

CHAPTER 6

6.4 BIKEWAYS

6.4.1. INTRODUCTION

Consideration of bikeway planning in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan has been a requirement since the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. The subsequent federal transportation bill, the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users, also indicated that safe accommodation of non-motorized users shall be considered during the planning, development and construction of all Federal-aid transportation projects and programs. SAFETEA-LU expired on September 30, 2009, but continues through resolution extensions that allow funding to continue at FY2009 levels while Congress decides on a new surface transportation bill.

Current legislation provides funding for eligible projects in a wide variety of categories including the Surface Transportation Program, Transportation Enhancement Activities, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. The fundamental purpose of a bicycle facility must support the activity as an alternative mode of transportation other than for recreational purposes to be eligible for funding. Connecting major traffic generators, such as shopping malls, employment centers, and educational institutions is considered in the planning process.

Eastgate, as part of the continuing planning process, has developed a Regional Bicycle Plan for the two-county area. Specific policies, programs, and projects will be coordinated through the formation of a committee made up of local officials, park board representatives, members of local bike clubs, and Eastgate staff members, on an as needed basis. It is important to note that Eastgate's role is strictly related to planning and funding and not construction and maintenance.

6.4.2. EXISTING BIKEWAYS

Several bikeways, numerous programmed projects, and many conceptual ideas exist within Eastgate's planning area. Existing facilities in the two-county area vary from small connector paths, to community-length trails, to cross-county bikeways with regional connections (Figure 6.4.1). The main bikeways (and some lesser, but federally funded, bikeways) that exist in the Eastgate area are identified below.

- The Stavich Trail – The Stavich Trail is a 12-mile long, 8-foot wide, paved shared-use path running parallel to the Mahoning River and the rails of the former Youngstown-New Castle streetcar line. The trail originates at Broad Street in Struthers, Ohio, and continues through Lowellville and Poland Township in Mahoning County. From Poland Township, it enters Pennsylvania in Hillsville, and passes through Union Township on its way to New Castle in Lawrence County, Pennsylvania.
- The Newton Falls Trail – The Newton Falls Trail is a 3/4-mile long, 4-foot wide paved trail through downtown Newton Falls. Conceptual extensions exist for this bikeway.
- The Warren Riverwalk – The Warren Riverwalk will be a 5-mile linear park along the Mahoning River in Warren with many bicycle components. Portions of the Riverwalk have already been completed and other sections are currently planned. Conceptual extensions also exist for this bikeway.
- The Mill Creek Park Bikeways – Mill Creek Park has many facilities designated for bicyclists, including bike paths closed to motorized traffic, bike lanes and pedestrian bridges. The bikeways existing in Mill Creek Park include the East Cohasset Hike/Bike Trail, East Newport Hike/Bike Trail, Shields Road Bridge Bike Lane, and the East Golf Hike/Bike Trail.

The East Cohasset Hike/Bike Trail is a 1.5 mile asphalt hike/bike path that is closed to motorized traffic. The East Newport Hike/Bike Trail is a 1.75 mile long, two way hike/bike lane alongside a one-way road. The trail connects to West Newport Drive on the opposite side of Lake Newport via a pedestrian-only bridge across Mill Creek. The 1.5 mile asphalt East Golf Hike/Bike Trail runs from Route 224 to Shields Road. A bike lane exists across the Shields Road bridge over Mill Creek, allowing safer bicycle access to the East Golf Hike/Bike Trail to the south and the East Newport Hike/Bike Trail to the north.

- The Hubbard Bike Lane – The bike lane along SR 616 in Hubbard is a 2-mile long shoulder designated bike lane.
- Bike Routes – Two cross-state bike routes pass through the area. Bicycle Route J connects Marietta, Ohio to Conneaut, Ohio. The Trumbull County portion of Route J has signs to identify the route. Route CT runs from Richmond, Indiana to Petersburg, Ohio. Route CT only passes through a small portion of Mahoning County at the southeast corner.
- The Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway – One of the most noted bikeways in the area is the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway. The Greenway is a 10-foot wide asphalt shared-use path being built on former railroad lines and adjacent corridors. The Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway, when completed, will be a 100 mile multi-modal transportation corridor which will connect Lake Erie to the Ohio River. The Lake-to-River Greenway will begin on the shores of Lake Erie at Ashtabula Harbor, pass through Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana Counties, and end at the banks of the Ohio River in East Liverpool (Figure 6.4.2).

