



**Mississippi Department of Transportation  
Scenic Byways Program Guidelines**



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## Executive Summary

The National Scenic Byways Program was established by Congress in 1991. The program is an effort to recognize certain roads based on their archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. These qualities are deemed to be intrinsic to the corridor. In order for a roadway to be considered for inclusion in the National program, it must first be designated as a state scenic byway. Subsequently, many states have adopted their own scenic byway programs.

This document encompasses the guidelines for the Mississippi Scenic Byways Program and details the overall program process and requirements for each phase (eligibility, designation, and implementation).

Mississippi has nine state-designated Scenic Byways, one National Scenic Byway, and one All-American Road. The state-designated Scenic Byways are Beach Boulevard Scenic Byway, Brice's Crossroads Battlefield-Chief Tishomingo Scenic Byway, Byways to Space Scenic Byway, Delta Bluffs Scenic Byway, Gateway to History, Grand Gulf-Raymond Scenic Byway, Highway 67 Scenic Byway, Highway 605 Scenic Byway, and Noxubee Hills Route. The National Scenic Byway is the Great River Road, and the All-American Road is the Natchez Trace Parkway.

Please refer to page 28 for a map of the Mississippi Scenic Byways.

# Program Overview

## Program Purpose

The Mississippi Scenic Byways Program (MSBP) is a grassroots effort designed to increase the focus on Mississippi's history and intrinsic resources. The intent of this program is to identify and designate highway, road and street corridors as scenic byways in an attempt to preserve, enhance, and protect the state's intrinsic resources for visitors and residents of the state.

Through community-based consensus building and the development of partnerships, it is hoped that a balance can be established between conservation and land use that heightens the experience of traveling designated byways while improving the community's quality of life. It is also desirable that scenic byways will provide economic opportunities for the communities along their path.

## Mission Statement

The mission statement of the MSBP reflects the Mississippi Legislature's desire to protect and enhance the state's intrinsic resources.

The Mississippi Scenic Byways Program will preserve, protect, and enhance the intrinsic resources of scenic byways across the state. This community-based program will encourage consensus building and partnerships to promote regional economic prosperity and heighten the traveler's overall experience.

## Background

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and was reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

In order for a roadway to be considered for inclusion in the National Scenic Byways Program, it must first be designated as a state scenic byway. States are free to establish their own guidelines for their scenic byways programs. However, state designation does not insure inclusion in the federal program. State scenic byways programs are designed to preserve property, build civic pride, and create an attractive community resource for citizens, visitors, and businesses.

The MSBP was established in July 2002 through the passage of Senate Bill 2098. This legislation provides the authority for the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) to develop and administer a Mississippi Scenic Byways Program. The legislation also established a Scenic Byways Advisory Committee (SBAC) which represents statewide interests and is responsible for making eligibility determinations, approving required Corridor Management Plans (CMP), and making recommendations to the State Legislature for final scenic byway designations.

Any individual, group of individuals, local government, non-profit organization, or MDOT itself can apply for designation of a corridor as a scenic byway. All applicants are required to submit information, represented in Appendix A, to the SBAC for an eligibility determination. If eligible, applicants are then responsible for the development of a CMP, which must be approved by the SBAC. Ideally, a Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) should be formed by the same individual(s), local government or non-profit organization that submits the original application. The SBAC works closely with MDOT to determine the eligibility of submitted corridors and in the review and approval of CMPs for statewide consistency. All approved CMPs are forwarded to the State Legislature for final designation.

## **Intrinsic Resources**

The MSBP is concerned with the preservation, protection, and enhancement of the state's intrinsic resources. Intrinsic resources are features considered significant, exceptional, and distinctive by a community and are recognized by that community as worthy of preservation and management. The intrinsic resources as listed in the National Scenic Byways program and adopted by the MSBP include both manmade and natural features:

- *Cultural Resources* are traditions, values, customs, and arts of social groups. Cultural quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features include, but are not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions.
- *Historic Resources* reflect human actions evident in past events, sites, or structures. Historic quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.
- *Archaeological Resources* embody physical evidence or remains of human life, activities, or cultures. Archaeological quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity. These characteristics must be visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor's archaeological interests, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence, have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.
- *Recreational Resources* highlight activities dependent on natural elements of the landscape. Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape.

The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include, but are not limited to, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.

- *Natural Resources* are natural landscapes showing little or no adverse disruption by humans. Natural quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations and may include geological formations, fossils, landform, water, vegetation, and wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.
- *Scenic Resources* are combinations of natural and manmade features that give the visual landscape remarkable character or significance. Scenic quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape - landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development - contribute to the quality of the corridor's visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.

In addition to these intrinsic resources, the MSBP encourages all applicants to provide information on the resources along the byway that contribute to a cohesive corridor "story". The byway should have an associated theme that is visual and clear to all who would travel the byway.

## **Benefits of Scenic Byway Designation**

A Mississippi Scenic Byway designation can benefit a community in several interrelated ways:

- *Resource Protection*: Intrinsic resources valuable to the state can be identified and a management plan to protect those resources is established. The management plan documents specific activities that will be pursued to protect the identified resources from future changes and growth along the corridor.
- *Community Recognition*: A scenic byway will highlight the different communities along the corridors and their contributions to the designation. This recognition can be a source of pride for the community.
- *Economic Development/Tourism*: If expressed in the vision and goals for the scenic byway, a designation can be marketed to spur tourism and associated economic development opportunities. Strategies such as locating visitor kiosks or scenic vista spots along the corridor can be coupled with opportunities to market information about the corridor and to serve the tourists who visit the byway.

- *Community Visioning*: Many small communities do not necessarily have an opportunity to envision a future scenario of their area. A scenic byway designation process provides an opportunity for the community to decide their future growth scenario and their desires on how to address roadway corridors and land use issues within their own locales.
- *Partnering*: The MSBP is a community-based, voluntary program that brings together individuals, land owners, the public, and private sector to partner for the betterment of the community. Together, these partners can provide many different ideas about the future and work together to implement activities to reach the agreed-upon future for the corridor and the surrounding area.

