

**NHS CORRIDOR  
BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
U.S. ROUTE 220 TIER ONE DRAFT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT**

**April 16, 2007**



**NHS CORRIDOR  
BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
U.S. ROUTE 220 TIER ONE DRAFT  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**Purpose and Need Statement**

**Federal Highway Administration**

**West Virginia Division of Highways**

**Maryland State Highway Administration**

**April 16, 2007**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Purpose of the Project.....	1
3.0 Project Location and Description .....	1
4.0 Project Overview and Background.....	4
5.0 Need for the Project .....	6
6.0 Existing Transportation Network .....	8
6.1 Major Maryland Roadways in the Project Area .....	8
6.2 Major West Virginia Roadways in the Project Area .....	13
6.3 System Linkage in the Project Area .....	19
7.0 Traffic Analysis.....	19
8.0 Safety Analysis.....	22
9.0 Growth and Development .....	25
10.0 Master Plan .....	27
11.0 Issues of Concern Raised During Project Scoping .....	31
12.0 Conclusions.....	33

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Existing Characteristics and Truck Traffic on Selected Routes.....	2
2	Current and Future Traffic and Levels of Service.....	22
3	Crash Rates for Project Area Roadways.....	24
4	Expected Job Growth by Industrial Sector .....	25

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Project Location.....	3
2	Engineering Deficiencies.....	9
3	Engineering Deficiencies Detail.....	10
4	Locations of Level of Service (LOS) E.....	21
5	Roadway Segments with Accident Rates Higher than the Statewide Avg. ....	23
6	Appalachian Development Highway System.....	26
7	Priority Funding Areas in Allegany County .....	30

## 1.0 Introduction

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the National Highway System (NHS) Corridor between I-68 and Corridor H is being prepared for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by the West Virginia Department of Transportation Division of Highways (WVDOH) and the Maryland State Highway Administration (MDSHA). The DEIS will fulfill requirements set forth in the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)*. The process for completion of the DEIS complies with regulations established by the President's Council on Environmental Quality and conforms with FHWA Technical Advisory 6640.8A, *Guidelines for Preparing and Processing Environmental and Section 4(f) Documents* (October 30, 1987). As a prelude to preparing an EIS, this purpose and need statement for the project has been developed through the evaluation of existing transportation facilities, an analysis of the social and economic conditions of the proposed project area, consultation with officials in the potentially affected communities, and preliminary comments from the public and environmental resource agencies. This document will form the basis for future alternatives development and subsequent analyses.

## 2.0 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop an improved transportation corridor connecting Interstate 68 (I-68) in Maryland and Appalachian Development Highway System Corridor H in West Virginia. Upgraded roadways resulting from this project will become part of the NHS. The new NHS Corridor, paralleling to some extent existing U.S. Route 220 in western Maryland and West Virginia's Potomac Highlands area, would improve the existing transportation system by providing an upgraded north-south road through a program of transportation projects. The new corridor will support efforts to increase mobility and regional commerce for residents, businesses, and visitors. It will also serve north-south interstate travel movements and support economic development throughout the Appalachian regions of Maryland, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

## 3.0 Project Location and Description

The project is located in Grant, Hardy, Hampshire, and Mineral counties in West Virginia, and Allegany County in Maryland. The project region stretches from I-68 near Cumberland,

*Purpose and Need Statement*

Maryland, in the north to the proposed alignment of Corridor H in West Virginia in the south. Figure 1 shows the project location in its regional context.

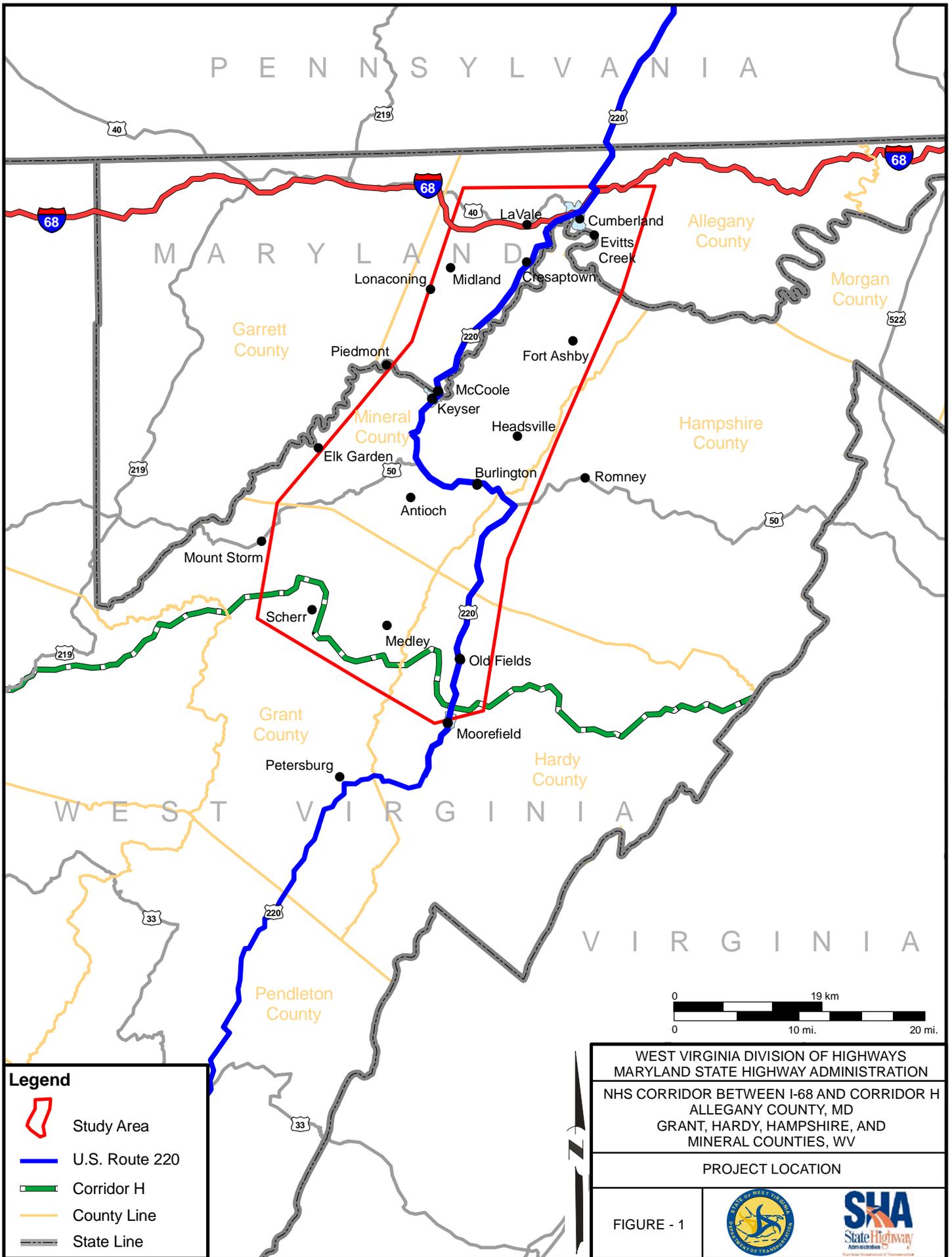
The major routes in the area are I-68, U.S. Route 220, U.S. Route 50, MD Route 51, MD Route 53, MD Route 135, WV Route 972, WV Route 46, and WV Route 93. These routes connect the major population and employment areas of the region located at Cresaptown, Cumberland, McCoole, Keyser, Romney, Moorefield, and Petersburg. Besides being the largest five communities in the region in terms of residents and employment opportunities, Cumberland, Keyser, Romney, Moorefield, and Petersburg are also the county seats of their respective counties (Allegany, Mineral, Hampshire, Hardy, and Grant).

Although the major roads serving the area are well-maintained, they are primarily two-lane roads with grades as steep as nine percent and deficient roadway geometry in some locations. Capacity of the existing roadway network is inadequate to accommodate future economic development and commerce. In many areas throughout the region, unrestricted access creates traffic conflicts on the roads. The lack of multi-lane transportation facilities, beyond I-68 and small sections of U.S. Route 220 and MD Route 53, has limited economic development in the region. Additionally, the high percentage of trucks on these two-lane roads together with limited passing zones creates conflicts with automobile traffic. Table 1 provides the existing characteristics and percentage of truck traffic on selected routes.

**TABLE 1  
Existing Characteristics and Truck Traffic on Selected Routes**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Functional Classification</b>	<b>Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT)</b>	<b>Lane Width (feet)</b>	<b>Shoulder Width (feet)</b>	<b>Speed Limit (mph)</b>	<b>Truck Traffic (%)</b>
MD Route 53	Principal Arterial	14,475	12	2-10	30-40	4-20
U.S. Route 220	Principal Arterial	14,125	12	0-12	25-50	4-20
WV Route 93	Principal Arterial	2,000	12	<2	55	4-20
WV Route 972	Principal Arterial	5,000	12	<2	35-50	4-20

Logical termini for the project are proposed at the northern end of the region along I-68 near the City of Cumberland, Maryland, and in the southern end along Corridor H. Interstate 68 is the



**Legend**

-  Study Area
-  U.S. Route 220
-  Corridor H
-  County Line
-  State Line

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV

PROJECT LOCATION

FIGURE - 1



*Purpose and Need Statement*

principal east-west route through the northern part of the region. When completely constructed, Corridor H will be the principal east-west travelway through the southern part of the region. Termini for the proposed project on each of these major highways will allow for a similar transportation connection between them.

The distance between Cumberland and Corridor H is approximately 40 miles. The existing travel time between Cumberland and the West Virginia communities near the planned alignment of Corridor H is approximately one hour.

#### **4.0 Project Overview and Background**

*NEPA* requires that the potential environmental impacts be assessed for every federal action that could “significantly affect the quality of the human environment.” The law applies to any project where there is major federal involvement, including federal financial assistance, the issuance of a permit, or a requirement for federal approval. Following the enactment of *NEPA*, regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality noted that environmental impact statements shall “provide full and fair discussion of significant environmental impacts and shall inform decision-makers and the public of the reasonable alternatives which would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance the quality of the human environment” (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508). An environmental impact statement is required when it is apparent from the beginning of the project, or through subsequent analysis, that the proposed project is likely to have a major effect on the human environment.

