

Summary Document



Division of
Bicycle &
Pedestrian
Transportation



Purpose



The High Country Regional Bike Plan was developed to increase safety, mobility, and recognition of cycling in the High Country region (Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey Counties). While the region has a significant number of recreational cyclists and organized events, major infrastructure improvements are needed to increase safety and make cycling a viable transportation option for the intermediate cyclist.

The High Country Regional Bike Plan intends to complement existing State, County, and Municipal plans by making specific regional-level recommendations for bicycle facility projects. The plan identifies a network of routes that connect municipalities and other destinations within the High Country region. The route network also includes connections to destinations and other bike routes outside the High Country region. In addition to identifying the route network, the Plan makes recommendations for facility improvements, and sets priorities for the improvements.

Process

The Plan was developed under the supervision of a Steering Committee appointed by the seven Boards of County Commissioners. The Steering Committee also included North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) staff. Additional input on the Plan was provided by Town and County Planning staff, local cyclists, and the general public. Public input was gathered from over 1,000 survey responses and comments at 17 meetings. Recommendations in the plan were developed using a variety of inputs, including analysis of existing roadway data; analysis of existing roadway conditions; analysis of existing transportation plans; research of the economic impact of cycling; research of best practices regarding cyclist education; interviews with transit providers in the region; and a survey of law enforcement agencies in the region.

The Plan was adopted by the seven High Country Counties, the Town of Boone, the High Country Council of Governments, and the High Country RPO.

Recommendations



The High Country Regional Bike Plan has two major components. It makes specific facility improvement recommendations for a Bicycle Transportation Route Network that connects the Towns and other major destinations in the region. It also recommends the establishment of seven Recreational Routes designed for tourism promotion. Additional recommendations regarding Enforcement, Education, Transit Interface, Economic Impact from Cycling, and Policies are included in the Plan.

Bicycle Transportation Facility Improvements

The Bicycle Transportation Route Network identified in the Plan includes 620 miles of NCDOT road, Blue Ridge Parkway, and existing and proposed Greenway trails. The network is divided into 46 segments. The Plan includes a map, recommended improvement, and prioritization of each route segment. Recommended improvements are based on guidelines developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and include bike lanes, wide shoulders, and off-road paths. The Plan also identifies areas where no facility improvement is warranted/feasible due to development constraints and speed limits.

This Summary Document includes a map of the recommended facility improvements at the County level, and a map of improvement priorities at the region level.

Recreational Routes



One Recreational Route was developed in each County. With recommended wayfinding signs and promotion strategies, the Recreational Routes are intended to take advantage of the economic impact from bicycle tourism. In addition to the Recreational Routes, there are many organized cycling events (rides and races) in the High Country region that can be promoted to increase tourism spending. Based on various studies, the average cycling event participant spends between \$260 and \$495 per day.

This Summary Document includes a map of the recommended recreational routes at the region level. The full Plan includes a map of each of the seven routes, elevation profiles of the routes, and a map showing location of recommended wayfinding signage for each route.

Additional Recommendations

In addition to the Bicycle Transportation Route recommendations and establishment of the seven Recreational Routes, the High Country Regional Bike Plan recommends strategies in the areas of enforcement, transit, economic development, education, and land-use policies. Accommodation of bicycles on transit vehicles can help make cycling a feasible transportation option. It is recommended that all seven County transit agencies operating in the region continue or begin to transport bicycles on their vans and buses. Recommendations regarding education and enforcement focus on educating law enforcement officers, cyclists, and motorists on current NC traffic laws related to bicycles. Recommended land-use policies are intended to improve access for cyclists during new land development through requirements in local zoning and subdivision regulations.

