



# TRANSPORTATION

8



## TRANSPORTATION

This chapter is the transportation component of Beckley's Comprehensive Plan.

It identifies the type, location, programs, goals and plans to meet the intermodal transportation needs of Beckley. It considers all modes of transportation, including parking issues and pedestrian and bicycle systems.

“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page.”

—St. Augustine

# 8.1

## INTRODUCTION

Transportation is the circulation system of a City. How easily people move within this system, and the choices they have to get from place to place impact quality of life in significant ways. Visitors similarly need to feel comfortable and safe as they navigate through unfamiliar places.

In Beckley, transportation issues have moved front and center in recent years as the Beckley Intermodal Gateway (BIG) project was planned and constructed downtown. Phase I of the BIG project was completed in mid-2012, and it represents the first phase of a two-phase master plan that will continue to support the redevelopment of Uptown Beckley with improved accessibility. Major objectives of the BIG project are to increase accessibility to transit and other non-motorized transportation choices, create



a public space for events and celebrations, improved parking and creation of sites for retail and associated uses. The cost of this project was approximately \$20 million and it was arguably among the largest public infrastructure investments in local history.

The completion of Phase I of the BIG project helps draw attention to shifting transportation perspectives. In recent years, conversations about transportation have become increasingly intermodal in nature and progressively more focused on non-motorized transportation. Indications of this trend were emerging in 2001 in the previous Comprehensive Plan when the 6.4 mile rail-trail project was being planned and subsequently built through the heart of Beckley. Today, local voices heard during the public visioning session and workshops in September/ October 2013 increasingly focused attention on the need to make Beckley a more walkable and bikeable community. The need for transit was also often raised as being important to support the needs of residents of all ages.

# 8.2

## A NEW MPO

Along with the trend toward multimodal transportation, the preparation of this transportation component must recognize that Beckley and Raleigh County are in the process of being designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). MPO's are federally-mandated and federally-funded transportation policy-making organizations.

MPO's are formed when an urbanized area reaches a population of 50,000 or more and they are made up of local government representatives and transportation authorities. Once established, federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through a local planning process that sets project priorities. The planning process that generates these priorities is sustained and ongoing among more than 300 MPO's around the nation. Two

important functions of an MPO are to maintain a long-range transportation plan (LRTP), and to develop a transportation improvement program (TIP).

The newly formed Fayette-Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization has jurisdiction over all of Fayette and Raleigh Counties. It is funded in part by fees from participating counties and municipalities, and federal/state funds. Once fully operational, the Fayette-Raleigh Metropolitan Planning Organization will begin work on the LRTP and the TIP. This work is expected to include transportation modeling and a focused effort to determine long-term transportation needs. As this substantial transportation planning effort is pending, the focus of this chapter is to draw attention to more short-term transportation needs, along with some policy-related matters that connect directly with broader community development issues.

**Federal funding for transportation projects and programs is channeled through the MPO.**

### Five Core Functions of an MPO

- Establish a setting: Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decisionmaking in the metropolitan area.
- Identify and evaluate alternative transportation improvement options: Use data and planning methods to generate and evaluate alternatives. Planning studies and evaluations are included in the Unified Planning Work Program or UPWP.
- Prepare and maintain a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): Develop and update a long-range transportation plan for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, and (3) good quality of life.
- Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): Develop a short-range (four-year) program of transportation improvements based on the long-range transportation plan; the TIP should be designed to achieve the area's goals, using spending, regulating, operating, management, and financial tools.
- Involve the public: Involve the general public and other affected constituencies in the four essential functions listed above.

