

Chapter 5

Transportation and Roads

The City of Pikeville remains the point of convergence for four major highways serving five surrounding counties in three adjacent states: Letcher, Floyd & Martin Counties in Kentucky, Mingo County, West Virginia and Wise County, Virginia. They also connect Pikeville to major cities in Kentucky (Lexington, Louisville and Ashland), as well as metropolitan areas in Tennessee (Knoxville, Johnson City), North Carolina (Asheville), West Virginia (Charleston) and Ohio (Portsmouth, Columbus). The four highways -- US Route 23 (north-south), US Route 119 (north-south), US Route 460 (east-west) and Kentucky Route 80 (east-west) see more than 30,000 cars each day, and serve as important connector routes between the Midwest and the Southeast. Pikeville is easily accessible to surrounding towns and cities, including Prestonsburg, Paintsville, Inez, Jenkins, Whitesburg, and Hazard, Kentucky, Williamson, West Virginia and Wise and Pound, Virginia. As the largest of the surrounding cities, places Pikeville well-positioned to serve as a tertiary center for goods and services.

There have been significant improvements to many of these highways over the last eight years since the 2005 Comprehensive Plan:

- US Route 119, Corridor G, between Pikeville and South Williamson had all segments completed as four-lane, divided highway in March 2008 when the final segment between Pikeville and John's Creek opened. The construction of this section of Corridor G, part of the Appalachian Highway Development System, required extensive design and construction: portions of the road were moved, mountable medians and jersey barriers were installed, numerous highwalls were constructed, and four twin steel-box girder bridges were erected. One of the twin steel-box girder bridge pairs is notable for being more than 1,200 feet long, and is the only one of its kind in Kentucky.

Improved and safer entrance and exit ramps and a modified diamond interchange were also installed. This reconstruction elevated traveler comfort by removing two sets of hair-pin turns over mountains, improved traffic flow by removing lights, turns and making the entire route four lane, and improved safety for the numerous trucks, school buses and automobiles which travel this corridor daily between rural areas of West Virginia and parts of Pike County and the City of Pikeville.

- Significant improvements on US Route 23 have also occurred since 2005. Designated as the Country Music Highway in 1997, the 32 mile section through Pike County is now nearly all four-lane. The route around the City of Pikeville includes the newest section of road through the Pikeville Cut-Through, with efficient online and exit ramps, and few remaining traffic lights. The section just north of the City at Coal Run has seen improved traffic flow with extended lanes, improved coordination of traffic lights, and additional turn lanes and arrows. Just south of the Cut Through there remains a section with several traffic lights but traffic congestion is rare. Repaving, new medians and wider shoulders have all occurred since the last comprehensive plan. The improvements to Route 23 have reduced commuter time for students, workers and visitors coming to Pikeville from the north and south and improved safety in and around the City.

The proposed Interstate 66, Southern Kentucky Corridor/ TransAmerica Corridor, will more directly connect Pikeville to Hazard, London and Somerset to the West and to the proposed King Coal Highway in West Virginia to the northeast, improving access to Pikeville even more. However, this extension of Interstate 66 through Kentucky has been discussed for more than a decade, with little indication that construction will start any time in the near future. Ongoing support of the project by state and federal congressional representatives continues, but funding is severely limited, and other sections of the road in Kentucky have been indefinitely postponed as a result of environmental and economic concerns. The City of Pikeville continues to support this project, and provided a letter of support to the Federal Department of Transportation. As it seems unlikely that I-66 will be constructed in the near future, the City should refrain from developing any future plans which would be dependent on this corridor.

Traffic flow on smaller roads into and within the City has also improved. The Thompson Road widening project was completed, adding a turn lane to improve traffic flow in and out of an expanding major retail area. The City of Pikeville has instituted a comprehensive paving and resurfacing maintenance program and schedule, and has improved drainage in the Downtown area and added a drainage maintenance schedule. This has improved road safety conditions and reduced hazardous conditions on wet road surfaces.