Implementation

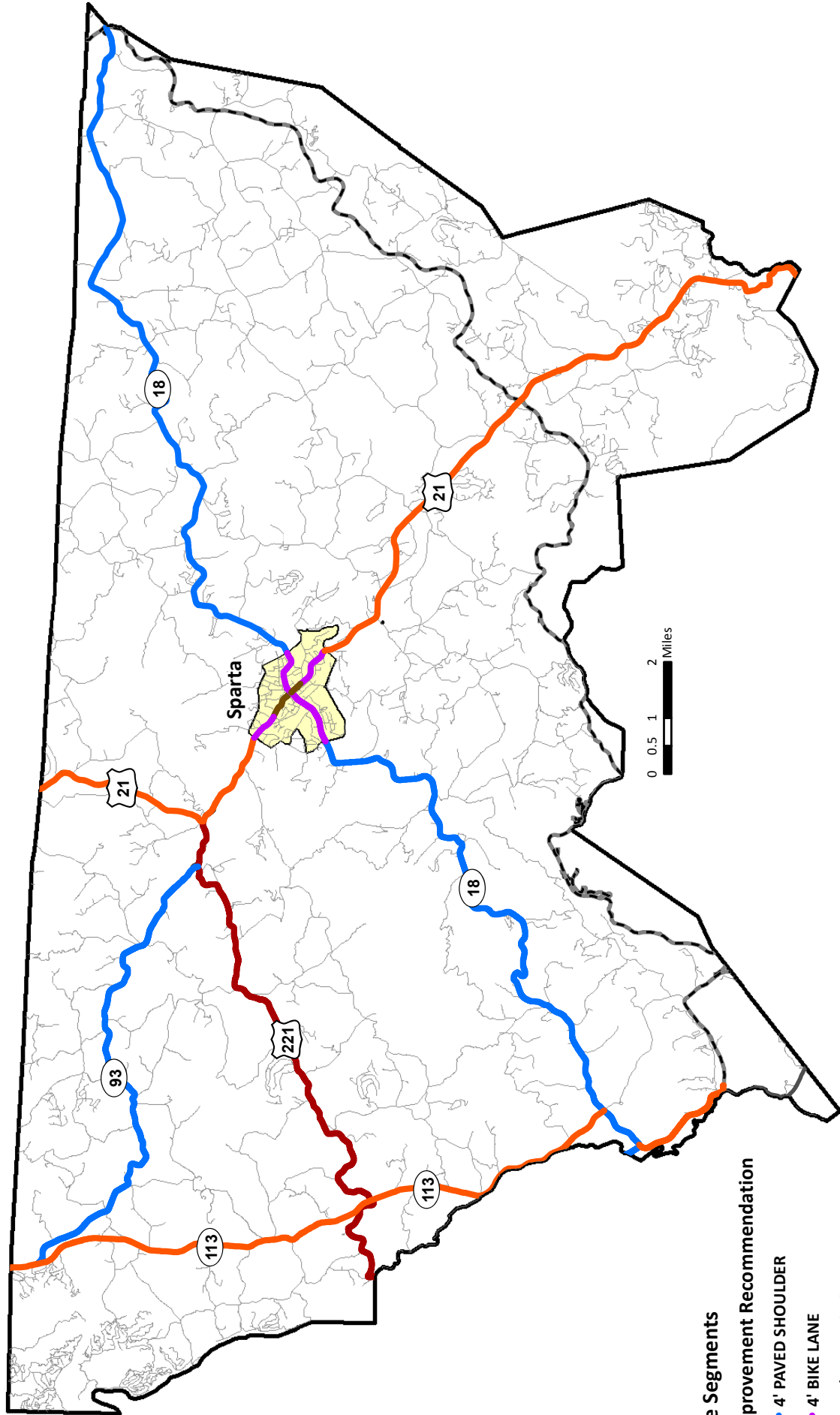
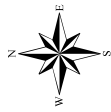


Implementation of the High Country Regional Bike Plan include short-term and long-term strategies.

Establishment, signing, and promotion of the Recreational Routes can occur quickly. Promotion of the Recreational Routes and existing cycling events will be a function of local governments, Chambers of Commerce, bike clubs, and event organizers. Education on cycling laws can also be accomplished locally, primarily through the High Country Rural Planning Organization (RPO).

Implementation of the Bicycle Transportation Route recommendations will be long-term. It is anticipated that most bicycle facility improvements (bike lanes, wide shoulders) will occur as part of larger highway projects. Programming of those improvements will require coordination among local governments, High Country RPO, and NCDOT.

