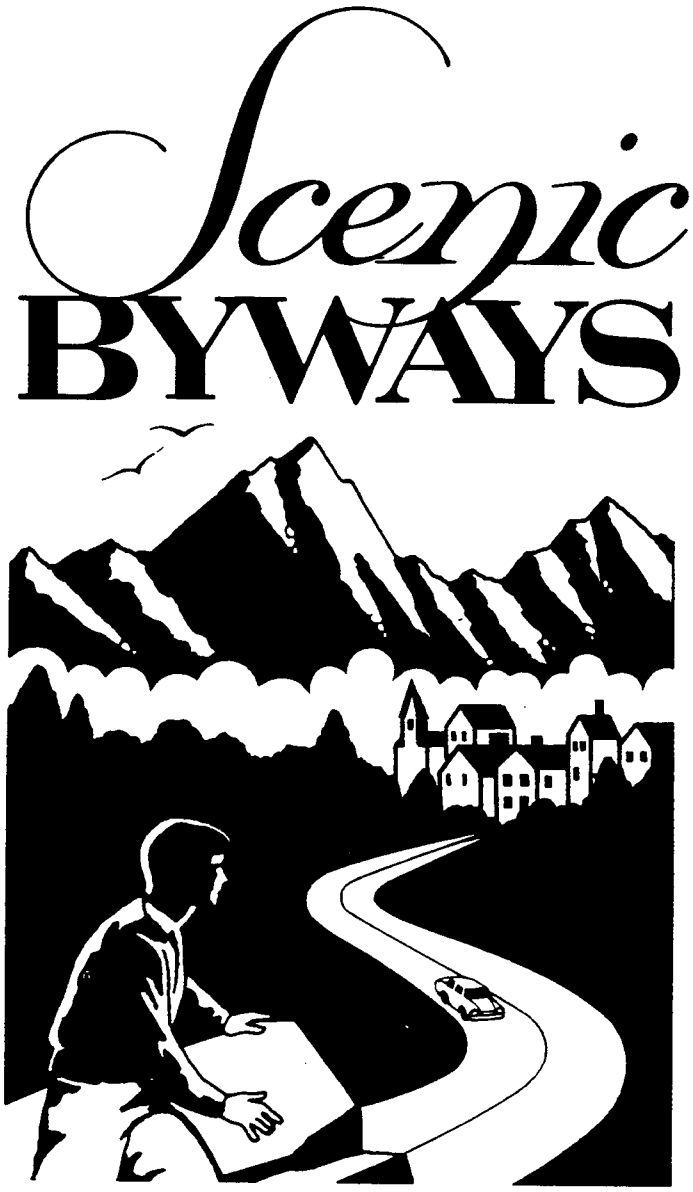
U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration

Final Case Study for the National Scenic Byways Study

Recommendations for a Scenic Byways Program



September 1990

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Final Case Study

for the

National Scenic Byways Study

RECOMMENDATIONS for a SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 1990

Prepared for

The Federal Highway Administration

Submitted by

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I. Criteria for consideration for inclusion within National Scenic Byway System:

CRITERIA

Nominees for consideration for inclusion should contain several of the following characteristics: a highway may be considered if it is the primary or a unique example of a single characteristic.

All highways or highway segments nominated should have definite and logical beginning and ending points, i.e. "logical termini."

Urban and or interstate highways should be considered eligible for consideration.

The designation "scenic byway" should be replaced by a more representative and encompassing term.

- outstanding or representative scenic quality
- traverses or connects historic points of interest
- traverses important architectural neighborhoods
- traverses or connects important natural areas
- a highway which may be developed thematically, i.e. agricultural (Amish, dairy, etc.), historic (War of 1812, Concord to Lexington, etc.), parks (National, state, Olmsted, etc.), geologic, etc.
- culturally significant
- outstanding or representative parkway design (Taconic, Merritt, Hutchinson River, etc.)
- significant recreational or tourism routes (must meet some standard of esthetics, history, cultural significance, etc.)

It is essential that a set of criteria be established to serve as a guide which will create an appropriate standard and is applicable nationwide.

