

Lessons from the Road



Case #12: Working With a Statewide Byways

From high plains to majestic mountains, Colorado is gifted with magnificent beauty. It also boasts a rich cultural history: the Anasazi civilization dates back thousands of years; the Spanish explored the State's southern reaches in the 1500s and left an indelible stamp; and then, in the 19th Century, explorers, trappers, and miners made the area their home. Today, Colorado's Scenic and Historic Byways Program celebrates the State's heritage through its extensive network of byways. Local groups

administer and manage the byways.



Recreational features such as Lake Irwin should be included in Corridor Management Plans.

The Scenic and Historic Byways Commission, created by executive order in 1989, coordinates this diverse byway system for the State of Colorado. This case study summarizes the Commission's approach to creating and maintaining a successful byway system for the State.

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 14 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.

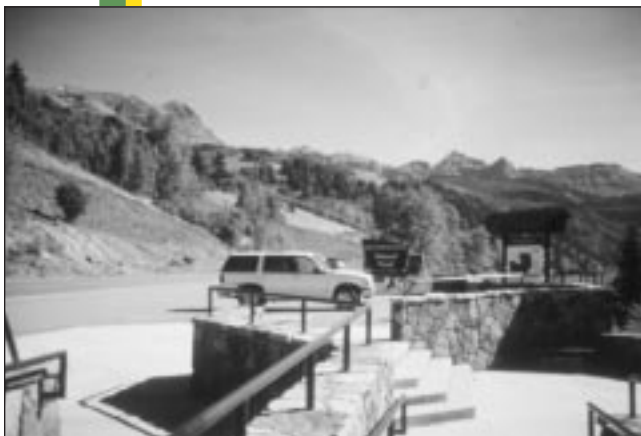
The Series

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
9. Marketing
10. Public Involvement
11. Action Plans
12. **State Program Management**

Colorado: A Model State Scenic Byway Program



A cooperative sign marks the entrance to a four-wheel drive loop off the byway.



The State, Federal agencies and local residents collaborate on many features in the byway system.



Byway improvements keep the route appealing to visitors.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission requires local communities to manage each State byway. Community members—whether individuals, government agencies, citizen groups, business interests, or others—must develop a plan to manage their byway. Doing so ensures commitment to the plan and guarantees that related projects will be consistent with local values.

The Byways Commission provides technical assistance to all of its byways, creating a statewide framework for the byways, setting standards for management plans, and funneling funding from government grants and private partners. The Colorado Department of Transportation, Office of Environmental Services, provides a staff member to manage the program with funding assistance from the ISTEA Enhancement Program (ISTEA is the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991). This staff member is a trained historian skilled in community organization, funding procurement, and management.

The State Byways Commission prepared a resource manual to guide the work of its designated byways as each developed a byway plan. The manual is written in layperson terms and each of the 12 chapters covers a key step in developing a byway organization.

Work with Key Partners

The key to the Byways Commission's success has been finding the right partners to develop a plan and then oversee management of each byway. The Commission encourages local byway organizations to involve representatives from the tourism industry, local governments, and local residents. Depending upon the byway and the land it crosses, the Commission also works with the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service.

The Commission first surveyed the byway organizations that had originally nominated routes for inclusion in the statewide program. Finding that many of the original groups had disbanded, and that others were not well organized or did not feel capable of completing management plans, the Commission hired consultants to help the groups expand their memberships and complete important tasks, such as preparing maps to help local groups visualize and discuss their areas; organizing and facilitating meetings; recording and distributing meeting minutes; preparing vision statements to help groups express their goals and objectives; and preparing agreements between government agencies.

Getting Started

To help the revitalized organizations start writing their management plans, the Commission held four one-day work sessions that covered public involvement strategies, interpretive planning, resource protection, and marketing. A month later, another workshop provided facilitators and resource experts to work on specific projects and issues. A third session focused on funding. The Commission invested heavily in this process because the management plan is the backbone of any designated byway, providing a blueprint for development and planning along the route.

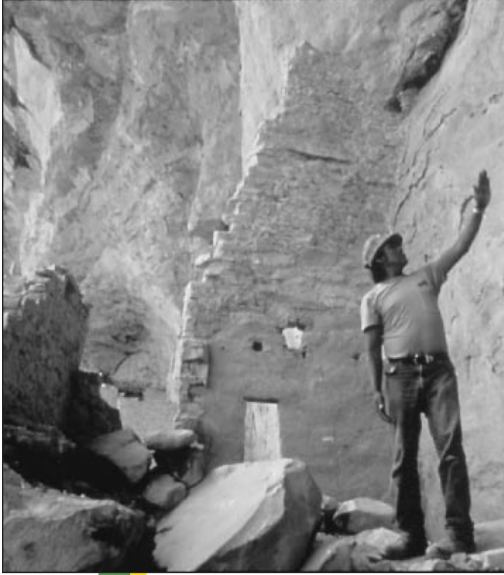
The Commission deliberately left this work up to the local groups, allowing them to set their own schedules, and to work without imposed mandates or requirements. This freedom and time fostered growing interest in the program among the local communities, helping to revitalize the organizations and instill in their members a fresh commitment to their vision and their byway's success.

