Bureau of Land Management: Addressing the Transportation Challenge
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Summary

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) maintains a transportation network more than one and half times the size of the Interstate Highway System. This network of roads, bridges, and trails cross the nearly 250 million acres of BLM-administered public lands providing access to vital economic and recreational opportunities throughout the West, including the National Landscape Conservation System, which contains some of the West’s most spectacular and treasured landscapes.

Maintaining this network in safe condition has never been more important. Growing travel demand and demographic changes in the West have increased public use of the BLM transportation system. By providing access to jobs and outdoor recreation opportunities a BLM’s transportation network can help to promote livable and sustainable communities in the West. In addition, the BLM’s transportation network provides critical access for law enforcement and firefighting agencies with responsibility for providing these services on federal lands.

BLM Lands and Management Activities

BLM administers public lands under the multiple-use mandates established by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). These lands are commonly used for recreation, resource harvesting activities, energy development, conservation, wildfire management, and grazing. All these uses and activities have a critical place within the American economy.

To adequately serve the needs of the American people for generations to come, BLM is committed to management practices that sustain the health, diversity, and economic vitality of our public lands. These practices are based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield of our nation’s resources within a framework of conservation, environmental responsibility, and scientific technology. Pivotal to this strategy is maintaining and improving upon BLM’s existing transportation system in a manner that enhances accessibility, connectivity, and safety, while at the same time addressing public needs, preserving ecological functions, and fostering economic development.

Meeting these needs requires wise investment and comprehensive transportation planning. Partnering with states and counties, the BLM helps to support the Land Management Highway System (LMHS), which identifies the state- and county-maintained public roads and bridges that serve as critical connectors to the BLM transportation system, and to BLM public lands. Comprehensive transportation planning can help to ensure that growing needs are met without impacting vegetation, soils, air and water quality, and cultural resources, or fragmenting habitat.
Public Use of BLM Roads, Bridges, and Trails

The BLM’s transportation system has historically served the purpose of administering public lands, and BLM personnel and lease holders were the primary users of the system. Now, as use by the traveling public has been increasing rapidly, the balance of use is shifting.

Increased use by the general public is linked to escalating population in both the urban metropolitan areas and rural communities contiguous to public lands. The completion of the nation’s Interstate system, and ongoing improvements to state highway systems, has also helped to make remote public lands more accessible and convenient to large populations.

The population in western rural communities is growing. More than 55 million people now live within 25 miles of the National System of Public Lands.1 Where public lands were once destinations for extended stay recreation opportunities, they now serve as backyard afternoon retreats. This adds to a much larger, and growing, volume of daily public use and travel.

Transportation Challenges and Issues

Demand is growing for recreational access, conservation management, and resource harvesting, particularly with regard to energy production. These demands do not only affect BLM’s transportation system; they also pose significant changes to broader wildfire and resource management activities, especially along the wildland-urban interface as development expands into formerly remote areas.

The transportation challenges and issues currently faced by BLM include:

- Transportation system conditions need to be improved to support the current and predicted recreational usage levels.
- Recreational users and resource harvesters are placing growing demands on the BLM transportation system.
- The “open-system” transportation model is being replaced by comprehensive travel management.
- Federal laws and regulations have established a new context for transportation planning, partnerships, and research.
- There is a growing interest in alternative transportation on BLM-managed lands.
- Provision needs to be made for aquatic-species passage and the reestablishment of native plants along BLM roadway corridors.
Introduction: Transportation and the BLM Mission

For over 60 years, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been responsible for managing extensive tracts of public land throughout the United States. Today, lands administered by BLM comprise 250 million surface acres and approximately 700 million acres of subsurface mineral estate, most of which lie within 13 western states. These lands cover roughly 13 percent of the total area of the United States—an area greater than Texas, Oklahoma, and New England combined—and account for more than 40 percent of all federally-managed land, making BLM the single largest land holder in the country. Oversight of such a vast area requires sound operational and management practices that provide the highest level of benefit to the nation.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) maintains a transportation network that encompasses 73,049 road miles, 825 bridges, and 14,855 miles of multiple use trails, connecting 250 million acres of BLM-administered public lands across the West. The mileage of this transportation network is more than one and a half times that of the 46,876 miles Interstate Highway System. The comparison demonstrates the magnitude of BLM’s network, and puts in perspective the challenges BLM faces in providing safe transportation on public lands.

