

Prospects for a Lincoln Heritage Trail America's Byway

Results from Assessment and Workshop

December 13-14th, 2006

Prepared for:

Central Kentucky Rural Heritage Development Initiative
Kentucky Heritage Council
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Preservation Kentucky

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Summary:

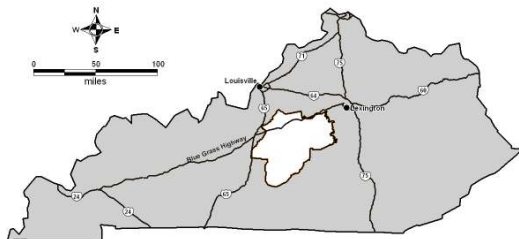
This memo reviews the National Scenic Byways program and assesses the benefits and likelihood for the Lincoln Heritage Trail in Kentucky to attain National Scenic Byway designation. The author concludes that byway designation is very feasible and that it can assist with a number of core objectives pursued by the Rural Heritage Development Initiative. Finally, this document offers step-by-step recommendations on how to obtain byway grant funding within the next six months and how to attain national designation in the next nomination round.

Introduction

This memo presents basic information on the *America's Byways* program (aka: National Scenic Byways Program) and summarizes the discussions and ideas that emerged from a two-day byway assessment of an eight county area in Central Kentucky (See Figure A). In addition, the document lays out a series of next steps for the area to pursue America's Byway designation and to obtain National Scenic Byways funding.

The area is currently working with the National Trust for Historic Preservation on a three-year Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHDI) funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The focus of that effort is working to strengthen the area's heritage economy so that local resources are protected in an economically sustainable manner. A key part of the initiative is on how to protect and enhance the heritage resources of the region (i.e., landscape, historic structures and sites, downtowns, heritage tourism destinations, farming and other aspects of the area's traditional character.)

Figure A – Eight-County Central Kentucky Study Area



Local residents, businesspeople, elected officials, landowners, heritage planners and tourism professionals are considering if pursuing America's Byways designation is a strategy that makes sense for the area.

To assist that decision, RHDI hired Mr. John Whiteman of Whiteman Consulting LTD to visit the area and give a presentation on the byways program and his thoughts on whether and how the area might pursue

national byway designation. Mr. Whiteman has extensive experience with byways in Kentucky and across the nation, and his assistance allowed local decision-makers to quickly assess the benefits, costs and prospects for pursuing byway designation.

Byways Basics

A byway is a road that takes the traveler to an authentic American experience. Byways are used by local organizations to accomplish a variety of objectives. These objectives include the following:

- Protecting important natural, historic and cultural resources;
- Strengthening local economies through tourism;
- Better interpreting the cultural and historic stories of their areas; and
- Strengthening downtowns.

In 1991, Congress established the National Scenic Byways Program. The program's intent is to support the protection of important resources in rural areas that are associated with American historical, cultural and natural resources and to support local rural economies by strengthening tourism. A marketing and branding program recently coined the term *America's Byways*. That term is used to describe the travel product offered by the program. The federal and state designation, management and grant funding aspect of this program is still referred to as the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP).

Today, there are 126 roads included in the NSBP. They range from famous roads like the Blue Ridge Parkway and Coastal Route One in California to virtually unknown gems in out-of-the-way locations.

There are two types of national byways: All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways. The former must be *destinations unto themselves* and have a high level of tourism infrastructure in place. The latter category covers the vast majority of roads in the national program. Their length, character and qualities include a wide range of experiences and stories.

Protect and promote is one of the underlying concepts of the NSBP. Obviously,

promotion has no place in efforts to protect and preserve extremely sensitive resources. In cases, however, where a rural area has resources that lend themselves to enjoyment by visitors and those resources can be enhanced and protected through the economic impact of visitation, then *protect and promote* can be a powerful concept for community development.

The material that immediately follows in Section One focuses on the prospects of achieving byway designation for this region. For a more in-depth discussion of the national byway's program, please refer to Section Two: Appendix of this memo.

