

VISTAS



SPRING 2006

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Creating Opportunities for National Forest and other Federal Land Byway Managers through the National Scenic Byways Program

By Mark A. Conley, Federal Lands Scenic Byways Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service, Duluth, MN

In December, I left my job as an Outdoor Recreation Planner with the USDI Bureau of Land Management in Eugene, Oregon. I drove about 1,900 miles to Duluth, Minnesota with my wife and son to accept a position at the America's Byways® Resource Center. Many of my family and friends asked why I would leave Eugene to accept a position in the extremely cold "arctic" environment of northern Minnesota. My wife and family also questioned my sanity to leave western Oregon for the unknown COLD weather conditions of Duluth.

The reason for my drastic lifestyle change was the offer by the U.S.



Forest Service (USFS), Department of Agriculture, to serve as the Federal Lands National Byways Coordinator co-located in Duluth with the America's Byways® Resource Center. The position is funded jointly through the USFS, the America's Byways® Resource Center, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Department of Interior. I am excited about my new duties and responsibilities, and my new interagency position is everything that I could hope for as a Federal employee.

I am working with a dedicated and talented team at the America's Byways® Resource Center. I am providing national coordination of the Federal Lands Byways Programs, particularly the USFS's National Forest Scenic Byways and BLM's Back Country Byways Programs. My primary customers are National Forest and BLM land managers. I work with them in exploring the full potential of using the National Scenic Byways Program to advance their goals in managing

My specific responsibilities are:

- ★ Develop a network of Byway experts on a National and State level that can provide technical expertise to Federal lands byway managers.
- ★ Develop a comprehensive list of potential grants and funding sources that are available to Federal lands byway managers and the byway community for America's Byways® and other designated byways on Federal lands.

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public lands, serving visitors, and working with local communities. I also am available to assist our other Federal land management agency partners that include the National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Army Corps of Engineers.

- ★ Share technical expertise and resources provided by the America's Byways® Resource Center, USFS, BLM, and other Federal byway managers and leaders.
- ★ Assist in strengthening the partnership between the America's Byways® Resource

One Big Neighborhood



Michelle Johnson,
Director,
America's Byways®
Resource Center

When I think of all the reasons why I love my home, my neighbors are at the top of the list. In warm weather, we can hang over the fence and talk about gardens, kids, neighborhood activities and the weather. In colder times, we wave from the kitchen windows—gestures completely understood and appreciated by both parties. We've developed special relationships with several of our neighbors. At the beginning of autumn, my husband and I host a big outdoor feast and invite our friends, family and neighbors. It has become the neighborhood event of the year. And one of our neighbors has a very prominent reputation with my kids. For my children, the name Marcia is synonymous with "treats." Their way of saying hello is to ask, "Do you have treats for us, Marcia?" She, of course, thinks it's cute and is delighted to stock up on treats. We can count on other neighbors to grab the mail or pull the garbage can off the street. I know we can rely on several of them in the event of an emergency. And, of course, we are more than willing to do the same for them. We have all witnessed the enthusiasm and friendship that exists in the Byway community.

Those of you who attended the rockin' conference in Cleveland saw firsthand how enthusiasm and friendship can be revved up with a handshake. I know that the importance of building relationships is something that each of you value in your own community and along your Byway. What about applying those approaches a step higher to the broader Byway community? Many States organize Statewide meetings or conferences, offering great opportunities to meet other Byway leaders and volunteers within your State.

The National Scenic Byways Program designated 45 new Byways last year. That's 45 new neighbors. Maybe you can't bring over a gift to welcome the new Byways across the country, but there are easier, more feasible methods of introducing yourself.

Several State Coordinators meet on a regular basis to discuss their programs and Byways, and share information and ideas at a regional level. These types of activities, commitments and exchanges are at the very heart of our community.

Maybe you're thinking this is a great concept, but you just don't have the time to work on relationships beyond your immediate borders. If all the Byways focused only on themselves, we would have many Byways tackling projects and struggling with problems that could have had simple, proven solutions.

Start With A Warm Welcome

Imagine living next to someone and not even waving as you pull out of the driveway in the mornings. We have new neighbors across the street, and it bothers me that we

haven't been over to introduce ourselves and welcome them to our neighborhood yet. Making an effort to get to know them is at the top of my to-do list.

The National Scenic Byways Program designated 45 new Byways last year. That's 45 new neighbors. Maybe you can't bring over a gift to welcome the new Byways across the country, but there are easier, more feasible methods of introducing yourself. For starters, call them up! Contact names and information are posted on

www.bywaysonline.org. Use the Discussion Forums on the website to generate a conversation and make a point to include new voices (or text!).

Building relationships takes time and energy, and the results can be significant. We all realize the benefit that our personal relationships add to our lives. Building professional relationships with individuals and groups that share our same values and visions deliver similar benefits. Did you meet someone new at the national conference? Have you stayed in touch? Send an e-mail! With all the buzz generated by the button game, I would guess several new friendships were formed. And if you haven't heard about the buttons, you really missed out! (Call up a Byway neighbor and ask.)

Support Your Byway Neighborhood Group

One of our major initiatives this year is to establish an Advisory Committee to help guide us as we meet the needs of the Byway community. This small group, representative of the Byway community, will provide feedback and guidance as we develop and implement projects and programs for Byways. The idea is to bring several of our neighbors together for some serious discussions.

Now that our community is growing, it's time for all of us

to pay closer attention to everyone in our community. The more successful each Byway becomes, the more successful we all become. Reaching out, getting to know each other and offering support and friendship will foster a stable, strong and caring community. We are all in this together.

So what is my contribution? I have some baking to do for a "welcome to the neighborhood" visit for the new neighbors. I hope they like cookies! ★



CAPITAL CORNER



By Derrick Crandall, President, American Recreation Coalition (ARC)

I am delighted to report a heightened awareness in and around Washington, D.C., of scenic byways, partly resulting from the 2005 Designation Event this fall, but mostly because more and more organizations are recognizing the current and potential contributions of byways to community pride and economics.

Michelle Johnson, America's Byways® Resource Center Director, was in town recently and we met with a variety of national byway partners—organizations that had played a role in the creation of the National Scenic Byways Program in the pre-ISTEA years. We found genuine pride in the program's overall accomplishments, but a surprising dearth of awareness about specific byway projects and activities. It was a reversal of what we found at this October's wonderful Cleveland gathering, where exciting details of byway projects and activities were everywhere, but many participants had a very limited understanding of the history and the vulnerability of the byway effort.

Washington is also a town filled with talk about retrenchment of Federal programs and spending. Discussions often focus on whether to pay for hurricane recovery and the war on terror or to pay for tax cuts and upward spiraling health care costs.

That leaves me convinced that 2006 is a very important year for byways. We need to get organized and get going this year. We need to move ahead toward our goals even as the winds suggest that we hunker down and stay safe.

Toolbox Update

One of the first things we need to do is take advantage of recent legislation—from SAFTEA-LU to FLREA, the new Federal recreation fees legislation. Literally dozens of tools are available to fund and assist byways. An exciting new project to

create a second version of the Toolbox for the Great Outdoors features many of these tools. By mid-2006, you'll have Internet access to a remarkable source of information about means to add dollars and other resources to byway projects. The first Toolbox was on a CD-ROM and highlighted 19 tools in four categories. The new Toolbox will have seven "drawers" with nearly 50 tools, including:

- Transportation-related (including scenic byways and TE)
- Wildlife, fisheries conservation and related areas
- Volunteers, fees, partnerships
- Youth corps, internships, academic links and more
- Health and education
- Economic development and better management
- Design and technical assistance

Together, these tools offer well over a billion dollars annually in resources to improve and operate byways, and especially byways linked to Federally managed lands.

