

WEST VIRGINIA HIGHWAYS

Classification Systems, Characteristics and Usage

The Jurisdictional System

Except for minor amounts of federal highway mileage under the jurisdiction of the US Forest Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Park Service, practically all public roads and streets in West Virginia are under the jurisdiction of State and local governments. A number of miles of public roadway existed that were not under the jurisdiction of any specific governing body. The origin of these roads, known as "orphan roads," may be traced to the Tax Limitation Amendment of 1932, passed during the Great Depression, which limited the amount of funds that might be raised from local property taxes to such a degree that the counties throughout the State would be unable to finance the construction and maintenance of local roads. The following year, the West Virginia Legislature mandated that practically all roads be incorporated into the State road system and the counties relieved of the responsibility for their upkeep, although each county court was required at that time to furnish an inventory of all its county-district roads to the State Road Commission (now the Division of Highways). Due to the fact that many roads and bridges then in existence were not considered by the counties to be part of the county-district system, these facilities were not incorporated into the State road system, and became known as orphan roads. Since that time, other roads have been placed in public use without being added to the State road system; these roads also became orphan roads. Roads used by the traveling public that are not under the jurisdiction of federal, State or municipal agencies, that were not transferred by the various counties to the State Road Commission in 1933, and have not been added to the State road system by official action of the Division of Highways, generally compose the orphan road system.

The Orphan Road Program, also known as the Home Access Roads Program (HARP) was put into effect in April 1998. Through this program, orphan roads are included into the state highway system for basic maintenance. Since June 1998, 4,869 roads have been added to the state system, including 1,591 to the State Local Service (SLS) system, and 3,268 orphan roads to the HARP system. The added orphan roads total 777.6 miles. (See Table 2.1)

As previously mentioned the 1933 Legislature relieved the counties of the responsibility of maintaining roads. Although some counties own and maintain a small number of bridges in the State, West Virginia is one of only four states (Delaware, North Carolina, and Virginia are the others) in which there is no county and/or township ownership of highways. As a result, the West Virginia Department of Transportation

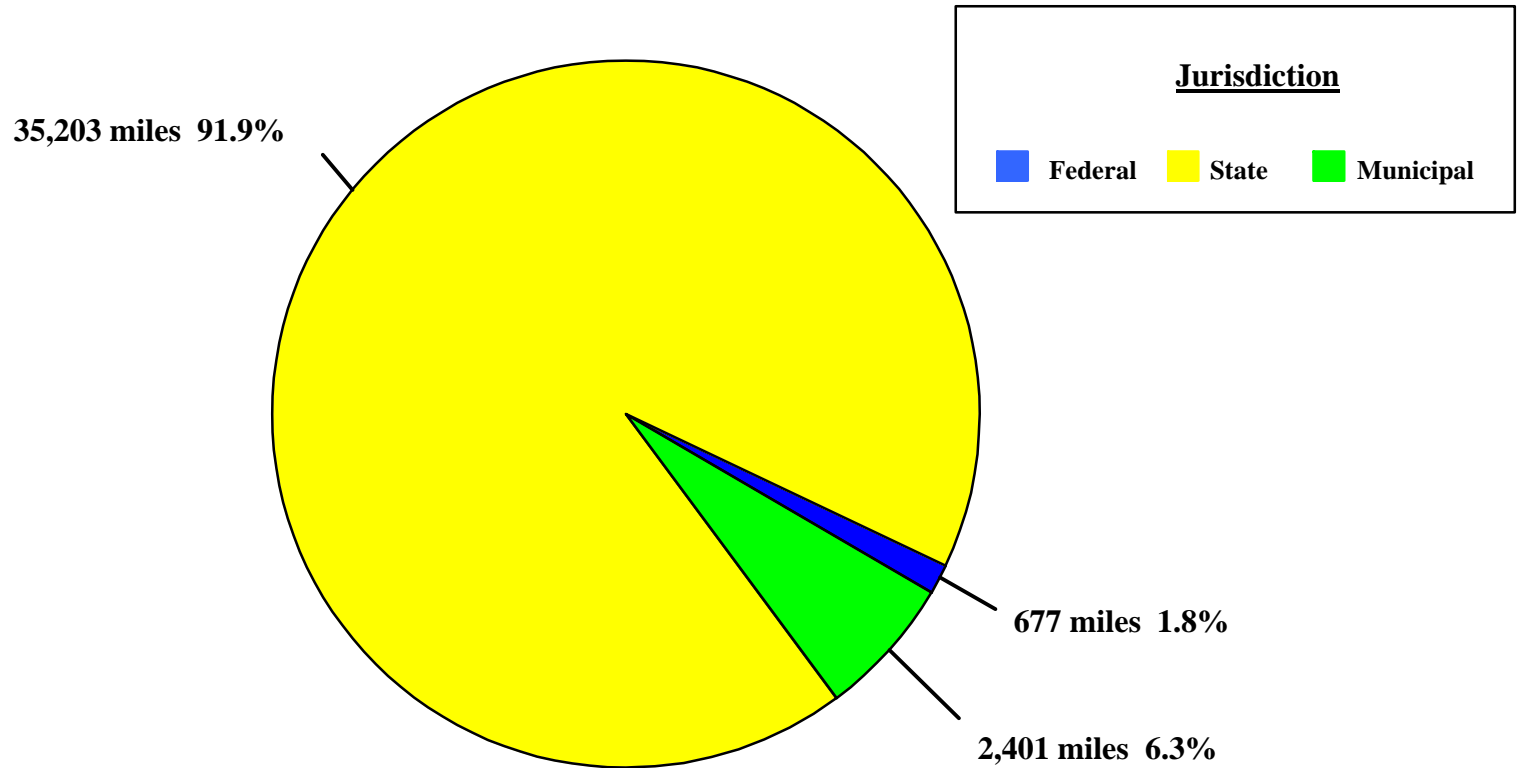
(WVDOT) is responsible for more than 91 percent (see Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2) of all public highway mileage in the State—the highest such percentage in the nation.

