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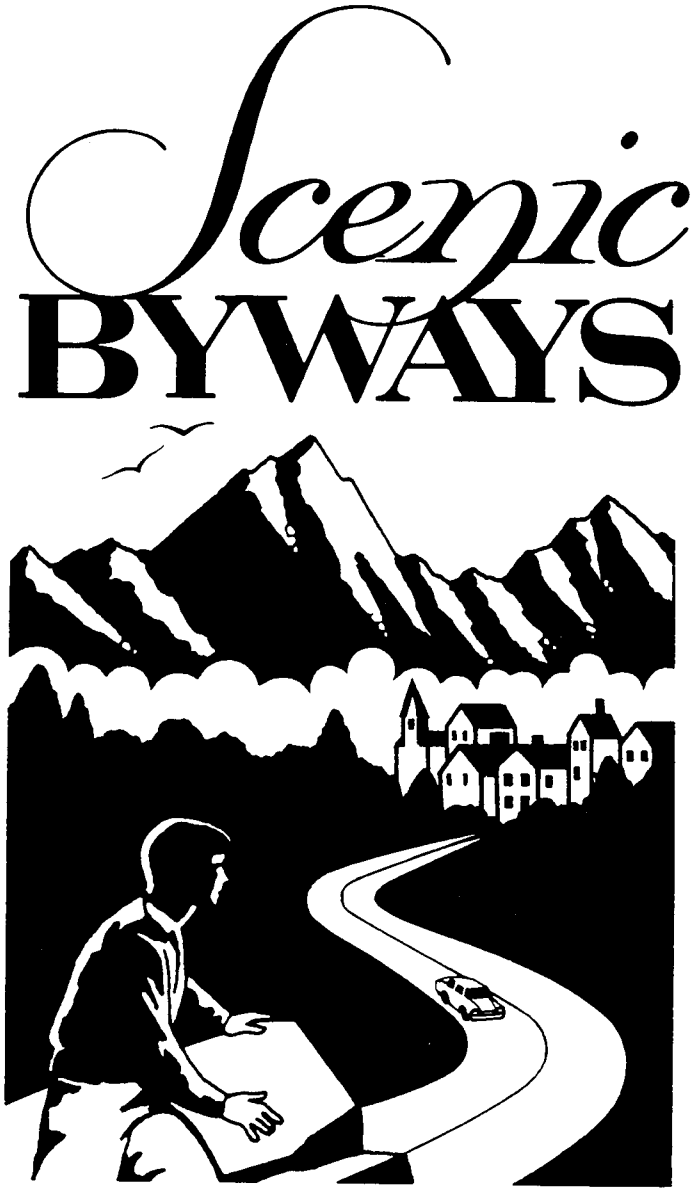
Final Case Study for the National Scenic Byways Study

Common Elements of State and National Scenic Byways Programs



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Final Case Study

for the

National Scenic Byways Study

COMMON ELEMENTS OF STATE AND NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAMS

SEPTEMBER 1990

Prepared for

The Federal Highway Administration

Submitted by

The American Recreation Coalition

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AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION
CASE STUDY

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PART I

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Overview

In the fall of 1987, widespread enthusiasm for expanding the network of scenic byways across American caused more than 30 organizations, including the American Recreation Coalition, to join together to sponsor the first national conference on scenic byways. The sponsors, comprised of national highway, tourism, recreation and conservation groups, saw the need to draw together federal, state and local interests to discuss the future of scenic byways. The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors had recently released its final report, which said that pleasure driving was a major recreational activity and recommended increased efforts to designate, protect and enhance scenic and historic roadways. In addition, a major initiative to develop a consensus on the nation's transportation priorities in preparation for discussions on the reauthorization of the 1991 highway bill was beginning. Scenic byways interests, the sponsors believed, would benefit greatly from the opportunity to share expertise and discuss common issues in a national forum.

Scenic Byways '88

Some 200 people from 37 states and Canada attended Scenic Byways '88, held May 1-3 in the Washington, D.C. area. Several themes emerged at the conference. First, successful scenic road programs depend upon broad partnerships involving national and local interests. State governments play an important role in defining guidelines and developing master plans, and local communities should be actively involved in choosing the scenic or historic road corridors. States can work together to create regional scenic byway systems, such as the Great River Road along the Mississippi River, or with Federal agencies such as

the National Park Service and Forest Service to encourage scenic byway development on public lands.

The participants agreed that the construction of new roads was not a major objective, but the protection, improvement and signing of existing roads with outstanding scenic, historic, cultural or recreational features was. They suggested enhancing safety with lower speed limits, wider shoulders and passing lanes, and encouraged the addition of amenities such as scenic overlooks, interpretive parks, and rest areas. The group cited the need to provide the public with information about where to find scenic byways and the travel services nearby. Signs, maps and information kiosks were all suggested as means to give the traveler essential information.

According to several Scenic Byways '88 speakers, political support on the federal and state levels is usually required to provide adequate funding to upgrade scenic roads. Scenic byways must compete with other transportation needs for funds, and there is seldom enough to cover all needed programs. But because scenic roads can be effective means to draw tourism to states and rural communities, these programs can be appealing to legislators, businesses and taxpayers.

Vivian Watts, then-Secretary of Transportation and Public Safety for the Commonwealth of Virginia, told attendees that bringing scenic byway programs to economically depressed areas had dual benefits: tourists inject dollars into the local economy and are exposed to the beauty and culture of a lesser-known destination. Ms. Watts stressed the importance of citizen involvement on land use issues and transportation planning. "There are many strong advocates for urban upgrades," she noted. Community leaders in rural areas must also gain the support of legislators and state officials to ensure the inclusion of scenic byways in state transportation plans, according to Ms. Watts.