Mark Conley, Federal Lands Scenic Byways Coordinator based at the America's Byways® Resource Center, and Michelle Johnson will play important roles in the development of the new Toolbox at the January 2006 Partners Outdoors meeting in Phoenix.

The first version of the Toolbox is still available through the America's Byways® Resource Center. To request a copy, e-mail Jeanine Buck at jbuck@byways.org.

Byways Issues Inside the Beltway

Although most of the news reported from Washington recently has focused on lobbying reform, Supreme Court nominations and the war in Iraq, there is much, much more underway inside the beltway. Important developments for America's scenic byways look somewhat good and somewhat not-so-good.

NEW TOOLBOX FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS COMING SOON!

Get ready to be surprised by some of the programs available, and some of the opportunities to adapt programs to benefit your byway.

- Did you know that there is a \$50-million-per-year program that can help your schools buy bikes to use to ride along your byway, or on the trails the byway access, as alternatives to PE classes focusing on flag football and volleyball?
- Did you know that funding for projects like universal design fishing piers increased by \$100 million annually as of August 2005?
- Did you know that a major resort in Nevada will be raising millions to boost visitor services on public lands in southern Nevada?

We look forward to keeping you up to date on the development of the new version of the Toolbox, which will include practical information about how to obtain the available resources and case studies.

First, some good news: More and more of the organizations that helped persuade Congress to create the National Scenic Byways Program in the late 1980s and early 1990s are again focusing on the byways program. The latest example is the National Tour Association, a key force in the group-tour industry and a major voice on national tourism policy matters. NTA's Washington representative is the Honorable Jim Santini, former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Nevada and the initial leader of the Congressional Tourism Caucus. Jim recently wrote me:

"Last week the NTA board officially endorsed the recommendations [of NTA President Hank Phillips and NTA Washington Representative Jim Santini] that we again team-up with ARC to highlight the remarkable Scenic Byways accomplishments over the last 15 years and continuing this pattern of success through 2021—the next 15 years. Our association leaders and government relations committee look forward to our role in the Scenic Byways mutual action agenda in 2006 and beyond."

NTA will be a central player in the Byways 2021 program. Jim Santini has accepted an invitation to be one of the VIPs serving on the new blue-ribbon panel to be introduced next month to help

define goals for our byway efforts. Also accepting an invitation recently: Kym Murphy, Senior Vice President for Environmental Policy at The Walt Disney Company, and Grant Jones, one of the nation's premier landscape architects.

This is exciting! NTA and more than a dozen other key national groups will be highlighting byway program successes in their magazines and upcoming meetings. They'll consider what tools and strategies will help the program to continue—and to build.

We are also excited that Federal land agencies, and especially the USDA Forest Service, are acting to capitalize on the opportunities created under SAFETEA-LU, including the expanded byways and recreational trails programs. The Forest Service and the Federal Lands Division of the Federal Highway Administration will be conducting training sessions across the nation starting this spring.

Not all news from inside the Beltway is good, however. As you know, we celebrated a major victory in August 2005 for the National Scenic Byways Program: inclusion in the SAFETEA-LU legislation with a very healthy increase in funding. By year's end, Congress reduced the Program's funding

Center and the Federal land management agencies participating in the National Scenic Byways Program.

- ★ Work with the National Scenic Byways Online team to expand and update information about the National Forest Scenic Byways and the Back Country Byways on the www.byways.org website.
- ★ In consultation with FHWA, America's Byways® Resource Center and Federal land management agencies, assist with the development of a long-term strategy to market America's Byways® on Federal lands.
- ★ Utilize and cooperate with the Forest Service Technology and Development Centers on research projects that would provide benefit to America's Byways®, such as models and best practices for scenic byways, visitor-use monitoring, scenic conservation management, interpretive planning and visual resource management.
- ★ Better integrate the Federal Lands Scenic Byways Programs into the National Scenic Byways Program.

Building a Seamless Network of Byways on Federal Lands

One of my long-term goals is to create a "seamless" network of byways on Federal lands, especially Byways with a national designation (All-American Roads/National Scenic Byways). To the public, it doesn't matter whether a group of citizen volunteers, local government, State DOT, USFS, BLM, National Park Service, or other Federal agency leads a nationally designated Byway. It's public land that the government manages for the people, and the public generally believes that these roads should be used and cared for with the public's needs in mind, regardless of organizational boundaries.

Many designated All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways cross multiple National Forests or other Federal, State and municipal

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government lands. These nationally designated Byways are best managed in a collaborative manner, with a strong grass-roots byway community. The Federal lands adjacent to local communities are intricately linked, and contribute significantly to the local economy, cultural identity, and quality of life in these gateway communities.

Byways connect people and communities to their public lands and this connection helps to create a climate of community pride and economic development through tourism. It is my goal to work in concert with rural communities to promote responsible travel and tourism destinations and to assist communities in achieving sustainable economic development. Byways help to connect gateway communities to their National Parks, National Forests, National Refuges, and other public lands. Byways provide a focal point advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, and sound stewardship of public lands.

America's Byways® is the umbrella term used by FHWA to market the collection of 126 distinct and diverse roads, located in 39 States and designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. America's Byways® includes National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. There are now 61 designated All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways that are located partially or totally on public lands. The 45 All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways that were designated last fall by the U.S. Secretary of the Transportation under the America's Byways® brand includes 21 new Byways which either cross National Forest or other Federal lands, or in which a Federal land

management agency provides assistance with landscape planning or other technical expertise.

Rogue-Umpqua National Scenic Byway

I would like to offer two outstanding examples and case studies of Federal agencies working collaboratively with local communities to promote tourism and economic development. The first is the 172-mile Rogue-Umpqua National Scenic Byway commonly known as the "Highway of Waterfalls." It ascends from I-5 into the southern Cascades, tracking two of Oregon's most majestic rivers. With abundant hiking, fishing, and camping opportunities, visitors experience some of the most scenic landscapes in western Oregon.

The marketing and promotion of this Byway is truly a cooperative effort between the Umpqua National Forest, the BLM's Roseburg District, Douglas County,

businesses and community leaders who all work together to promote tourism and rural community development. Through this community partnership, there has been extensive collaboration to tell the story of the North Umpqua and Rogue Rivers and the adjacent National Forest lands that surround this Byway. The community partnership and involvement has assisted the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management with the production of the Rogue-Umpqua National Scenic Byway brochure, the Thundering Waters (waterfalls) brochure, the North Umpqua Trail brochure, and the North Umpqua River Users Guide. This Byway has helped create community pride and long-term partners to promote tourism, rural economic development, and land stewardship.

Sky Islands National Scenic Byway

The second example is the Sky Island National Scenic Byway, located partly on the Coronado National Forest. This Byway offers visitors a journey through ecological zones equivalent to a drive from Mexico to Canada. The Byway begins in the Sonoran Desert among the giant saguaro cacti and climbs through conifer forests, reaching nearly 9,000 feet elevation in just 27 miles. The Coronado National Forest is committed to working with community partners, local businesses, and the Arizona Department of Transportation to protect the unique and irreplaceable natural resources, but still promote tourism and community development. This partnership has helped to build community involvement, pride, and long-term sustainability of the Byway.