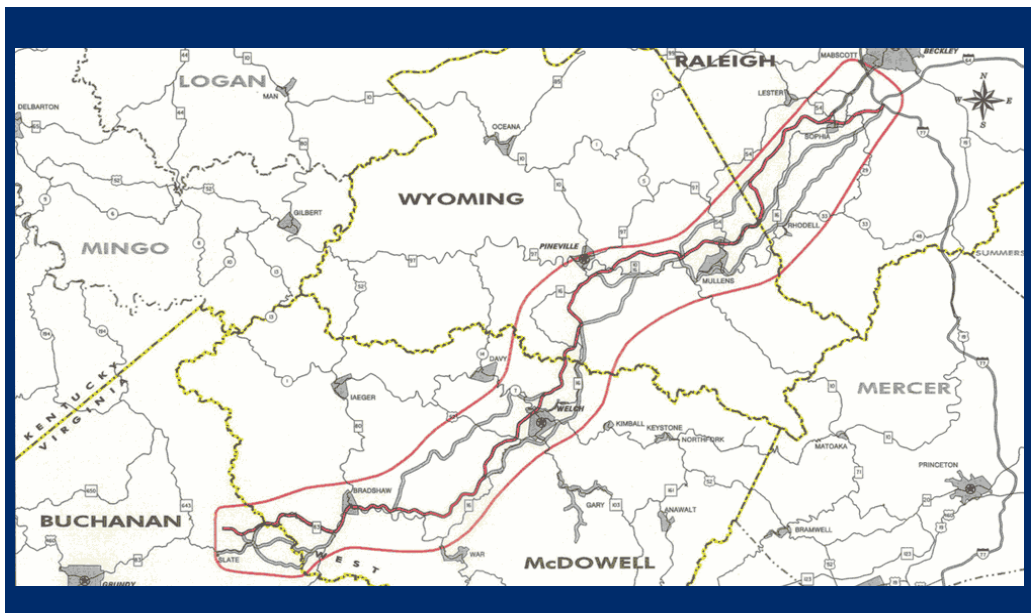
# 8.3

## VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION

### Interstate Linkages & Regional Access

Two major interstate highways connect Beckley to the larger region. I-77 (the West Virginia Turnpike) opened in 1958. It is a north-south highway located along the western edge of the City. It leads north toward Charleston, WV and Cleveland, Ohio and south toward Charlotte, NC. The primary interchange for Beckley is Route 3 (Harper Road). Interstate 64 travels east and west and connects with I-77 just south of Beckley. I-64 leads eastward toward Virginia, passing through Richmond and ultimately ending in Norfolk near the Atlantic Ocean.

Although not an interstate, the Coalfields Expressway is an ongoing project that will help connect Beckley with the larger region. Originally proposed in the 1960's, the Coalfields Expressway is a 4-lane partial access control divided highway between the WV Turnpike (I-64/77) near Beckley and Appalachian Corridor B (US 23) at Pound, VA. It is about 60 miles in length along a southwesterly alignment from the Beckley area. Construction began in 2000, and once completed, it will connect the City of Beckley with the Virginia/West Virginia state line where it intersects the Virginia alignment for the Coalfields Expressway. Currently, 6.9 miles of the Coalfields Expressway is open to traffic in Raleigh County.



Source: <http://www.coalfieldsexpressway.com/route/index.html>

### Local Arterials

- **US 19** is a major north/south route on the east side of Beckley. In Beckley, US 19 is Eisenhower Drive. North of Beckley, US 19 leads to Oak Hill, Fayetteville, and ultimately Interstate 79. To the south, US 19 connects with I-64.
- **WV Route 16** is known as Robert C. Byrd Dr. in Beckley. It follows a north-south route through the center of Beckley, joining with US 19 in the northern portion of the City. This route through the City is mostly a 4 or 5 lane road except for a short portion north of WV Route 3 and near intersections.
- **WV Route 3** is known as Harper Road in Beckley and it is one of the few east-west routes through Beckley. East of I-77, WV Route 3 is known as Harper Road near I-77, and then it changes to Neville



Robert C. Byrd Drive Looking South from Rail Trail Bridge

### Map 8-1



Street near Downtown, Fayette Street in the southeast portion of the City, and Ritter Road in the County. East of Downtown, WV Route 3 is known as Fayette Street.

- **WV Route 41** travels through the City between S. Fayette St. and Eisenhower Drive, where it is called Johnstown Road and Beaver Ave. WV Route 41 is known locally as Stanaford Road and it leads northeast out of town toward Piney View and Prince.
- **WV Route 210** is known as Kanawha Street in Beckley. It is a short route through the City connecting WV Route 16 northeast of the Downtown area with US 19 via Eisenhower Drive.
- **The East Beckley Bypass** is a new road that was built to relieve traffic congestion on Eisenhower Dr. and to open up land for development on the east side of Beckley. The East Beckley Bypass connects with an interchange at I-64 and currently terminates at Stanaford Road. The East Beckley Bypass has 5 lanes (two through lanes and a center turn lane) and bike lanes and sidewalks on both shoulders.

Other significant roads in Beckley that have been identified in prior planning efforts include the following:

- **Maxwell Hill Road/Rural Acres Drive:** These key roads connect northwest Beckley with both Robert C. Bryd Dr. and Eisenhower Dr. They also connect with Stanaford Road and thereby create an east/west route through the northern half of Beckley.
- **New River Drive/Pikeview Drive:** New River Drive was recently constructed and serves as an east-west connector along with Pikeview Drive. Pikeview Drive connects to Harper Road near the I-77 interchange. It leads north, and then connects to New River Drive and ultimately Robert C. Byrd Drive. This route provides an alternative to the Harper Road Corridor, which can be congested at peak times.



Eisenhower Drive (shown above) is among the City's busiest highways. Traffic volumes north of the area pictured (past the intersection with Robert C. Byrd Drive) exceeded 15,000 vehicles per day according to the most recent State of West Virginia traffic counts.