The portions of the Greenway constructed in Eastgate's planning area include the Western Reserve Greenway and Niles Bikeway in Trumbull County and the Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway in Mahoning County. The Western Reserve Greenway begins near West Avenue in the City of Ashtabula in Ashtabula County and continues south into Trumbull County, terminating at Champion Street East, just north of the City of Warren. It is a total of 43 miles long, with 16 of those miles in Trumbull County.

The Niles Greenway connects the City of Niles to the existing Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway and will connect to the future Warren Greenway. The Niles Greenway begins near Robbins Avenue in downtown Niles and ties into the MetroParks Bikeway at the Mahoning-Trumbull County line. The Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway is 11 miles long. It begins at the Mahoning-Trumbull County border in Austintown Township and continues south to Western Reserve Road in Canfield Township.

The Warren Greenway section of the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway is currently under construction. The completed Warren Greenway will run from North River Road south through the City of Warren to Burnett Street East. Phase I will complete most of the Greenway except for a short section downtown.

Figure 6.4.1 – Existing Bikeways

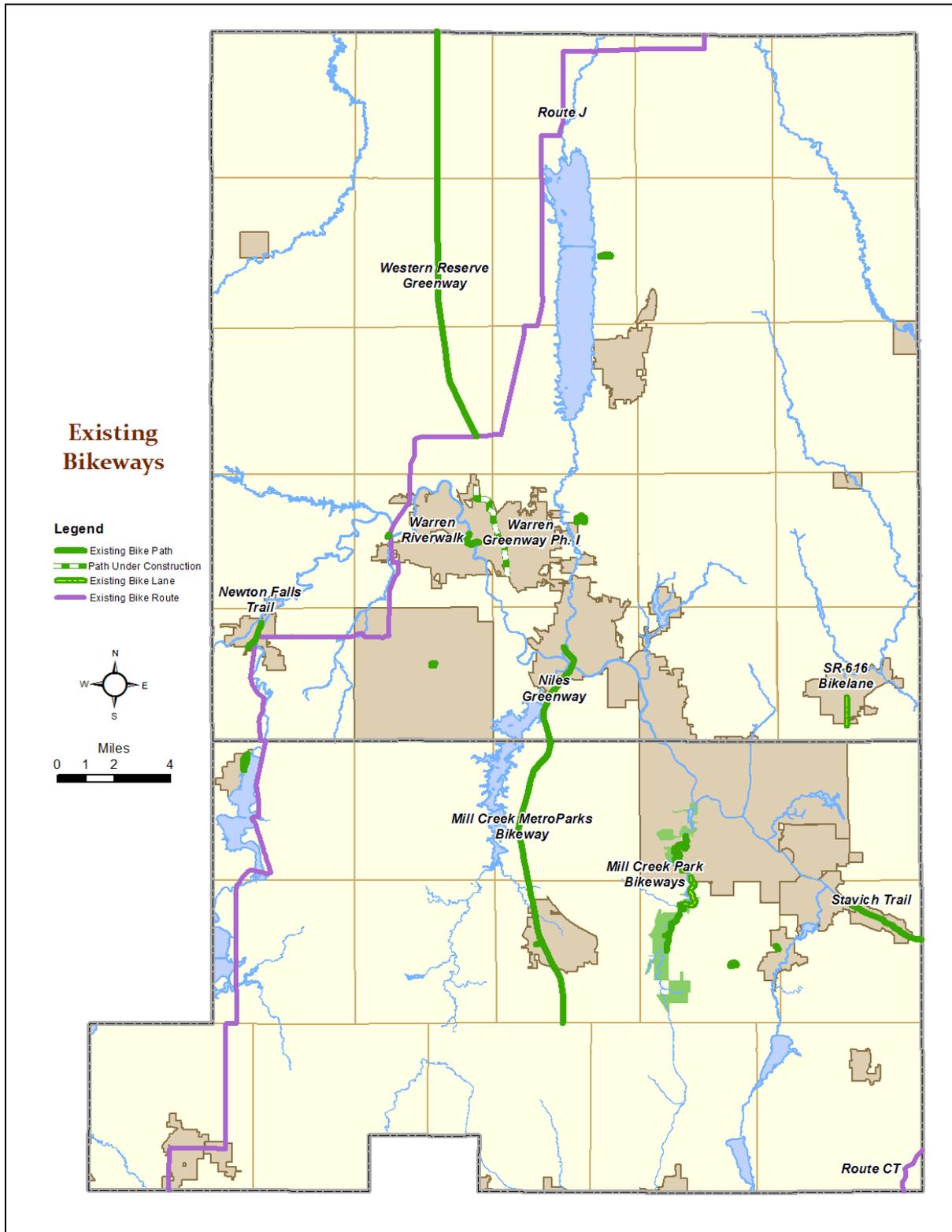
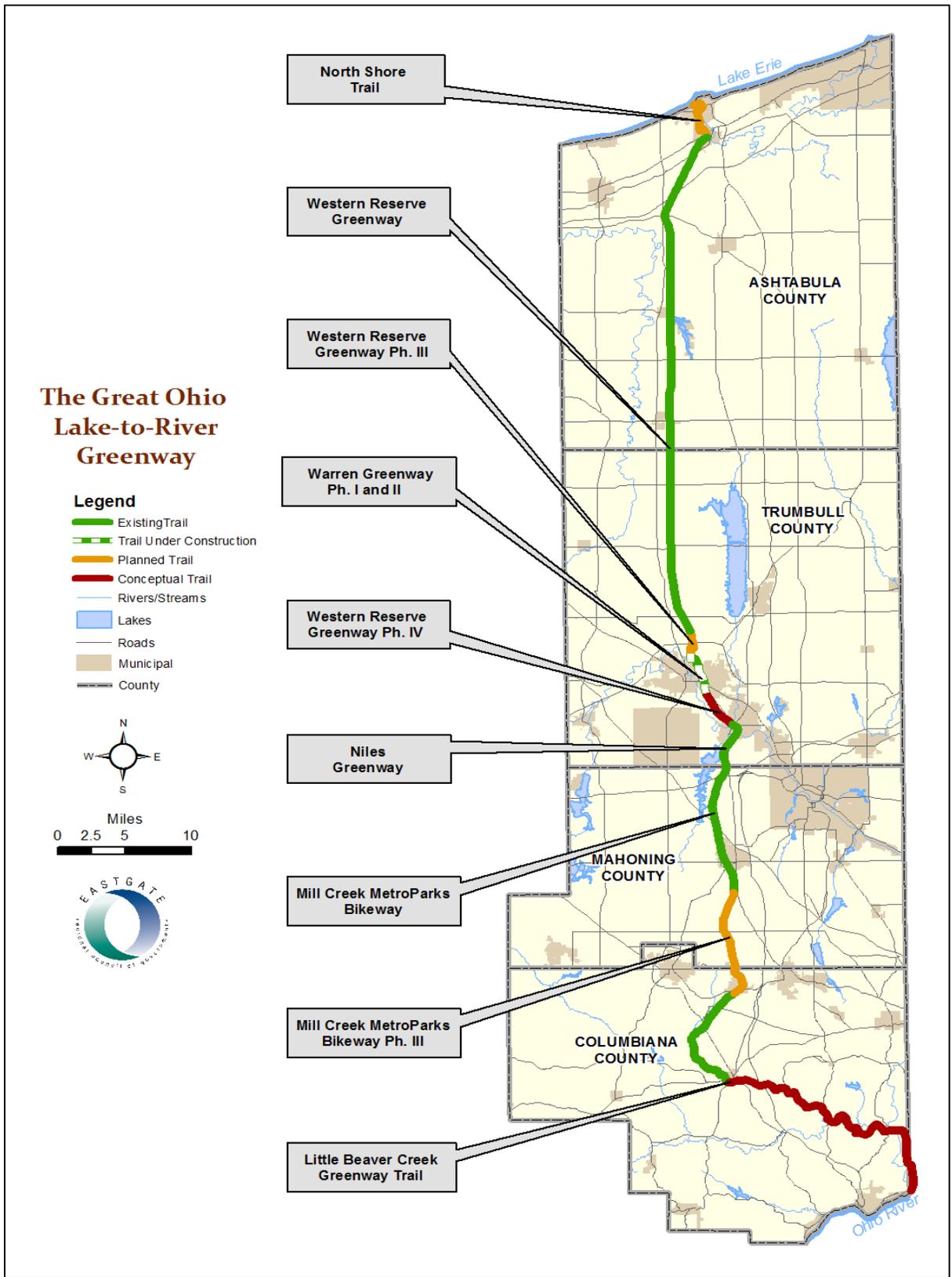


Figure 6.4.2 – The Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway



6.4.3. PLANNED AND PROGRAMMED BIKEWAYS

The majority of the programmed projects in the area are part of the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway, which is now nearing completion. There are, however, other local bikeways moving closer to construction. Figure 6.4.3 identifies the bikeways currently planned or programmed bikeways in the Eastgate area.

