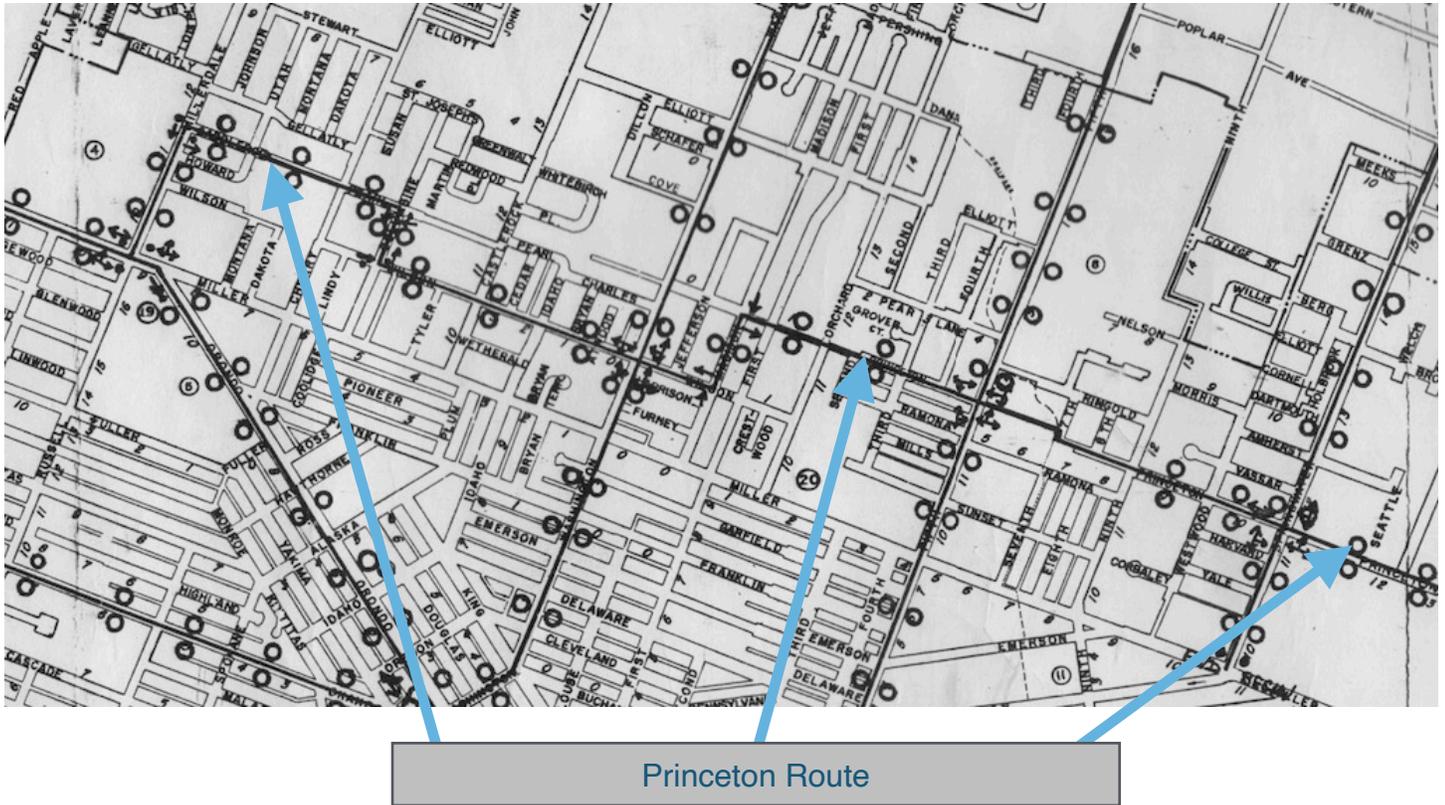


Princeton Bike Route - Past, Present, and Future

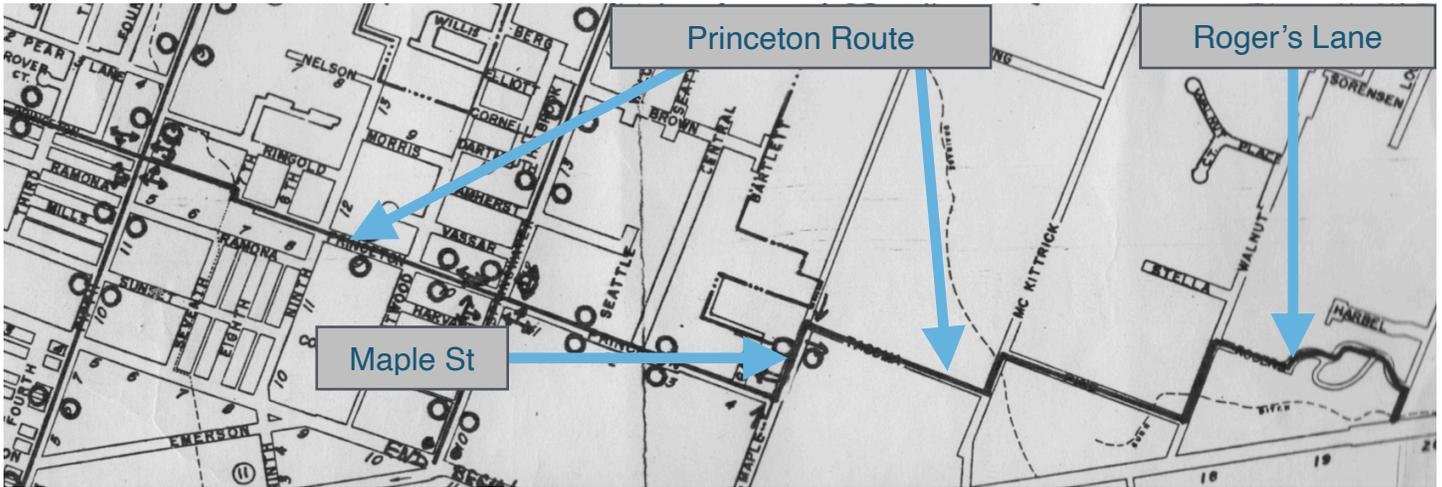
by Charles Hickenbottom



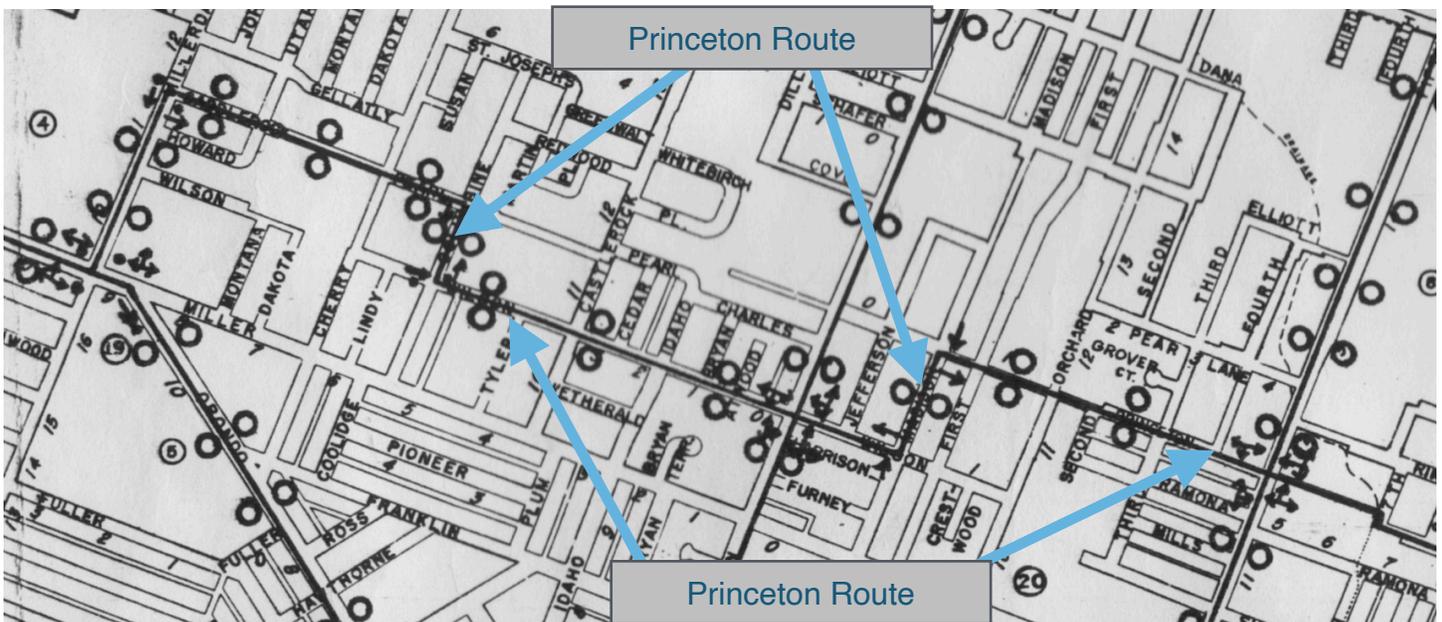
The Princeton bike route has always been unofficial, never officially named. But this north-south route extending from Maiden Lane to Wenatchee High School has always been defined by Princeton St, a mostly residential street that comprises about half of the distance of the route. The selection of streets was chosen by a Chelan County Parks Department committee in 1980, with route signs placed in 1981. The bike map (above) from 1981 is believed to be one of the first bike maps in the state of Washington.