## 8.4

## CURRENT HIGHWAY PLANS AND KEY ISSUES

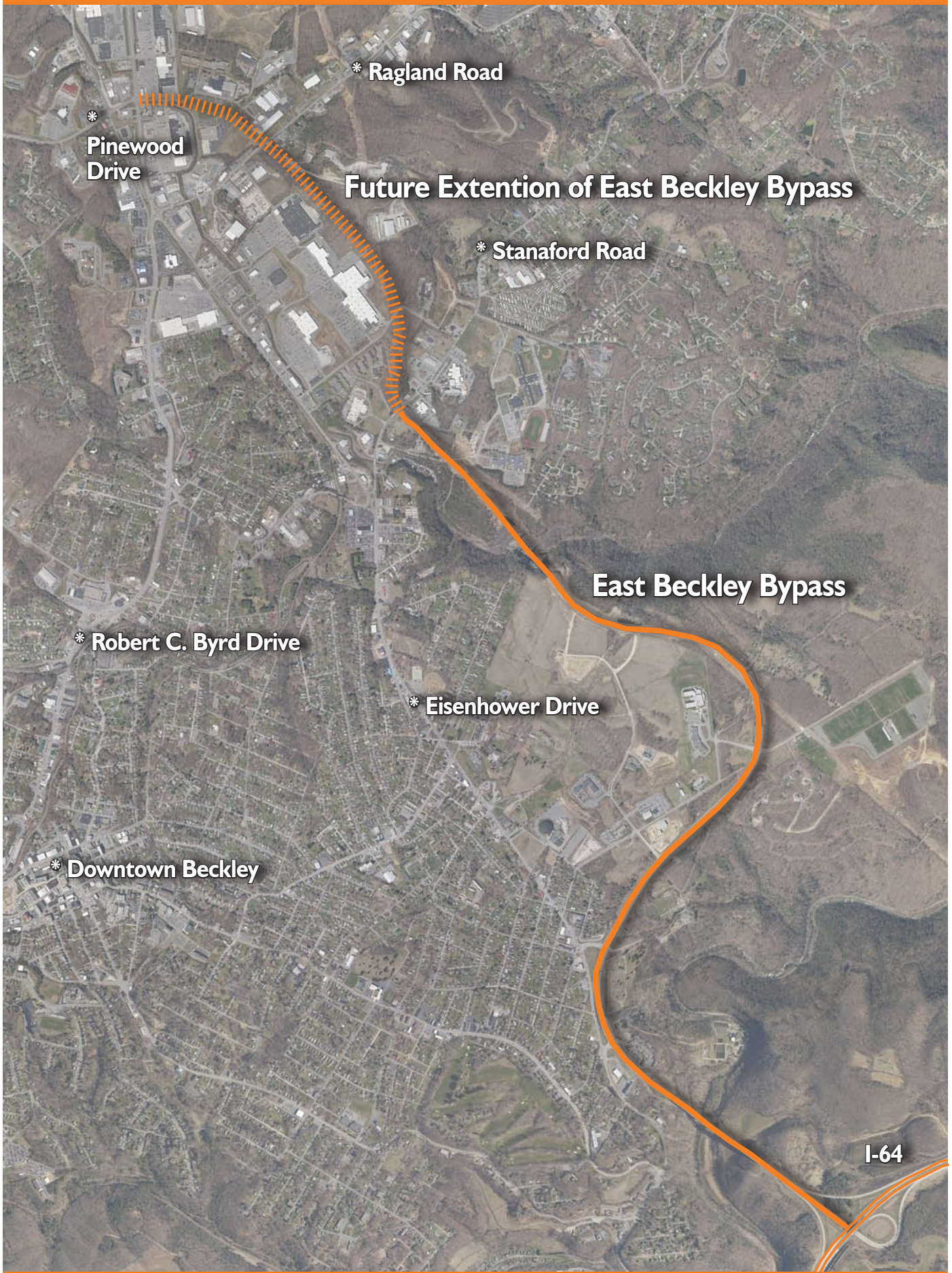
Several key transportation issues are evident in Beckley and received attention during the public visioning and planning workshops. These included the following:

- **Completion of the East Beckley Bypass.** The East Beckley Bypass now ends at Stanford Road. In the next few years (potentially as early as 2014-2015), this road will be extended northward. It will connect with Industrial Drive and the Pinewood intersection with Robert C. Byrd Drive. Completion of the East Beckley Bypass will reduce congestion on Eisenhower Drive and will greatly improve access to the eastern side of Beckley. It will also significantly add to the inventory of developable sites for economic development. This is illustrated on Map 8-2.
- **Impact of New Major Intersection at Pinewood Drive:** Completion of the East Beckley Bypass will result in the need for intersection improvements at Robert C. Byrd Dr. and Pinewood Drive. Concerns regarding changes to traffic flow patterns have been expressed as traffic flows into this area from the East Beckley Bypass. Specific concerns include the potential that traffic will continue past this new intersection and use Pinewood Drive and Maxwell Hill Road as east-west access. Maxwell Hill Road and the Maxwell Hill neighborhood are not conducive to heavy traffic flows. Careful attention to this situation is warranted as the East Beckley Bypass is completed and traffic flows are altered.



Intersection of Pinewood Drive and Robert C. Byrd Drive Near Area Where New Bypass Will Intersect.