The core resources of BLM lands include recreational amenities, rangelands, timber, minerals, watersheds, fish and wildlife, wilderness, fresh air, and scenic, scientific and cultural values. Through the harvesting of resources, production of energy, and grazing activities, BLM lands provide significant economic benefit to America and to the states and counties where they are located. The BLM’s management of Federal lands supports over 570,000 American jobs.iii

Figure 1  Public lands administered by BLM

A healthy transportation network is crucial for BLM to ensure the sustained vitality of America’s public lands.
Transportation Challenges and Issues

Growing Population

As the population in the West continues to grow, creating heightened management challenges, the job of balancing resources and multiple uses on BLM lands becomes more complex. With more than 71 million people living in the region today, the West continues to be one of the fastest-growing areas in the nation. Growth and the accompanying urbanization place new demands on BLM-managed lands and the roads that serve them.

Increasingly, BLM roads and the adjacent LMHS are playing important roles in the travel choices of millions of people throughout the western United States. Between 2000 and 2009, the 13 western states comprising the vast majority of BLM lands grew by 14 percent, outpacing national population growth as a whole by 5 percent. Four of the five fastest growing states during that period have significant BLM land holdings. Nevada experienced the largest growth between 2000-2009 at 32 percent, followed by Arizona with 29 percent, Utah at 25 percent, and Idaho at 19 percent. With this rapid growth, BLM roads have seen an increase in use, creating an assortment of safety, rehabilitation, and accessibility issues, especially since more visitors must share BLM transportation facilities with vehicles used for energy-production activities.

Increased Recreational Demand

Steady growth and urbanization in the West an increased interest in outdoor recreation is creating greater demand for recreational opportunities on BLM lands. This increased use requires greater transportation system management and investment. Recreational visitors to BLM lands are drawn to what has been characterized as the last remnants of the American Frontier. In many areas, BLM lands provide the best, and sometimes the only, venue for self-directed, dispersed recreation.

Recreation management on BLM lands emphasizes resource-dependent recreation opportunities, such as driving for pleasure, hiking, boating, trail riding, education and interpretive activities, and off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. While much of the recreation is dispersed, BLM also provides specific access through developed recreation sites and trails, visitor centers and facilities, typically located in areas referred to as Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs).

Recreational activities on BLM lands are likely to increase as various agencies encourage fitness programs; for instance, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are actively promoting outdoor recreation through their Active Community Environments Initiative (ACES). To further the goals of ACES, CDC is in partnership with the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and
Conservation Assistance Program to promote the development and use of close-to-home parks and recreational facilities.

BLM lands offer virtually boundless opportunities for outdoor recreation, accommodating millions of visitors every year. In 2009, recreational visitors spent more than 57 million visitor days on BLM lands. The recreational value of BLM lands is realized not only by the millions of annual visitors, but also by adjacent communities whose economies directly and indirectly benefit from recreation activities. Recreational activities on BLM lands generate an estimated $3.3 billion in economic activity and sustain nearly 34,000 jobs."

Figure 2  Proximity of BLM lands to urban centers
Demand for Accessibility

Providing adequate and accessible visitor facilities is a central goal of BLM’s recreation program. In the past, BLM has successfully used available resources to achieve high levels of customer satisfaction and to maintain facility conditions. In 2006, 97 percent of recreation visitors to SRMAs were satisfied with their visit. During that same time, 92 percent of facilities at SRMAs were in good or fair condition. However, only 8 percent of facilities at SRMAs were universally accessible. In order to maintain high levels of visitor satisfaction, it will become critical to improve accessibility to facilities on BLM lands.

Comprehensive Travel Management

In addition to the tens of thousands of miles of BLM roads and trails that are formally recognized, hundreds of thousands of miles of “off-system” roads and trails have been informally created by visitors’ unrestricted access to BLM lands. Given the nature of their creation, these roads and trails are hard to identify and manage.

