

Lessons from the Road



Case #10: Public Involvement

Outreach and Participation

Public involvement is a mix of outreach and participation. It is a continuous, cyclical process that starts when the concept of a byway is first proposed.

Public outreach informs, inquires, and

inspires. Public participation invites personal involvement, discussion, and shared understanding.

A well-structured public involvement process:

- Is strategic;
- Starts to implement the scenic byway vision from the outset;
- Is flexible and opportunistic; and
- Has diverse support and is inclusive.

This case study describes techniques drawn from experiences on the Mountains to Sound Greenway in Washington State and the Loess Hills Scenic Byway in Iowa that serve both outreach and participation.

“Making sure we keep the look and feel of the landscape a century from now requires strong community involvement . . .”

—From **Mountains to Sound**, by Daniel Chasen

About Lessons from the Road

This case study features lessons learned by scenic byway advocates across the country that are applicable to many scenic byway initiatives.

Scenic byways are public roads with special scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archaeological, and/or natural qualities that have been recognized as such through legislation or some other official declaration.

Nomination guidelines for National Scenic Byway designation require a series of planning and management elements. Some byway efforts lead to nomination, and possibly national designation; the rest choose other paths for implementation. These case studies show how various byway managers address planning and management issues in distinctive ways.

Each case study in this series concludes with a resource list of helpful publications and details on how to contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse.

Good luck with your byway.

The Series

1. Mapping
2. Design and Maintenance
3. Assess Intrinsic Qualities
4. Telling the Story
5. Conserving Intrinsic Qualities
6. Visitor Experience & Services
7. Manage Development
8. Signage

Profiles in Public Involvement

Origins of the Mountains to Sound Trust

In 1990, citizens launched an effort to protect the Interstate 90 scenic corridor, which spans the Cascade Mountains between Seattle and the eastern foothills. It was because of citizen action that the State

included an executive committee to serve the board in oversight, with advisory services provided by a council (30 community leaders), and a technical advisory committee (70 technical experts). Staff of the Trust included an executive director with several staff and a corporate executive “on loan.”

Beyond board and committee work, hundreds of volunteers devote thousands of hours to the Mountains to Sound Greenway. Volunteers staff many special projects, from planting trees at interchanges, to restoring shorelines, to sharing knowledge about forest ecology and the greenway idea.

The Trust facilitates public discussion and resolution of sensitive issues such as land use. It avoids confrontation and regulatory demands, focusing instead on building coalitions and cooperation for its vision.



The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust developed an effective participation structure to manage the hundreds of people involved.

of Washington began to protect corridor resources under the State scenic byway program. Members of a community hiking club and others organized an 88-mile hike from the mountains to Puget Sound along the “greenways” of Interstate 90.

Nearly 100 hikers dramatized the idea of reclaiming the wilderness corridor for a regional “Central Park,” to maintain connections between city and wild places, and among trails, parks, communities, and wildlife habitat.

The Mountains to Sound March educated residents about the vision of preserving an irreplaceable asset and the urgency of the cause.

Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

A year later, march organizers formed the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, a non-profit organization, to protect the Greenway. The new Trust called on 53 regional leaders in business, conservation, and government to fill its board of directors, ensuring representation of a full range of interests and opinions from the corridor. The Trust developed an effective participation structure (see diagram at left) that

Volunteers contribute to the byway in many ways.



Public Involvement Profile: The Loess Hills

The Loess Hills Scenic Byway in southwest Iowa grew out of a citizen effort to form a local tourism organization, the Loess Hills Hospitality Association. The Association, once founded, received technical assistance from the local unit of the Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) program, a Federal program that offers technical and financial assistance to locally initiated resource conservation and development programs.

RC&D staff worked with the Hospitality Association to create scenic routes and to initiate promotion through signs and brochures in two counties. The pilot project subsequently expanded to include all seven Loess Hills counties in developing scenic byways and generating tourism revenue. While the pilot project had very little public involvement, the second phase made public involvement a priority. The Loess Hills Byway incorporated and relied on broad public participation. The intent was to help residents learn about the region and allow them to determine which aspects of the corridor merited regional, and possibly national attention.

