

# **New River Valley Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan**

## **Executive Summary ~ 2000**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to provide information, guidelines and cohesion in the creation, expansion and coordination of a safe and effective Bikeway, Walkway and Blueway system for the New River Valley Planning District region. This region includes the Counties of Floyd, Giles, Montgomery and Pulaski, the City of Radford, and the Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Dublin, Floyd, Glen Lyn, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pembroke, Pulaski, and Rich Creek. The plan identifies issues, assets, routes and connections that would provide accessibility to a comprehensive Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway system for all citizens and visitors of the New River Valley region. The plan seeks to build on, supplement and coordinate with existing plans, and recognizes and acknowledges the work and foresight of the local governments, community groups and individuals who have created the excellent and growing network of bikeways, walkways and blueways in this region. Ultimately, this Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan is a valuable resource, both as an overview of existing and proposed bikeway-walkway-blueway routes and facilities; and to those wishing to solicit funds from different sources. This document provides a platform for coordinating plans and soliciting local corporate and non-profit financial support.

### **Vision Statement**

*"The New River Valley is committed to the promotion of non-motorized transportation as a safe, reliable, healthy, environmentally friendly alternative to motorized transportation. Opportunities must exist for residents of our community to choose walking, biking, or canoeing as a means of getting to a destination."*

### **Objectives of a Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway System**

1. To identify the variety of Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway users.
2. To coordinate a system of bikeways, walkways, and blueways locally and regionally, and to maintain the continuity of the Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway system.
3. To identify and coordinate Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway development with future and imminent Virginia Department of Transportation Projects.
4. To showcase and focus on the natural and cultural opportunities of the New River Valley when proposing bike routes and walking trails, in order to maximize trail effectiveness.
5. To assist in the development of tourism within the district, and to attract visitors from beyond the region to the New River Valley.

6. To promote the health, safety, and welfare of those using the Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway system and to improve the quality of life within the district for the residents of the New River Valley
7. To facilitate the use of recycled materials in the construction of bikeways, walkways, and blueways.

### **Elements of a Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway System**

The New River Valley Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan incorporates different types of facilities. Each has certain advantages or specific purposes. A Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway System for the New River Valley would include these types of facilities:

- ◆ **Shared Road** - These are routes that make use of existing vehicular roadways.
- ◆ **Wide Curb Lanes** - These are traffic lanes designed substantially wider than the 12 foot standard.
- ◆ **Bicycle Lanes** - This facility is defined as a separate lane, designed and constructed into the roadway.
- ◆ **Paved Shoulders** - Shoulders exist as a portion of highway right-of-way adjacent to the outside traffic lane.
- ◆ **Pedestrian Trails** - These are multi-purpose trails which are compatible with recreational cycling.
- ◆ **Multi-purpose Trails** - These are separate paths used exclusively for non-motorized transportation and may run within the right-of-way of an existing road or have its own independent right-of-way.
- ◆ **Sidewalks** - Sidewalks are valuable options for providing safe pathways for pedestrian travel within clustered residential and business sections and serve in this plan to connect or provide access to existing and/or proposed routes.
- ◆ **River Access and Support Facilities** - New to this plan, blueways require the availability of public access and rest stop points. Included in this are boat ramps, parking areas, bike storage and security racks, canoe rentals, portages, restroom facilities, picnic areas, etc.

### **Conceptual Overview**

The New River Valley Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan is promoting a transportation network, a recreation facility, a wellness asset, and an economic development resource all in one system. This is the integrated conceptual basis for developing this plan for the New River Valley.

Bikeway, walkway and for the first time in this plan, blueway routes, facilities, and connectors are identified and proposed to provide an interconnected and comprehensive network of trails and facilities that will provide opportunities for New River Valley residents and visitors to:

- ride to work, thereby reducing traffic congestion and parking requirements,
- exercise in a safe environment for mental and physical health, and well being,
- go sightseeing on vacation,
- promote eco-tourism, and

- attract local, regional, national, and international naturalists, cyclists, birders, water enthusiasts and related events

As an economic development tool, the implementation of the bikeway, walkway and blueway networks in this document can enhance the overall quality of life in the region, provide an attractive resource for tourism promotion, establish a world class reputation for cycling, hiking, birding, canoeing and other outdoor sports events, and offer a superlative enticement to business professionals looking to start up, expand or relocate their company.