Some desired improvements outlined in the last comprehensive plan and since then were not possible as a result of geographical or economic limitations:

1. Hiffman/ Chloe Road Intersection: there is not enough room for a turn lane on the by-pass road at this juncture
2. Cassady Boulevard Widening: this corridor cannot be widened outside the existing boundaries based on the transportation engineering study
3. Cassady Boulevard Traffic Signal: traffic flow will not allow for a signal based on the transportation engineering study
4. By-Pass Road Highwall: Construction of a highwall along the by-pass road remains in the 6-year road plan but there is no funding at this time; this project depends upon availability of state funds
5. Riverfill Parking Egress to By-Pass: additional egress routes from the Riverfill parking lot to the By-Pass and into downtown are not possible at this time because of limited land mass and a lack of available funds
6. Marion's Branch Connector: the planned connector to Marion's Branch was estimated to cost in excess of \$15 million so the existing Island Creek Road will be utilized

The availability of parking in the Downtown District was a major concern in 2005. Since then, more than 100 spaces have been added in the downtown area and plans for a second parking garage downtown in the Riverfill are being explored. Street parking was included in the Pike County Justice Center development, and additional parking spots along Hambley Boulevard have been added. The construction of the Pikeville Methodist Parking Garage will help alleviate some downtown parking congestion, and shuttle service will be available from that location. Observance of downtown parking limitations and regulations have improved, and tickets are issued if cars are parked for more than two hours. The completion of the pedestrian bridge from the downtown parking garage over Hambley Boulevard to the University of Pikeville campus, and the pedestrian bridge over College Street have improved parking accessibility to both UPike and the Eastern Kentucky Exposition Center.

Pedestrian access and safety has also improved. A pedestrian bridges enables safe crossing from the parking garage to UPike and the East Kentucky Expo Center. Sidewalk improvements and a sidewalk maintenance program have improved safety in the downtown district, a shuttle bus for employees and visitors at Pikeville Medical Center now minimizes hazardous crossing of the By-Pass Road, and additional sidewalks on Thompson Road, Hambley Boulevard, and around the new Justice Center make pedestrian access easier and safer. Traffic Signals at major intersections are now equipped with walk signals and pedestrian buttons to prompt signal changes for safe crossing.

Other forms of transportation continue to be investigated. The recommendation for increased public transportation services within downtown and between the downtown district and other parts of the City, particularly the retail sector on Thompson Road, have not proved to be feasible: A pilot Trolley service was not utilized enough to justify the added expense. The implementation of bus service within the City and between the City and surrounding destinations would require initial investment of \$1 million and no agency has had access to that amount of capital. Sandy Valley Transportation Services continues to be available for non-emergency medical transportation and scheduled appointments and taxi service is more available within the City limits.

The solicitation of commercial air service to Hatcher field remains active and ongoing. The Airport Board has secured the perimeter as required, and necessary improvements to the runway are being addressed to accommodate commercial regional air service carriers. Potential carriers are being contacted and courted. The increase in regional air carrier service nationwide bodes well for the possibility of future commercial air service in the region in the near future. The improvements in major arteries in and out of the City of Pikeville have reduced travel time to airports in Huntington, Charleston and Knoxville, making air travel easier and more convenient. Hatcher Field will continue to serve private and charter jet flights and helicopters; Pikeville Medical Center and several other area businesses also have heliport access.

Future Needs:

There remains an ongoing need for mitigation of rockfall hazards along the By-Pass Road from Baird Ave. to Huffman Ave. This need has been identified since the 1999 Pikeville Urban Transportation Study, and is presently in the early phases of design. Delays have been a result of limited available funds as well as geographical limitations regarding how much more the shoulder can be widened, and how risk of rockfall can be best mitigated and prevented. As currently conceptualized, the project will combine two phases identified in that transportation analysis, but will not incorporate the more northern section of the roadway from Bill King Rd. to US 119 at this phase. This project is also noted in the more recent Big Sandy Area Development District Regional Concept Plan (2012), along with 14 additional projects within the City and 43 projects within Pike County for consideration by the Kentucky Department of Transportation. Ongoing review of this list, to prioritize based on need should continue so that the Department may consider new projects if and when additional funds become available.

One other project on that list is reportedly under consideration at the time of this writing: A Safety Hazard Elimination need on the segment of KY 3495 from the termination of the US 23 – KY 3495 exit ramp north to the end of KY 3495 is necessary to reduce congestion, improve condition and increase motorist safety. This project was estimated at a cost of \$1,083,000 at the time of conceptualization.

Utilities Management Group has assumed responsibility for resurfacing and maintenance of city roads. UMG has identified eleven projects at a projected cost of \$10.8 million which are in process or slated for completion in the near future as follows:

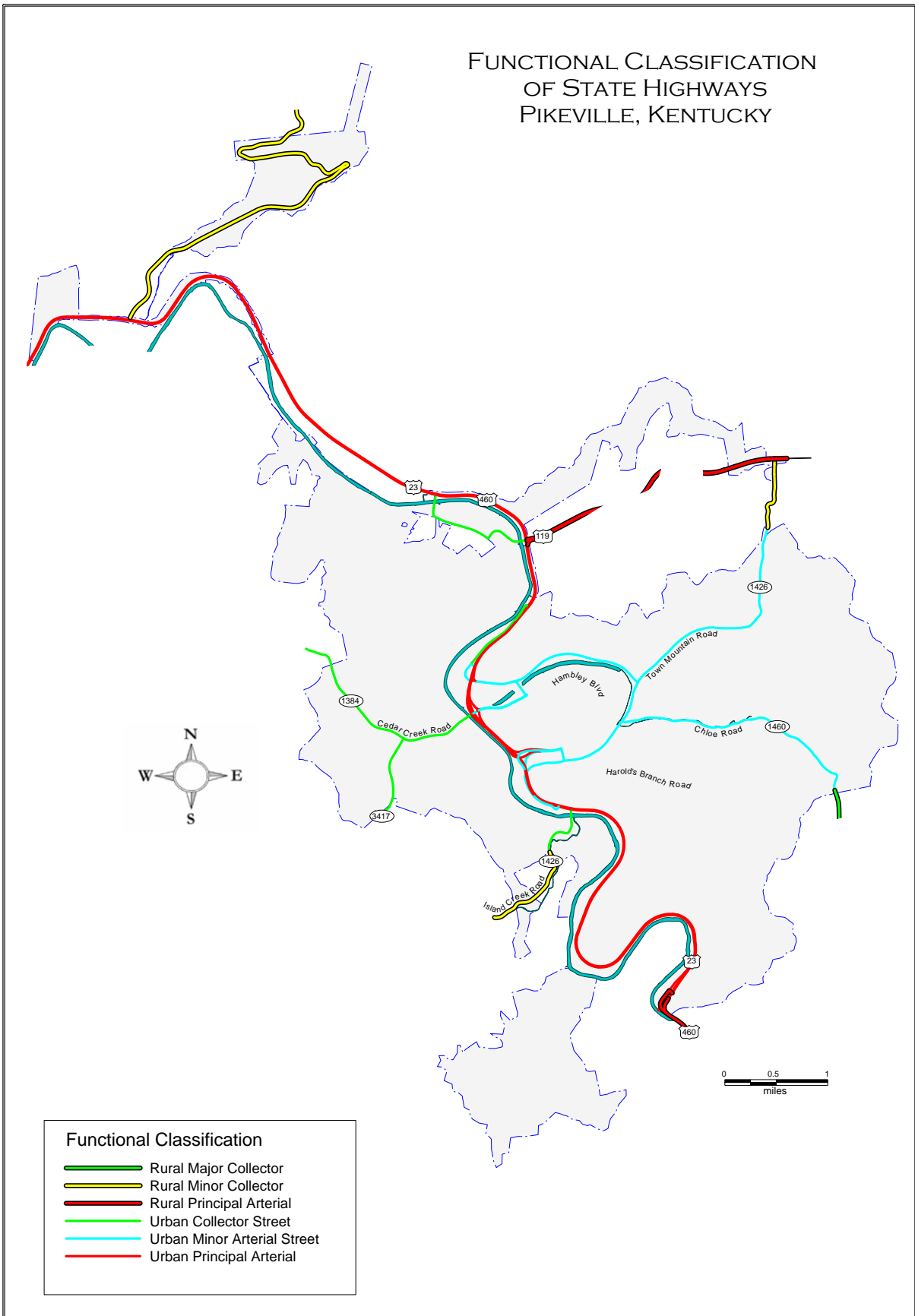
- Resurfacing of Keyser Heights and Main Street (2 projects)
- Resurfacing of Transfer Road
- Widening of By-Pass Road, Division Street (completed), Main Street, and Overlook Road (4 projects)
- Replacement of the Walters Road Bridge and Drain (2 projects)
- Marion Branch Access Road (on hold, due to expense)
- Cassidy Boulevard Traffic Study

Transportation and Roads Goals and Objectives:

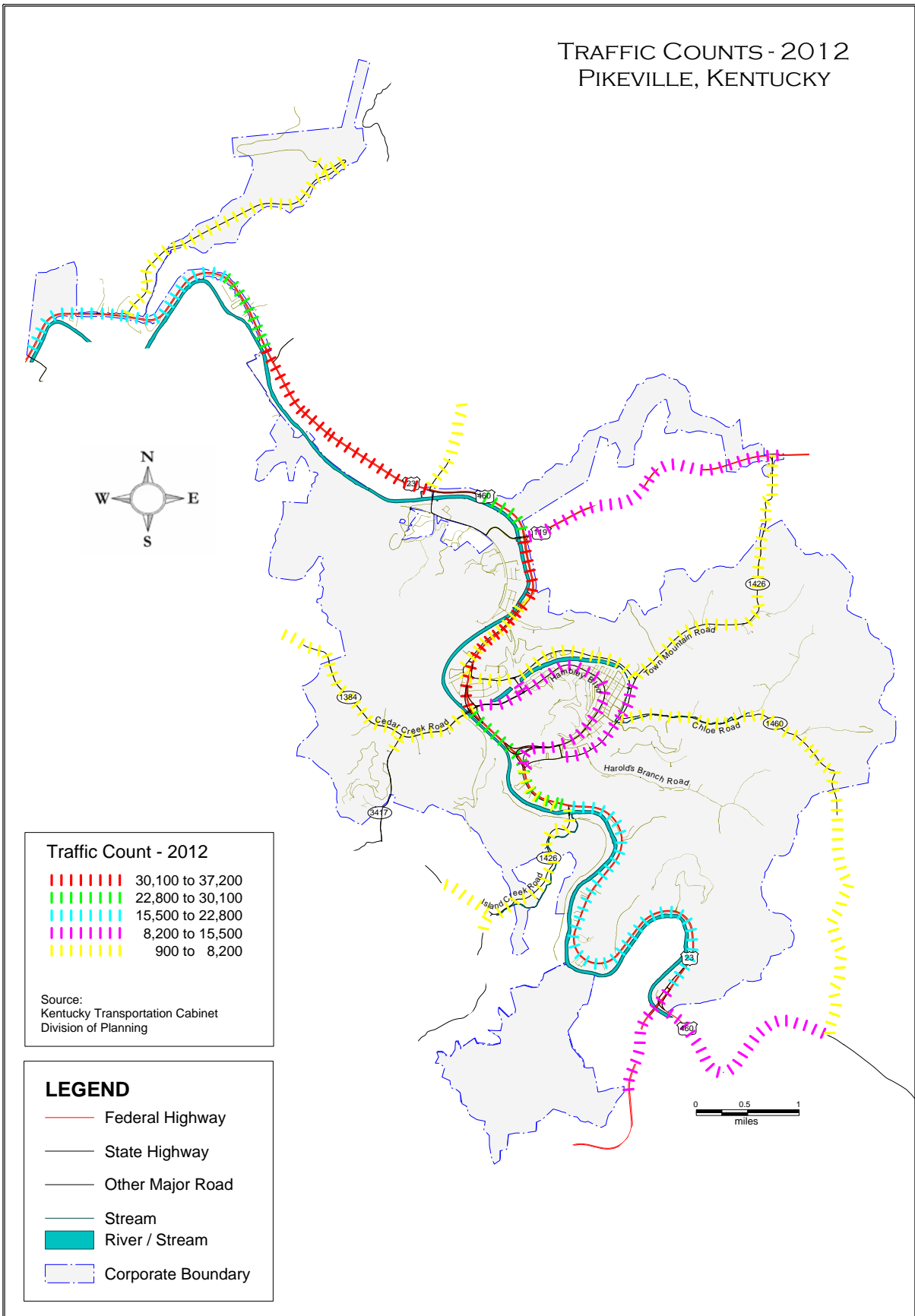
Goal: The City of Pikeville will support the development and maintenance of accessible, convenient, safe, efficient and modern transportation, including automobile, pedestrian, bus/trolley and air into and within the City.

- Support maximum flow of traffic in and around the Downtown area, specifically:
 - Increase parking in the Downtown district by 100-300 spaces
 - Continue to improve pedestrian access and safety throughout downtown, especially between Riverfill development, Pikeville Medical Center and Downtown
 - Work with the Department of Transportation to reduce traffic impediments from left turns along By-Pass Road
- Maintain and expand road maintenance and rehabilitation, drainage and safety improvement activities throughout the City as determined necessary by UMG
 - Paving and resurfacing maintenance program and schedule
 - Drainage improvements and maintenance schedule
 - Sidewalk maintenance program and schedule
 - By-pass highwall safety
 - Support Safety Hazard Elimination project on KY 3495
 - Advocate for funding for 14 identified road projects within the City
- Promote commercial air service to Hatcher Field
- Advocate for completion of I-66

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STATE HIGHWAYS PIKEVILLE, KENTUCKY



TRAFFIC COUNTS - 2012 PIKEVILLE, KENTUCKY



Traffic Count - 2012

- 30,100 to 37,200
- 22,800 to 30,100
- 15,500 to 22,800
- 8,200 to 15,500
- 900 to 8,200

Source:
 Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
 Division of Planning

LEGEND

- Federal Highway
- State Highway
- Other Major Road
- Stream
- River / Stream
- Corporate Boundary