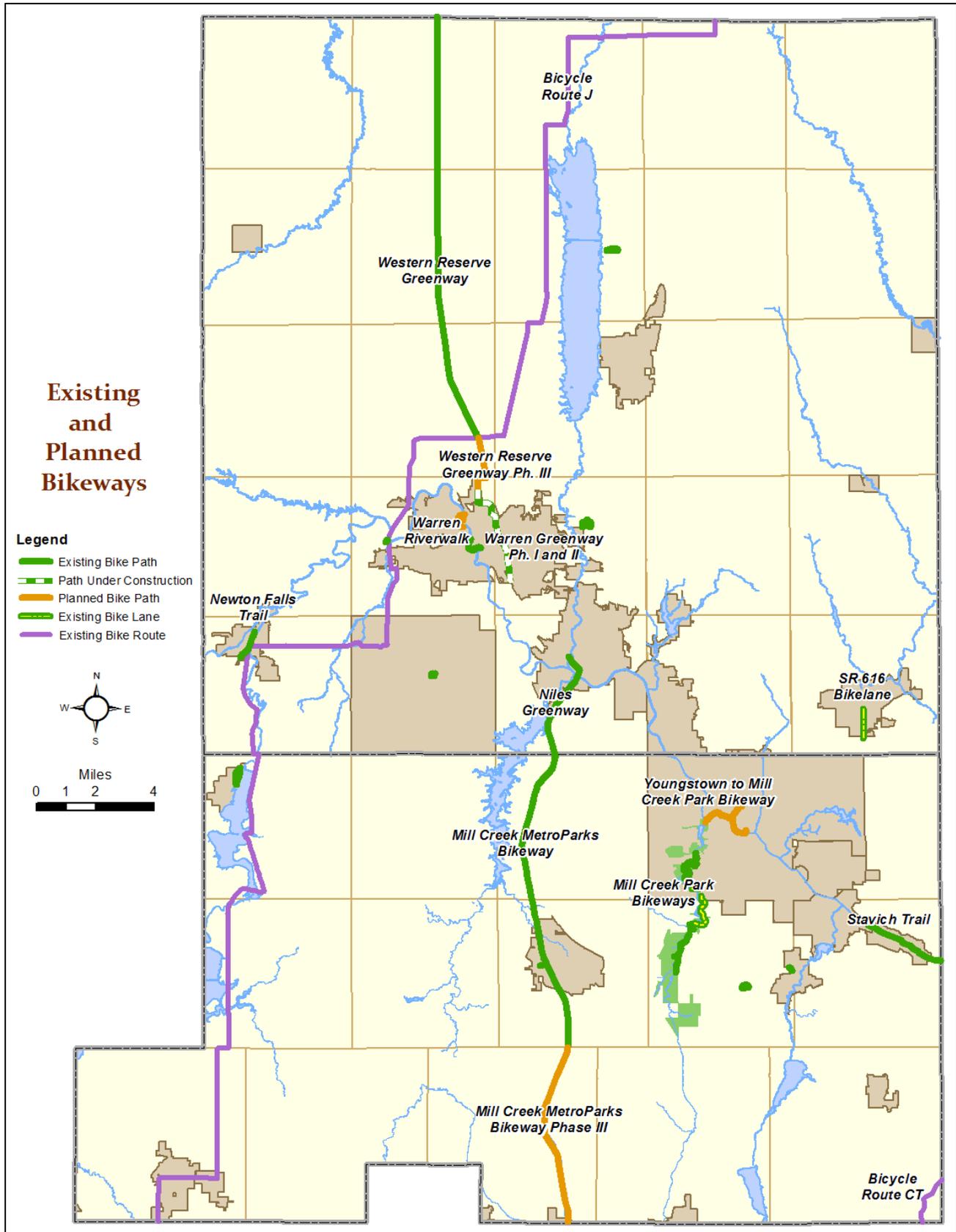
- The Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway – Several sections of the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway are currently moving toward construction and will help to complete the regional bikeway. The sections which are currently programmed for construction include the Western Reserve Greenway Phase III, Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway Phase III and the Warren Greenway Phase II.