The goal of the current project is to complete a proposed DEIS for Tier One only. Through the preparation of a tiered EIS, separate *NEPA* and transportation planning processes can be combined with a consolidated approach. In Tier One, generalized travel corridors will be evaluated at a planning level of detail, leading to the refinement of purpose and need and the alternatives carried forward into more detailed analysis. By following a tiered approach, consideration of major environmental factors will be incorporated into the planning process at a very early stage. The tiered process also provides a systematic approach for advancing transportation improvements in a cost-effective manner.

At the conclusion of Tier One, a record of decision will be sought on a possible program of projects for that corridor. The analyses undertaken during Tier One will lead to the identification

*Purpose and Need Statement*

of one corridor with the potential to have the fewest environmental impacts as a result of the project. More detailed alternatives of candidate transportation improvements will be developed within the selected corridor during Tier Two. The more detailed environmental analyses expected will be undertaken as part of a subsequent project.

The project was initiated with a notice to the public published in the *Federal Register* on April 14, 2006. The notice was issued by the FHWA and informed the public that an EIS was being prepared. Following a preliminary interagency coordination meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, formal project scoping and interagency review meetings were held in early May 2006, in LaVale, Maryland, and Moorefield, West Virginia. This was followed by a series of public meetings that same month in Cumberland, Keyser, and Moorefield, which introduced the project to the public.

The WVDOH has already taken a proactive stance by exploring future transportation needs through the development of “sketch-planning” scenarios. For potential highway projects, sketch-planning utilizes previous analytical studies, secondary source data, and intuitive design judgment as a means of evaluating community issues and any related transportation problems. It allows transportation planners to suggest reasonable study parameters that could form the basis for more detailed future studies. At the initial level of investigation that precedes work on the DEIS, state planners proposed five potential preliminary corridors be carried into the full environmental process expected during the next tier.

Environmental resource and transportation agencies with jurisdiction over, or having operating interests with, transportation projects within West Virginia and Maryland will help guide the project through the environmental process. In addition to WVDOH and MDSHA staff, representatives from the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP), West Virginia Division of Culture and History, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources (WVDNR), Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Maryland Historical Trust, Maryland Department of Planning, Allegany County Planning Commission and the Region 8 Planning and Development Commission have been invited to participate in the planning and environmental process for this project. The FHWA has invited the USACE, USCG, the National Park Service, and USFWS to become cooperating agencies in the preparation of the DEIS. The USEPA has already committed to being a cooperating agency

*Purpose and Need Statement*

(June 14, 2006). A cooperating agency is any public agency with jurisdiction by law over parts of the proposed project or with special expertise related to the project.

The FHWA administers the highway transportation programs of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) in accordance with *The Department of Transportation Act* (49 USC §104 and USC §101 et. seq.). As such, it also coordinates the development of highway programs with other modes of transportation.

The USACE has jurisdiction over environmental impacts to most water bodies within the project area. The USACE would also issue a *Clean Water Act*, Section 404 permit for the proposed project. The DEIS and subsequent Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will provide background information for the USACE in support of the Section 404 permit application, but additional documentation will be required before a permit can be issued.

In conjunction with several different laws, the Commandant of the USCG must approve the location of, and plans for, any new bridges over the navigable waterways of the United States. The Potomac River is a navigable waterway to its confluence with Wills Creek near Cumberland. As the proposed project began, it was determined that it could cross the Potomac River in a navigable location and, if this were the case, a Coast Guard permit would be required before construction could begin.

The USFWS and the USEPA will also review the Section 404 permit application. The USFWS has special expertise with threatened and endangered species and their habitats. The USEPA has discretionary veto authority over the Section 404 permit under Section 404 (c) and special expertise with respect to the *Clean Water Act*, Section 404 (b)(1) guidelines. A Section 404 permit will not be sought, however, until Tier Two.

## **5.0 Need for the Project**

As noted previously, the purpose of this project is to develop an improved transportation corridor connecting I-68 and Corridor H. In support of this purpose, several preliminary needs for the region were identified in the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* (July 2001), a multi-state transportation planning and economic development effort between WVDOH, MDSHA, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, and the Virginia Department of Transportation.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

The purpose of *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* was twofold:

- “To determine the relative costs and social, economic and environmental benefits of transportation improvements in several north-south transportation corridors in Appalachian Maryland, West Virginia and northern Virginia,” and
- “To encourage economic development and improve quality of life while protecting and enhancing the environment in the study area via north-south transportation corridor improvements.”

The *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* analyzed the potential support of highway improvements for economic development in four north-south corridors bisecting the Appalachian regions of Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Virginia. The study also evaluated the potential environmental impacts that would be associated with a major transportation improvement in the region. The study concluded that U.S. Route 220 south from I-68, via MD Route 53, to Corridor H and U.S. Route 219 north from I-68 to the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-76) would provide the greatest potential for benefiting Appalachian economic development. The report concluded that the proposed NHS corridor (being studied through the DEIS process herewith) should be given a high priority for future highway upgrades and other transportation improvements.

Additional needs were examined in the early stages of the project now being undertaken (i.e., the Tier One DEIS) through a collaborative process that included additional examination of past studies, a further review of existing regional plans, consultation with citizens and local officials within the project area, consultation with the government agencies involved in the process, and an analysis of the environmental and socioeconomic conditions of the region. Through this process, the following needs were identified within the study corridor:

- Current transportation deficiencies limit regional mobility.
- The project area has inadequate roadway capacity.
- There are safety deficiencies on some of the area’s roadways.
- There is a need to support economic development efforts in the area.
- Additional system linkage is needed to complete the regional road network.

## 6.0 Existing Transportation Network

Speed limits for the through routes within the study area vary between 25 and 55 miles per hour (mph). Except for small sections of four-lane travelways on U.S. Route 220 and MD Route 53 near Cumberland, the through routes are two-lane facilities with 12-foot travel lanes and shoulder widths varying from 0 to 12 feet. Turning lanes are found at many, but not all, of the major intersections. Several important intersections are currently too narrow to allow for additional lanes. Engineering deficiencies exist on most of the area's roadways. The locations where these engineering deficiencies occur in both the Maryland and West Virginia portions of U.S. Route 220 are shown on Figures 2 and 3.

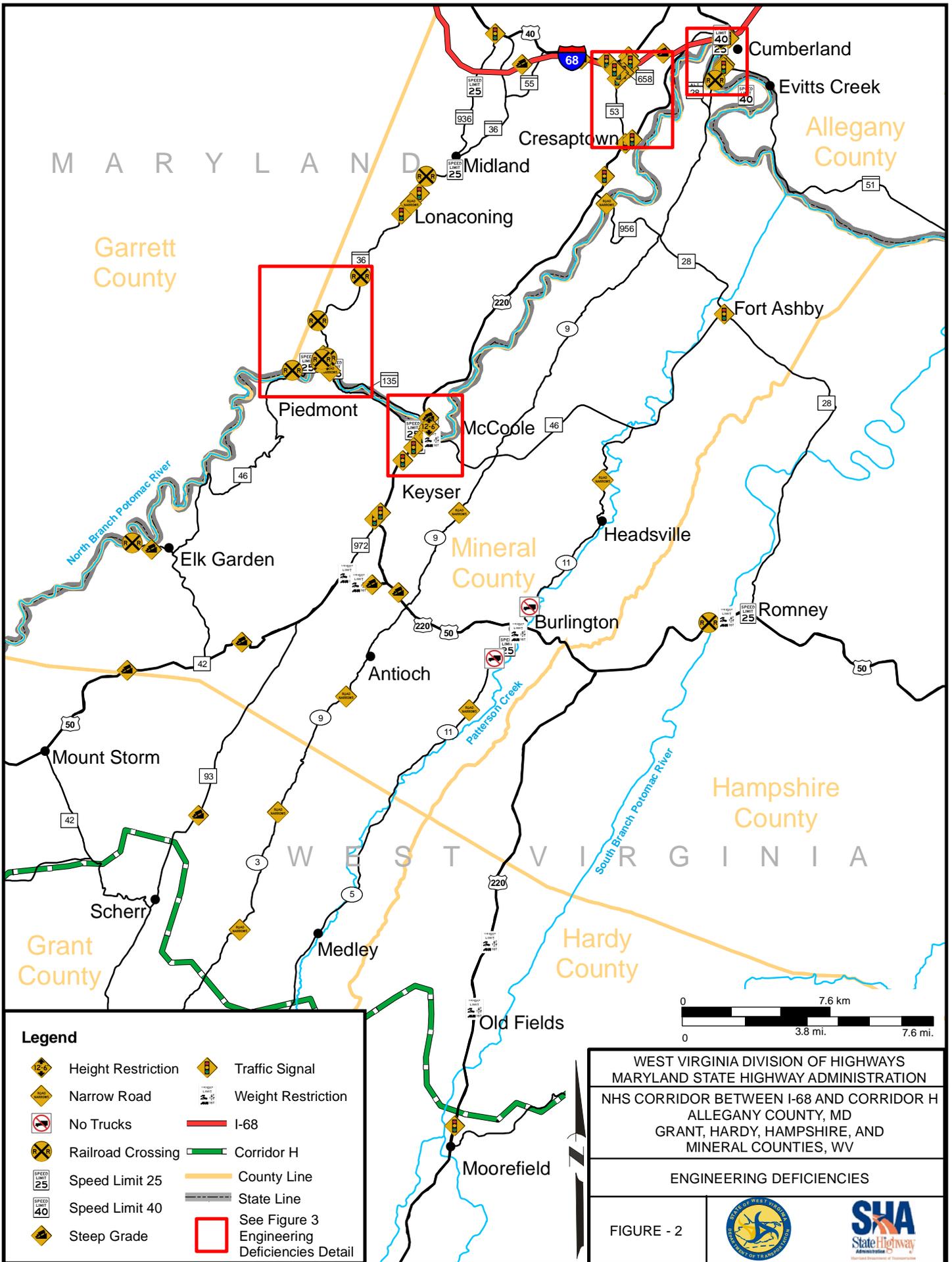
### 6.1 Major Maryland Roadways in the Project Area

#### U.S. Route 220

U.S. Route 220 in the Maryland is classified as an urban principal arterial. It begins at I-68 and extends southward to the North Branch of the Potomac River at MD Route 135 in McCoole. The speed limit ranges from 40 to 50 mph on this roadway, with a reduced speed of 30 mph through Cresaptown and suggested speeds of 35 mph on numerous curves. Trucks are advised at 25 mph approaching McCoole because of the steep grade. There are two undivided, 12-foot travel lanes with two to eight-foot paved shoulders. Truck climbing lanes exist at the northbound approach to I-68, northbound at Dawson, and on the northbound ascent from McCoole.

