

# **BICYCLE TOURISM AS A RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VEHICLE**

by Heidi Beierle

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To my creamy roadster for going the distance, my parents for... everything...especially managing home-base operations, communications, and appreciations...helping from afar, Daniel for being my constant companion through riding and writing, readers of enroutetransport.org, friends, and the kind and generous people I met along the way.

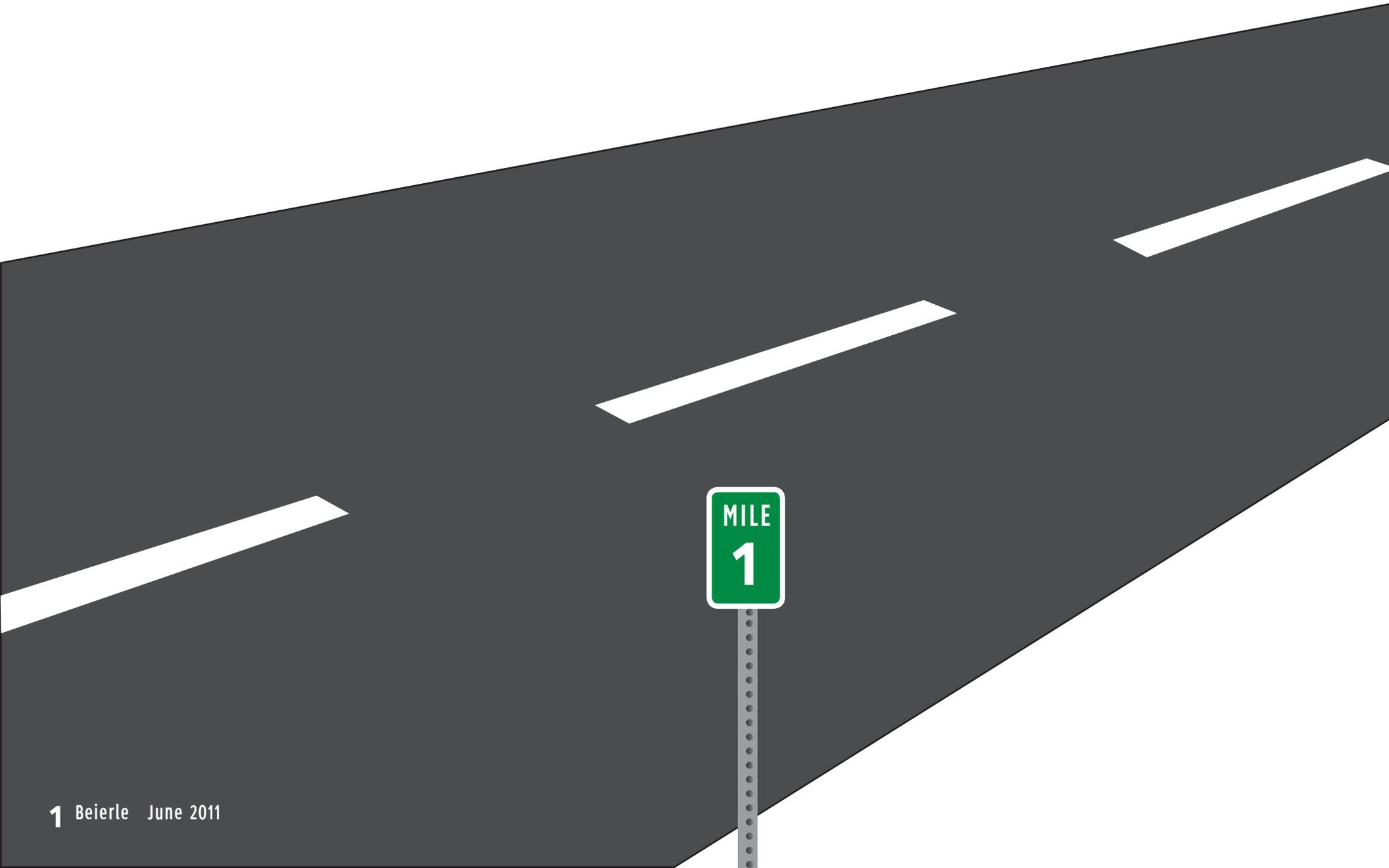
Thank you to the following groups and individuals for believing in this project, contributing funds and resources, and inspiring follow through.

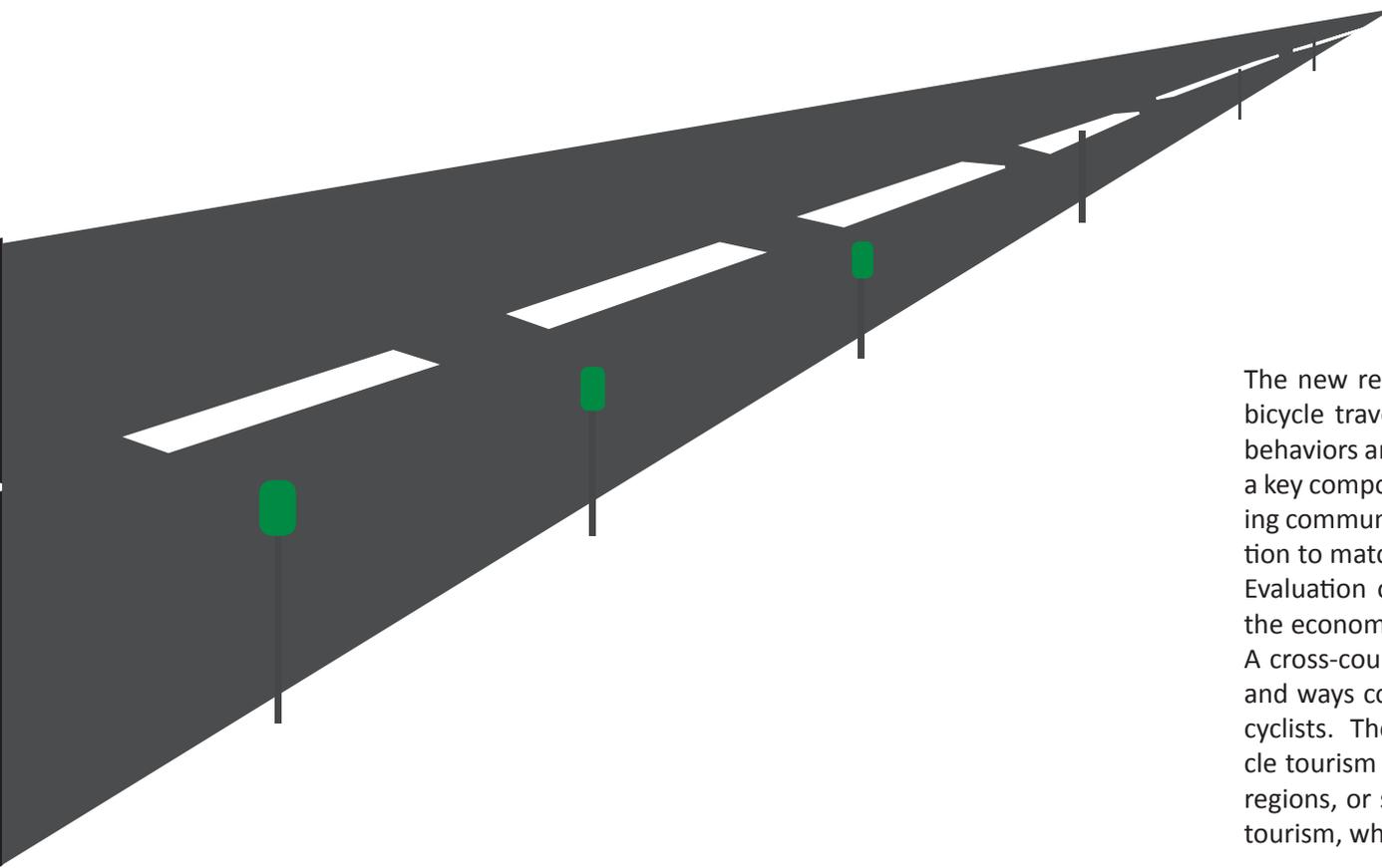
- Women in Transportation Seminar (WTS) Portland Chapter
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**RIDE**

# Introduction





At the 2011 Oregon Governor's Conference on Tourism an entire workshop session focused on Bicycle Tourism. Oregon has long recognized bicycling – in all forms – as one of the state's great assets. Travel Oregon, the state's organization for planning, developing, and marketing travel to local, regional, domestic, and international visitors, currently markets Oregon cycling across the nation and abroad. The Oregon Bicycle Tourism Partnership, that Travel Oregon convenes, has been a statewide effort since 2003 and includes over 120 collaborating organizations and partners. Because the state supports cycling and promotes great cycling resources and infrastructure, bicycle tourism is one of Travel Oregon's top three priorities for visitor experience marketing.

The new research presented here examines the self-contained bicycle traveler and describes nuances of these cyclists' travel behaviors and preferences. While the study of cyclist behavior is a key component of developing bicycle tourism products, assessing communities and routes presents equally important information to match market demands with infrastructure and services. Evaluation of communities, routes, and cyclists can maximize the economic benefits bicycle tourists bring to rural economies. A cross-country field study provided assessment data of routes and ways communities across the nation interface with touring cyclists. These observations are useful to develop Oregon bicycle tourism products, and they are also useful for communities, regions, or states interested in developing or enhancing bicycle tourism, wherever they may be located in the nation.

This document addresses the applicability of bicycle tourism in rural areas by:

1. Providing a contextual overview of field research, planning strategies, history of road building and bicycle transportation in America, and options for adaptively using roadways;
2. Detailing a typology of riders;
3. Characterizing preferred route characteristics;
4. Discussing different types of destinations for cyclists;
5. Presenting an overview of the economic benefits of bicycle tourism in rural communities along with assessment strategies and examples to help communities identify bicycle tourism potential; and
6. Providing a bicycle-friendly top-ten list for states, regions, and communities.

# Contextual Overview

## FIELD RESEARCH

Data for this report was gathered during an 80-day, self-supported, solo, 3,500-mile, cross-country bicycle ride from Eugene, OR, to Washington, DC, in the summer of 2010. During the ride, cyclists, community members, and business owners provided interviews. The research route followed the TransAmerica (TransAm) Bicycle Trail, a route that travels east-west from Yorktown, VA, to Astoria, OR. Missoula, MT, is the northernmost point on the route, and Hoosier Pass, CO, at 11,539', stands as the highest elevation along the route. To the south, the route follows a fairly direct east-west line from Richmond, VA, to Pueblo, CO.



The TransAm established as the first cross-country bicycling route in 1976. Development of the trail responded to growing environmental concern, rising fuel prices, and renewed interest in bicycling as a form of transportation. The inaugural ride in 1976 celebrated the U.S. Bicentennial. Today, the route continues to attract thousands of riders annually.

## DATA

Data was collected around three primary areas: riders, route characteristics, and destinations. Studying riders enabled identification of who rides and the critically different ways they travel. Route characteristics include roadway siting, conditions, and culture. Destinations comprise visitor services such as restaurants, cafes, grocery stores, and other places to procure food and lodging. Other services of note include wifi, water, restrooms, bike shops,

and visitor information. Destinations also include attractions that represent a broad range of entertainment and recreational activities and usually typify scenic or historic points of interest and/or cultural events or sites.

## PLANNING STRATEGIES

Three interwoven policy domains guide this work: bicycle transportation, economic development, and historic preservation. Routes that travel historic transportation corridors exhibit two types of development 1) distance between communities based on how far a horse could travel in one day, and 2) commercial main streets with a post office and rail station or stage stop. The historic buildings and resources in these town centers have proven economic and livability benefits for communities and are often the main reason visitors will stop and spend money in a place.

Heritage tourism activities often involve walking tours within these development areas but rarely, if ever, explore the historic transportation relationship between communities and within regions because the distance between historic transportation hubs or along corridors is not compatible with walking or driving speeds. Transportation modes that would have been contemporary to historic development, such as bicycling, horse power, streetcar, trolley, and train, provide better experiential links to these regional transportation patterns. If historic transportation modes are offered as a choice to visitors, they may choose to experience the transportation heritage of an area from the vantage of a historically appropriate transportation mode. Consequently, experiencing relationships between communities presents greater opportunities for understanding historic development.

