

US Bicycle Routes System Briefing

Background

- In 2008 AASHTO established a national corridor plan for US Bicycle Routes to facilitate travel between the states over routes which have been identified as being suitable for cycling.
- USBR routes almost exclusively use roads and streets suitable for bicycle travelers with separated trails incorporated where appropriate. Facility construction/upgrade is not required - state DOTs determine road suitability and submit AASHTO applications for USBR designation.
- State DOTs must confirm that all relevant local jurisdictions support the proposed route.
- A well-defined process has been developed for route implementation: www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/implement-a-us-bike-route
- AASHTO has a Purpose and Policy document (revised 5-15-09) for the USBRS: www.adventurecycling.org/default/assets/File/USBRs/AASHTOPurposePolicyStatement.pdf
- Extensive reference information is available at www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system
- Environmental, economic, health, and transportation benefits are well-documented: www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/faq

Drivers

- Numerous studies show significant economic impact from bicycle tourism (see www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/implement-a-us-bike-route/benefits-and-building-support/economic-impact)
- Bicycling economic impact in Wisconsin approaches \$1B per year.
- Typical bicycle travelers spend \$100 per day on tour.
- Return on investment is high for bicycling facilities (NC Outer Banks study - \$6.9 mill investment = annual \$60 million return in tourism generated income).
- Proximity to bicycle facilities means higher real estate values/more desirable neighborhoods.
- Bicycling reduces heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, obesity, arthritis and more.
- Our physical environment matters - see *"Increasing Physical Activity Through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners"* <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/IPAchap1.pdf>
- More people bicycling mean reduced air pollution and less motorized congestion.
- US Bicycle Routes utilize existing roads, streets, and trails and are very low cost to implement.
- Increasing bicycling can decrease energy consumption and pollution.
- Bicyclist tourism has low impact on public spaces and low cost to implement.

Concerns

- Liability issues vary from state to state but generally states do not incur added liability from designating US Bicycle Routes. (See Transportation Research Board report from April, 2010 onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_lrd_53.pdf)
- Some local jurisdictions are concerned about increased bicycle traffic. An increase of 2000 bicycle travelers per year would have significant economic impact on a local community but is only 10 cyclists per day.
- The target audience for USBRs is long distance bicycle travelers who are experienced road users and so are able to deal with higher traffic density and speed.
- There is no cost for implementing a USBR. Signage not required. There are a number of ways a route can be designated including maps (paper or electronic), signs, pavement markings, downloadable GPS coordinates, noting routes on state and local maps, etc.
- The roads, streets, and trails chosen for a USBR are not chiseled in stone. Route changes can be proposed to AASHTO twice per year. There is no reason why there would be resistance to any reasonable change request.