The Western Reserve Greenway Phase III will extend the existing Western Reserve Greenway south to the City of Warren. It will begin at Champion Street East, just north of Warren, and end at North River Road and the Warren City limits. It will connect to the Warren Greenway Phase I currently under construction. The Warren Greenway Phase II will complete the Warren Greenway through the central downtown area.

The Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway Phase III will extend the MetroParks Bikeway for 6.25 miles to the south, beginning at Western Reserve Road where the existing bikeway ends. Phase III will end at the Columbiana County line in Washingtonville.

- Warren Riverwalk – The Warren Riverwalk will serve as a bicycle and pedestrian link through Warren and, when complete, will connect Perkins and Packard Park, the Warren Community Amphitheater, the historic Kinsman House and possibly other bikeways, including the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway.
- Youngstown to Mill Creek Park Bikeway – The bikeway will connect Youngstown State University at the Andrews Student Recreation and Wellness Center, the Covelli Center, and Mill Creek Park. Planning for this project is nearly complete and the project will soon be programmed.

Figure 6.4.3 – Planned and Programmed Bikeways



6.4.4. CONCEPTUAL NETWORK

The vision of expanding the existing bicycle network within our region and making connections with neighboring counties and states has appeal. Regional bikeways would serve as an alternative transportation option and at the same time provide recreational opportunities. Many conceptual bikeway ideas currently exist in Mahoning and Trumbull County (Figure 6.4.4).

The conceptual bikeways identified do not represent future plans, with the exception of the Western Reserve Greenway Phase IV. Phase IV will connect the City of Warren at Burnett Street East to Robbins Avenue in the City of Niles and would be the final section of the Greenway in the Eastgate area. Initial discussions on this project have begun, but official plans and funding sources have yet to be determined. Eastgate is committed to completing the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway and will provide funding and planning support to the Phase IV project sponsor.

Eastgate will support the development of other conceptual bikeways, but is not yet committed to any other particular projects. The amount of discussion on and feasibility regarding each conceptual bikeway varies greatly. Some of the conceptual bikeways are very feasible and are simply waiting for leadership and funding. Others are simply ideas that represent a vision of future regional connections. Locations of conceptual bikeways represent locations where regional connections could be made, where existing bikeways could be expanded, where spurs from existing or planned bikeways would be ideal and where abandoned or active railways exist.

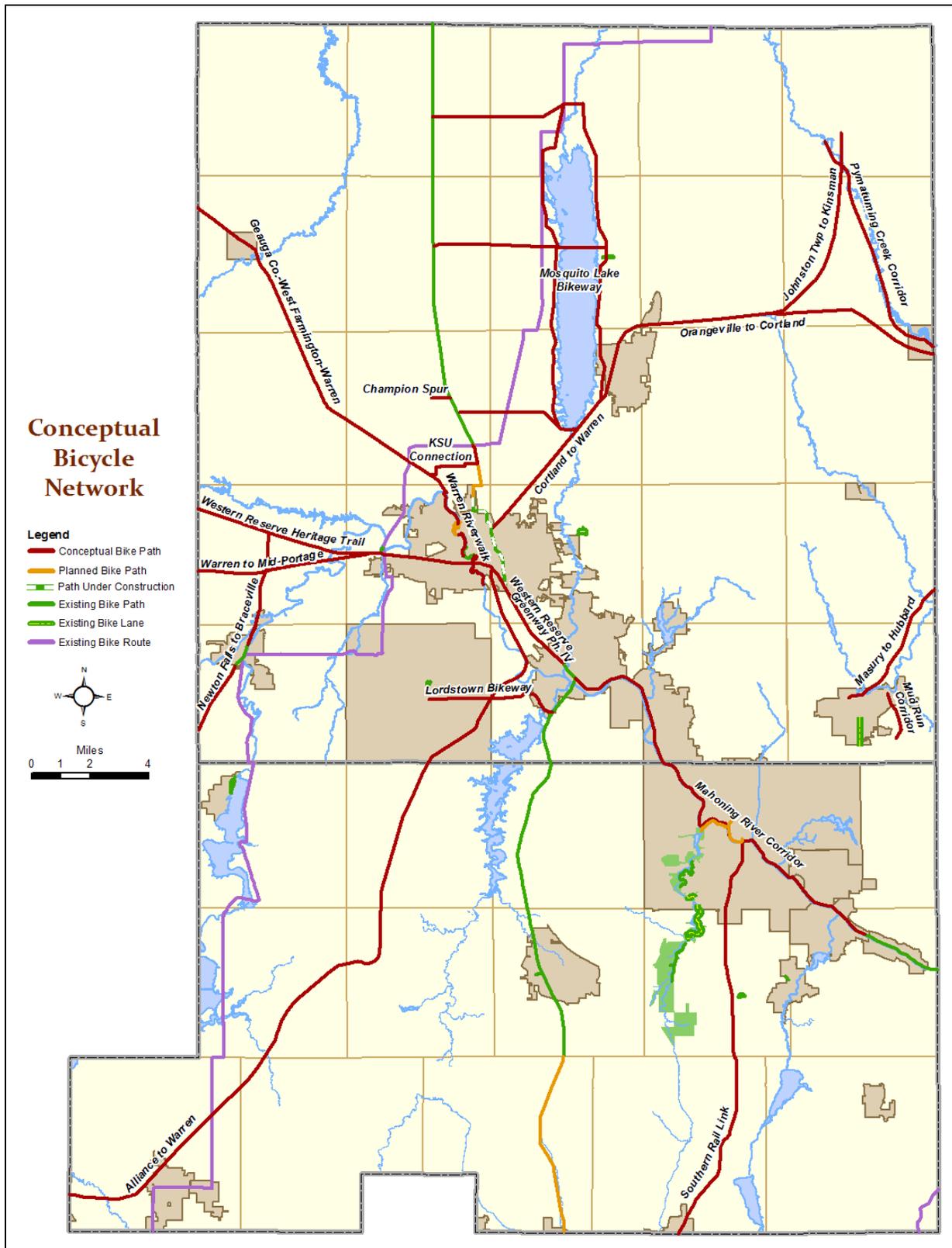
Some of the conceptual bikeways that represent the possibility of regional connections include the Western Reserve Heritage Trail and the Mahoning River Corridor Trail. These trails would connect the cities of Cleveland and Pittsburgh via the Mahoning Valley. The regional corridor would utilize and connect several trails including the Portage County MetroParks' Headwaters Trail, the Great Ohio Lake to River Greenway and the Stavich Trail. Much of the proposed trail would ideally follow abandoned rail rights of way.

