

CASE STUDY

the ROAD BECKONS

BEST PRACTICES FOR BYWAYS

MARKETING

TRAVEL NEW YORK STATE SCENIC BYWAYS IN THE FALL:
FALL FOLIAGE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

New York



TRAVEL NEW YORK STATE SCENIC BYWAYS IN THE FALL: FALL FOLIAGE MARKETING CAMPAIGN

*With over 2,200 miles of road included in the **New York State Scenic Byways** system, travelers have lots of choices. Individual byway themes are widely varied and suitably representative of the amazing diversity of New York State and its people.*

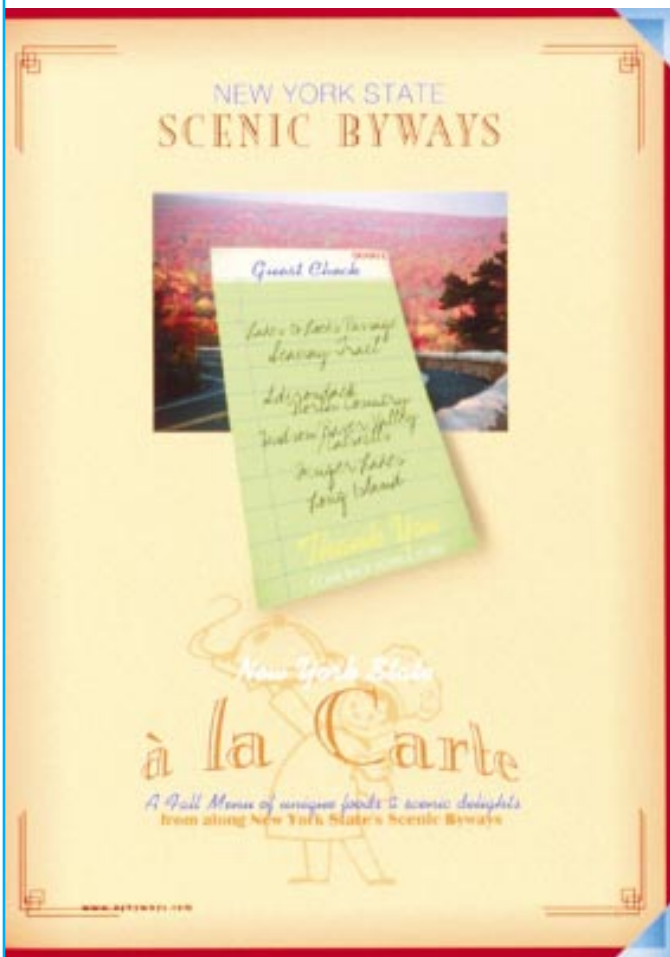
A coordinated effort between the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) resulted in a successful multi-media campaign to promote the state's scenic byways. Developed to create an identity and raise awareness for the byways, the Fall Marketing Campaign promoted the roadways as a pleasant travel option for those willing to wander a bit in search of fall foliage. To raise the profile of the campaign and tell the story of the many attractions to be found along the routes, celebrity spokesperson Tom Bodett was selected to act as the voice of the traveler. Featured in all electronic and print ads, Mr. Bodett provided a ready identifier and lent a friendly voice to the campaign. Promotional materials included television spots, print ads, a brochure, web site and 800 number all designed to increase awareness and appreciation for the byways and the surrounding communities.

WINNING ELEMENTS:

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER. Substantial work at the local, regional and state levels during the 1990s to plan, develop and market New York's Scenic Byways led to an increased understanding of the importance of working with tourism partners to effectively establish name recognition and appreciation for the byways. The idea of "branding" the byways was developed in 2002 as a coordinated effort between ANCA and NYSDOT to develop a multi-media "Fall Marketing Campaign." The goal was to create an identity for New York's State's Scenic Byways and offer the byways as a fall foliage travel option to consumers planning "leaf peeping" trips in New York. The use of a celebrity



Print and electronic ads featured celebrity spokesperson, Tom Bodett (right).
A 32-page byway guide was developed for the Fall campaign (opposite above).



spokesperson—Tom Bodett—as the voice of the traveler was designed to increase recognition of the byway brand.

