



## Steps for Planning and Implementing U.S. Bicycle Routes

The following outline suggests a process for implementing U.S. Bicycle Routes (USBRs). It takes planners from national concept to finalized interstate bicycle route. This is not an AASHTO document, but takes into account existing guidelines and procedures.

If issues come up during implementation that need additional clarification, the AASHTO Task Force on U.S. Bicycle Routes can address them specifically. Once an application is completed, it goes to the AASHTO Special Committee on Route Numbering. All the items

listed below are either posted on, or linked to, from the [Adventure Cycling Association U.S. Bicycle Route System](http://www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs) website ([www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs](http://www.adventurecycling.org/usbrs)).

### 1) Review the Corridor Plan Map

The national corridor plan provides a starting point for planning routes and is adaptable.

Corridors can be added or edited based upon states' interests and opportunities. Grey scaled corridors without a number may be prioritized by states as long as neighboring states agree. Consider the following when reviewing the national corridor plan map:

- **Determine the purpose of the corridor.** What are the priorities for the state? Is it attracting touring cyclists or is it connecting cities and/or transportation hubs. Consider having both types of USBRs defined in your state, for example in Oregon and California, the coast route is intended for touring and the central valley route for connecting cyclists to major cities. Also consider having both an east/west and north/south route in your state.
- **Does it incorporate your state's interests for a U.S. Bicycle Route?** Are there state destinations or attributes not reflected in the corridor plan? Understand the regional connections and destinations beyond your state border and take these into account.
- **Coordinate with neighboring state(s)** to match routes or to determine which corridor to implement first. Regional conference calls can be coordinated by Adventure Cycling Association.
- **Adaptations and changes to the Corridor Plan.** If a corridor needs to be changed or a new corridor is identified, Adventure Cycling can coordinate the information to the AASHTO Staff Liaison and Task Force Chair for comment and review.

### 2) Determine Stakeholders, Roles, and Responsibilities

Once a corridor is chosen for implementation, a plan for identifying the roads and trails within the corridor must be developed. State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) may appoint a person "in charge" of the project though that person may not have the resources to do the leg work required to define a route and gain support from local agencies. For states that wish to have U.S. Bicycle Routes but do not have the DOT capacity to pursue them directly, partnerships, contracts with non-government organizations (NGOs), and/or collaborative efforts with stakeholder organizations can accomplish this part of the process.

- **For states coordinating the project through collaboration,** here are example organizations states should consider collaborating with to do route planning and outreach:
  - State wide coalitions and/or advocacy groups
  - Governor appointed or state-wide bicycle and pedestrian advisory councils/boards
  - trail and greenway organizations

- transportation consultants
- bicycle touring or recreational bike clubs
- parks & recreation organizations
- other state or local agencies
- tourism and/or economic development organizations
- A combination of appropriate NGOs that form a “Implementation Team”
- **For states taking control of the process** from beginning to end; collaboration is still recommended. Planning should involve a “review” of the corridor and the draft route by appropriate groups as noted above. In addition, the following should also be involved during some part of the process, especially if they have jurisdiction over roads and trails:
  - Local government, politicians, business leaders
  - Cyclists and cycling clubs
  - DOT districts, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Transportation Organizations (names vary), county road commissions
  - Other agencies such as Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Forest Service.
- **Develop a plan for route review, communication, and a timeline.**
  - Maps need to be shared for comment. Google Maps offers a collaboration option and maps can be shared electronically. When a route is finalized, it can go into a mapping program or GIS.
  - Communication can be achieved through in-person meetings, conference calls, emails, the Adventure Cycling Forums, or Google Groups.
  - Establish a timeline that sets benchmarks and meets goals. For example, if you want to apply at the AASHTO fall meeting, assign dates and responsibilities against that goal.

### 3) Develop the Route(s)

- **Review suggested route criteria** developed by the USBRS Task Force. If creating criteria to use for route identification, consider the totality of road quality, traffic volume, support/services along route, along with its scenic, historic, recreation, and connectivity features. Access tools for making these assessments from the USBRS Resources page.
- **Review AASHTO Purpose and Policy Statement for U.S. Bicycle Routes**
- **Take the Corridor and overlay it on a detailed map** so roads can be chosen. County maps 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, don't exist, or connections that are actually there don't show up. 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 USBRS 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 can be made once the improvements are completed.

- **Make the draft route public for comment and buy-in.** Support from city or county elected officials in the form of Resolutions are often required in order for the state DOT to complete the AASHTO application. Sample resolutions; environmental, economic, transportation and health benefit handouts; and “What is Bicycle Travel” slide show are on the USBRS Resource page. Gain support from bike clubs and cyclists along the route. Get suggestions from appropriate local government agencies.
- **If necessary, get jurisdictional agreements.** We have not seen these needed yet, however they may be necessary for maintenance of infrastructure (i.e. striped lanes, bridge improvements) or signs.
- **Determine if the route will be signed and marked.** Signing the U.S. Bicycle Routes is strongly encouraged, but not required. Though this probably won’t happen until after the route has gone through the AASHTO application process, plans for signing the route should begin early in the process. Funding for signs might come from local city or county agencies or from advocacy or trail groups. Signs for U.S. Bicycle Routes are in the AASHTO Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Other methods for route recognition include local, county, and state maps, web site maps, and GPS waypoints and downloadable maps.

#### 4) Document the route

- 1) **Turn-by-turn details** must be documented for the AASHTO application including where the route enters and exits the state. For an example of what AASHTO wants, see the Instructions to the Application.
- 2) **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?

#### 5) Continue to coordinate with adjoining states

- 1) **Applications must be submitted together with the neighboring state** unless the route connects one or more existing USBRs, is an in-state adjustment to an existing USBR, or links to a foreign country’s network/trail. Therefore, if you don’t fall into these exceptions, at least one adjoining state must also apply for designation.

#### 6) Fill out the AASHTO Application.

- 1) **State DOT’s chief executive signature** or a letter with signature must accompany the Application;
- 2) **Submit to AASHTO Special Committee on Route Numbering** via AASHTO staff approximately one month before the fall or spring meeting (dates and locations change, see [www.transportation.org/meetings/](http://www.transportation.org/meetings/)).

#### 7) Promote the U.S. Bicycle Route(s).

Once the application has been accepted by AASHTO, the state DOT or a combination of the state DOT and partners should plan on doing the following as appropriate:

- 1) Produce maps and/or brochures of the route(s)
- 2) Incorporate into the state bicycle plan and maps

- 3) Add the route to the state highway map
- 4) Sign the route
- 5) Post information on the state agency website
- 6) Post information on the state or local bicycle advocacy web sites
- 7) Publicize the route through tourism agencies and partner organizations
- 8) Provide maintenance and engineering improvements as scheduled by the DOT or local road jurisdictions
- 9) Provide downloadable GPS waypoints and maps.

**NOTE:** Since there is no dedicated funding for the USBRS at this time (although USBRS routes are eligible for existing federal and state funding options such as Recreational Trails and Transportation Enhancements), state DOTs might consider partnering with private groups or use bicycle organizations and/or clubs to help fund, place and manage the routes. Local officials or organizations eager to host the USBRS in their community may also be willing to help fund maps or signage and may be able to volunteer services such as route turn-by-turn documentation, sign placement; and/or sign maintenance. Community grants and Bikes Belong grants might be suitable sources of funding.