The parks committee chose well, creating a route that connected important locations and traveled mostly on quieter streets that were bicycle-friendly. The route is anchored on the south by Wenatchee High School. The north end at Maiden Lane is close to the Highway 285 bridge across the Wenatchee River. Prior to the Loop Trail, the Princeton bike route was the primary route out of town for bicyclists heading towards Cashmere or Entiat.

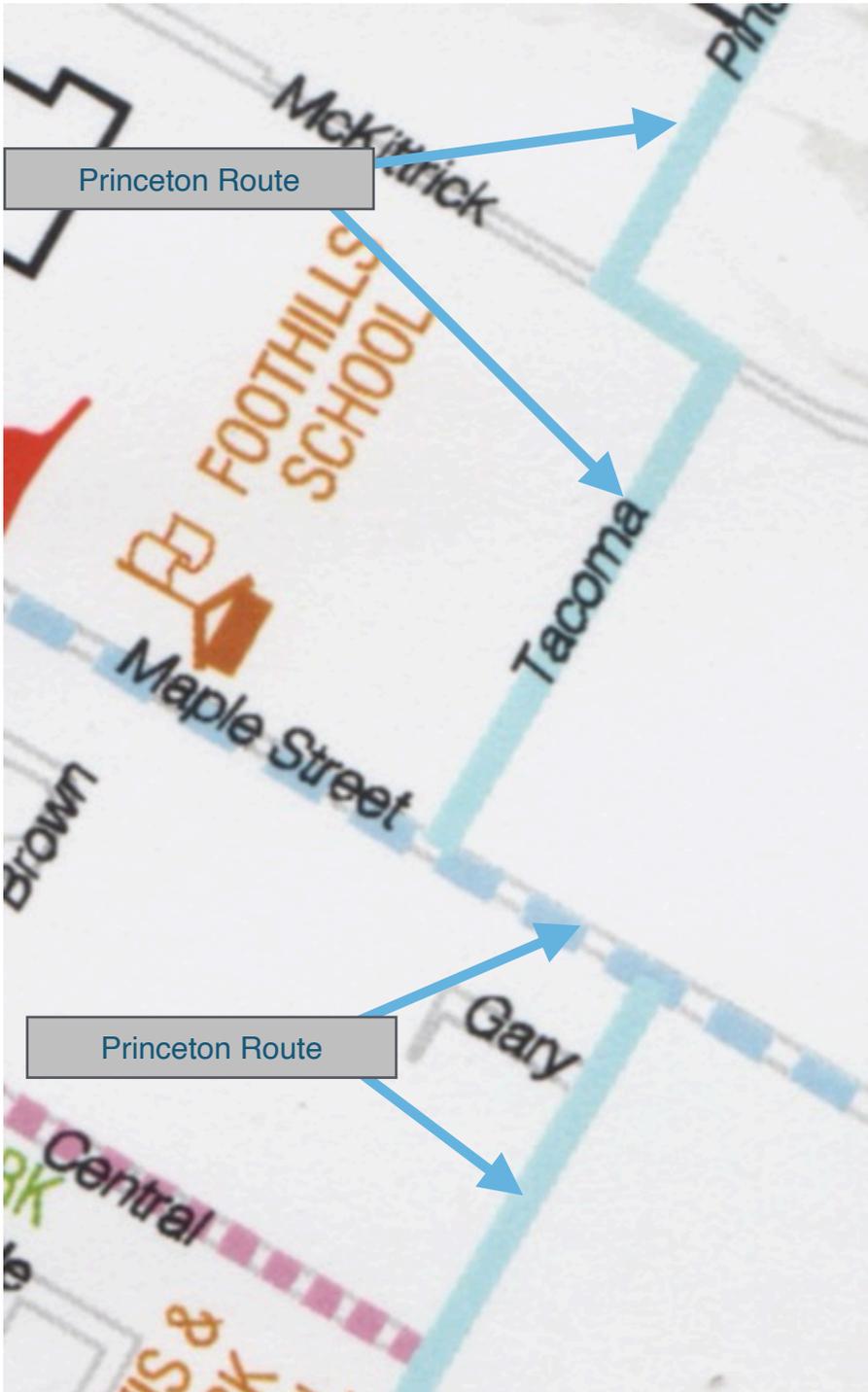
The utility of this route is notable. Besides Wenatchee High School, the route is near or alongside Pioneer Middle School, Triangle Park, Saint Joseph's School, Washington Park, Orchard Middle School, WSD Administration, Wenatchee Valley College, and Lewis & Clark Elementary. Foothills Middle School, opened in 1995, did not factor in the park committee's planning in 1981, but is also near the route. Nor did the committee plan for Home Depot and Walmart near Maiden Lane, more recent commercial locations that has added to the route's importance.



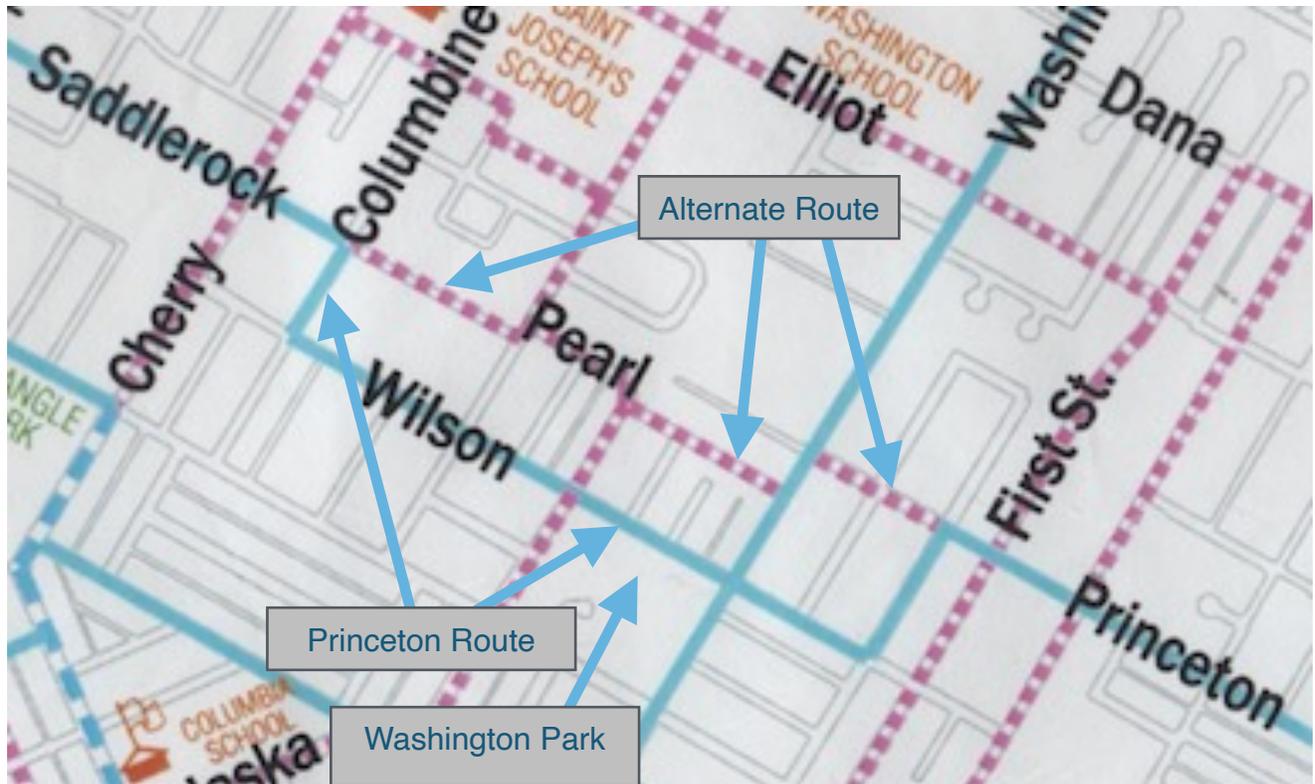
A major change to the Princeton route occurred in 2004 when Home Depot was built. The route through the orchards on Rogers Lane (above) north of Walnut St were vacated to make room for the development. Stella St was extended north from Walnut St to Maiden Lane as both a back door route into Home Depot and the northern finish of the Princeton route. The new end to the route was farther from Highway 285. But few bicyclists were using the Highway 285 bridge across the Wenatchee River after the west side of the Loop Trail was opened in 1990. The map above also shows a short portion of the Princeton route on Maple Street, an unavoidable compromise in placing a short east-west portion of a busy arterial on a route of mostly residential streets.



