

= Interstate 81 in West Virginia =

In the U.S. state of West Virginia , Interstate 81 ( I @-@ 81 ) crosses the Eastern Panhandle region , linking Virginia to Maryland . The Interstate Highway , completed in 1966 , spans 26 @.@ 00 miles ( 41 @.@ 84 km ) through Berkeley County , paralleling U.S. Route 11 ( US 11 ) for its entire length . I @-@ 81 enters the state near Ridgeway and travels northeast , bypassing the city of Martinsburg , and leaves the state at the Potomac River , which serves as the state line . The first solicitations for the construction of I @-@ 81 were published in 1959 , with the first 6 miles ( 9 @.@ 7 km ) of freeway being opened in 1963 , and the full length was completed by 1966 . On average between 45 and 60 thousand vehicles use the freeway though the panhandle per day .

= = Route description = =

I @-@ 81 enters the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia just west of Ridgeway , paralleling US 11 ( also known as the Valley Pike ) . The highway passes through some light farmland before entering a wooded area , north of Ridgeway . A welcome center for northbound travelers is passed before the woodlands give way to a light urban setting . As the highway approaches the community of Inwood , a diamond interchange with West Virginia Route 51 ( WV 51 ) provides access to the community , as well as Gerrardstown to the west of the freeway , and Charles Town to the east . A small business park is passed by before I @-@ 81 intersects County Route 32 , providing access to Arden , the Eastern WV Regional Airport and Tablers Station . The freeway turns more towards the north as it approaches Martinsburg , intersecting WV 45 , County Route 15 and Dry Run Road while in the city limits . I @-@ 81 bypasses downtown , running along the western border of town while US 11 continues through the town .

Just northeast of Martinsburg the freeway passes over a CSX Transportation rail line while a cloverleaf interchange with WV 9 provides access back to Martinsburg and to Hedgesville . As the freeway curves back east , it intersects WV 901 between Hainesville and Falling Waters . WV 901 is a short connector route back to US 11 . North of Falling Waters and south of Marlowe , US 11 intersects the freeway and continues north while I @-@ 81 turns east towards the Maryland state line at the Potomac River . Just south of the river is a welcome center intended for southbound travelers from Maryland .

Out of the six states that I @-@ 81 passes through , the segment in West Virginia is the second shortest , only longer than the Maryland segment . Every year the West Virginia Department of Transportation ( WVDOT ) conducts a series of surveys on its highways in the state to measure traffic volume . This is expressed in terms of average annual daily traffic ( AADT ) , which is a measure of traffic volume for any average day of the year . In 2009 , WVDOT calculated that as few as 45 @.@ 000 vehicles traveled along the highway at the Virginia state line , and as many as 62 @.@ 500 vehicles used the freeway between County Routes 15 and 13 in Martinsburg . As part of the Interstate Highway System , the entire route is listed on the National Highway System , a system of roads that are important to the nation 's economy , defense , and mobility .

= = History = =

I @-@ 81 roughly parallels the Great Indian Warpath , an old Indian trail which connected New York to the Carolina Piedmont via Virginia and West Virginia . A series of roads linking Virginia to Maryland through Martinsburg were present on maps as early as 1873 .

Bids for construction of I @-@ 81 by WVDOT were published in 1959 , with a budget of about \$ 10 @.@ 6 million to complete the highway . Completion of I @-@ 81 in Virginia up to the West Virginia state line was completed by the Virginia Department of Transportation in November 1965 . The first 6 miles ( 9 @.@ 7 km ) of the highway through West Virginia were completed between 1959 and 1963 . The construction of the remaining 20 miles ( 32 km ) of Interstate Highway through the Eastern Panhandle was completed by 1966 . Since then , there have been no major realignments , and the highway continues on its original path .

= = Future = =

In 2014 , WVDOT officials announced in conjunction with the Maryland State Highway Administration that the bridges over the Potomac River would be rehabilitated to accommodate three lanes of highway in each direction . The widening of the highway is proposed to head south along I @-@ 81 to exit 23 for US 11 . Construction is expected to start in the summer of 2016 .

= = Exit list = =

The entire route is in Berkeley County .