



Image courtesy of WTB

## THE WIDENING ROAD

July 2017 // Road // Exploring the Industry

Plus isn't just for mountain bikes anymore. Meet the new road trend taking the industry by storm: road plus – offering grip, comfort, and suppleness on multiple surfaces.

**Standards in the world of cycling are kind of funny** — albeit less “ha ha funny” and more “you’ve gotta be freakin’ kidding me” funny. No other industry continually subverts the definition of the word more than the bike industry. Brands and manufacturers have built their businesses on constantly one upping one another with the latest and greatest technologies and ever-evolving “standard.” Bottom bracket standards, disc brake standards, drivetrain standards — and the most recent component to receive the new-standards treatment: tires.

Several years ago, the dirt-obsessed side of the industry dove headfirst into a new tire standard: plus, in both 27.5” and 29” varieties. (If you’re unfamiliar with plus, take a minute to check out our [article on the subject](#))

While a little slow to start, the plus movement would eventually revolutionize mountain biking to the point where nearly every major brand is launching new new mountain bikes with a wider footprint. With the success and stability of the plus market, it was only a matter of time before an inevitable even newer standard cropped up.

Enter: road plus — the same principle and benefits of mountain plus, in a shiny new road standard. Wait, wait... come back. It's nothing to be scared of. How about if instead of using the “s” word, we just refer to road plus as new “trend”? There, isn't that better?

Now that we've (hopefully) made the thought of another new stan...er, trend a little more palatable, let's dissect it a bit and see what all the hubbub is, shall we?



### So What Exactly Is Road Plus?

Simply put, it's a 650b x 47c road tire. Now, right off the bat, a 650b tire might sound out of place in such a 700c-dominated field such as road. But therein lies the beauty of road plus. While the wheel size diameter may be 650b, the 47c width increases the overall outer diameter of the tire so that it closely mimics that of a 700 x 28–30c tire.

### Where We're Going, We Don't Need Roads...At Least, Not Paved Ones

So how does this smaller yet also larger tire benefit your ride? Easy: traction and comfort. While a 650b x 47c tire has roughly the same diameter as a 700c x 28c tire, it also has a much wider footprint.

“What this all boils down to is a tire that's grippy, comfortable, and supple on multiple surfaces including gravel, deteriorating tarmac, and pothole-filled city streets.”

That equates to a much larger contact patch with the pavement or gravel that you're riding on and therefore, more traction. On the comfort side of things, these high-volume road tires can be run at much lower pressures than their pizza-cutter-esque counterparts. This lower pressure easily absorbs bumps in the road and creates a much cushier, more supple ride quality...and that's if you have a tube in the tire. When set up tubeless, these benefits are magnified.

Essentially, what this all boils down to is a tire that's grippy, comfortable, and supple on multiple surfaces including gravel, deteriorating tarmac, and pothole-filled city streets.

### A Cornucopia of Tire Options to Choose From

Ok, so maybe it's not exactly an overflowing cornucopia. Think of it as more of a nice cheese plate of options... provided there's only three kinds of cheese on the plate. At the time of this writing, the road plus tires on the market are still fairly limited. From WTB, there's the tire that started it all: Horizon; as well as the newly released Byway. From Teravail, there's the Rampart which is available in both Light & Supple and Durable casings.

#### WTB Horizon

A road plus original, the WTB Horizon was first introduced in February 2016, appearing on a number of custom frames at NAHBS that year. Its tread consists of a smooth centerline and all-weather herringbone side tread that maximizes traction while cornering in wet or loose conditions. Utilizing [WTB's Tubeless Compatible System \(TCS\) technology](#), these tires can easily be set up fully tubeless for an ultra plush feeling ride.

With black tread and tan sidewalls, the Horizons really stands out, no matter what frame they're on. The Horizons are the lightest of the three offerings, coming in at 515g. Due to this lightweight construction and lack of any additional puncture protection, they're best suited for mildly deteriorated pavement or rides that venture out to explore maintained gravel roads.



image  
TR1515  
WTB Horizon

The Horizon Road Plus tire brings supple plus-size traction and smooth riding characteristics beyond where the pavement ends.