In part because of extensive unmanaged cross-country travel, which can impact vegetation, soils, air and water quality, and cultural resources on “open” or unrestricted lands, comprehensive transportation management (see definition below) has become a greater priority. The BLM is amending and revising numerous land use plans in order to shift millions of acres currently designated as “open” or “unrestricted” to “limited.” The BLM is currently moving towards a system of keeping motorized vehicles on designated sustainable routes and reducing off-system travel.

Comprehensive travel management is the proactive management of public access, natural resources, and regulatory needs to ensure that all aspects of road and trail system planning and management are considered. This includes resource management, road and trail design, rehabilitation, and recreation and non-recreation uses of the roads and trails. The BLM’s comprehensive travel management will address all resource aspects and accompanying modes and conditions of travel on the public lands. However, implementing comprehensive travel management, by inventorying, evaluating, and deciding how roads or areas will be designated, is an enormous task.
Transportation planning, partnerships, and research

In managing its transportation system, the BLM must be cognizant of several new and changed legislative, regulatory, and policy requirements, as well as an evolving context for transportation planning and research.

- Comprehensive planning with relevant stakeholders, including the FLHP; other federal lands management agencies; state, local, and tribal governments; and the private sector. There is a growing emphasis on partnerships and on innovative-financing arrangements in both program operation and project delivery.

- There are now data-collection requirements in connection with management systems for safety, pavement-condition, bridge, and congestion data. Managing (and paying for) the collection of this large amount of data, coordinating such data with that collected by other federal lands management agencies, and incorporating it into the transportation planning process will all be significant challenges.

- The Department of the Interior has established the Facility Condition Index (FCI) and Asset Priority Index measures, which aim to assist in determining investment priorities and in making the most effective use of capital funding. These data must be reconciled with other transportation data, including those measures described above.

- There is increasing interest in researching recreation and transportation on public lands, including traffic and visitation studies and best practices in areas such as travel management.

Alternative Transportation

Nearly two-thirds of BLM lands in the lower 48 states can be reached within one hour from an urban area. This close proximity has led to increased levels of automobile traffic on BLM roads, increasing air and noise pollution levels, and greater levels of roadside damage from parking in undesignated areas. As visitation to BLM lands increases, some sites are experiencing traffic congestion and parking shortages at levels experienced by some major national parks. As one example, the La Posa Long-Term Visitor Area along the Arizona-California border and its gateway community of Quartzite are severely congested as a result of the influx of northern retirees who visit these areas during the winter.

Several BLM sites have been identified as potential candidates for alternative transportation systems (ATS), and BLM is eligible to apply for ATS funding from the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks Program (formerly called the Alternative Transportation in Parks and Public Lands Program), which was established in 2005. ATS can help reduce traffic congestion and parking shortages, thereby increasing recreational opportunities and visitor satisfaction while decreasing environmental impacts to the area. A shuttle service, for example, transporting hikers to-and-from designated parking areas could make long-distance and one-way hiking trips easier while removing cars from BLM roads.
Aquatic-species passage and the reestablishment of native plants along BLM roadway corridors

The Native Plant Materials Program (NPMP) is in its seventh year at the BLM and is in direct response to congressional direction to “supply native plant material for emergency stabilization and longer term rehabilitation and restoration efforts.” NPMP works with the private sector to increase the amount of seed available and the number of native species with seed available for these efforts. Re-vegetation of native plants along disturbed sections of BLM roads will work toward efforts of erosion control, reforestation, fire rehabilitation, forage enhancement, noxious weed control, and meadow/wetland restorations.

On many BLM’s roads there are culverts that allow water to flow from one side of the road to the other. Many of the streams that pass through these culverts are essential habitat for fish and other aquatic species. When culvert openings are too high above the streams for fish to reach or, culverts are positioned at a grade too steep for fish to ascend, they pose barriers to fish attempting to access their natural rearing and spawning habitat. The BLM is concerned about the condition of the culverts on fish-bearing streams because many culverts, either because of deterioration or design, do not provide passage for all life stages as required by current standards. The costs of facilitating passage of aquatic species beneath BLM roads include those associated with constructing, maintaining, replacing, or removing culverts and bridges, as needed.
The Importance of BLM’s Transportation System

BLM-owned transportation facilities represent a substantial public investment in roads, bridges, and trails. Use of BLM lands is increasing as a result of the growth in resource harvesting and, through the nature of the fast-growing American West, from increasing visitor recreation. The growth in demand on BLM’s transportation facilities by the general public, both local populations and tourists, underscores the need to maintain these facilities in a safe condition—not just to enable their continuing use, but to ensure the ongoing contributions of BLM lands to the regional and national economies.