Designation will not affect the level of maintenance or the agency responsible for maintenance. The ongoing responsibility and concern shall be to ensure the safety and travel service on the roadway.

## **Control of Outdoor Advertising**

Once a road is designated as a scenic byway, then it must comply with all applicable federal and state regulations. The installation of new outdoor advertising billboards or similar devices along designated state or federal scenic byways that are interstate, National Highway System, or federal-aid primary roads is prohibited. Outdoor advertising constitutes signs, or similar devices, that advertise a service or product and are not located on the premises where the service or product is vended. On-premise signs used to advertise or identify the principal activities conducted on the property on which they are located are allowed on all scenic byways. The federal regulation pertaining to designated scenic byways is Federal Statute 23 U.S.C. §131(s). The state regulation pertaining to designated scenic byways is Rule No. 941-7501-09002.

## **Program Process**

The overall process and timeline for designation of a roadway as a Mississippi Scenic Byway is as follows:

- In January of each year, MDOT has a call for byway nominations and sends out a notice to all Mississippi counties and cities along with an application checklist (Appendix A).
- The deadline for application submittals is April 30th of each year.
- In May, MDOT reviews all applications, develops recommendations, and schedules the first SBAC meetings in June.
- In June the SBAC meets, reviews MDOT recommendations and makes eligibility determinations for applications received.
- Applicants are informed of the SBAC recommendations in July. If the byway is deemed eligible, applicants must proceed with developing a Corridor Management Plan (CMP). The CMP, among other requirements, should include the vision for the corridor, outline strategies for attaining the vision, and document the public participation process.



- In order for the byway to be considered for designation at the next Legislative session, the CMP must be completed and presented for approval at the second meeting of the SBAC in November. If the CMP is not completed and approved at the November meeting, it will be reviewed at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the SBAC (the following June)\*.
- If the SBAC approves the CMP in November, then MDOT will complete draft legislation for designation of the byway in December for presentation at the next Legislative session in January of the following year.
- In January of the following year, the legislation is presented to the Legislature for formal designation.

\*If the CMP is approved at the June meeting, the SBAC will wait until the subsequent Legislative session in January of the following year to present the designation legislation.

## Eligibility Phase

The purpose of the eligibility phase is to determine whether a proposed roadway corridor exhibits the required characteristics for designation as a scenic byway. The vision of the scenic byway program as set forth by the Mississippi Legislature includes preservation, protection and enhancement of the state's intrinsic resources. Because of this, the eligibility application must reflect this legislative vision. A clear description of the candidate corridor will allow the SBAC to make an eligibility determination.

Any citizen, group of citizens, or local government can propose a corridor for designation. While almost anyone can participate and serve as the applicant, it is recommended that the local government(s) where the proposed corridor is located participate to ensure consistency with the regional vision and goals. It is also recommended that a Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) be established in the initial stages of the designation process. A CAG provides a focal point for the process. CAG membership includes those individuals and groups that will support the corridor's designation.

The CAG is formed from those individuals who prepared the preliminary application. If a CAG was not formed at the time of application, it is recommended that one be formed once the roadway is determined eligible. The CAG can be a group of interested citizens, business interests, civic groups, local government representatives, Native American representatives, or other advocates who are seeking the roadway's Scenic Byway designation and who will be instrumental in developing the CMP and in implementing the corridor vision. The CAG should provide leadership and support during all phases of scenic byway designation. The CAG will also be instrumental in the implementation phase of the program where funding and promotional tasks are identified for completion.

The role of the CAG is to provide leadership during the scenic byway designation process, from eligibility through implementation. The following is a list of CAG responsibilities:

- Formulate by-laws and a decision-making process.
- Maintain meeting minutes.
- Establish a corridor vision.
- Develop and implement goals, objectives, and strategies for the vision.
- Develop a schedule or work plan for implementation.
- Create and implement a community participation program.
- Develop a training program to ensure on-going public participation.
- Oversee the development of the Corridor Management Plan.
- Investigate and document opportunities and techniques for corridor management protection.
- Identify existing management entities having the authority and ability to implement corridor strategies.
- Search for funding sources, such as grants.
- Manage the implementation phase.

## **Eligibility Application**

The eligibility application package in general will require background information on the corridor, eligibility documentation, and endorsements. Submittal of the eligibility application and any additional required information to the MDOT officially begins the nomination process. The application should be organized according to the elements listed below (see Appendix A). When completing the application all of the following elements must be addressed:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables, Figures
- Background Assessment
- Intrinsic Resource Assessment
- Minimum Criteria
- Vision and Goals
- Corridor description
- CAG description (if formed)
- Community participation program and documentation of public hearing
- Local support/Endorsements
- Location map

## **Background Assessment**

The goal of the MSBP is to designate roadways for the protection and promotion of their resources, yet it must never hinder the overriding purpose of the roadway, which is to ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. Because of this, it is required that the eligibility application include a discussion of the current and future conditions of the roadway. The SBAC requests information on the roadway and right-of-way physical characteristics, traffic volumes, accident locations, and level of service that may need to be considered as part of the eligibility determination. Additionally, the SBAC will need available information on current and future land use and zoning along the corridor. Current and future proposed zoning provides an indication of the local government's vision.

## **Intrinsic Resource Assessment**

The MSBP is founded on a vision of identifying, preserving and protecting corridors. The Intrinsic Resource Assessment is a methodology used to help identify key corridors for consideration. The methodology can be both qualitative (corridor impression) and quantitative (field inventory). When complete, the CAG will have a comprehensive evaluation of all intrinsic resources along the corridor.

## Minimum Criteria Assessment

The minimum criteria assessment is intended to document how the corridor and its intrinsic resources meet the criteria as set forth by the MSBP. These minimum criteria establish the quality level for the MSBP and are the foundation by which all other program elements are based. The minimum criteria all corridors must meet and guidance for addressing each one is discussed below.

1. *The proposed byway must be an existing public roadway.*

A graphic depicting the proposed byway's location and length must be included. MDOT will confirm that the proposed byway is publicly owned.