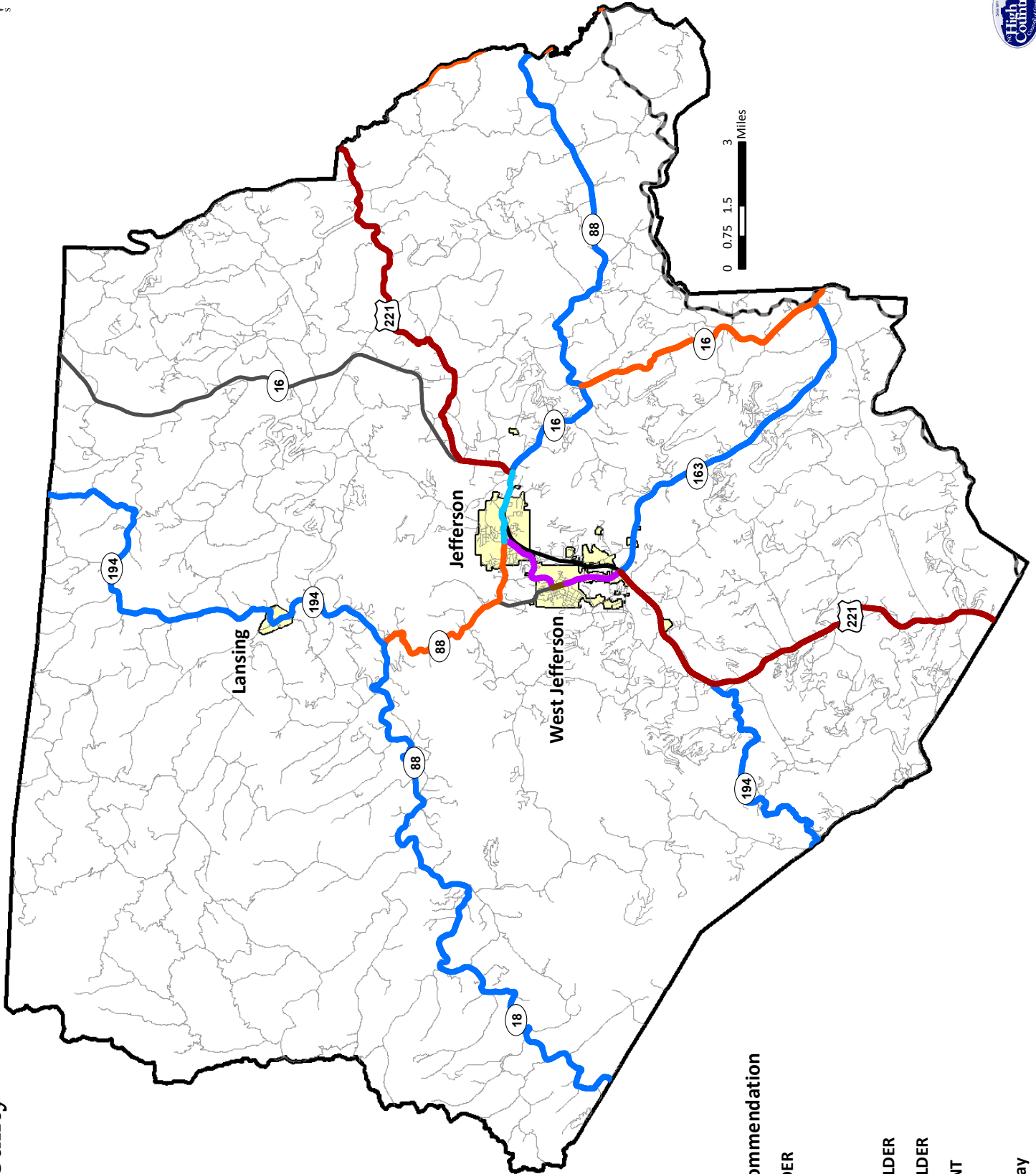
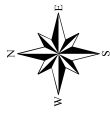
High Country Regional Bike Plan Allegheny County



- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation
 - █ 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - █ 4' BIKE LANE
 - █ 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
 - █ 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
 - █ NO IMPROVEMENT
 - Blue Ridge Parkway