Robert Farris, former FHWA Administrator and former head of the Tennessee Department of Transportation also spoke about the importance of citizen and community

support to achieving scenic road programs. He suggested "building a coalition of support with Governors, state legislators, community leaders and private sector groups." Contentious issues such as land use and development restrictions are easier to resolve, Mr. Farris suggested, when an environment of cooperation and partnership has already been established.

Mr. Farris was responsible for implementing Tennessee's scenic parkways program, and he stressed the importance of working with the state tourism office on promotional efforts. Tennessee officials determined that if only 1% of tourists to their state stayed an extra 1/2 day, annual tourism revenues would increase by $6 million. The Tennessee Scenic Parkways initiative was seen as one way to encourage visitors to stay longer. A special scenic parkways map was developed highlighting the system and its primary attractions to help sell the idea.

George Gunderson of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation gave a presentation on that state's Rustic Roads program. A number of low volume local access roads have been designated as Rustic Roads since the program was initiated in 1973. The program is administered by a 10-member Rustic Roads Board, and communities may petition to have roads added to the system. The roads need not be paved, and speed limits cannot exceed 45 MPH.

Illinois completed a comprehensive look at its recreation and tourism future in 1987, and the results of the Governor's Task Force report were shared at Scenic Byways '88 by Edward Hoffman, Planning Supervisor of the Illinois Department of Conservation. One of the chief recommendations of the panel was an initiative to establish a State Heritage Corridor Program "to designate, develop and promote Illinois' scenic and historic corridors."

U.S. Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson announced his agency's new National Forest Scenic Byways program at the conference. Through this program, the USFS can

"better meet the growing needs of the #1 outdoor recreation customer of the National Forests -- the people out driving for the pleasure of it, enjoying the scenery and the great outdoors," Robertson said. He also noted that the Forest Service would be relying on public/private partnerships to help with construction improvements, signs and interpretive materials.

Scenic Byways '89

The second national conference on scenic byways was held November 5-7, 1989, again in the Washington, D.C. area. Once again, nearly 200 individuals representing highway, tourism, recreation and preservation interests participated. In the 18 months since Scenic Byways '88, significant progress had been made on national, state and local scenic byways. New programs were underway at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as well as in several states, and proponents of scenic byways had succeeded in getting the national scenic byways study, [for which this case study is submitted] approved by Congress.

The speakers at Scenic Byways '89 expressed universal support for scenic byways, and offered a variety of reasons why these programs are good for the nation. "Rural areas are where we discover the color, character, spirit and history of America," Congressman Ike Skelton (D-MO) told the audience. Tourism is a valuable economic tool for revitalizing rural communities and small business, and scenic byways are one way to draw visitors out of cities and into the heartland of America. Skelton and other speakers were excited by the educational value of interpretive programs on history, culture, and natural resources along scenic byways.

Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) echoed Skelton's concern that tourism is too-often viewed as a frivolous business. Economic opportunities are "explosive in terms of tourism," Rockefeller said, and more attention should be paid to promoting domestic and international

travel. Skelton, Rockefeller and U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration (USTTA) Under Secretary Rockwell Schnabel all noted the need for a national rural tourism policy, a recommendation included in a study recently completed by USTTA. Schnabel, who recently served as the U.S. Ambassador to Finland, told the group that Europeans were "hungry to discover the America beyond our cities."

One highlight of the gathering was the formal introduction of the new Back Country Byways program of the Bureau of Land Management, presented by BLM Director Cy Jamison. He showed a new video on Back Country Byways which showcases the scenic beauty and recreational diversity of the 270 million acres of western public lands BLM manages. Implementation of the new Back Country Byways program will benefit from ongoing cooperation with states and communities, as well as private partnership development, according to Jamison. Farmers Insurance Group of California, the nation's third largest casualty insurer, and American Isuzu Motors have committed to providing key initial support for the program, including the creation of several hundred informational kiosks along the BLM byways.

Forest Service Chief Dale Robertson, who made a surprise announcement at last year's conference regarding the creation of the National Forest Scenic Byways program, also had important news to report. In eighteen months, the program has grown to include 73 byways in 30 states representing about 4,000 miles of scenic roads. In addition, the FS has found hundreds of enthusiastic private partners willing to help with the program. Plymouth, in concert with the Forest Education Foundation, is a key national partner, helping to produce brochures, displays at fairs and consumer shows, signs and various on-the-ground improvements. Major goals for the program include interpretation of forest history, culture, and management, and local involvement. "We will not designate a byway unless local people are involved and support it," Robertson explained. "We want local pride and local initiative."

The Federal agencies involved in scenic byways are also committed to better coordination among themselves. The FS Chief indicated that meetings with officials from the FS, National Park Service, BLM, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Army Corps of Engineers, would be ongoing. Together, these agencies manage one third of the land area of the United States.