2. *The proposed byway must be a passable, all-weather road that will safely accommodate 2-wheel-drive motor vehicles.*

Paving is not required, i.e. dirt roads are not automatically eliminated from consideration. However, the roadway will not qualify if it is dependent on a 4-wheel-drive for access. MDOT will confirm that the proposed byway meets current state highway design standards for a 2-wheel-drive vehicle. The application should demonstrate vertical clearances for all overhead structures that cross the roadway.

3. *The proposed byway must obtain endorsements from the local government(s) that has/have jurisdiction(s) along the corridor.*

Support for the proposed byway must be demonstrated through written letters of endorsement from applicable Planning and Development organizations and from those cities and counties that are located along the corridor. Additional support from business and civic groups along the byway will strengthen the demonstration of support and agreement on the significance of the byway as a resource.

4. *The proposed byway must have logical termini. The corridor limits must be defined by recognizable geographic locations or milepost markers.*

To ensure corridor continuity, identifiable byway beginning and ending points must be stated in the preliminary application. A visible element, point of interest, or town should function as each logical termini point. In some cases, byway segmentation may occur due to existing detracting elements such as outdoor advertising, but segmentation should be kept to a minimum.

Applicants are encouraged to identify alternate routes whenever there are segmented sections.

5. *The proposed byway must be in conformance with local, regional, and state land use plans.*

This conformance can be expressed through partnering agreements, proclamations, ordinances or other methods from the local planning and development organizations, local governments, business and civic groups, and interested citizens.

6. *The proposed byway must possess at least one of the six intrinsic qualities cited in “Intrinsic Resources” section.*

The purpose of the scenic byway is to preserve, enhance and maintain a roadway having exceptional natural or manmade resources. The preliminary application must clearly describe consistency with at least one of the aforementioned six intrinsic qualities. The application should include a narrative that supports this consistency and photographs that illustrate the natural and/or manmade resources.

7. *The desired minimum length is ten miles.*

Ideally, the resources present along the byway should define the length, though ten miles is a desired minimum. This minimum length must accommodate a cohesive travel experience that is linked to the intrinsic qualities.

8. *All intrinsic resources are located on or near the corridor and are easily accessible.*

To meet expectations of a scenic byway traveler, all identified intrinsic resources must be visible from, though not necessarily located directly on, the roadway. For example, a likely scenario might be a ‘blueways’ recreational resource for canoeing and kayaking. The resource must be visible and directly accessible from the byway.

9. *New outdoor advertising is not allowed on designated byways.*

New outdoor advertising is not allowed on designated scenic byways pursuant to federal guidelines. However, on-premise signs are allowed. (See Definitions/Acronyms.) During the eligibility phase, the applicable permitting agency is encouraged to refrain from issuing new outdoor advertising permits until an eligibility determination is made by the SBAC.

10. *Segmentation of the corridor should be kept to a minimum.*

Segmentation should only be allowed for corridor continuity if the area is heavily commercialized or industrial, if there are no intrinsic resources along a specific segment, and if no alternate route could accommodate continuity. Segmented sections may be signed as part of the corridor, but those sections are not eligible for federal funds. The goal is to provide an undisturbed and uncluttered view throughout the corridor.

11. *The corridor should have a level of community-based support.*

A show of support by local civic groups, businesses, and citizens is the purpose of this selection factor. Appreciation and recognition of the byway as a resource within the community is necessary for a scenic byway project to be successful. Letters of endorsement, partnering agreements, and proclamations, etc. should be submitted during the eligibility phase. Evidence of community meetings to discuss the proposed scenic byways designation application should also be submitted.

12. *The quality of the corridor 'story' as it relates to its intrinsic resources and the traveler's experience will be a primary consideration.*

The theme of the corridor story must cohesively link the corridor's intrinsic resources. Whether the resources are natural or manmade, they should interest and educate the traveler concerning their origin, value, purpose, and relationship with the corridor.

The following elements are encouraged but not required:

1. *The corridor is route friendly to non-motorized users.*

This ensures that pedestrian, bicycle, and other non-motorized travel on the byway is a safe and friendly experience. It is recommended that the byway provide paths, paved or unpaved, to accommodate non-motorized movement along and across the byway.

2. *The corridor is located in a rural area.*

Mississippi has many beautiful rural roadways. The SBAC, with an eye towards preserving and protecting rural areas, will give due consideration to roads that maintain their pristine condition.

3. *The corridor is a 2-lane road*

The Scenic Byway experience can be a pleasant drive along a roadway to become familiar with natural and/or cultural resources. To enhance this experience, a 2-lane, low-volume roadway is desired for scenic byway designation. Under special circumstances, 4-lane roadways will be considered by the SBAC.

4. *The corridor connects with other Scenic Byways.*

In addition to designating individual scenic byways, the SBAC is also looking towards the future, where a continuous series of scenic byways will be linked throughout the state. Due to the state's significant number of natural and historic resources and the natural beauty of the state itself, Mississippi is poised to be 'The State of Scenic Splendors'. Therefore, the byway sponsors are encouraged to recognize the connectivity opportunities of their proposed byway.

The SBAC will review each application to determine whether the minimum criteria are met and whether the proposed roadway's designation is in conformance with the overall goals of the Scenic Byway program. It has sole purview for eligibility determinations and for ultimate designation recommendations to the State Legislature.

## **Corridor Vision and Initial Goals**

The applicant and/or the CAG should establish a corridor vision statement. The vision is a testament to the community's aspirations for the corridor. The corridor vision should be based on an ideal, yet attainable focus. The vision should be broad and should include future plans. Typically, the target frame of reference should be a projected 20 year planning window.

Once the corridor vision has been established, initial goals and objectives should be developed. These goals should be measurable and address the five key components of the program that are outlined below. Other corridor specific goals can be included but, at a minimum, the following five must be addressed:

- Resource protection, maintenance, preservation, and enhancement
- Transportation planning and safety
- Community support and perception
- Education and corridor story
- Economic development and tourism.

The goals should be structured to clearly accomplish the corridor vision. These goals will be refined while developing the CMP during the designation phase.