High Country Regional Bike Plan Ashe County

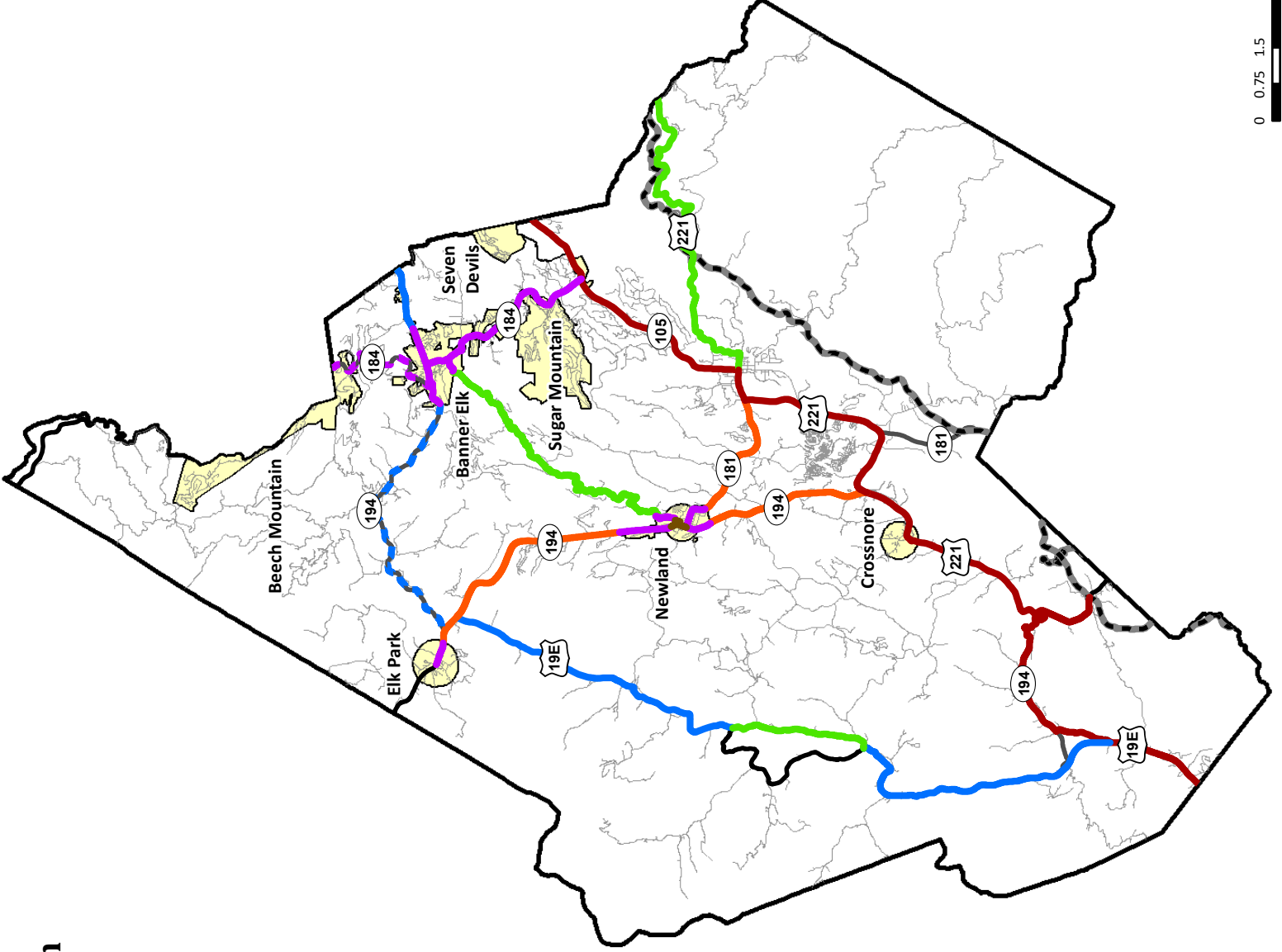


- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
 - NO IMPROVEMENT
 - Blue Ridge Parkway

High Country Regional Bike Plan Avery County



0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



Route Segments

By Improvement Recommendation