The Rogue-Umpqua National Scenic Byway (Oregon)



A birds-eye view of the Sky Island Parkway (Arizona)

I mention just two examples, but there are many other successful partnerships with Federal partners. The USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, and the other Federal agency partners are proud to work with the Federal Highway Administration in support of the National Scenic Byways Program. There is a strong commitment to continue the partnership to support and promote

America's Byways® and other byway designations on Federal lands.

I am excited to be the Federal Lands National Byways Coordinator. Developing and maintaining the relationship with the America's Byways® Resource Center and Federal agency partners will be my biggest challenge and the potential for the greatest results. The future looks promising for the

National Scenic Byways Program. I look forward to challenges of working collaboratively with the byways community to make the program stronger in partnership with the Federal agencies. If you have any questions about any of the Federally designated Byways, I can be reached in Duluth at 1-8004BYWAYS, ext. 5, option 3, or mconley@byways.org. ★

Notes

Welcome, Mark Conley



The USDA Forest Service selected Mark Conley to serve as the Federal Lands Scenic Byway Coordinator, stationed at the America's Byways® Resource Center. This is a newly created position made possible through an Interagency Agreement between the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Federal Highway Administration.

Primarily serving Federal land management agency partners, Mark will provide national coordination and support for the National Forest Scenic

Byways Program and Bureau of Land Management Back Country Byways Program. He will work in a team environment with America's Byways® Resource Center staff, formulating and advancing the Center's goals. He will also coordinate and work closely with Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management national, regional and byway leaders to assist with obtaining grant funds and partnerships to promote and enhance America's Byways® on Federal lands.

Mark has over 20 years of Federal experience as an Outdoor Recreation Planner with the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon and California. He also served five years in Nepal as a Natural Resource Specialist with the Agency for International Development and Peace Corps. Mark will reside in Duluth with his wife, Lucy and son, Michael. He can be reached at 1-8004BYWAYS, ext. 5, then press 3 or mconley@byways.org. ★

Remembering Larry Moon

North Shore Scenic Drive Council member Lawrence "Larry" Moon passed away on December 20, 2005. Larry was instrumental in achieving All-American Road status for the North Shore Scenic Drive (NSSD). He was an outstanding byway advocate and a greatly respected member of the byway community. Moon served as the Chair of the NSSD Council from 1999-2005.

His passing will leave a void along the NSSD, but his work and appreciation for byways will always be remembered.

Larry's family requests that contributions for the North Shore Scenic Drive may be made through the National Scenic Byway Foundation: Lawrence Moon Memorial (write in the memo line), 118 Wildwood Bay Drive, Mahtomedi, MN 55115. ★

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and introduced uncertainty for most SAFETEA-LU programs. The action came through “rescissions,” Congressional actions that actually take back previously appropriated money. Rescissions are not new, but the 2005 actions—prompted in large measure by 2005 hurricane damage in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Florida and Alabama—are unusually large and threatening.

Congress took three separate actions in late 2005, which will reduce SAFETEA-LU funding in current FY 2006 by almost 10%.

The first action was a flat 1% rescission of most Federal spending during the year. That will result in a spending reduction of \$300,000, 1% of this year’s \$30 million appropriation for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP).

The second rescission came in the Transportation appropriations measure for FY06 in late November. It reduced SAFETEA-LU spending by \$2 billion, out of about \$40

billion in FY06 spending, or roughly 5%. But this reduction does not affect all SAFETEA-LU programs. The reduction in money is based upon funding provided under the following programs:

FY 2006 apportionments for the Interstate Maintenance (IM), National Highway System (NHS), Bridge, Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) programs.

The mandated spending cuts may be taken from these programs as well as (1) unobligated funding from prior years and (2) a variety of other programs, including the Recreational Trails Program. It gives States discretion as to where the cuts are made; **the reductions do not have to be even on all of the affected programs.**

The Federal Highway Administration issued guidance to the States on this second reduction on December 28, 2005. The result is that any one of the

eligible programs could be entirely exempted from cuts or could see very sharply reduced funding. Each State is likely to react uniquely to this challenge.

The third rescission was done in the Department of Defense appropriations bill, which became law on December 30, 2005. It cut just over \$1.1 billion in FY06 SAFETEA-LU spending, or roughly another 3%. This third rescission is structured similarly to the second rescission: a reduction in allowed State spending, but at each State’s discretion on how to allocate the cuts.

While the National Scenic Byways Program is not directly impacted by the second and third rescission actions, a few possible exceptions may occur. A State could cancel a byway’s project and count the savings against the rescission. It is also possible that States will be forced to replace Federal reductions with State funds otherwise available for byway projects.

The lessons for us are:

- 1) Supplemental funding for byway projects from Transportation Enhancement, Recreational Trails Program and other sources will be more difficult to find this year.
- 2) We should prepare now for possible rescissions in FY07 and beyond, finding ways to protect byway funding against unfair reductions.
- 3) Spending promised in a five- or six-year surface transportation bill is not a guarantee of actual funding levels. Even after passage of a measure like SAFETEA-LU, the byway community at every level, from local to national, must work with all transportation interests to assure that transportation funding isn’t seen as an easy target by those seeking money for special needs, including disaster recovery. ★

Stanley Steamer Event Held Along Florida’s A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway



In 1903, the smooth, hard-packed sands of Ormond Beach became a proving ground for automobile inventors and drivers. These first speed tournaments in the U.S. earned Ormond the title “Birthplace of Speed.” Records set here during speed trial tournaments for much of the next eight years would be the first significant marks recorded outside of Europe. Motorcycle and automobile owners and racers brought vehicles that used gasoline, steam and electric engines. They came from France, Germany and England as well as from across the United States.

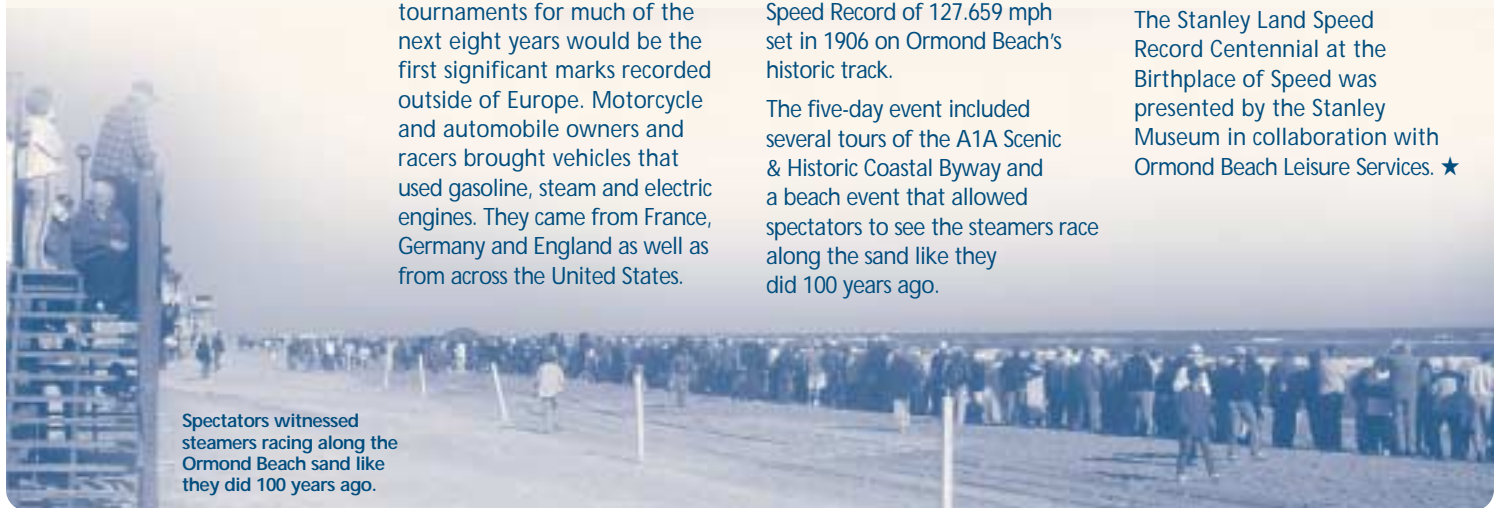
These steam cars made their presence yet again along the roads and beaches of the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway during the week of January 24-27th. Close to 100 vintage steam cars came together to honor the Centennial of the Stanley Land Speed Record of 127.659 mph set in 1906 on Ormond Beach’s historic track.

