

CASE STUDY

the
ROAD
BECKONS

BEST PRACTICES FOR BYWAYS

RECOGNIZING AND ACTING ON THE POSSIBILITIES

OHIO RIVER SCENIC BYWAY
TRI-STATE STEERING COMMITTEE

Ohio/Indiana/Illinois

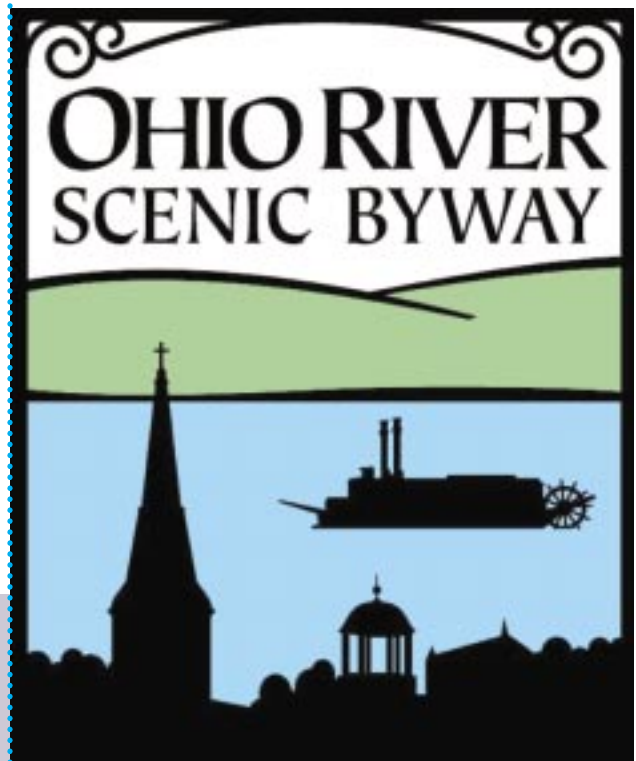


Stretching 942 miles across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the *Ohio River Scenic Byway* is a corridor steeped in history. The byway meanders along the banks of the Ohio River guiding visitors through rural landscapes and authentic river towns.

Recognizing the importance of coordination, and to ensure a “seamless experience” for travelers along the Ohio River Scenic Byway (ORSB), representatives from Illinois, Indiana and Ohio have formed the Ohio River Scenic Byway Tri-State Steering Committee. Under its auspices, multiple byway groups and agencies have been brought together to provide balanced direction for key projects of benefit to all three states. In a unique division of labor, Illinois serves as the coordinator for the multi-state signing project, Indiana serves as the coordinator for the multi-state interpretive plan and Ohio serves as the coordinator for multi-state marketing. By working together, these states have been able to more effectively utilize their resources and provide a first-class experience for travelers along the multi-state byway.

WINNING ELEMENTS:

POOLING RESOURCES AND TALENT. In 1998, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio applied for National Scenic Byway discretionary grant funds. Two of the states wanted to install signs on their sections of the byway. All three states planned to prepare an interpretive master plan, and then follow-up with marketing the byway. Recognizing the importance of coordination to enhance the travel experience, representatives of the three states began meeting. These informal discussions led to the formation of the ORSB Tri-State Steering Committee. Upon notifying the states that their applications for funding had been approved, FHWA suggested that one of the states take the lead to simplify the administration of funds. To fairly shepherd the projects and properly manage



Three states use one sign to guide travelers (right). The Ohio River Scenic Byway twists and turns along the Ohio River (opposite). A few paddlewheelers still move up and down the river. Credit: Ohio River Trails, Inc. (cover).

the federal funds without overburdening any one state, a creative solution was called for.

In response to FHWA's request for a single agency lead, the three states elected to oversee the three byway projects jointly, identifying the Tri-State Steering Committee as the decision-making and coordination entity. To overcome a variety of issues (e.g., the difficulty of one state covering another state's soft match, the inability of one state to direct another state or local unit of government to install signs outside their jurisdiction, the inability of one state to ensure the fulfillment of another state's contractual obligations, etc.) each state agreed to take the administrative lead for one of the projects.