Most contemporary projects that seek to restore rural community functionality across regions involve bicycling events. By participating in rural ride events, cyclists can appreciate rural character and resources while benefiting the communities economically when they refuel and rest. However, bicycle tourism on its own may not generate enough visitation over the course of a riding season or year to sustain a rural community economically. Yet, when bicycle touring is paired with heritage tourism, an economically attractive visitor market, opportunities to attract both markets to a community exist. Heritage visitors may not consider themselves cyclists, but they could

have measurable interest in heritage tours that involve cycling.

In essence, by combining what is known about historic preservation-economic development with bicycle transportation-economic development, a strategy for rural communities and regions is created. Bicycle travel in scenic and historic resource corridors boosts community and economic development opportunities and enhances rural livability.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Road building in the U.S. grew from the bicycle craze that swept the nation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the 1880s when the League of American Wheelmen organized, the highwheeler was the bicycle of choice.

By 1890 when the safety bicycle – much like today’s road bicycle – made cycling accessible for men and women alike, the League began advocating for improved roadways. This advocacy for smoother pavement was known as the Good Roads Movement.

With road improvements in place, cyclists took to the American countryside and rural areas in large numbers. With “strangers” swarming about the country lanes, the need for road maps, highway signs, and right-of-way laws developed too. As cyclists visited the countryside in increasing numbers, they also patronized inns, taverns, and restaurants. The League wanted to ensure its members enjoyed their experiences while in these rural communities and created a service directory of rural businesses for its members. Participation in the League service directory meant that businesses would provide a minimum standard of service for cyclists and discounts in exchange for guaranteed patronage by League members.

By the 1920s, the bicycle craze yielded to a car craze. Cyclists’ need and desire for smooth, scenic roads worked well for auto use and prompted a new market for scenic travel by car. This new roadway tourism continued to drive economic development opportunities for remote and scenic regions.

During ascendancy of the automobile in America as the primary mode of transportation, cycling interest declined considerably.

Beginning in the 1970s, cycling in America began a renaissance. Transportation pressures, high oil prices, and growing awareness of environmental degradation fueled interest in exploring non-auto transportation options.

In 1973, the *Des Moines Register* inaugurated the first annual state ride, *Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa* (RAGBRAI). This week-long ride visits seven different rural communities in Iowa every year. Today, this ride attracts approximately 10,000 cyclists. RAGBRAI catalyzed the development of state rides. The alchemy of a week-long bicycle ride, newspaper leadership, sense of personal accomplishment, and economic benefit to others combine to amplify the popularity of RAGBRAI and other state rides like it.

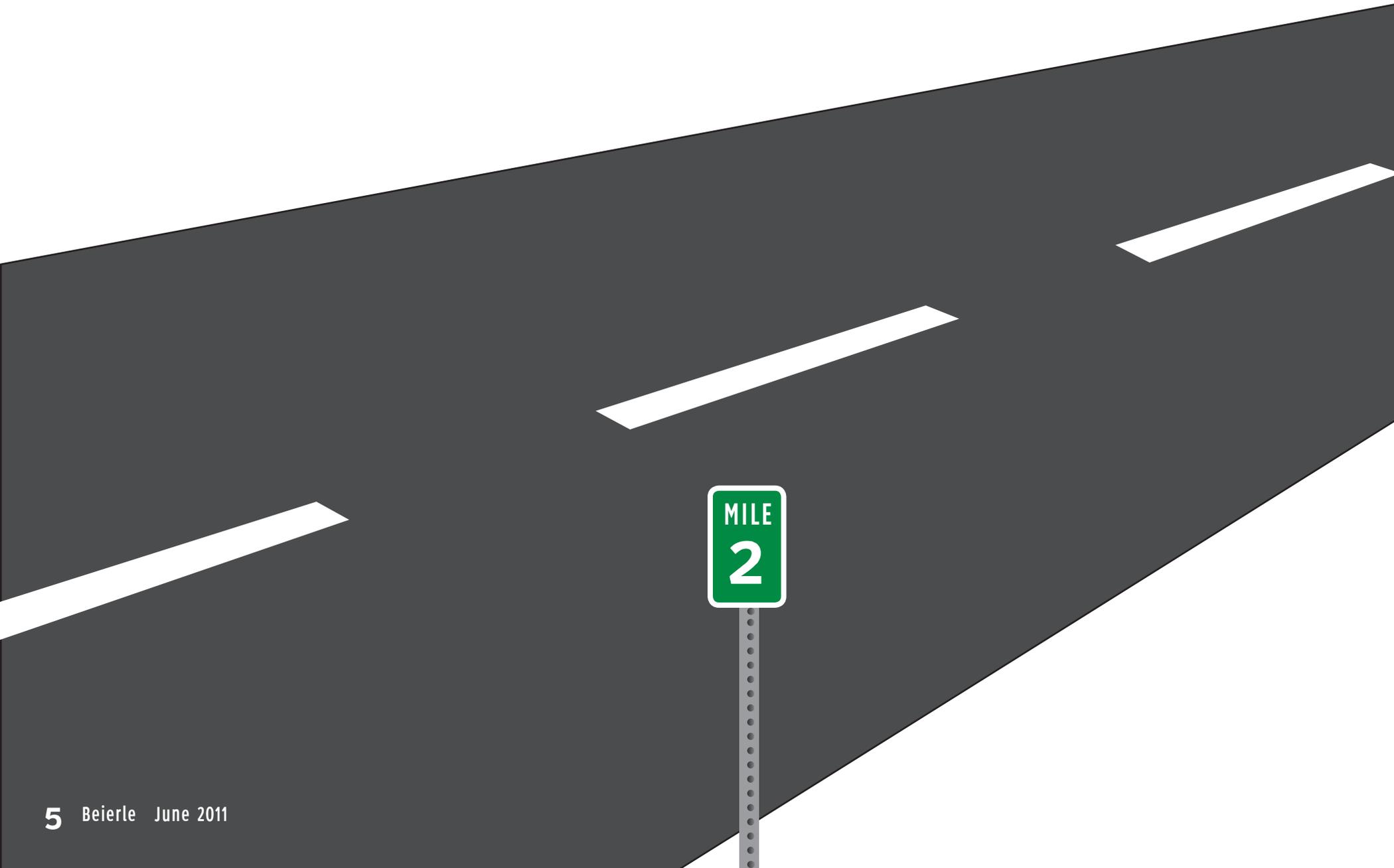
## **ADAPTIVE USE**

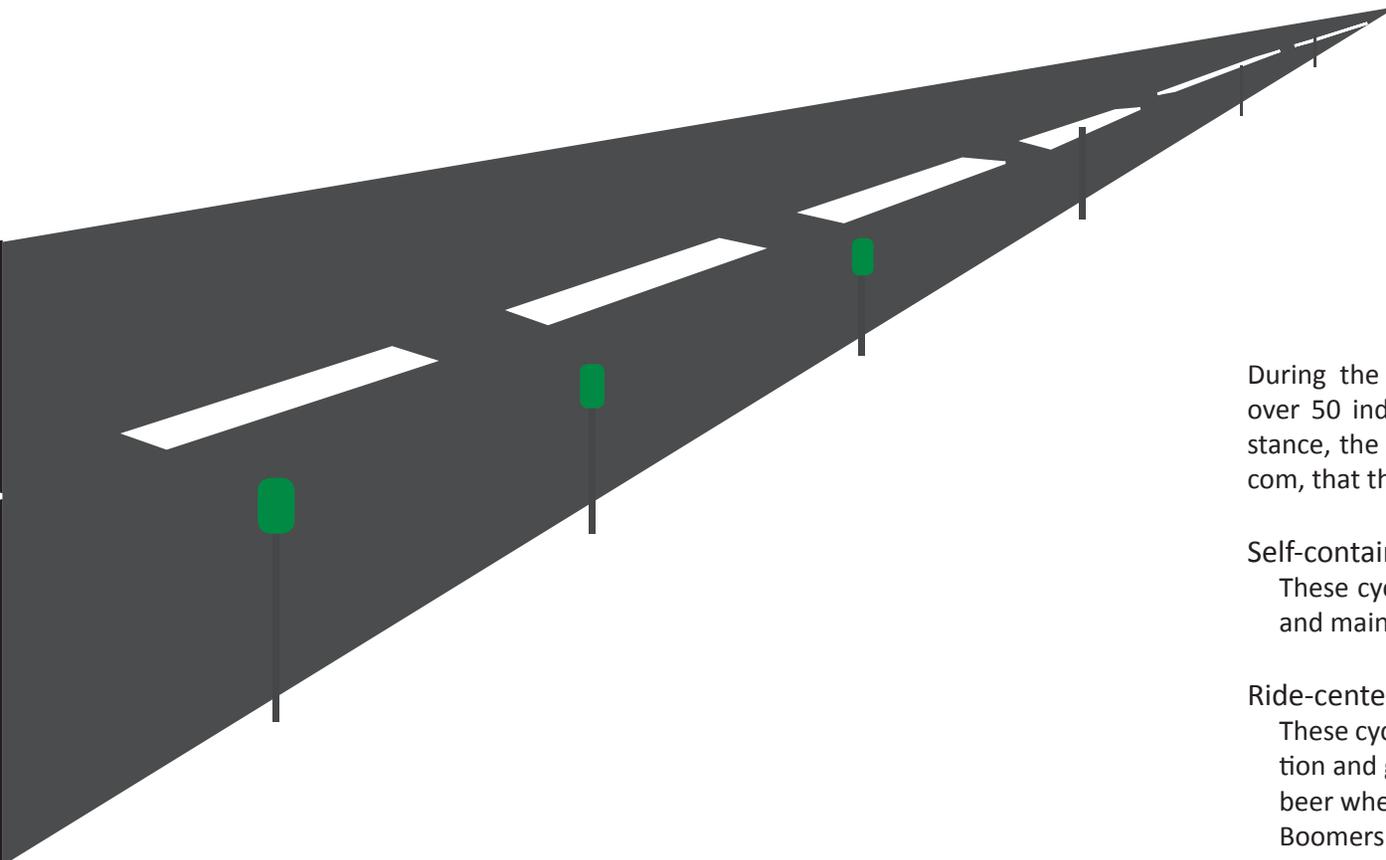
Like repurposing historic buildings for new uses, historic roadways put to use as bicycle tourism routes can encourage economic development in communities along old routes while providing attractive riding and restorative environments for cyclists through cultural landscapes. With lighter wear and tear on the infrastructure, these repurposed historic roads require less structural maintenance than roads that experience continual automobile and truck traffic. All of these reasons contribute to the appeal of siting cycling routes along historic roadways; these cycling routes:

- Reuse existing infrastructure,
- Require less maintenance,
- Benefit communities economically,
- Provide appealing, open-air travel environments, and
- Enhance local sense of place.

Given the historical use of rural roads for recreation, cycling, and tourism, re-envisioning roadway use to adapt to our current environment reflects effective and tried approaches to roadway use. Auto-dominance in America did not negate the utility of recreational road use in rural areas, but it helped Interstate drivers forget that there used to be scenic and recreational reasons for traveling the nation’s roads.

# Riders





During the 2011 Oregon Governor’s Conference on Tourism, over 50 individuals learned from David Lowe-Rogstad of Substance, the consultant planning and designing RideOregonRide.com, that there are four kinds of bicycle tourists:

#### Self-contained travelers

These cyclists and travelers take their gear along on the ride and mainly need camping, grocery, and internet access.

#### Ride-centered travelers

These cyclists and travelers tend to stay overnight in one location and go riding during the day. These travelers like to drink beer when they’re done riding for the day and are often Baby Boomers.

#### Event-centered travelers

These travelers participate in organized rides or event rides. These kinds of travelers also include spectators at racing events.