THINKING STRATEGICALLY TO MAXIMIZE INVESTMENT AND EXPOSURE. Both the television and print campaigns were crafted to target the mature traveler interested in heritage travel and consumers interested in drive-to destinations. Tapping into an already popular seasonal activity and tourist market provided an ideal means for NYSDOT and ANCA to launch a full-fledged marketing campaign.

Well-conceived, each component of the campaign was designed to complement the other. Marketing materials included the development of a 30-second television spot, print ads, a byway guide, web site and 800 number. Paid media buys (both print and

electronic) were made to ensure maximum exposure in key media markets. Four thousand sixty-five 30-second television spots were run in 11 markets including Toronto, Cleveland, Harrisburg, Ottawa, Philadelphia, Scranton and 5 New York urban areas. The print ads were targeted to national magazines in the northeastern United States including *The New York Times*, *AAA Going Places/Car & Travel*, and *USA Weekend Magazine* among others. Total circulation represented by the 12 magazines: 18,787,304 resulting in the return of 20,612 reader response cards.

Callers who contacted NYBYWAYS, either through the call center (1-866-NYBYWAYS) or web location (www.NYBYWAYS.com), received a copy of the Scenic Byways guide (*New York State à la Carte: A Fall Menu of Unique Foods and Scenic Delights From Along New York State's Scenic Byways*) complete with contact information and interesting stories about each byway.

EFFECTIVELY MATCHING THE SUBJECT MATTER TO THE INTENDED AUDIENCE.

To create awareness and promote travel and spending along the routes, it was important to come up with a “brand” that would both resonate with the intended audience and serve as a ready identifier for the marketing campaign.

“Remember what life was like before the interstates? When you actually stopped to eat in the little towns along the way instead of just watching their names go by on exit signs? Well, get out on the New York State Scenic Byways this fall and discover that world is still there.”

— Fall Foliage Campaign ad copy



Carefully crafted, the campaign's messages were designed to appeal to the target audience's sense of nostalgia. Harkening back to a time when life moved just a little bit slower provided the perfect context to promote a complete travel experience that encouraged touring along at a leisurely pace and taking the time to stop and explore local towns and businesses along the way.

LENDING A VOICE TO THE CAMPAIGN.

To make the connection between the byways and a quality travel experience, Tom Bodett was hired as the campaign spokesperson. To establish an immediate rapport with the audience, both the television and print ads began with *Hi, I'm Tom Bodett*. This approach lent a "down home" flavor to the campaign that effectively mimicked the unhurried tone of the messaging and provided the ideal means to promote the New York State à la Carte guide. Arms crossed, sporting jeans and leaning against his Mustang convertible, Tom appealed to the traveler's sense of adventure and the call of the open road.

TAKING AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

TO FACILITATE TRIP PLANNING. Adopting a 1950s motif, the guide includes interesting anecdotes about the towns along the byways, a list of local attractions and a featured specialty, complete with mouth-watering photo, from restaurants located along the routes.

Colorful and easy to use, the guide focuses on New York's nationally designated byways, and groups the other byways into 4 geographic regions readily recognized by the traveling public (Adirondacks, Hudson Valley/Catskills, Finger Lakes and Long Island). To facilitate trip planning, each byway's write-up is color coded to match the New York State Scenic Byways map located at the front of the guide. The web site complemented this publication and was designed to entice people to register to receive information. Those who did were immediately rewarded with recipes for regional specialties that they might encounter in their travels and sent the à la Carte guide in the mail. These registrations were 1 of 3 sources used to analyze the success of the initiative.

EVALUATING WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T TO GUIDE FUTURE INITIATIVES.

This well-conceived and targeted marketing campaign paid big dividends. Information for the conversion study was derived from 3 sources: the toll-free telephone number, the Internet and reader service cards. Based on the information collected, 65 percent of the households who ordered travel information in response to the campaign actually visited New York State Byways last fall. Since the campaign drew 47,000 responses, this means that at least 30,500 households traveled byways in New

York, with two thirds making at least one more trip in the fall. Of the 3,100 households who were sent the conversion study, 888 (29 percent) responded. Fifty percent of the respondents said the guide reinforced their plans to travel in New York, and 25 percent cited the guide as the deciding factor. Fifty-seven percent were significantly influenced by the celebrity spokesperson.