Section 1: Attaining National Byway Designation for the Lincoln Heritage Trail

Based on a one-day review of the region and previous familiarity with Central Kentucky, it is the author's opinion that the region has a very high probability of attaining national byway status.

This opinion is based on the following observations and facts:

1. There is arguably no other American from the 19th century who so famously and enduringly represents American's values of equality, access to achievement, pioneer wit, compassion, and commitment to freedom and to the concept of a *united* states, and adhering to personal faith during difficult times. It goes without saying that the story of his rise from humble beginnings to the presidency combined with his vision and leadership during the Civil War has placed him in the company of America's most revered leaders. This region's role in his life is clear, and therefore clearly of national significance. The oncoming bicentennial of his birth is a perfect time to create a byway in his honor.
2. To become a byway, the region must demonstrate to a national evaluation committee that the highway's resources are of regional and/or national significance. The demonstration of national significance for this region is largely accomplished by the presence of the National Park Service and its management of Abraham Lincoln's birthplace and boyhood home sites. In other words, the National Park Service only takes on management of sites that are deemed to be of national or high regional significance.
3. Aside from National Park Service designation of the two above sites, Lincoln's early life and ongoing connections with the Commonwealth of Kentucky throughout his life are also evident in this region through sites, structures and stories connected to his family, acquaintances and important events in his life. Examples include the Mordecai Lincoln House, the Washington County Court House, Old Fort Harrod State Park and the Lincoln Homestead State Park.
4. There are three major Civil War stories extending from this region which have regional or national significance. Obviously, these stories also connect to the broader Lincoln theme.
 - a. The first is the battle of Perryville, the most significant Civil War battle in Kentucky and one which was critical to victory of Union forces within Kentucky.
 - b. The second Civil War story is the history associated with the Battle of Tebbs Bend and the Confederate raider John Hunt Morgan. The region contains a significant number of sites related to this person and these events. A Tebbs Bend interpretive tour is already in place. Significant research has also been performed on John Hunt Morgan.
 - c. Finally, Camp Nelson is a national historic site, and is an

important part of the story of freed African-American slaves and their role as soldiers for the Union during the Civil War.

5. The landscape of Central Kentucky is a beautiful farming region. It is largely undisturbed by development that might deter from that beauty. Driving through this area is very relaxing and rewarding. The scenic beauty of the region will assist it in gaining national byway designation.
6. The region is home to four distilleries of national fame. The distilleries all produce Kentucky bourbon. In a manner similar to Napa and Sonoma counties, Kentucky is famous for its bourbon, and this region is the heart of the distillery history. (NB: The author understands that emphasizing this part of the region's heritage might be politically unpopular to some residents, but the story is mentioned here since it one of national significance. Decisions on whether to emphasize this aspect of regional character will be made by local leaders in the months ahead.)
7. The region has a heritage of active Amish populations and is home to one of the premier Shaker villages in the United States at Pleasant Hill. In addition, the area actively supports a healthy agricultural economy. These qualities are evidence of a continuation of the agrarian heritage that Lincoln and his forebears helped to establish.
8. The region has a number of very nice, very traveler-welcoming downtowns. There is a tourism infrastructure in place in the region that means that the area is ready to handle more visitors. Starting from scratch on this front is difficult. Already having an established tourism sector – although still emerging – is an important asset for the region's byway prospects.
9. The region contains a number of routes that are already designated as state scenic byways. In addition, it may be that 30 year-old legislation by the Commonwealth of Kentucky

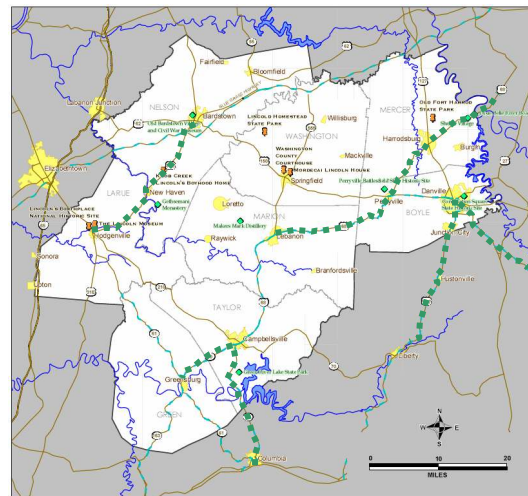
establishing the Lincoln Heritage Trail in conjunction with Indiana and Illinois may have also given certain routes special status that will help with attaining designation.