The five-day event included several tours of the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway and a beach event that allowed spectators to see the steamers race along the sand like they did 100 years ago.



In January, vintage cars from Europe and America and their fans gathered in Ormond Beach, Florida, to celebrate the Centennial of the Stanley Land Speed Record of 127.659 mph.

The Stanley Land Speed Record Centennial at the Birthplace of Speed was presented by the Stanley Museum in collaboration with Ormond Beach Leisure Services. ★



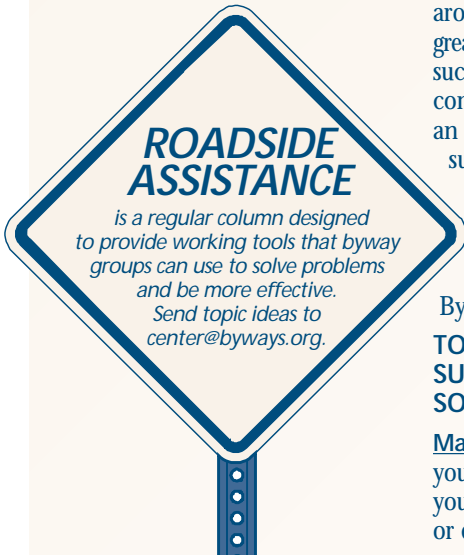
Spectators witnessed steamers racing along the Ormond Beach sand like they did 100 years ago.



Roadside Assistance

Seven Steps To Great Celebrations

By Chel Ethun, Byways Resource Specialist



Our Byways Resource Specialists are here to assist you. Find the Resource Center contact for your State on the Community website at www.bywaysonline.org/contacts/rc_contacts.html. Call us toll-free at 1-800-4BYWAYS, Ext. 5., or contact your Byways Resource Specialist directly:

Chel Ethun
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Susan Koschak
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Curt Pianalto
Direct: (218) 625-3304
cpianalto@byways.org

The "Share the Celebration" banner (6'H x 10'W) is available for Designation Celebrations.

Contact Patricia McNally at pmcnally@byways.org to check dates.

As the new National Scenic Byways designees graced the platform in September 2005 and joined the America's Byways® collection, the celebration planning started to take shape around the country. And that's great! Celebrating accomplishments such as designation or even completion of grant projects is an integral component to the success of Byway organizations.

Celebrations offer a forum to publicize participants' hard work and dedication and generate new interest for Byway projects.

TO HELP YOU CELEBRATE SUCCESSFULLY, HERE ARE SOME PLANNING TIPS:

Make it BIG! Don't be shy about your accomplishments. Whether you are celebrating a project or designation, it took many people and a great deal of time. Members of your byway corridor community(ies) probably don't realize the amount of effort involved. Celebrations remind them that your group is working really hard. Brag a little! Celebrations get folks excited. Old-fashioned banners, posters and plaques all add to the festive atmosphere as well as offer visible reminders afterward.

Focus on something tangible.

If a particular resource on your Byway emulates the intrinsic qualities, host the celebration there. Perhaps a new visitor center is the reason for the celebration. By all means, show off your hard work there! Experiencing something firsthand cements concepts in your audience's memory much more than reading an article or hearing a broadcast. There is plenty of room for creativity in this regard. Another reason to focus on a tangible element is that it gives the media a subject for their photographers. A picture says a thousand words. Why pass up the opportunity to provide a "Kodak moment" for the local media?

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To be formal or informal, that is the question. Celebrations come in all shapes in sizes, from the black-tie dinner to the community potluck picnic. Set the mood and atmosphere to fit your Byway and its featured accomplishment. If the celebration is about a new trailhead, it probably seems out of character to have a black-tie dinner. Likewise, if the accomplishment is monumental and historically significant, take it seriously and create an atmosphere that reflects what you want people to remember.

Choose the right time. As members of an organization, you know the details and actual timing of accomplishments. General community members do not. Celebrations serve as a public relations forum for your organization and it is perfectly acceptable to schedule the announcement at a date when you will get the most bang for your buck, rather than when it actually happens. For example, restaurants usually open long before their Grand Opening to ensure customers will encounter a well-trained and prepared staff. Book publishers do it all the time, too. Harry Potter came off the presses in August but the big release was not until late October. Why? Because consumers are more likely to buy at that time. Choose a time that will ensure a large audience and best leverages your situation.

PR, PR, PR. If reaching a large audience is your objective, the market needs to know when, where, whom and how. Craft a press release about the celebration date and location with a paragraph about the accomplishment and a picture, if possible. Even if the media can't come the day of the big celebration, they can publish an article and photo to help you spread the word. Hosting a press conference is another way to ensure the media is present. Establish a time for all media to be there, indicate who will be speaking and provide the press release about the accomplishment at that time. Presenting a member with a plaque or cutting a ribbon are solid press conference highlights, and they give the media a newsworthy focus.

Invitations. If you want important people at your celebration, invite them. Everyone appreciates the recognition implied by a request to attend an event; often this is enough to get someone there who might not otherwise attend. Invitations can be formal or informal, depending on the celebration atmosphere.

Thank-you notes. Thank the special guests you invited for attending your celebration. Thank the media, too. A simple note a week or two later is a simple and effective way to build a good relationship that sets the stage for your next celebration. ★

A Conversation With...

Rob Draper
Team Leader,
National Scenic Byways
Program

1 *What is your background and what led you to the Federal Highway Administration and the National Scenic Byways Program?*

I studied urban planning in college. I was attracted to FHWA by the agency's on-the-job professional development program. Aside from gaining experience in planning, I was curious to learn how a large organization operates at different levels and was excited to have the opportunity to travel and live in different parts of the country. I worked several months in our region office in Portland, Oregon, our Texas division office, our headquarters office, and the metropolitan planning organization in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

As an organization, FHWA encourages and fosters geographic and functional mobility for our employees. I've been a headquarters guy, yet I've had the opportunity to work in a variety of positions with planning, policy development, research, budget, and now program management responsibilities. I was selected to serve as the byways program director in May 1999, when Gene Johnson (the original director) retired.

2 *How have you used this experience as the National Scenic Byways Program Director?*

I've drawn equally on FHWA experience and my community involvement in leading and managing the National Scenic Byways Program as a grassroots, locally driven venture. I continuously draw on the breadth of my FHWA experience and my network within and outside the agency when resolving policy and program issues.

My community volunteer experience has been invaluable in relating to people responsible for byways. In my senior year of

college, I lived and worked in a community design center in Portsmouth, Virginia. I helped organize a free community health clinic and created a job placement program for young people on probation. Since graduating from college, I served on the Alexandria Human Rights Commission, a neighborhood advisory committee for the update of a local sector plan, and the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Committee for Montgomery County, Maryland.