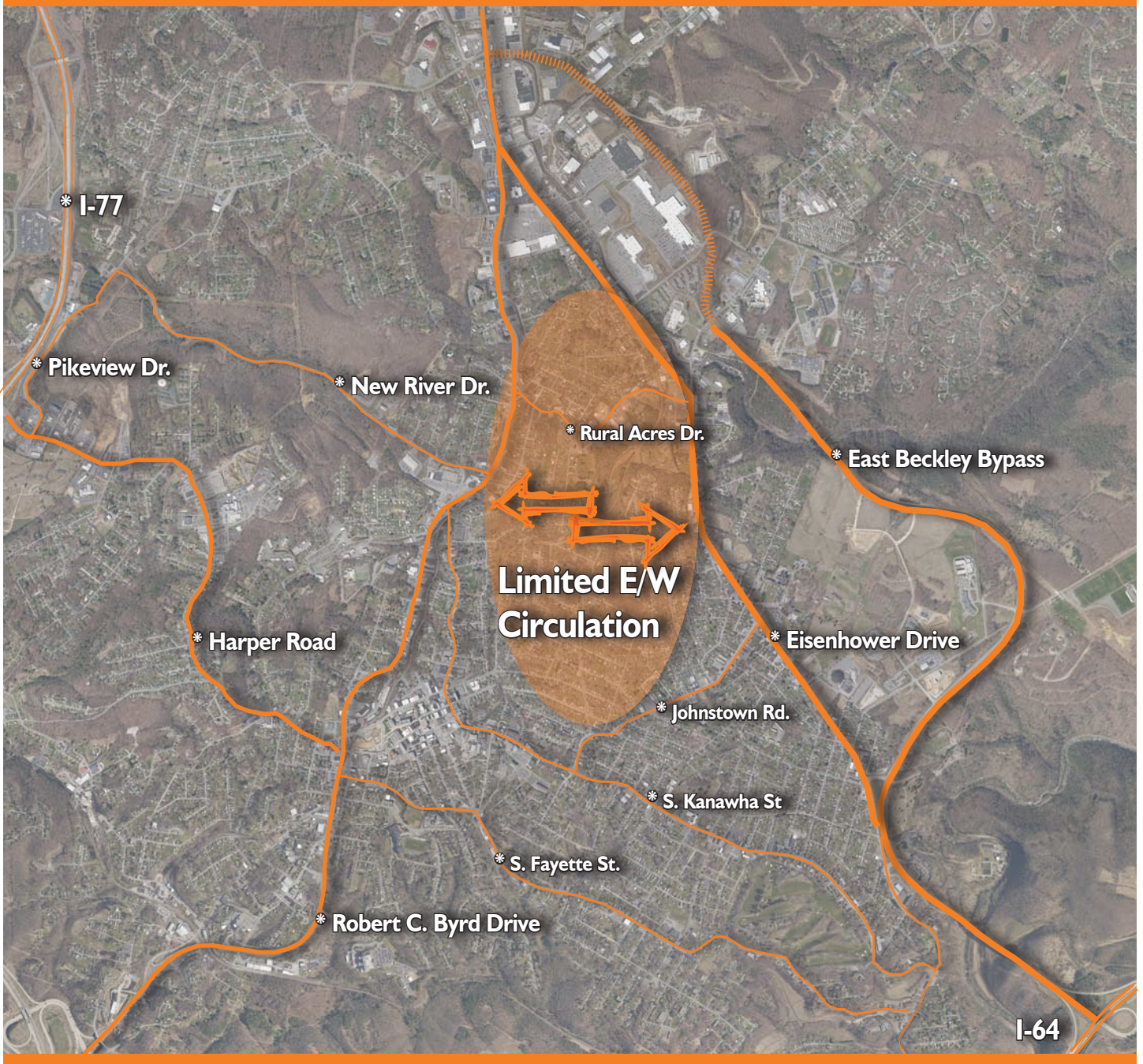


• **Improve East-West Traffic Circulation:** The completion of the East Beckley Bypass greatly aids north-south traffic flow. However, east-west traffic circulation remains a challenge due to existing development patterns and topography. Presently, Rural Acres Drive provides some relief for east-west traffic flow demand as it connects Robert C. Byrd Drive with Eisenhower Drive south of the more congested areas to the north. Traffic flow on Rural Acres Drive is limited however due to the existing road width and road geometry. Residential development along Rural Acres Drive restricts the easy ability to upgrade this road. A more complete study of alternatives (including the construction of a new road directly connecting with New River Drive) is needed to fully evaluate options, costs and potential reductions in congestion. See Map 8-3.

“In 2005, drivers lost an estimated 4.2 billion hours in delays on congested roads. The average peak-period driver nationwide was stuck in traffic for an aggravating thirty-eight hours—more than a day and a half over the course of one year. Beyond the personal cost, that lost time hurts individuals and society through decreased productivity.”

Source: [www.hamiltonproject.org](http://www.hamiltonproject.org), Policy Brief NO. 2008-05, July 2008, The Brookings Institution,

Map 8-3



- **Traffic Signal Synchronization:** There is considerable antidotal information that suggests that traffic signal timing could be improved locally. Improved signal timing would help efficient traffic movement and help make the most out of existing transportation infrastructure. Efforts in this regard require participation and involvement with West Virginia Department of Highways (WVDOT).
- **Greater Access Management:** Roads have two general functions - the movement of traffic and access to adjacent property. Interstate highways move huge volumes of traffic – but access to adjacent property is limited to interchanges spaced far apart. Local residential streets provide exceptional access to many properties – but speeds and volumes are low. Access management techniques seek to balance traffic movement with access by combining or limiting new driveways, creating access roads and various other techniques. Roadway capacity can be significantly diminished when the numbers of driveways and/or poor driveway placement create conflict points between the flow of through traffic and turning movements. Successful access management efforts help to preserve road capacity, and often involve focused efforts when development plans are presented and approved. Greater access management efforts are called for in Beckley, especially along major routes such as Harper Road, Robert C. Byrd Drive and Eisenhower Drive.
- **Problem Intersections:** A number of problem intersections are well known in Beckley. Peak hour congestion and bad sight distances are common reasons for delays and accidents. These problem intersections include those shown on Map 8-4 (while not necessarily an all-inclusive list). Potential solutions to these problems are localized and would typically require engineering studies to identify and evaluate alternative improvements and cost implications. Roundabouts should be among the alternatives considered where there is adequate room for vehicular circulation and pedestrian movement.