The region has resources that are clearly both regionally and nationally significant. The combination of beautiful driving experiences, important historic resources and the upcoming Abraham Lincoln bicentennial birth celebrations will provide a strong impetus for the national scenic byway program to support your application.

Defining the Route

Figure B indicates the location of current Kentucky state scenic byways within the region.

Figure B – Existing Kentucky State Scenic Byways in the Region



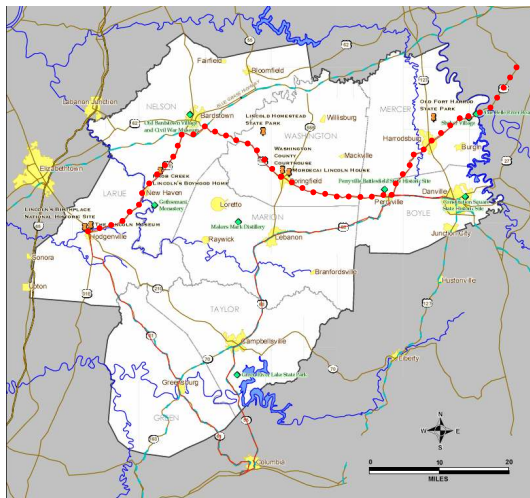
The routes are as follows:

- US31E from Hodgenville to Bardstown
- US68 from Lebanon to Perryville to Harrodsburg and onto Lexington
- US55 from Columbia (out of region) to Campbellsville
- KY70 from Greensburg to Campbellsville
- US127 south from Danville and through Liberty

This network of existing state byways provides a good framework for building the national byway.

While more research will be needed to confirm legislative details, it is known that in the 1960's or 70's the Commonwealth of Kentucky worked with Indiana and Illinois to establish a tri-state Lincoln Heritage Trail. Markers – many of which have faded with time – were erected. Based on brochures published for the original project, the route designated within this region follows that shown in Figure C.

Figure C- Regional Route of the State-Designated Lincoln Heritage Trail (circa 1960's)



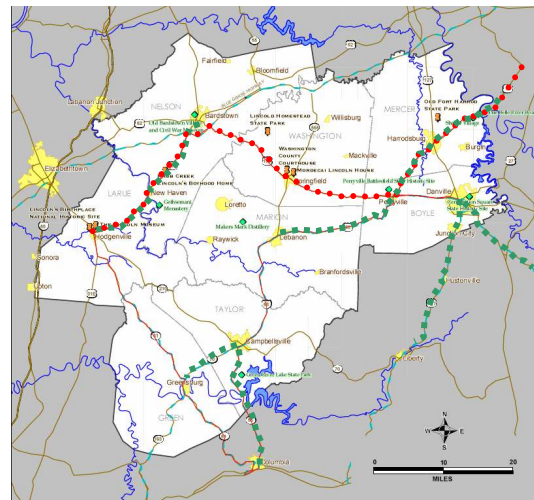
Together, these two types of designations create the routing shown in Figure D.

It should be noted that the Kentucky State Byway Program is in the process of revising its byway designation regulations. In the past, in order for a state road to achieve byway status, that road could not have major road modifications planned, as measured by the presence of that project on the state's six year State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). Of the routings shown in Figure C from the Lincoln Heritage Trail Project, only the segment of US150 from Bardstown to Springfield is not already an official state scenic byway. The only

US150 project shown on the STIP is the bypass around Springfield, which has been completed. (See <http://transportation.ky.gov/progmgmt/06syp.html> for STIP.) Thus, even if the historic Lincoln Heritage Trail is somehow deemed to not be an official historic state scenic byway, the road will be eligible for quick confirmation as a byway due to the absence of planned highway modifications.

Together, the historic Lincoln Heritage Trail and the more recent state scenic byways would create the routing shown in Figure D.