South of Maple Street, the Princeton route (above) crosses arterial streets (Springwater Ave, Ninth St, Fifth St, Washington St, and Cherry St) at stop signs that allow a bicyclist to cross safely. Two short east-west deviations on Madison St and Columbine St, plus the use of Wilson St as a connector were strategic streets designed to make the route bicycle friendly.

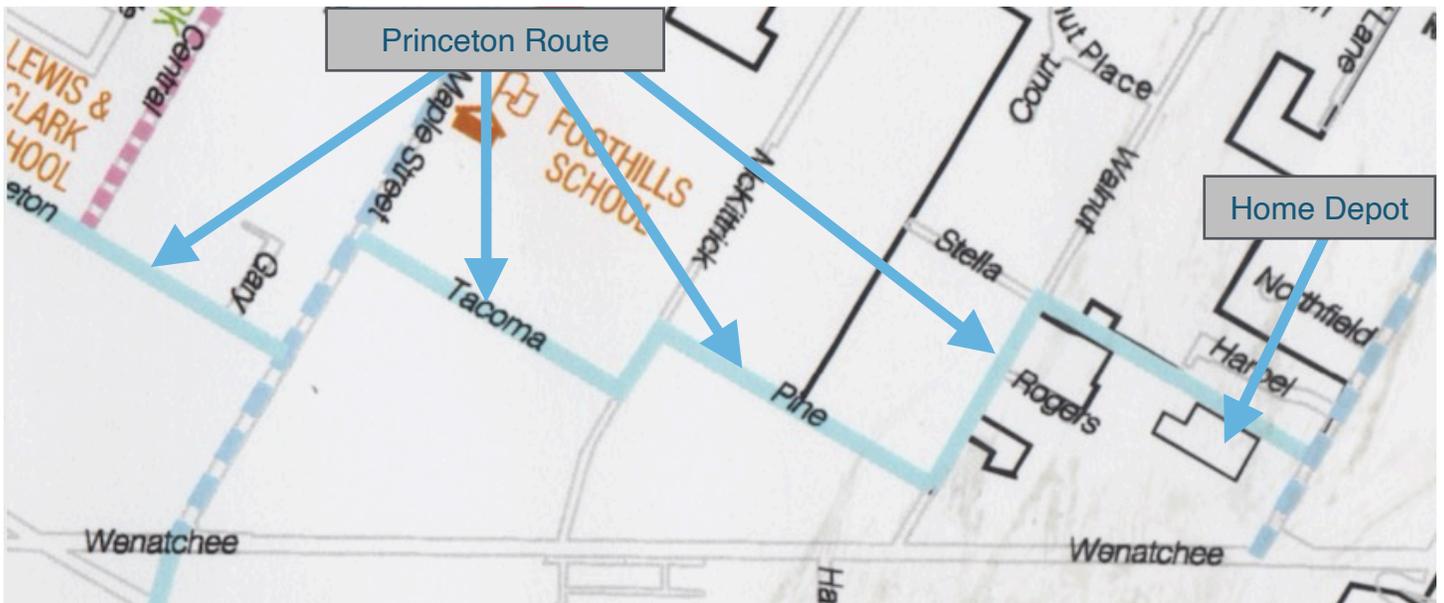


Another event in 2004 important to the Princeton bike route was the addition of bike lanes on Maple St. Now the portion of Maple St that is part of the Princeton bike route (Princeton St to Tacoma St) can be ridden on a designated bike lane. A City of Wenatchee bike map from 2005 shows the new bike lanes on Maple St with a dashed blue line symbol.

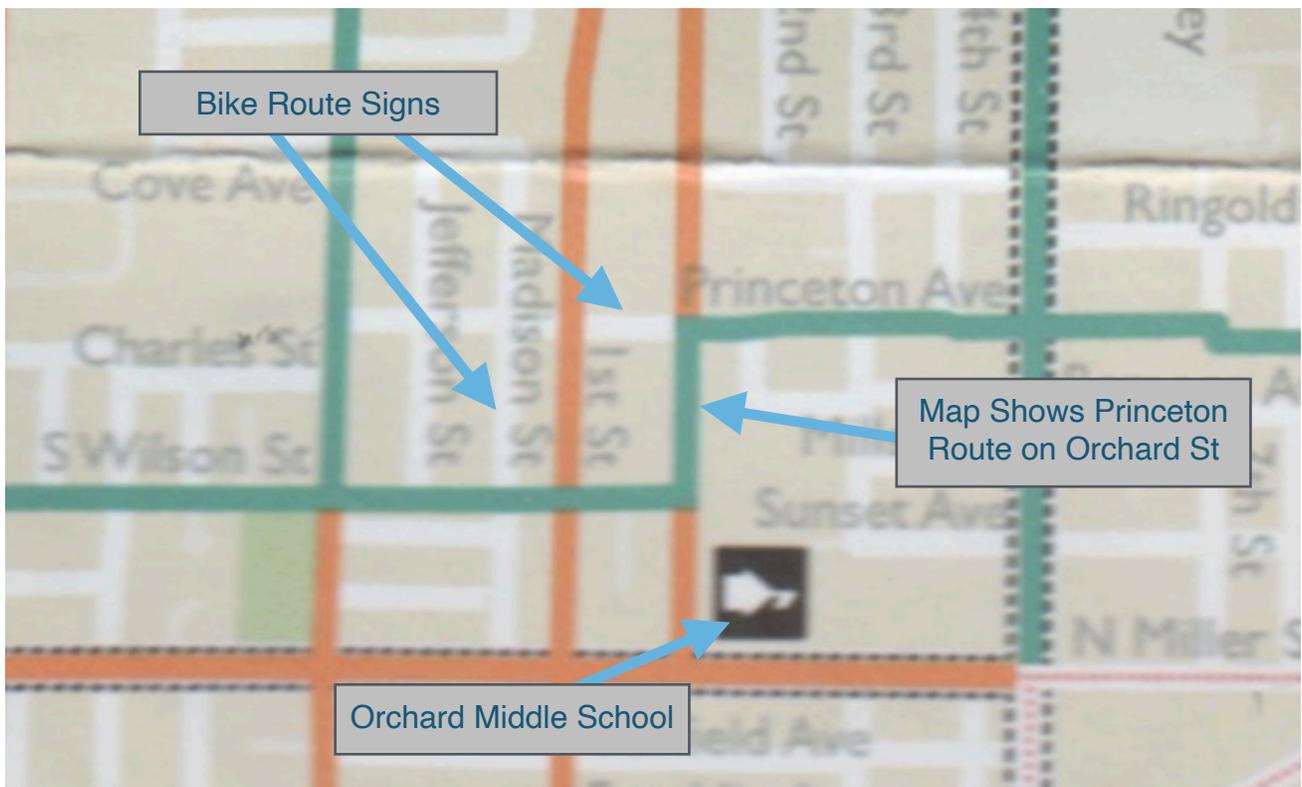


The 2005 bike map (above) added a new map designation with possible routes shown with a purple dashed line symbol. The bike board of that era used the new symbol to showcase additional streets that had no bike route signs, but were bicycle friendly and/or important connectors. Bicyclists not bothered by riding a short segment of Washington St could shorten the Princeton route a bit by using Pearl St instead of Wilson St. The fact that Wilson St passes by Washington Park and provides a stop sign to cross Washington St were strong factors used by the bike board of that era to not suggest altering the Princeton route, but to show an alternative for experienced riders and/or those not heading to Washington Park.