I understand what it's like to work as a volunteer in a local community. I've been on the outside looking in, trying to understand how government

agencies work and how to improve agencies' responsiveness to community concerns. I'm empathetic to byway volunteers. I listen. I do my best to balance community concerns with FHWA's broader interests, as well as the public's interest in my stewardship for the byways program and public funds.

3 *How does the National Scenic Byways Program fit within FHWA's broader interest?*

I believe there are four important ways to answer the question: from the standpoint of program funding, the Federal-State relationship, staff responsibilities, and the relationship of the byways program to other transportation programs.

The National Scenic Byways Program is relatively small in terms of its funding level. For FY 2006, \$30.0 million is authorized for byways. \$36.0 billion is available for the overall Federal-aid highway program. The Federal-aid highway program, as is the byways program, is based on a strong Federal-State (and local) partnership. From a staffing perspective, FHWA division office byway contacts and State byway coordinators manage

I continuously draw on the breadth of my FHWA experience and my network within and outside the agency when resolving policy and program issues.

the byways program as a collateral responsibility. A full-time coordinator is the exception.

Compared to core programs such as the National Highway System, Interstate Maintenance, Bridge, Congestion Air Quality and Mitigation, and Surface Transportation Programs, the National Scenic Byways Program has been referred to as a “special” program, a “boutique” program, or a “good neighbor” program almost “philanthropic” in nature. To me, it is all of these and more, because most importantly, the byways program is a grassroots, locally driven venture that has great benefits for communities.

4 *What are the core values of the Program? How do they influence your expectations?*

We—FHWA, America’s Byways® Resource Center and National Scenic Byways Online—have identified our core values for the National Scenic Byways Program (see inset). I believe it is most important that we *speak and reflect our values*. Our actions reflect the Program’s values. We expect each of America’s Byways® to offer an authentic experience, and people associated with a particular Byway to respect its qualities and unique resources. We ensure that each new Byway adds to the diversity of the collection. We look for opportunities to empower local leaders through our emphasis on the grassroots nature of the Program. We demand integrity of ourselves in the decisions we make, the actions we take, and our stewardship for public funds.

5 *What were the important accomplishments in 2005?*

To put 2005 in perspective, I believe it is important to reflect on what was happening in 2003 and 2004. In 2003, we were waiting for reauthorization—much like *Waiting for Godot*. We operated under the first of what would become twelve short-term extensions of transportation and byways funding. The time horizon for long-term program

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM VALUES

We value ...

- Unity of purpose and teamwork;
- The **authenticity** and **diversity** of America’s Byways®;
- The **integrity** of the program, Byways, one another, and ourselves;
- Respect** for the Byways’ intrinsic qualities and resources;
- The **curiosity** to ask questions, and to collect, distill, and share information about innovative approaches to solving Byways’ problems;
- The **empowerment** of local leaders to sustain their Byways and enhance travelers’ experiences; and
- Fun** times working with Byways and one another.

planning was quantified in weeks or months, not years.

In 2004, we (FHWA, ABRC and NSBO) decided to restore a sense of continuity and lay the groundwork for re-energizing momentum for the byways program. We held a series of Power Workshops around the country. We opened the discussion forums on www.bywaysonline.org. We initiated plans to have designations and a national conference in 2005, the first (and hopefully last) time we will have them in the same year.

Thus, three important 2005 accomplishments were:

- 1) reauthorization, to the credit of leaders in Congress and the Administration;
- 2) an increase to 126 in the America’s Byways® collection; and
- 3) a successful national conference.

In addition, more people are using our websites. In November 2005 there were 117,000 page views and 4,800 unique visitors on www.bywaysonline.org, compared to 19,000 page views and 1,300 unique visitors in November 2003, the first full month the new separate program website was launched. As of 2005, we have had 15.2 million page views and 1.7 million unique users to www.byways.org for byway travelers, compared to 11.7 million

pageviews and 1.2 million unique visitors in 2004.

I am pleased with the results of our efforts to promote the America’s Byways® brand. Over the past year, usage of the America’s Byways® logo has dramatically increased. Over 500 America’s Byways® logos were requested for use on everything from travel mugs and tee shirts to tote bags and caps. More America’s Byways® signs are seen along the Byways, and the logo is included in brochures, State destination guides, banners and booths. Commercial and trade media, such as the Associated Press, msnbc.com, Good Sam’s *Highways*, Ford pre-owned vehicle’s *Owners*, and Honda Motorcycle’s *Red Rider* have done stories on individual America’s Byways® and pointed the consumer to www.byways.org.

In addition, our Federal partners are working with us to promote the brand. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service produced a brochure and is finishing a documentary on wildlife refuges and Byways. The USDA Forest Service added more information about its National Forest Service Byways and its logo on www.byways.org. The U.S. Department of Commerce partnered with us on booths and programs at the National Tour Association marketplace and in London at the World Travel Market.

6 *What are your views about the future of the Program?*

I’m optimistic and realistic about the future of the Program. I am especially optimistic when I am working directly with people on matters affecting their Byway and I see all that they accomplish.

I’m pleased that Byway funding was reauthorized with a modest increase in SAFETEA-LU. Yet, we are entering a dramatically different climate looking ahead to the next reauthorization in 2009. Derrick Crandall, Director of the American Recreation Coalition (ARC), articulated the obstacles and opportunities well—during both a session at October’s national conference in Cleveland and the America’s Byways® Resource Center’s February Tele-Workshop. The Highway Trust Fund revenues are not keeping up with transportation expenditures or needs. Other pressing needs and issues distract key constituents for byways. We need elected officials at the local, State and national level to champion byways.

ARC is leading efforts to mobilize other key partners and rejuvenate the broad coalition of industry associations and interest groups that led efforts with Congress to create the National Scenic Byways Program in the early 1990s. The coalition will form a blue ribbon panel that will reach out to the byway community, stimulate ideas about the future of byways, and develop its recommendations for the next evolutionary phase of the Program. I encourage everyone to speak up and share your ideas and vision for byways. The blue ribbon panel offers an important opportunity to share your views about the future of the Program, though not your last chance.

Coinciding with the formal 15th anniversary of the Program in December, the coalition will sponsor a national forum to unveil the proposed recommendations of the blue ribbon panel. The panel will present its recommendations to the new National Commission

of Surface Transportation Programs and Revenues that, in turn, will frame the issues for the overall transportation reauthorization that the Department will use as part of its continuing outreach for development of its reauthorization proposal.

The 2007 National Scenic Byways Conference will be the last opportunity for the byway community to meet face-to-face before FHWA begins its work on drafting its proposed changes for the Program as part of the Department's reauthorization proposal. We'll use this opportunity to pose questions about the future of the Program, share what's on our mind, as well as listen to your needs, ideas and thoughts about the possibilities for byways.

7 *What are your views about the future of byways? Where do you expect byways to be in 10 years?*

I expect byways will forever flourish. The America's Byways® collection will grow stronger and become more prominent in the public's eye. Looking ahead 10 years, I expect the majority of byways will be financially and organizationally sustainable. Byways are becoming more creative and sophisticated in addressing sustainability, as well as in sharing what they've learned with one another. This doesn't mean I expect the issue of sustainability to disappear. Rather, over the next 10 years, I believe byways will turn more of their attention from sustaining their overall byway to helping other organizations, particular facilities and attractions along the byway to become sustainable.