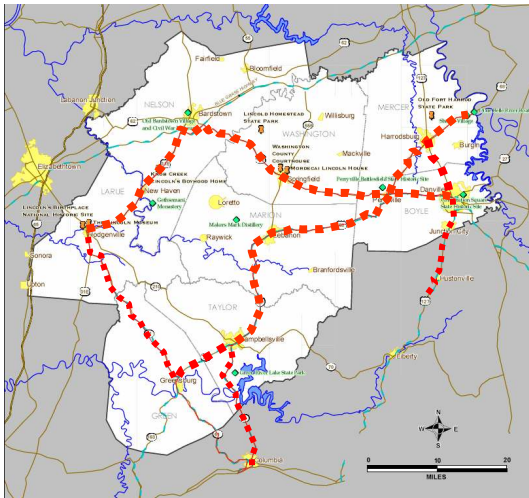
Figure D – State Byways and Lincoln Heritage Trail Combined



With the designated routes as shown, one can see a routing that travels from Hodgenville to Pleasant Hill. A spur clearly runs down to Lebanon. New designations – which could be attained in the future– could add the segments from Lebanon to Campbellsville on US68 and from Perryville to Danville on US150. Designation of KY61 from Greensburg to Hodgenville would create an appealing circular route that would take travelers through the majority of the region.

Figure E shows what might be the eventual full routing for this byway.

Figure E- Potential Byway and Spurs for the Lincoln Heritage Trail



preservation partners throughout the region.

How might a byway program mesh with and support these objectives?

- **Farmland, rural character and farming preservation:** The key to successful farmland preservation lies in successful farm preservation. The core of a rural place's character lies in its farming landscape and farming economy. True farm preservation lies with the economic success of the farmers. A byway program for this region should have a central focus of helping to support the farming economy by exploring several potential actions:

- **Assertively promote agri-tourism:** The drive-around nature of byways is perfect for promoting local agriculture. The Ohio Byways Program has had good success with this effort in the Amish country of southern Ohio. This is a common objective for many byways in other parts of the country.

The key to success will be using the regional partnerships associated with RHDl to support create structures to assist with liability insurance, how-to trainings on profitable but compatible operations like B&Bs, farm stands, alternative lodging opportunities in natural locations such as yurts and log cabins and good marketing to make people visit the region during times other than harvest season.

- **Use the byways program and RHDl to explore low impact ways for farmers to obtain short-term returns on their land:** Do local communities make it

Advancing Central Kentucky RHDl Objectives

This region is considering byway designation as a tool to help pursue its broader objectives. Those objectives focus on protecting and managing the heritage resources of the region in a way that will both protect the unique character of the area and allow the local economy to grow in a manner that values and preserves local heritage.

The key issues identified for RHDl focus are the following:

- Rural farmland preservation; rural character preservation; farming preservation;
- Identification of new uses for historic farm structures and new markets for local products;
- Preservation education
- Business and entrepreneurship development;
- Regional image development and branding;
- Cultural heritage tourism development and marketing; and
- Development of additional

easy for farmers to subdivide off small lots in areas that are not productive for their farms?

Do local communities allow small clustered subdivisions that would let a farmer group several buildings together in locations that are separated from farmed areas but still provide a good return for the farmer?

Can farmers develop seasonal vacation cabins with lower road standards than conventional subdivisions and thus obtain rental income from travelers?

These and other options should be explored. This type of training can fit well with a byway effort.

- **Educate travelers and residents on the importance of the local agricultural sector:** Byway marketing materials can raise awareness about farming and food production. Building a strong local tourism program around the rural character of a place builds a strong constituency for protecting that character.

Residents, businesspeople and elected officials begin to see that their heritage economy is an important part of sustained economic health.

- **Reuse of historic structures:** Byway funds can help to purchase and protect key structures. But, there are limits to how many historic structures can be owned and maintained by the public sector. A strong heritage economy can encourage existing and new

residents to creatively find uses for historic structures. As mentioned above, building a heritage tourism economy makes people realize that historic structures are a key part of that economy.