#### Urban-cycling travelers

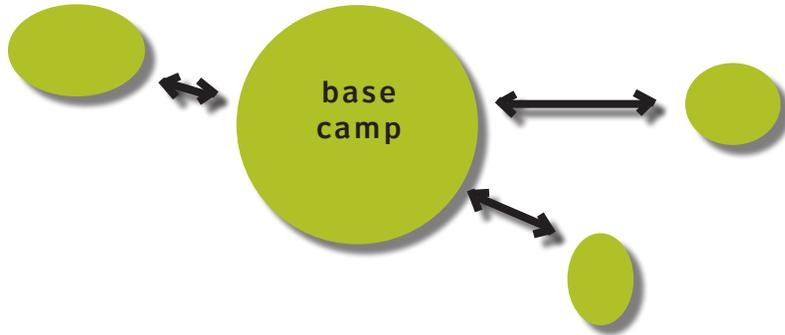
These travelers arrive in a community and spend all or some of their time in the community traveling by bicycle. These travelers may also sightsee locally by bicycle.

While these categories are useful, more needs to be learned about the different travelers to adequately understand their needs. In the following pages, details about the different styles of bicycle travel provide a more complete picture to assess and match traveling cyclists’ needs with infrastructure and services.

# Travel Patterns

Not all bicycle tourists travel the same way.

For ride- and event-centered visitors, one community serves as a base camp from which cyclists can initiate a number of different daily rides. With this particular style of traveling, cyclists may move to more than one base camp

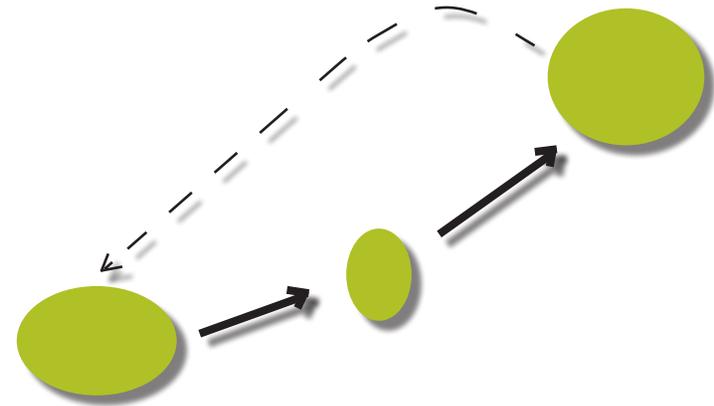


community during the duration of their travel, but the importance of this kind of bicycle travel for communities is the cumulative economic benefit reaped from these bicycle travelers' entire duration visit. For the most part, this economic benefit remains in the base camp community. Consequently, the more opportunities there are for cyclists to engage in a number of different rides or activities from one community, the more time and money they will spend in that community.

Unlike ride- and event-centered cyclists, self-supported cyclists tend to travel along linear areas sometimes returning to their trip origination point and sometimes not.

All types of self-contained cyclists generally stay in a new town every day, although occasionally they stay in one place for a couple of nights. This travel pattern means that rather than concentrating economic activity in base camp communities for trip duration, the important economic benefit figure for self-contained cyclists is average daily spending.

Self-contained cyclists almost always require another form of transportation apart from their bicycle to complete their trip. They may travel to one end of their cycling route and make the journey their ride home. They may pedal to a particular destination and return home using another travel mode. They may travel to and from a cycling route that neither originates nor completes at their home. Lastly, they may use other transportation during their travel for accessory travel to the bike tour or for unexpected occurrences.

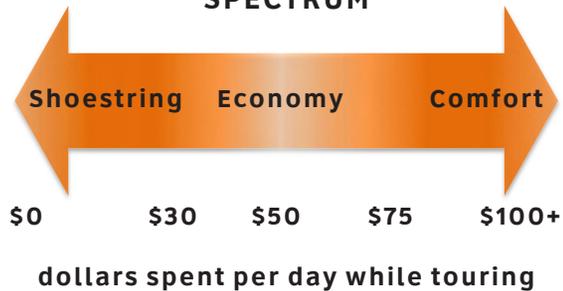


Looking specifically at the self-contained cyclist type, three types of touring cyclists present: Shoestring, Economy, and Comfort. Each type is described in further detail on the following pages. These three cyclist types can be graphed along a continuum based on average daily expenditures. Lodging accounts for the largest expense item, and food accounts for the second largest expense item. All self-contained cyclists spend money on food, but only about half of them spend a substantial portion of their daily budget on lodging. Consequently, those cyclists who spend money on motel lodging more often create a high frequency peak at the right end of the spectrum, see the figure above right, whereas those cyclists who camp most often create a high frequency peak at the left end of the spectrum.

The different cyclist types do not distinguish easily, especially when their bicycles are not nearby.

# Shoestring Cyclists

## BICYCLE TOURISM TYPOLOGY SPECTRUM



Below, three cyclists mingle at a 4th of July BBQ at a hostel in Missoula, MT. The Economy and Comfort Cyclists were traveling together. They both compromised on lodging. The Economy Cyclist preferred camping, and the Comfort Cyclist liked staying in motels.



The Shoestring Cyclist pictured above recently completed graduate study and rode to Glacier National Park from Logan, UT.

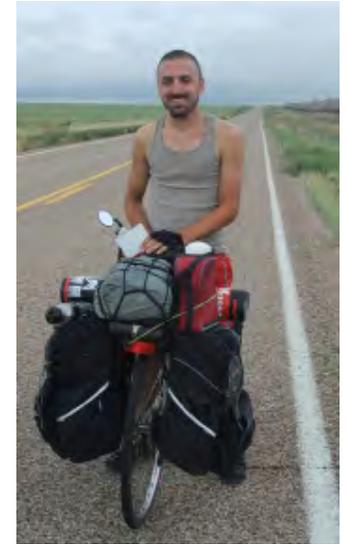
Shoestring cyclists tend to be young and spend a maximum of \$15-\$30 per day while touring.

One way these cyclists economize their tour is to ride high mileage days – 75-100+ miles per day – thereby reducing the number of times they must secure lodging during their trip. These cyclists also prefer the low-cost options of camping and homestays to other types of accommodations. Food is these cyclists' main expense category, and they further ex-

tend limited budgets by shopping at grocery stores and cooking their own food. Shoestring cyclists form a substantial portion of total touring cyclists. They travel in the most economical ways possible by necessity.

Communities can cater to Shoestring Cyclists by:

1. Providing friendly, welcoming homestay opportunities. For example, warmshowers.org matches member hosts with touring cyclists in communities across the U.S.
2. Accommodating camping opportunities in or near town. City parks and school grounds can be made available.
3. Offering low-cost use at maintained public showers.



Matt, pictured above, lives in Chicago, IL, and rode to Mesa, AZ. A photography student, he carried his heavy photography gear in panniers.

Below, bicycles in Saratoga, WY, belong to two Shoestring Cyclists and display the gear-heavy look characteristic of economizing bicycle tourists.



**Younger riders are Shoestring Cyclists and spend no more than \$30 per day and ride 75-100+ miles per day**

# Economy Cyclists

Economy Cyclists do not exhibit age-income correlations related to their travel and spending patterns. These cyclists could have comfortable means or not, but something about this particular style of journey captures their interest and matters more to them than where they stay or what they eat.

Spending for these cyclists averages approximately \$50 per day but may vary considerably. These cyclists may choose to spend the least amount of money possible for their particular kind of journey although they may also spend more in a particular community if conditions or interest encourage them to do so. For example, some of these cyclists may travel by bicycle to go camping and appreciate nature. In this scenario, if they are rained out, they may choose to find a room somewhere to clean up and dry off. Or, if they were headed to a particular event or destination and wanted to camp along the way, they would be able to have two different kinds of vacations during the same time.

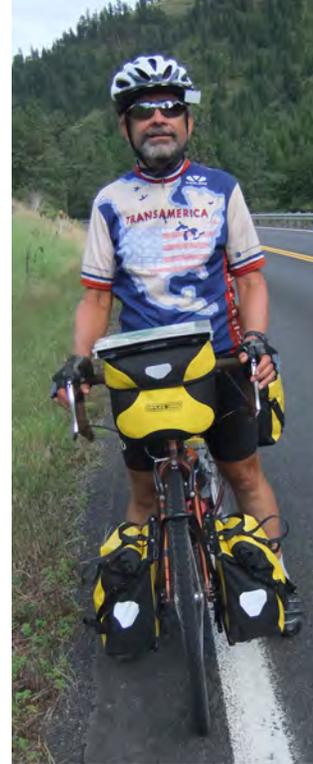
Economy Cyclists will ride an average of 50-90 miles per day. They often travel with cooking gear and shop for food at grocery stores, although they eat at restaurants more often than Shoestring Cyclists. These cyclists are worth noting as a type of traveler who may arrive in a community, but their behavior may be indistinguishable from Shoestring or Comfort cyclists in a given location. In any case, Economy cyclists travel in economically conservative ways out of choice rather than necessity.

## Two ways communities can cater to Economy Cyclists:

1. Maintain a hostel or biker camp.
2. Offer “no-cost” incentives for cyclists at visitor centers or attractions, such as cyclist discounts or free water, ice, hot chocolate, or coffee.

John, pictured above right, lives in Boulder, CO, and was riding the TransAm from Yorktown, VA, to Astoria, OR. He shared particulars about low-cost accommodations and recommended church hostels in the eastern U.S., a homestay in eastern CO, and abundant free camping in the national forest.

John, pictured center right, lives in Portland, OR. He rode from Yorktown, VA, to his home in Portland, OR. He covered two-thirds of the route in 23



The recumbent rider below rode with two other men from Oklahoma City, OK, to Florence, OR.



days, at one point riding over 120 miles in one day with a Shoestring Cyclist. A solo rider, he enjoyed pedaling in company with other cyclists. He emphasized his cuisine preferences along the TransAm, giving particular caution about gravy when traveling eastern states. He underscored the importance for cyclists to purchase drinks or ice cream at stores along the route. He advocates that cyclists who have no immediate need for anything at the store buy something and give it to the kids outside.



**Economy Cyclists spend about \$50 per day and ride approximately 75-90 miles per day**

# Comfort Cyclists

Comfort cyclists represent approximately half of self-supported cyclists. They tend to be older cyclists, and spend an average of \$75 to \$100 per day.

These cyclists ride 50-75 miles per day and prefer to stay in motel, hotel, or bed and breakfast lodging. In some cases, they may travel fewer than 50 miles per day to stay in preferred lodging types. They may stay in less comfortable accommodations if there is no other choice, but they generally do not travel with shelter. Their sleeping gear may be minimal and for emergencies only.

Comfort cyclists do not carry cooking gear and rely on restaurants and cafes as their primary refueling options. Approximately 66-% of Comfort cyclists' spending funds lodging with the other quarter dedicated to food. Comfort cyclists are more likely than the other two types to spend money on entertainment and other forms of non-cycling recreation and visitation.

## Two ways communities can cater to Comfort Cyclists:

1. Provide motel, hotel, or bed & breakfast lodging.
2. Prioritize historic preservation, emphasize the community's unique sense of place, and offer great customer service.

Dermot and Mary traveled from their home in Wales to ride the TransAm. Dermot wanted to ride a bicycle across the U.S. since he was a boy. He practices general medicine, and Mary teaches. They purchased second-hand bicycles and gear at home and flew with their bikes into Seattle. They carry only sleep sacks for emergency accommodations and stay in motels mostly. They enjoy recuperating from a day's ride with a cold beer at the local pub.



Dave and Ann, pictured on the left, live in southern CA. Every year, they celebrate their anniversary by going on a bike tour. For their 35th anniversary, they toured a scenic loop in ID and spent a day whitewater rafting in Riggins, ID. For their first tour, Ann sewed chamois leather into their shorts, a recommendation from expert bicycle tourists in 1975.