Economic benefits of resource harvesting and other land-management activities

BLM plays an important role in fostering commercial activities on public lands, as it manages more land area than any other federal agency. Such activities on BLM lands include natural resource harvesting, grazing, and timbering. Recent surges in energy pricing have increased interest in further resource production. The BLM reviews commercial interests and may issue permits and licenses for exploration, development, and production of oil, natural gas, and geothermal resources on both federal and Indian lands to eligible parties. In addition to administering this process, the BLM is responsible for inspection and enforcement of all resource harvesting and development operations to ensure that lessees and operators comply with BLM regulations.

By harvesting resources from public lands, private industry provides substantial returns to the American people in a mix of tax and non-tax revenues. In FY09 BLM collected over $200 million in receipts for resource extraction activities, including mineral leases and permits, timber sales, and grazing leases. As shown in Figure 4, the broader economic impacts of resource extraction activities on BLM lands are far greater than the direct receipts collected by the BLM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Type</th>
<th>Estimated Jobs Impact</th>
<th>Estimated Economic Impact ($ millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grazing</td>
<td>7,999</td>
<td>$1,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>2,243</td>
<td>$537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil, Gas, and Coal</td>
<td>489,983</td>
<td>$124,391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geothermal</td>
<td>2,311</td>
<td>$379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minerals</td>
<td>35,126</td>
<td>$3,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>34,713</td>
<td>$3,324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>572,373</td>
<td>62,458</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: DOI, Economic Impact of the Department of the Interior’s Program and Activities, December 2009
Economic benefits of recreation and visitor spending

A transportation network in good condition is essential to ensure access to BLM lands and the successful execution of the BLM’s mission and major activities. One of the BLM’s greatest management challenges is providing transportation routes across a range of conditions for access to public lands, while also providing areas for a wide variety of both motorized and non-motorized recreational activities. Without transportation facilities in sufficient condition, this visitation may not be sustainable and the related economic contributions would be diminished. In general, road rehabilitation will not only improve the possibility of maintaining visitation, but will support increased visitation by providing better road surfaces, increasing revenues and growing the economies of local communities.

BLM-administered public lands and waters provide visitors with a vast array of recreational opportunities. In 2009 an estimated 57 million visitor days were spent on BLM lands, with over 40 percent of the annual visitor days spent camping and picnicking. Most of the overnight visits to BLM-managed public lands involve camping in either developed recreation sites or dispersed-use areas. Additionally, many visitors come simply to view landscapes and other unique natural or cultural heritage features of public lands. Other important activities include hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, hiking and backpacking, motorized and non-motorized boating, OHV driving, and mountain bicycling. More than half of recreational visitor days are spent in the National Landscape Conservation System, which includes National Monuments, National Scenic and Historic Trails, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wildernesses, Wilderness Study Areas, Cooperative Management and Protection Areas, Forest Reserves, and National Recreation Areas.

Some BLM recreational sites generate revenues through entrance permits, daily use permits, and specific event or group leases. Of the 2,663 BLM recreation sites, over 300 sites require permits or recreational fees. These sites generated over $18 million in revenue in FY 2009. Although these revenues are significant, they only include recreational permit and lease revenues to BLM, which are minor in comparison to total visitor spending in surrounding communities.

