

INDOT Establishes U.S. Bicycle Route 235

Bicycle tourism has shifted into high gear in Indiana with the latest AASHTO designation of a new state U.S. Bicycle Route (USBR).

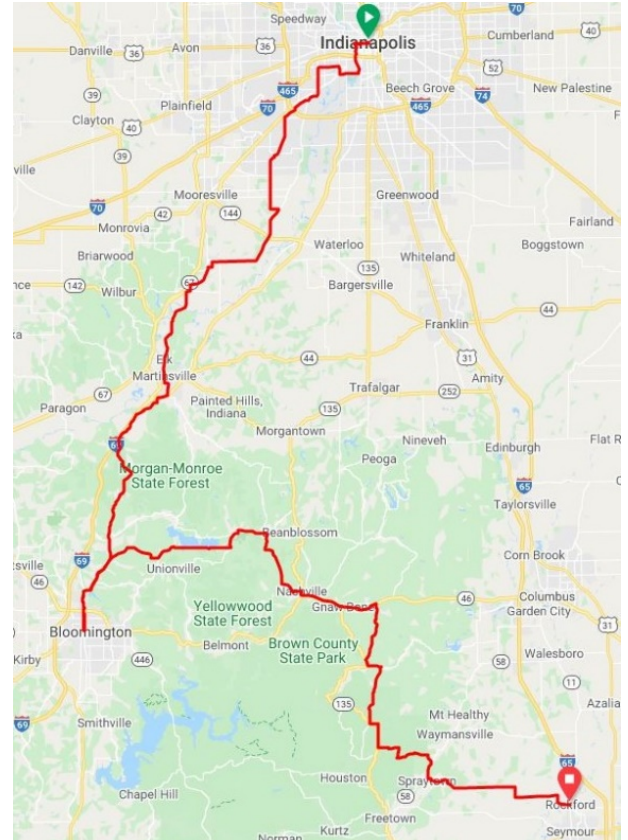
This spring, USBR 235 became a reality. USBR 235, at 122 miles, is an alternative to USBR 35 between Seymour and Indianapolis, and mostly follows scenic country roads. From the southern terminus near Seymour on State Road 11, flat terrain turns hilly as the route meanders northwest and northeast. Riders pass by Lake Lemon in Brown County en route to Nashville on S.R. 45. Riders may then take the route to bike-friendly Bloomington or head northeast to Indianapolis. Along the way to the latter, they traverse the tree-covered Morgan-Monroe State Forest on Old S.R. 37 to Martinsville, and then through Indiana farmland to White River State Park and the White River Trail in Indianapolis. After passing the Indiana State Capitol, bicyclists head to Monument Circle, where the route ends.

“With the designation of USBR 235, Indiana now boasts more than 730 miles of USBR that are part of the much larger USBR national system,” said Statewide Bicycle Pedestrian Coordinator Brandon Burgoa.

The U.S. Bicycle Route System is a national network of officially recognized and numbered bicycle routes that connect people, communities, and the nation. The system provides important recreational and transportation options for the active traveler. It also helps promote tourism and economic development, and enhances the cycling enthusiast experience. All USBRs are approved by state departments of transportation and designated by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

U.S. Bicycle Routes are intended for experienced and confident long-distance bicycle riders, generally considered touring cyclists, who are comfortable riding on roads without any special treatments for bicyclists. This group also includes utilitarian and recreational riders who are confident enough to ride on busy roadways and navigate in traffic to reach their intended destination.

Burgoa noted that, in 2012, INDOT established the three USBRs in Indiana that predate USBR 235. They are USBR 35, which stretches 381 miles from the Michigan border in LaPorte County to the Ohio River at the Big Four Bridge in Jeffersonville; USBR 36, a 59-mile route that connects Illinois and Michigan just around the bend of Lake Michigan; and USBR 50, which reaches 171 miles from the Illinois border near Terre Haute to the Ohio border in Richmond.



The route of U.S. Bicycle Route 235.

No physical infrastructure is required for USBR designation, and the designation does not imply an infrastructure investment.

“Like the other three USBRs in Indiana, USBR 235 does not physically exist and is unlikely to include dedicated on-street bicycle facilities,” said Burgoa. “They are *designated* routes and don’t require or warrant additional bicycle infrastructure. Typical USBRs are meant for seasoned bicyclists, commonly those engaging in regional bicycle tourism or cross-country travel via bicycle.”

INDOT compiles the necessary materials for filing an official designation package through AASHTO’s Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering. The application package includes a formal application or approval letter signed by the INDOT commissioner; a digital map of the route; a route log; and local resolutions of support from towns, cities, or counties.



The U.S. Bicycle Route System is meant for serious bicyclists.



“Obtaining local jurisdictional approval is one of the pillars of what makes USBRs a cherished local asset,” said Burgoa. “A lot of communities consider USBRs to be an economic and tourism development opportunity. Local and regional bicycle advocates work with communities and jurisdictional entities along a proposed route to make sure that they have input on where the route travels and that they consider it to be suitable for bicyclists.”

At that juncture, the proposed route is vetted for safety.

“Typically, we get the appropriate INDOT district offices involved with the route proposal to ensure that any state-owned facilities on the proposed route are suitable and safe for serious bicyclists,” said Burgoa. “INDOT identifies where the route proposal crosses over, under, or follows in tandem with state-owned highway facilities. INDOT examines factors such as safety statistics, lane width, shoulder availability, traffic and truck volumes, existing roadway conditions, and other factors.”

INDOT’s Technical Planning & Programming Division is in the process of formalizing the internal USBR application procedures.

“We are looking to further formalize and solidify the internal USBR approval process as well as including a public comment period with the approval procedure,” said Burgoa. “Currently, public comment is not required, but we believe that it would be beneficial during the route proposal/planning process.”

The division also plans to streamline its current web page for the USBR system in Indiana.

“The goal is to simplify important information for bicyclists; ensure that internal and external routes and maps are accurate and true to their original character; and provide a detailed list of amenities, lodging, and attractions along the routes,” said Burgoa.