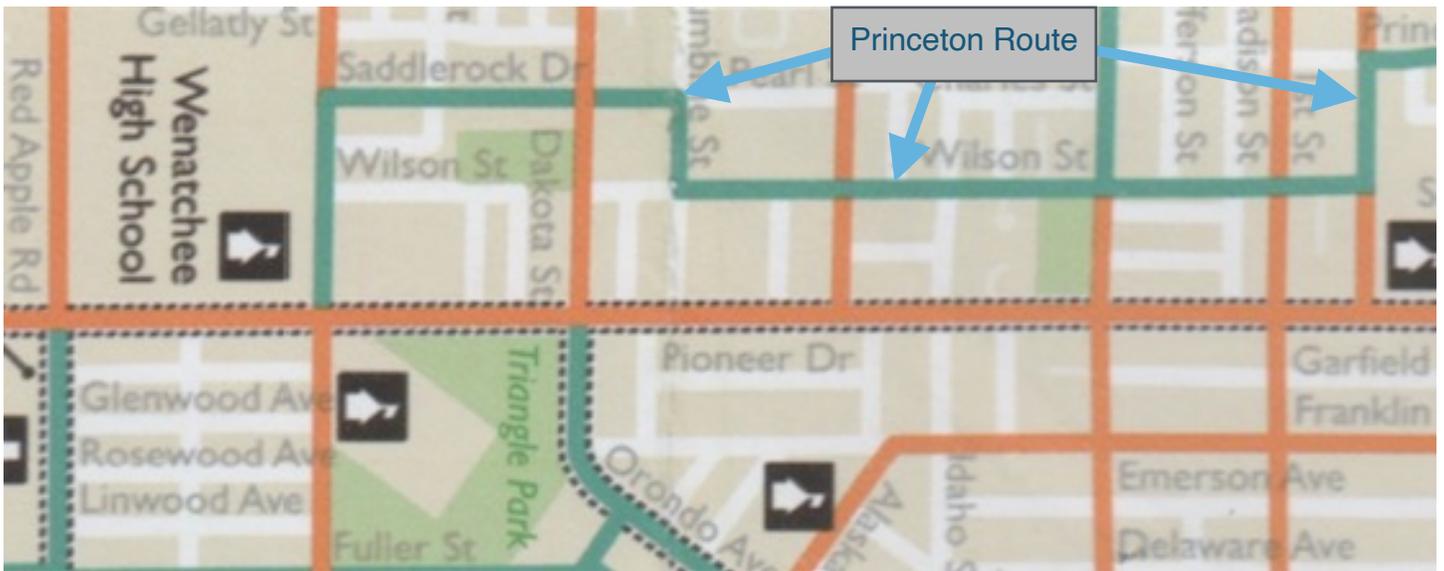
The use of Wilson St as part of the Princeton bike route required the selection of two east-west streets as connectors. Adjacent to Madison St were two other possible alternatives, First St and Orchard Ave. Farther south an alternative choice to Columbine St was Castlerock St. The three streets not chosen to be part of the Princeton route were all marked with purple dashed line as possible routes by the 2004 bicycle board, each street making important connections.



The 2005 bike map (above) showed how the north end of the Princeton route changed with Rogers Lane vacated and Stella St extended north to Maiden Lane.



A bike map (above) constructed in 2017 by Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council and assisted by the bike board used a new set of criteria to show bicycle information about local streets. Green lines were identified as most comfortable, while orange lines represented somewhat comfortable. The Princeton route was shown taking Orchard St, a different east-west street to connect between Princeton St and Wilson St. Anyone with prior experience riding the Princeton bike route might have noticed that the bike route signs still showed Madison St as the chosen route. The use of Madison St avoids any additional traffic associated with Orchard Middle School on Orchard St.

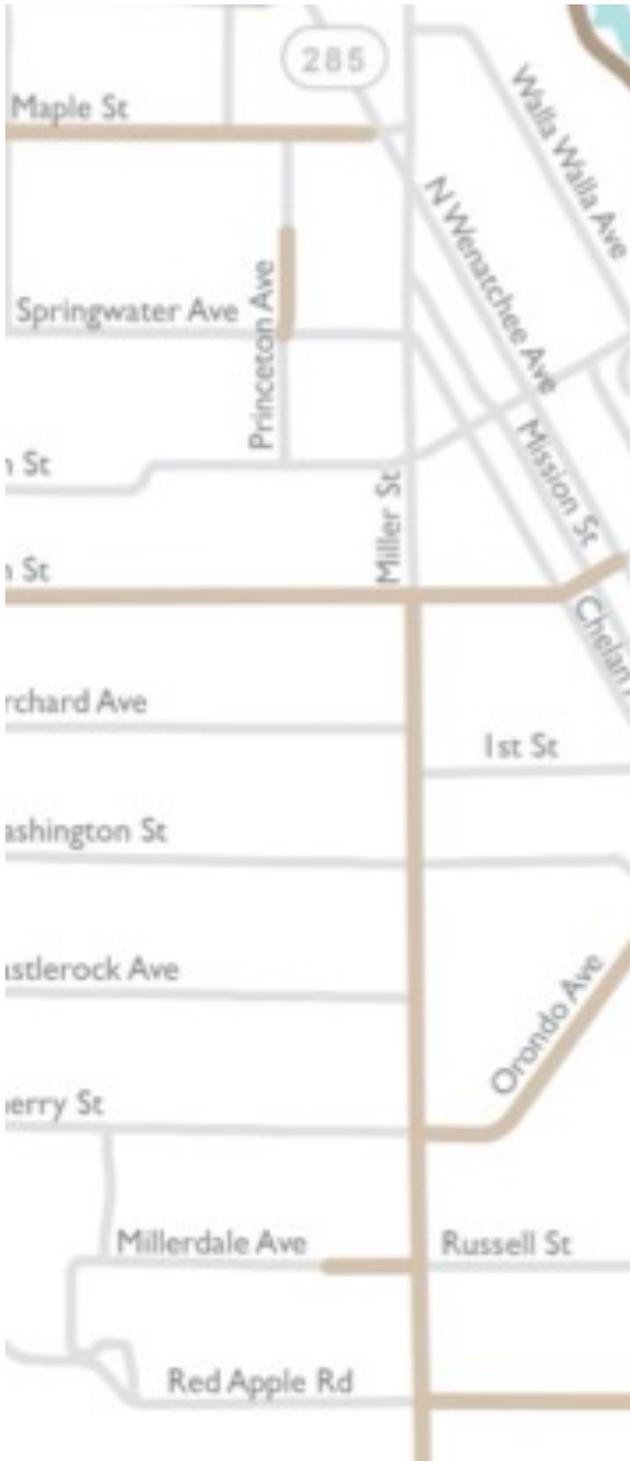


The 2017 bike map (above) portrayed the southern end of the Princeton route in the traditional way, consistent with the existing bike route signs. One could quibble and argue that the portion of the Princeton bike route on Millerdale Ave in front of Wenatchee High School might deserve the orange colored symbol for somewhat comfortable, based on the additional traffic associated with the school.



A planning map (left) was prepared for the 2018 regional bike plan overseen by the Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC). Curiously, the Princeton bike route is only shown as far south as Washington St.

2018 Existing Bicycle Network



Existing Bicycle Network

Multi-Use Trails 

Bike Lanes 

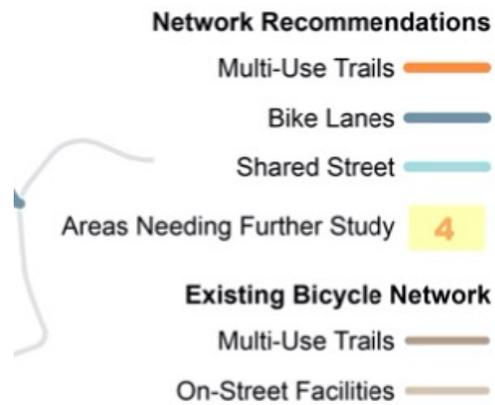
Sharrows 

Another map (left and above) from the 2018 adopted bike plan used a new set of symbols to represent bicycling information. Bike lanes were shown on Princeton St just north of Springwater Ave in front of Lewis & Clark Elementary. The bike lanes were brand new in 2018.