TIMELINE

- 1998 *The states of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio separately apply for National Scenic Byway discretionary grant funds*
- 1999 *National Scenic Byway funding is awarded with conditions for a lead state although dollars are issued individually to each state for each of the three projects—a major compromise by FHWA*
Representatives of the 3 states begin meeting. These informal discussions lead to the formation of the ORSB Tri-State Steering Committee to oversee three primary projects
- 2000 *First byway route signs are manufactured and installed along the byway in Indiana and Illinois as first multi-state project is implemented*
- 2002 *Interpretive Master Plan is completed*
- 2003 *Vendor selected to produce web site and brochure*



Illinois assumed point for route signs along the byway through Illinois and Indiana (total cost: \$100,900). Indiana took the reins to manage the Interpretive Master Plan for all three states (total cost: \$267,000). And Ohio took the lead for the marketing effort (total cost: \$177,300). Funding for each of the three projects was issued individually to each state.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE: IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GET THE JOB DONE.

To ensure balanced representation, the Steering Committee is composed of twelve representatives, four from each state. Members include one representative from each state's local byway group, tourism office and transportation department with the fourth position representative determined at the discretion of each state's contingent.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS. Together, it is believed that these states have accomplished more than they would have alone. Successful partnerships formed at the local, state and interstate level have

had a positive impact on the development and implementation of these projects.

- To place route signs across southern Illinois and Indiana, the Illinois DOT took the design jointly developed by the three states and contracted with the Illinois Department of Corrections to fabricate the route signs for both states. DOT district offices in both states accepted delivery and assumed installation responsibility. The DOTs each paid the Illinois Department of Corrections. Ohio has now, through other funds, placed this same sign along their portion of the byway.
- Indiana's Department of Commerce, Tourism Division led the tri-state Interpretive Master Plan because of its expertise in interpretation and promoting sites within the state. For over two years, Steering Committee meetings were hosted by the agency to help guide and manage the project. An Interpretive Master Plan for the entire three state byway has been completed.





- Partnerships continued to grow as team members from Ohio assumed leadership roles in the marketing project. An RFP was issued and the tri-state committee selected a marketing firm to create a fulfillment piece and web presence for the multi-state byway.

Having seen the benefits of coordinating these initial projects along the length of the 967-mile byway, local byway supporters, tourism professionals and transportation agency planners agree on the long-term value of, and need for, the Tri-State Steering Committee after the current projects have been completed.

CREATING A SEAMLESS TRAVEL EXPERIENCE.

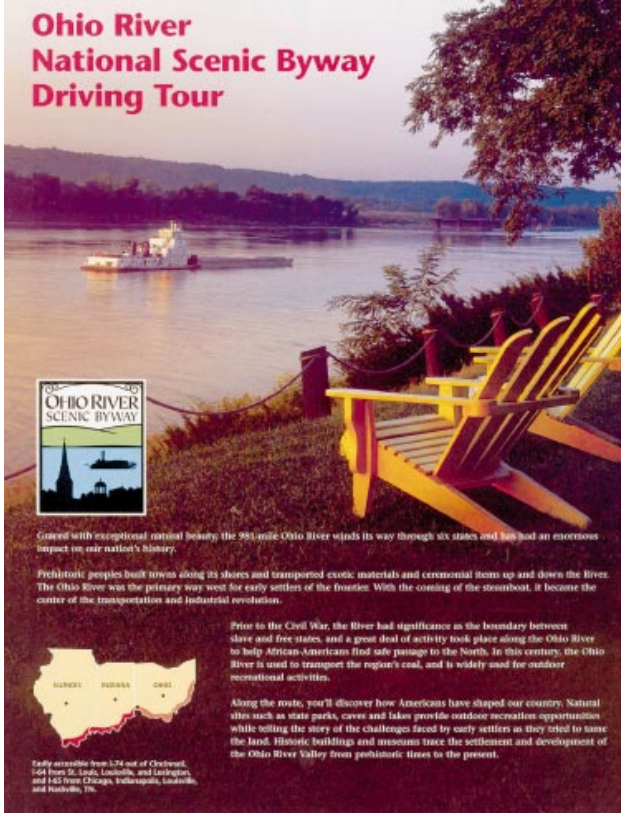
Thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Tri-State Steering Committee, travelers will see the same route signs erected by three state DOTs from the West Virginia state line to the Mississippi River.

A single consultant that the states jointly selected prepared the interpretive plan for the entire byway. A single firm was selected jointly by the Committee for a multi-faceted marketing effort. State tourism offices in the three states will employ themes and stories identified in the interpretive plan to market the entire byway both nationally and internationally. A single web site will be used to attract visitors and provide information to facilitate trip planning and provide information on one of the longest byways in the nation.