Participants in Scenic Byways '89 also heard reports about several of the newer state and local scenic road programs, and shared ideas on promotion, signing, safety improvements, design technology and protection of scenic and historic resources. A pre-conference field trip to Montgomery County, Maryland took the group along narrow and winding country roads slated for protection under a county-sponsored rural roads program. Officials from the Seaway Trail in upper New York State told how their scenic byway had grown out of a "National Trail" designation, and of the growing support for the 454-mile byway from state and local governments. Highlights from a series of workshops included:

o a report on **The Trail of the Great Bear**. This byway would link the U.S.'s first national park, Yellowstone, with Glacier National Park, Waterton Lakes International Peace Park and Banff National Park in Canada;

o a session about partnerships and marketing projects undertaken regarding the **San Juan Skyway**, a National Forest Scenic Byway in Colorado. Projects include a promotional video-tape, brochures, and an interpretive audio tape drivers can listen to during the 230-mile trip;

o a presentation on the **Pacific Coast Parkway** by an official of the Oregon Department of Transportation. Oregon has developed a plan for protecting and enhancing U.S. 101 along the coastline, working with citizens and business groups to develop a consensus on the concept and design. Eventually, they'd like to see the Parkway run from San Luis Obispo in California to Port Angeles, Washington.

Western Scenic Byways Conference

Expanded partnerships, better sharing of expertise, and greater community involvement in byway projects were goals voiced by participants at the Western Scenic Byways Conference, held in Monterey, California February 5-7, 1990. Scenic byways projects are expanding as state and Federal officials work to satisfy the growing demand for

scenic touring opportunities and protection of the West's rich natural, historic and cultural heritage. Nearly 100 representatives from state governments, Federal land managing agencies, and private sector tourism interests gathered in Monterey to compare programs and share insights at the conference.

Frank A. Bracken, Under Secretary of the Interior, addressed the importance of using scenic byways to teach Americans about their natural heritage and the importance of stewardship of our public lands. Scenic byways can "strengthen the economies of small communities throughout the country," he said. The Administration will be focusing more attention on natural resource protection and improvement of recreational facilities, including scenic byways. "The President is committed to providing more of these recreational opportunities for all Americans." Bracken explained.

Former California state senator Fred Farr shared stories about the early scenic byway movement in California and at the national level. Mr. Farr was the original sponsor of legislation that created California's scenic byway program in 1963, which also led to his active involvement in the first national scenic highway study in the 60's. Protection for coastal Highway 1, including the famed stretch through Monterey County and Big Sur, was the result of political activism and community support. "I must emphasize the importance of working closely with state and county highway officials". He told the group that he felt like Rip Van Winkle, recently awakened from a long sleep. "From 1969 to today, I had almost no involvement in scenic highways. But now my interest is rekindled!"

A panel of Federal land managing agency officials described present and anticipated scenic byways activities and future priorities for these programs in the region. Ed Hastey, California State Director for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), said that 35 Back Country Byways had been designated and 100 more had been proposed. People living in communities affected by new byways should be included in planning to instill a sense of ownership in the new Back Country Byways, Mr. Hastey emphasized.

Regional Forester Paul Barker discussed the successful National Forest Scenic Byways program, which now includes some 61 byways and over 3,000 miles of roadways. Mr. Barker also talked about the importance of community involvement. Local communities need an understanding of "what the scenic byway is going to do for them, not to them." He suggested that baseline economic studies are needed to provide definitive answers to this question.

The National Park Service (NPS) has a longstanding tradition of scenic road development, Regional Director Stan Albright told the group. Park roads in Olympic, Yosemite, and Glacier National Park serve millions of visitors each year, and allow them to see and learn about wildlife and natural wonders. Park roads also provide access to areas for hiking, boating and fishing. The three panelists agreed that future priorities must include better coordination among their agencies, including efforts to connect scenic byways passing from one jurisdiction to another.

State initiatives were described by a trio of state program leaders: Chris Hatfield of the California Department of Transportation, Don Byard of the Oregon Department of Highways, and Stephanie Two Eagles of the Colorado Department of Local affairs. Each state is at a different stage in its scenic byway development, and has different priorities. California's program has "matured," and receives less program and budget emphasis than in previous years. In Oregon, a comprehensive planning effort for coastal Highway U.S. 101 has been completed, and a plan for scenic improvements adopted. Colorado recently issued criteria for state scenic byways, and has asked communities to nominate roads for the program (see more information on Colorado program in Part II of this study).

Panel moderator Don Diller, head of the scenic byways task force of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), summed up the panel sessions with a key insight on the dual functions of scenic byways: providing public access to recreational areas and facilitating the protection of the scenic corridor.

Marketing scenic byways and preservation of historic resources were also addressed by speakers at the conference. Ann Bond, Public Affairs Manager for the San Juan National Forest, offered a "how-to" lesson in creating partnerships to aid in publicizing and marketing a scenic byway. On the San Juan Skyway, a National Forest Scenic Byway in southwestern Colorado, partnerships have fostered projects as diverse as videos, audio tapes, interpretive pullouts, books and brochures. Historic resources can give a tremendous boost to tourism development programs, according to a slide show presented by Courtney Damkroger of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Many communities can successfully take advantage of historic assets in scenic byway development, as well.

One issue discussed repeatedly at the conference -- spurred by Monterey's location on the famous Highway 1 -- was the intricate balance that exists between land managers, landowners, and the travelling public when a popular scenic road travels through a community. Monterey, Big Sur and other coastal communities are economically dependent upon the tourism trade, but often resent the impacts of visitors and reject improvements that could add to their number.

PART II

HOW FOUR STATES ESTABLISHED NEW SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAMS

Summary

A variety of forces come into play and ignite the fires that spark the creation of state scenic byways programs. In the four states considered in this case study, Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina and Utah, forces behind the development of new scenic byways programs included Governors, federal land managing agencies, citizens groups, state legislators, and the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors.