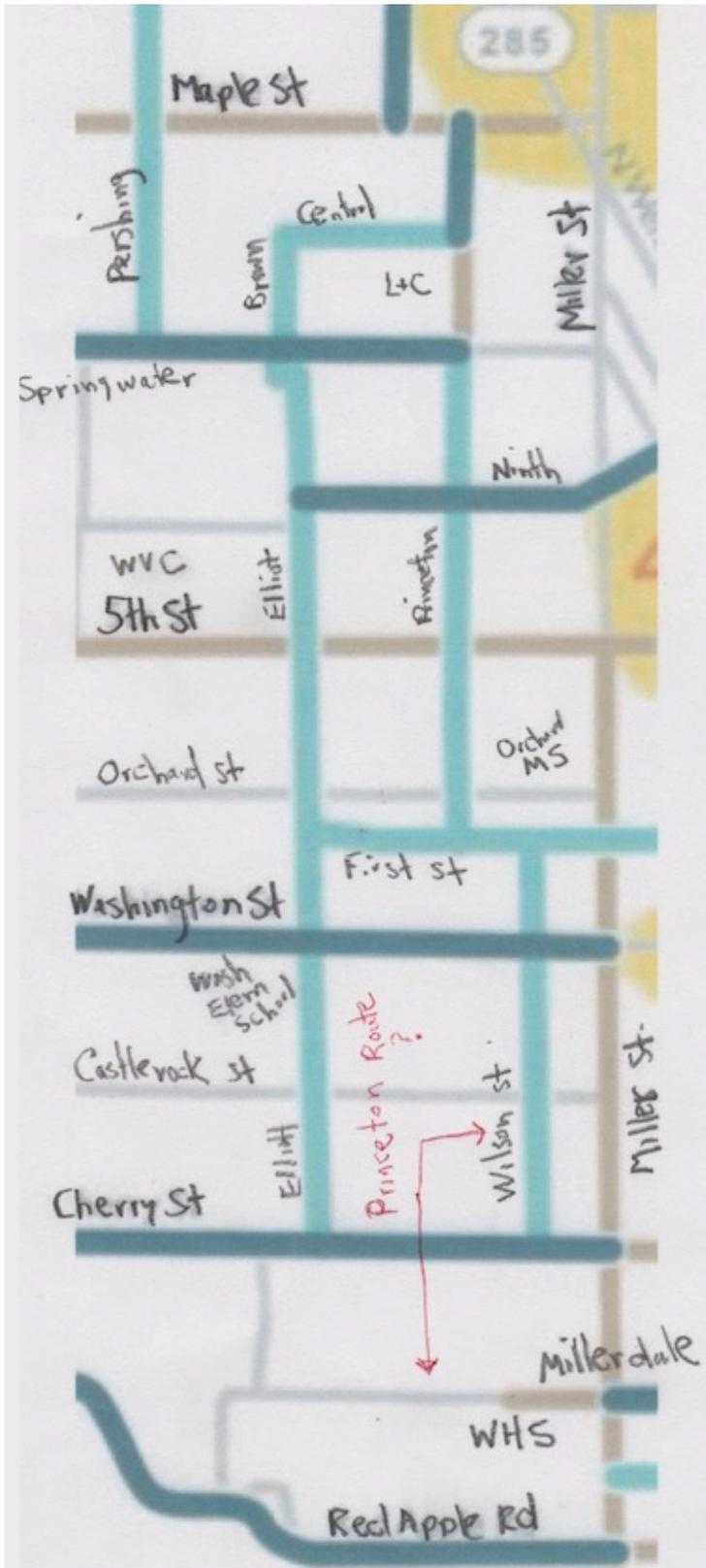
The choice of symbols chosen did not include signed bike routes, thus the rest of the Princeton route is not shown.

Based on the choice of symbols used on the map, the Princeton bike route that has been used for most of four decades has vanished.

2018 Bicycle Network Recommendations



Another map from the 2018 bicycle plan presented recommendations. A new set of symbols incorporated different colored lines to represent multi-use trails, bike lanes, and shared street. No symbol was used for existing bike routes. A portion of the Princeton bike route from Cherry St to Millerdale Ave was not placed on the map. West of Miller St, no bicycle facilities near Wenatchee High School are shown except a short section of bike lanes in front of the school. At Saddlerock St where a quiet road suitable for bicycling heads north from the high school, nothing is marked on the map.



The map from the previous page along with additional hand drawn labels (left) provides an improved map that's easier to comprehend. A line in red with the label Princeton Route shows the spot just north of Wenatchee High School where a portion of the Princeton bike route is no longer shown.

Bicycle plans come and go, and adjustments can be made along the way. A bicycle route that connects so many important places seems worth keeping. But the fate of the Princeton route seemed uncertain after the adoption of the 2018 bike plan. Some bike route signs along a portion of the route no longer adopted in the 2018 plan were no longer maintained, but need trimming to be visible. Funds to implement a city-wide way finding system are lacking, but the 2018 plan included way finding recommendations.