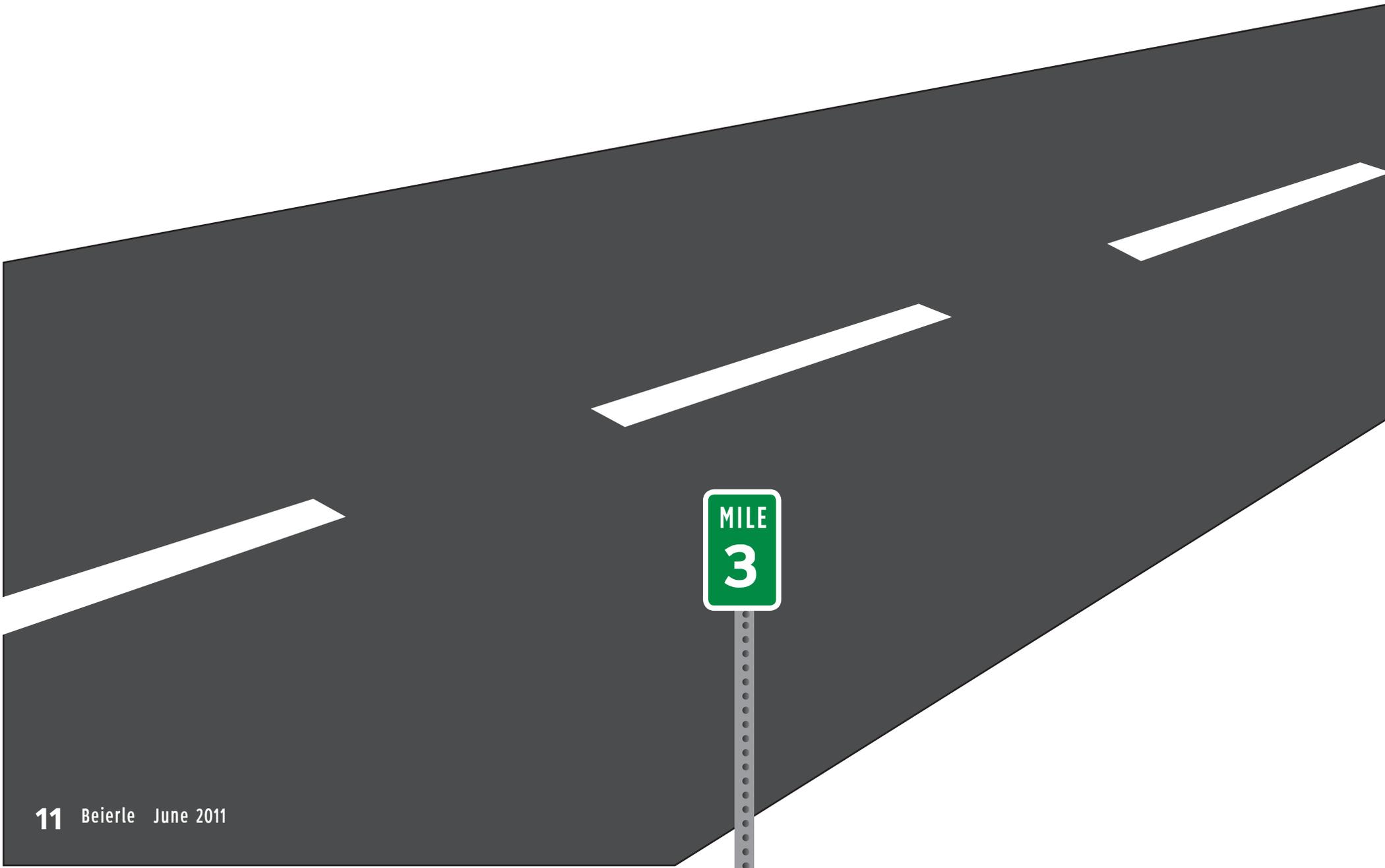
Curt, below, from Wichita, KS, doesn't ride a bike at home, although he trained for this trip. He rode to Portland, OR, to honor the memory of his mother who was one of the original 4,000 riders on the inaugural

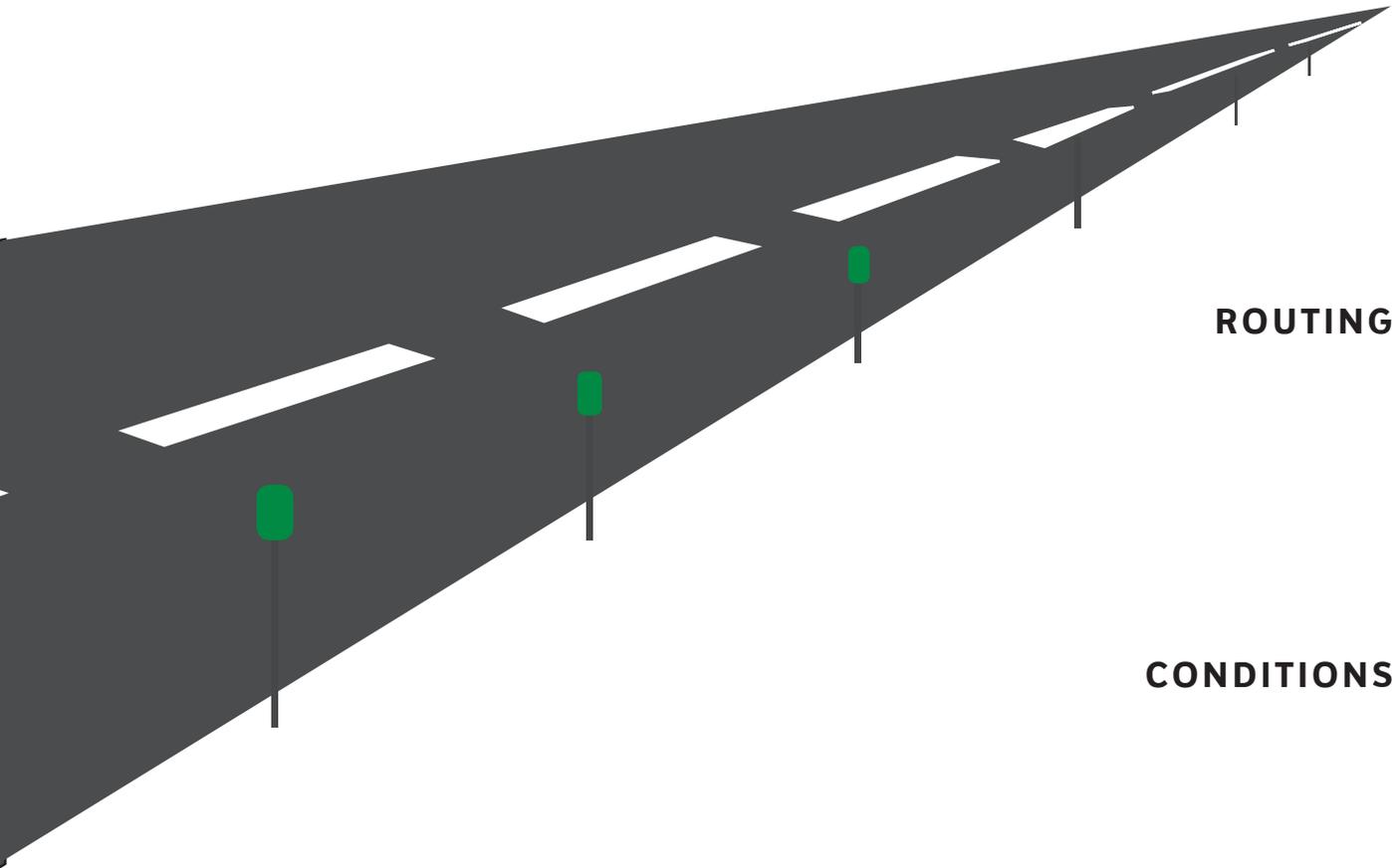
TransAm ride in 1976. On the morning of this photo, he was still cold following an emergency camp in Austin Junction, OR. Despite an uncomfortable night's sleep, he happily could access wifi on his netbook to update his blog.

**Older riders are  
Comfort Cyclists  
and spend  
\$75-\$100  
per day and  
ride  
50-75 miles  
per day**



# Route Characteristics





## ROUTING



## CONDITIONS



## VISITOR CULTURE



Bicycle tour routes' landscapes, road conditions, and the cultures through which they travel all contribute to the quality of cycling experience for visitors. Route characteristics contribute significantly to the bicycle-friendly feel of an area or region, and those areas with a positive bicycle-friendly feel are more likely to derive greater economic benefit. Cyclists are more inclined to travel in areas where they feel welcome – either directly through their interaction with people or indirectly through the quality of roads and infrastructure.

# Routing

Routes are comprised of different kinds of roadways and infrastructure. Attractive cycling routes possess scenic qualities or are themselves historic roadways. These routes follow quiet, low-traffic-volume roads without shoulders.



Routes that feature regularly spaced towns and/or services (water, rest-rooms, food/restaurants, accommodations) are also functional touring routes. Regions without abundant natural or scenic assets may want to

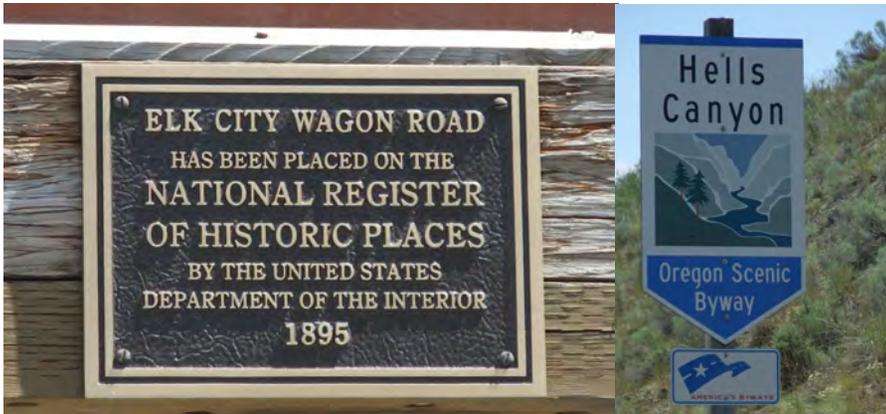


promote the communities' uniqueness, friendliness, history, culture, events, or local products.

Touring routes with topographical variation offer cyclists challenging and appealing interactions with terrain.



# Road Types



Scenic roadway design is a feature of past road building strategies, and scenic byways often indicate historic roads.



Cultural landscapes, like Split Rock, WY, pictured above, do not need historic or scenic designation to lend provocative layers of interpretation to a journey. This road offers undesirable riding conditions; however, the landscape enriches the journey immeasurably.

There are four kinds of paved paths or roads upon which touring cyclists ride, and each of those paths or roads also has a combination of elements that enhance or detract from enjoyment of the ride.



## **BICYCLE PATHS**

Paved, off-street pathways for non-motorized use.



## **BICYCLE-ONLY ROADS**

Open seasonally with periods of bicycle-only access.



## **ROADS WITHOUT SHOULDERS**

Any roadway with fewer than twelve inches between the white fog line and the roadway edge.



## **ROADS WITH SHOULDERS**

Any roadway with more than twelve inches of roadway between the white fog line and the rideable pavement edge.

# Conditions

Roadway conditions vary considerably across the country from the smooth, freshly paved rural roads in Kansas, as depicted in the previous section, to the challenging conditions found in Wyoming on the wide-shouldered roads: regularly spaced, patched cracks, rough chip seal, and rumble strips in the shoulder. Wide shouldered roadways in West Virginia had smooth surfaces and adequate room; however the entire shoulder width contained debris – gravel, glass, tire pieces, and plastic bottles.

For each of the different road types, there are four elements that can equally enhance or detract from the riding experience: roadway surface, rumble strips, signage, and debris.

## Roadway surface

Smooth road surfaces foster pleasant riding experiences. Cracks, holes, and patches on the road can cause flat tires and other damage to bicycles or gear, particularly bicycles loaded for touring. Unpaved surfaces lead to the same issues and increase potential for falls. Freshly oiled or tarred roadways create unpleasant environmental effects, can damage bicycles, and pose danger for slips. Chip seal creates a rough road surface (often ending in the middle of the rideable shoulder making the shoulder an undesirable place to ride), and loose, flying rocks can injure cyclists.



Chip sealed shoulders that allow enough room for a cyclist to travel comfortably on the smoother, unsealed portion, like the road pictured above left, offer preferable riding conditions to chip sealing that covers the entire shoulder or road edge or a chip seal line that ends in the middle of a narrow shoulder.