## **Eligibility Determination**

Once the application and all required information as listed in for the eligibility application, MDOT and the SBAC will review the documentation for completeness and, if necessary, work with the applicant to resolve outstanding issues. A positive eligibility designation will allow the application to move into the designation phase. The SBAC, at its discretion, may conditionally decline approval, offer corrective comments, and allow a new application to be submitted at a later time. However, the SBAC has the authority to deny an application that may generally meet the specific designation criteria but does not meet the overall intent and vision for Mississippi Scenic Byway designation. The SBAC can deny an application from proceeding to the designation phase for a number of reasons, including:

- Resources along the proposed byway are deemed to be of insignificant value or lacking in integrity.
- There are too many segmented out sections (not continuous enough).

- Documented, credible opposition to the proposed designation is received.
- Proposed byway designation would be inconsistent with future transportation plans and programs.
- Other criteria as may be determined by the SBAC.

## **Appeals Process**

If an application for eligibility is denied by the SBAC, the applicant must file a formal letter of appeal to the MDOT and the SBAC. The applicant must then attend the next regularly scheduled meeting of the SBAC to present its case for reconsideration. The SBAC alone has the authority to reconsider an application. The MDOT staff does not have authority to hear an appeal or to reconsider a determination made by the SBAC.



## Designation Phase

This chapter provides guidance regarding the Designation Phase. In this phase, the Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) will develop the implementation document for the corridor. This Corridor Management Plan (CMP) expands upon information developed during the Eligibility Phase by determining the most effective management plan for existing and future conditions. This phase charts the course for implementation of the CAG’s vision for the corridor.

### Corridor Management Plan

The primary mission for the MSBP is to preserve, enhance, and protect intrinsic resources within the designated corridor. The key to this mission is the CMP. It is expected that the CAG and the MDOT will work closely in the development of a successful CMP. Because MDOT must continue to meet its statutory mission of providing a safe and efficient transportation system, the designation of a roadway as a scenic byway will not occur until MDOT and the SBAC are in agreement with the CMP.

The CAG may wish to review the Community Guide to Planning & Managing a Scenic Byway, published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 1994. It contains guidance regarding the development of a CMP. This FHWA document lists 14 components that must be in any CMP submitted for national designation. While it is not anticipated that every byway designated in Mississippi will eventually receive national designation, the MSBP encourages compliance with these components. This will ensure that any Mississippi Scenic Byway proposed for national designation will be eligible and will minimize any additional work efforts. The 14 components are:

1. A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location of intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the corridor.
2. An assessment of the intrinsic qualities and their “context” (the areas surrounding them).
3. A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of those intrinsic qualities.
4. The agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan, including a list of their specific, individual responsibilities. Also a schedule of how, when, and to what degree those responsibilities are being met.
5. A strategy of how existing development might be enhanced and future development accommodated, to preserve the intrinsic qualities of the byway.
6. A plan for on-going public participation.
7. A general review of the road’s safety record to locate hazards and poor design and to identify possible corrections.
8. A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.
9. A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize unnecessary intrusions on the visitor’s experience of the byway.
10. Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising.

11. A plan to ensure that the number and placement of highway signs will not detract from the byway's scenic character, but will still be sufficient to help tourists find their way.
12. Plans for how the byway will be publicized and marketed.
13. Any proposals for modifying the roadway, including an evaluation of design standards and proposed changes that may affect the byway's intrinsic qualities.
14. A description of the interpretation plan for significant byway resources so visitors can gain a full byway experience.

## **Designation Package and Corridor Management Plan Format**

The Designation package should include general corridor information, as exhibited in Appendix A, along with the CMP elements listed above. Written endorsement from the CAG and evidence of support from the local governments along the corridor should also be included. If there are other impacted municipal planning organizations or an applicable Planning and Development District (P&D) in the area, endorsements should be secured from these organizations as well. Finally, the package needs to document the results of the required public hearing. The CMP format should generally contain the following components:

- Location and Corridor Description
- Corridor Vision
- Goals, Objectives, and Strategies
- Existing conditions identification and evaluation
- Protection techniques
- Community Participation Program
- Action Plan (short-, mid-, long-terms)

### **Location and Corridor Description**

Mapping and location information developed during the eligibility phase should be updated for inclusion in the CMP. The mapping should be supplemented with text documenting all municipalities, jurisdictions, and other management entities with control over any portion of the byway or lands adjacent to it.

### **Corridor Vision**

As part of the eligibility application, a "corridor story" should have been developed to capture the essence of the byway and to place it in context of the local, state, and regional significance. The CMP will identify the intrinsic resources that best support the corridor story and theme. The vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies should ensure that these resources have a continued relationship to the byway story. To begin the visioning process, the CAG must evaluate the primary reason for proposing a particular corridor for designation. The corridor's intrinsic values are the vision drivers. Additionally, the CAG should consider what the corridor would look and feel like in the future. In focusing on the future

value of the corridor, the CAG can develop an ideal yet plausible Scenic Byway Vision -- a vision to grow into or possibly to maintain as the community around the byway evolves.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

The corridor vision is implemented by establishing specific goals, objectives, and strategies. Goals are the long-term ends toward which activities are ultimately directed; objectives are specific intermediate ends that are achievable, that mark progress, and are measurable; strategies are the methods in which activities are conducted to achieve an identified goal. These strategies will be incorporated into the corridor action plan.

## **Existing Conditions Identification and Evaluation**

Much of the existing condition information was developed as part of the eligibility application. This information should be included in the CMP. The information should cover existing and future land uses, roadway features, and intrinsic resource descriptions.

## **Protection Techniques**

One of the major goals of the MSBP is the identification and protection of intrinsic resources along scenic corridors. The CMP should provide examples of some protection techniques. Coordination is required with local and state jurisdictions as well as with adjacent land owners and businesses. Some commonly employed techniques include easements, voluntary donations, purchase of development rights, design guidelines, context sensitive design, and sign ordinances. Prior to implementing any technique the CAG should verify the technique's legality with the proper jurisdiction. In all cases, the MSBP encourages voluntary participation by land owners, citizens, and businesses along the byway.