Bicycle Network Wayfinding Plan



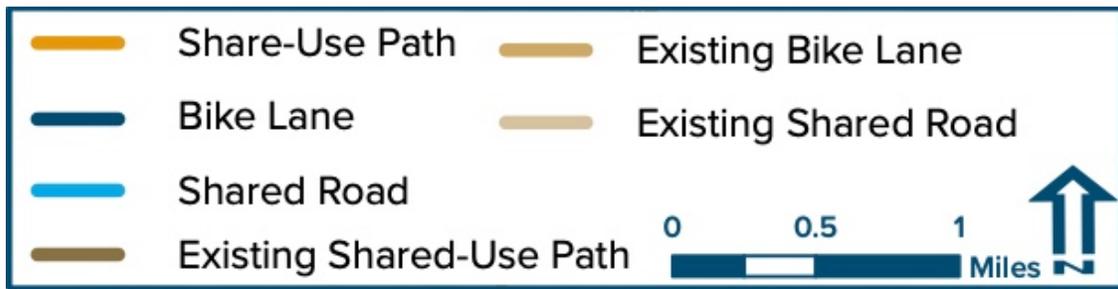
Wayfinding Route Priorities

Priority Wayfinding —

Other —

Multi-Use Trails —

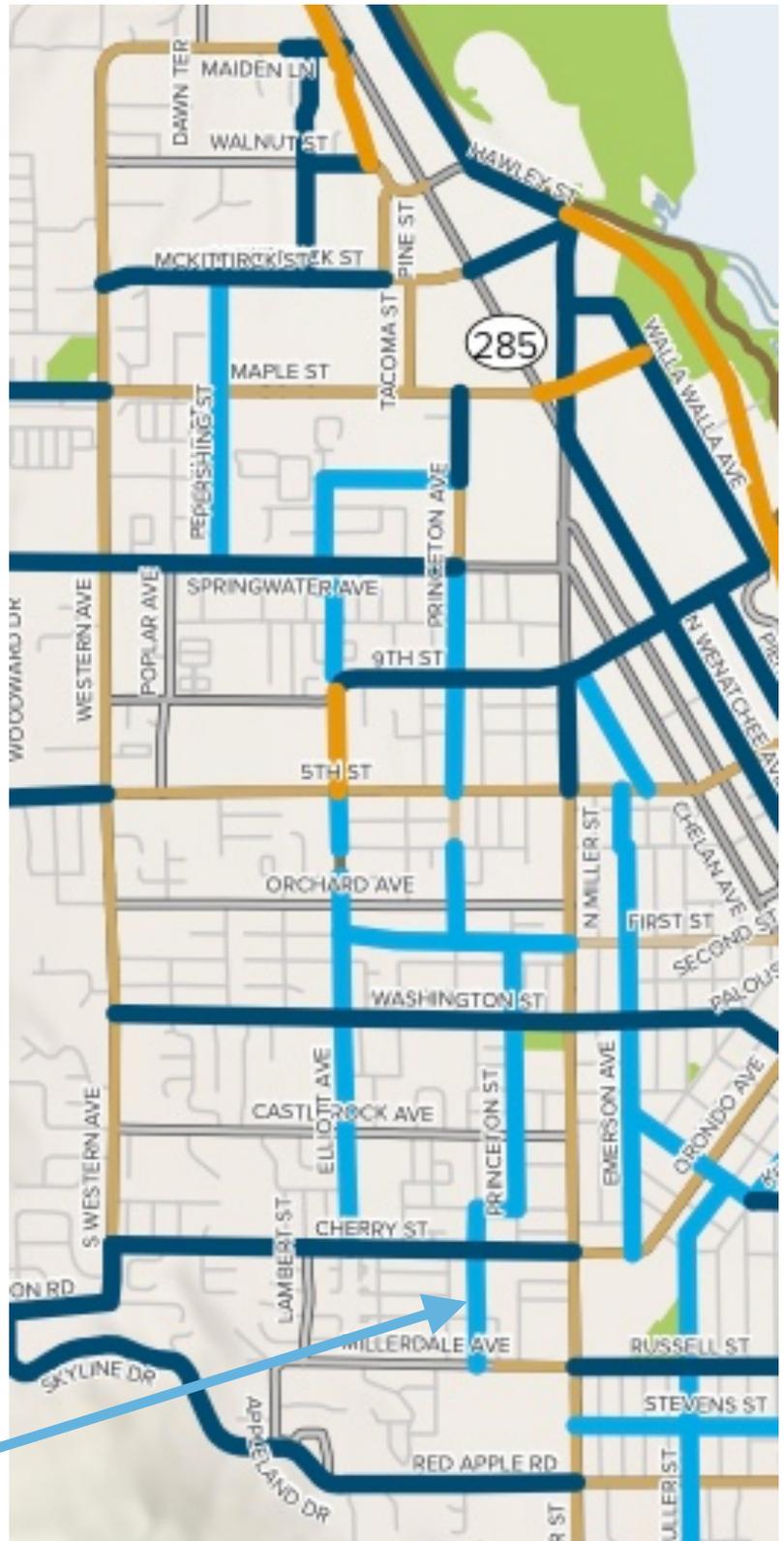
The 2018 bike plan (left) included priority recommendations with the use of a red line symbol. Yellow was used to show other, presumably streets that might be incorporated in a way finding plan if funds were available. Portions of the Princeton bike route both north and south of Cherry are not shown for any way finding signs.



Fast forward to 2021-22 and CDTC and the bike board were planning another bike plan adoption. Some bike board members continued to lobby for acknowledgement of the existing Princeton bike route, as well as getting this important bike route back into the adopted plan. Without being in the adopted plan, City of Wenatchee Public Works were reluctant to provide maintenance of bike route signs.

A map from the 2022 bike plan (above and right) shows most of the Princeton bike route with a light blue line, shown on the legend as Shared Road. Regardless of the nomenclature and chosen use of map symbols, the Princeton bike route now appears to be secure again.

With this acknowledgement, the City of Wenatchee is studying the possibility of an upgrade to the Princeton bike route. There are missing signs, with some of the key turns not marked. Numerous bike route signs are hidden by encroaching vegetation. The use of way finding symbols would add value to the route.



Princeton Route

It's fun to look forward to the future of the Princeton bike route. What's missing is a safe way to continue north across the Wenatchee River. It's possible to cycle it as is, but it is both inconvenient and not up to safety standards. Once onto the sidewalk on the north side of the Wenatchee River Bridge (Highway 285), the narrow sidewalk width and unprotected proximity to southbound motorized traffic on Highway 285 make the bicycle ride unappealing and unacceptable to most bicyclists.

The bike board of 2010 envisioned extending the Princeton bike route north to Chatham Hill. The draft bike board plan included the vision of a wider sidewalk crossing the Wenatchee River on Highway 285. The precedent was the cantilevered sidewalk addition to the Sellar Bridge, a part of the Loop Trail completed in 2002. The bike board in 2013 studied possible routes in the Rainbow Park area well ahead of agency planning. The study map (below) refers to the Gunn Irrigation Ditch, the name for an irrigation district between Monitor and Wenatchee.

Rainbow Park Area - Bicycling

1. Valley Trail towards Leavenworth projected to begin here. A connection here would provide access from residential areas in north Wenatchee.

2. WSDOT long ridge plans should include widening the west (upstream) side of the Wenatchee River Bridge to include a bicycling/pedestrian lane. The Odabashion Bridge is a prototype. This proposal does not compromise the southbound bridge on Highway 285 that has historic architectural value.

3. The portion of the route between Horse Lake Road and the Wenatchee River Bridge will require cutting into the slope and constructing a retaining wall if the existing five foot wide sidewalk was widened to at least eight feet in width.

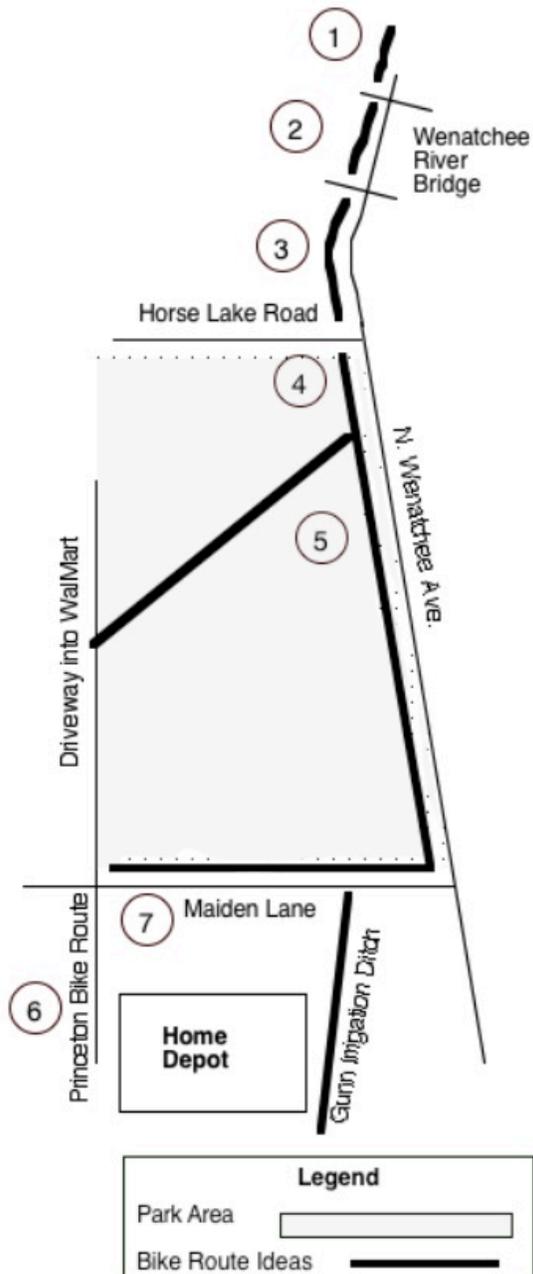
4. There is space below the welcoming sign for a future bicycling route.

5. The Gunn Irrigation Ditch and some steep hillsides are considerations in locating a bike route. One choice is to widen the existing sidewalk alongside Wenatchee Avenue through Rainbow Park. An alternative proposal places the route up the hillside and connects with the driveway into WalMart. Placing a bike route south of Maiden Lane on top of the Gunn Irrigation Ditch would allow connections farther south with the Princeton Bike Route.