## Rumble strips

Rumble strips alert drivers when they have strayed beyond the designated lane of travel. For cyclists, rumble strips can alert them to vehicles approaching from behind. With center lane rumble strips, cyclists know that vehicles are giving room and passing. With shoulder strips, cyclists know if vehicles are approaching too closely. Sometimes, rumble strips consume the rideable shoulder. While the effect for vehicles driving on rumble strips is a noise alert, they can render a shoulder unrideable, forcing cyclists to ride in the auto-travel lane.



Rumble strips, like those pictured above right, situated at the white fog line and with regular breaks between the treatment, enable cyclists to maneuver their riding position between the shoulder and auto-travel lane. This placement of rumble strips also allows cyclists maximum use of the rideable shoulder.

## Signage

Bicycle-specific signage serves a key role in making cyclists feel welcome in a region or invited to a community. Wayfinding signage helps cyclists locate communities, services, and trails. Historic roadway and scenic by-way signage often also indicates desirable cycling facilities.

Bicycle-specific signage catches cyclists' attention like other friendly cyclists on the road. Communities or regions that emphasize their cycling assets will attract cyclist revenues.

# Visitor Culture



## Debris

Cyclists try to avoid all debris on the roadway, and road surfaces free of debris offer optimal surface conditions. Debris - including glass, dirt, rocks, metal, tires, trash, and road kill - can damage bicycles and gear and cause slips and falls. Cyclists may swerve or move into the roadway to avoid debris, likewise putting themselves at risk for falls or collisions, both of which could result in injurious or fatal consequences.

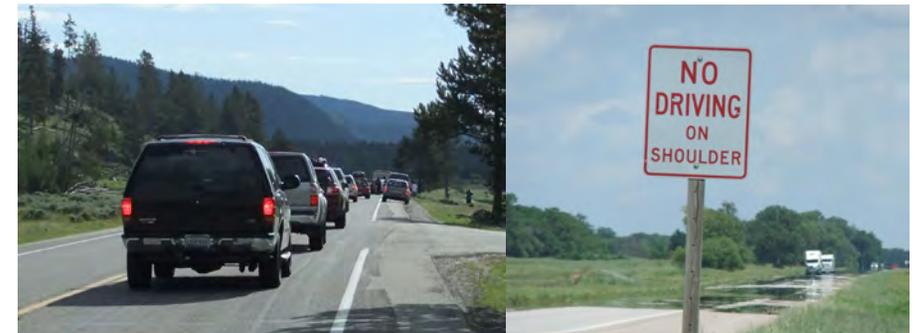
Cycling route shoulders swept regularly during the riding season enhance riding conditions, reduce flat tires, and allow cyclists to comfortably ride the shoulder or road edge. Comfortable riding space improves driver interactions and safety.



Infrastructure colors touring cyclists' experiences, and social environments equally affect cycling experiences. For example, the friendly road crew and bar patrons in White Bird, ID, pictured in the bottom-left-hand column wanted to hear bicycle tourism stories.

Sometimes, cyclists will ride interstates or major highways. Usually when this happens, no other cycling routes exist. Drivers should know that cyclists riding these roads do so because they have no other option.

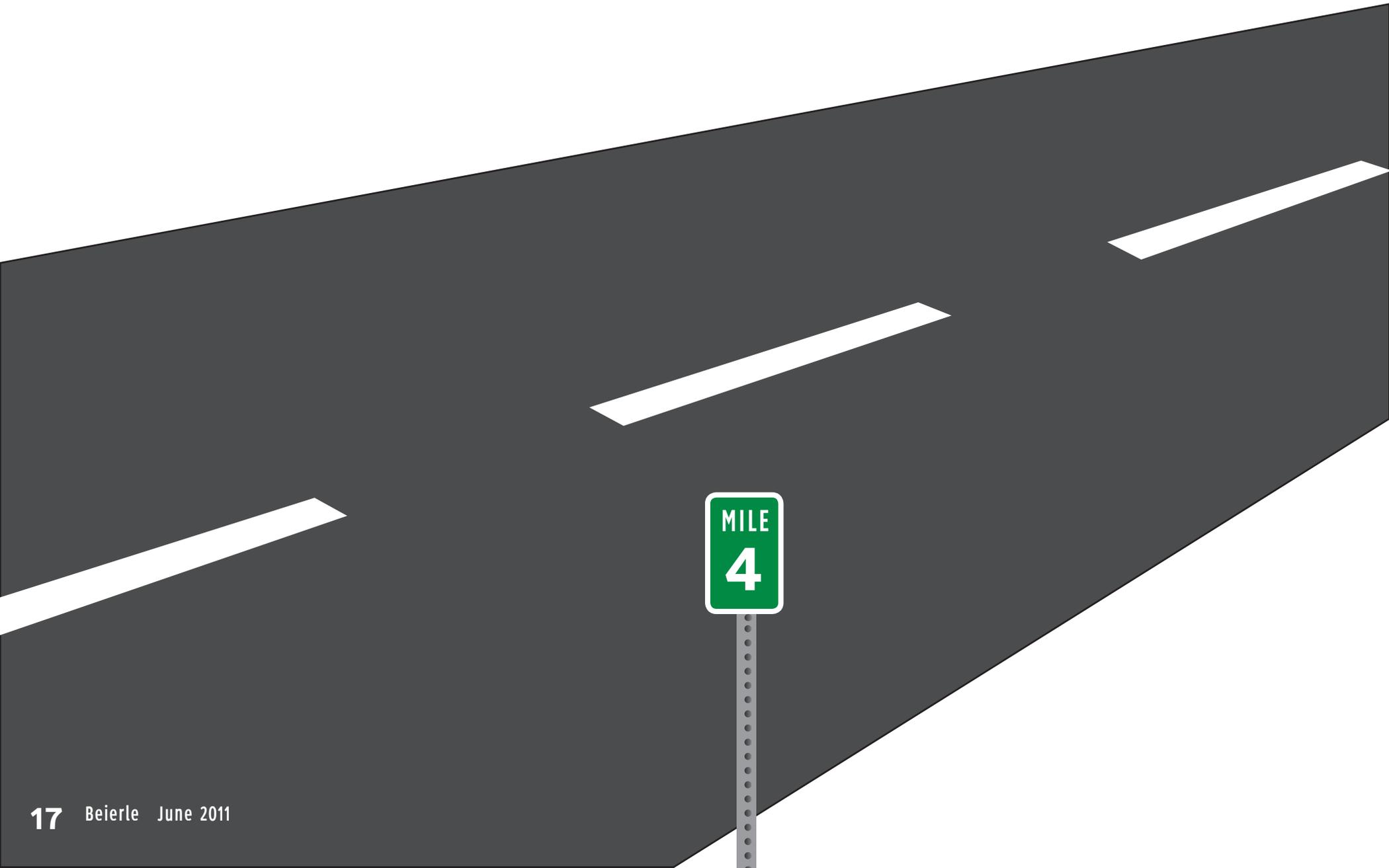
Cycling routes in areas that attract driving visitors may present dangerous conditions for cyclists, particularly areas with RV traffic. Employing strategies that alert drivers to cyclists' presence on the roadway increases cycling safety and comfort considerably. Alerts coupled with education for shared-road courtesies considerably improve visitor experiences.

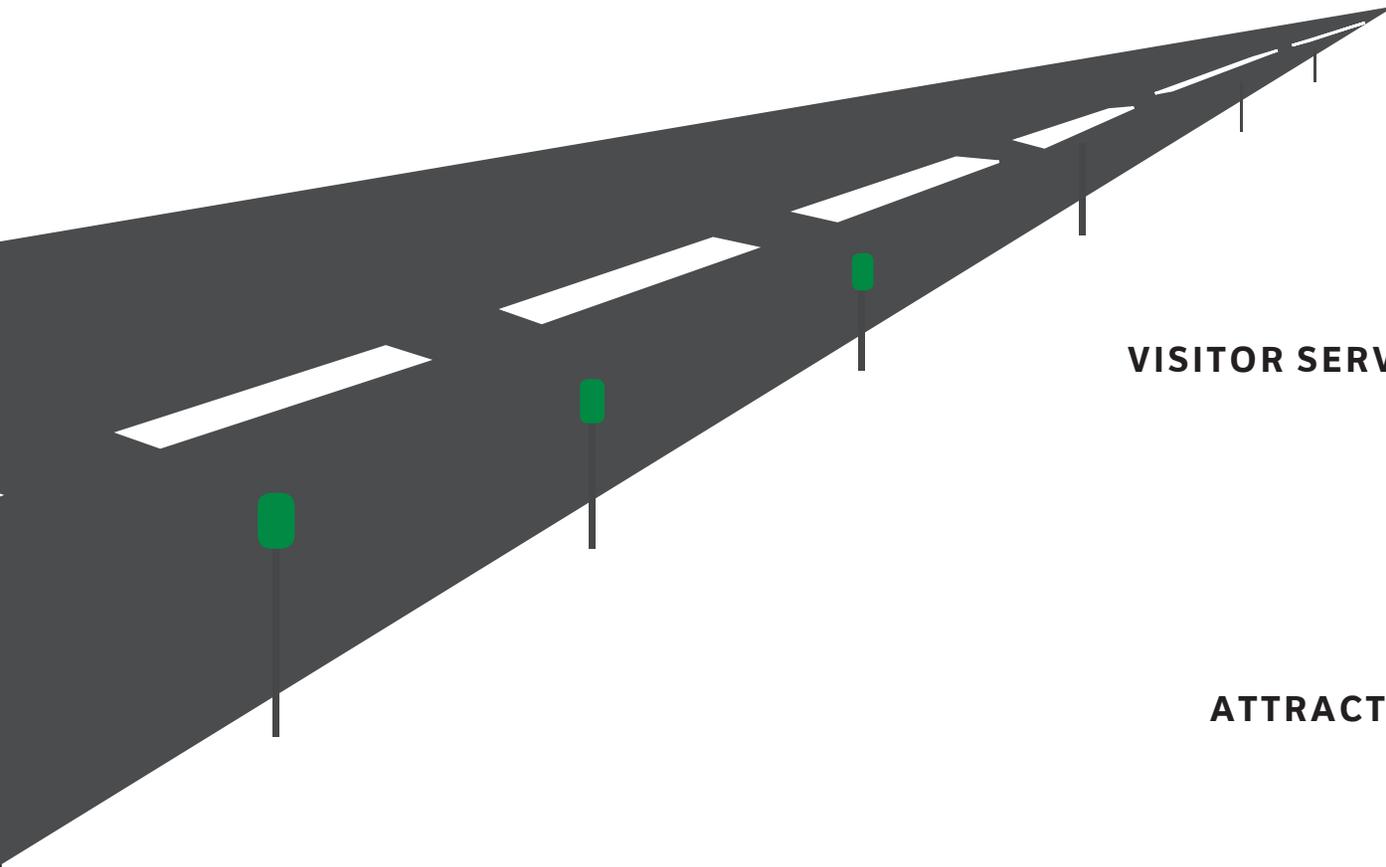


Within communities, the same thoughtfulness and courtesy applies. Infrastructure and people reveal attitudes. Cyclists stay longer in friendly places where they feel welcome.



# Destinations





**VISITOR SERVICES**



**ATTRACTIONS**



Like route characteristics, the destinations touring cyclists encounter significantly affect the quality of their cycling experience and the amount of money they will spend in a community. Destinations include daily stops, such as where to find a meal or a cold beverage, or they might include other kinds of attractions that determine a trip itinerary, such as riding to a national park or historic or archaeological sites.

# Visitor Services

Visitor services for touring cyclists include **refueling establishments** such as restaurants, cafes, grocery stores, and convenience stores. **Accommodations** are a needed service and include homestays, camping, hostels, motels, hotels, and bed and breakfasts. **Other services** of note include water, restrooms, wifi, cell service, showers, laundry, bike shops, emergency services, and visitor information.



All cyclists must refuel. Cyclists can be particular about where they eat and what they eat. At the same time, the imperative to eat can often override particularities.

Cooky's Cafe comes highly recommended via cyclists' word-of-mouth interactions. "Anyone who's anyone stops at Cooky's in Golden City, MO, and has some pie." If a cyclist only has one piece, the wait staff know better, "All cyclists have at least two pieces." To reinforce this point, the cyclist log book details other cyclists' journeys and their joy of being well-treated and well-fed at Cooky's.