## **Community Participation Program**

Community involvement should continue in the designation process and in the development of the Corridor Management Plan (CMP). The local government and/or the CAG must hold, at a minimum, a second public hearing during the development of the CMP. A notice of the public hearing along with a description of the highway, road, or street proposed as a scenic byway must be published once each week for at least three (3) consecutive weeks in a newspaper having general circulation in the areas of the byway. A copy of the notice should be sent to the MDOT and the SBAC. The public hearing must be held at a place and time generally convenient for persons affected by the byway. Documentation of the public hearing and any comments received at the meeting must accompany the CMP submittal to the SBAC.

Once a road is designated, the Community Participation Program (CPP) can identify ways for citizens to become involved in implementing the corridor vision. The program provides a mechanism for continued community involvement. Citizen support is critical to successfully pursuing the corridor vision. The CPP should identify the following components:

- Message - the vision for the corridor
- Audience - individuals and property owners along the corridor, as well as the traveling tourist
- Approach - will depend on the target audience
- CPP Team - may be a subgroup of the CAG
- Duration - should be an ongoing process with scheduled milestones

## **Action Plan**

The CMP development process should progress from broad, general statements embodied in the vision and goals to very specific tasks in the objectives and strategies. The Action Plan will lay out steps for accomplishing these tasks and for implementing the byway enhancements. In developing the action plan, tasks should be separated into short-term, mid-term, and long-term activities, all based on opportunities and needs. For example, if funding is available for certain tasks, then they can be designated as short term. If there is a serious or immediate threat to an intrinsic resource along the byway, then protection and preservation-related tasks should be designated short term. The result should be an annualized five-year program of tasks and activities to be accomplished in the Implementation Phase. More detailed information regarding the Action Plan is included in the Implementation chapter.

## **Designation Determination**

After the CAG develops the CMP, it is submitted to the SBAC and the MDOT for final approval. Once the CMP is approved, then the scenic byway designation is recommended to the Legislature. The Legislature, at its regularly scheduled session, will then pass legislation to officially designate a corridor as a Mississippi Scenic Byway. At this stage, it will be the responsibility of the CAG and other interested parties to implement the strategies identified in the CMP.

## Implementation Phase

Once a corridor is designated as a Mississippi Scenic Byway, it will be the responsibility of the CAG to begin the CMP implementation process. The first step in the process will be to physically sign the road as a Mississippi Scenic Byway. The CAG responsibilities will also include assuring that the strategies identified in the CMP are implemented, monitoring the completion and success of these strategies, and updating the CMP over time.

### Signage

The design of the signs shall be white text on a brown background with the MDOT approved Mississippi Scenic Byways logo on the signs at each end of the Byway. Trailblazers with the Mississippi Scenic Byways logo and a directional arrow will be used to direct travelers along the Byway should the Byway be along different routes. No other logos or pictographs will be allowed. The size of letters will be in keeping with the type of facility. The CAG shall coordinate with MDOT regarding the exact locations and erections of the signs. Any permits required to place signs on local roads will be the responsibility of the CAG.

For Scenic Byways on MDOT maintained routes, the MDOT will furnish, install, and maintain all signs. For Scenic Byways on local roads, the MDOT will furnish the signs prior to the initial installation, and the Local Agency will be responsible to install and maintain all signs from that time forward. If a sign is irreparably damaged, stolen, or otherwise show up missing, the Local Agency will be responsible to furnish and install the new sign(s).

If applicable, the MDOT will not install any of the Scenic Byway signs for which it is responsible until the Local Agency (or CAG) has installed all signs for which it is responsible on the Scenic Byway. If the Local Agency (or CAG) fails to maintain and replace any missing signs on the scenic byway for which it is responsible, then the MDOT may opt to remove or cover the signs for that Scenic Byway located on MDOT right of way.

### Work Plan

As part of the CMP, the CAG will develop a general work plan of activities to implement the CMP. The work plan of activities outlined in the designation phase includes specific tasks with relevant schedules (short-, mid-, or long- range). A responsible agency and/or individual should also be identified for each work task and, if known, funding amounts needed for each activity should be provided. Some activities will require several steps, which could include applying for grants. For example, if one of the work plan activities is to build a multi-use path along the scenic byway, then the tasks could be: (1) identifying funding sources and applying for them and (2) once funds are awarded, designing the project, acquiring land and construction. A project such as this requires extensive coordination among many groups, and the central role of the CAG is critical for the successful meeting of schedules.

The work plan activities can be further categorized by type such as the following examples:

- Promotion and Marketing
- Interpretation Enhancements
- Community Participation
- New Guidelines
- Maintenance strategies.

The CAG's responsibility will be to constantly communicate and monitor the success of the activities listed in the CMP and work plan. The CAG must regularly schedule meetings and establish a protocol for written documentation that identifies progress towards meeting the expressed CMP goals.

### **Monitoring and Coordination**

The CAG is not only responsible for developing the work plan of activities, but also for monitoring the progress of these activities and regularly coordinating CMP issues such as:

- Assuring that the goals, objectives, and strategies of the CMP are implemented,
- Coordinating corridor promotion activities,
- Continuing the public participation process to solicit input on potential changes to the CMP, and
- Serving as the repository for information regarding the Scenic Byway.

### **Biennial Reports**

Each Scenic Byway CAG will be required to submit a report every two years to the SBAC through MDOT. The Biennial Report will be submitted to the SBAC through MDOT on the second year anniversary date of the corridor's designation. During these reporting periods the SBAC and MDOT have an opportunity to determine if a scenic byway designation remains pertinent and whether de-designation may be appropriate.

The biennial report will serve several purposes:

- Provide a status report on the intrinsic resource conditions identified in the CMP.
- Report progress towards accomplishing goals.
- Update corridor issues.
- Report financial progress.
- Provide an update on the implementation strategies and work plan developed as part of the CMP.
- Report on any other CAG activities.
- Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the strategies in meeting the corridor vision as stated in the CMP.

The biennial report will be used as a tool to track the accomplishments of the Scenic Byway program goals. Importantly, the biennial report assures the SBAC that the reasons for the corridor designation are still relevant and that progress is being made towards preservation of the corridor as such. This issue becomes extremely important since the SBAC has the authority to recommend de-designation should the intrinsic value of the corridor be compromised in any way.