In 10 years, I believe the majority of byways will have good wayfinding and interpretive information in place, and their leaders will be more sophisticated in marketing their byways to attract people when and where they want them to visit the

byway. Byways will become more adept at integrating technology into all aspects of their byway: planning, inventorying resources, marketing, wayfinding, interpretation, reserving and ticketing for attractions, etc. Byway travelers of all ages will expect byways to be technology savvy.

8 *What is your advice to people involved in byways?*

My advice is to remember what attracted you to your byway, whether it is the opportunity to recognize, celebrate, promote and share what is special and unique about your local area, to preserve or protect a special resource, to achieve broader local goals or objectives, to partner, or to tap and channel the energy and passion of people involved in your byway.

As I reflect on my byway values and the maturing of byways, the most important issue to me is the sustainability of a byway's resources or a byway's intrinsic

qualities, as we say in byway terms. Remember your inventory of resources when you first developed your corridor management plan? Managing, enhancing, protecting and preserving these resources are essential to ensuring the authenticity, integrity and diversity of the America's Byways® collection. Respect your byway's intrinsic qualities and resources.

9 *Where will you be in 10 years?*

On America's Byways®. ★

America's Byways® Logo Registered

The U.S. Patent and Trade Office notified FHWA that the America's Byways® logo is officially registered! While the application was being considered, FHWA has been using America's Byways™. Now everyone must use America's Byways®. The National Scenic Byways Online staff are making changes on the www.byways.org and www.bywayonline.org websites to reflect the registered America's Byways® brand. FHWA is incorporating it into collateral materials currently under development, such as the new map, to promote the America's Byways® brand. FHWA is preparing a Graphics Standards Manual to provide guidance on the correct use of the logo, including colors, fonts and graphics. FHWA will release the manual on www.bywayonline.org.



National Scenic Byways Program Unveils Logo

The National Scenic Byways Program now has a new logo! Widmeyer Communications developed the logo with direction and input from FHWA, ABRC, and NSBO staff. Widmeyer designers created several options. FHWA narrowed the options and shared them with the America's Byways® Marketing Committee for comment. The logo will be used for information and materials associated with the overall National Scenic Byways Program. The America's Byways® collection is a product of the National Scenic Byways Program. The new NSBP logo is designed to include some elements of the America's Byways® logo. The road design and the colors are the same, but the star has purposefully been eliminated from the NSBP logo. You receive a "star on the map" when the byway is nominated and designated as one of America's Byways®. Initially FHWA typically will use the full logo, including the words "National Scenic Byways Program." As people become more familiar with the logo, FHWA will use the shortened "NSBP" and road element alone.





Dear Kate Bolder:

E-mail your questions for Kate to center@byways.org with the words "Be Bold" in the subject line.

Dear Kate:

We are a new organization and need some guidance. I went to the conference, which was fantastic and very helpful. But it sure would be great to have some reference books for our budding library. I've heard the Resource Center has some publications that they send out. What sort of materials do they have there, and is there any charge to get them?

M.J. Shelves

Dear M.J.,

You are in luck! The Resource Center has a variety of publications that can be requested, free of charge, to put on those shelves. Determine which topic would be the most useful to you:

America's Byways® and Intelligent Transportation Systems: An Introduction to ITS (mini CD)

Byway Beginnings: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities

Community Guide to Planning & Managing a Scenic Byway

Conserving Our Treasured Places: Managing Visual Quality on Scenic Byways

Driving Financial Sustainability for Byway Organizations (CD)

Lessons from the Road

Making the Grassroots Grow (unbound copies and mini-CD)

Scenic Byways: A Design Guide for Roadside Improvements

Tele-Workshop Fact Sheets on many topics

Vistas (current issue and back issues)

All of these publications are subject to availability, of course, but it never hurts to ask! To request a publication of interest, just call 1-800-429-9297, option 5, then option 4, or center@byways.org. Some of these materials are also available online at <http://bywaysonline.org/center/publications/>.

Dust off those bookshelves; they won't be empty for long!

*Request some relevant reading,
Kate*

Dear Kate:

My byway group made a New Year's resolution that we'd review our CMP and organization goals on a regular basis. It's time to get going before the year gets away from us, and we're trying to figure out exactly what we need to do and who needs to do it. Do you think we should hire a consultant?

*Yours truly,
Time's a Tickin'*

Dear Resolved,

Great idea! And I'm glad to hear you are starting now—and not procrastinating, like many of us do.

Your review and revision process will depend partly on which entity is responsible for implementing the CMP. That organization definitely needs to be involved, and may even need to lead the process. Developing and updating a plan is not a big mystery, but it can seem tedious for some people. You can do it yourselves if you have members who are skilled at working through the steps and facilitating decision making. If you do hire a consultant, be sure your contract is clear about the deliverables, timeline and cost.

It's worth the time to meet and review your organization goals on a regular basis. It gives you a chance to celebrate what you've accomplished and set new goals and objectives for the next period of time. Your goals should be bold enough to inspire action, yet realistic enough to be accomplished.

Your first point of contact is your State Scenic Byways Coordinator. You can find contact information arranged by State on <http://www.bywaysonline.org/contacts/>. After you've spoken with your State Coordinator, the Byways Resource Specialist responsible for your State is always happy to help you develop a process and can even provide consulting at your location, if you'd like. I know he or she is waiting for your call.

*There's no better time to be bold than now,
Kate*

Wisconsin Great River Road Takes The Next Steps Toward Sustainability

Many Byway supporters who attended the Power Workshops in 2004 expressed concerns about the comprehensive task of creating a sustainable future for their Byways—organizationally, financially and taking care of the resources. Leaders from the Wisconsin Great River Road (WIGRR) decided to implement some of what they learned from one of the Power Workshops at the local level.

Al Lorenz and Marty Beekman, WIGRR leaders, met with America's Byways® Resource Center staff to explore employing the Power Workshop process to bring the concepts of sustainability to their organization and Byway. The group revisited the organization's current goals and plans. The group also assessed how the organization's activities relate to the long-term future of the Wisconsin Great River Road, which was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2000. Group members realized that the process would require many meetings, much homework and strong leadership. Nearly a year later, the group can claim success in achieving one of its large strategies and many activities that support the organization's refreshed goals.

Assessing the Byway Organization

The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission (WIMRPC), the Byway organization for the Wisconsin Great River Road, is comprised of commissioners appointed by the Governor for a four-year term. One commissioner from each of the eight counties bordering the 250-mile WIGRR, plus four State legislators, must

represent their respective county within the Wisconsin section of the 10-State Great River Road and also participate in the full 10-State Mississippi River Parkway Commission.

Established in the 1970s, the organization has a long history with the road and corridor. Continual

changes in individual membership of the organization, however, had generated pages and pages of activities and ideas that seemed out of sync on where to go, what to do and what was really important about the WIGRR.

The group also had to grapple with a recent announcement by the State departments of Transportation and Tourism that, due to budget restraints, they would no longer provide financial assistance for WIMRPC special projects nor earmark funds for GRR promotion.

The Hard Work of Reorganizing

The first step in the process was to revisit the organization's mission and collective vision for both the resource and the organization for a set period of time. The commissioners had to determine what influence and power they have, if any, as well as the reason

they were at the table. The group then looked into the future and discussed what they wanted the corridor and the organization to be. Next, the group discussed what would happen in the future regardless of their influence. This was not an easy task and many debates formed around the table. Perhaps the most difficult element of the process was for the group to agree what was essential to the character of the Wisconsin Great River Road—the true essence of the Byway—and formulate it into one statement.

