

# ***WEST VIRGINIA HIGHWAYS***

## **Classification Systems, Characteristics and Usage**

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### **The Appalachian Development Highway System**

The slow economic development of the Appalachian region may be attributed to the region's lack of adequate transportation. Historically, the region's rugged, mountainous terrain has caused road construction to be an expensive undertaking. To minimize the cost, roads were built to follow the region's topography, resulting in a highway system of winding roads following stream valleys and troughs between mountains, characterized by low travel speeds and long travel distances. The terrain profoundly discouraged commerce and industrial development within the region, caused construction of major transportation routes to bypass Appalachia, and severely limited the size of available labor pools. With very few exceptions, Appalachian communities were not able to compete for large employers, due to poor access to national markets. Modest economic recessions in 1953 and 1958 also resulted in the loss of several thousand jobs within the region.

In 1960, the governors of eight Appalachian states (Alabama, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia) formed the Conference of Appalachian Governors (CAG), in an effort to raise the region to the levels of prosperity enjoyed by other regions of the United States. To accomplish this task, the CAG determined specifics the region needed to become more competitive nationally, such as improvements in access and infrastructure, the formation of a comprehensive, region-wide agency to redevelop the region, and flexible matching formulas. As a result, President John F. Kennedy established a special study commission, coordinated by the US Department of Commerce, to examine the needs of Appalachia. This commission, known as the President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC), identified areas with high growth potential to receive priority attention and established the routing of new highways, designated as "corridors," to be constructed to near-Interstate standards. Following the expansion of the PARC to include five other Appalachian states (Georgia, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, and South Carolina), President Lyndon B. Johnson supported a bill creating the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the Appalachian Regional Development Act of 1965 was subsequently passed by the US Congress. The purpose of this Act was to provide a highway system (with local access roads) which, in conjunction with the Interstate System and other federal-aid highways in the region, would provide service to Appalachian areas with development potential where commerce and communication had been inhibited by a lack of adequate access. This Act is especially noteworthy because it marks one of the few times the federal government has designated a specific geographic area for special funding to enhance its economy (the Tennessee Valley Authority is another notable example).

Although transportation oriented, the Appalachian Development Highway Program has historically been viewed from the federal level as a socio-economic program intended to benefit the entire country. For this reason, the Program always has been funded from the federal General Fund, rather than the Highway Trust Fund. This funding has allowed the construction of a network of Appalachian Development Highways, each with unique letter designations, throughout the thirteen states within the Appalachian Region (see map located at the end of this section). These high-speed, multi-lane, partially controlled access highways have provided service to hospitals, businesses, homes, markets and many other amenities that were previously inaccessible. This program has greatly benefited West Virginia (the only state located entirely within the Appalachian boundary defined by the US Congress) by allocating the State over \$1 billion in federal funds (23% of the national total) for the development of the Appalachian Highway System. West Virginia's Appalachian Corridor System mileage is depicted in Table 2.8 and Figure 2.7.

**TABLE 2.8**  
**West Virginia Highways**  
**Under WVDOT Jurisdiction:**  
**Appalachian Development Highways System**  
**As of June 30, 2000**

CORRIDOR	RURAL MILEAGE	URBAN MILEAGE	TOTAL MILEAGE
D*	65.63	11.59	77.22
E**	32.73	2.20	34.93
G	78.85	7.28	86.13
H***	140.99	2.90	143.89
L	66.34	3.51	69.85
Q	20.73	6.34	27.07
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>405.27</b>	<b>33.82</b>	<b>439.09</b>

