

CASE STUDY

the
ROAD
BECKONS

BEST PRACTICES FOR BYWAYS

INTERPRETATION

**CULTURAL CORRIDORS:
PUBLIC ART ON SCENIC HIGHWAYS**

New Mexico



CULTURAL CORRIDORS: PUBLIC ART ON SCENIC HIGHWAYS

*In New Mexico, two mighty roads, the ancient *El Camino Real* and the modern *Route 66* cross just west of Albuquerque.*

To celebrate travel along these fabled routes and the communities that link them, a cultural mapping project has resulted in the installation of a series of public artworks to underscore the value of both transportation and art to the economic and cultural life of New Mexico.

Designed as roadside attractions, the sculptures captivate the attention of residents and visitors as they travel the historic roadways and think about those that have made the journey before them.

WINNING ELEMENTS:

TELLING THE STORY CREATIVELY.

Monumental in scale, the artworks are designed as a focal point for regional interpretation. By providing “history at a glance,” the sculptures are meant to pique interest in the culture of the area and invite travelers to learn more about the significance of the roads to the history of New Mexico and the nation. Unique in scope, the project was one of the first of its kind in the country and continues to provide inspiration for the White House Millennium Art on Trails Program.



*"Fire & Ice," 1998, Howard and Kathleen Meehan, Grants, NM (right).
"Royal Road," 1998, Tom Askman, Las Cruces, NM (opposite right).*

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS. Federal, state and local entities came together to forge a partnership to underscore the value of both transportation and art to the economy of New Mexico. The Art in Public Places Program of the New Mexico Arts Division coordinates the program in collaboration with the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department and local communities. Fourteen local communities along El Camino Real and Route 66 are partners in the program. A community-based committee in each village, city or pueblo is charged with selecting a site, developing project intent and selecting an artist(s) for each project.

INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

The communities are also responsible for providing a cash match and in-kind services including time, land, maintenance and other services. To date, 8 of the 12 sculptures planned have been completed and 2 are in progress. The installations have been successful in initiating complementary projects

TIMELINE

- 1986 *Art in Public Places Program established to work with local communities to promote art as a resource for education, advocacy and economic opportunity*
- 1993 *New Mexico Arts, A Division of the Office of Cultural Affairs, applies for Transportation Enhancement funds from the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department*
- 1994 *First Transportation Enhancement dollars secured (funding was applied for and secured in 2 subsequent funding cycles)*
- 2003 *Eight of the 12 sculpture have been completed, 2 are in progress*

including a bike path alongside the Paso Por Aqui sculpture in Gallup and a park surrounding the Puerto del Sol installation adjacent to Tome Hill. Upon completion, the sculptures quickly have become a focal point for local events and lent a spirit of place to the communities.

ATTRACTING THE BEST. Artists nationwide were invited to submit proposals for these projects. Each artist was carefully selected by the individual communities and their work will play an important role in interpreting the connection between the 14 communities and the historic roadways that link them.

MAXIMIZING INVESTMENTS. Transportation Enhancement funds were used to finance the projects. Each \$100,000 commission is split between Transportation Enhancement funds (75%), state funds (15%) and local funds (10% cash match provided by the community). Total funding: \$1.2 million to install 12 noteworthy public artworks along the 2 byways.



INROADS TO SUCCESS

TAPPING INTO A CULTURAL RESOURCE TO BUILD PRIDE, ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE.

The landmark artworks are deeply rooted in the surrounding communities, their history and their people. Ranging from the whimsical to the representational the sculptures showcase local history and culture. Along El Camino Real, artworks focus on the rich history of the Native American trade route traversed by early colonizers who traveled the road from Mexico City to Santa Fe. In Socorro, First Contact: Socorro Wheel of History includes objects representative of Socorro's history from the first meeting between the Spaniards and the Piro Indians to the present. At Tome Hill, early travelers are depicted in the La Puerta del Sol sculpture.