## WHAT IS ACCESS MANAGEMENT?

Access management is a set of techniques that state and local governments can use to control access to highways, major arterials, and other roadways. Access management includes several techniques that are designed to increase the capacity of these roads, manage congestion, and reduce crashes.

- Increasing spacing between signals and interchanges;
- Driveway location, spacing, and design;
- Use of exclusive turning lanes;
- Median treatments, including two-way left turn lanes (TWLTL) that allow turn movements in multiple directions from a center lane and raised medians that prevent movements across a roadway;
- Use of service and frontage roads; and
- Land use policies that limit right-of-way access to highways.

State, regional, and local governments across the United States use access management policies to preserve the functionality of their roadway systems. This is often done by designating an appropriate level of access control for each of a variety of facilities. Local residential roads are allowed full access, while major highways and freeways allow very little. In between are a series of road types that require standards to help ensure the free flow of traffic and minimize crashes, while still allowing access to major businesses and other land uses along a road.

Source: <http://www.accessmanagement.gov>, FHWA Document Number FHWA-OP-03-066

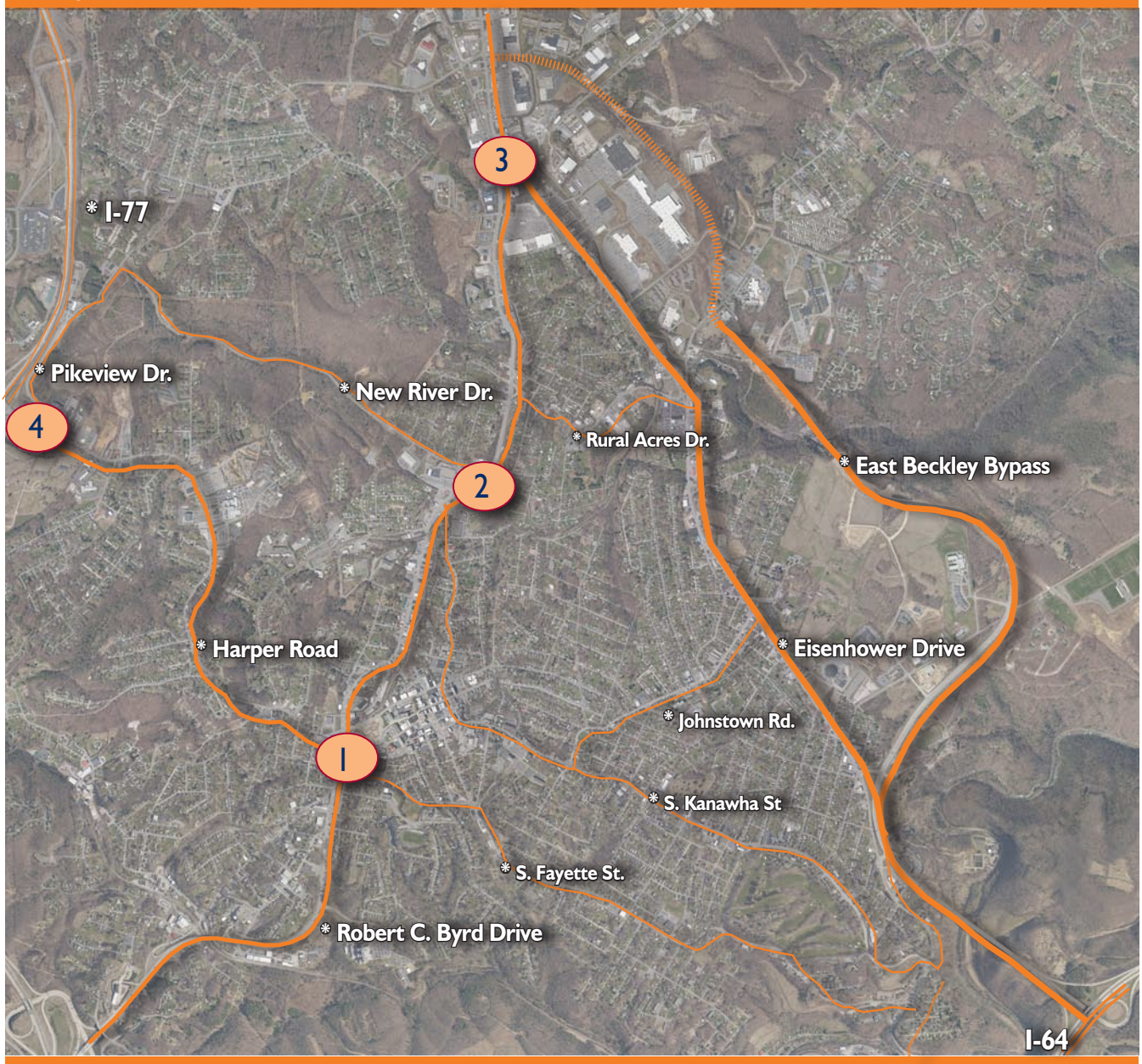
**1) Harper Road & Robert C. Byrd Dr.**

**2) New River Drive and Robert C. Byrd Dr.**

**3) Eisenhower Dr. and Robert C. Byrd Dr.:** This intersection is perhaps the most highly congested area in Beckley as it represents the connection of two of Beckley's busiest roadways. Presently, a semi-formal shortcut exists that involves motorists driving through the parking lot of Kroger, TJ Maxx and Hobby Lobby. This route helps relieve pressure on the intersection in the public right-of-way, but it is not a public street and it may not be the best long-term solution to congestion problems.