The Ohio River has a rich transportation history which is one of the themes highlighted in the Master Interpretive Plan (left). Diverse recreational opportunities await visitors (opposite above and right).

Ohio River National Scenic Byway Driving Tour



LESSONS FROM THE ROAD: “IN THEIR OWN WORDS”

During this project we learned:

- A multi-state byway organization is a marriage: partners must be patient, have confidence in each member’s ability, be willing to rely on each other and willing to compromise, and COMMUNICATE
- Positive synergy among the partners can move mountains
- Decisions are best made through consensus
- Participants should not come to the table with an agenda
- Members of the Committee need to be from the appropriate agencies and groups and able to make decisions
- The Committee did not create a mission statement but follows the mantra of “one byway...one seamless experience”

A Driving Tour publication (above) offers a three-state itinerary for the Ohio River Scenic Byway (right).

FUNDING SHARE & SOURCES	DOLLARS	PERCENTAGE
STATE SHARE:		
DOTs, Tourism Offices, other support	\$139,310	25.6%
FEDERAL SHARE & SOURCE OR PROGRAM CATEGORY:		
National Scenic Byways Program Grant	\$405,890	74.4%
TOTAL COST	\$545,200*	100%

*Although eligible for reimbursement, travel and conference calls associated with the ORSB Tri-State Steering Committee are not reflected here. These costs are the 3-state total for signage, interpretation and marketing projects that the Committee oversees.

- Committee membership will change over time as people leave or change jobs, but the value of the Committee survives the projects it was designed to accomplish
- Designing a multi-state route sign was the acid test of our Committee’s strength
- For successful byway efforts, there’s no substitute for the leadership provided by a strong and effective local byway group

If we were to do it again, we would:

- Hire a single firm to do work involving more than one state, such as corridor management plans, logo designs, route signs, interpretation, marketing, or grant applications
- Provide support to ensure and maintain a strong local byway group from the very beginning and then pursue state agency participation.



ASSESSING YOUR EFFORTS

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



A rural section of the byway.

ASSESSMENT
1 2 3 4

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

1. We look beyond our borders, coordinating efforts with neighboring counties, states, and political jurisdictions.
2. We work to create a seamless travel experience for visitors through coordinated logos, signage, interpretation, and marketing.
3. Our byway organization includes people with a wide range of skills and expertise who possess the ability to make decisions and get the job done (e.g., state Department of Transportation, tourism representatives, state historic and preservation office, etc.)
4. We have developed a positive working relationship with our State Scenic Byway Coordinator.
5. We understand the requirements to use federal funds and the administrative responsibilities associated with these funds.
6. We have outlined clear responsibilities and expectations for our byway leaders, officers, and committees.
7. We strive to make decisions through consensus.
8. We have a succession plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of our byway organization.

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RESOURCES

1999 letter from INDOT Deputy Commissioner Klika to Eugene Johnson, former NSB Program Director, defining Indiana, Illinois and Ohio's proposal for splitting the leadership role on signage, interpretation and marketing (Illinois and Ohio DOTs drafted and mailed similar letters). Image of the ORSB logo developed by 3 states and used on route and gateway signage. ORSB Interpretive Master Plan (2002). RFP and scope of work for ORSB marketing project.

Additional contacts are also available in IL and OH.

ROAD WORK AHEAD



1. Does our byway cross multiple jurisdictional boundaries – city, county, park, forest, state, federal, etc.? Where does our byway start and end? At a jurisdictional boundary – why? Are our byway’s termini logical points from the travelers’ and visitors’ point of view?
2. How often and how many of our byway’s initiatives cross jurisdictional boundaries? Do we view jurisdictional boundaries as hurdles or opportunities for engaging new partners?
3. Does the same organization have lead responsibility for all of our byway funds or grants? Is this arrangement working well?
4. Is there another organization willing, able, and familiar with the responsibilities associated with having lead responsibility for some of our byway funds or grants? Would it help to share the time and effort associated with administrative responsibility, or would it require unnecessary time and coordination?
5. Do we have any future projects where it might be more effective or efficient for one organization to have the technical lead for the project, while another organization has the administrative lead for the funds or the grant? Or, would it require unnecessary time and coordination?
6. What can we learn from this case study?
7. Are there aspects of this case study that we would like to incorporate into our byway plans and initiatives?
8. What are our success stories? In what ways do we build and maintain an effective byway organization?
9. What steps would we like to take to improve our organizational structure and processes?
10. What more would we like to know about this case study?



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