



East Coast Greenway Route Selection Guidelines

12/12/06

Route Vision

The goal of the East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) is to establish a safe *traffic free* pathway for muscle-powered users of all abilities as a connection between our eastern seaboard cities.

Making this route off-road is the highest priority, although it is understood that this is a long-term reality. In the shorter range, the route will include many on-road sections, much like the Appalachian Trail did for decades. With a premium put on this route being traffic-free, a more circuitous route that is off-road is preferred to a shorter route that is on-road.

The ECG is above all an urban trail system. That is, it is less a “coastal” route than an urban connector. This route *must* go through the 25 major cities that the ECGA has identified as essential destinations along this route.¹ It should also link in smaller urban centers and towns. Going to the heart of the city or town is also part of the ECG vision.

This route should be chosen for its varied and interesting landscape and for what it accesses including key points of interest, transit hubs and user services and amenities. Again, in choosing a route one that incorporates these qualities is preferred, even if it is more circuitous. It should--

- Pass through a varied range of built landscapes including residential (urban, suburban, small town), commercial, and industrial areas
- Include a variety of natural landscapes including rivers and lakes, coastal beaches, wetlands, farmland, forested areas, and public parks and open spaces
- Access key transportation nodes, such as transit, train and bus stations and airports.
- Bring the traveler to or near points of interest that a tourist will want to visit or which showcase the history, architecture, culture and natural features along the route.

The route should provide amenities and services that multi-day users will need. These amenities include (but are not limited to) overnight accommodations (hostels, camp sites, B&B's and hotels), restaurants, food stores, convenience stores, bike repair shops, emergency health services, telephones, picnic areas and benches, drinking water, public restrooms, and public libraries for Internet access.

Who is the target user audience for the ECG?

East Coast Greenway users will include walkers, cyclists, wheelchair users, equestrians, skaters and skiers. However, initially, to get a route established, the focus will be on accommodating walkers and touring cyclists, and the other users only when it is feasible. Providing for a route that serves these other users, with their more challenging requirements, remains our ultimate goal but will come about incrementally.

* Calais, ME; Bangor, ME; Portland, ME; Portsmouth, NH; Boston, MA; Providence, RI; Hartford, CT; New Haven, CT; New York City, NY; Jersey City, NJ; Newark, NJ; Trenton, NJ; Philadelphia, PA; Wilmington, DE; Baltimore, MD; Annapolis, MD; Washington, DC; Richmond, VA; Raleigh, NC; Wilmington, NC; Charleston, SC; Savannah, GA; Jacksonville, FL; Miami, FL; Key West, FL

The Greenway will serve users of all abilities—children, families, the elderly, and the disabled including wheelchair users. Avid cyclists who seek speed will not find the Greenway to be their preferred route. Rather, it will cater to those who seek a relatively unchallenging, leisurely, safe, and pleasant outdoor travel or recreational experience. (Due to its location in the coastal plain, and because much of it uses canal towpaths and rail corridors, it will be a relatively flat route.)

Time Frame for Implementation

The short-term goal is to make a Continuous Route from Calais, Maine to Key West available to the public. The continuous route links completed Permanent Trail with Interim (on road) Route. It is the current priority to get this route defined, cue-sheeted, mapped² and signed, so that by the end of 2007 people can **cycle or walk from Calais to Key West**. However, traveling this route will involve some challenges, since large portions are on road, and at times these roads are busy with traffic. Most likely, use of this “interim” route will be mainly by experienced bicyclists and some hearty walkers. It is not being targeted to the ECGA’s core user population that includes people of all abilities. Only the completed trail segments are being marketed to those users.

Our longer-term goal is to move much of the on-road route off-road. We aim to complete 80% of the off-road permanent route where 80% of the people live by 2010.

This is a long-term project. Full consideration will be given to routing possibilities that may take a decade or even several decades to achieve if they can help meet the goal of being off-road. *The highest priority is to maximize the percent of this route that is off-road.*

Permanent Route Criteria

- **Off road.** Traffic-free.
- **Firm surface.** Easily navigated by a touring bicycle or a wheelchair; may be paved or a fine stone dust surface or other natural surface that a touring bicycle can easily and comfortably navigate.
- **Publicly accessible,** Open and free for public use from dawn to dusk every day of the year. In a few areas we will need to incorporate fee-charging ferry service but we seek crossings that minimize the cost and provide frequent service. And possibly, short sections of bicycle-accessible transit will be needed to achieve key water or other crossings.
- **Width requirements for the trail tread.** The aim generally is for a 12 foot wide pathway but that may not always be achieved initially. In the more rural areas, where use may be lower, a narrower tread may suffice. Over time, increasing use will lead the public to demand increased path width *as needed*.
- **Avoid steep grades and steps that prohibit wheelchair access and make bicycle access difficult.**
- **Avoid areas that are unpleasant or uninteresting** in favor of route that is pleasant, varied and scenic.

² ECGA is currently planning to develop detailed maps of the permanent and interim routes using Google Earth maps.

Interim On-road Route Criteria

- **Serves as a direct link between existing off-road ECG trail segments.** (Proximity to proposed permanent off-road trail should be a consideration in order to make it easy to add completed trail to the continuous route)
- **Safe route for cyclists with average skill.**
 - Priority is given to streets with low and-or slow moving traffic and with marked bike lanes.
 - Streets with wide shoulders are a secondary priority along with streets with no shoulders but *very low* traffic.
 - Preference given to streets that are well maintained (good surface and no debris).
 - Preference given to streets that have well-marked, safe intersection treatments for pedestrians and other users.
 - Avoid hilly routes, especially those with steep grades
- **Parallel walking route available.** (sidewalks or footpaths open to public use)
- **The most pleasant and interesting route to walk or cycle, as well as the safest.** Getting “there” quickly is less important than the quality and safety of the experience. Avoid roads that tend to be major traffic corridors, or those that carry heavy truck traffic. State highways may have generous shoulders but often also have heavy traffic and may be designated truck routes.
- **A route that accesses services and points of interest.** Aim to avoid any roads, which tend to be major traffic corridors, or those, which carry heavy truck traffic.