**4) Pikeview Dr. and Harper Road** (along with greater Exit 42 issues).

Map 8-4



# 8.5

## TWO-WAY TRAFFIC DOWNTOWN

Like many downtowns in the United States, Beckley's downtown includes one-way streets. The common thinking that led to converting downtown streets to one-way traffic relates to the fact that one-way traffic is more efficient at moving vehicles through an area and that it lessens congestion. In recent years, many communities have begun to re-think one-way traffic in downtown for several reasons. For example, it has been found that one-way

traffic encourages speeding and it can be more confusing for visitors. Organizations such as the National Main Street Center (a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation) now advocate for two-way downtown streets when there is adequate road width. Ideally, there is two-way traffic and on-street parking to separate pedestrians from moving vehicles. An important goal is to create a downtown environment that better serves pedestrians. This issue is explored more deeply in Chapter 15.

USA TODAY - 12/20/2006

BY MELANIE EVERSLEY, USA TODAY

### MANY CITIES CHANGING ONE-WAY STREETS BACK

More traffic will be coming to downtown Danville, Ill. — and that's how Danville wants it. The city of 33,000 is converting some of its longtime one-way streets back to two-way thoroughfares. City officials hope the change will make it easier for customers to reach downtown stores and shop in them.

"The driving force behind it is economic development," says city engineer David Schnelle, who expects to reprogram signals, change pavement markings and change signs by November 2007.

He says motorists tend to drive faster on one-way streets and go past their destinations, then lose time and patience backtracking.

Danville is one of hundreds of cities — from Berkeley, Calif., to Charleston, S.C. — switching one-way streets to two-way to improve commerce downtown, according to the American Planning Association in Chicago. The trend got rolling in the early 1990s and has expanded this year to bigger cities such as Miami, Dallas and Minneapolis. It's part of the reinvention of former industrial cities, which are converting empty factories into loft housing and trying to convince suburbanites that downtowns are livable.

"There's a lot of emphasis now on taming the automobile and emphasizing walking and biking. It's all part of creating a place that people want to be," says Marya Morris of the American Planning Association. "The bigger pieces are the major downtown housing booms and having things for people to do after 5."

# 8.6

## PEDESTRIAN AND BIKE TRAVEL

Pedestrian and bike travel are increasingly significant components of the transportation system. For many years, the public right-of-way was thought of primarily in the context of efficient vehicle movement and traffic safety. Today, growing interest in biking and walking has generated more focus on non-motorized transportation options. Increasingly, as new roads are built, they incorporate support for bike and pedestrian travel. A good local example of this is the new East Beckley Bypass, which was designed to include bike lanes on both sides of the road, along with sidewalks.

The desire to make Beckley more walkable and bikeable was a common theme in the public visioning sessions and during the focused workshops. Most notably, the need to make the Rail Trail a more functional part of the transportation system and a viable transportation alternative was explored. Some key considerations flowing from these conversations include the following:

- Create a staging area at the south end of the trail. Presently, there are no places to park a vehicle and the trail simply ends. Extending the trail southward may be possible, but it will likely require significant costs to address the need for a bridge to cross over City Ave., or some other means to address grade issues.
- Create options to develop bike trail linkages so that bike travel becomes a more viable option for getting from place to place (rather than just a recreational pursuit). As shown on Maps 8-5 and 8-6, there are many at-grade crossings where one can access the Rail Trail and use it as an alternative to vehicular travel. The locations illustrated show potential