6. The existing Princeton Bicycle Route travels north/south on Stella just west of Home Depot.

7. Bike lanes now exist on Maiden Lane from Western Avenue to North Wenatchee Avenue.

updated
2-18-2013
Charlie Hickenbottom
Regional Bicycle Advisory Board member



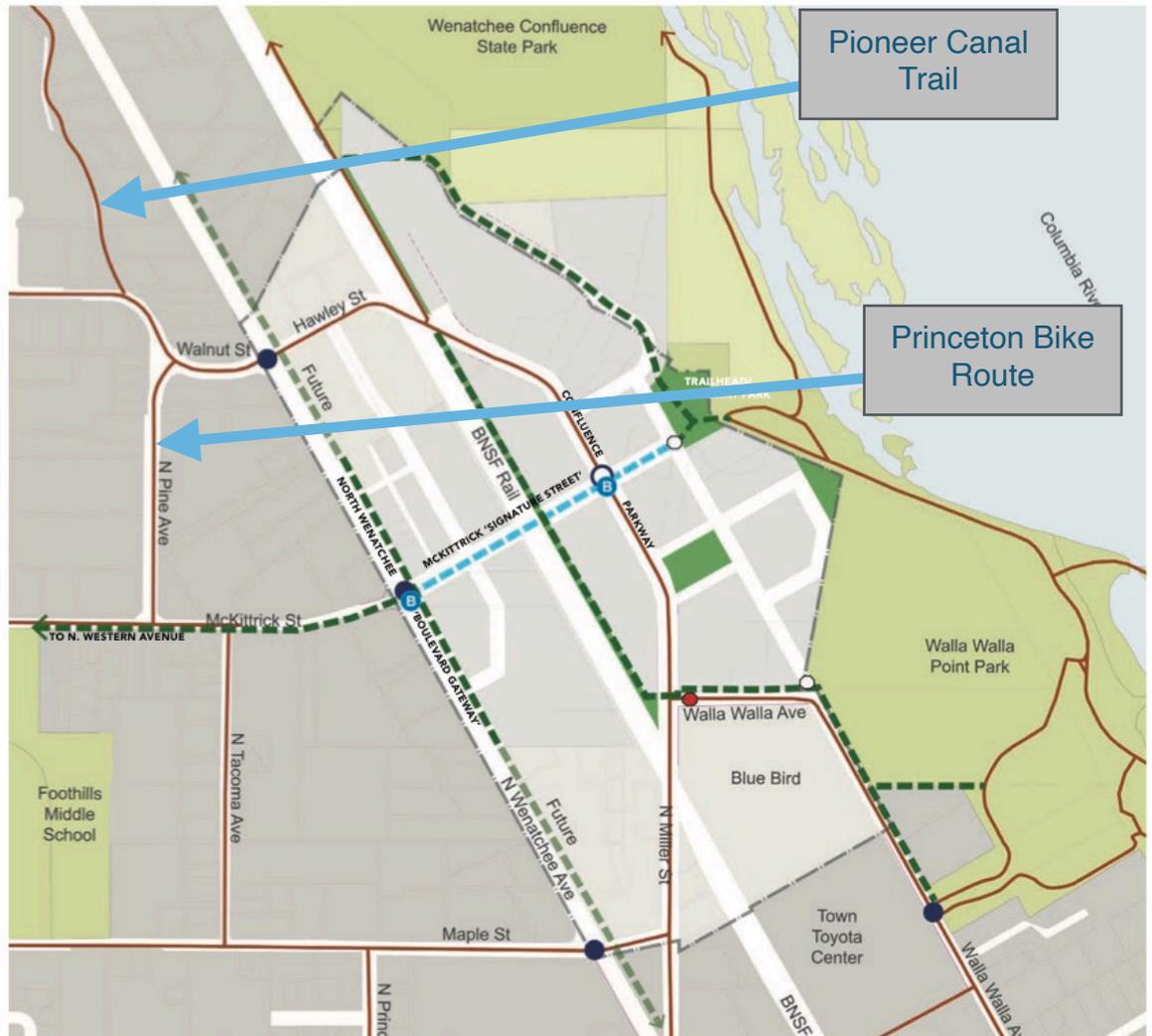
The City of Wenatchee adopted comprehensive plans in 2016 for North Wenatchee Ave. The comprehensive plan included a Pioneer Canal Trail atop the Pioneer Irrigation Ditch. The trail name originated from an irrigation extension of the Gunn Ditch. The proposed route would begin on Walnut St, very close to where the Princeton bike route exits off of Pine St onto Walnut St. The shared-use trail would be ten feet wide, placed on top of the irrigation which is buried under a service road. It would extend north to Maiden Lane, just a few feet uphill from N Wenatchee Ave. A drawing (below) with added captions shows both the proposed Pioneer Canal Trail and the Princeton bike route.

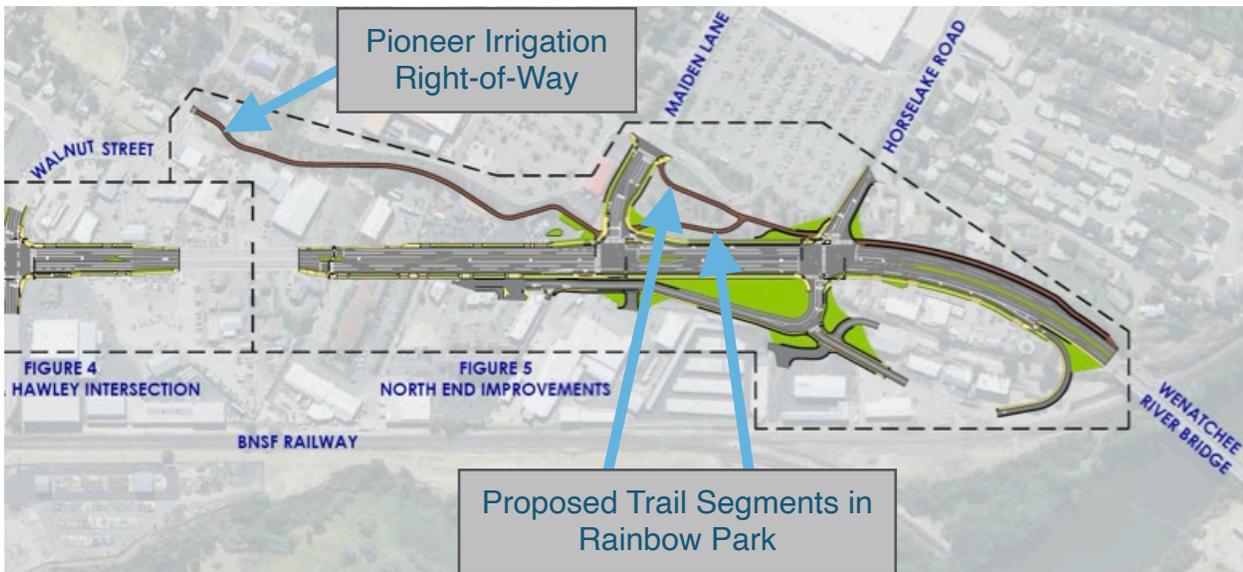
For a bicyclist heading north on the Princeton bike route, the Pioneer Canal Trail would provide direct access to Rainbow Park and the Wenatchee River bridge on Highway 285. The route would parallel N Wenatchee Ave, but be totally separate. It would seem that this would be an appealing route to walk and/or bicycle.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CONNECTIONS

-  Protected Bike Lane
-  Multi-Use Trail
-  Existing Bike Routes*
-  Existing Traffic Signal
-  Traffic Signal
-  Bike Signal
-  Existing Stop Sign
-  Stop Sign

* Existing bike routes include off-street multi-use trails, striped bike lanes, roadway shoulders, and in-roadway designated routes.





In 2019 the KPG engineering firm published more planning documents pertinent to the City of Wenatchee's N Wenatchee Ave remake. One of the maps (above) shows the Pioneer Irrigation Right-of-Way, but now the enhanced planning shows two shared-use trails in Rainbow Park. One trail would connect with the Princeton bike route at Maiden Lane at the intersection of the driveway into Home Depot. The other trail stub would connect with the Pioneer Irrigation Right-of-Way at Maiden Lane closer to N Wenatchee Ave. A close-up view of the trail proposal (below) shows additional detail.



Multimodal Improvements

The North Wenatchee Transportation Masterplan identifies a multiuse trail as the preferred bicycle facility along North Wenatchee Avenue. The proposed alignment is adjacent to the west side of North Wenatchee Avenue between the bridge and Maiden Lane and then continues south as a separated facility along the abandoned irrigation alignment, terminating at Walnut Street with connections to existing bike facilities at Walnut Street and along Pine Avenue extending to McKittrick Street. This project will also extend a downhill bike lane along Maiden Lane between the trail connection and the Home Depot/Walmart intersection. No bike improvements are proposed for Horselake Road.

