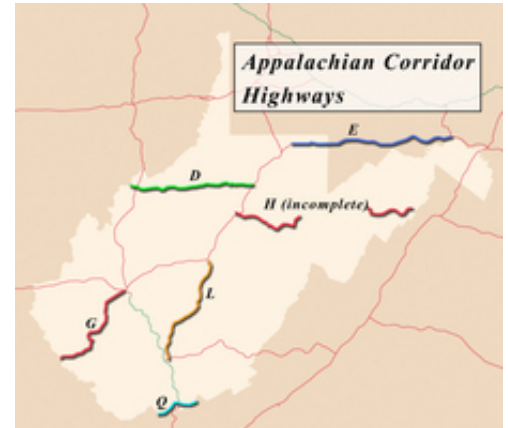


Appalachian Corridor Highways

Development of West Virginia's Appalachian Corridor highways began in 1965, when U.S. Sen. [Jennings Randolph](#) helped to create the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#). The Appalachian Development Highway System was created under the Appalachian Regional Commission to attract industry and diversify the economic base by building good roads throughout the previously isolated region. Originally including 23 individual corridors designated alphabetically from A to W, the 3,285-mile system was designed to link the [Interstate highways](#) of the 13 Appalachian states. West Virginia's 424-mile system included six routes, designated D, E, G, H, L, and Q.



Corridor D (U.S. 50) was designated as an 82-mile four-lane highway from Ohio to I-77 at Parkersburg and on to I-79 at Clarksburg. Seventy-two miles of the highway were built from Parkersburg to Clarksburg by the late 1970s. After sufficient funding was secured, a bridge over the Ohio was completed and opened to traffic June 13, 2008. The bridge spans historic [Blennerhassett Island](#) though there is no access to the island from the highway. The bridge completed construction of Corridor D.

Corridor E, completed in the late 1970s as U.S. 48 and redesignated in 1992 as Interstate 68, is a 32-mile link from I-79 near Morgantown eastward to I-70 near Hancock, Maryland.

Corridor G (U.S. 119) is a 79-mile route linking Kentucky near Williamson with I-64 at Charleston. Corridor G is also known as the [Robert C. Byrd](#) Freeway, because Byrd helped to secure a major part of the funding for it and other corridors. West Virginia's portion of the highway was complete by the 1990s.

Corridor H follows U.S. 33 from I-79 at Weston to Elkins and will move from there through the eastern mountains. The building of this road was controversial, arousing strong passions for and against. Decades of public debate and legal battles aired the essential question of whether previously isolated areas should be preserved or opened to development. Historic and environmental concerns for the remaining 100 miles were being addressed as construction on several sections began in 2000. Despite controversy, additional sections of the road have been opened. It is now complete from Weston past Elkins to Kerens, and from Forman to Wardensville. Construction is under way on a section between Forman and Bismark, and the Division of Highways awarded a contract for a section between Bismark to the State Route 93 connector in Tucker County.

Corridor H is the only significant portion of the Appalachian Highway System in West Virginia that remains incomplete in 2012.

Corridor L (U.S. 19) is a 70-mile link between I-77 near Beckley and I-79 near Sutton. Including the spectacular [New River Gorge Bridge](#), the road was completed in the 1970s with four lanes only from U.S. 60 south. Continuing increases in traffic resulted in upgrading the remainder to four lanes, with the final segments from Summersville northward completed at the end of the 1990s.

Corridor Q (U.S. 460), a 27-mile route through [Mercer County](#) completed in the 1970s, connects via the Virginia portion of U.S. 460 to I-81.

Written by [Carol Melling](#)