The New River Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan has been developed with the intention of providing population centers in the district with access to an alternative transportation system. The plan proposes a network of routes creating connections within and between local communities and regional and national points of interest throughout the New River Valley.

### **Multi-Jurisdictional Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Connections**

Many of the routes and proposed routes cross jurisdictional boundaries. Cooperation between these localities will ensure their success and greater access by more individuals. The following is a list of the major cross jurisdictional routes:

- **Rte. 221** - From Floyd County to Roanoke County
- **Rte. 8** - From Floyd County to Montgomery and Patrick Counties
- **Rte. 100** - From Giles County to Pulaski County
- **Rte. 61** - From Giles County to Bland County
- **Rte. 42** - From Giles County to Craig County
- **Rte. 11** - From Montgomery County to the City of Radford and Roanoke County
- **Rte. 114** - From Montgomery County to Pulaski County
- **Huckleberry Trail** - From Montgomery County to Pulaski County
- **Bicentennial Bicycle Route 76** - Crosses the United States from Oregon to Yorktown, Virginia and passes through Montgomery County to Pulaski, Wythe, and Roanoke Counties
- **TransAmerica Bicycle Route** - This 16,000 cross continent trail includes sections in the New River Valley from the City of Radford to Montgomery and Pulaski Counties
- **New River Trail** - From Grayson, Carroll, Wythe, and Pulaski Counties to Montgomery and Giles Counties, The New River Trail was recently connected to the **Virginia Creeper Trail** in Abingdon, Virginia, creating 160 miles of continuous trail.
- **Blue Ridge Parkway** - Creating a scenic route from the North Carolina-Tennessee border to Skyline Drive in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, the Blue Ridge Parkway connects Carroll, Floyd, Patrick, Roanoke, and Franklin Counties. Parkway officials encourage bicycling on the Parkway. To ensure a safe trip, they recommend becoming familiar with the Parkway resources and services. To view some tips, go to [www.nps.gov/blri/bike.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blri/bike.htm)
- **Appalachian Trail** - Spanning from Georgia to Maine, the Appalachian Trail connects localities in the Mt. Rogers PDC, NRVPC, and Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission regions.
- **New River Canoe Trail** - Connects Grayson, Carroll, Wythe, and Pulaski Counties with existing New River Canoe Trail in North Carolina.

## **Blueways**

The New River Canoe Trail will be Virginia's first designated inland canoe trail as well as the Department of Conservation and Recreation's first water trail or blueway. Good canoe trails offer the visitor a well-spaced series of access sites as well as adequate support facilities between those access sites. Support facilities in the New River Canoe Trail include campsites, rest stops, sanitation facilities, potable water, and sources of information to aid in trip planning. Many of these facilities will be jointly used by both New River Trail State Park and New River Canoe Trail users.

A 100 mile canoe trail will be developed on the New River in Virginia through the provision of only a few missing elements. The development of the New River Trail State Park, the efforts of the Partners in River Access Program, and other activities have already developed the majority of the needed public access sites. Some camping areas and support facilities are also present in the corridor. By developing several public use nodes, the entire trail system can be made available. When added to the 30 miles already in place in North Carolina, this system will provide a 130 mile interstate canoe trail with a beginning at the Virginia-North Carolina state line and a terminus at Claytor Lake State Park.

The Blueway system is included in this planning document because bikeways and walkways will be connecting with the blueway system providing opportunities for intermodal alternative transportation systems.