Highways considered for inclusion then must be inventoried in relation to these criteria.

INVENTORY COLLECTION

Inventory should include the collection of pertinent categories of data which will be used including maps.

Seaway Trail created base maps for the ten county area. An inventory was collected to ascertain correct data to determine resource themes. Attached is a hard copy of 1987 inventory collection. Data was also on computer disc. It is the hope that highway data can be on computer by highway mile marker in the future.

REVIEW

Following inventory, nominated highways should be reviewed at the state and national level. Recommend a review process similar to that established for historic and/or archaeological sites or structures (under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act).

At the state level: establish or identify an office within the DOT which serves a role similar to the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO); it would be this office's responsibility to provide technical assistance and establish inventory standards and to review submissions in order to determine eligibility for inclusion within the scenic byways system.

At the federal level: establish an office within the Federal Highway Administration which will provide technical assistance to the states and approve or disapprove inclusion within the national system. Inclusion would make a particular highway/highway segment eligible for federal funds for capital projects. The FHWA would also establish appropriate design criteria dependent upon highway classification which must be met to receive funds. These criteria should encompass:

- pavement and shoulder widths
- guiderail (self-oxidizing?)
- signage
- geometrics
- utilities
- etc.

Seaway Trail has a scenic, unique common thread. For its 454 miles, it parallels four waterway systems across New York State's freshwater shoreline. The Trail is a mix of state and county two-lane roads. It is recognized for mixed usage: the car, bicycle, boat, RV, and motorcoach. We feel it is a greenway offering public access to 38 state parks, 13 wildlife management areas, 37 fishing access sites and 21 public beaches.

Seaway Trail has eight resource themes: coastal recreation, history of the coast, people of the coast, natural resources, coastal agriculture, commercial shipping, water-related industry and international coastline. Appropriate tourism and recreation development of the Seaway Trail will result from the identification, protection and enhancement of the region's resources and assets, and the minimizing or mitigating of negative impacts.

II. **Establish Guidelines:**

Organization

In the review process, the various types of effective organizations will be recognized. Public, private and a mix of this

combination should each be considered.

Seaway Trail is a private sector not-for-profit 501-C6 with bylaws authorizing officers and board of directors. A staff of seven carry out programs. The board of directors meet on a quarterly basis and is currently composed of one representative from each of the ten counties.

The Seaway Trail is the longest National Recreation Trail in the United States. It is important for the system to be part of appropriate systems like the Department of the Interior's National Recreation Trails.

FUNDING

All potential federal, state and local public and private sector corporate membership and users of categories for funding should be identified for scenic byways. A carefully balanced mix will provide funds for popular byways. Incentives or matching funds should be used for new model programs and to spur economic development in recognized economically depressed areas. Government funds should be considered for administration of proven successful organizations that provide user services to the public.

Long term public/private sector partnerships should be encouraged. Highway funding is addressed under the criteria section.

Seaway Trail, Inc. has received an annual New York State appropriation since 1986. The funds are administrated and reviewed by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Regular qualified audits are required. Private sector contributes advertising and membership monies. The highest annual budget in four years was $700,000 for organization administration.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Scenic Byways offer resources for recreation and tourism. Short and long term plans should be developed for the future. Plans should consider present and future recreation and tourism trends and usage patterns.

For more complex Scenic Byway zones of similar resources should be identified for maximum benefit.

Planning will recognize the fragile sites that have unique ecological or historical features. Furthermore, increased awareness and appreciation of the resources that will create the linkage between the resource base and the viability of the tourism industry.

A major underlying aspect of Scenic Byways is the potential

increase of economic growth. Planning will ultimately identify the tourism development growth. Planning will ultimately identify the tourism development opportunities. Little effort is traditionally given to encourage investment in the tourism/recreation/retailing industries. It will identify public and private sector tourism development roles that will create planned cluster development and partnerships. Tourism planning and implementation will develop the Scenic Byways as a high quality experience for recreation and vacations.