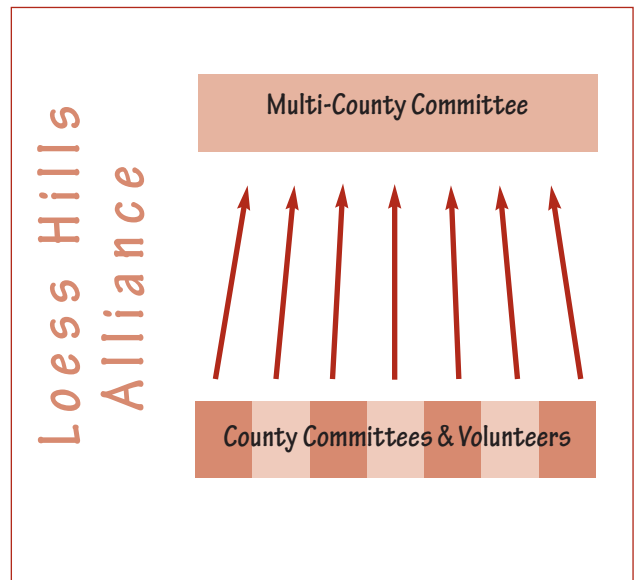
Managing the Byway

The Loess Hills' public involvement structure (see diagram above right), is simpler and smaller than the structure used by the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust. A Multi-County Committee, made up of one or two representatives from each of seven County Committees, provides oversight.

The County Committees, each with eight members (local residents and leaders in economic development, business, tourism, and government agencies), are working groups responsible for organizing volunteers and collecting data.

RC&D professional staff advised volunteers, who then helped evaluate local resources and identify scenic routes by administering a public Landscape Preference Survey, inventorying and mapping resource data, and producing a video.

Small signs bearing the Byway logo now mark the Loess Hills Scenic Byway. Promotional and interpretive material includes a map brochure, articles in travel



sections of regional newspapers, and materials in group tour manuals.

To manage the Loess Hills Scenic Byway and maintain communication among the counties, supporters formed the non-profit Loess Hills Alliance.

The Loess Hills' public involvement structure is simpler and smaller than that of the Mountains to Sound Greenway, but no less effective.

Getting the Word Out

Public Outreach

Public outreach informs all, asks for opinions, and inspires identification with the scenic byway project. Effective outreach:

- ✓ **Makes its message clear and simple, and is consistent and continuous.** Make the most of the brief opportunity to contact and engage the public by basing messages on a clear vision and goals. Be

consistent and continuous: maintain visibility for the byway with regular, repeated exposures.

- ✓ **Uses a variety of outreach methods.** Stakeholders

and byway supporters have different interests and needs, and outreach techniques should be tailored to these. When selecting outreach techniques, consider the audience's age, abilities, language, interests, and motivations (personal, civic, environmental, political, etc.).

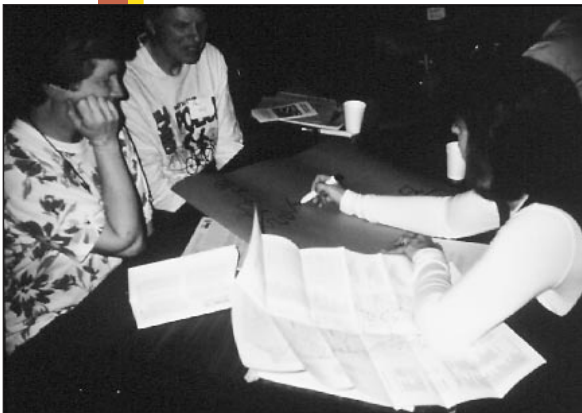
- ✓ **Contacts individuals personally who might play a key role due to their position.** Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust extends an invitation each month to the mayors in all the towns along the Scenic Byway, even though Greenway Trust board meetings are open to the public. Both the Trust and Loess Hills Scenic Byway have produced slide shows or videos to extend their outreach and education.
- ✓ **Keeps people involved.** An effective process fosters participation, engaging the public in the byway's vision and process.

Public Participation

Citizen involvement with the scenic byway demonstrates support and enhances

the credibility of the project. Effective public participation:

- ✓ **Is fun!** Activities and meetings should be rewarding for the participants and well-organized—don't let participants stand idly waiting for you.
- ✓ **Recognizes all contributors.** Everyone involved needs to feel that their contribution is valuable and appreciated. Critics must be listened to and understood; good deeds should be recognized.
- ✓ **Offers many ways to participate in and support the scenic byway.** A tremendous array of participation choices will become apparent from the scenic byway vision and the public involvement strategy. (See ideas on page 6.)