There are numerous turning lanes along this stretch of U.S. Route 220, specifically at the Western Correctional Institute and throughout Cresaptown. Three traffic signals exist, one each at Barton Boulevard, Warrior Drive, and Winchester Road. There is a flashing yellow signal in McCoole at the intersection with MD Route 135. Traffic becomes congested through Cresaptown and at Bowling Green where there is on-street parking.

Of the 18.7 miles of U.S. Route 220 roadway from I-68 to the West Virginia state line, approximately 2,200 feet, or 2.2 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 29,100 feet, or 29.5 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 14.1 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 9 percent for this type of roadway facility.



**Legend**

- Height Restriction
- Narrow Road
- No Trucks
- Railroad Crossing
- Speed Limit 25
- Speed Limit 40
- Steep Grade
- Traffic Signal
- Weight Restriction
- I-68
- Corridor H
- County Line
- State Line
- See Figure 3 Engineering Deficiencies Detail

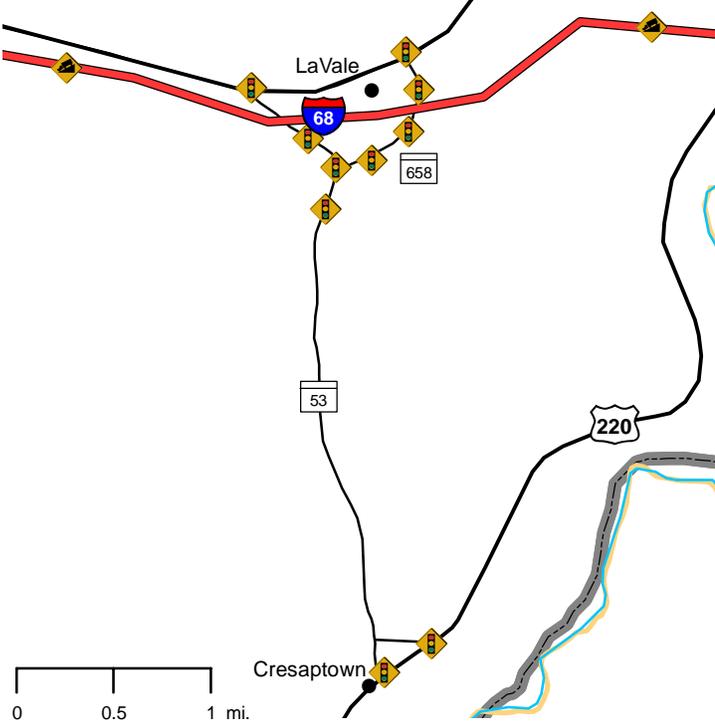
WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV

**ENGINEERING DEFICIENCIES**

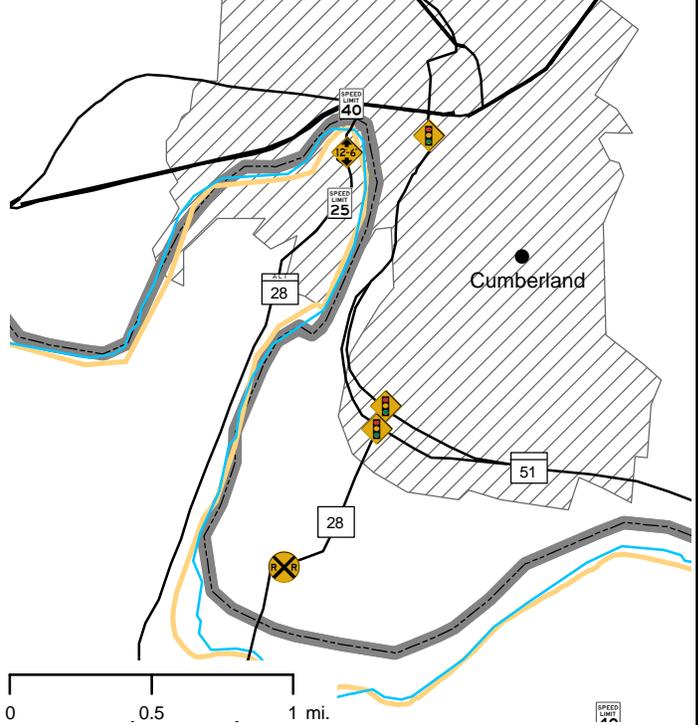
FIGURE - 2



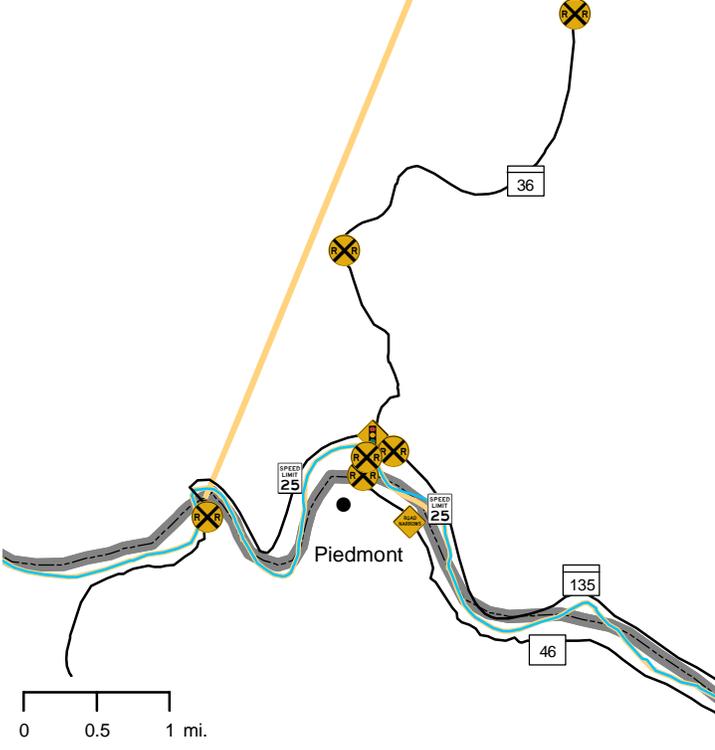
LaVale/Cresaptown, MD Detail



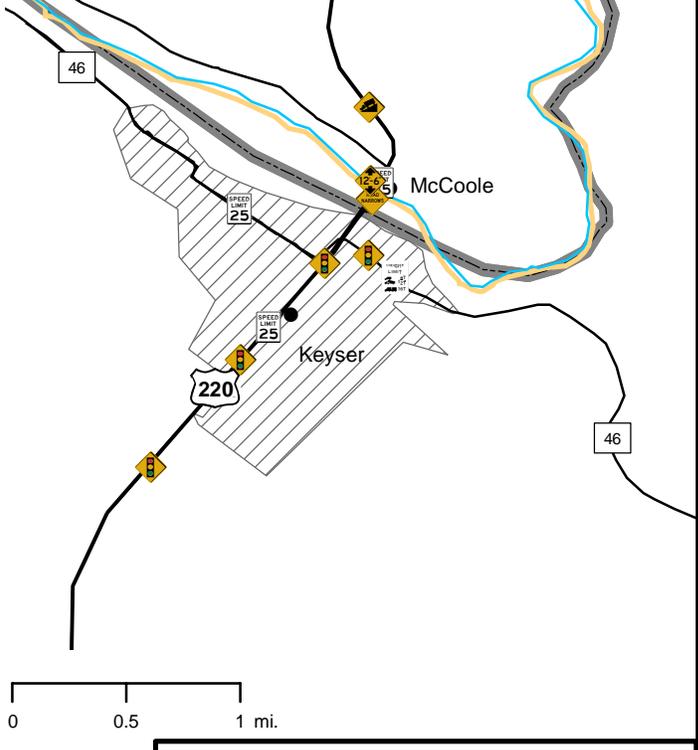
Cumberland, MD Detail



Piedmont, WV Detail



Keyser, WV/McCoole, MD Detail



Legend

- Height Restriction
- Narrow Road
- No Trucks
- Railroad Crossing
- Speed Limit 25
- Speed Limit 40
- Steep Grade
- Traffic Signal
- Weight Restriction
- City Limits
- County Line
- State Line

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV

ENGINEERING DEFICIENCIES DETAIL

FIGURE - 3

*Purpose and Need Statement*

Interstate 68

Interstate 68, or the National Freeway, is the principal east-west route through the northern part of the project region. On the western fringe, the route begins at Midlothian Road (Exit 33) in Frostburg and continues 16.7 miles east to MD Route 144, National Pike (Exit 47), in Wolfe Mill. Built in the 1960s, the elevated section of I-68 through Cumberland is substandard for its urban freeway classification because of a speed limit of 40 mph, narrow lane widths, and exit ramp speed limits of 15 mph.

The maximum speed limit on I-68 is 65 mph with reductions to 50 mph when approaching Cumberland and then 40 mph through the Cumberland city limits. There are four 12-foot travel lanes, two eastbound and two westbound, separated by a wide grassy median with guide rail. Certain sections have five 12-foot lanes where there are truck-climbing lanes, specifically on the 6 percent grades between Exits 33 and 34, and Exits 42 and 47. Through Cumberland, there are four 10- to 11-foot lanes with very narrow shoulders separated by a concrete barrier. Trucks and buses are not permitted in the left lane or on Exit 42 eastbound because of the steep grades.

Of the 16.7 miles of I-68 roadway from Exit 33 to Exit 47, approximately 8,900 feet, or 10.1 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 19,700 feet, or 22.3 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 29.1 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 6 percent for this type of roadway facility.