The biennial report should address the following topics:

1. *Corridor Conditions*: Provide a brief discussion of the intrinsic resources along the corridor and any changes to them since the corridor designation. Provide photographs or other graphical representation of the resources. Discuss any goals that have been met or projects that have been initiated or completed since designation. Describe changes to land and/or roadway development along and adjacent to the byway and discuss how these changes will impact the byway and how these issues can be addressed by the CAG.
2. *Goals, Objectives, and Strategies*: Provide an update on accomplishments. Describe those goals, objectives and strategies which have been effective and why. Describe those goals, objectives, and strategies which may not be achievable and why. Are there proposed activities in the public or private sector that may help the CAG attain the CMP stated goals?
3. *Public Participation*: Discuss public meetings that were held during the reporting period. Identify any critical issues that arose during the public participation process and how they will be addressed. Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the public's participation.
4. *Maintenance*: Discuss any maintenance coordination issues between the MDOT, the CAG, and the local government(s).
5. *Funding*: Briefly describe Byway funding needs. If obtaining funding has been a problem, how will the CAG attempt to resolve the issue? Are certain funding sources being pursued, and what is the anticipated timeline? How will the funding be used? Has information on funding been readily accessible or provided to the CAG?
6. *Marketing*: Describe efforts to publicize the Byway. List new partnerships, promotions, literature, and news articles.
7. *Measuring Success*: Describe any community benefits resulting from the designation. This discussion can include any available facts and documentation about environmental, economic, recreational, and cultural enhancements resulting from the designation. Identify any available economic or financial impacts that may be attributable to the corridor designation. If tourism efforts are related to the Byway, present any relevant information on increased tourism numbers.

8. *Outstanding Issues*: Briefly describe any problems regarding the Byway and any current or future actions to resolve them. Describe any coordination, partnering issues, and any other outstanding issues that the CAG feels is relevant to the Byway's success.

Having completed the above review, provide, if applicable, a revised CMP action plan that will re-direct objectives, strategies, and management techniques to support the corridor vision.

## **Five-Year Corridor Management Plan Update**

The regular biennial reports can give the SBAC and MDOT relevant recent information on the specific steps being taken to implement the CMP and can highlight some problem areas. However, the Five-Year CMP update looks back at the baseline conditions identified in the original CMP and at the vision, goals, and strategies and determines if the overall general direction of the CMP is being achieved. This is an opportunity for the CAG to reassess the Byway in its entirety and to judge what changes, if any, should occur in the CMP beyond those changes previously identified in the Work Plan updates. The Five-Year CMP Update should discuss the same elements found in the biennial reports but in a more expansive manner. The CMP update is also an opportunity to include new strategies for the implementation of goals and to describe any CAG organizational improvements that may be necessary.

## **Criteria for De-Designation**

In reviewing the reports submitted for each Scenic Byway, the SBAC can determine that de-designation is appropriate in the following instances:

- The intrinsic values originally identified along the corridor have been degraded.
- The minimum criteria for designation are no longer applicable.
- The CAG organization deteriorates and/or there is no cohesive group of citizens or a local government to implement the CMP.
- The land uses along the corridor change the overall character of the byway.
- Other reasons as may be deemed appropriate by the SBAC.

## **Promotion**

Through the development of the CMP and the public participation process, the CAG will identify the important intrinsic resources along the Byway. These resources represent valuable assets to the state of Mississippi. Increased recognition and economic benefits can result from a well-managed promotional program that is designed to attract heritage tourism to the area and to stimulate the region's economy. The key, however, is to balance this desire for additional tourism with the preservation goals of the Mississippi Scenic Byways Program. The resources for which the designation was granted must be maintained, since their degradation could trigger the byway's de-designation.



The first step in developing a promotional campaign is to prepare a plan that identifies what features an area has to offer and who will be interested in enjoying or using them. The CAG should focus on those intrinsic resources of primary interest to visitors and determine what facilities and support services may be needed to augment the promotion of these resources. Once the CAG determines what to promote, then the focus should be to determine “whom” to target with any marketing efforts. Some designated corridors will be traveled most heavily by local residents and tourists from nearby areas. Other corridors will be destinations in and of themselves for national and international tourists. These types of tourists would require more support services, such as overnight accommodations.

Once the CAG has established what they want to promote and whom to target, promotional strategies can be developed. These strategies can be used to gain awareness for the designated corridor and its intrinsic resources as well as to encourage visitation. Some of the promotional methods listed below are cited in literature published by the Bureau of Land Management and the Federal Highway Administration:

- Signage and informational kiosks along the route can inform travelers of the activities and services available within the corridor.
- Brochures describing the corridor can be distributed throughout the state at welcome stations, chambers of commerce, hotels and travel agencies. Depending on the target market population, these brochures can also be distributed to national and international tourism agencies.
- Magazine ads or articles can target specific interest groups (such as history buffs or hiking enthusiasts).
- Road maps can be created and marked with the highway’s location and points of interest. These maps could be distributed to tourist areas and travel agents.
- Trade show displays
- Special events highlighting the corridor’s assets can be planned and advertised. For example, bicycle races along a scenic corridor can be promoted with sensitivity to the adjacent community by scheduling the event early in the morning.
- Scenic highway-sponsored contests such as a “name the corridor” campaign can raise awareness of the route.

A promotional plan need not be costly or complex. The plan should outline short- and long-term strategies for promoting the byway, always keeping in mind that any promotion must be consistent with the desires of the adjacent community and must ensure that the resources will not be degraded as a result of visitation. In the short term, promotional activities may be plentiful in order to heighten awareness of the corridor and support the corridor “story”. Once the byway becomes recognized then the long-term promotional efforts should lessen and the focus should be on managing the visitation to the corridor. Some of the promotional activities listed above can be incorporated into funding requests at the state or federal level.

## Definitions/Acronyms

**All-American Roads:** public roads that have been designated by the federal government as satisfying National Scenic Byways criteria and have satisfied the additional criteria and requirements for designation as All-American Roads pursuant to the National Scenic Byways program and its implementing legislation and regulations.