Visitors to BLM lands purchase a variety of consumer goods and services, including food and beverages, groceries, fuel, souvenirs, and lodging. The economic impact of the visitor purchases and the jobs and incomes those purchases create has been estimated by the Department of the Interior at more than $3.3 billion. This economic activity sustains an estimated 34,713 jobs.
Transportation’s role in wildfire management

As wildlands become more integrated with nearby urban areas, wildfire management has become more important in protecting natural resources and public and private infrastructure. Every summer in the West, wildfires burn millions of acres of public lands. In 2009, wildfires burned nearly 6 million acres. BLM’s wildfire operational strategy involves not only fire suppression but also managing fuels to reduce the threat of future large-scale disasters. Fuels management involves both removing heavy forest debris and using prescribed burns as a natural tool to manage unhealthy forest parcels. The roads, bridges, and trails on BLM lands provide critical access for wildfire mitigation strategies and escape routes for fire crews and the general public.
The BLM Transportation System

Overview

BLM’s network of roads, bridges, and trails is an integral part of the western American infrastructure, providing access for recreation, commercial activities, and administrative operations, including wildfire management and conservation efforts. The far-reaching benefits stemming from BLM lands include resource harvesting and energy production as well as recreational opportunities, such as scenic driving, camping, biking, hunting, and fishing. A well-maintained, well-connected transportation system is essential to making these beneficial activities possible.

Figure 4. BLM roads, bridges, and trails, by state

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Miles of roads</th>
<th>Miles of trails</th>
<th>Number of bridges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2,442</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZ</td>
<td>1,591</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>4,579</td>
<td>2,252</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>4,092</td>
<td>1,163</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>8,383</td>
<td>3,796</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>3,424</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NV</td>
<td>10,646</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>4871</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>23,873</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT</td>
<td>7,648</td>
<td>2,376</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WY</td>
<td>3,904</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73,049</td>
<td>14,855</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the most part, the BLM manages its own transportation system, but also enters partnerships with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and state and county transportation agencies to manage roads that provide access to BLM lands, resources, and facilities. Referred to collectively as the LMHS, these state and county owned roads cover more than 7,000 miles across 257 designated routes.

Beyond these road networks, access to over 138 million acres of BLM administered land—some 53 percent of the total—is either undesignated or designated as “open” to motorized use, meaning that vehicles are free to travel on these lands without restrictions. Unrestricted travel has led to the creation of hundreds of thousands of miles of informal roads and trails; applying standard transportation management and maintenance practices in these cases can be difficult.
Roads

The 73,049 miles of roads that form the BLM transportation system are used widely by the general public, private industry, and BLM employees. Funds for maintaining these roads come from the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) annual appropriated budget, user fees, and revenues generated under the authority of the Recreation Enhancement Act. In instances of large-scale disasters, BLM roads are also eligible for funding under the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program, administered by FHWA.

Nearly all of the BLM’s system roads were originally built for administrative purposes or resource harvesting, but many are now being used for recreation. Growing travel demand and demographic changes have increased the recreational use of the BLM’s system roads. As a result, BLM roads need an increased amount of rehabilitation to continue to provide adequate access to the public, and to ensure visitor safety.

The BLM’s roads are for the use, development, protection, and administration of public lands and resources. Few are in good enough condition to resemble “typical” urban or suburban arterial streets. Most are naturally surfaced, less than 20,000 miles are gravel roads, and less than 2,000 miles are paved roads. In other words, most BLM roads present challenging driving conditions in any weather, especially for visitors from urban and suburban areas unfamiliar with driving on these surfaces, and these roads can also present special maintenance problems.

For BLM to respond to changing use patterns and accommodate visitor safety, many roads will need to be improved to higher standards.

Bridges

The BLM is responsible for managing 825 bridges, providing recreational and administrative access to facilities, trails and the National Back Country Byways. The condition of these bridges affects visitor and employee safety as well as emergency response time. As with its roads, the BLM’s bridges range in type, from single-lane wooden river crossings and foot bridges for trail access to heavy-duty Interstate-type steel truss bridges.

Trails

The BLM manages 14,855 miles of historic, scenic, and recreational trails in addition to thousands of miles of multiple use trails. These trails provide for outdoor recreation needs, promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of outdoor areas and historic resources, and encourage public access and citizen involvement.
National Scenic and Historic Trails

The BLM manages nearly 6,000 miles of congressionally-designated national scenic and national historic trails under the National Trails System Act of 1968. These trails are the backbone of the National Trails System, which also includes National Recreation Trails and rail-trail authorities. The 6,000 miles of BLM-managed trails includes 13 long-distance trails, three national scenic trails totaling 624 miles, and 10 national historic trails totaling 5,355 miles. The BLM manages more miles of national historic than any other agency.