Conservatively estimated, the campaign resulted in \$27.9 million in direct spending by travelers visiting New York byways. This represents a 28 to 1 return on investment!

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS. A partnership with the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council enabled ANCA and NYSDOT to coordinate work on the campaign with other tourism promotion

agencies and byway planners throughout the state. The Tourism Council also was active in selecting and training staff for the call center and conducting the conversion study to analyze the economic and visitor impact of the campaign. In addition to the core partners, efforts were made to coordinate with other partners including the Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway, Lakes to Locks Passage All-American Road, Franklin County Tourism, the Thousand Island Tourism Promotion Agency, and the New York State Scenic Byways advisory board. These representatives were invited to all of the planning meetings and their help was solicited in reviewing the various components of the campaign (e.g., electronic and print ads and to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in the byway guide).



Collaboration on the campaign helped increase appreciation for the benefits of branding in marketing the state’s resources and encouraged cross-promotional opportunities.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD: “IN THEIR OWN WORDS”

During this project we learned:

- There is a critical need to *identify* the Scenic Byways “brand” for the traveling public
- There is a need to *market* the Scenic Byways “brand” for the traveling public
- The use of a celebrity spokesperson, with the image and voice of Tom Bodett—the voice of the traveler—validates the Scenic Byways “brand” in the public’s view

Some conclusions:

- The public responds enthusiastically to byways, but, the public has a short memory. If marketing is not continuous, awareness will drop sharply.
- National campaigns will have a limited impact on the state if the state product is not differentiated and branded on its own.
- Having a celebrity spokesperson had a positive impact on response to advertising.
- The best news is that the economic impact of byways travel is considerable. Because byways traverse secondary roads, the revenues stream directly to the communities that really need them.



- There is no better way to inspire folks to get back to their roots than marketing New York State Scenic Byways!

If we were to do it again, we would:

- If we were to develop the Fall Foliage Marketing Campaign again, the Adirondack North Country Association, in partnership with the New York State Department of Transportation, would extend the project-planning component of the project. In particular, outreach to the Screen Actor’s Guild and contract negotiations with Tom Bodett were time consuming, and there were elements that had to be addressed prior to the development of the television and print advertising. These negotiations had an impact on the timeframe of project development that would have been minimized by a more extensive project-planning phase.

FUNDING SHARE & SOURCES	DOLLARS	PERCENTAGE
STATE SHARE:	\$200,000	20%
FEDERAL SHARE & SOURCE OR PROGRAM CATEGORY:		
National Scenic Byways Program Grant	\$800,000	80%
TOTAL COST	\$1,000,000	100%

ASSESSING YOUR EFFORTS

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



Bicyclists along Lakes to Locks Passage.

ASSESSMENT
1 2 3 4

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

1. We have clear marketing goals and objectives.
2. We have identified our target audience.
3. We have outlined a marketing action plan to accomplish our goals and objectives (e.g., television advertising schedule, print advertising schedule). We have taken the time to develop a project planning and implementation timeline.
4. Our byway's marketing materials carry a consistent logo, image, content, and tone.
5. We use multiple media to attract and inform a variety of audiences.
6. We participate in regional and state-wide marketing efforts.
7. We take time to evaluate our marketing efforts and make adjustments as needed.

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RESOURCES

New York State Scenic Byways à la Carte Guide.
Print ad copy. 30-second New York State Scenic Byways television advertisement featuring Tom Bodett.

ROAD WORK AHEAD

1. What can we learn from this case study?
2. Are there aspects of this case study that we would like to incorporate into our byway plans and initiatives?
3. What are our *marketing* success stories? In what ways are we working to promote our byway?
4. What steps would we like to take to improve and enhance our *marketing* efforts?
5. What would we like to know more about related to this case study?



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MAY 2003

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