Byway funding should be used to support educational programs that encourage new business development. Byway marketing might also be used to encourage visitors to consider moving to the area and buying/restoring historic structures. An aspect of local byway marketing could be on advertising local historic structures.

The byway program could fund the preparation of professional marketing materials and website presence for key historic structures in the region that are for sale.

- **Business and entrepreneurship development:** Byways programs all around the country have focused on this objective. It is a natural fit for byway efforts.
- **Image development, branding and heritage tourism:** Some byways make this the core of their local byway efforts. They know that branding their area as an authentic American travel experience will bring the higher spending heritage traveler and have important economic benefits. The America's Byways branding effort is focused on attracting these types of travelers. (For more information link to: <http://www.bywaysonline.org/program/marketing/>)
- **Development of partners:** Byway success is built on partnerships. The nature of the byways program brings together preservationists, tourism officials, local businesspeople, environmental advocates and elected officials. It truly is a 'feel-good', non-threatening

program that can be a good place to construct strong partnerships.

Byway initiatives are designed by the local people that support and organize the byway. In the case of this byway, the focus of the program will be on using the byway to advance rural character protection and preservation.

The author believes that the 'corridor-oriented' nature of a byways program will also provide important focus for RHDl on the areas that are most visible to both travelers and to residents. Much of our own personal perspectives on a place are shaped by what we see and do not see through the windshield of our cars.

Next Steps

As noted above, Central Kentucky has all the ingredients for a successful byways effort: nationally significant resources, state byways designations, a beautiful landscape, appealing downtowns, a strong interpretive story to tell, a good location relative to urban populations, a growing tourism sector and a population interested in protecting its rural character.

The next steps for the Lincoln Heritage Trail are the following:

1. Confirm state scenic byway status.

- Find original act or legislation that created the Lincoln Heritage Trail in the 1960's or 70's. Confirm that there was no sunset provision attached to the legislation or that the act was not rescinded in later years.
- Work with Transportation Cabinet to confirm Lincoln Heritage Trail as Kentucky State Scenic Byway.

2. Attain state byway status for segments that are not so designated.

- For segments of the full byway that are not currently state scenic byways or covered under the Lincoln Heritage Trail, perform the necessary inventory work and submit this to the state scenic byway office for Transportation Cabinet approval. Line up political support beforehand to encourage quick approval. A new application is being created, but information can be obtained at: http://tea21.ky.gov/scenic_byways.asp

(NB: While getting the rest of your potential system under state byway status is

important, it may not be possible to do that prior to submitting your byway grant application in February. That is OK. The byway group can still apply for the funding based on the currently designated portions.)

3. Apply for a national byway grant to support byway corridor planning.
 - Go to <http://www.bywaysonline.org/grants/> and prepare an online application for corridor planning funding for the parts of the potential byway that currently have state status or legislative designation status. Much of the text written for your Enhancements grant and for this document can be used in the application.
 - Apply for a \$120,000 grant of national byway planning funds to prepare the corridor plan. Twenty percent (i.e., \$24,000) must be a local match.
 - Use \$12,000 of funding from the Transportation Enhancement grant for the Lincoln Heritage Trail to match against this grant. Specifically use funds that were provided by the state for the Enhancement grant. (NB: In double checking the federal-to-federal matching allowances, the matching federal funds must be from a land management agency. Thus the general Enhancement funds are ineligible for the match.)
 - Use another \$12,000 in local in-kind support to provide the other part of the 20% match.
 - The grant should be

completed by late January to allow for sufficient time for local review and submittal to the state in mid-February.

