



UNITED STATES BICYCLE ROUTE SYSTEM

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Transportation Benefits

In addition to providing a place for cyclists to travel, bicycle travel has many transportation benefits, including:

- **A Reduction in Air Pollution, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and Congestion**

As a zero-emission vehicle, increased bicycle use reduces the amount of air pollution and greenhouse gases, both of which are rising. The U.S. Department of Energy reports that transportation energy is expected to increase 19% between 2010 and 2035.¹ Bicycles occupy much less space than motor vehicles, easing roadway congestion, and interest in bicycle travel is increasing. The number of personal trips made by bicycle increased 30% between 1990 and 1995.²

- **Cost Effective Spending**

Bicycles are low cost to purchase, maintain, and insure, and require zero gasoline consumption. Public infrastructure costs are also lower than motor vehicle and public transport.³ Furthermore, 80-90% of the U.S. Bicycle Route System will ideally be on existing (as is) facilities. Infrastructure investment might include adding shoulders and providing access to bridges, tunnels, or other important links.

- **A High Investment Return**

Bicycle facilities increase tourism dollars. From 1987 to 2006, the North Carolina DOT invested \$6.7 million dollars in public funds to construct a network of bicycle facilities along Outer Banks. The annual economic impact has been \$60 million and 1,407 jobs supported, an approximate **nine-fold** return on the initial investment.⁴

- **Elevated Infrastructure Priorities**

Designating routes on the U.S. Bicycle Route System can increase awareness about, and the need to address, a lack of facilities and infrastructure along the route. Projects otherwise without funding might be more likely to receive funding if designated as a U.S. Bicycle Route. Furthermore, findings from a recent study indicate that higher investments in bicycling and walking transportation have a higher mode share and are safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.⁵

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration. *Annual Energy Outlook 2010 Early Release*. Table 2. Energy Consumption by Sector and Source (The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, D.C. December 14, 2009); ² Don Pickrell and Paul Schimek. *Trends in Personal Motor Vehicle Ownership and Use: Evidence from the Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey* (Cambridge: U.S. DOT Volpe Center, 23 April 1998); ³ John Pucher and Ralph Buehler. *Making Cycling Irresistible: Lessons from The Netherlands, Denmark and Germany* (Transport Reviews, Vol. 28, No. 4, 495–528, July 2008); ⁴ Judson J. Lawrie, Thomas P. Norman, Mary Meletiou, and Sarah W. O'Brien. *Bikeways to Prosperity: Assessing the Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities* (TR News 242 January-February 2006); ⁵ Alliance for Biking & Walking. *Bicycling and Walking in the United States 2010 Benchmarking Report* (Washington, D.C. 2010).