The Byway group members realized that they were laying the groundwork for the commissioners that were to come after them, and not focusing on planning a long list of activities to be accomplished in their two-year term.



A fam tour of the WIGRR brought together commissioners, technical experts, State and Federal agency representatives and community members during the two days of travel. Importantly, the comments, observations and data from the tour are currently being collated into the goals and strategies for the WIGRR work plan, including calendar dates to revisit the issues observed along the corridor.

All photos courtesy of Wisconsin Mississippi Parkway Commission

MISSION OF THE WIMRPC:

The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission exists to preserve, promote and enhance the Scenic, Historic, Recreational, Cultural, Natural and Archaeological resources of the Wisconsin Mississippi River Valley, to foster tourism in the River Road Corridor, and to develop and enhance the National Scenic Byway known as the Great River Road.

The Commission seeks to coordinate activities with communities, local, State and Federal units of government and planning agencies and to cooperate with the nine Mississippi River States and the Province of Ontario that comprise the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC).

The group had mastered four steps so far:

1. Reviewed the mission statement
2. Clarified the vision of the future for the corridor and the organization
3. Defined what will probably happen to the corridor in the future
4. Identified the true essence of the Byway

Byway members now had the basis to develop goals to accomplish their vision.

The group settled on five broad goals to focus on for the next 20 years:

- Increase commissioner knowledge
- Broaden the base of financial support
- Enhance partnerships/outreach
- Promote tourism
- Become active in issues of interest (non-political)

Notably, five goals were a much more manageable number than the 40-plus goals prior to the process.

After a breakout session to determine strategies to accomplish the goals, the group decided commission members would shepherd these goals by forming subcommittees to further develop the work plans on a twenty-year calendar and see that the work gets done.

Now meeting notes are organized by the five goals; commission members responsible for overseeing particular goals provide reports on their progress.

Making Progress

One of the key goals for the Wisconsin Great River Road was to increase commissioner knowledge of the Byway. Much discussion ensued from the planning sessions, including recognition that many commissioners really didn't know the entire Byway corridor or the issues beyond the counties they represented. The group agreed to pursue a mechanism to ensure that future commissioners would have working knowledge of the entire Byway. One of the strategies developed to accomplish this goal was to hold an all-Byway fam (familiarization) tour. That strategy was accomplished in July 2005.

The following are experts from the fam-tour report by the WIGRR MPRPC committee.

“Since early 2003 Governor Doyle has appointed nine new members to the twelve-member Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission (WIMRPC). One of the priority Goals emerging from the 2004 WIMRPC Power Workshop Exercise was ‘Increase Commissioner Knowledge’ with an accompanying Strategy to undertake a tour of the 250-mile Wisconsin Great River Road

National Scenic Byway. The tour took place on July 28th and 29th, 2005. The intended primary purpose of this report is to enable the WIMRPC to accomplish the following:

To recall, in file memo format, the highlights of what was seen, heard and done each day.

To document, in an organized fashion, the observations and comments that each participant had logged on their comment form. It was predetermined that this

THE MRPC COMMISSIONERS ARE CHARGED WITH THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

Become knowledgeable advocates of the GRR as a NSB.

Become knowledgeable of NSB Program.

Become knowledgeable of current issues of GRR corridor.

Become knowledgeable of programs and technical aspects of supporting State departments.

Become knowledgeable of 250-mile GRR corridor resources.

Be a spokesperson and advocate on behalf of GRR.

Assist in creating partnerships for benefit of GRR.

Take active role in work of committees and task forces for commission work.

would not just be a sightseeing bus tour but also a sharing of information, thoughts and ideas to be captured and capsulated in a subsequent report. It is intended that the WIMRPC will review and discuss this listing in perspective of its stated Vision, Goals and Strategies—to set priorities and infiltrate actions into its Work Plan re-implementation.

To record the written comments by the participants expressing their feelings about the effectiveness of the tour in regard to meeting one of the WIMRPC stated priority Goals, i.e., Enhance Commissioner Knowledge. The recorded comments (and verbal) were very positive. The Goal was met in even a broader sense than anticipated, i.e., yielded a bonding effect; created synergism; and renewed a spirit of appreciation of the Byway and commitment to fulfill their obligations.”

Each respective Commissioner was responsible for performing guide duty as the tour traversed his or her county. Each participant received a packet containing the vision and goal statements for both the WIMRPC and the GRRNSB Corridor as well as definitions of the Byway's six intrinsic qualities, summaries of the stories contained in the GRR Interpretive Guide, and the document, “Summary of Public Infrastructure Features That Comprise Part of the WIGRR.” The packet also included a prescribed comment form for recording special notes, observations and priority recommendations.

The fam tour brought together commissioners, technical experts, State and Federal agency representatives and community members during the two days of travel. Importantly, the comments, observations and data from the tour are currently being collated into the goals and strategies for the WIGRR work plan, including calendar dates to revisit the issues observed along the corridor.

Participant Reactions to the Fam Tour

The two-day fam tour was a success as judged by the many positive verbal comments during the tour and as evidenced by the following quotes from the participants' notes:

"I have a much better picture of this complete route. This trip was well worth the time. I liked the openness of all passengers on today's trip."

"I cannot express enough my satisfaction in touring the WIGRR scenic byway and doing so with fellow commissioners. It was easily one of the best and most worthwhile experiences I have had. And feel it will make me a better Commissioner. Our time was, understandably limited, I am still better off, however than before, and am grateful for the experience. The GRR is a true treasure."

"This was a great idea. It gave us a chance to learn the route. The trip was outstanding. The commentary by the different county commissioners gave me good knowledge and a different side of the story than just reading about it or seeing it on a map. I

think we have a great asset here and I'm hopeful we can all work together to make it attractive to the traveler and yet not ruin the 'quaintness'."

"enhance partnerships/outreach." For the first time since the formation of WIMRPC, the organization has been successful in obtaining local financial

strategies and activities are accomplishable—ready to be checked off as progress is made. Though the process took nearly a year to complete and the work

Though the process took nearly a year to complete and the work continues, the group is energized and is truly working on behalf of the Byway.

"I finally understand the lofty word VISION. It's what Commissioner Frank Fiorenza has when he looks at the Potosi Brewery as it is and how it will be. It's what Byway member Mike Hunter has when he sees what Freedom Park will be like next spring. It's what the people who approve these Byway grants have when they give large sums of money for these long-shot projects."

Additional Progress

Initial but significant short-range strides have also transpired regarding the goals to "broaden the base of financial support" and

commitments that provide the WIMRPC's local match for two 2005 National Scenic Byway grant applications, and/or WIMRPC operation and WIGRR promotion.

The Wisconsin Great River Road Byway group has the next steps toward ensuring that the organization will always have a clear focus on the Byway and the issues that affect the character of the Great River Road. These leaders have also worked hard to set a framework for other commissioners to follow in achieving the vision they have for their byway. The goals they defined and the subsequent

continues, the group is energized and is truly working on behalf of the Byway.

For more information about the Wisconsin Great River Road or to network with Byway members, look on www.bywayonline.org for contact information. ★

THE VISION OF THE MRPC FOR THE GRR CORRIDOR:

The ever-changing experience of traveling through the un-glaciated landscapes and historic river towns embraced by towering bluffs and the mighty Mississippi will be enhanced and preserved and allow increased usage and growth of the corridor to be accommodated.

The Wisconsin Mississippi River Parkway Commission as a commission as well as individually increases its power of advocacy while effectively working together with various agencies, counties, communities and volunteer groups for the good of the whole corridor and for the development of the uniqueness of the communities along the corridor.