4. Using already allocated funding from the Enhancement grant, begin basic planning work necessary to move forward with regional Lincoln Heritage Trail signage and interpretive investments.
 - Solicit a consultant and begin work on the Enhancement grant.
 - Prepare an outline strategy for the entire region.
 - Break the effort into segments and start on one segment. This will allow the program to complete recommendations and construct interpretive and wayfinding signage for the test segment.
 - As byway funding is secured, use those monies to complete the planning process and guide the interpretive and signage work for the remainder of the byway and the region.
5. Raise private funding for the Lincoln Trail concept. Look for ways for local corporations to benefit from the celebration of the bicentennial and from the ongoing marketing of the byway.
 - These funds will provide important money to leverage other federal grants. If acquired in time, they can be used to match against this year's byway grant.
6. Prepare a corridor management plan.
 - Obtain a consultant to prepare the corridor plan in compliance with national scenic byway program requirements.
7. Seek and attain national scenic byway designation in the next nomination round.
 - Be ready with the plan by the end of 2007 so that the region can submit a nomination application for national designation in early 2008.
 - Be sure to assemble a good collection of high-resolution 35mm photography of the region during this process. It will be needed for the nomination.
8. Receive \$25,000 per year in staff funding to support the ongoing work of the byway and RHDl.
 - Assuming designation is granted, apply for \$25,000 in the spring of 2009.
9. Apply for byway funding to support various byway projects along the corridor which also advance the objectives of the RHDl.
 - Apply for other grants in the spring of 2009.

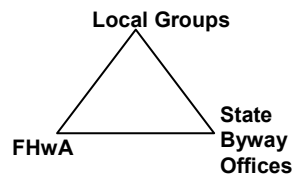
Conclusion

This region and this corridor have great potential for National Scenic Byway status. The pieces are truly all in place for this to be a successful effort. The key to guiding the program will be clear direction from the RHDl program and its various partners in all the communities along the corridor.

Section 2: Appendix

National Byway Structure

The National Scenic Byways Program is built on a system of three critical components: the local byway groups, the Federal Highway Administration and state byway offices.



Local byway groups are perhaps the most important component of this program. Without them, byways would merely be lines on state highway maps. Local byway groups come in a variety of organizational structures. Byway groups are organized and staffed by historic and natural resource preservation groups, chambers of commerce, local and regional tourism agencies, regional planning offices, state departments, local not-for-profits, federal land management agencies (e.g., U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management) and many other entities.

Local byway groups control the types of initiatives pursued on their byways. It is a deliberate and open policy of the NSBP that management of local byways lies in the hands of the local byway groups.

The **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)** oversees the National Scenic Byways Program. FHWA is in charge of distributing \$25 million per year in grant funds to byways across the country and is responsible for the process of designating highways into the program. Policy, designation and final grant decisions are made by Washington, DC FHWA byways office. (<http://www.bywaysonline.org/contacts/fhwa.html>) Regional FHWA offices review designation and grant requests to ensure that they meet

requirements. The Washington office also houses a marketing professional who spends all of her time promoting the America's Byways brand.

The FHWA office works in conjunction with the America's Byway Resource Center in Duluth, Minnesota.

(<http://www.bywaysonline.org/center/>) The Resource Center provides technical information and staff support to byways around the country.

State byway programs and state byways coordinators comprise the other part of the byway structure. Most states have a Scenic Byway Coordinator, who works either within the state department of transportation or the state tourism office. This person is typically in charge of the designation of roads as state scenic byways. State scenic byway designation is a prerequisite for national byway designation. The state scenic byway coordinator also works with local byway groups to coordinate grants, and support initiatives and events.

Therefore, the FHWA provides the overall structure, marketing support and funding. State byways programs work to promote state and national byways and to integrate byway efforts with other transportation and planning projects. Local groups provide the ideas, initiative and manpower to accomplish projects and make byways important in their communities. Together, this program and these people have created one of the most successful, grassroots community development efforts in America.

The Byway Designation Process

National byways are designated via the following steps.

Step #1: Designation as a state scenic byway

All roads that apply for national byway status must first be state scenic byways. This can take one or both of two forms. The first, and

most common, is to be designated as a state scenic byway under a state's existing scenic byway program. The second and less common approach is to receive some type of designation from the state legislature. This might be in the form of a historic act that formally denoted a highway as having important significance.

Roads that do not have state scenic byway status, but wish to achieve designation, can apply for corridor planning funds to help them reach that objective.