MD Route 36

MD Route 36 begins at the northern end of the project near I-68 and continues southward to MD Route 135 in Westernport. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 50 mph with reductions to 25 mph in Midland and Lonaconing. There are two 12-foot travel lanes with the exception of a four lane divided highway over I-68. The shoulder is paved and ranges in width from 8 to 12 feet. There are four railroad crossings and three traffic signals along this stretch of MD Route 36.

Of the 15 miles of MD Route 36 roadway, approximately 17,000 feet, or 21.5 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

MD Route 51/Industrial Boulevard

MD Route 51 begins at the northern end of the project near I-68 and continues southward through South Cumberland to Spring Gap. The speed limit ranges from 45 to 55 mph with a reduction to 30 mph through Cumberland. There are two 12-foot travel lanes with a paved 2 to 8 foot shoulder. Through Cumberland, MD Route 51 has three lanes southbound. The road splits through Virginia Avenue to become a one-way couple with two lanes on each side. The median is grass or raised concrete and varies in width from 16 to 20 feet. There are three traffic signals, one at the access ramp to I-68 and two at Virginia Avenue on each side of the couple.

Of the 7.2 miles of MD Route 51 roadway from I-68 to Spring Gap, approximately 4,100 feet, or 11 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 16,300 feet, or 42.3 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 11 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 9 percent for this type of roadway.

MD Route 53

MD Route 53 begins at LaVale near I-68 and U.S. Route 40 Alternate and runs southward to Cresaptown at U.S. Route 220. The speed limit ranges from 30 to 40 mph on this roadway. Three traffic signals are located in LaVale. There is one traffic signal in Cresaptown at the junction with U.S. Route 220. There are two 12-foot travel lanes with a paved 8-foot shoulder, except in LaVale where the roadway is a four-lane divided with concrete curb.

Of the 3.1 miles of MD Route 53 roadway, approximately 800 feet, or 4.9 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 2,400 feet, or 14.4 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment.

MD Route 55

MD Route 55 is a small segment of roadway that begins in Clarysville at U.S. Route 40 Alternate and runs to MD Route 36 near Vale Summit. The speed limit ranges from 45 to 50 mph with two 12-foot travel lanes and an 8 to 10-foot paved shoulder. There are no traffic signals along this stretch of road. Of the 2.6 miles of this route, 1,600 feet, or 11.8 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment.

MD Route 135

MD Route 135 begins in Westernport at MD Route 36. From Westernport, MD Route 135 runs

*Purpose and Need Statement*

eastward to McCoole, terminating at U.S. Route 220. The speed limit ranges from 30 to 50 mph with a reduction to 25 mph through Westernport. There are two 12-foot lanes with an 8-foot paved shoulder. In Westernport there are concrete curbs with sidewalks and a center island. There is one traffic signal at MD Route 36 and one railroad crossing near the same intersection. The Keyser-McCoole Bridge has a restricted underpass clearance of 12 feet; however, the bridge is slated for improvements in the near future. (More information on the Keyser-McCoole Bridge is found in the next section.) For over-height vehicles, MD Route 135 provides an alternative connection to U.S. Route 220 in McCoole.

Of the 5.3 miles of MD Route 135 roadway from U.S. Route 220 to WV Route 46, approximately 1,100 feet, or 3.8 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment. Additionally, 10 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 6 percent for this type of roadway facility.

MD Route 658 (Vocke Road)

MD Route 658 is a small segment, approximately two miles long that runs through LaVale from U.S. Route 40 Alternate to MD Route 53. The speed limit is 40 mph and there are four 12-foot lanes separated by a raised concrete median. The shoulders are paved with a concrete curb. There are numerous left and center turning lanes. There are three traffic signals along this stretch of roadway. Access to I-68 is available from this roadway.

MD Route 936

MD Route 936 begins at U.S. Route 40 Alternate in Frostburg and runs southward to MD Route 36 in Midland. The speed limit is 50 mph with a reduced speed to 25 mph in Borden/Shaft. There are two 11-foot travel lanes with little to no shoulder and numerous clear zone restrictions. There is one traffic signal at U.S. Route 40 Alternate in Frostburg. Advisory signs suggest 35 mph on some curves. Of the 5 miles of MD Route 936 roadway, approximately 600 feet, or 2.3 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment.

## **6.2 Major West Virginia Roadways in the Project Area**

U.S. Route 220

Beginning at Keyser, the West Virginia portion of U.S. Route 220, classified as a rural principal arterial, continues southward to Corridor H at Moorefield and beyond. The speed limit ranges

*Purpose and Need Statement*

from 40 to 55 mph on this stretch of roadway, with reductions to 25 mph through Keyser and 35 mph approaching Moorefield. Many curves have reduced speeds ranging from 20 to 45 mph.

There are two 12-foot travel lanes, separated by road markings, with two to 12-foot paved shoulders; in a few instances, the shoulder is gravel. At Keyser, there is a concrete curb with sidewalks. There are left turning lanes throughout Keyser, as well as a broad center turning lane and median.

The Keyser-McCoole Bridge presents a narrower width than the approaching roadway. The bridge exhibits major structural deficiencies and the two most recent inspection reports gave the bridge an overall rating of "poor." The concrete deck, steel superstructure members, concrete substructure elements, and existing bridge drainage system are in varying states of decay. The concrete deck has many delaminated areas, as well as areas of full-depth contamination, particularly on the approach spans in Keyser. There is also rust packing and corrosion on the outside girders, corrosion and measurable section loss at the bottom flanges of the approach spans over the railroad tracks, cracked welds, severe concrete spalling with corroded rebar exposure, and vertical cracks. The bridge is expected to be replaced in the future and an environmental assessment for that project is currently underway.

There are two posted, bridge weight restrictions along U.S. Route 220 in the West Virginia portion of the project; both are located at the southern end of the corridor in Hardy County. The first is near the northern leg of County Route 2 and the second is just north of WV Route 923; both limits are 18 tons and the bridges have narrower widths than the approaching roadway. There is a 9 percent grade for approximately 1 mile where U.S. Route 220 couples with U.S. Route 50. A truck-climbing lane is in place for the ascent.

Of the 36.8 miles of U.S. Route 220 roadway from the Maryland state line to Moorefield, approximately 18,200 feet, or 9.4 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 14,000 feet, or 7.1 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 4.8 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

U.S. Route 50

Within the project area, U.S. Route 50 begins at Mount Storm and extends eastward to

---

*Purpose and Need Statement*

Romney. The speed limit ranges from 40 to 55 mph, except on approach to Romney, where it is reduced to 25 mph. There are two 12-foot travel lanes separated by road markings. The shoulder varies from 0 to 6 feet in width and is either gravel or paved. There are numerous clear zone restrictions along this curvy portion of U.S. Route 50.

There are three bridge weight restrictions along this stretch of U.S. Route 50; the first is 20 tons at the WV Route 972 junction, the second is 20 tons just east of there, and the third is 18 tons over the South Branch of the Potomac River near Romney. The second location also has a bridge width less than the approaching roadway. There is also a 9 percent grade for 4 miles between Mount Storm and WV Route 93, as well as another 9 percent grade near the U.S. Route 220 split. Truck climbing lanes exist at both locations.

Of the 27.3 miles of U.S. Route 50 roadway from WV Route 42 to WV Route 28, approximately 17,600 feet, or 13.7 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 13,300 feet, or 10.4 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 13.7 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

WV Route 28

WV Route 28 begins in Cumberland at MD Route 51 and extends southward into West Virginia at the Hampshire County line. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 55 mph with two 12-foot travel lanes. The shoulder type varies from less than 2 feet gravel to 8 feet paved. There is one traffic signal at WV Route 46 and one railroad crossing near MD Route 51. There are numerous advisories for reduced speeds of 30-50 mph on curves.

Of the 15.5 miles of this roadway, approximately 9,600 feet, or 11.7 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 11,700 feet, or 14.3 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 5.8 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

WV Route 28 Alternate

WV Route 28 Alternate begins in Cumberland at the Potomac River and runs southward to WV Route 28 near the Greater Cumberland Regional Airport. The speed limit is 50 mph except in Ridgeley where it is reduced to 25 mph. There are two 11-foot lanes with no roadway shoulder.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

There is one traffic signal on WV Route 28 Alternate near Cumberland. In Ridgeley, there is a railroad underpass with an 11-foot, 11-inch height restriction. The underpass and bridge over the Potomac River both have narrow widths.

Of the 2.7 miles of this roadway, 5,900 feet, or 38.3 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 63.9 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

WV Route 42

WV Route 42 begins near Kitzmiller and meanders southward to WV Route 93 near Bismarck. The speed limit ranges from 30-55 mph and, generally, the travel lane widths vary from 10 to 11 feet. The shoulder is gravel and in some places becomes very narrow, but in other places ranges up to 6 feet in width. There is a railroad crossing at the North Branch of the Potomac River, suggested speeds of 20-35 mph on some curves, and a 9 percent steep grade for approximately 3 miles. There are also clear zone restrictions along this roadway.

Of the 16.1 miles of WV Route 42, approximately 20,700 feet, or 24.4 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and 11,050 feet, or 13 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 28 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

WV Route 46

WV Route 46 begins in Elk Garden then runs north and eastward to WV Route 28 in Fort Ashby. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 55 mph with reductions to 25 mph through Piedmont, Keyser, and Fort Ashby. There are two travel lanes ranging in width from 8 to 12 feet. In many instances along this roadway there is no shoulder. There are four railroad crossings, four traffic signals, and one weight restriction on WV Route 46. Just southeast of Piedmont, the road contains severe clear zone restrictions as well as cautioned speeds reduced to 15 mph on some horizontal and vertical curves and a narrow width bridge.

Of the 34.7 miles of this roadway, approximately 20,000 feet, or 11 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 30,200 feet, or 16.5 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 22.4 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway facility.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

WV Route 93

WV Route 93 begins at U.S. Route 50 and extends southward to WV Route 42 in Scherr. The speed limit is 55 mph with two 10-foot lanes and a paved shoulder less than 2 feet in width. There is a 7 percent grade for approximately 2 miles.