Seaway Trail has completed base maps township tourism inventories, a comprehensive Tourism Development Plan for the entire Trail, Shoreline Analysis Study, a two year Action Plan, Tourism Development Plan for Dunkirk (a shoreline gateway city) and initiated Tourism Development Zone Plans for Seaway Valley, Rochester and Eastern Shore. A Lighthouse Condition and Feasibility Study has begun to recognize opportunities of stabilization and development.

A monitoring study has begun to enable the Trail to collect both long and short term data for optimum decision making. Measuring data will help identify development opportunities and Seaway Trail organizational progress in economic improvement. To ensure true progress, we are greatly interested in the implementation of the Tourism Development Zone recommendations for the private sector.

SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION

Unique Scenic Byway characteristics can be interpreted through receptive signage. Scenic Byways provide security and direction for the traveler. Receptive signage provides high quality consistent directional information.

Trailblazer signs should line the Scenic Byway. Manned or unmanned information center sites should guide the tourist. Complete rest areas should be installed.

A management system should be in place in areas adjacent to the Byway. Roadway conditions should be monitored and enhanced to encourage mixed usage.

Seaway Trail has over 1500 green and white Trailblazer signs, 42 theme War of 1812 signs and 56 information kiosk and display units. In the future, we plan to add a series of awareness units to encourage visitation.

Seaway Trail has recognized important linkage opportunities for the future.

Evaluation of the present system is ongoing. Brochure racks and improved signs will be added to our outdoor units in 1990.

MERCHANDISING

Cost effective image building for each Scenic Byway is a necessity. A mix of paid advertising, public relations, promotions and publications will get your product's message to the consumer. The coordination with existing promotion agents is vital to proper Scenic Byway merchandising.

Target markets must be identified as existing and potential traffic for the Byway in the following categories: Geographic, Life Stage, Socioeconomic, Purpose of Trip and Recreational Activity.

A complete merchandising campaign including conversion studies and evaluations must be planned to determine effectiveness.

Seaway Trail has a complete program including paid advertising, a consumer magazine called Journey, a series of five guidebooks and coordinated campaign for the United States consumer market. A hospitality awareness program for image building has been created using "Ask Me About the Seaway Trail" buttons.

III. Case Studies of Economic Impact

All Scenic Byway programs should have an evaluation program to determine effectiveness. Little has been completed for simple or long term analysis for any recreation or tourism based product. A Scenic Byway is unique but has the same needs.

Seaway Trail has begun a Tourism Monitoring System. Attached are pages referring to the "Scope of Work" itemizing options for measurement.

IV. Safety and Environmental Impacts

In all likelihood highways which meet the criteria for consideration as a scenic byway will be safe and environmentally sound. Highways which are "one" with the landscape, urban or rural, blending with the topography, vegetation, and architecture, tend to be safe and at worst environmentally neutral. Of course, this can be compromised by excessive and inappropriate signage, inadequate pavement widths, lack of consideration and accommodation for the pedestrian and bicyclists, and the location of utilities.

While difficult in some instances, it is possible to identify a correlation between the highway which is sensitively placed into the landscape and highway safety. Those highways which are imposed on the landscape tend to set up visual and psychological conflicts which compromise safety. Not so coincidentally, these highways tend to adversely impact the environment. The classic example of this is the early segments of the Pennsylvania Turnpike which were imposed upon the mountainous terrain of this beautiful state. Designed by many of the same engineers who

built the nation's railroads, they brought with them many of the constraints as to degree of curve and grade dictated by the train. Consequently, the highway is imposed on the landscape, with little consideration of the natural land forms. Vegetative boundaries visually support neither the highway alignment nor the topography, and median widths are narrow and constant. Conversely, the early Hudson River Valley Parkway - the Taconic, Merritt, Sawmill, and Hutchinson River - more safely accommodate the motorists even though traveled by more motorists at higher speeds than envisioned in the 1930's. Modern interstate highways such as the Adirondack Northway (I-87) and the Palisades Interstate Parkway confirm this correlation.

In order to provide a specific analysis as it relates to the Seaway Trail, three highway segments along the St. Lawrence River were examined. Proceeding from west to east along routes 12E and 12.