By contrast, Route 66 speaks to the dawn of the interstate, auto travel, and travel based tourism. Artworks created for this byway emphasize this strong connection to the road. In Tucumcari, Roadside Attraction lights up the night sky

FUNDING SHARE & SOURCES	DOLLARS	PERCENTAGE
STATE SHARE: New Mexico Arts Division	\$180,000	15%
LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHARE & SOURCE: Municipality involved in project	\$120,000	10%
FEDERAL SHARE & SOURCE: Transportation Enhancements Program	\$900,000	75%
TOTAL COST	\$1,200,000	100%

with its gleaming tail fin and brake lights. In Gallup, the Paso Por Aqui sculpture incorporates a striped centerline and neon detailing evocative of the fanciful signs found along the route.





CREATING INTEREST AND OWNERSHIP BY ACTIVELY ENGAGING THE COMMUNITIES ALONG THE BYWAY. From the outset, the project was designed to raise awareness for the intrinsic qualities of both byways. Each sculpture is the product of a local selection committee comprised of residents and representatives of the nearby village, town, or pueblo, and chaired by a local arts organization representative. These committees were charged with selecting a site, establishing project intent and selecting a project artist or team. Throughout the process, partners have had the opportunity to learn more about each other and the history and culture that binds them.

ADVANCING MUTUAL INTERESTS. The project advanced the interests of the Highway Department by providing enhancement to transportation facilities; the interest of the Arts Division by giving artworks public venues; and the interests of the partner communities by providing focal points for residents and visitors to connect with local history and, in some cases, recreational opportunities.

DESIGNING FOR THE LONG TERM. All of the sculptures are designed to require minimal maintenance and be fully accessible to people of all abilities.

*"Puerto del Sol," 1997, Armando Alvarez, Tome Hill, NM (left).
"First Contact: Socorro Wheel of History," 1998, Claudia DeMonte & Ed McGowin, Socorro, NM (above).*

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD: “IN THEIR OWN WORDS”

During this project we learned:

- A lot about the 14 partner communities and their relationships to El Camino Real and Route 66
- How to work with volunteers, communities, and local government entities
- How to act as a liaison between artists and communities

If we were to do it again, we would:

- Do more to ensure that artists complete the work on time and according to plan
- Make some changes to the professional service contract we started out using



ASSESSING YOUR EFFORTS

This project was successful because of a number of factors. Is your byway implementing similar best practices?

ASSESSMENT
1 2 3 4

1: Never 2: Sometimes 3: Frequently 4: Always

1. We tell our byway's story through a variety of media.
2. We form partnerships with organizations and agencies with mutual interests.
3. We promote local community accountability for byway funding, maintenance, and safety.
4. We have considered hosting a "competition" to attract the best ideas and people for byway projects.
5. We have researched federal funding sources beyond the National Scenic Byways grants program (e.g., Transportation Enhancements and others).
6. We share our cultural heritage with visitors.
7. When designing byway facilities, we accommodate visitor needs for safety and accessibility.
8. We cultivate positive relationships with byway communities, volunteers, and local government entities.



"Roadside Attraction," 1997. Tom Coffin, Tucuman, NM.

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RESOURCES

Cultural Corridors: Public Art on Scenic Highways brochure,
New Mexico Arts web site, www.nmarts.org.

ROAD WORK AHEAD

1. What is special in communities along our byway?
What do people come to see? How are these communities or their attractions related to our byway's intrinsic qualities or stories?
2. How can we engage and partner with people, businesses, artisans, heritage or natural interests within these communities to become more active in byway initiatives to achieve shared goals or objectives?
3. What can we learn from this case study?
4. Are there aspects of this case study that we would like to incorporate into our byway plans and initiatives?
5. What are our *interpretation* success stories?
In what ways are we working to tell our byway's story?
6. What steps would we like to take to improve and enhance our *interpretive* efforts?
7. What would we like to know more about related to this case study?



"Paso Por Aqui," 1998. Charles Malley & Robert Hymer, Gallup, NM.



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Case studies are drawn from the 2001 and 2003 Best Practices for Byways competitions.