Trail from Horse Lake Road to Wenatchee River Bridge

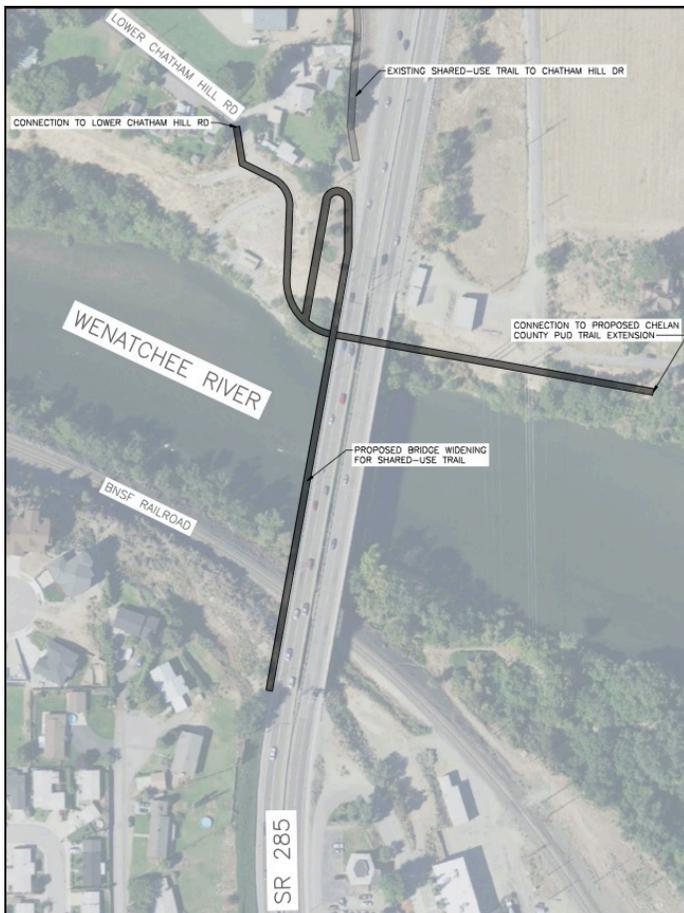


Figure 11. Multi-Use Trail

Pioneer Irrigation Right-of-Way

There are current efforts to advance the multiuse trail concept in this area. The City of Wenatchee is working to determine the cost and feasibility of the proposed path alignment along the former Pioneer irrigation alignment between Maiden Lane and Walnut Street. WSDOT has furnished a report titled "Wenatchee Avenue SB Type, Size and Location Report, Bridge No.285 / 20W to the City of Wenatchee. It is anticipated that the report will be used to help determine the next steps for development of a multiuse facility."

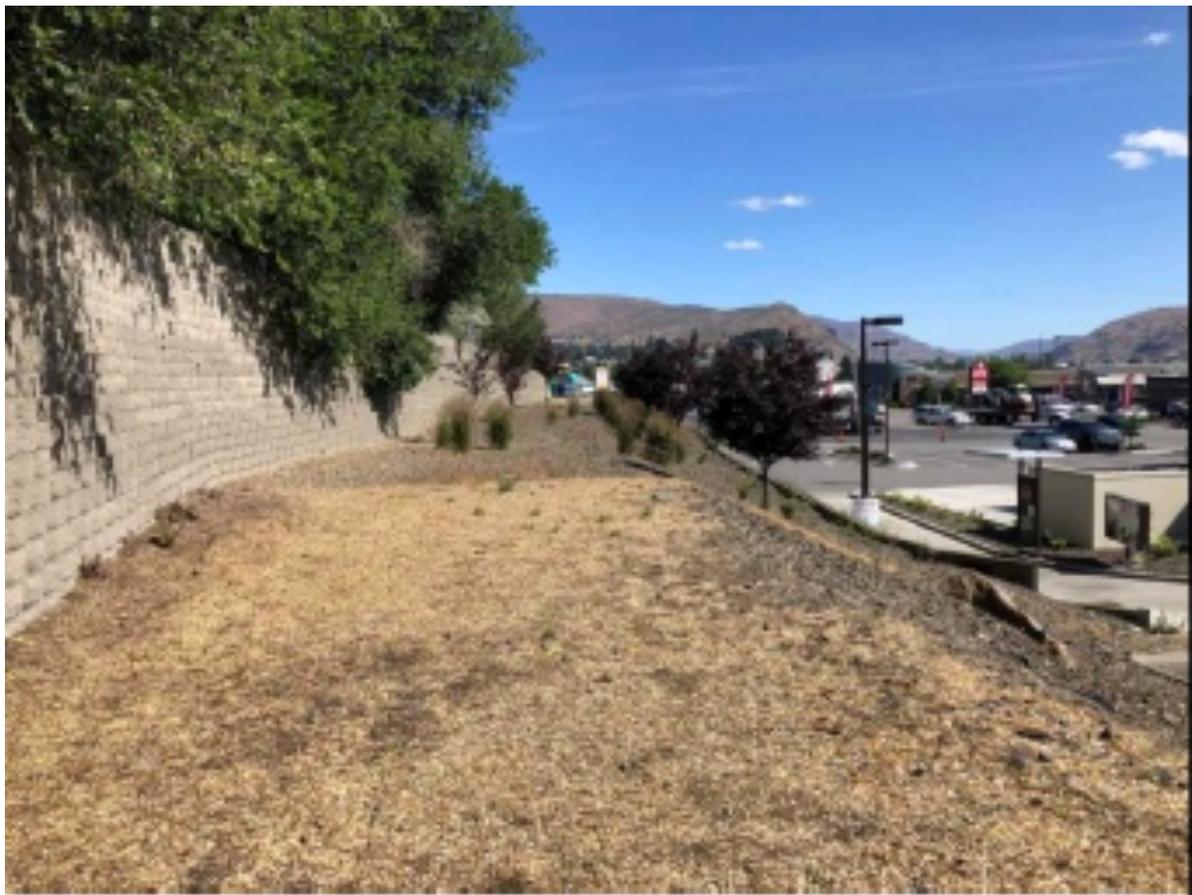
There were additional details in the KPG report (above). Most intriguing was the thought process of the City of Wenatchee and WSDOT to continue a bike/pedestrian facility over the Wenatchee River towards Chatham Hill noted in the text as "Bridge No. 285", a reference to Highway 285.



In 2020 the City of Wenatchee released a planning map (left) of the Wenatchee River Bridge (Highway 285). The SR 285 - Wenatchee River Bridge Shared-Use Trail would involve retrofitting the southbound SR 285 bridge with a cantilevered platform for bike/pedestrian use. Planning involves the WSDOT Pedestrian and Bicyclist Program. Also in the planning mix is an under-the-bridge connection from Chatham Hill to a connection with a proposed trail from Wenatchee Confluence State Park to Olds Station Road. One cannot help wonder if this project represents new life for a Valley Trail heading up the Wenatchee Valley. For a bicyclist in Chatham Hill, this project would create excellent connections towards both North Wenatchee, the Loop Trail and the Princeton bike route.



Additional planning has been released in 2022 from WSDOT regarding the Pioneer Irrigation Trail. A detailed map (above) shows the trail configuration between Walnut St and Maiden Lane. One can see that there is a good deal of separation of the trail away from N Wenatchee Ave, which will provide a somewhat quiet ride. A picture (below) provides a vision of what the trail will look like when constructed. One can easily see that the extension north of the Princeton bike route will be a huge addition and expand the usefulness of what is already a very useful bike route.





If anyone thought I might favor the Princeton bike route, you would be right. As a bicycle commuter and teacher with Wenatchee School District, I logged thousands of trips between home and school, school to school, administration building, and operations/technology. The vast majority of the trips included a portion of the Princeton bike route.

Charles Hickenbottom (above) began bicycle planning as a member of the inaugural Regional Bicycle Advisory Board (RBAB) chartered by the City of Wenatchee and Chelan County in 1997. In 2005 Hickenbottom collaborated with the City of Wenatchee to produce an improved bicycle map for Wenatchee. In 2007 he was the principal author of a bike route update prepared by the bike group. In 2009 Hickenbottom prepared bike route maps for elementary schools in the Wenatchee School District. Much later the group was renamed Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee (RBAC) and was overseen by the Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC). In 2022 the committee was changed again, now referred to as the Chelan-Douglas Bicycle Forum. Throughout, Hickenbottom has contributed his knowledge of local bicycle routes, and advocated for the use of bicycles for local travel. He logs hundreds of trips yearly riding around town.

In 2022 Hickenbottom published *Greater Wenatchee Bicycle Routes - A History Told Through Maps, Drawings, and Pictures*. The book is available through [North Central Washington Libraries](#) for checkout. Copies of the book are for sale at [Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center](#). Proceeds from book sales accrue to the museum.