Of the 12.2 miles of WV Route 93 roadway, approximately 10,400 feet, or 16.1 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 10.7 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 7 percent for this type of roadway.

WV Route 956

WV Route 956 begins at U.S. Route 220 near the Allegany Ballistics Laboratory and extends eastward for a short distance to WV Route 28. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 45 mph with two 11-foot lanes and a narrow gravel shoulder. Reduced speed advisories from 30 to 35 mph are posted around some curves. The Potomac River Bridge has a width that is less than the approaching roadway.

Of the 7.4 miles of this roadway, approximately 6,100 feet, or 15.6 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 18.8 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 10 percent for this type of roadway facility.

WV Route 972

WV Route 972 starts at U.S. Route 220 south of Keyser and extends for a short distance to U.S. Route 50. The speed limit ranges from 40 to 50 mph with two 12-foot travel lanes and a narrow gravel or paved shoulder. There are clear zone restrictions as well as reduced speed advisories to 30 mph around some curves. Of the 2.1 miles of this roadway, approximately 900 feet, or 7.8 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 400 feet, or 3.7 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment.

Grant County Route 3

Grant County Route 3 begins at the Mineral County line and runs southward to WV Route 42. The speed limit is 35 mph with two 8- to 10-foot lanes and a narrow shoulder. Suggested speeds on curves range from 20 to 30 mph. The majority of the roadway has no centerline markings.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

Of the 10.2 miles of this roadway from the county line to Oak Hill, approximately 1,700 feet, or 3.3 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 7,000 feet, or 12.9 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 3.7 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 10 percent for this type of roadway.

Grant County Route 5

Grant County Route 5 begins at the Mineral County line and extends southward to Lahmansville. The speed limit is 55 mph with two 11-foot lanes and a narrow shoulder. Suggested speed on some curves is 35 mph and there are also some clear zone restrictions along this roadway. Of the 9.8 miles of this roadway from the Mineral County line, 1,825 feet, or 3.5 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment.

Mineral County Route 9

Mineral County Route 9 begins at WV Route 28 and runs southward to the county line. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 45 mph with two 8 to 11-foot lanes and a narrow shoulder. Suggested speed on some curves is as low as 15 mph, but generally ranges from 20 to 35 mph. There are also some clear zone restrictions.

Of the 13.5 miles of this roadway, approximately 3,500 feet, or 4.9 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 15,000 feet, or 21.1 percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 9.9 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 10 percent for this type of roadway facility.

Mineral County Route 11

Mineral County Route 11 begins at WV Route 46 and runs southward to the county line. The speed limit ranges from 30 to 55 mph with a reduction to 25 mph through Burlington. There are two 8- to 11-foot lanes with little to no shoulder. Advisories posted along this roadway include horse crossings, slippery when wet, and 30 mph on curves. There is also a 20-ton bridge weight restriction in Burlington near the intersection with U.S. Route 50/U.S. Route 220. The majority of roadway has no centerline markings and also contains severe clear zone restrictions.

Of the 18.3 miles of this roadway, approximately 3,100 feet, or 3.2 percent of the entire segment, exhibits substandard horizontal alignment and approximately 6,400 feet, or 6.6

*Purpose and Need Statement*

percent, exhibits substandard vertical alignment. Additionally, 0.4 percent of the segment is steeper than the maximum design criteria of 10 percent for this type of roadway facility.

### **6.3 System Linkage in the Project Area**

#### Airports

The Greater Cumberland Regional Airport is located near Cumberland, off of Canal Parkway and Airport Drive, via MD Route 51. The airport is owned by the Potomac Highlands Airport Authority and is one of four primary airports serving western Maryland. Commuter air service was provided between the airport and Hagerstown Regional Airport and Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) until January 2006 when *Independence Air*, the airport's last remaining commercial carrier, ceased operations.

The Grant County Airport near Petersburg is the only other publicly owned air facility in the area. The airport is owned by the Grant County Airport Authority and serves general aviation.

#### Public Transit

Fixed-route bus service is provided in Cumberland and the surrounding Maryland communities of LaVale, Cresaptown, and Frostburg, among others. Bus service is also provided in Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, and Mineral counties via the Potomac Valley Transit Authority. Various social service agencies also provide demand-responsive transit service throughout the entire project area.

#### Railroads

Amtrak provides passenger service in the area with stations at Cumberland, Martinsburg, and Harper's Ferry, with connecting service to Washington, D.C., to the east, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the west.

#### Intermodal Facilities

There are no intermodal facilities in the vicinity of the project area.

## **7.0 Traffic Analysis**

The effectiveness of a roadway system to provide adequate traffic service is typically measured

---

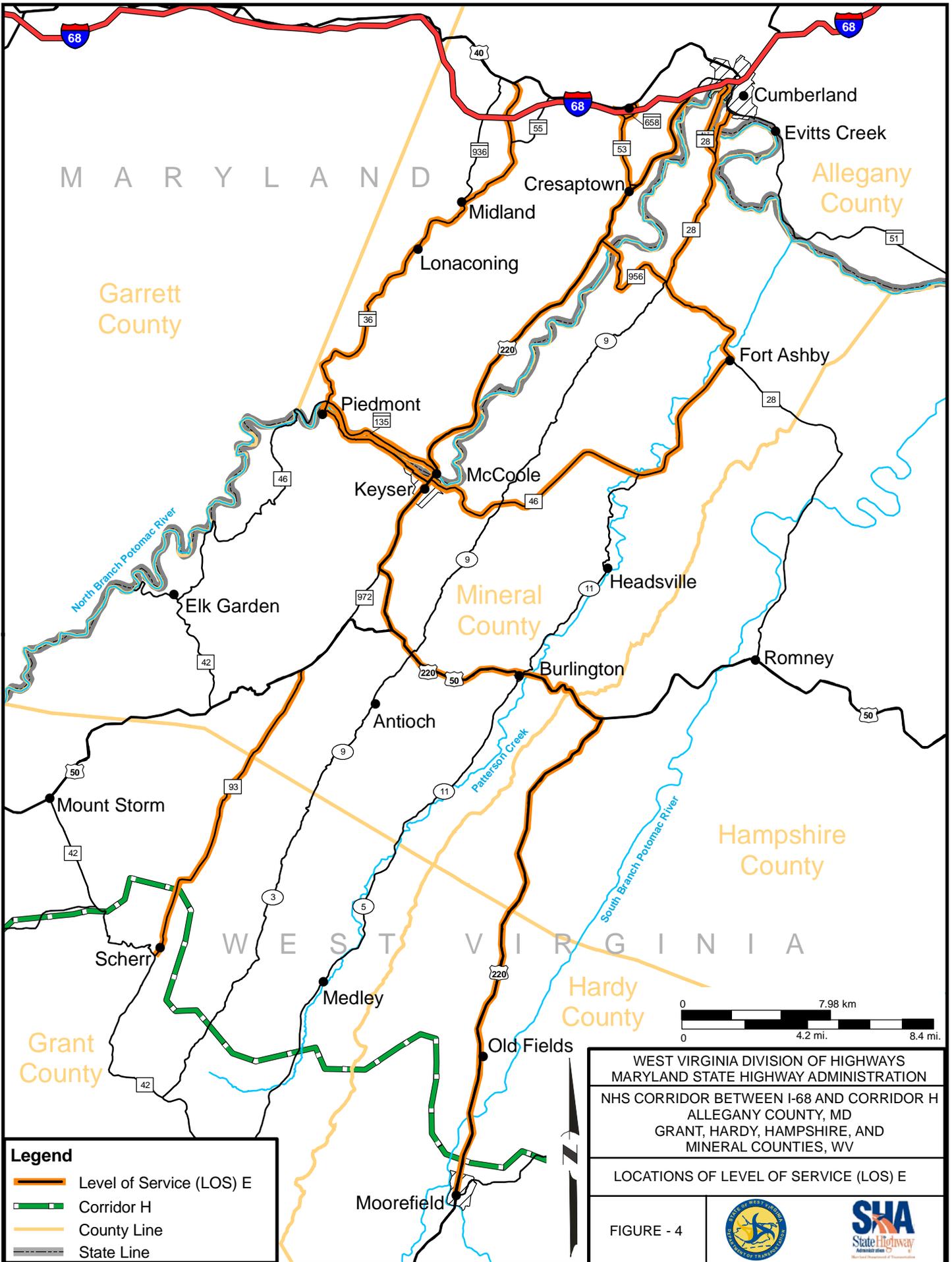
*Purpose and Need Statement*

in terms of Level of Service (LOS). Levels of Service describe the operation of a given highway by establishing a range of “A” to “F.” LOS “A” represents the best operation of a roadway and LOS “F” represents the worst. Although the four-lane roadways in the northern portions of the study area exhibit sufficient levels of service through the corridor, several traffic segments in the area do not. Data collected during the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* showed LOS D occurring on MD Route 53 and major segments of U.S. Route 220. Though considered an acceptable level of operation in urban places, LOS D is assumed to be unacceptable in more rural areas. Much of the study area falls within such rural areas. Under LOS D, speed and traffic maneuverability is severely restricted and driver comfort declines.

Based on updated highway capacity modeling completed specifically for the development of the DEIS, all of the locations examined in the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study*, as well as several other locations in the current project area, were found to be functioning at LOS E. Figure 4 shows areas where conditions now exhibit LOS E. This is typical of what is generally predicted on two-way, two-lane highways of a similar nature. Even at volumes that are far from the actual physical capacity of the roadway, lower speeds prevail and the time spent following another vehicle tends to be high, resulting in poor LOS.

As expected, traffic volumes reported in the *North South Appalachia Corridor* were highest in the vicinity of Cumberland and on West Virginia’s rural routes. On some segments of the principal roadways, truck traffic accounted for up to 20 percent. The high percentage of truck traffic, though necessary for local and regional commerce, creates safety conflicts with automobile users, especially on narrow-lane roadways in mountainous terrain.