**Archaeological Resources:** resources that embody the physical evidence or remains of known historic or prehistoric human life, activity or culture. For example, significant ruins, artifacts, inscriptions, structural or human remains may be considered archaeological resources. These resources differ from historical resources in that they may have existed before written records were kept.

**Biennial Report:** a report required to be submitted by the CAG to the MDOT and SBAC once every two years regarding progress on the vision and strategies outlined in the Corridor Management Plan for the scenic byway corridor.

**Community Involvement Program:** a documented plan for showing how the communities adjacent to the Byway will be involved in the Byway planning and implementation process.

**Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG):** a group of interested citizens, business interests, civic groups, local government representatives, and other corridor advocates formed to seek Mississippi Scenic Byway designation for a roadway.

**Corridor Management Plan (CMP):** a formal policy and plan that addresses the goals, policies and objectives, management strategies, practices, and action plans by which the designated Scenic Byway corridor will be managed. Each Mississippi Scenic Byway must have a CMP in place as a guide to maintain, preserve, protect, and enhance the intrinsic resources of the corridor and to maintain roadway safety.

**Cultural Resources:** qualities that are evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features include, but are not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, and vernacular architecture. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions. They could also include distinctive characteristics that express or highlight the customs, traditions, and learned behaviors of a specific group of people and/or community. The cultural resources within a corridor must possess a cohesive relationship, and collectively they must tell a story that the traveler can easily understand.

**Designation Phase:** the second phase of the process for the Mississippi Scenic Byways program (after the Eligibility Phase) which ends with an approval/denial recommendation for state designation.

**Eligibility Application:** the package of information submitted to the Mississippi Scenic Byways Advisory Committee for determination of a roadway's eligibility for designation.

**Eligibility Phase:** the first phase of the process where the Scenic Byways Advisory Committee determines whether or not a roadway is eligible for designation.

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):** the federal agency that oversees all highway transportation issues for the nation.

**Five-Year CMP Update:** an update of the Corridor Management Plan required to be submitted to the MDOT and the SBAC every five years. Progress on strategies and identification of new strategies and new programs for implementation are identified in this document.

**Historical Resources:** qualities that encompass legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation of the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**Implementation Phase:** the final process of the program (after completion of the Eligibility and Designation phases) whereby the Corridor Advocacy Group implements the actions and requirements developed in the Corridor Management Plan (CMP).

**Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA):** the federal legislation which initiated the development of the National Scenic Byways Program.

**Intrinsic Resources:** the cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural or scenic qualities, or values along a roadway that are necessary for a road's designation as a Mississippi Scenic Byway. Intrinsic resources are features considered significant, exceptional, and distinctive by a community and are recognized and expressed by that community as worthy of preservation and management.

**Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT):** the agency responsible for administering the Mississippi Scenic Byways Program.

**Mississippi Scenic Byways:** any public roads that are so designated by the Mississippi Legislature pursuant to Code Section 55-13-35. These roadways offer travelers views of cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural, or scenic resources and provide a relaxed recreational and educational experience. The intrinsic resources of the corridor must be considered of significant value by the surrounding communities. The corridor can often include vistas, rest areas and other amenities in harmony with the scenic character of the road.

**Mississippi Scenic Byway Program (MSBP):** the process and criteria that define a system of public roads that are officially designated as Mississippi Scenic Byways. It may also include public roads that are part of the National Scenic Byways Program. It is a voluntary, grass roots program.

**National Scenic Byways:** a scenic highway that is designated by the federal government as satisfying the criteria for a National Scenic Byway pursuant to Section 1047(f) of Title 23 USC and any federal regulations and/or guidelines. These roadways offer drivers and passengers views of cultural, historical, archaeological, recreational, natural or scenic resources and provide a relaxed, recreational, and educational experience.

**Natural Resources:** the ecological environment such as water bodies, wetlands, marshes, forests, geologic features, landforms, topography, vegetation, and wildlife that are indigenous to and/or characteristic of the State in which the scenic byway is located.

**On-Premise Signs:** signs used to advertise or identify the principal activities conducted on the property on which they are located. On-Premise signs are allowed on all scenic byways.

**Outdoor Advertising:** signs that advertise a service or product and are not located on the premises where the service or product is vended. New outdoor advertising is prohibited on all scenic byways. On-Premise signs are not prohibited under the federal scenic byways laws.

**Program Guidelines:** the Mississippi Scenic Byways guidelines created by MDOT to guide an applicant seeking designation for a roadway as a Mississippi Scenic Byway. It details each phase in the program process and offers step-by-step instructions. The guidelines also contain the instructions that an applicant needs to prepare and submit a state Scenic Byway nomination to the Scenic Byways Advisory Committee for its use in eligibility, determinations, and designations.

**Public Road:** a road that is open and available for use by the public and dedicated to the public use, according to law or by prescription.

