During the designation process your team will determine how the route will be defined and evaluated, draft the route, secure local agreements through resolutions of support, documenting the route, fill out and submit the AASHTO application.

Determine How the Route Will Be Defined & Evaluated

States may consider setting up a process that involves using criteria, a road inventory based upon a bicycle level of service model, or final route review documentation.

If using criteria or formal methodology for route identification, consider the totality of road quality, traffic volume, support/services along route, along with its scenic, historic, recreation, and connectivity features. Sample criteria and roadway evaluation methods states may use include:

- Adventure Cycling's Route Criteria (PDF/32k): Provides a great start for planning long distance routes using existing roadways and trails.
- Florida U.S. Bicycle Route Criteria (PDF/98k): Developed by Florida and Georgia DOTs in cooperation with a number of non-profits and transportation agencies, this criteria provides more specific route considerations while providing enough flexibility for route development anywhere in the U.S.
- Wisconsin Rural Roadway Methodology (PDF/1.6M, pages 13-15): Wisconsin's Department of Transportation has been using this model, with slight modifications, for the past 28 years.
- Read BikePennsylvania's route evaluation form (PDF/164k) to learn more about Pennsylvania's bike route network visit BikePA and for maps and directions, visit Penn Highways Bike Routes.
- Florida's Bicycle Level of Service Model
- Rhode Island's Bicycle Route Suitability Report (PDF/20k): Another example of how a state determines roadway suitability.
- Tips for Bikeway Designation (PDF/156k) by Michael Jackson, director of bicycle and pedestrian access for the Maryland Department of Transportation.
- Michigan DOTs roadway evaluation model for U.S. Bicycle Routes available upon request.
- Kentucky's rural bicycle level of service tool is available upon request.

Draft the Route

Review the route criteria developed by the USBRS Task Force. Take into account that there are many things to consider when choosing the route including distance to between services and the historic, cultural aspects of the route, and/or the connections to destinations the route might make.

- Use state or local bicycling maps, county maps and trail maps, which often show more choices than state highway maps. DeLorme maps and Google maps also offer some great perspectives, but be careful, some roads may not be paved, may not exist, or may not show connections that are actually there. This is where the local knowledge of bike clubs and cyclists can be very helpful.
- Review your state's trail system and determine what might fit into the route. Trails must first and foremost be suitable for touring bikes (paved or crushed, hard pressed fine gravel and easy to locate). It might take local knowledge to access trail locations and to insure suitability for bicycle touring.
- State bike routes, existing touring routes, or tour event routes are a great starting point and may be used for the entire length or portions of the route. Older routes may need to be updated or assessed for current conditions.

- Assess if the route needs infrastructure improvements or additions. This might include adding bike lanes or notifying the appropriate agency that a road is a USBR and could be a candidate for widening shoulders during construction improvements or repaving. If a proposed route needs significant investment or the process will take a number of years to accomplish, consider temporary or alternative routes that work as a short-term solution. Realignment of the USBR is easy can be made once the improvements are completed.

Make the draft route available to stakeholders for comment, suggestions and buy-in using an on-line and/or printed map. Instructions and tutorials for drafting routes using Google Maps is available upon request.

Secure Local Agreements Through Resolutions of Support

Gain support from other state or local agencies that may have jurisdiction over the route or surrounding area, including road authorities, municipal governments, departments of natural resources, parks and recreation or federal land agencies such as U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and/or others.

- Michigan Trails and Greenways volunteer Scott Anderson created an outreach letter template (Word/26k) that informs roadway managers and transportation agencies about the development of a USBR in their jurisdiction.

Gain support and agreements from city or county elected officials in the form of Letters or Resolutions of Support, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), or interagency agreements. These are often required in order for the state DOT to complete the AASHTO application.

- Use our Guide to Gaining Local Agency Support (PDF/115k); a tracking spreadsheet is available upon request.
- The Resolution of Support template (Word/26k) and Letter of Support template (Word/21k) can be used when local jurisdictions are ready to officially endorse a U.S. Bicycle Route.

Gain support from trail organizations, bike clubs, and cyclists along the route.

Prepare ahead for the route to be signed and marked. Signing U.S. Bicycle Routes is not required, but strongly encouraged by AASHTO. Unless the local authority prohibits signing, agreements should contain language that allows for future signing and marking. Signs for U.S. Bicycle Routes are in the FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Funding for signs might come from the state DOT, city or county agencies or from advocacy or trail groups, community foundations or a combination of any/all.

Document the Route

For the application, which the state DOT must submit to AASHTO, the following items must be prepared:

- Turn-by-turn details must be documented for the AASHTO application including where the route enters and exits the state, starting at the northern-most or eastern-most point of the state border. For an example of what AASHTO wants, see the Instructions to the application.
- A map, in electronic format if possible, is required for the application. Consider how you want to promote the route in the future when deciding how to map the route. Will it be promoted in a downloadable format only? Will it be printed on a bike route map? Will it become part of the state highway map? Sample maps from state applications are available upon request.

- Applications must also show that a neighboring state is also committed to developing a route within the same corridor. The adjoining state should provide a letter or memorandum that demonstrates agreement regarding the connection (road or trail) across the state line. Applications may also be submitted with the neighboring state. Examples of both types of documents are available upon request, contact us at usbrsinfo@adventurecycling.org. **Note:** Exceptions to these parameters exist when the route connects one or more existing USBRs within a state, is an in-state adjustment to an existing USBR, or links to a foreign country's network/trail. In these cases, the DOT needs not consult with neighboring states about their application.

Fill Out & Submit the Application

The state DOT's chief executive or program supervisor must sign the application, or a letter with signature must accompany the application.

The state DOT must submit the application to the AASHTO Special Committee on Route Numbering via AASHTO staff (usroutes@aashto.org) approximately 5-6 weeks before the fall or spring meeting.

Visit our page on submitting an application for more details.

Related Documents

AASHTO Guide for The Development of Bicycle Facilities 4th Edition : This is the newest version of the guide, released in February of 2013.

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices: This manual is managed by the Federal Highway Administration and the latest version was released in 2009. The USBR sign is in the manual, however, the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices approved a new green and white version that states may use if they request interim approval from the Federal Highway Administration. See our Sign a U.S. Bicycle Route page for more information.