Recent data collected by the WVDOH and MDSHA (*West Virginia Traffic Flow Maps for Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, and Marshall Counties, 2005*, and *Maryland Traffic Volume Map for Allegany County, 2004*) show that traffic has remained consistent in some parts of the study area and increased in others. Traffic volumes on U.S. Route 220 south of Cumberland are 14,125 AADT. South of Keyser, traffic volumes have also remained consistent from the previous study, hovering around 10,000 AADT. Traffic on the more rural roads of the study area, especially WV Routes 93 and 972, has seen minimum AADT growth from 1,200 to 2,200. Heavy truck traffic is still found throughout the study area, ranging from 5 to 10 percent in several locations. Current and projected future traffic and LOS information for the area’s roadways are shown in Table 2.



**TABLE 2**  
**Current and Future Traffic and Levels of Service**

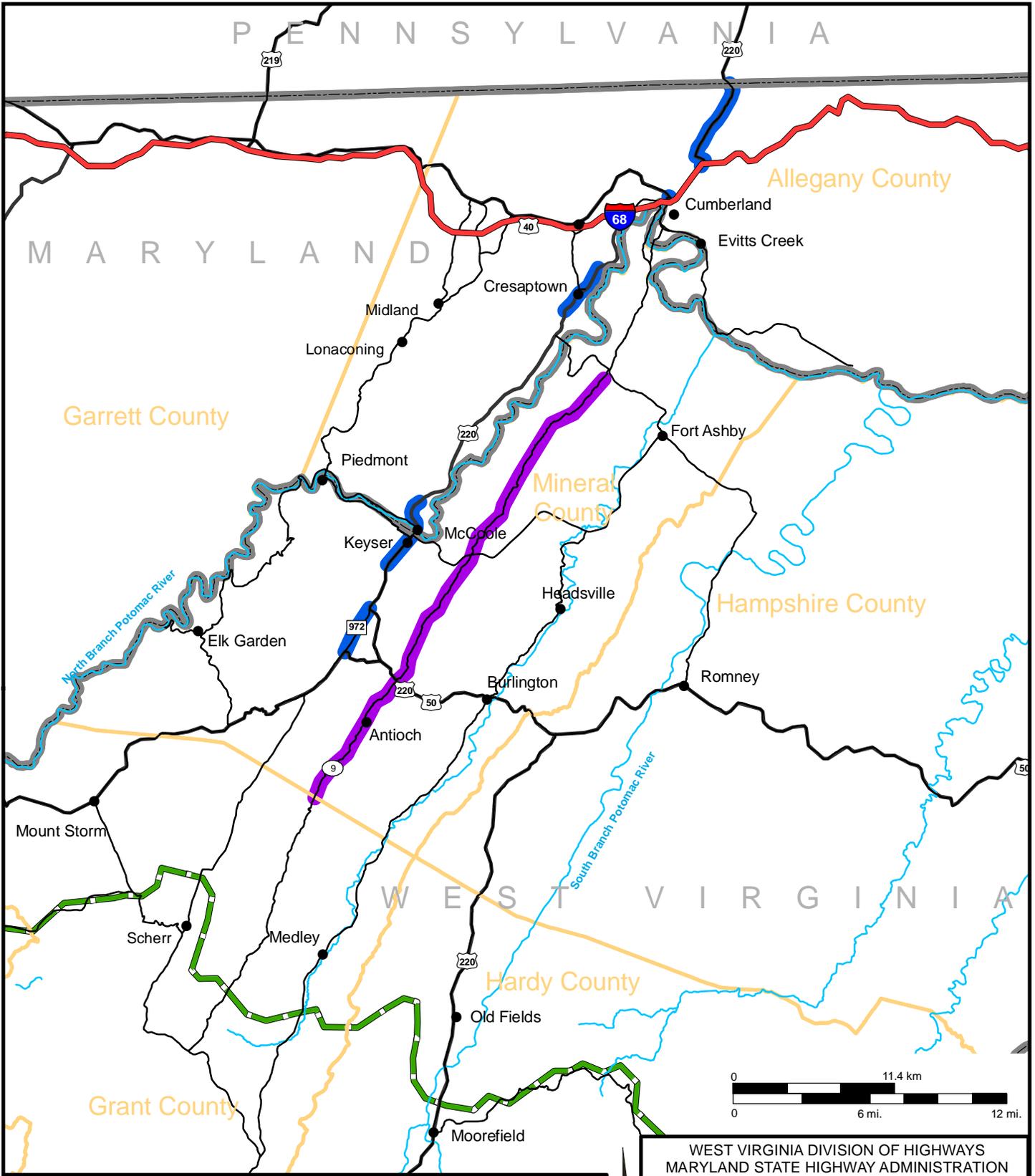
Route	Segment	Current AADT	Current LOS	Year 2025 AADT	Year 2025 LOS
U.S. 220	Moorefield to Junction	3,800	E	5,600	E
	Junction to New Creek	4,700	E	7,000	E
	New Creek to State Line	4,400	E	6,500	E
	State Line to MD 53	10,125	E	12,400	F
	MD 53 to I-68	14,125	E	20,200	F
MD 36	Westernport to Frostburg	8,150	E	11,650	F
MD 53	U.S. 220 to I-68	14,575	E	20,800	E
MD 135	Westernport to Keyser	6,975	E	9,950	E
WV 28	Ft. Ashby to WV 956	9,300	E	14,700	E
WV 28	WV 956 to Cumberland	9,900	E	15,700	E
WV 46	Westernport to Keyser	2,000	E	3,300	E
	Keyser to Ft. Ashby	3,200	E	5,300	E
WV 93	Scherr to New Creek	2,200	E	3,400	E
WV 956	WV 28 to US 220	5,200	E	8,000	E

As shown on the table, traffic volumes are expected to increase by the year 2025 for all parts of the study area. Without major transportation improvements, the roadways will continue to experience LOS E and three are expected to drop to LOS F.

## 8.0 Safety Analysis

Accident data collected as part of the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* showed that several travel segments throughout the area exhibited accident rates higher than the statewide average for similar types of roadways. Roadway sections along U.S. Route 220 and WV Route 93 exceeded the statewide averages. These segments are shown on Figure 5.

Updated crash rates on each of the major roadways in the project area highway network are shown in Table 3. Because of different reporting procedures in each state, crash rates were analyzed for different lengths of time. For the Maryland roadways, the crash rates are based on the years January 2001 through December 2005. For the West Virginia roadways, they are based on data from July 2002 through June 2005. The timeframes are consistent with typical study parameters in support of other projects in Maryland and West Virginia and are sufficient samples of data from steady state conditions. Additionally, there were no major changes to project area roadways during the period that could affect the crash data analysis.



**Legend**

- █ Roadway Segments with Accident Rates Higher than the Statewide Average (N/S Appalachia Corridor Study)
- █ Roadway Segments with Crash Rates Higher than the Statewide Average (updated data)
- █ Corridor H
- █ County Line
- █ State Line

WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV  
 ROADWAY SEGMENTS WITH ACCIDENT RATES  
 HIGHER THAN THE STATEWIDE AVERAGE

FIGURE - 5

Purpose and Need Statement

Only one of the segments, Mineral County Route 9, had a crash rate higher than the statewide average for similar highways. There were nine segments in West Virginia, however, that had a crash rate higher than the statewide average for expressways of 1.45 crashes per million vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Those segments include the following:

- WV Route 972 from U.S. Route 220 to U.S. Route 50
- Grant County Route 3 from the County Line to Oak Hill
- WV Route 28 from Romney to the MD/WV State Line
- WV Route 956 from WV Route 28 to the MD/WV State Line
- U.S. Route 220 from Moorefield to the MD/WV State Line
- WV Route 46 from Elk Garden to WV Route 28
- U.S. Route 50 from Mt. Storm to Romney
- Mineral County Route 11 from WV Route 28 to the County Line
- Mineral County Route 9 from WV Route 28 to the County Line

**TABLE 3**  
**Crash Rates for Project Area Roadways**

Route	Segment	State	Crash Rate per Million VMT	Statewide Average
I-68	Exit 34 to Exit 47	MD	0.23	0.54
MD 135	Westernport to Keyser	MD	0.60	1.49
MD 36	Westernport to Frostburg	MD	0.63	1.32
US 220	MD/WV State Line to I-68	MD	0.66	1.59
MD 53	US 220 to I-68	MD	1.15	1.99
WV 28A	WV 28 to MD/WV State Line	WV	0.62	3.06
WV 42	Mt. Storm to WV 93	WV	1.01	3.06
Grant CR 5	County Line to Lahmansville	WV	1.14	3.80
WV 42	US 50 to MD/WV State Line	WV	1.36	3.06
WV 93	Scherr to New Creek	WV	1.39	3.06
WV 972	US 220 to US 50	WV	1.59	3.06
Grant CR 3	County Line to Oak Hill	WV	1.92	3.80
WV 28	Romney to MD/WV State Line	WV	2.11	3.80
WV 956	WV 28 to MD/WV State Line	WV	2.14	3.80
US 220	Moorefield to MD/WV State Line	WV	2.34	3.80
WV 46	Elk Garden to WV 28	WV	2.45	3.80
US 50	Mt. Storm to Romney	WV	2.5	3.80
Mineral CR 11	WV 28 to Grant County Line	WV	3.67	3.80
Mineral CR 9	WV 28 to Grant County Line	WV	3.98	3.80

## 9.0 Growth and Development

The existing transportation system is a critical factor hindering economic development in the project area. The Appalachian regions of Maryland and West Virginia have been hampered by a surface transportation system adapted to mountainous terrain and an inadequate system of regional highways. Although there have been tremendous improvements in other parts of both states, the region has been unable to meet the demands of all roadway users.