The Commission
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Jump at Opportunities to Implement Your Byway Plan

Seeing Results

Local groups often put their plans to work before they are off the drawing board, eagerly making enhancements to their routes. By mid-1997, 75 projects had been completed, providing travelers along some of the State's designated routes with a variety of wayside exhibits, audiotapes, informational kiosks, brochures, or rest stops with facilities and gracious people to answer questions. The local groups allocated half of their nearly \$7 million to facility



Protecting archaeological features and respecting native cultures are important issues.

development, interpretation, and planning. Most of the remaining funds paid for road improvements and marketing. Some groups spent small amounts to acquire land to protect important local resources. The

Commission's ability to secure funding for early action has been extremely important to the local byways, and to the success of the statewide byways network.

Being Organized Pays Off

Just as the Byways Commission was preparing to seek funding to develop management plans and provide amenities for byway visitors, the US Congress passed ISTEA. Suddenly funds were available through the National Scenic Byways program. Today, the Commission works to attract additional partners who are willing to contribute to the development of byway programming. Partners have already provided more than \$1 million in projects and local matches.

Coping with Difficulties

While the reasons vary, it is not uncommon for byway organizations to face anything from dissenting opinion to outright opposition due to the differing visions and goals individuals may have for a corridor and local communities. The Byways Commission and local groups used third-party facilitators to help them progress through these difficult situations. Another useful tool is a "Memorandum of Agreement" signed by key stakeholders stating their commitment to participate in a public planning process. While a smaller task force may develop the actual plan, those who sign the Memorandum have the opportunity to review the final document.

The planning process should also include Scenic and Historic Byway public hearings. For the Gold Belt Tour Byway near Colorado Springs, copies of the draft plan were available at the hearings with a survey so residents could easily respond and offer comments. Gathering citizen input helps people feel part of the process.

Lessons Learned

✓ Support the Community as it Develops its Management Plan

Provide an outline of a management plan and what it should address, but stress that the outline is not an edict. Encourage the



Citizen involvement builds support for byway projects, and in Colorado, that support has turned into improvements along the State byway system.

community to revise it to fit its needs. Give examples of what has worked well elsewhere and why it has worked. Be willing to be a sounding board and act as an information clearinghouse, especially among affected State and Federal agencies. Provide funding sources and coordination. Help the byway group to be sustainable.

✓ Understanding the Community

Do not move too fast. Meet with community leaders individually to allow them to express their concerns. Go to town council and planning commission meetings. Follow the local newspaper(s). Realize that some folks may not think a grassroots process is genuine and may suspect a hidden agenda behind the byway project. Never make unfounded assumptions. If you don't know if you understand something, ask again. Listen, listen, and listen!

✓ Develop True Citizen Participation

A true grassroots byway approach must attempt to bring every possible interested party to the table. Shared incentives are powerful tools for getting diverse groups

together. Whether an issue is Federal, State, or local, each agency or individual must believe the process is fair and inclusive to gain the necessary sense of ownership that makes a successful project. The byway management plan is the most effective tool for assuring that diverse and even conflicting interests are dealt with properly.

Be patient and demonstrate commitment. It may take time to gain credibility with a grassroots group. Support your words with actions that make a difference in the community. Remember to use local knowledge and resources. Diverse opinions will be an ongoing management issue, so encourage an expression of all opinions and a means of resolving conflicts. Never assume that any byway is designated specifically as an economic development or tourism effort. The protection of intrinsic qualities and life styles, coupled with visitor education, may be the focus of the group's byway planning effort.



A Byway Checklist

Colorado's goal is for all its byways to complete management plans for their corridors. Local groups have helped create the following list of management considerations:

- Accommodations
- Budget and Funding Program
- Evaluation
- Financial Projections
- Fund Leveraging
- Funding and Financing (types and sources of funding and revenue)
- General Marketing Strategy and Techniques
- Infrastructure Protection, Enhancement, and Development
- Interpretive Plan
- Maintenance of Resource Quality
- Market Identification
- Marketing and Promotion
- Medical, Police, and Fire
- Monitoring and Protection
- On-site Byway Support Facilities
- Phasing and Time Lines
- Promotion Program
- Recreation Attractions
- Resource Protection, Enhancement, and Development
- Restaurants
- Transportation and Traffic
- Visitor Services

To complete the plan, the Commission provides technical assistance and troubleshooting. Work sessions focus on elements of the plan or on issues such as understanding the balance between development and resource protection. In some cases, the Commission and the local group work closely with community leaders to learn about past successes and failures, and to understand the causes.

Additional Resources

Scenic Byways Plan, State of Colorado, Department of Transportation, 4201 East Arkansas Avenue, Room 284, Denver, Colorado 80222.

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

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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