Existing bikeways provide obvious locations for conceptual extensions. A conceptual extension exists for the Newton Falls Trail which would connect it to other conceptual bikeways. The Warren Riverwalk also has conceptual extensions, both north and south, which would connect the Riverwalk area to the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway and other conceptual bikeways.

There are several conceptual spurs off of the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway which would provide local connections to this regional bikeway. Conceptual ideas include connections to schools (such as Champion High School and Kent State Trumbull), to local communities (Lordstown), and to local parks and recreation centers (Mosquito Lake).

Many of the conceptual bikeways locations are based on railroad right-of-way. Some railways are still active but have conceptual bikeways proposed for their location should they ever go out of service. The conceptual Southern Rail Link connecting the Mahoning River and Columbiana County is one example of a conceptual bikeway utilizing a currently active railway.

Figure 6.4.4 – Conceptual Bikeway Network



6.4.5. PRIORITY ROUTES

The evaluation of existing conditions and the development of priorities is one of the first steps in moving toward a regional bikeway network. An inventory report was previously developed by Eastgate in 1997 to identify and prioritize conditions along roadways and document their potential for use as bicycle routes. The inventory report was developed in cooperation with area bicyclists who recommended that specific routes be available to provide service between local residential neighborhoods and public or commercial attractions.

Eastgate analyzed and evaluated their recommendations while taking into consideration traffic volumes, posted speeds, observed speeds, width of outside lanes and the presence or absence of connectivity at activity centers. Roads were assigned a priority rating as shown in Table 6.4.1.

Table 6.4.1 – Priority Rating

Priority 1	Route segments that will require major rehabilitation to be conducive to bicycle travel.
Priority 2	Route segments that are somewhat conducive to bicycle travel, but are in need of minor rehabilitation.
Priority 3	Route segments that are relatively better for bicycle travel, but planning activities and rehabilitation may still be warranted.

The resulting map (Figure 6.4.5) was updated to reflect major roadway improvements which have occurred since the original inventory was documented. A new map is currently underway which will rate roads on the functional classification network by bicycle suitability. The new bicycle suitability map will replace Figure 6.4.5 and can be used for the same purpose; to identify where improvements are needed. The bicycle suitability map will also aid cyclist in route planning.

Figure 6.4.5 – Roadway Priority Routes