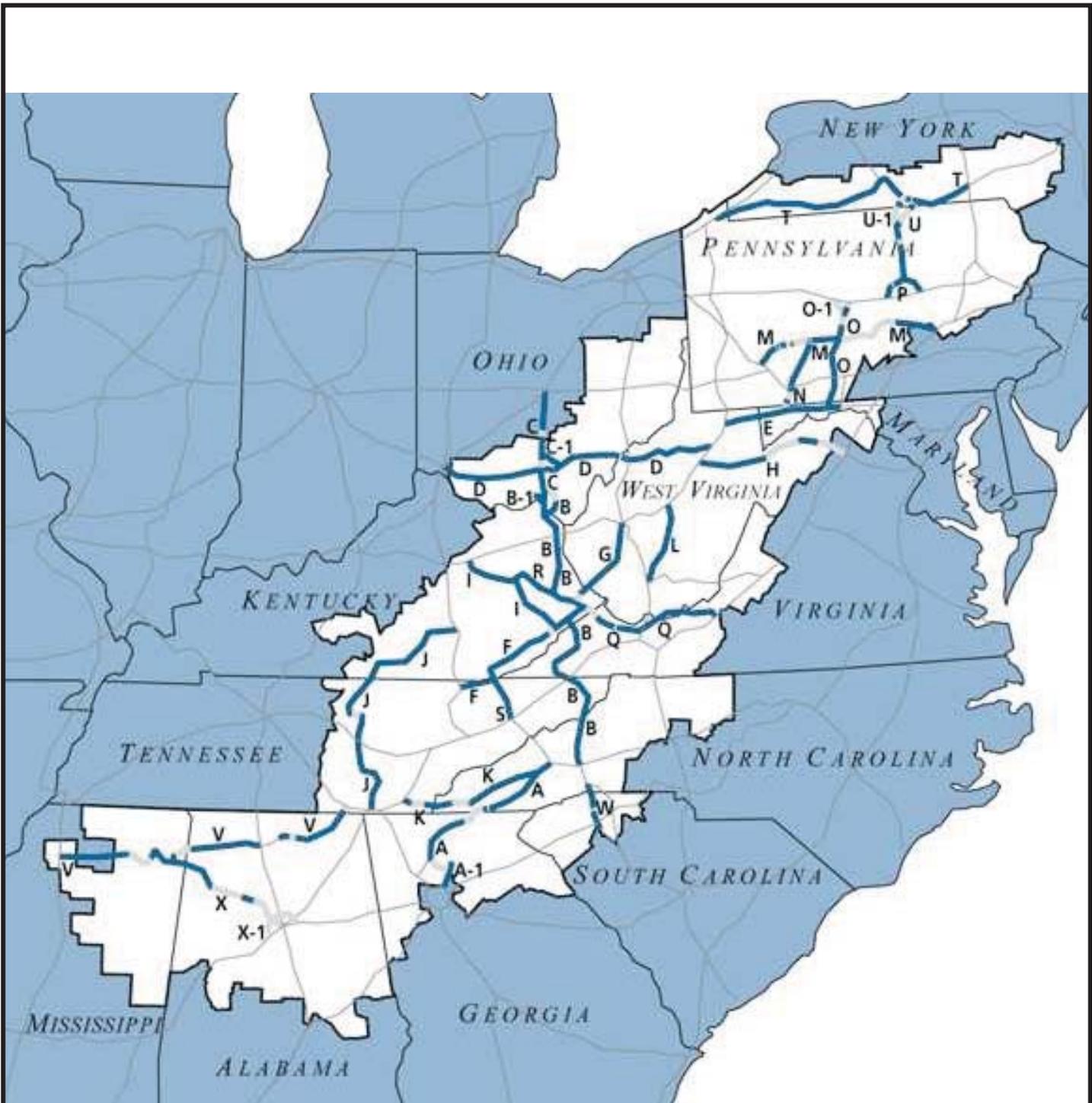
The number of jobs located within the region is approximately 43,000. Past studies have shown that with specific transportation investments in north-south access, the area could support additional jobs. The *North South Appalachia Corridor Study* noted that there would be a 19 percent growth in job opportunities with such transportation improvements, the highest rate of job growth found at the time. Expected job growth by industrial sector is shown in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**Expected Job Growth by Industrial Sector**

Industrial Sector	Expected New Jobs	Percentage of Total New Growth
Agriculture	90	1.1
Construction	660	8.1
Manufacturing	690	8.4
Transportation & Utilities	580	7.0
Trade, Wholesale & Retail	1,880	22.8
FIRE (fire, insurance, and real estate) & Service	4,330	52.6
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8,230</b>	<b>100</b>

The U.S. Congress authorized construction of the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS) in the *Appalachian Development Act of 1965*. The ADHS was designed to generate economic development in previously isolated areas, supplement the interstate system, connect Appalachia to the interstate system, and provide access to areas within the region as well as to markets in the rest of the nation.

The ADHS is currently authorized at 3,090 miles. By the end of FY 2005, approximately 85 percent of the authorized system was complete or under construction (see Figure 6). Corridor H, the southern terminus of the proposed project, is a part of the ADHS. Although its entire length has not been completely designed yet, parts of Corridor H are already open. When fully



WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV

APPALACHIAN DEVELOPMENT HIGHWAY SYSTEM

FIGURE - 6  
 NOT TO SCALE



**Legend**

- Open to Traffic
- Not Open to Traffic
- Interstate System

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission,  
 September 30, 2005

*Purpose and Need Statement*

opened, Corridor H will provide an additional east-west travel choice for the public and commerce. Currently, I-68 is the principal east-west highway in the region.

Similarly, Congress approved the NHS in 1995 to include roadways important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. Although the NHS includes only 4 percent of the nation's roads, it carries more than 40 percent of all highway traffic, 75 percent of heavy truck traffic, and 90 percent of tourist traffic. The proposed project will be part of the NHS and also link I-68 in the north to Corridor H in the south. The Interstate Highway System comprises about 30 percent of the NHS roadways. The linkage of these two nationally important highway systems in the region will bring economic and transportation benefits to the area.

In Maryland, the closest NHS roadways providing north-south connections between I-68 and points to the south are U.S. Route 219 (approximately 32 miles to the west) and I-81 (approximately 65 miles to the east). In West Virginia, the closest NHS roadways providing similar connections are also U.S. Route 219 (approximately 30 miles to the west) and U.S. Route 522 (approximately 42 miles to the east). Because there are so few NHS roadways providing suitable connections, north-south travel in the project area is often circuitous and time consuming.

## **10.0 Master Plan**

Highway improvements for the proposed NHS Corridor between I-68 and Corridor H are consistent with growth and development plans at all government levels. At the federal level, the U.S. Congress has established both the Appalachian Development Highway System and the National Highway System – two key components of the proposed project. Additionally, the FHWA has undertaken the DEIS and provided funds for preliminary studies.

At the state level, the proposed project is listed on the *West Virginia Statewide Transportation Improvement Program*. Additionally, construction of a new U.S. Route 220 is listed in the *Maryland Highway Needs Inventory*. To further advance the project, the WVDOH and MDSHA entered into a *Memorandum of Understanding* on May 21, 2004, which established specific parameters, coordination activities, and funding arrangements associated with the study corridor. Both state transportation agencies had previously participated in the development of the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study*, the precursor to the DEIS.

*Purpose and Need Statement*

At the regional level in West Virginia, the *Regional Development Plan Update* (FY 2006), prepared by the Region 8 Planning and Development Council, identified U.S. Route 220 as a roadway critical to the region's economic development. The Region 8 Planning and Development Council was established on May 3, 1972, through the *West Virginia Planning and Development Act of 1972*. As such, the Council is the primary agency for planning and economic development on the regional level for the West Virginia counties of Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, and Pendleton. Specifically, the *Regional Development Plan Update* called for a renewed highway program "to focus on a highway's impact on long term growth." The *Update* went on to identify not only U.S. Route 220, but also U.S. Route 50, WV Route 28, and WV Route 93 as roadways vital to the area's economy. All of these roadways fall within the study area developed for the DEIS. Officials at Region 8 added that economic growth in the area hinges upon an improved north-south transportation corridor.

At the regional level in Maryland, the Cumberland Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has identified upgrades to existing U.S. Route 220 as a proposed major highway improvement. The MPO is the Cumberland area's officially designated agency for carrying out a federally mandated metropolitan planning process. Geographically, the MPO includes most of Allegany County, Maryland, and a small portion of northern Mineral County, West Virginia. One of the MPO's major responsibilities is the annual development of a long-range transportation plan (LRTP) for Cumberland and the surrounding area. In its last update to that transportation plan, the *Cumberland Area Long-Range Transportation Plan, Final Report* (September 28, 2005), the MPO called for construction of "a new U.S. Route 220 that will eventually connect Cumberland with Appalachian Development Highway System Corridor H south of Keyser." Furthermore, the LRTP identified the proposed new transportation corridor as "one of the most significant potential regional highway improvement projects in both Allegany and Mineral counties."

At the local level, four of the five counties within the study area, as well as the City of Cumberland, have developed comprehensive plans. Major transportation improvements in the area are recommended within the *Allegany County Comprehensive Plan 2002 Update* (March 2002), the *Hardy County Comprehensive Plan* (1999), the *Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan* (August 20, 2003), and the *Mineral County Comprehensive Plan: A Vision for the Future* (July 10, 1996).