Segment 1 - Village of Cape Vincent to the Village of Clayton.

This segment is characterized as rural residential with population nodes at the Villages and Millens Bay. The highway section is quite narrow with 22 feet of pavement and a 2 to 3 foot stabilized shoulder. The travel corridor resembles in some respects, the two land highways which serve Cape Cod's shore.

Segment 2 - Thousand Islands Bridge to the Village of Alexandria Bay.

This segment is characterized by strip residential and commercial development with numerous access drives serving adjacent development. Billboards and commercial signage compete for the motorists attention.

The highway section is ample with 12 foot travel lanes and a 10 foot stabilized shoulder. Left turn lanes are provided at the intersecting roads and at the entrance to Keewaydin State Park.

Segment 3 - Alexandria Bay to the Village of Morristown.

A relatively new highway (early 1970's) bordered by pristine woodlands, farmsteads, and occasional residential clusters, this travel corridor presents some of the most attractive vistas available within the Thousand Islands region. Three scenic overlooks provide panoramic views safely and conveniently. Scenic strips acquired in the late 70's have preserved the corridor's visual quality and the state's Freshwater Wetlands Act has helped ensure the preservation of the river, marshes, and wetlands.

The highway section is similar to that found within Segment 2.

In examining recent accident histories for these highway segments, one finds that Segment 3 is the most safe, with segment 2

being the least safe. Segment 1, with the narrowest road section and the east satisfactory highway geometrics is nonetheless safer than Segment 2.

The conclusions one can draw with a reasonable degree of certainty from this comparison are these:

While all segments be within the extremely scenic Thousand Islands region, and each is adequate to accommodate existing traffic demand, the safety of the traveling public is influenced by other factors. Among these are:

- the division of driver attention influenced by the proliferation of signage and the commercial and recreational establishments which line the travel corridor.
- related to the factor above is the numerous conflicts which occur at the access drives which serve these establishments.

Comparative accident rates for three contiguous highway segments are 1.36, 1.75, and 2.51 accidents per one million miles traveled respectively.

- the inadequate accommodation of the pedestrian and bicyclist either discourages use of the travel corridor by these individuals, or creates potential conflict increasing the accident potential.
- the compatibility of the adjacent topography and vegetation with the highway influences safety and environmental impact. If the highway alignment is supported by adjacent and forms and vegetation, the driver alignment, intersection location, etc.
- careful and appropriate highway design, compatible with the topography and vegetation, minimizes the need for guiderail and other barriers and warning or cautionary signage.

Each of the segments considered traverse similar terrain, native woodlands, wetlands, and agricultural lands and each parallel and are in close proximity to the St. Lawrence River. In each travel corridor, the natural beauty and ecology have been compromised to some extent. The most safe segment is the segment least modified, further cementing the relationships between environmental impacts and highway safety.

In summary, the designation of a highway as a scenic byway need compromise neither safety nor the environment. The characteristics which make a highway suitable for inclusion within the scenic byway system gives some indication that the highway is safe and environmentally compatible. A carefully developed design standard which addresses <u>appropriate</u> section, geometrics, directional, and receptive signage, vegetative clear zones, and protective barrier installations for each class or hierarchy of scenic byway, will ensure safety and environmental

preservation and enhancement with no compromise to the characteristics which make it eligible for designation as a scenic byway.

SCENIC BYWAY STUDY RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
from Seaway Trail, Inc.

Federal Highway Administration identify criteria, organizational structure and funding to establish Scenic Byway legislation.

Use terminology that is more appropriate and encompassing than scenic byways.

Review highway systems considered for inclusion at both the state and federal levels.

Establish overall guidelines that participating organizations follow including funding, planning, signage, and merchandising.

Create an ongoing monitoring system.

Plan for receptive signage that considers recreation and tourism needs.

Adopt an appropriate highway corridor management plan to be developed and implemented.

Protect and enhance scenic, natural and cultural resources of the system.

Invite lateral network participation from public and private sector groups.

☆ U.S. Government Printing Office : 1991 - 518-755/21045

Publication No. FHWA-ED-90-033
HEP-23/11-90(1M)QE