The climate for the development of scenic byway program in the late 1980's was very good. States had an increasing awareness of the importance of tourism to their economies, and were looking for new ways to entice travelers to visit their state and spend time and money. Many communities in rural areas were becoming more aware of their recreational, historical and cultural treasures, and realized the need to protect these resources, both for the enjoyment of future generations and the immediate potential to attract tourists. And all over the nation, people were looking for scenic touring opportunities. A study for the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors in 1987 found that driving for pleasure and sightseeing was enjoyed sometimes, often, or very often by 77% of Americans.

When the pressure to develop a scenic byways plan came to a head in these four states, key people were tapped to lay the groundwork for the program. Colorado established a commission; Utah organized a task force of federal, state and local officials; North Carolina drew together key state agencies; and Maryland's DOT worked closely with the Governor's office. Once decision-makers were identified, the processes of developing criteria and selecting roads was begun. Various amounts of public input were encouraged by the four states.

The final steps in the process of establishing an on-going scenic byways program involved actual "on-the-ground" work, such as road improvements and signing; the development of marketing tools such as maps, brochures and publicity campaigns; and the creation of a plan for managing the established scenic byways system.

Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina and Utah all have "different" scenic byways programs. They have different methods for designating roads, have similar but unique criteria, and measure their success in different ways. One program is not inherently better than another; instead each has responded to different circumstances and different political leadership. In the following pages, we will explore in more detail the forces which led to each state's developing a scenic byways program, and the key features of each program.

SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAYS
STATE OF COLORADO

Transportation And Tourism In Colorado

Colorado is a grand place for exploring and for recreation. It has 11 national forests, three national recreation areas, Rocky Mountain National Park, 31 state parks, over a dozen raftable rivers, 28 ski areas, and much more. The expansive mountains of Colorado include 53 peaks of more than 14,000 feet, are a potent lure. But the state also boasts a variety of interesting cultural and historical attractions, ranging from ancient Indian ruins to restored silver mining towns, from early pioneer settlements to contemporary music and theatre productions.

The economy of Colorado is highly dependent upon its natural and cultural attractions. Over 26 million tourists visited the state in 1988, contributing over $5.6 billion to Colorado's economy. Tourism is the largest employer, above mining and agriculture, in Colorado.

Denver is the chief gateway to Colorado by air. Many visitors arrive at Stapleton Airport, rent cars or recreational vehicles, and drive around the state. Interstate U.S. 70 cuts across central Colorado, and the north-south route, Interstate 75, provides a four-lane connecting Colorado with New Mexico and Wyoming. But as with other large western states, two lane roads predominate. The state highway department and Federal land managing agencies work closely to ensure these roads are maintained winter and summer. Many of the county roads, as well as many roads on Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service lands, are unpaved.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Colorado has a very strong interest in promoting tourism. Skiing is marketed heavily leading up to the winter months, while scenic touring, outdoor recreation and cultural attractions are marketed for the warmer months.

Before the advent of a formal scenic byways program, several communities had sought recognition for scenic drives. Independence Pass was declared a scenic byway by the Colorado state legislature in the 1970s, and groups formed later to promote similar designations for the Scenic Highway of Legends and the Peak to Peak Highway. In all of these cases, communities were looking at scenic byways primarily as a means to boost tourism. In early 1988, it had become apparent that the state legislature was unlikely to approve either the Peak to Peak or the Scenic Highway of Legends. A new approach was initiated by a state legislator from the Boulder area, who began by contacting the Governor's office to assess his interest. Support was forthcoming, and top officials from the highway, tourism, and local affairs agencies were soon drawn into forming a task force to look into a statewide scenic road program. The idea was enthusiastically received by all, and within several months the Task Force, made up of representatives from the state legislature, Department of Highways, Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Tourism Board, Department of Natural Resources, Colorado Historical Society and the U.S. Forest Service. made its initial recommendations to Governor Roy Romer.

Interest in statewide scenic byways program was heightened by the national Scenic Byways '88 conference in Washington in May 1988, and the announcement by the U.S. Forest Service of their new program at the Washington conference. By fall of 1988, the Forest Service began seeking approval from Colorado highway officials for the designate the San Juan Skyway as a National Forest Scenic Byway.

Colorado Governor Roy Romer signed an Executive Order on March 16, 1989 creating the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission, a three-year commission a charge to:

"1) develop and recommend criteria for designating scenic and historic byways to the Colorado Highway Commission for its approval;
(2) evaluate nominations for and recommend designation of scenic and historic byways to the Colorado Highway Commission for its approval;
(3) coordinate the State's involvement with the Forest Service Scenic Byways Program, including the promotion of state and local government priorities for designation as Forest Service Scenic Byways; and
(4) develop funding sources and support promotional and interpretive programs for designated scenic and historic byways."

Members of the Commission were appointed from all parts of the state, and included legislators, private citizens, representatives of key state agencies, and the executive directors the Departments of Highways, Local Affairs and Natural Resources, who served as ex-officio members. The Commission also included a representative of the U.S. Forest Service. The Commission's special concerns were to develop a coordinated statewide effort on scenic byways to 1) facilitate uniformity in criteria and promotion; 2) enable the designation of roads not wholly in National Forests; 3) ensure the inclusion of scenic and/or historic roads in the Eastern Plains area of Colorado, and 4) to foster strong community involvement and support.