The national scenic trails include the Pacific Crest, Potomac Heritage, and the Continental Divide, and the national historic trails include the Iditarod, Nez Perce, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis and Clark, Oregon, California, Juan Bautista de Anza, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, Old Spanish, and Pony Express. Approximately 80 BLM Field Offices manage national historic trails, while about 15 offices work on national scenic trails. In addition, the BLM serves as lead agency for the Iditarod National Historic Trail in Alaska, and collaborates with the National Park Service in this role for El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro and Old Spanish National Historic Trails.

These trails are managed in partnership with several federal, state, and local agencies, the Partnership for the National Trails System, 16 dedicated trail organizations focusing on each individual trail, and other trail-related organizations.

Both national scenic and national historic trails comprise a variety of linear transportation features, including paved highways, gravel roads, maintained dirt roads, primitive roads (two tracks), historic wagon ruts, single-track trail, and point-to-point routes. Auto tour routes are also designated for the national historic trails in agency planning, so that individuals or groups may retrace these trails. Side and connecting trails to these linear interstate giants are also authorized and established under the National Trails System Act. National trails must be maintained to national trails standards.
Figure 5  BLM National Scenic and Historic Trails
Land Management Highway System (LMHS)

The BLM is the lead agency responsible for identifying access needs to BLM lands based on land use and resource management activities and the impact of those activities upon existing road systems. In 1993, as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the BLM designated the Land Management Highway System (LMHS), which aimed to create “a BLM-State designated system that would include adjoining State and local roads that provide access to BLM property.” Land Management Highways are not BLM roads, but designated state and/or county roads that provide access to (or are within) lands administered by the BLM. The creation of the LMHS allowed the BLM to become directly involved in statewide transportation planning when BLM access roads are concerned.

The LMHS is the backbone connecting essential BLM resources, facilities, and administrative roads together. A key purpose of the LMHS is to provide improved public access to recreational facilities and BLM Back Country Byways. This link helps promote travel, tourism, and related rural economic development. The LMHS also helps serve local needs such as school routes, mail delivery, commercial supplies, and access to private property. Generally, routes on the LMHS are low-volume rural highways, owned by state and local governments.
National Back Country Byways

The National Back Country Byway program was developed by BLM to complement the National Scenic Byways program. As an integral part of the larger Scenic Byway system, Back Country Byways show enthusiasts the best the West has to offer in a trip “off the beaten path.” Most of these byways are native surface or gravel base roads tracing across vast stretches of land.

BLM recognizes 55 designated National Back Country Byways, totaling 2,952 miles in eleven states. Most of these Back Country Byways are part of the LMHS and are managed collaboratively by BLM and other jurisdictional agencies.

Planning and data analysis: estimating and prioritizing needs

The BLM has become increasingly aware of the complexities involved in public land management and the effects that land use decisions have on others. Land ownership patterns in the West are fragmented and public lands are intermingled with lands owned and managed by many other entities. Watersheds, plant and animal populations, and human uses cross jurisdictional boundaries. As these complexities increase, so do the administrative duties of the more than 11,000 BLM employees in upholding the environmental and economic integrity of our public lands.

One such activity is a centralized data library containing current data in spatial formats, which can be made available for download. Such a data library has already been created for the ten districts administered by the Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) BLM office. Users can download over 50 spatial datasets from the OR/WA BLM web site, including those for the BLM road and trail networks. The road and trail datasets contain an extensive amount of data that can easily be displayed spatially using standard Geographic Information System (GIS) software. The following features are a small snapshot of what is included:

- Owner Designation
- Access Rights
- Road Classification
- Surface Type
- Surface Condition
- Mileage
- Special Designation
- Maintenance Responsibility
Endnotes


ii All data cited is from the BLM Public Lands Statistics Reports for FY2009 unless otherwise noted.


iv Ibid.
