

May 11, 2009

To: Special Committee on US Route Numbering
From: Task Force on US Bicycle Routes
Subject: Criteria for the Designation of US Bicycle Routes

A resolution adopted by SCOH and the Board of Directors at the 2008 AASHTO Annual Meeting states that “...*the Task Force on US Bicycle Routes will work with the Special Committee on Route Numbering and the Subcommittees on Design and Traffic Engineering on developing criteria, or a process for States to use to develop criteria, for use in designating US bicycle routes.*”

The Task Force on US Bicycle Routes has worked with representatives from each of these committees and determined that the designation of appropriate facilities for US Bicycle Routes is best left to each State DOT using its own criteria and engineering judgment for several reasons, including:

- Variations among the states – geographic, weather, traffic, urban vs. rural, etc.;
- Variations in laws regarding where bicycling is allowed and which facilities are suitable; and
- The potential duplication of effort – and potential conflicts – if national criteria are developed for the many states that have already developed guidance for the selection of long-distance bicycling routes.

The Task Force is assisting states in the development of criteria through several avenues. In 2006, the Task Force developed Corridor and Route Criteria (see attached) to guide the development of the US Bicycle Routes System national corridor plan. States may use these criteria as they plan U.S. Bicycle Routes and/or develop their own criteria. Several states and national organizations, such as the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA), have a history of selecting and mapping suitable routes for long-distance, cross-state, and multi-state bicycling and can share their expertise. In addition, AASHTO and ACA are pulling together the following resources and best practices that will be posted on the US Bicycle Routes web site (and other locations as appropriate, such as the US Route Numbering web site) for states to use in the development of their own guidance:

- Purpose and Policy Statement for US Bicycle Routes
- Instructions and Application for Designation of a US Bicycle Route
- A link to the AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, which is currently being extensively revised
- A compilation of cross-state bike route and/or road suitability criteria from State DOTs
- A compilation of long-distance route criteria and evaluation techniques from bicycle groups such as Adventure Cycling Association, BikePA, East Coast Greenway, and state and local Parks and Recreation departments
- A list of considerations for selecting appropriate long-distance corridors and routes, developed by the AASHTO Task Force on US Bicycle Routes
- Sample MOUs and maintenance/signing agreements
- Other documentation and research as appropriate (e.g., Liability Aspects of Roadway Designation, Tips for Bikeway Designation)

The task force does not foresee liability issues for the Special Committee on US Route Numbering in designating US Bicycle Routes, as each State DOT that submits an application affirms that their proposed route complies with the Purpose and Policy for US Numbered Bicycle Routes.

Thus, the Task Force on US Bicycle Routes requests approval of the revised Purpose and Policy for US Numbered Bicycle Routes and the revised Application for the Designation of a US Bicycle Route.

**Task Force on US Numbered Bicycle Routes
Corridor and Route Criteria for U.S. Bike Route System
April 2006; Revised June 2006**

It is the aim of the AASHTO Task Force on Numbered Bicycle Routes to encourage the development of a coordinated system of interstate bicycle routes. The Task Force is charged with developing a recommended national systems-level or corridor-level plan for use in designating potential future U.S. bicycle routes. In developing this corridor plan, the task force recognized the need to establish guiding principles for selecting and/or recognizing routes for inclusion.

The Route/Corridor Criteria provide guidance to the Task Force for developing the corridor-level plan. The Specific Route Criteria may be incorporated at a local level as the corridor plan is adopted by state and local agencies and state routes are designated. The criteria are broken down into Primary and Secondary considerations in order to prioritize the criteria.

While the following criteria provide a guide for consistency, they are not intended to supersede state and local agencies' policies on designing cycling facilities nor are they intended to create a uniform approach which might be determined unfeasible, given the expanse and varying terrain and population densities across the U.S. When choosing a corridor/route and the specifics of a given route implementation, the totality of the route must be considered. It may well be that portions of a route do not meet these criteria but that when taken all together, they represent the best choice to achieve the goal of the route.

Corridor Criteria: Considerations when Choosing Corridors

Primary Considerations – Corridors should meet as many of the following as practicable:

1. When applicable, meet the planning, design, and operational criteria in the AASHTO Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities.
2. Access destinations and regions with high tourism potential, including routes that incorporate important scenic, historic, cultural, and recreational values.
3. Link major metropolitan areas to connect key attractions and transportation nodes.
4. Reasonably direct in connecting cities or attractions.
5. Make natural connections between adjoining states, Canada, and Mexico when possible..
6. Have more or less even distribution north to south, east to west, though route density will need to consider both population density (greater populations may equal higher route densities) and available, suitable roads.
7. Include major existing and planned bike routes, including both on-road facilities and off-road shared use paths and trails that are suitable for road bikes.

Secondary Consideration

8. Offer services and amenities such as restaurants, accommodations, camping, bicycle shops, and convenience/grocery stores at appropriate intervals.

Specific Route Criteria: Considerations when Choosing Roads and Trails

Primary Considerations – Specific Routes should meet as many of the following as practicable:

1. When applicable, meet the planning, design, and operational criteria in the AASHTO Guide for Development of Bicycle Facilities.
2. Offer services and amenities such as restaurants, accommodations, camping, bicycle shops, and convenience/grocery stores at appropriate intervals.

3. Go into the centers of metropolitan areas, using low-traffic and/or off-road bikeways when possible. Bypass routes could be considered to accommodate users who don't wish to enter the city or who are seeking a less urban experience.
4. Include spurs to target destinations (universities or other educational institutions, recreational areas, or other attractions) and to multimodal nodes such as airports and rail, bus, and transit stations.
5. Follow natural corridors and provide terrain suitable for cycling, avoiding extremely hilly and limited visibility winding roads when feasible.
6. Consider appropriate combinations of low daily traffic, low truck traffic, wide paved shoulders, lane striping, adequate sight distance, and traffic speed in order to be bicycle friendly.
7. In urban areas, be suitable for utility cycling (commuting, access to shopping, schools and universities, recreation centers, etc.). Consideration should be given to bicycle routes that can be used as evacuation routes for emergency situations.
8. Include major existing and planned bike routes, including both on-road facilities and off-road shared use paths and trails that are suitable for road bikes.

Secondary Consideration

9. May include short stretches of high quality unpaved roads if needed to connect highly desirable paved road sections. (These roads should maintain the standard of road bike suitability).