*Purpose and Need Statement*

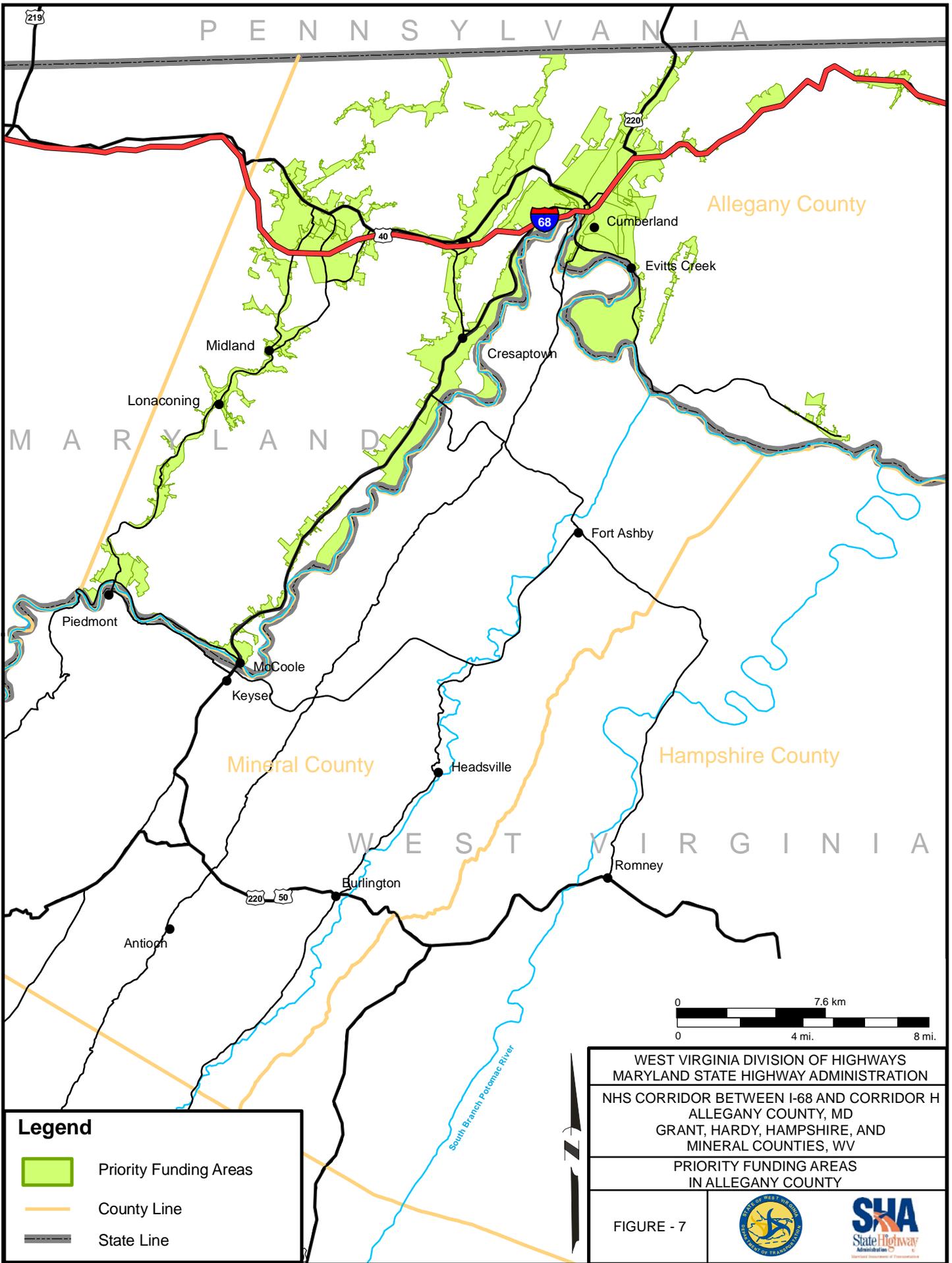
The *Allegany County Comprehensive Plan* contains considerable discussion on the role of U.S. Route 220 as one of the area's major roadways. The plan identifies the need for a transportation network that allows the movement of people and goods with maximum efficiency. It also encourages construction of "a new Route 220 as a four-lane limited access highway that will connect Cumberland with Corridor H."

Recognizing the strong relationship between transportation and land use, comprehensive planning is currently receiving a renewed emphasis in many Maryland communities. In support of these local planning efforts, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation and budget initiatives in 1997 known collectively as smart growth. Smart growth targets programs and funding to support established communities and locally designated growth areas as well as protecting rural areas. Smart growth initiatives also encourage more efficient design for residential, commercial, and industrial development, and emphasize a compatible mix of land uses. They enable local citizens and government officials to develop future plans and growth management strategies in a coordinated and responsible manner.

The *Priority Funding Areas Act*, the primary element of Maryland's smart growth efforts, provides a geographic focus for investment in growth-related infrastructure. It capitalizes on the influence state-sponsored initiatives can have on economic growth and development. Growth-related projects identified in the legislation include highways, sewer and water facilities construction, economic development assistance, and new office facilities. Figure 7 shows the Priority Funding Areas located within Allegany County.

Although an upgrade of U.S. Route 50 is the top transportation priority identified in the *Hampshire County Comprehensive Plan*, U.S. Route 220 is an important roadway for north-south access to both I-68 and Corridor H. Access management issues are of "particular concern" as they relate to roadways falling within the "Corridor H Areas of Influence" (U.S. Route 220 and WV Route 28, among other roads within Hampshire County).

While not specifically identifying a north-south corridor project by name, the *Hardy County Comprehensive Plan* notes that "transportation is the most urgent problem to be addressed within the (comprehensive) plan." The plan did, however, identify completion of Corridor H for its whole length as the most significant road project for Hardy County.



WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 MARYLAND STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION  
 NHS CORRIDOR BETWEEN I-68 AND CORRIDOR H  
 ALLEGANY COUNTY, MD  
 GRANT, HARDY, HAMPSHIRE, AND  
 MINERAL COUNTIES, WV

PRIORITY FUNDING AREAS  
 IN ALLEGANY COUNTY

FIGURE - 7



**Legend**

- Priority Funding Areas
- County Line
- State Line

*Purpose and Need Statement*

On the other hand, the *Mineral County Comprehensive Plan* contains a considerable amount of specific discussion about U.S. Route 220 and other north-south routes through the county, recognizing their important role in the continued vitality of Mineral County. A related study, the *Economic Adjustment Strategy for Mineral County* (1993), suggested that “U.S. Route 220 be upgraded its entire length to provide competitive access for future industrial sites in the county.”

## **11.0 Issues of Concern Raised During Project Scoping**

Public and agency scoping for the project occurred through a combination of meetings and field views held in early May 2006. Public meetings were held in Keyser on May 1<sup>st</sup>, in Moorefield on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and in Cumberland on May 10<sup>th</sup>. About 120 people attended the meetings. Although the public attending the meetings were generally supportive of the project, potential impacts to the Patterson Creek valley were voiced as a major concern from many. Areas of concern within the Patterson Creek valley included potential impacts to farmlands, historic resources, water quality, and the overall environment. Other locales also mentioned as areas of special concern included New Creek, the Burlington Historic District, the rural landscape east of Keyser, Knobley Mountain, Greenland Gap, Old Fields, and Dans Mountain. As with the Patterson Creek valley, concern for these other areas included potential impacts to historic resources, farmlands, and the overall environment.

As part of the scoping process, two separate agency field views were also held in conjunction with the public meetings. The first field view was held on May 3, 2006, and began with a project briefing in Moorefield before traveling into the field. Besides FHWA, WVDOH, and MDSHA staff members, agencies represented that day included USFWS, WVDNR, WV Division of Culture and History, and WV Department of Forestry.

Concerns voiced during the field view included bald eagle habitat, the Indiana bat, the Virginia Big-eared bat, mussels, threatened and endangered plant species associated with shale barrens, wetlands and streams, and the relationship of this project to Corridor H and U.S. Route 50. Discussion about cultural resources was directed toward the need to identify historic districts, archaeological sites, and individual historic properties in the vicinity of the project area.

The second agency field view was held a week later on May 10<sup>th</sup> in LaVale. Besides FHWA, WVDOH, and MDSHA staff members, agencies represented at the second field view included

*Purpose and Need Statement*

USACOE, MDNR, MDE, and MD Department of Planning. Initial concerns included potential impacts to the Dans Mountain Wildlife Management Area. Dans Mountain is an important natural resource. Specific concerns related to Dans Mountain included:

- The amount of contiguous forestland (including a very large tract of contiguous state-owned forest) it represents.
- Habitat values associated with forest interior, wildlife corridors, and Green Infrastructure.
- Its value as public land for recreation as well as habitat. Hunting and other wildlife related recreation is closely related to the significant size and nature of the tract.
- Federal funds were used for the resource. Replacement of such a large contiguous tract of public land and its associated values could pose a major difficulty in both the region and the State.
- Any taking of State land for transportation use from Dans Mountain will trigger a Section 4(f) consideration. The MDNR may be unable to agree to consistency unless every effort has been made to avoid impact. Additionally, conversion of existing public land to a transportation use may require conformance with other federal regulations associated with federal fund sources used at Dans Mountain over the years.

Additional concerns included restoration activities in the North Branch Potomac River watershed, wild trout and long-term resident stocked trout, historic resources, the numerous North Branch Potomac River tributaries flowing east off of Dans Mountain, and additional habitats of significance in the vicinity of Fort Hill and along the riparian corridor of the North Branch Potomac River.

Following the field views and public meetings, written correspondence was received from the U.S. Department of the Interior and the USFWS. Although the Department of the Interior did not express any specific concerns in its letter (May 17, 2006), the USFWS discussed many issues, including potential impacts to several federally listed animal and plant species (Indiana bat, Virginia Big-eared bat, bald eagle, shale barrens rock cress, and sensitive mussel fauna). It also expressed concern for wetlands, riparian areas, and streams in the proposed project area, and reiterated concern over potential impacts to Dans Mountain.

## 12.0 Conclusions

The purpose of this project is to develop an improved transportation corridor as part of the NHS. The improved corridor would connect I-68 in Maryland and Corridor H in West Virginia. Upgraded roadways resulting from this project would provide a better north-south road than what currently exists. Several preliminary needs for the region were identified in the *North South Appalachia Corridor Study*, a multi-state planning effort completed in 2001. Those needs were further expanded under the current effort to address regional mobility, inadequate roadway capacity, safety deficiencies, economic development, and additional system linkage.

Engineering deficiencies exist on most of the project area's major routes. Among the transportation deficiencies found in the project area are numerous curves, reduced speeds, steep grades, a low number of truck climbing lanes, inadequate shoulders, and substandard geometry. The engineering deficiencies contribute to additional concerns about capacity and safety. Inadequate roadway capacity restricts traffic maneuverability and driver comfort. Although traffic volumes are below actual physical capacity on many of the area's roadways, lower speeds prevail. This results in both poor LOS and safety concerns at some locations.

Growth and economic development have been hindered by the area's transportation system. Past studies have shown that there could be an increase of 19 percent in jobs with improved north-south connections. Improvements in north-south travel would also serve to link the area's two most important east-west transportation facilities, I-68 and Corridor H.

Issues of concern have been raised and will be evaluated further as the project progresses. The consequences of taking no action, however, would result in a continuation of inadequate conditions on the existing transportation facilities in the project area. Future transportation demand, especially north-south travel through the region, would not be accommodated and existing levels of service on the transportation facilities could worsen. Safety concerns would also still remain. This could impede the future economic growth of the area and limit its attractiveness for residents and businesses.