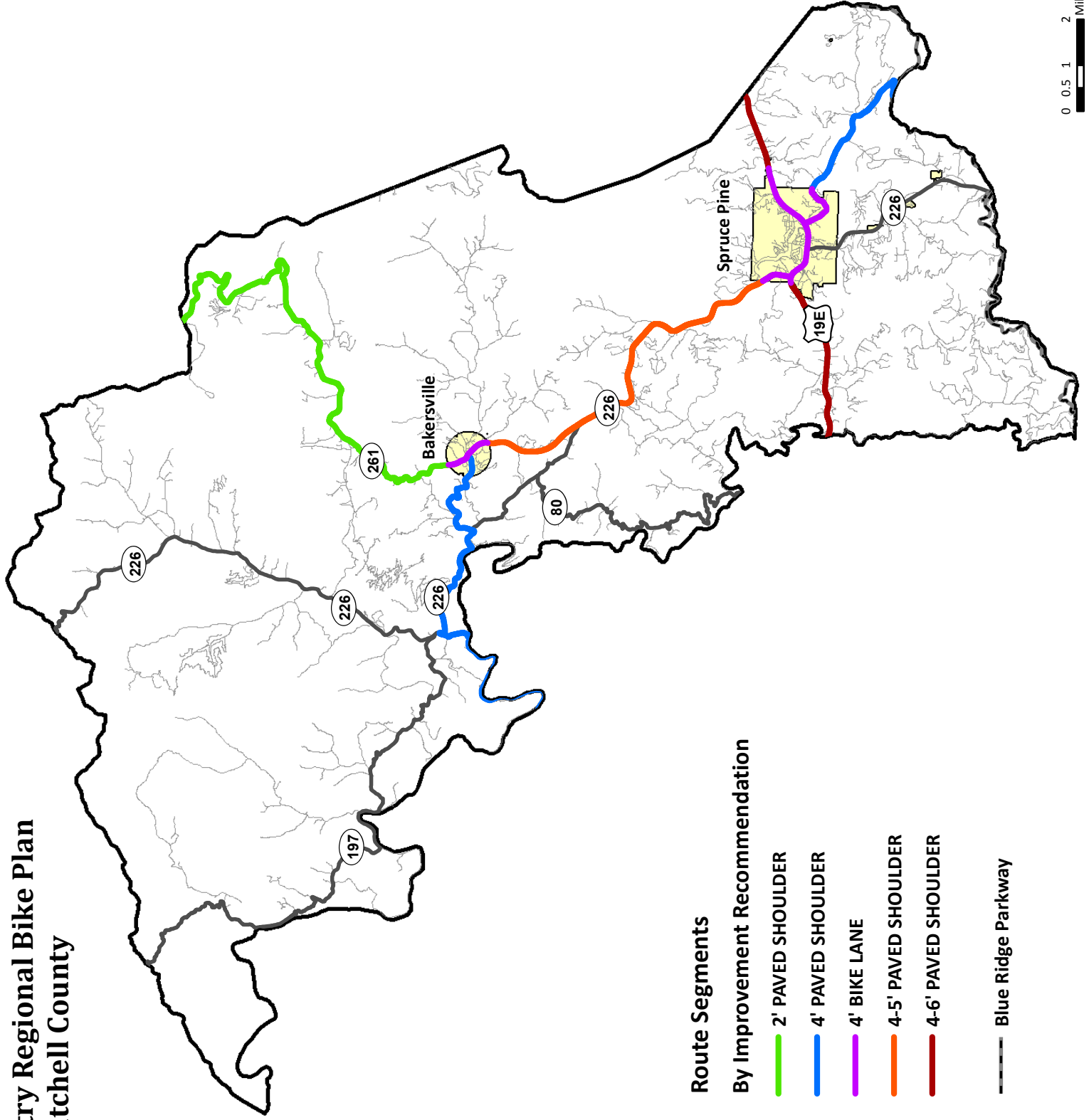
- 2' PAVED SHOULDER
- 4' PAVED SHOULDER
- - - 4' PAVED SHOULDER (NORTHBOUND LANE ONLY)
- 4' BIKE LANE
- - - 4' BIKE LANE (NORTHBOUND LANE ONLY)
- 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
- 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
- NO IMPROVEMENT