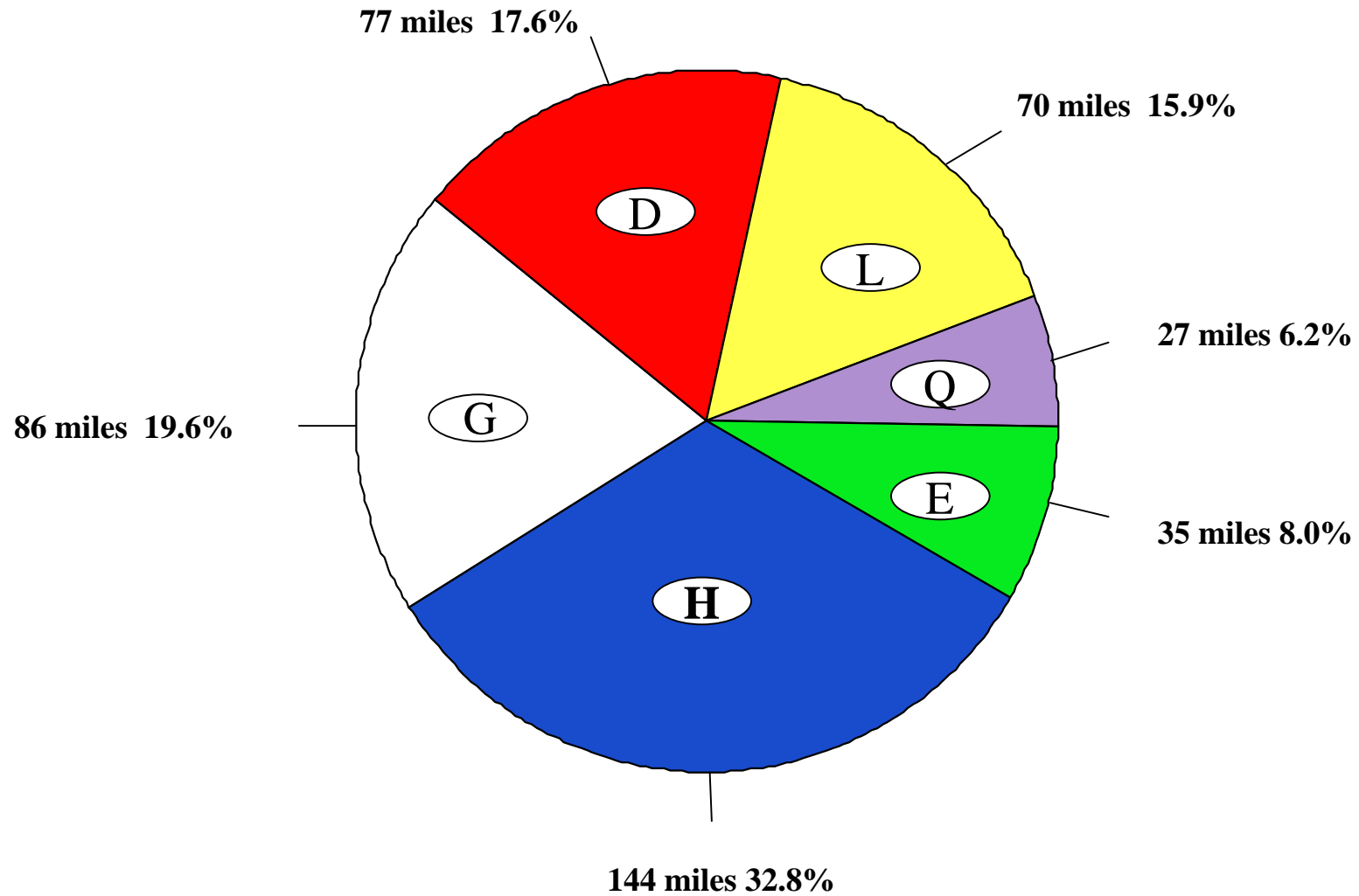
\* Mileage is associated with existing traveled way. Proposed route in Wood County will be new location.

\*\* Corridor E was redesignated (from US 48) to I-68 in 1991. The mileage is not included in the Interstate apportionment funding formula.

\*\*\* Mileage is associated with existing traveled way. Proposed route in Hardy and Grant Counties will be new location. Since the proposed route for Hardy and Grant Counties currently has no route designation, mileage for these counties is based on Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting data.

SOURCE: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Planning and Research Division, Intermodal and Special Projects Section. *West Virginia National Highway System Report*. Charleston, WV:2000.

Figure 2.7  
**West Virginia Appalachian Development Highway System  
As of June 30, 2000**



SOURCE: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Planning and Research Division, Traffic Analysis Section.  
*West Virginia Traffic Count File Summary Tables*. Charleston, WV:2000.