



VISTAS

news from the
national scenic byways program
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ISTEA REAUTHORIZATION HEADS TO CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

Reauthorization of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) moved significantly closer to becoming law in April. House and Senate lawmakers are now readying to meet to address major differences in their two recently approved versions.

The conference is expected to begin officially after the spring recess with preliminary talks between conferees expected earlier in mid-April. The current short term extension of ISTEA expires May 1.

After months of wrangling, the House passed its own bill, HR2400, on April 1 a \$218.3 billion package by a 337-80 vote. HR2400 provides a 40 percent increase in overall funding and exceeds the Senate bill in funding by \$4 billion. Its scenic byways funding amounts to \$30 million for each of the six fiscal years ending 2003 for a total of \$180 million.

The Senate's six-year ISTEA version, S1173, was approved three weeks earlier by 96-4. Of its \$214.3 billion in funding -- nearly \$60 billion more for transportation programs than its predecessor -- \$116 million is earmarked for the scenic byways over six years.

S1173 would provide \$17 million for the scenic byways in fiscal year 1998, another \$17 million in 1999, \$19 million in 2000 and 2001, \$21 million in 2002 and \$23 million in 2003. By contrast, NEXTEA, the administration's bill, would have provided \$90 million over the six-year period. As

does the House bill, the Senate bill expands the categories of project eligible for scenic byways funding to include development and implementation of scenic byways marketing programs.

In its discussion paper accompanying the bill, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works said the program has successfully combined economic development with the conservation of important scenic, historic, natural and other resources. The FHWA should implement aggressive technical assistance and outreach efforts (to) educate citizens and communities about this program and aid them in accomplishing their conservation and economic development goals along scenic byways."

LIFE MAGAZINE TOASTS BYWAYS

Public awareness of the National Scenic Byways Program took a leap forward this month when *LIFE* magazine published a scenic byways feature complete with four-page pullout poster.

The poster is a photomosaic in blues, greens and pinks created by Rob Silvers. The Blue Ridge Parkway's Lynn Cove Viaduct framed by a clump of mountain laurel becomes on closer look a cluster of 2000 to 2500 tiny scenic byways photographs, many supplied by state scenic byways coordinators and sponsors of All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways. Contributors may need a magnifying glass to discover whether their individual offering was used in the poster.

The facing page showcases the first 20 roads of the national program, with a pointer to the byways website. Poster

reprints are expected to be distributed in press packets, to FHWA field offices and state scenic byways coordinators, and through state tourism offices and national program marketing contacts.

CAMINOS PINTORESCOS

Foreign language translations of the popular gray, green and blue DOT Scenic Byways brochure are now available through the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse. The translations are intended to be offered as companion pieces to the English language original. They come in French, German, Japanese and Spanish with a narrower width which makes it easy to tuck them into the glossy DOT brochure.

COMMUNITY GUIDE RELEASED

A spiral-bound final version of the *Community Guide to Planning and Managing a Scenic Byway* has just been published by the Federal Highway Administration and can be obtained through the Clearinghouse. The guide, which was written as a friendly how-to, combines two earlier draft reports: *Community Guide to Corridor Management Planning and Preparing Corridor Management Plans: A Scenic Byways Guidebook*.

US SCENIC BYWAYS GIVEN ONCE-OVER IN EUROPE

More than 700 overseas tour operators and travel agents were introduced to the National Scenic Byways Program at the Visit USA Seminar in Zurich, Switzerland during January. It was the first international marketing effort for the program.

Purpose of the annual Visit USA show

is to unveil new products from the United States for European travel markets. American scenic byways were showcased in 16 separate workshops during two days. The workshops focused on various scenic byway systems and included a video and slide presentation highlighting the first 20 National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads.

The National Scenic Byways website was recommended as an initial trip or tour planning tool for agents and operators.

The National Scenic Byways display was on show in an exhibit hall where registrants could stop in after the workshops for discussions with staff and to pick up information packets containing the DOT brochure and translations and other information. Its location next to the KOA campgrounds exhibit allowed the two displays to compliment each other. As a featured destination, only the state of Georgia enjoyed the same prominence as scenic byways among all the U.S. exhibits.

Swiss tourists prefer to travel individually rather than in groups, according to staff. Because an emerging European travel trend is a "fly and drive" option to see "the real America," scenic byways is considered an ideal product for that market.

Agents were most interested in one- and multi-day itineraries containing a wide range of information -- travel directions and details about stops and stop-overs.

AAA AND NSB PROGRAMS SHOWCASED IN CALIFORNIA

All the differences and similarities between the AAA's scenic byways program and FHWA's national program were explained to some 75 AAA auto travel managers from AAA

clubs around the country at three workshops in Newport Beach, CA in February.

Michael G. Mouser, AAA manager of data services, and Sharon Hurt Davidson, marketing manager for the National Scenic Byways Program, conducted a joint presentation, outlining the FHWA-AAA partnership in the Clearinghouse and explaining details of both programs to interested audiences. Asked whether they felt comfortable giving information about national scenic byways to AAA members even though some byways might not be part of the AAA program, club representatives' response was nearly unanimous. A designation by one or another organization means little to AAA members just wanting to be directed onto scenic routes, they said.

Participants were enthusiastic about the two programs and urged information about both to be circulated so more AAA members could be routed along the byways. A mailing of the DOT brochure describing the first 20 designations is being organized for all AAA clubs and service centers.

SCENIC BYWAYS WEBSITE SEEKS CONTRIBUTORS, SLIDES

LIFE magazine readers who liked what they saw in the scenic byways poster and feature and want more may be headed for the National Scenic Byways Program website -- all 15 million of them. The website address was the only scenic byways contact *LIFE* gave.

To be ready, National Scenic Byways On Line is asking state scenic byways coordinators to make sure they have registered as contributors and their state and byway information on-line is all spruced up and current.

Already the website is receiving 5,000-7,000 visits a week -- a rate which has begun growing at 25 percent per week

since the *LIFE* article. The best, most electrifying presentations possible need to be on-line for potential customers. Contributors also must make sure that their part of the website contains all the important links to their own home pages and other related sites.

Contributors are being requested to forward slides or photographs of their scenic byways to the Clearinghouse to be included in the on-line slide show.

The website has also put out the call for consultants with expertise in corridor management planning, environmental concerns, interpretation, design and other aspects of scenic byways to register as on site information contributors available to answer questions and supply specialized information. Among other benefits, resident experts enjoy high visibility when requests for proposals are circulated. Details about becoming an information contributor are available at the Contributor's Corner.

FHWA MARKETING SCHEDULE

April 21-23 - FHWA Scenic Byways Nomination Review Panel meeting, Washington, DC

May 2-6 - Scenic Byways Program Marketing Committee, Creole Nature Trail, Lake Charles, LA

May 3-10 - National Tourism Week

May 4 - Press Conference on National Program, Lake Charles, LA

May 11-15 - Nat. Transportation Week.

Vistas* originates at the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse

**1440 New York Ave., Ste. 202,
Washington DC 20005
(800) 4BYWAYS**

<http://www.byways.org>

Editor - Céi Richardson

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