

The History of the US Bike Route System in the State of Virginia

It is well known that Virginia was one of the first states with a US Bike Route designated by AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials). But less is known regarding the details of how this came about. In the process of revising USBR 1 in northern Virginia, the NOVA District reviewed the documents found in AASHTO's files. Here's a timeline of what they found.

1. October 30th, 1979 – AASHTO sent a letter to all the Members announcing that on October 14, a Purpose and Policy Statement for U.S. Numbered Bicycle Routes was adopted by the Association. This letter also requested, "...that your State submit to AASHTO those routes within your State which you consider as meeting the criteria for facilitating travel between the States over appropriate, safe routes and the best roads. The Route Numbering Committee will then evaluate the recommendations coming from each State for such items as route continuity and will lay out a system of bicycle routes to subsequently be numbered.....".
2. December 4, 1979 – A letter was received by AASHTO from the USDOT expressing their support for AASHTO's efforts.
3. December 12, 1979 – Virginia responds to AASHTO's request by identifying two routes in the State "...developed by bicycling organizations in the private sector (which) may meet these criteria". The routes were listed as the TransAmerica (Bikecentennial) Trail and the East Coast Bicycle Trail. The letter states that while these routes are being submitted "...for AASHTO's consideration, the Virginia Highways and Transportation Commission has not yet endorsed these facilities as approved routes..." since they have not been field checked yet.
4. December 19th, 1979 – AASHTO requests a Virginia map showing these two routes.
5. January 22, 1980 – Virginia supplies a marked up map of the two routes reiterating, "...it should be noted that the Virginia Highway and Transportation Commission has not yet endorsed these facilities.....Such an endorsement is contingent upon a field check of these routes...."
6. December 8, 1980 – AASHTO repeats their request for Members to submit recommended routes. An attached report noted that as of May 23rd, 1980, thirty seven states had responded with thirteen having no proposed routes.
7. December 22, 1980 – VDOT letter to AASHTO saying, "...the Virginia Department of Highway and Transportation has reviewed its earlier submission to the proposed U.S. Bicycle Routes System and there are no additions or corrections. It also lists Mr. Richard Lockwood as the state bicycle contact.
8. September 1, 1981 – letter to VDOT – No copy of this letter was in the file but it was mentioned in a subsequent letter dated 9/15/81.
9. September 15, 1981 - letter to AASHTO reiterating that the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation has again reviewed the proposed routes and found no needed corrections.
10. Exact date unknown – Map of US showing states which submitted proposed routes and 12 possible named connecting routes.

11. June 3, 1982 - Letter from AASHTO informing States that the US Bicycle Route System topic will be on June 28th agenda.
12. June 28, 1982- Working agenda for next route numbering committee meeting. Includes an attached letter from Virginia which discusses their preference for using detailed maps over signage as well as other topics.
13. July 6, 1982 – Letters to the Bicycling Federation, the Bicycling Manufacturing Association and the League of American Wheelman notifying them of AASHTO’s action adopting two new bicycle routes.
14. July 7, 1982 – Letters to Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Illinois notifying them of the adoption of 2 new bicycle routes and minor revisions to the policy.
15. August 17, 1982 – Letter to The California Commuting Cyclist sending the Press Release w/copy of the revised Purpose and Policy statement. The press release states that “While several states have examined bicycle routes to be included in a national system, only the two mentioned above have been formally approved.”

Respectfully submitted,

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