## **New Partners - Federal Trail Designations**

### *Virginia's Millennium Trails*

The Millennium Trail initiative is a joint effort between the White House Millennium Council, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the Rails to Trails Conservancy. In October of 1999, First Lady Hillary Clinton announced the names of 50 Millennium Legacy Trails which "honor the past and imagine the future." Southwest Virginia was fortunate to receive one of those 50 designations. The New River Trail State Park, which runs from Pulaski County through Wythe, Carroll, and Grayson Counties, received this award due to its efforts to link communities with land, history, and culture. The Trail is currently 57 miles long and is constructed on an abandoned railroad right-of-way through the Blue Ridge Mountains. In May, 2000, at Governor Gilmore's Conference on Greenways and Trails, the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the U.S. Forest Service agreed to connect, via forestry trails, the New River Trail to the Virginia Highlands Horse Trail and the Virginia Creeper Trails. This will result in a 160 mile, multi use trail from Abingdon to Pulaski.

Another Millennium Trail runs partly through the New River Valley. The Appalachian Trail travels through Giles County on its 2,100 mile journey from George to Maine. The Appalachian Trail spans 544 miles in Virginia.

A counterpart to the Millennium Legacy Trails is the **Community Millennium Trails**. These are

trails that are smaller in scale and run throughout individual communities. Southwest Virginia is fortunate to have three more walking paths designated as Community Millennium Trails. They include the 6 mile Huckleberry Trail from Blacksburg to Christiansburg, the half mile Bicentennial Trail in downtown Blacksburg, and the soon to be constructed 2.2 mile Riverway in Radford from Radford University's Dedmon Center to the City's Bisset Park.

The Millennium Trail recognition is important to these areas, because they will now be eligible for federal grants and benefits to improve and support the trails. This will ensure their longevity in the years to come, and allow them to be enjoyed by everyone.

### *Virginia's American Heritage River*

The American Heritage River is an initiative by President Clinton to recognize outstanding rivers in the United States. These designated rivers will receive federal assistance in the form of refocused programs, grants, and technical assistance from existing federal resources. These initiatives focus on community based efforts which restore and protect the environmental, economic, cultural, and historic values of these rivers. The designation and support are good for five years.

Southwest Virginia's New River, along with 13 others, was one of the first rivers designated in 1998. Flowing north, the New River stretches from North Carolina, through Southwest Virginia, into West Virginia. The New River Community Partners is in charge of coordinating the activities of the American Heritage River. The initiative also provides for a River Navigator to aid in development of the activities.

One of the goals of the program is to develop and implement programs that promote the recreational use of the New River Watershed. The New River Valley Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway Plan ~ 2000, integrates recreational use, enhancing natural ecosystems, promoting tourism and connecting and showcasing cultural and historic resources. It is proposing an extension of the New River Trail from Pulaski to Radford and Blacksburg. It will create a network of bicycle routes which will connect the history of the New River Valley. The Mary Draper Ingles Trail will be implemented as a multi use bike, horse, and hiking trail along the New River. This will stretch into West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio, and retrace the steps of Mary Draper Ingles. The New River Trail will be extended into Galax. It will build on existing projects, and possibly connect with the Fishers Peak Music Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Finally, the New River Trail State Park will be completed in downtown Pulaski, with its terminus at the historic Pulaski Railway Station.

The American Heritage River initiative will bring federal funds into the area, and help support economic development and tourism in an area not widely known for such strong features.

### **Identification of Proposed Routes**

The remainder of the document describes existing bicycle, walkway, and blueway routes, as well as, proposed bicycle, walkway, and blueway routes. These routes will span the New River Area,

including Floyd County, Giles County, Montgomery County, Pulaski County, and the City of Radford, and the Towns of Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Dublin, Floyd, Glen Lyn, Narrows, Pearisburg, Pembroke, Pulaski, and Rich Creek.

**The lists of routes included in this document are not meant to represent a recommendation as safe bicycling routes. The Plan is a resource for use by local governments and citizens interested in the development of Bikeway-Walkway-Blueway facilities.**