Public involvement takes many forms. Above, bicyclists discuss potential routes with planners; at right, volunteers conduct surveys at public events.



Lessons Learned

Planners and managers along the Mountains to Sound Greenway and the Loess Hills Scenic Byway learned the following lessons about public involvement.

Have a Strategy

- ✓ **Know the desired results.** Be clear about your goal, and target the people and resources to accomplish the goal.
- ✓ **Formulate a public involvement process, addressing the structures of participation and outreach.** (See charts on pages 2 and 3.)
- ✓ **Include timing in strategy.** Watch for significant opportunities to coordinate efforts and schedule events. To administer its Landscape Preference Surveys, the Loess Hills Scenic Byway capitalized on the large number of residents and visitors attracted to regional events.

Build Strong Leadership

- ✓ **Call first on expertise available in the community.** Seek people who are technically skilled, professionally connected, and open-minded and diplomatic for key oversight and advisory support.

Implement a Process

- ✓ **Start making the byway happen right away, even before the Corridor Management Plan is finished.** Quick successes with pilot projects are essential to develop and maintain momentum. The Mountains to Sound Greenway began working toward its goals of preservation and education immediately by maintaining historic properties and developing classroom materials. Pilot projects must fit the long-term vision.

Maintain Flexibility

- ✓ **Go where there is interest and build cooperation wherever possible.** The Mountains to Sound Greenway started a *Biosolids Forestry Program* to use treated organic solids as fertilizer on public

forests. The program has expanded and now generates revenue and supports education and conservation projects for the area's youth.

- ✓ **Public involvement is not a rigid discipline; flexibility and a willingness to respond to special needs and delays are essential.** Important stakeholders or interest groups are sometimes overlooked or fail to respond to early outreach work. Keep an open door and periodically re-evaluate target audiences.

Attract Diversity

- ✓ **Public involvement should attract the full spectrum of demographics in the byway community and must include minority interests.** A good public involvement strategy does not exclude, nor appear to exclude, any individual or interest group. Its adequacy is measured not only by the number of active supporters, but also by its ability to involve people who may not support the scenic byway. Diverse groups, including youth, civic and recreational clubs, timber and development companies, and town governments, support the Mountains to Sound Greenway with volunteer hours, cooperation, funding, and more.

Outreach & Participation Techniques

The following techniques are drawn from the scenic byway work covered by this series. They offer a menu of public involvement opportunities to encourage participation.

Additional Resources

The Loess Hills Scenic Byway: Case Study Documentation, Mimi Askew, USDA-SCS, 1993.

Mountains to Sound: The Creation of a Greenway across the Cascades, Daniel Chasen, Sasquatch Books, Seattle, 1993.

Byway Beginnings: Understanding, Inventorying, and Evaluating a Byway's Intrinsic Qualities, Evelyn Swimmer, Rick Taintor, John Whiteman, National Park Service & USDOT-FHWA, 1998.

Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning, USDOT-FHWA, 1995.

Riverwork Book, National Park Service: Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program, Philadelphia, 1988.

Contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse for these and other resources (see below).

- Form steering, technical, or citizen advisory committees
- Work regularly with the media
- Establish a Visual Identity: logo, stationery, signs
- Place Public Service Announcements
- Organize maintenance and improvement projects
- Write articles and letters to the editor
- Interview elders and experts on history, traditions, industry, and geology
- Publish a newsletter
- Train volunteers for resource inventories, image surveys, and preference testing
- Develop slide shows, videos, and/or a speakers bureau
- Offer educational and school programs
- Design and update an Internet web page
- Produce interpretive materials: books, tour manuals, illustrated maps, and roadside displays
- Distribute posters, brochures, and flyers
- Use volunteer clubs for projects
- Hold design competition for logos or t-shirts
- Host celebrations: ribbon-cuttings, a party
- Develop educational curriculum
- Organize events: Adopt-a-Mile clean-up, tree planting

About this Series

The National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration and the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service collaborated to research, write, and produce **Lessons from the Road**. The series was written in 1998.

For information on resources mentioned in this series, contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse: 1-800-4-BYWAYS (1-800-429-9297), press 2, or visit our website at www.byways.org.

The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program works beyond national

park boundaries to bring conservation assistance to communities, serving as a catalyst for tangible results.

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