The Scenic and Historic Byways Commission developed five criteria for designation:

"1. The proposed Scenic and Historic Byway must possess unusual, exceptional, and/or distinctive scenic, recreational, historical, educational, scientific, geological, natural, wildlife, cultural, or ethnic features.
2. The proposed Scenic and Historic Byway must be suitable for the prescribed type(s) of vehicular use.
3. The proposed Scenic and Historic Byway must be an existing route and have public access.
4. The proposed Scenic and Historic Byway must have strong local support and proponents must demonstrate coordination within relevant agencies.
5. The proposed Scenic and Historic Byway must be accompanied by a conceptual plan, as specified in the nomination process."

Nomination packets containing detailed instructions for submitting proposals were mailed to local chambers of commerce, Forest Service offices, and community officials

around the state, as well as to organizations thought to be interested in the new program. Five roads were chosen in 1989 separate from the official nomination process. They included Independence Pass, the Peak to Peak Highway, the Scenic Highway of Legends, the San Juan Skyway, and the Gold Belt Tour. The Commission felt these byways clearly met the criteria that had been established, and would help get the program off to a quick and exciting start. These first five Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways appear on the 1990 Colorado State Highway Map.

Nineteen new nominations was received in May of 1990, and seven have been invited to present final proposals before the Commission. The final selections are expected in late July. The nomination process will have another cycle next year, the third and last year of the Commission's life. State officials estimate that a total of about 30 byways will be eventually be part of the program.

Colorado has succeeded in creating a scenic byways program that will have a clear identity, despite the fact that a good portion of the designated roads are also National Forest Scenic Byways or Back Country Byways sponsored by the Bureau of Land Management. The state's official logo sign, featuring the Colorado columbine, is the only trailblazer sign on these byways. The Forest Service and BLM will use their logos only at entry points. In addition, the two federal land managing agencies have "gone out of their way," according to one state official, to bend and conform to the parameters of the new program. They have sought the state's approval for brochures and books used to market their programs, and have made dedication ceremonies a celebration of the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program, not their own.

SCENIC ROUTES

STATE OF MARYLAND

Transportation And Tourism

Maryland's history and natural resources offer an exciting array of travel and recreation opportunities to visitors. From the ocean beaches to historic towns on the Chesapeake Bay, from Antietem Battlefield to the foothills of the Allegheny mountains, diversity is what Maryland is all about. The state has 44 state parks and forests, and numerous spots for fishing, boating, canoeing, hiking, camping, bicycling and swimming.

Tourism ranks as the 2nd largest employer in Maryland. The state hosted 33 million visitors in 1988, who contributes some $2.7 billion to the economy, according to statistics from the Maryland Office of Tourist Development.

Maryland's location in the Mid-Atlantic regional puts it within several hours drive of most eastern states. Its proximity to Washington, D.C. has created transportation opportunities as well as challenges, as the metropolitan area struggles to keep up with population growth and ever-increasing air, rail and road traffic. Numerous state and county roads are key transportation corridors connecting cities and reaching into suburbs and rural communities.

Program Background

Maryland's Governor, William Donald Schaefer, was the primary motivator for Scenic Routes in the state. The forces that prompted the Governor's office to pursue the program beginning in 1987 were 1) the desire to reduce congestion on Rt. 50 between Ocean City and Washington as part of the "Reach the Beach" effort, and 2) the desire to attract more visitors to rural parts of the state.

The Governor gave the project originally to the Landscape Division of the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Office of Tourism. A plan was developed for marketing the program and basic criteria were selected by early 1988. The plan called for a special state Scenic Roads map, routes marked with the state flower, the Black-Eyed Susan, and a press conference with the Governor to launch the effort.

The State Highway Administration's Traffic Division worked with the Landscape Division to determine the roads that would originally be part of the program. The first route selected, in accordance with the Governor's first goal, was an "alternate" route connecting Ocean City, in eastern Maryland, to Oakland, in the western-most county. The "O.C. to Oakland" scenic route was announced during a press conference in late May 1988, in time for the busy tourist season.

Subsequent routes selected over the next six months were exclusively state roads. A team of highway officials drove around the state assessing the safety and scenic qualities of their state roads, choosing those they thought were the "best" to be included in the program. The state did not consider development restrictions or means to preserve the roads. County officials, members of the tourism industry, citizens and state legislators were not included in the selection process, or, for that matter, the design of the Scenic Routes program.

The Scenic Roads map was printed in late 1988. It features a state highway map on one side with all scenic roads outlined in green. On the other side, a hand illustrated map depicting major historical and cultural sites is featured. The addresses of county tourism offices are listed for sources of more information.

Once the map was produced and signs began appearing in 1989, feedback on the routes was provided by citizens and local tourism and government officials. Because they had not been involved at the advent of the program, there were many questions about how future roads would be selected, and how local communities could become involved. As a result, a nomination process was developed by the State Highway Administration to receive

suggestions for additions to the system.

At this time, no special improvements are planned for Maryland Scenic Routes. It is probably, however, that as interest in and "ownership" of the program gradually picks up on the local level, communities may look for ways to incorporate amenities such as picnic areas and interpretive sites along these routes.

SCENIC BYWAYS

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

Transportation And Tourism In North Carolina

North Carolina lures visitors with its scenic and cultural diversity, historic attractions and many recreational offerings. From miles of seashores to the rolling hills of the Piedmont, to the famous Blue Ridge Parkway, the state is easily explored by roadway. Fishing, camping, hiking, sailing, sightseeing, and golf are just some of the activities enjoyed here.

Tourism is an important industry in the state, ranking as its 2nd largest employer, behind manufacturing. North Carolina officials expect tourism to take over as the #1 employer by the year 2000. Some 61 million tourists contributed $6.2 billion to the state's economy in 1988.