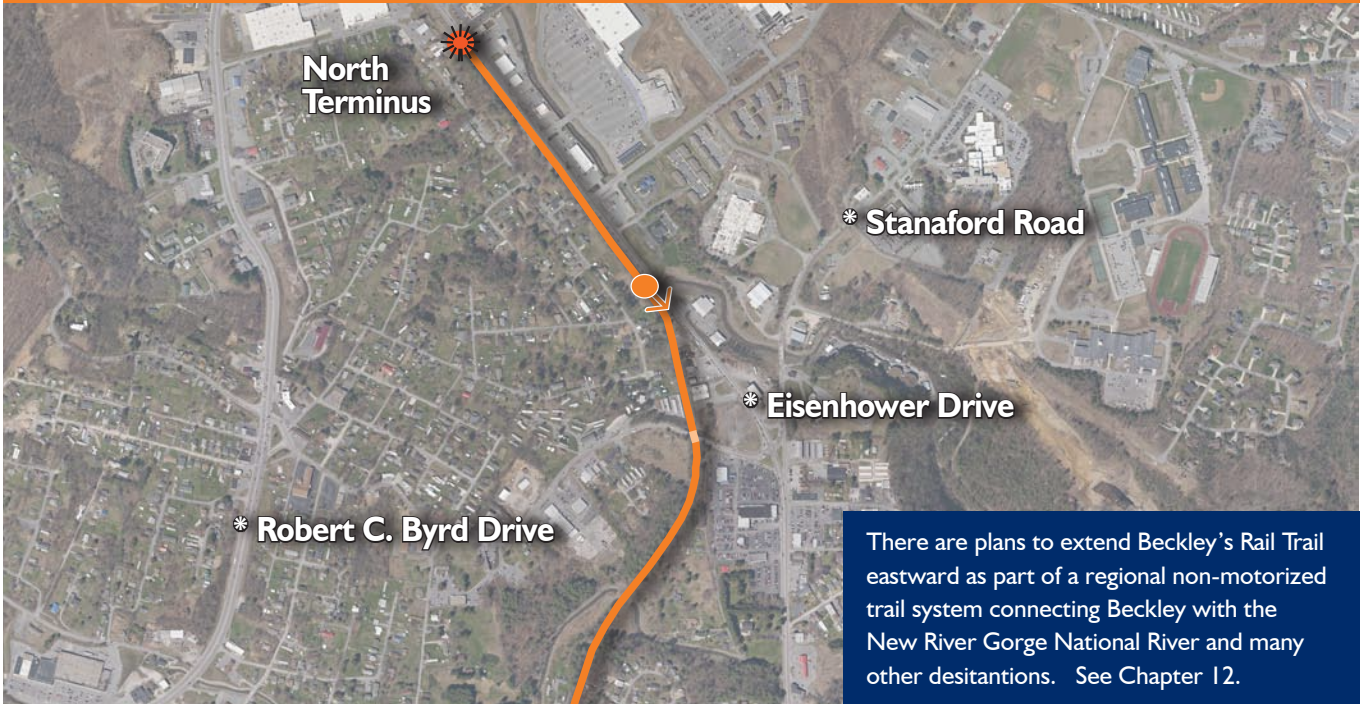
places where bike lanes can go with direct connections to the Rail Trail.

- Despite the presence of lighting all along the trail, there is a perception that public safety may not be at levels it should be. While it is difficult to gauge the significance of this, attention from Beckley Police and public safety professions is encouraged.
- Areas where the Rail Trail crosses public roads often do not include pavement markings to alert drivers of crossing bike and pedestrian activity. Some key locations include Prince Street near downtown and at N. Kanawha.