TABLE 2.1
Additions to State Road System: June 1998 to July 2000

County	Number of orphan roads	Length of orphan roads (in miles)	State Local Service Roads	Total number of roads
Barbour	17	3.8	14	31
Berkeley	267	73.1	10	277
Boone	62	12.1	28	90
Braxton	6	3.5	5	11
Brooke	59	11.4	89	148
Cabell	44	12.8	59	103
Calhoun	2	0.6	10	12
Clay	2	0.4	0	2
Doddridge	3	0.8	2	5
Fayette	62	10.2	42	104
Gilmer	5	1.9	9	14
Grant	26	8.5	9	35
Greenbrier	31	8.2	66	97
Hampshire	42	18.6	2	44
Hancock	21	3.8	10	31
Hardy	34	12.3	4	38
Harrison	149	24.5	39	188
Jackson	63	14.6	16	79
Jefferson	239	64.0	3	242
Kanawha	122	25.3	174	296
Lewis	33	8.8	5	38
Lincoln	28	12.0	39	67
Logan	46	9.4	103	149
Marion	141	26.4	24	165
Marshall	26	6.7	25	51
Mason	11	2.5	17	28
McDowell	244	57.5	105	349
Mercer	311	68.2	61	372
Mineral	54	21.6	3	57
Mingo	29	7.0	71	100
Monongalia	121	23.3	11	132
Monroe	11	4.1	9	20
Morgan	60	23.1	20	80
Nicholas	26	8.5	34	60
Ohio	23	7.0	4	27
Pendleton	4	1.3	21	25
Pleasants	2	0.2	0	2
Pocahontas	21	8.8	22	43
Preston	72	18.4	7	79
Putnam	23	6.8	35	58
Raleigh	244	46.7	99	343
Randolph	23	6.5	52	85
Ritchie	13	3.4	34	47
Roane	28	9.0	4	32
Summers	20	4.7	14	34
Taylor	30	5.5	27	57
Tucker	6	1.5	12	18
Tyler	6	0.9	9	15
Upshur	16	5.0	2	18
Wayne	33	8.1	59	92
Webster	16	4.9	12	28
Wetzel	3	0.4	4	7
Wirt	48	7.2	3	51
Wood	112	22.8	43	155
Wyoming	128	19.0	10	138
TOTAL	3,268	777.6	1,591	4,869

SOURCE: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Charleston, WV: 2000.

Figure 2.1
West Virginia Highways by Jurisdiction
As of June 30, 2000



Source: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Planning and Research Division, Roadway Records and Statistics Section.
PR-528- Summary of Existing State and Local Roads and Streets. Charleston, WV: 2000

TABLE 2.2
West Virginia Highways: Jurisdictional System
As of June 30, 2000

AGENCY WITH JURISDICTION	RURAL MILEAGE	URBAN MILEAGE	TOTAL PUBLIC HIGHWAY MILEAGE	PERCENT OF STATE TOTAL
US Forest Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service	677	0	677	1.8%
WV Department of Transportation <i>Division of Highways</i>	33,673	1,443	35,116	91.7%
WV Department of Transportation <i>Parkways, Economic Development and Tourism Authority</i>	72	15	87	0.2%
Municipalities	966	1,435	2,401	6.3%
TOTAL	35,388	2,893	38,281	100.0%

SOURCE: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Planning and Research Division, Roadway Records and Statistics Section. PR528 – *Summary of Existing State and Local Roads and Streets*. Charleston, WV:2000.