- - - Blue Ridge Parkway

High Country Regional Bike Plan Mitchell County



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

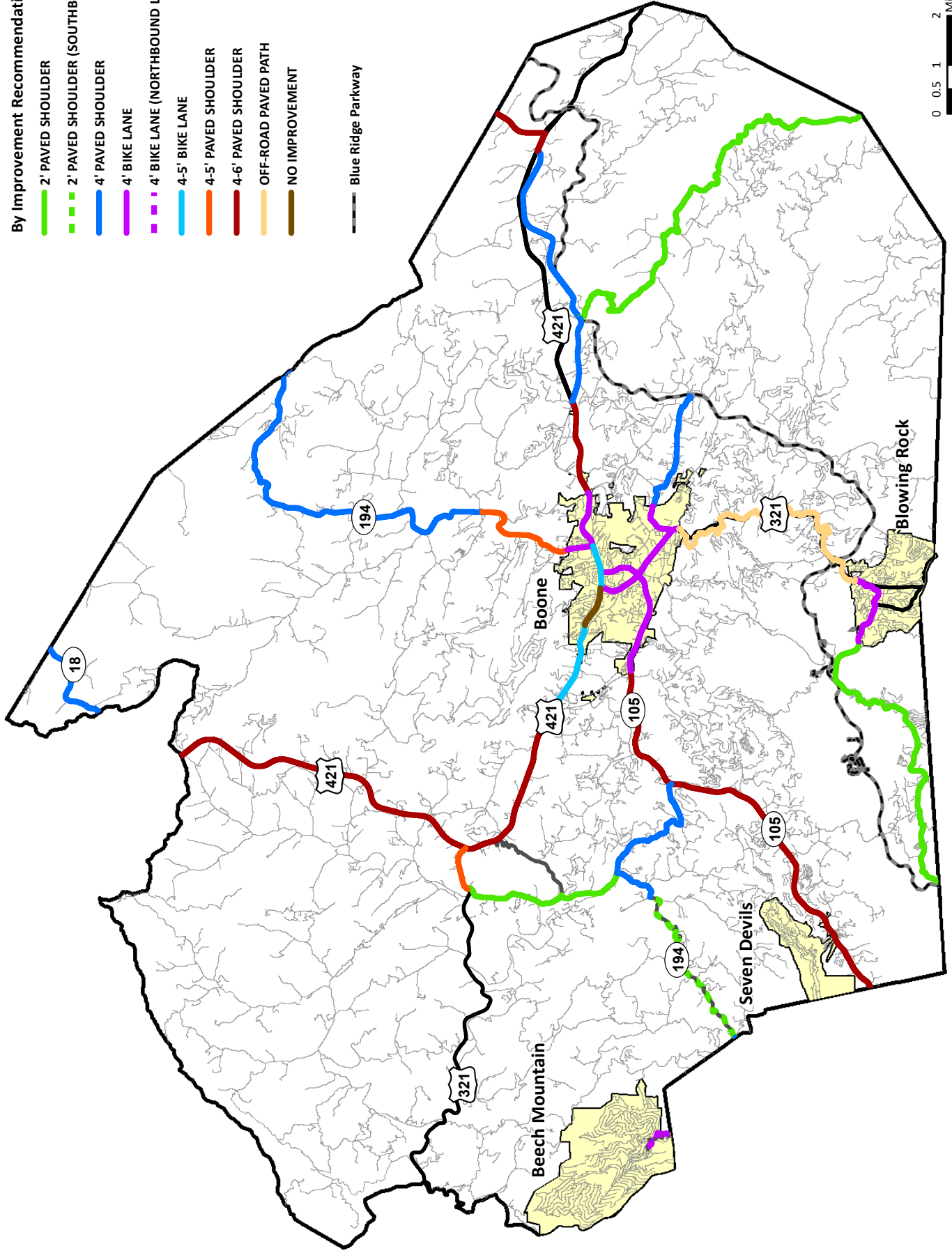


- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation**
- 2' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
 - Blue Ridge Parkway

High Country Regional Bike Plan Watauga County

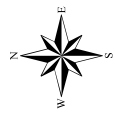
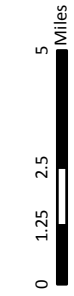
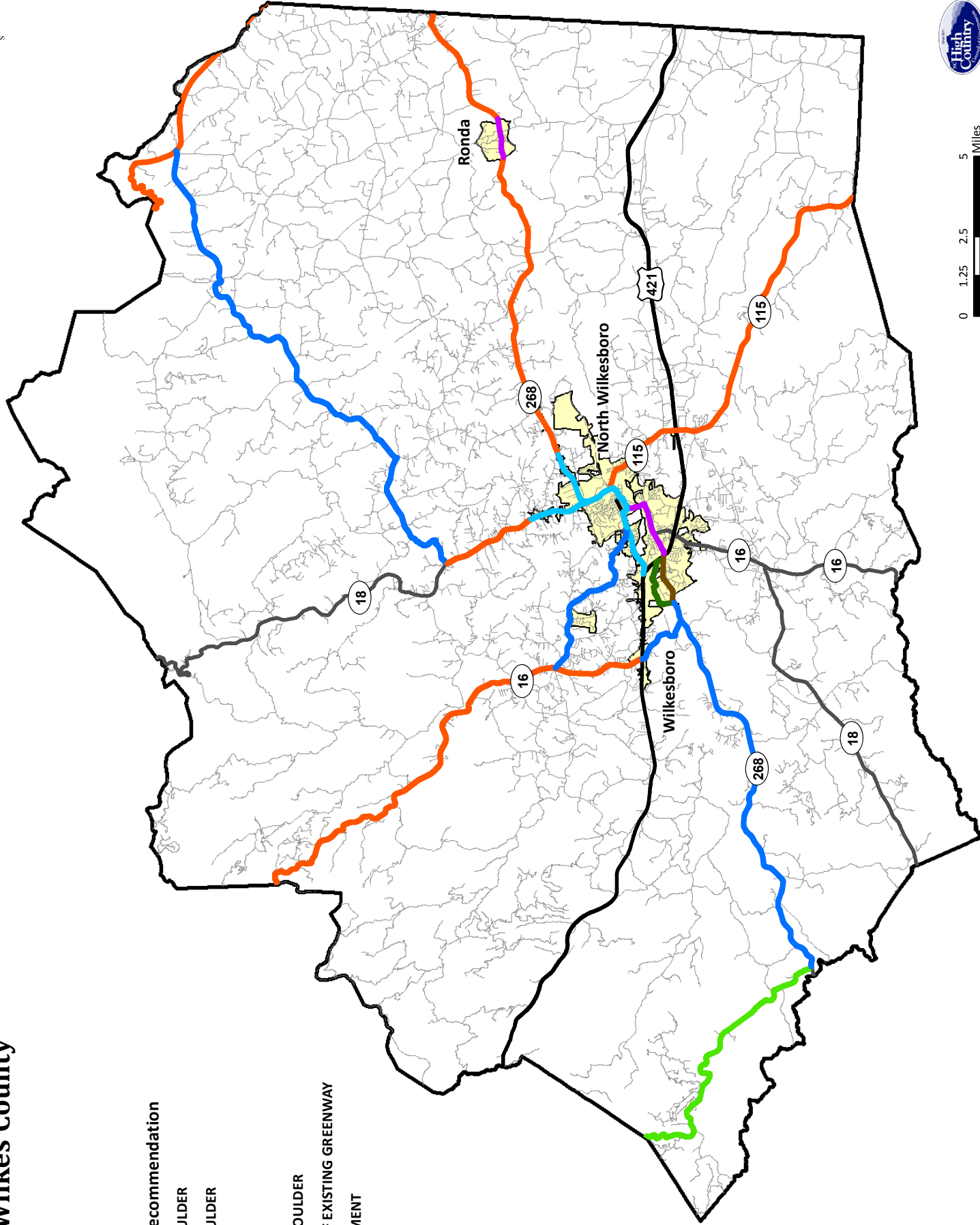


- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation**
- 2' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 2' PAVED SHOULDER (SOUTHBOUND LANE ONLY)
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' BIKE LANE
 - 4' BIKE LANE (NORTHBOUND LANE ONLY)
 - 4-5' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
 - OFF-ROAD PAVED PATH
 - NO IMPROVEMENT
- Blue Ridge Parkway



High Country Regional Bike Plan Wilkes County

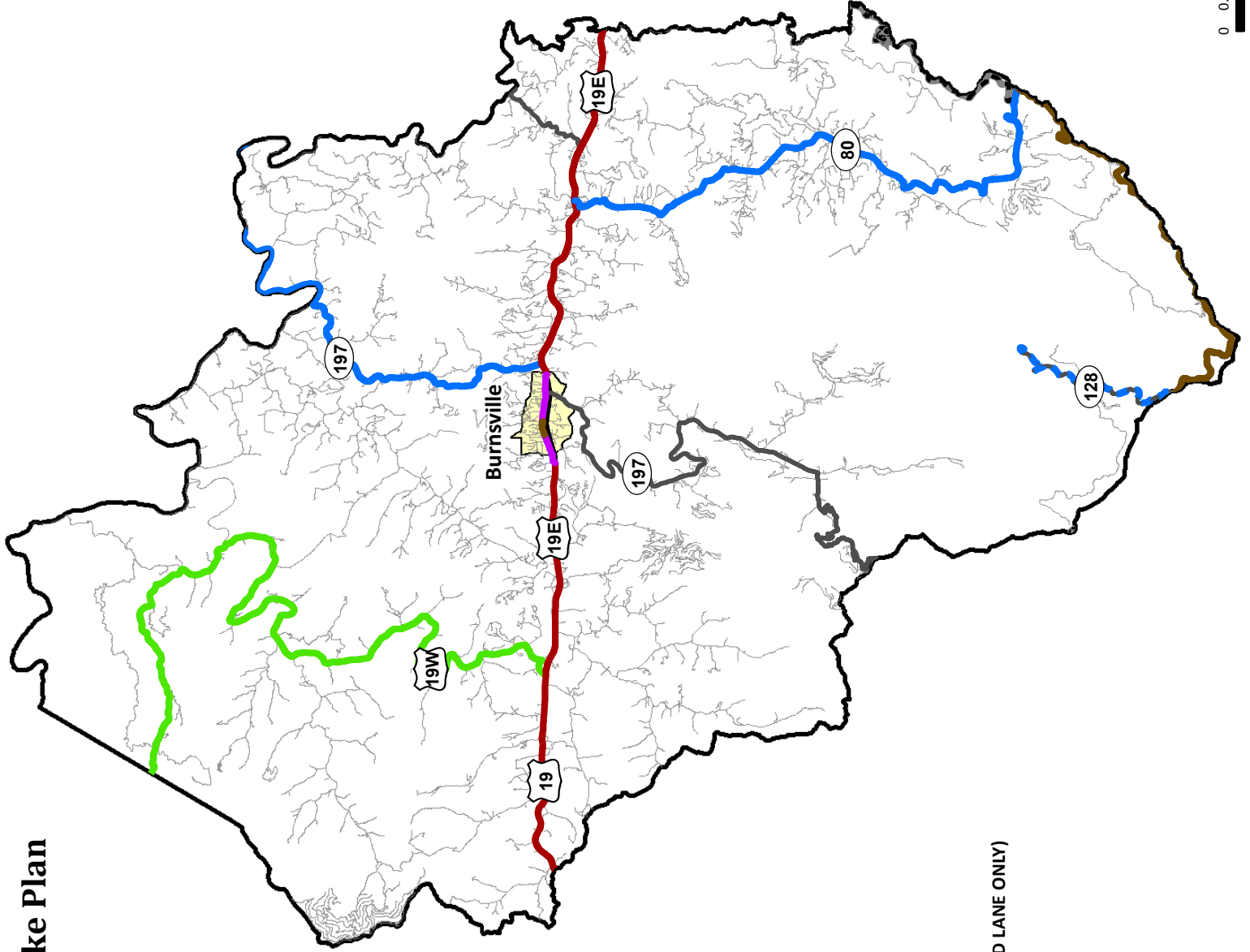
- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation**
- 2' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' BIKE LANE
 - 4-5' PAVED SHOULDER
 - EXTENSION OF EXISTING GREENWAY
 - NO IMPROVEMENT