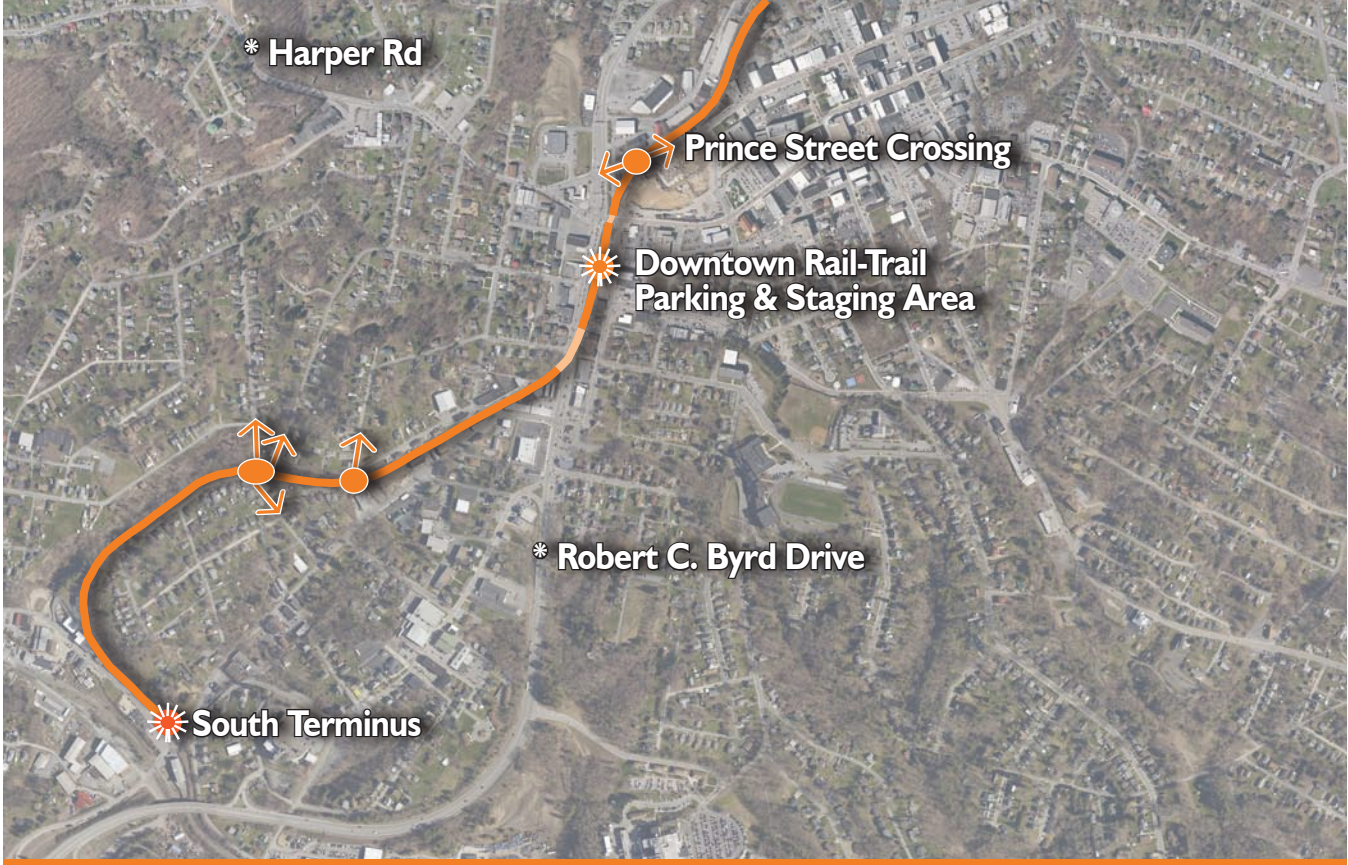


Pedestrians walking along Robert C. Byrd Drive near Rural Acres Drive. This is one of many areas that lack sidewalks—but experience pedestrian traffic.

Map 8-5



Map 8-6



Images of the Rail Trail At Various Points



# 8.7

## SIGNAGE

Roadway signage is especially important in Beckley since curving roads that follow local topography can be confusing for visitors, and it can be easy to feel lost. Beckley installed a wayfinding system following the completion of the last Comprehensive Plan. Today some improvements are suggested to enhance the functionality of this system, and these include:

- Generally enlarging the lettering of some signage to enhance readability.

- Including signage that directs people to the interstate system so they feel comfortable exploring Beckley and assured that they can easily return to the interstate.

Related to the public signage, is the need to enact better controls on private signage (billboards and commercial signage). Numbers of signs and sizes of signs clutter corridors such as Harper Road and create distractions and reduce traffic safety. A growing number of temporary signs also adds to a sense of clutter and confusion.

# 8.8

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

The City of Beckley does not have a full-scale public transit system. However, the Raleigh County Community Action Association (RCCA) operates a transit system consisting of two City and two County shuttle routes to provide transportation to the residents of Beckley and Raleigh County. All shuttle buses are ADA approved. RCCA also offers a curb-to-curb transportation service to the general public to doctor's offices, hospitals, shopping, etc. Transportation is provided by appointment only.

The need for a local transit system in Beckley has been studied in the past. As far back as 1995, The Beckley Transit Feasibility Study Update was commissioned by the State of West Virginia Public Transportation Division and the City of Beckley. This study identified the need for transit services for the

disadvantaged and the need for a transit system to help address traffic congestion. Today, transit needs continue to exist in the minds of local leaders and a new transit study is needed – especially in light of the completion of the BIG project downtown. The need for a local transit system was also expressed in local visioning sessions and planning workshops conducted as part of the development of this Comprehensive Plan. Going forward, the following actions and initiatives are proposed:

- Complete a new study of transit needs and implement recommended solutions using the BIG project as a hub.
- Encourage the Greyhound station to utilize the BIG project.
- Coordinate transit issues with the RCCA.

# 8.9

## PARKING

Parking issues are most acute downtown as most other areas in Beckley have free off-street parking. In the mid- 2000's and before the construction of the BIG project, a parking study was done for downtown. This study was comprehensive and inclusive, but it is

dated and obsolete because of the passage of time and because the BIG project has impacted downtown parking supply and demand in significant ways. An updated parking study is needed to fully appreciate downtown parking needs as they exist today.

## 8.10

**COMPLETE STREETS**

The subject of Complete Streets was introduced in Chapter 5 as a concept that is both growing in popularity and relevant to Beckley. In essence it centers on the concept that streets are an important part of community livability, and that they should be designed to for multiple modes of transportation. Historically, streets have been designed for motorized vehicles exclusively, and often ignore the needs of the bicyclist, pedestrian, wheelchair user or transit rider. In our earlier history, most streets were designed to be walkable and bikeable. However in more recent decades, streets have been

designed with the singular goal of smooth and efficient vehicular traffic flow, and they became wider and more dangerous for other users of the public right-of-way.

In Beckley, multiple conversations during the planning process included issues related to Complete Streets and goals and policies expressed later support incorporating Complete Streets principles in future local road improvement projects. In a few cases, some Complete Streets could be accomplished easily and at low cost with some minimal engineering, planning and some paint.



Several corridors in Beckley are candidates for inexpensive Complete Streets projects. The photos above are along S. Kanawha where excess pavement creates opportunity to re-stripe vehicle lanes and allow for bike lanes.

## 8.11

**AIRPORT**

While the Raleigh County Airport is not located in Beckley, it still represents an important part of the local transportation system. This facility has become perhaps even more significant with the establishment of the Summit Bechtel Reserve to the north. According to the New River Gorge Regional

Economic Development Authority, Boy Scout leaders are very interested in ensuring that the Raleigh County Airport is improved, and this topic is specifically mentioned in the Vision 2025 Strategic Plan for the New River Gorge Regional Economic Development Authority.

## 8.12

**RAIL**

Active rail lines in the Beckley area are owned by CSX Transportation (CSXT). The locations of these lines are shown to the right.



Source: CSX