Fairplay-Valiton Hotel welcomes weary cyclists who have traveled over 75 miles of unpopulated CO landscapes before climbing Hoosier Pass. For proud riders descended from the big climb, the hotel offers fluffy pillows, hot showers, and wifi.



In Yellowstone National Park, camping is always available for cyclists, even when the campground signs say "FULL." Wifi is now as essential a service as restrooms and water.

Visitor information guides cyclists to accommodations, provides local maps



of an area – particularly if cyclists are not traveling through towns or with resources that have service directories – and identifies local attractions.

Well-maintained laundry, rest area, and shower facilities often serve as local destinations for sweaty cyclists needing a refreshing change of personal environment.



# Attractions

Attractions include a broad range of entertainment, educational, and recreational activities that do not require cyclists to carry away items. For cyclists interested in attractions, visiting scenic or historic points of interest may appeal. Historic landscapes, sometimes referred to as cultural landscapes, also appeal to cyclists, particularly because they are best appreciated at cycling speed. Some cyclists might river raft or visit museums. Cultural events or destinations are likely to draw some bicycling visitors.

Contemporary roadway siting often follows historic roads and trails. Fort



Larned, above, provides a rich, heritage experience through preservation of historic fort buildings and interpretation of the Fort's key role providing security for pioneers along the Santa Fe Trail. DeVoto



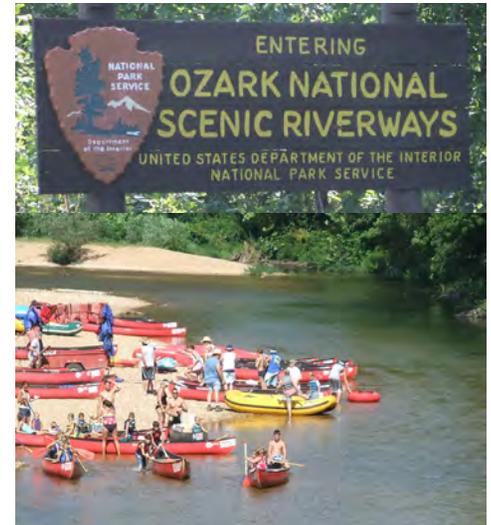
cedar grove, above right, stands next to the Lolo Pass highway and memorializes Lewis & Clark's expedition and a historian of their journey. The grove provides a quiet and ecologically unique place to reflect.

To the left, this restored historic bank building stands majestically in

Ness City, KS, a one-story town. Roadway signs for miles in both directions direct visitors to this "skyscraper of the plains."

Recreational attractions like the Scenic Riverways pictured at the right allow cyclists to recreate in other ways and experience unique elements of local landscapes and culture.

Below, Old Faithful geyser and the visitors who travel from around the world to watch its steamy

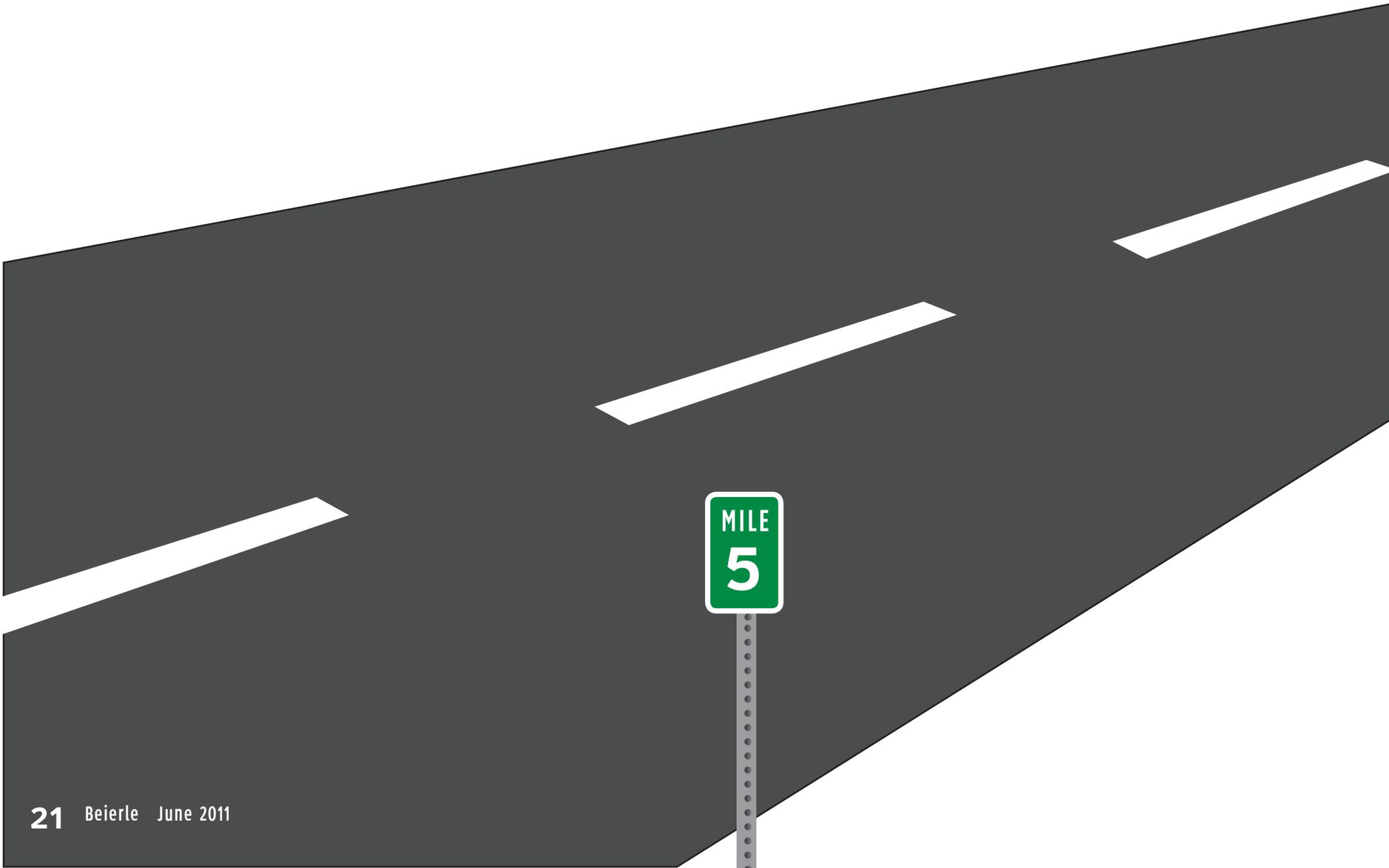


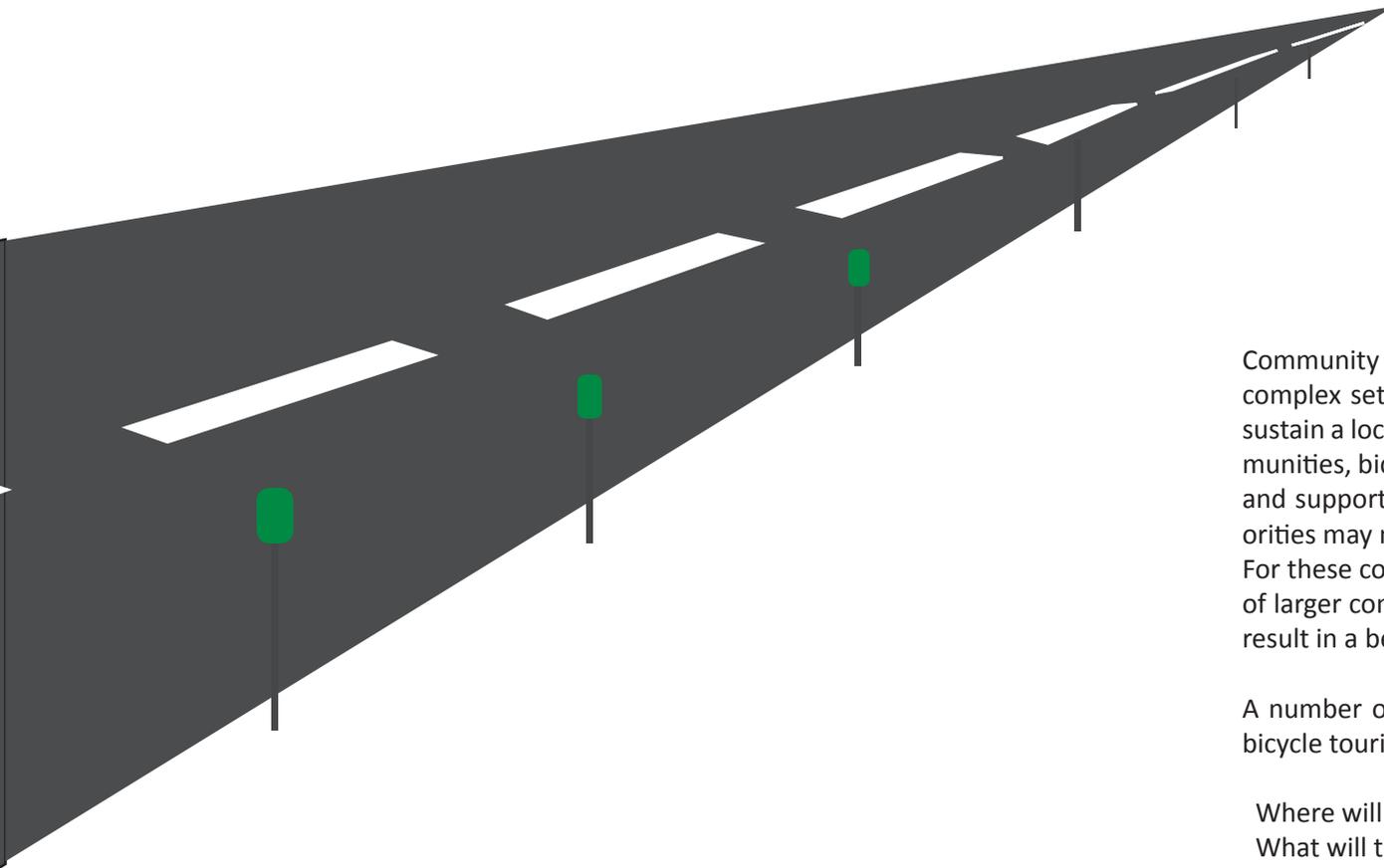
display can be appreciated from the observation deck at the Old Faithful Inn, a National Historic Landmark.

Local attractions, such as the historic ranger station pictured below right, entice cyclists from the roadway to rest and explore. Communities fortunate to have a famous person's birthplace, bottom left, draw visitors to their ultimate destinations and on happily, unanticipated detours.



# Economic Development





Community and economic development strategies involve a complex set of factors that all must be addressed to grow and sustain a local economy at a viable pace and scale. In some communities, bicycle tourism might be a singular strategy to catalyze and support growth. In other communities, local assets or priorities may not place such an exclusive focus on bicycle tourism. For these communities, framing bicycle tourism as a component of larger community and economic development strategy might result in a better fit for localities or regions.

A number of questions arise given the opportunity to develop bicycle tourism in rural areas.

- Where will cyclists stay?
- What will they eat?
- How long will they stay?
- How will they find a particular community?
- What draws them along the route?
- What will they do once they arrive in town?
- How many will visit a particular place?
- How much money will they spend in a community?
- How far do they ride each day?
- What is a reasonable distance between communities or services?
- What makes a rural community bicycle-friendly?
- How are services spaced within a region?

For rural communities hoping to capture revenues from bicycle tourism activity, knowing what kind of cyclist a community serves or hopes to serve focuses plans for enhancements and marketing.

Four basic steps guide program development: 1) assess the potential; 2) plan and organize; 3) prepare, protect, and manage; and 4) market for success.

## **ASSESS POTENTIAL**

**Evaluate cycling assets** in the area, including: Adventure Cycling routes, scenic byways, recreational bike paths or rail trails, U.S. Bicycle Routes, state cycling organization routes, and local road race routes or notable rides.

**Identify the community's or region's uniqueness.** Individuality may express itself in the physical appearance of a place, but it could have less visible identifiers, revealing itself instead in the people, culture, or history of a particular place. Cyclists and other visitors are drawn to unique places.