North Carolina has the country's largest state-maintained road system, encompassing more than 76,000 miles of roads. In fact, it is known as the "Good Roads" state.

Program Background

North Carolina first took on the task of a scenic byways program in 1964, after the President's Council on Recreation and Natural Beauty recommended a national program of scenic roads. In January 1965, the North Carolina Scenic roads and Parkways Study was released, and the public was invited to nominate roads for inclusion in the program. 69 routes were proposed statewide. By 1966, North Carolina had readied a program which had an estimated cost of $85-170 million for road improvements and related expenditures. The state decided at the end of the decade against spending the money to implement the program. When a federal interest again prompted North Carolina to inventory its scenic

roads in 1974, a program was again considered. But the oil embargo again caused the state to defer action.

Citizens groups were behind an effort in 1982 to force the state to consider a scenic byways program. Petitions were sent to the Governor's office, who turned the project over to the NC Department of Transportation's Landscape Unit. The Landscape Unit responded with a proposed pilot program consisting of 15 scenic roads. No action was taken.

By fall of 1988, a variety of national efforts to expand the protection and enhancement of scenic byways had begun, and the North Carolina DOT decided to take another look at a scenic byways program. This time, the NCDOT proposed a historic preservation effort through scenic byways, and by October 1988, the Governor's office had assigned the task again to the DOT Landscape Unit. The project began in January 1989, and development a scenic byways program for the state was completed in just over a year. In March 1990, the program was approved unanimously by the North Carolina Board of Transportation.

The Landscape Unit created a Scenic Byways Task Force to undertake the job of developing the program criteria and selecting roads to be included. The Task Force included the Director of North Carolina's Welcome Center Program, a representative from the state's Department of Cultural Resources, and staff from DOT's Landscape Unit. The Task Force identified five criteria/guidelines for the roads in their program:

- a minimum length of one mile;
- "development" along the byway "should not detract from the scenic character and visual quality;"
- "significant visible natural or cultural features along its borders. These include agricultural lands, historic sites, vistas of marshes, shorelines, forests with mature trees or other areas of significant vegetation, or notable geologic or other natural features;"

- preference for roads that are protected by land use controls; and
- a provision for de-designation should the character of the road change.

North Carolina Governor Jim Martin has strongly endorsed the new program, which initially incorporates 1,500 miles of scenic byways in about 30 segments. The roads are dispersed geographically around the state, and signs will be erected this summer. A new map and brochure are planned.

Public comments on the new system are being taken at regular meetings on highway issues around the state called Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meetings. NCDOT is taking suggestions for additions to the system. An annual review of proposed and existing routes will result in additions and deletions from the system.

SCENIC BYWAYS AND BACKWAYS

STATE OF UTAH

Transportation And Tourism In Utah

Utah has some of the most spectacular scenery in the nation. National parks such as Bryce Canyon and Canyonlands are frequent destinations for visitors to southern Utah, while the snow-capped peaks of the Wasatch Range less than an hour from Salt Lake City captivate millions of skiers. Utah boasts five national parks, six national forests, 10 million acres of high mountains, a variety of recreation-oriented resorts, 3,000 lakes, including the Great Salt Lake, and diverse resources under the authority of the Bureau of Land Management. 63% of Utah is comprised of federal lands.

Utah contains many remote and sparsely populated areas, but the state is crisscrossed by several major interstate highways, improving access to its many scenic and recreational areas. The state offers a multitude of outdoor opportunities, from white water rafting to sailing, from snowmobiling to rock climbing, from camping to fly-fishing. Aside from its own allure, the state is "on the way" to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona, and to major cities in California and Colorado.

Tourism is very important to the state's economy, bringing in some $2.5 billion each year, and ranking as the state's largest private sector industry. Visitors have steadily increased in number over the last ten years, due to the growing popularity of Utah's ski resorts and national parks. Utah's tourism industry is solidly behind the new "Scenic Byways and Backways" program, for it encourages visitors to travel beyond the highways and to discover small towns and attractions, building the economic base in rural communities.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Utah started working on a scenic byways program as early as 1986. The impetus for the program came primarily from the local tourism industry in southern Utah, who wanted to draw tourists off the main highway and into their communities. Visitors were flocking to national parks -- sometimes causing overcrowding -- and many felt less well known attractions were not being effectively marketed. Scenic routes that would provide visitors with a variety of new scenic and recreational options were proposed. The Utah Travel Council and representatives from seven counties met to set up the original criteria, and each county submitted nominations to the Utah Travel Council for "scenic routes." To qualify for "scenic route" designation, a road had to be scenic, safe, and passable by motorcoach. A second category, "secondary routes," was established to accommodate unpaved scenic roads. Too many roads were initially nominated, so the Utah Travel Council made decisions on which ones to accept. The Utah Travel Council then took on the task of compiling information and pictures on each route for the publication of a brochure. In addition, the process for selecting routes -- nominations by committees established in each county -- was repeated throughout the state. By the summer of 1988, the statewide effort was nearly completed.

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) had declined to become involved with the program except to provide signs after the roads were designated. The lack of national guidelines for scenic byways programs, and concerns over liability, impacts on development and other issues, prompted the department's unwillingness to proceed.

A new nationwide effort to designate scenic byways by the U.S. Forest Service was initiated in May 1988, and Forest officials in Utah approached the Utah Travel Council with their plans to designate several roads shortly thereafter. They had received approval from UDOT for the National Forest Scenic Byways they planned to designate, but needed to establish how these roads fit into the emerging statewide program in Utah.