GOALS FOR THE GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR AND THE WIMRPC NEXT 20 YEARS:

1. Increase commissioner knowledge
2. Broaden the base of financial support
3. Enhance partnerships/outreach
4. Promote tourism
5. Become active in issues of interest (non-political)

Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway Receives National Honor

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), in partnership with the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway Highway 38 Leadership Board, received the Best Project Award using Context-Sensitive Solutions principles from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

This prestigious national award was presented to Mn/DOT during the 2005 Best Practices in Context-Sensitive Solutions (CSS) awards competition held last fall in Nashville, Tennessee. According to Mn/DOT engineer Michael Robinson, this "best of show" project rose to the top of a field of 75 special transportation improvements projects submitted by 33 States. Judges consisted of 10 of the nation's foremost transportation leaders.



Mike Robinson, Mn/DOT Northeast District Engineer, presented the crystal award to the MN Highway 38 Leadership Board. Pictured left to right are: Douglas Differt, Mn/DOT Deputy Commissioner and Chief Engineer; Michael Robinson, Mn/DOT District 1 *District Engineer; Carol Molnau, Minnesota Lt. Governor and Commissioner of Transportation; and Jack Lettiere, Commissioner of the New Jersey DOT and AASHTO President.

Context-Sensitive Solutions to transportation design is defined as the integrated consideration of the total circumstances within which a transportation facility exists. The CSS philosophy is based up on successful and collaborative partnerships between government agencies and community interests to solve complex transportation problems. According to Michael Robinson, "The key to using CSS successfully is broad and long-term stakeholder engagement in developing a 'living' transportation



AASHTO awarded the Minnesota Department of Transportation for its extraordinary development and reconstruction of Minnesota Highway 38, "Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway." Photo Credit: Mn/DOT, Neil Kveberg

improvement plan which overlays the road's physical setting with the textures of the corridor's scenic, historic and environmental assets, while at the same time, improving travel safety and mobility."

The complexity of the Edge of the Wilderness project challenged participants to seek innovative approaches to funding and construction. The construction plan for the highway was codified as the Highway 38 Corridor Management Plan completed in the mid-1990s. The document served as the template for the reconstruction of 27 miles of this stunning Byway completed at a cost of \$24 million. The context-sensitive improvements developed along the Byway included safety and alignment improvements, interpretive and recreation site enhancements, turnouts, shoulders, sidewalk and streetscape improvements, lighting and more. With more than half of the Byway now improved, the final 20 miles are currently awaiting project funding.

Robinson said, "When the final ribbon is cut, marking the completion of rebuilding the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway, our entire State will stand in awe of the marvelous legacy that the framers of the Highway 38 Corridor Management Plan have given to us all...indeed, this was the right project, in the right place, done the right way!"

Mn/DOT officials recognized the Highway 38 Leadership Board at

their October 2005 Board meeting, where Mike Robinson presented the crystal award to the Board. He credited the award to the strong grassroots efforts of the Board and the stakeholders who participated in the planning and throughout the construction process. He noted that Mn/DOT would not have been honored for Best Project without the involvement and long-term commitment of the Highway 38 Leadership Board in the Edge of the Wilderness project. Board members were delighted and pleased to celebrate this significant achievement and national recognition with Mn/DOT officials.

Tim Johnson, Edge of the Wilderness Community Coordinator, said, "The biggest benefit is that ownership is community-based and citizens actively take part in the decisions that affect the Byway and work collaboratively with government agencies to enhance and protect the area's outstanding recreational, historical, cultural and scenic qualities." The Leadership Board is truly a grassroots community effort, which includes representatives from the Minnesota Historical Society, lodging associations, business associations, the local Lion's Club, the Northern Itasca Joint Powers Board, local government, businesses, citizens-at-large and government agencies that include the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Arrowhead Regional

Development Commission and the Chippewa National Forest.

The Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway is a 47-mile winding drive from Grand Rapids to Effie, Minnesota. The Byway was designated in 1996, among the first to join the America's Byways® collection. The Byway corridor offers some of the most spectacular and breathtaking scenery in northern Minnesota. Along the Byway, visitors are awed by pristine lakes and the home of the largest breeding population of bald eagles in the continental United States. Nearly half of the Byway winds through the Chippewa National Forest, which encompasses about 1.6 million acres of public lands with over 1,300 lakes, 923 miles of streams and 400,000 acres of wetlands. The lands along the Byway corridor offer some of Minnesota's most popular fishing, hunting, camping, trails, winter sports and resort opportunities.

Along the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway, 14 sites have been selected where visitors can learn about the natural and cultural history of northern Minnesota. They are identified with green reference point markers approximately one mile apart. For more information on what to see and do along the Edge of the Wilderness National Scenic Byway, visit www.edgeofthewilderness.com or the Chippewa National Forest website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa/. ★



Read more about this award-winning project on AASHTO's website: http://environment.transportation.org/documents/AASHTO_CSS_Brochure_v4.pdf

2006 Calendar

Send calendar entries by the 5th of each month to center@byways.org

APRIL

April 6-8, 2006

Northwest Regional Land Trust Conference
Bend, Oregon
Land Trust Alliance
For more information, please visit:
www.lta.org

April 27-29, 2006

Gathering of Nations Powwow
Albuquerque, New Mexico
For more information, please visit:
www.gatheringofnations.com

April 27-30, 2006

Preserving the Historic Road
Boston, Massachusetts
For more information, please visit:
www.historicroads.org

MAY

May 4-6, 2006

Southwest Regional Land Trust Conference
San Antonio, Texas
Land Trust Alliance
For more information, please visit:
www.lta.org

May 6-10, 2006

International Pow Wow
Orlando, Florida
Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)
For more information, please visit:
www.tia.org

May 15-18, 2006

Interpreting World Heritage
San Juan, Puerto Rico
National Association for Interpretation
For more information, please visit:
www.interpnet.com/iwh

May 15-19, 2006

*Adapting to New Realities:
2006 NARRP Conference*
Nashville, Tennessee
National Association of Recreation
Resource Planners
For more information, please visit:
www.narrp.org

JUNE

June 9-11, 2006

Northeast Regional Land Trust Conference
Saratoga Springs, New York
Land Trust Alliance
For more information, please visit:
www.lta.org

AUGUST

August 7-10, 2006

*State Coordinator and FHWA Division
Contact Training Workshop
(by invitation only)*
Minneapolis, Minnesota
For more information, please e-mail:
dadams@byways.org

August 13-16, 2006

*National Rural ITS Conference:
Last Best Place*
Big Sky, Montana
For more information, please visit:
www.coe.montana.edu/wti

SEPTEMBER

September 5-8, 2006

Pro Walk/Pro Bike: Making Connections
Madison, Wisconsin
For more information, please visit:
www.bikewalk.org

September 26-29, 2006

URISA 44th Annual Conference
Vancouver, British Columbia
Urban & Regional Information
Systems Association
For more information, please visit:
www.urisa.org

OCTOBER

October 12-15, 2006

*Rally 2006: National Land
Conservation Conference*
Nashville, Tennessee
Land Trust Alliance
For more information, please visit:
www.lta.org/training/rally.htm

October 19-22, 2006

18th National Trails Symposium
Quad Cities – Iowa and Illinois
For more information, please visit:
www.americantrails.org

NOVEMBER

November 7-11, 2006

National Interpreters' Workshop
Albuquerque, New Mexico
National Association for Interpretation
For more information, please visit:
www.interpnet.com/niw2006/

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