High Country Regional Bike Plan Yancey County



0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles



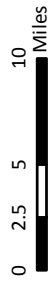
- Route Segments**
- By Improvement Recommendation
 - 2' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER
 - 4' PAVED SHOULDER (NORTHBOUND LANE ONLY)
 - 4' BIKE LANE
 - 4-6' PAVED SHOULDER
 - NO IMPROVEMENT
 - Blue Ridge Parkway

Bike Route Segment Priorities

High Country Regional Bike Plan

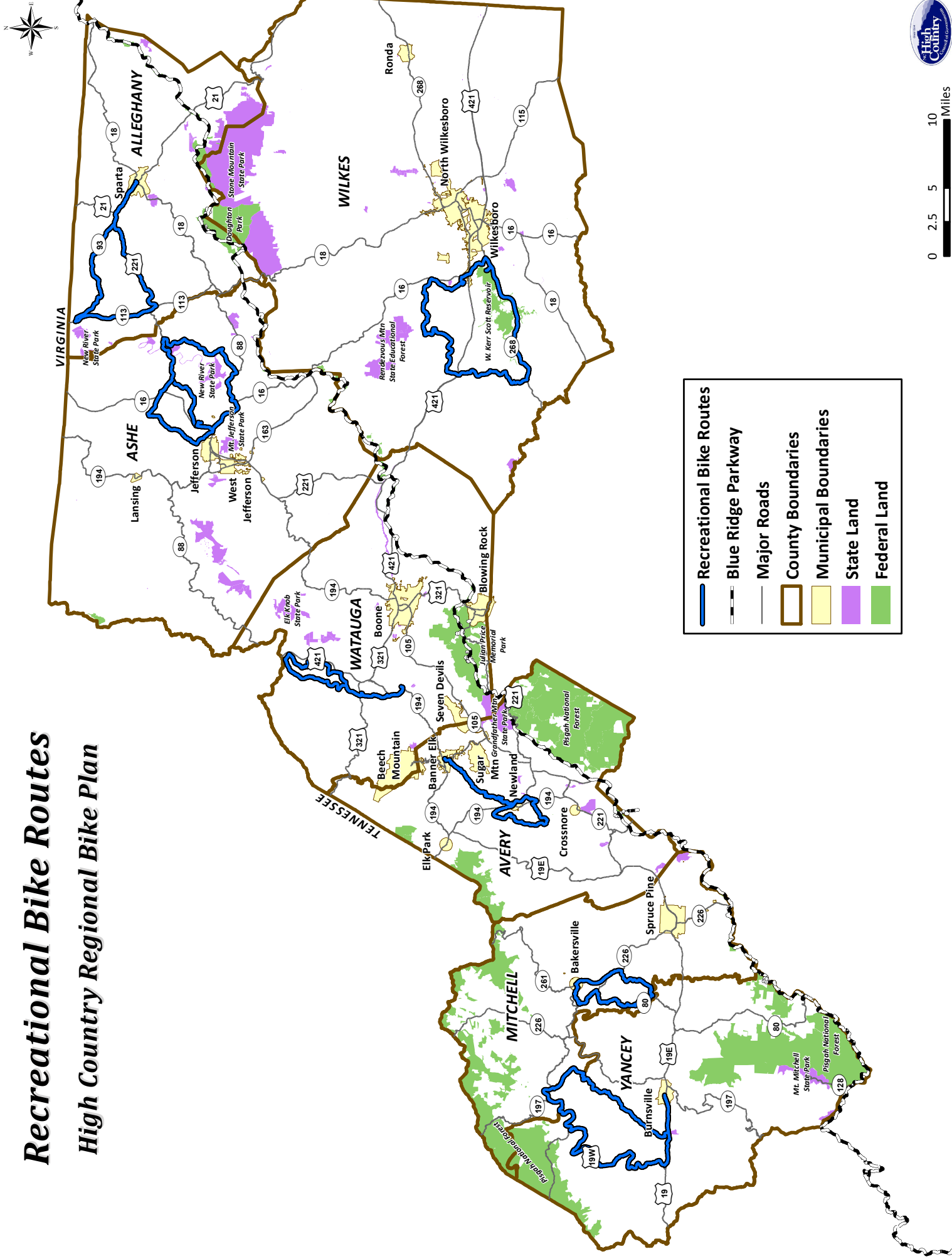


Bike Routes	
By Designated Priority	
LOW	
MEDIUM	
HIGH	
Major Roads	
County Boundaries	
Municipal Boundaries	



Recreational Bike Routes

High Country Regional Bike Plan



0 2.5 5 10 Miles