
 - Roadway doesn't fully meet AASHTO Bike Guide criteria for signed shared roadways
 - Designation might affect ability of agency to install shoulder rumble strips

Agency Concerns - Cost

- **Cost of route markers**
 - Installation
 - Maintenance
 - Total price tag nationwide? unknown
- **Bicycle route organizations may be able to assist with mapping and publicity**

MUTCD Changes

- **Revised M1-9 sign design**
 - Emphasizes bicycle symbol
 - Better accommodates 3-digit or lettered routes



Old M1-9



New M1-9

MUTCD Changes

- **Revise wording in MUTCD (Section 9B.20) to emphasize importance of coordinating multi-state route plans and applications through the AASHTO US Bicycle Route System**

MUTCD Changes

- **Changes proposed by NCUTCD Bicycle Technical Committee in June 2003**
- **Changes approved unanimously by NCUTCD Council January 2004**
- **Submitted to FHWA to be included in the next revision to the federal MUTCD (2006?)**

What Happens Next?

- **Route designations will need to be established as a first step**
 - Otherwise, chaos might ensue
- **Ad Hoc Route Designation Group**
 - FHWA
 - AASHTO Subcommittee on Traffic Engineering
 - AASHTO Task Force on Nonmotorized Transportation
 - AASHTO “Green Book” committee
 - Route organizations
 - NCUTCD
- **Route numbers, or route letters?**

What Happens Next?

- **Presentation of draft route designations to AASHTO committees for review**
 - Traffic Engineering
 - Nonmotorized Transportation
 - Special Committee on Route Numbering
- **Approval of designations by AASHTO Executive Board**

What Happens Next?

- **Coordination between route organizations, AASHTO, and local jurisdictions on implementation**
- **Coordinated application to AASHTO by DOTs for routes across multiple states**
- **AASHTO review and approval of applications**
- **Sign installation by state DOTs and/or local agencies**

What Happens Next?

...many happy bicyclists following these routes across the United States