Step #2: Preparation of a corridor management plan

In Congress' original scenic byways legislation, a 14 part corridor management plan was specified as a requirement of national designation. Corridor management plans must address the following issues:

Location

1. Corridor Map

Physical Description

2. General Review of Road
3. Highway Design & Maintenance

Intrinsic Qualities

4. Intrinsic Quality Assessment
5. Intrinsic Quality Management Strategy
6. Interpretation Plan

Visitor Needs & Expectations

7. Visitor Experience Plan
8. Development Plan
9. Commerce Plan
10. Sign Plan
11. Outdoor Advertising Control Compliance

Marketing & Promotion

12. Marketing Narrative

Public Involvement & Responsibility

13. Public Participation Plan
14. Responsibility Schedule

Of perhaps highest importance, the corridor plan must demonstrate the presence of and the appropriate management strategies for one or more *intrinsic qualities* along the byway. These intrinsic qualities are the resources that make the byway of regional

and/or national significance. They may fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Natural
- Historic
- Cultural
- Recreational
- Archeological
- Scenic

Therefore, despite the importance of scenery to most driving experiences, it is not a requirement that a road in the national byways program be scenic. Just as much value is placed on roads that have other significant intrinsic qualities.

Step #3: Completion of nomination application

The national byways program accepts nominations for new byways every two to three years. The last nomination round occurred in the fall of 2005 when 45 new roads were welcomed to the program. The next likely nomination round will be during either 2007 or 2008. The nomination process requires the completion of variety of questions and forms, submittal of a corridor management plan, a variety of maps, and submittal of high-resolution photography that illustrates the critical resources of the byway.

More information on the nomination process can be found at:

<http://www.bywaysonline.org/nominations/>

Benefits of Byway Designation

Promotion and branding

National Scenic Byways become part of the overall family of the America's Byway program. The logo for the America's Byway program is shown in the sidebar. There is an ongoing effort to establish the America's Byway as a well-known travel brand. The objective is that all domestic and international travelers will see the byway logo or hear the America's byways name and immediately associate it with an authentic American travel experience.

The national byway effort also actively works to market byways as a travel experience. This effort is coordinated by Patricia McNally at the National Scenic Byways Program office in Washington. Over last five years Ms. McNally has accomplished a variety of objectives. Please link to http://www.bywaysonline.org/program/marketing/building_brand.html to review the marketing plan that the program is following.

The national byways marketing effort is increasingly achieving its objectives. More and more often, one will see the America's byways logo used in a variety of travel marketing information, including those produced by the AAA and by National Geographic.

In the last six years, over 20 different byways travel books have been published.

The national byways program supports a very robust web presence. By going to the site www.byways.org, one will find a wide variety of information on the byways, all formatted in an approach that encourages people to travel. In addition, one can go to www.bywaysonline.org and find information more relevant to byway groups. This includes information on a nomination process, grants and ongoing byway group support.

Staff support

All national scenic byways are guaranteed a five-year grant of \$125,000 at \$25,000 per year. This funding can be used only for staffing purposes. The objective is to help local byway groups support at least a part-time staff person to help move their byway initiatives forward. These monies are obtained by completing a scenic byway grant application during its annual grant round, which occurs in the spring of each year.

Project grants

Each year the national scenic byways program allocates approximately \$25 million across the country to a wide variety of byway programs. The project categories covered under the program are:

- Interpretation
- Corridor planning
- Resource protection
- Training
- Marketing
- Signage
- Facilities investments

The program is a competitive grant process. The federal government provides 80% of the total estimated project cost. The local byway group must provide 20% of the total project cost. While cash matches are always encouraged by the national byways program, and it is very common for local groups to raise their match through a combination of in-kind services and some cash.

To review the extent of the program over the last 15 years, and the types of grants that have been allocated, please link to: <http://www.bywaysonline.org/grants/> At this site, one can review the full range of grants that have been awarded, both by state and by category.

Organization and focus

The establishment of a byway in most rural areas provides a new rallying point and focus for both resource protection and tourism promotion. An unusual aspect of the byways program is the degree to which it is able to gather around the same table so

many individuals in the community representing a wide variety of perspectives. These perspectives and agencies are commonly historic preservation, downtown revitalization, tourism promotion, recreation and trails development and other groups. The byways program is typically a win-win situation for all of those organizations.