**Evaluate off-season and other assets** that synergistically pair with cycling to support investments. For example, motorized activities can fill a winter-time recreational need in some areas, whereas harvest-oriented activities that involve food, beer, and wine may offer other attractions in areas that do not lend themselves to winter recreation. Arts and cultural festivals or celebrations also support off-season visitation and draw upon lodging and restaurant services developed to serve summer demand. Sumpter, OR, a small town on the TransAm and an All-American Road scenic byway, uses its network of ATV trails for snowmobiling recreation. Also, mountain biking trails in the area serve cross-country skiers during snowy seasons.

## **PLAN AND ORGANIZE**

**Space lodging** approximately 50 miles apart for linear travel routes. Emphasize spacing for motel type lodging and/or camping to accommodate both Comfort and Shoestring Cyclists. Consider resources in the surrounding area to help identify which type is more likely attracted to the area. Other visitor services should be spaced approximately 10-25 miles apart. Bike shops do not need to be spaced as frequently as lodging, but it is important that a community knows where the nearest shops are.

**Cultivate relationships** among businesses, cycling organizations or clubs, land management agencies, departments of transportation, community and county governments (including emergency response and enforcement de-

partments), local chambers of commerce, and other interest-based groups related to community assets. As an example, a scenic bikeway project in Cottage Grove, OR, loops around a reservoir on a rail-trail and county road. The route planning team requires participation from all groups and agencies who have an interest in the project: the Army Corps of Engineers, the county, the Bureau of Land Management, the town administration, the local chamber of commerce, area cyclists, and others.

**Research and participate in economic development programs** for rural areas. Explore microenterprise and small business development and support programs. For example, rural business development grants help communities write management plans and fill visitor service gaps, such as lodging. Incentives are also available for women and minority entrepreneurs.

**Use historic resources in business development strategies** whenever possible. Rehabilitation is often thriftier than building new, and historic and cultural sites attract visitors. Preservation establishes and maintains the sense of place that gives a community its distinctive character. Breweries redevelop historic warehouses, auto shops, and other large commercial spaces into profitable, character-filled, entertainment destinations for visitors and production space that contributes to local economic growth.

## **PREPARE, PROTECT, AND MANAGE**

**Manage, measure, and evaluate.** Keep visitation sustainable for a community by understanding where and how resources may be under- or overused. Bicycle tourism has a minimal environmental effect in communities related to transportation and parking. Depending on the bicycle tourist type, these visitors may have a small to large economic benefit. Developing services and amenities that cater to Comfort Cyclists can help a community maximize visitor revenues. A community that emphasizes its assets with a balanced approach to visitation enhances its social sustainability by increasing local livability and maintaining a unique sense of place. Encouraging cyclists to stay in downtown historic hotels effectively accomplishes all of these goals.

**Create Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessible destinations.** ADA-compliance ensures bicycles can easily reach destinations, allows for family-

friendly and all-abilities access, and sends a message that the community is friendly to everyone. The same curb cut a local centenarian uses to walk from a parking lot to the local diner is the same one a cyclist uses to wheel her loaded bike up to a visible bicycle parking place against the diner. The same principle applies to lodging establishments also, especially when cyclists park to register and then wheel their bicycles into the room.

**Evaluate surface conditions and infrastructure** along the bicycle-touring route and plan for signage, regular maintenance, and improvements, if needed. The community of Guffey, CO, installed a bicycle sign on the highway to direct cyclists to the community. Guffey is situated 30 miles from any town or services in either direction on the cycling route, but it is one mile off the highway behind a hill and invisible from the road. Until the sign was installed, needy cyclists passed by Guffey without knowing a bike-friendly stop was nearby.

**Evaluate spacing of visitor services** and work with local businesses and entrepreneurs to fill service gaps. The town of Lowell, ID, has a population of 23, but it sits at the western gateway to Lolo Pass where no services are available for 66 miles. Lowell maintains a cafe with wifi, a motel, and two large recreational campgrounds. Despite its small population, Lowell fills a critical lodging and services need for cyclists traveling over the pass.

**Interpret and educate.** Interpretation and education are key to bringing a community's history, culture, or scenery to visitors. Roadside interpretive signs in Idaho marked significant locations where: American Indians traveled and wintered, the Corps of Discovery crossed mountain ranges, settlers fought the elements for survival, battles waged, lumberjacks winched timber up the mountainsides, and roadways blasted through the declivitous terrain.

## MARKET FOR SUCCESS

**Market destinations and attractions** to target markets. Consider community assets as a whole and in context with existing markets to determine who is the most likely audience for the particular bicycle tourism product.

**Be aware** that bicycle tourists may not necessarily be the primary market; however, bicycle tourists traveling in an area may still find the community attractive and visit worthy. Newton, KS, stands out from other Kansas towns along the TransAm. With a vibrant downtown historic district that offers organic produce and coffee shop wifi, this college community appeals to bicycle tourists who find their way to town.

**Employ positive word-of-mouth advertising** a great low-cost high-return approach. Cooky's Cafe uses this strategy to advantage while still maintaining their enduring high quality service. Cyclists tell other cyclists about their memorable experiences and proliferate information online through blogs, facebook, twitter, google maps, yelp, and other sites.

**Be a friendly community.** Each community shares different assets, and warm, congenial, helpful interactions with all types of travelers will encourage visitors to stay and spend money in a place. Linda volunteers at the Halfway, OR, branch library where a new picnic table outside in the well-tended garden provides a comfortable seat for cyclists using the library wifi. Linda and her husband Tom are warmshowers.org members, and Linda also invites cyclists she meets at the library to stay at her home. She and Tom grow a stunning array of organic vegetables and enjoy sharing their bounty.

**Layer services within businesses** to diversify the customer market and to lessen seasonal highs and lows. The general store in Boone, CO, operates with this diverse business model, providing hardware, convenience, and grocery goods for local residents and visitors. The store remains open year-round, seven days a week.

## Case Studies

The next pages provide two case studies of how these four strategies operate. First, the region along Highway 96 in eastern CO demonstrates elements of these four strategies creating positive bicycle touring experiences. Second, the region along Highway 287 in central WY illustrates how a region could build on its assets and employ these strategies to increase visitor numbers and revenues. Both regions have sparse populations, dry climates, and evidence of previously more robust local economies.

# Strengths



People like Jeff Earhart from Boone, CO, emphasize the benefits bicycle tourism can bring to small communities. Boone intentionally markets to cyclists along with other communities in eastern CO along the TransAm.

A “Share the Road” sign, right,

with a small, branded Prairie Horizon Trail sign underneath signals the beginning of the Trail. The Prairie Horizon Trail logo appears along the route, mainly at businesses where staff and proprietors know what kinds of services cyclists seek. At these businesses, staff offer helpful suggestions for cyclists to enjoy their visit through this sparsely populated region.

Jeff’s store is the local hardware, grocery, and convenience store. His storefront, below right, has a hand-made plywood sign hanging on the corrugated metal by the door stating hours and “open.” The “Cyclists Welcome” and the Prairie Horizon Trail logo send a clear message to cyclists that the store is open and interested in their business.

Opposite the entry door, cold drinks draw cyclists inside. At the register, another Prairie Horizon Trail logo stands next to a log book, “Feel free to sign in there. All the cyclists passing through here say a few words. My wife reminds me I should give you one of these maps too. It will help you find what you need, like places to eat.” Jeff speaks with long pauses between his sentences, and the words stroll out in his gravelly voice. He engages with cyclists and shares stories about his life and Boone. He politely takes

his leave from friendly and informative conversation to help customers find irrigation parts.

The maps Jeff distributes are available and offered to cyclists in businesses along the Trans-Am. They display Prairie Horizon Trail logos and have small diagrams of the town centers that locate services. A coded matrix of services along the entire length of the Trail identifies wifi, restrooms, groceries, convenience stores, restaurants, motels, and camping.

At the restaurant in Ordway, 26 miles east of Boone, the proprietor delivers a friendly list of breathless advice with a log book, “You’ll want to take extra water with you in the morning. It’ll be 50 miles before you get to another place where you can find water on a Sunday. Cyclists traveling through here usually leave at about 6 a.m. to beat the heat. Do you have a place to stay yet? Lots of cyclists stay with Gillian. Her place is up Main and a left on 9th. At the end of the road, you’ll find it.”



Gillian offers home-stay accommodations for cyclists, “I know how expensive it can be going on a long tour,” she says in her Aussie accent, “there aren’t many options out here. Take a shower. Make yourself comfortable out in the trailer. We have wifi and laundry. Here’s a towel.”



# Opportunities

The route through central WY has almost no services and travels well-interpreted, incredibly austere landscapes. The road, wind, altitude, signs, settlements, and the shadeless, dry desert challenge even the most stalwart adventurer.



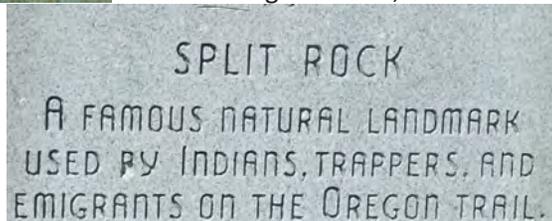
Jeffrey City is a bust, a ghost town. The town population of 106 is invisible amid decaying buildings that were erected during the uranium boom. A vacant-looking apartment reads, "Jeffrey City Public Library. Open." Commercial buildings slump in disrepair. The motel stands tired and boarded up. From the only "open" business, a bar, escapes a human groan.



Cyclists in need of water, food, or accommodations can brave the uncertain conditions in Jeffrey City or continue. West 19 miles, Sweetwater Station hunkers, offering water, rest rooms, and shelter from the wind and sun. Another relentless 39 miles into the wind from there stands Lander, a town with full services. East of Jeffrey City 22 miles squats Muddy Gap, a highway intersection with a gas station, convenience

store, \$12 camping, and restrooms that are open only during business hours.

Between and amid the spare services, interpre-



Snow fences along the Continental Divide, left, and across the sagebrush landscape below, evidence wind intensity through this area. During the summer, these winds push cyclists traveling east an easy 20 mph and faster. Cyclists traveling west strain against headwinds that limit top speeds to a 3 mph crawl.

The harsh climate is no gentler on the road than the cyclists. Temperature extremes and aridity open wide cracks in the asphalt every ten feet, and patches, chip seal, and rumble strips aggravate cycling discomfort on the road.