[Buy Now](#)

#### WTB Byway

WTB's latest offering to the road plus market is the Byway, a dirt-focused cousin to the Horizon. With three distinct tread patterns on one tire, it's the epitome of an all-road tire. Starting at the center, a fast-rolling smooth tread features small, angled sipes that conform to uneven surfaces. Moving outward, a strip of file tread on either side of the smooth keeps things in control and traction-laden when the road begins to loosen up. Finally, open spaced side knobs provide excellent cornering traction at lower pressures. Those side knobs also act as a sort of deflector to keep road debris and schrapnel away from the sidewall.

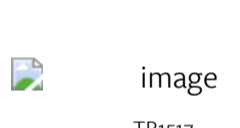


image  
TR1517  
WTB Byway

The Byway Road Plus tire allows riders to find comfort on remote gravel roads without being slowed down on the pavement required to reach them.

[Buy Now](#)

#### Teravail Rampart

The Rampart is the latest to the road plus party. Available in two different casings — Light & Supple and Durable — the Rampart has options for a more fine-tuned experience depending on where you typically ride. The Light & Supple casing offers no additional puncture protection but is by design slightly thicker than the Horizon so it is inherently better suited for roads that have seen better days.

The Durable casing, on the other hand, features a layer of woven aramid fiber reinforcement between the outer rubber and the inner casing on the sidewalls. This material is twice as strong as Kevlar and lighter in weight than any other reinforcement material. It provides moderate protection against abrasion and sharp road debris that would otherwise result in a flat tire. This protection layer makes the Durable Rampart best suited for heavily deteriorated pavement routes and rides that go further out into gravel country.

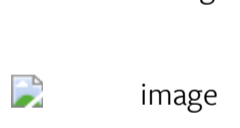


image  
TR7264  
Teravail Rampart

The Rampart offers increased traction and an ultra-smooth ride quality on rough pavement (and well beyond). The 650b diameter allows it to fit into many existing 700c frames, giving your current bike an entirely different feel and increased versatility.

[Buy Now](#)

### This Is Great and All, But I Don't Really Want To Buy Another Road Bike

Well then friend, you may be in luck. Depending on what your current road, cyclocross, or gravel frame is, there's a chance that you might be able to sneak a set of 47c road plus tires onto it. The folks at WTB have compiled a very thorough [list of the frames that are legally compatible with road plus tires](#). Of note, several of QBP's own brands' bikes made the list: All-City Space Horse (both 700c size 49–61, Surly 26” Disc Trucker and 26” Long Haul Trucker, and the Surly Straggler (both 700c and 650b varieties).

While WTB worked with a lot of bike brands to compile this list, it's not the be all end all of road plus frame compatibility. If you don't see your frame on this list, check with your local bike shop and have them measure your tire clearance. If you can fit a 47c tire and still have the legally required 6mm of clearance on all sides, you're good to go. If your frame is on this list, all you need is a set of tires and a 650b wheelset to give your ride a completely different feel.

### Will It Last?

Ah, the question on everyone's mind every time a new trend hits the market. While it's still fairly early on in the road plus trend, it seems to be gaining traction (all the pun intended) fairly quickly. With the Byway and both version of the Rampart being launched at Sea Otter 2017, and several new bikes designed specifically around the platform, it seems as though this trend might have some longevity.

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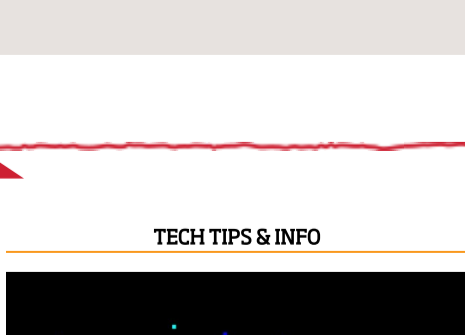


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