After some initial competition over which agency's criteria would take precedence, it was decided that a cooperative program which would benefit Utah and its visitors was needed. A new Steering Committee was formed composed of representatives of ten organizations and agencies, including:

- Utah Travel Council;
- Utah Travel Regions;
- Utah Department of Transportation;
- Utah Association of Governments;
- Utah League of Cities and Towns;
- Utah Association of Counties;
- National Park Service;
- U.S. Forest Service;
- Bureau of Land Management; and
- Federal Highway Administration.

The Steering Committee had its first meeting in the Fall of 1988 to begin the task of organizing a "new" scenic byways program for Utah. The involvement and cooperation of the tourism community was sought through the nomination and selection process. Regional field representatives worked closely with county officials and industry leaders to identify, evaluate and prioritize potential scenic byways, and provided comments on the selection criteria.

One of the chief challenges faced by the Utah Tourism Council in developing the statewide program was the lack of any standard criteria or suggested means to go about creating a new statewide program. After deciding that a chief criteria for scenic byways should be safety, they contacted the Federal Highway Administration, which suggested Utah use the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) safety standard. The logo that was adopted borrowed the type style developed by the Scenic Byways Coalition for the May 1988 Scenic Byways '88 national conference. There was no standardized national logo that could be found.

The Steering Committee finalized criteria for designating Utah Scenic Byways. In general, Utah Scenic Byways are primary or secondary roads (no interstates) that can be

safely traveled by a variety of vehicles, including recreational vehicles. Outstanding roadside features such as scenery, historic sites, or educational, scientific or cultural values must be present.

Once again, the Utah Travel Council, now in concert with the Steering Committee, undertook the process of selecting the roads to be designated and gathering information for publication. They provided opportunities for public review, which resulted in minor changes to the selections.

By spring of 1989, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) contacted the Utah Travel Council to bring attention to their new Back Country Byways initiative. A BLM representative joined the steering committee and it was decided that a new category called "Scenic Backway" would become part of the Utah program. Utah Scenic Backways are less developed routes, usually unpaved, which exhibit outstanding roadside features. Adding this category to the program allowed many spectacular roads -- including some on Forest Service lands -- that did not conform to the AASHTO standard to be designated.

PART III

SUGGESTED ELEMENTS OF A COMPLEMENTARY NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

From our analysis of recent scenic byways conferences and the experiences of four states in developing new scenic byways programs, the American Recreation Coalition has developed six recommendations for a national scenic byways effort that complements existing and potential state, local and federal agency initiatives.

As even our four-state study illustrated, scenic byways programs in America are very diverse in structure and in scope. Presently, federal criteria has not been established to encourage uniform scenic byways programs, so programs that have been developed over the years conform to local needs and priorities rather than national ones. Our study shows that a "cookie cutter" approach to designing scenic byway systems is not feasible. States are simply too different. Their landscapes, their demographics, and their land ownership patterns differ dramatically. But federal guidelines could play a useful role by defining the most important elements of an ongoing scenic byways program. Such guidelines should not be mandatory; nor should they remove key decision-making ability from state control.

Recent discussions with some 50 state legislators at the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures reinforced this point. The legislators were strong supporters of byway initiatives, and agreed that primary control over the designation of scenic byways should be with the state. Some suggested that appropriate federal roles would include technical assistance and financial assistance. The legislators we talked to were most excited about the opportunities to bring more tourism to their communities with the help of scenic byways. That -- coupled with the comparatively moderate investment needed to enhance and promote these roads -- generated the most enthusiasm from these state leaders.

States have traditionally played the most active role in developing scenic byway programs, but they have recently been joined by two Federal land managing agencies with

exciting initiatives: the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Our analysis points to a growing need to coordinate federal, state and local efforts, and to provide technical assistance to states where new programs are being developed or under consideration. Byway program coordinators from different states -- if they were to compare notes -- would find they have many similar goals, and face similar challenges. There is plenty of room for individuality, but sharing of expertise and ideas should be encouraged.

The following elements of a national program would enhance existing scenic byways efforts and promote the creation of new programs where they are lacking.

1. A NEW OFFICE IN THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION TO ESTABLISH GENERAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAMS; TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE; AND TO ENCOURAGE COORDINATION OF SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAMS.

Several state officials interviewed for this case study were surprised by the lack of federal guidelines for establishing and administering scenic byways programs. Some sought out existing Federal standards or AASHTO standards that might apply, and finding none, sought to define their own. Others tried to determine how states with similar ideas had proceeded. None of the states we examined in detail -- Colorado, Maryland, North Carolina or Utah -- employed another jurisdiction's "formula" for developing a scenic byways program without changes. The handbook written for the Scenic Byways '88 conference was a useful resource for Utah and North Carolina officials, but a national presence equipped to provide direct technical assistance was not available.

An FHWA Office on Scenic Byways could provide essential information to federal, state and local entities. For example, information on:

- o typical guidelines and criteria for scenic road programs;
- o techniques for the selection and preservation of scenic byways;
- o Federal-aid eligibility for scenic road projects;
- o organizations and agencies that should be consulted during the development of a program; and
- o existing programs on federal lands or in nearby states.