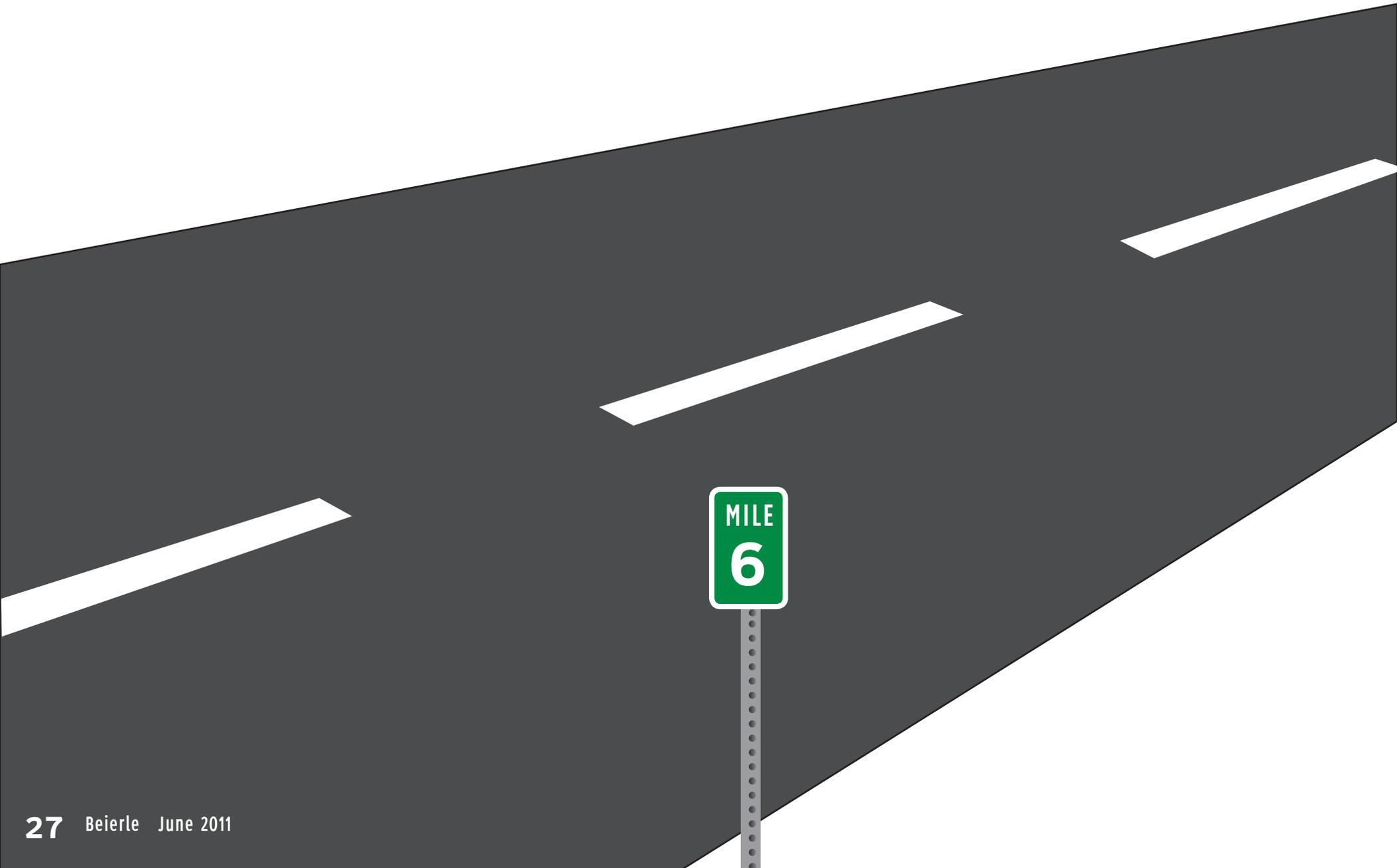


This region presents unique challenges for improving cycling conditions because the challenges the area presents stand as its great assets. Emphasizing the dark tourism aspects of place – such as the cycles of boom and bust – could heighten visitor's awareness of peoples' daily struggle. Providing log books at interpretive signs could enhance experiences of the peopleless landscape while providing riders with a connection to other people who have made the journey. Materials in the gateway towns that clarify for riders the physically experiential nature of this region could further enhance the incomparable journey through this high plains desert.

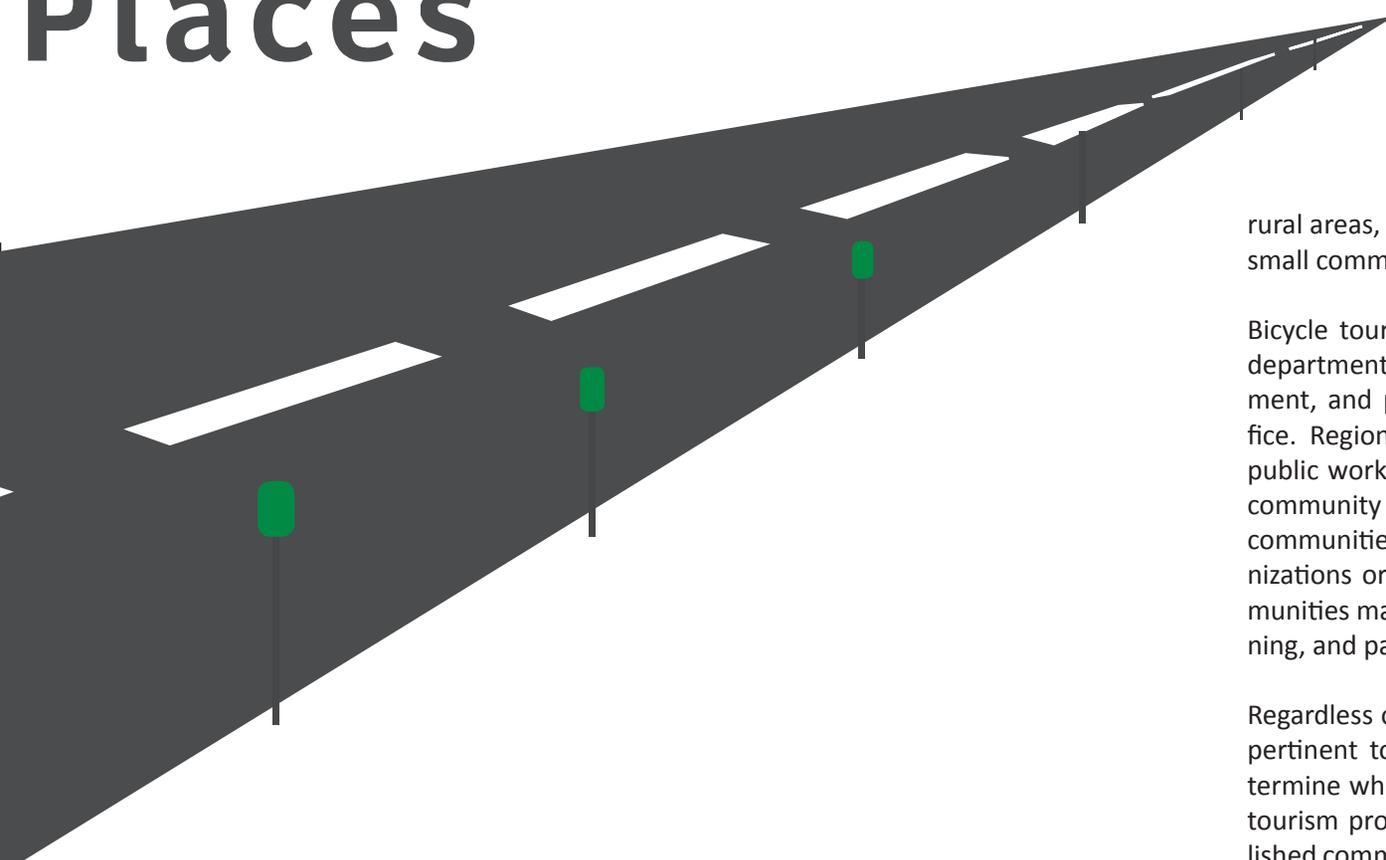
tive markers narrate this desolate and wind-swept landscape. At Ice Slough, pioneers traveling the Oregon Trail found ice in the heat of the summer by digging in the soil about 12". Sweetwater Station marks where a natural spring and oasis quenched the thirst of the pioneers, trappers, and early Americans who journeyed through this desiccating landscape. Cycling in this region poignantly brings the experiences of these persevering travelers into uniquely sharp focus.

Snow fences along the Continental Divide, left, and across the sagebrush landscape below, evidence wind intensity through this area.

# Cultivating Bicycle-Friendly



# Places



Bicycle tourism strategies are multi-faceted, integrated, and rely heavily on policy, organizational, and action collaborative practices for creation, implementation, and ongoing management. Within government, planning and management occurs across departments and through sectors. Bicycle tourism product development can occur at three levels: state, region, and community.

At the state level, this planning can occur through the state tourism agency. Within regions, tourism planning occurs through the regional destination marketing organization. Local tourism planning occurs through the destination marketing organization (DMO). Depending on the planning area, the DMO may also operate at a regional level. Often, community tourism planning occurs through the chamber of commerce or visitors' bureau. In

rural areas, the chamber of commerce may include a number of small communities.

Bicycle tourism programs also draw on state resources in the department of transportation, the parks and recreation department, and possibly through the state historic preservation office. Regional involvement comes through county government's public works department, parks and recreation department, or community and economic development department. For rural communities, local planning likely occurs through county organizations or councils of government although some rural communities may have municipal administration, public works, planning, and parks departments.

Regardless of which level of planning is involved, contacting the pertinent tourism planning organization will help a group determine what tools or resources are already in place for bicycle tourism projects or how bicycle tourism might relate to established community and economic development goals for the area. Generally speaking, the different levels of tourism organizations nest within each other. For example, a modestly sized community may work with the area chamber of commerce and DMO developing a bicycle tourism product. The chamber networks with local, area businesses, and marketing or outreach occurs at a person-to-person or business-to-business scale. The DMO is connected to the information and marketing network of the regional destination marketing organization and the state tourism agency. If this same example community wanted to highlight destinations or attractions to an international market, most of that marketing would occur through the DMO's relationship to other marketing organizations at regional- or state-levels.

The following pages present a top-ten list for states, regions, and communities that have interest in developing or enhancing bicycle tourism strategies and products.

# State

1. Ensure that the state department of transportation's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator plays an active role in developing and enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the state.
2. Coordinate with the state department of transportation to ensure that cycling routes are maintained (free of debris, potholes, cracks, rumble strips, chip seal, and obstructions).
3. Ensure that the state department of transportation scenic byway coordinator considers shared use and context sensitive enhancements on state and national scenic byways.
4. Coordinate with state department of transportation to develop and apply for U.S. Bicycle Route designation(s).
5. Coordinate with the National Parks Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to enhance non-auto transportation from population centers to parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, and public lands.
6. Identify key signature or priority routes as key building blocks of a statewide system. This might manifest as development of a state scenic bikeway program and/or bikeways, a U.S. Bicycle Route, or some other program.
7. Provide a statewide, web-based resource of routes, events, and reviews.
8. Encourage the development of paved trails and bicycle-only roads in scenic areas and in parts of the state that already experience active cycling use.
9. Designate a cycling advocate within state parks and recreation to partner with the department of transportation and statewide tourism organization.
10. Develop or provide hiker-biker campgrounds at state parks.

# Region

1. Collaborate with other communities in the region along bicycle tourism corridors to create visitor resources including branded signs, regional cycling service maps, and business ambassadors. All these help bicycle tourists find their way through a region and to destinations and services within it.
2. Coordinate with roadway jurisdictions to ensure that cycling routes are regularly maintained (free of debris, potholes, cracks, rumble strips, chip seal, and obstructions).
3. Develop or enhance scenic byway routes.
4. Coordinate with adjacent regions to ensure bicycle routes and networks connect across jurisdictional lines.
5. Market bicycle destinations and activities.
6. Coordinate with local and regional enforcement agencies to reinforce visitor-friendly behaviors and shared roadway use.
7. Use bicycle route signage along cycling routes.
8. Coordinate with local chambers of commerce to assess routes for service gaps and to fill any service gaps that may exist.
9. Consider how cyclists will access a cycling route in relation to the nearest transportation hub. Provide services at the hub for bike assembly and/or shipping.
10. Designate a regional, cycling advocate contact person within government for bicycle-related infrastructure and service needs and programs.

# Community

1. Use “Cyclists Welcome” or “Bikers Welcome” signage at community gateways and at key visitor services such as restaurants or motels.
2. In the absence of public restrooms, assure that at least one business that offers free water and restroom access is always available. Best choices are restaurants, stores that serve ice cream or cold drinks, or business ambassador/visitor information centers that also direct cyclists to the community’s best cyclist destinations.
3. Provide inexpensive lodging options – such as camping or hostel – along with motel accommodations.
4. Keep key destinations open at convenient times. Remember that bicycle tourists travel every day of the week and usually begin riding early in the morning.
5. Ensure that restaurants and lodging either have wifi or know where cyclists may access it. If the area has poor cell coverage, know the best locations to find a signal.
6. Educate local residents to develop friendly rapport with visitors – particularly cyclists – within the community and on the road. Every cyclist is a potential customer, and local residents can have a significant effect on whether that cyclist spends \$0 or \$100 in a community.
7. Keep dogs on leashes or trained to stay within their yards. Injuries from dog attacks are not uncommon for bicycle tourists.
8. Provide visible bike parking outside of restaurants, coffee shops, and cafes and understand that cyclists may want to sit within the business where they can see their bikes.
9. For lodging establishments, allow cyclists to bring bicycles inside their room. Provide rags for use on bikes or other dirty items. Let cyclists know what time services (such as food, laundry, or entertainment) close for the evening and open in the morning.
10. Have cyclist log books available at key community destinations and encourage cyclists to sign in.