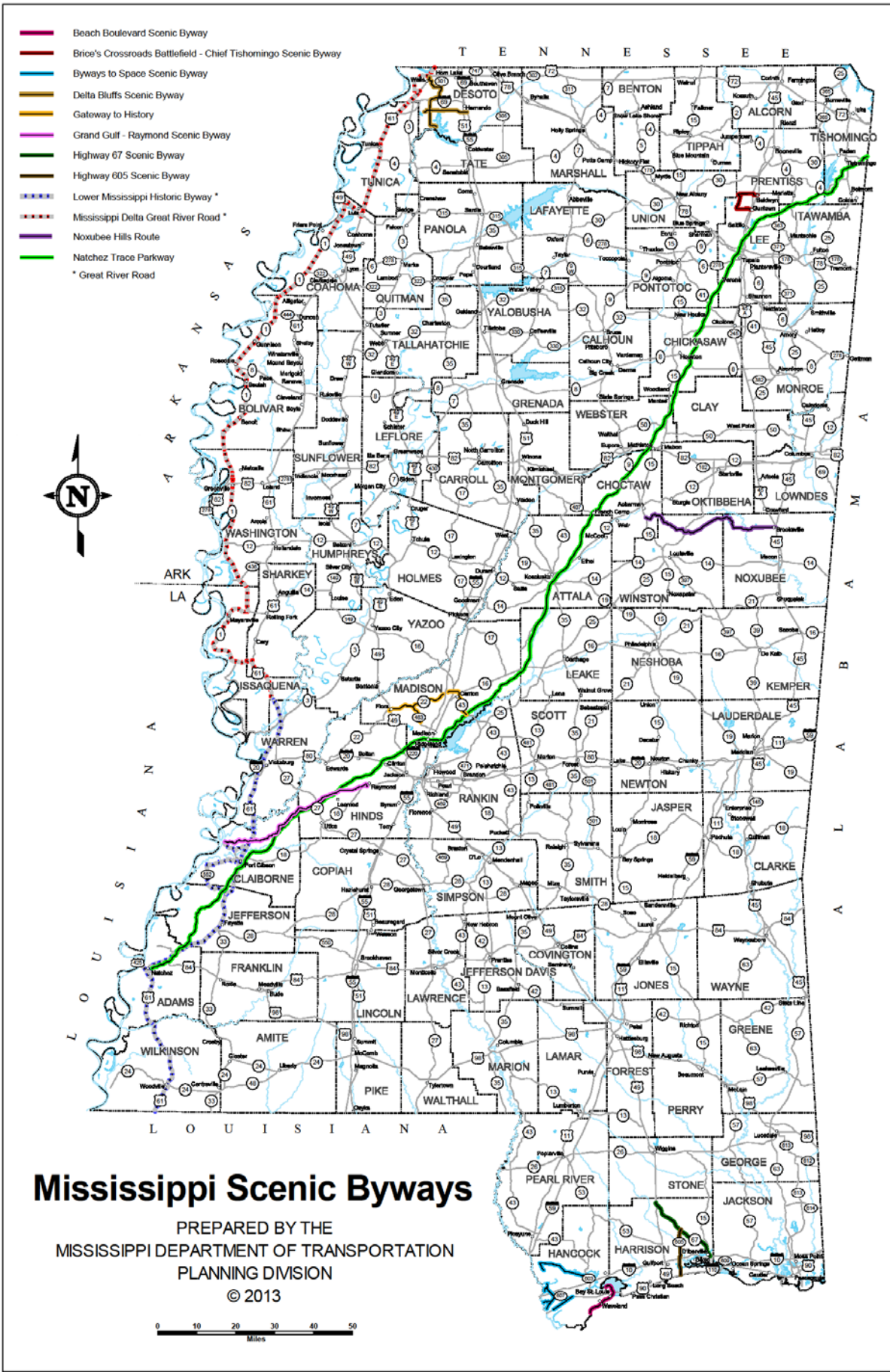
**Recreational Resources:** qualities that involve outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience.

**Scenic Byways Advisory Committee:** the organization identified in the legislation (SB 2098) responsible for the continued development and implementation of the Mississippi Scenic Byways Program.

**Scenic Resources:** qualities related to heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and man-made elements of the Scenic Byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape landform, water, vegetation, and man-made development contribute to the corridor's visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares the intrinsic qualities.

**Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21):** refers to the federal legislation which followed the ISTEA of 1991 and which continued the implementation of the National Scenic Byways Program and its accompanying grants program.

**Work Plan:** a specific list of activities to be implemented as part of the CMP. Each activity should have an estimated dollar cost, a schedule for implementation, and an individual or agency responsible for its implementation.



# APPENDIX A

## PREPARING AN APPLICATION FOR STATE SCENIC BYWAY DESIGNATION

### I. ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN APPLICATION PACKAGE

#### A. Title Page

- a. Name of proposed byway (ex. Grand Gulf – Raymond Scenic Byway)
- b. Contact information
  1. Name, title, and organization
  2. Mailing address
  3. Phone and fax numbers
  4. Email address
- c. Date

#### B. Table of Contents

#### C. List of Tables, Figures

#### D. Background Assessment

- a. Physical Route Description (including the length in miles)
- b. Location map
  1. Proposed byway route
- c. Roadway information
  1. Discuss current and future conditions of the roadway.
  2. Discuss roadway and right-of-way physical characteristics, traffic volumes, accident locations, and level of service.
  3. Discuss current and future land use and zoning along the proposed byway.
  4. Include copy of local, regional, and state land use plans.
  5. Include an inventory of existing outdoor advertising along the proposed byway. (Only commercial billboards and their locations)
  6. Include an inventory of any incompatible elements along the byway (ex. junkyards, etc.)
- d. Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG)
  1. Has a CAG been formed for the proposed byway?
  2. If no, please indicate future plans for organizing a CAG.

#### E. Intrinsic Resource Assessment (for each resource along the byway)

- a. Identify and name resource(s)
- b. Photograph(s) of resource(s)
- c. Location of resource along the byway
- d. Significance of resource to the byway story
- e. Indicate the intrinsic quality or qualities represented by each resource.
  1. Archaeological
  2. Cultural
  3. Historic
  4. Natural
  5. Recreational
  6. Scenic

- f. Ownership and management of the resource
- g. Recognition of the resource (ex. National Register, etc.)

**F. Minimum Criteria Assessment**

- a. Address and discuss each criteria listed in the Scenic Byways Program Guidelines.
- b. Include any necessary documentation to support the criteria
- c. Specifically address any outdoor advertising and segmentation issues

**G. Corridor Vision and Initial Goals**

- a. Resource protection, maintenance, preservation, and enhancement
- b. Transportation planning and safety
- c. Community support and perception
- d. Education and corridor story
- e. Economic development and tourism

**H. Community Participation Program**

- a. Include a copy of the public notice published in newspaper.
- b. Include any documentation and comments received at public hearing.
- c. Include documentation of endorsements from local governments that have jurisdiction along the byway.

**II. SUBMISSION**

**A. One original and 20 hard copies of the application**

**B. One electronic copy of the application**

**C. Mail to the State Planning Engineer, Mississippi Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 1850, Jackson, MS 39215-1850.**

**D. Applications are due to the State Scenic Byway Coordinator by 5:00 p.m. on the day of set deadline.**



PREPARED BY THE  
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PLANNING DIVISION  
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