To take this idea one step further, a federal scenic byways office (or some other national entity) could develop and promote national guidelines for scenic byways programs in America. The guidelines developed should not intrude on a state's selection of roads or program goals, but should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place for selection and managing a scenic byway program. Programs could then be evaluated against the guidelines -- if state officials desired -- and those that satisfy the requirements could receive special advantages. Successful 'certification' of a state's program, for example, might qualify it for an increased federal match of funds, the right to use a special national logo or insignia, or special promotional opportunities. Suggested federal guidelines for scenic byways programs accepted under a national umbrella should include:

- o clear designation criteria;
- o formal periodic review of designated routes to ensure continued eligibility;
- o provisions for signing routes and a plan for interpretation of key sites;
- o corridor management program, including a mechanism to provide technical assistance to local units of government;
- o analysis of byway demand, inventory of route potentials and a state scenic byways plan; and
- o state scenic byways coordinating group involving federal agencies, other interested state agencies; local government representatives; and key private sector representatives.

The Office of Scenic Byways should also assume responsibility for providing information on amenity programs that expand the uses of scenic byways, such as access to public waterways, bicycle trail development, and rest area development. These projects sometimes qualify for Federal-aid funding, and states should be encouraged to pursue their construction. A central source of ideas on funding, design and placement of amenities would contribute greatly to the overall quality of scenic roads in this nation.

State budgets often cannot be stretched to pay for byway amenities such as pull-offs, interpretation of historic and cultural sites, improving access to rivers and parks, and trailblazer signs, with Federal-aid help. To sidestep this problem, civic organizations and private corporations have been enlisted by the Forest Service and others as financial or in-

kind partners to help with on-the-ground improvements and marketing campaigns. The Office on Scenic Byways could perform an important service by promoting successful public/private partnership development. The Office could make available case studies on different partnership arrangements and projects, and could provide information on not-for-profit organizations with experience in matching and managing partnerships involving corporations and government agencies.

Another suggested task of the Office of Scenic Byways would be to coordinate and share research on specially-designed safety and construction features for scenic byways. Scenic and historic roads clearly call for different roadside treatments, bridge treatments, signs and other features. The National Park Service, in cooperation with the Federal Lands Highway Office of FHWA, are forerunners in the development of aesthetically-pleasing guardrails, for example, which might be appropriate for many other scenic roads. This information should be shared with others, and efforts to further improve safety features -- including directed research projects -- should be undertaken, with the Office of Scenic Byways coordinating both activities.

II. FORM A FEDERAL SCENIC BYWAYS COUNCIL

To foster cooperation and coordination, a Federal Scenic Byways Council should be formed. The following agencies are suggested for the Council:

- Federal Highway Administration
- National Park Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration

The Council would promote the coordination of scenic byway programs among federal agencies, seeking ways to link roads crossing through lands under different jurisdictions, and working cooperatively on interpretive programs. Joint marketing

opportunities could be explored, as well as ideas for new construction of parkways. Most important, however, would be the simple opportunity for program leaders from the various agencies to regularly share information on their individual program efforts.

Agencies such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Army Corps of Engineers have indicated a keen interest in developing scenic road programs for their land systems. The U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration does not manage lands, but is responsible for marketing U.S. destinations abroad, and is another key agency that should be involved.

III. INCREASED FUNDING FOR SCENIC HIGHWAYS ON FEDERAL LANDS

Some of the nation's best scenic touring opportunities are found on thousands of miles of federally-managed roads on public lands. The National Park Service has a long history of involvement in scenic parkway construction, and millions drive through the parks each year to see wildlife, scenic vistas and the beauty of nature. The Federal Land Highways Program has primary responsibility for engineering and construction of major scenic roads on public lands in our national parks and forests, bringing a high level of expertise and sensitivity to road building in these areas. Today, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have established scenic byways initiatives to designate roads on their lands and promote them for public enjoyment. More people are enjoying the roads on public lands than ever before.

More money is needed to provide federal agencies with the resources needed to maintain and improve park and forest roads used by visitors. Improving safety is a chief concern, but funds are also needed to improve signing, to add pull-offs and to construct interpretive overlooks. Agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management have found private sector partners to support significant improvements on their designated scenic roads. In the Forest Service's Challenge Cost Share Program, federal

dollars are used to leverage private dollars, increasing the "buying power" of federal money significantly.

Sufficient money should be made available from the Highway Trust Fund to meet the growing demand for scenic travel experiences on federal lands. The public is, after all, contributing to the Fund through federal gasoline taxes assessed on every gallon of gas sold in America. In addition, more money should be allocated from special trust funds set up to support park and forest roads.

IV. USE OF FEDERAL MONIES SHOULD BE PERMITTED ON ALL SYSTEMS OF ROADS

Currently, Federal-aid money can only be spent on roads that are part of the Federal-aid primary or secondary systems. All scenic byways do not therefore qualify for these monies. We suggest expanding eligibility to all systems of roads. This will help ensure scenic roads around the nation are safe and enjoyable to travel. Projects which should be considered eligible include: roadway and signing improvements; parking area construction at scenic locations; interpretive facilities; special design features for guardrails, bridges and other structure, and similar improvement projects. Incentives should be included for projects which stimulate long-term partnership agreements involving non-highway interests in the creation and operation of scenic byways.

V. EACH STATE SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO INCLUDE A COMPONENT ON SCENIC AND RECREATIONAL DRIVING IN ITS LONG RANGE HIGHWAY PLAN.

Scenic byways are a very important and unique American resource, and one that deserves to be protected and enhanced. Though over half of the 50 states have designated one or more scenic roads, many have not undertaken a thorough assessment of their scenic resources. Just as there are requirements for states to submit plan for primary and

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