

Ohio Byways CMP Final Report

August 2015

Introduction

In November 2012, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) entered into an agreement with SJPearce Consultants to conduct a three phased project for Corridor Management Plan Education and Support. The goal was to provide assistance to Ohio Byway organizations as they began work to update and create Five Year Corridor Management Plans as required by ODOT.

Phase One involved the review and evaluation of all existing Byway nomination and planning documents. Sally Pearce and Sharon Strouse (the consultants) evaluated documents for 27 byways and provided recommendations for updating management plans to each byway organization in accordance with ODOT requirements. Each byway organization received a multi-page letter outlining recommendations and steps for completing their CMP update.

During Phase Two, five educational workshops were held in small group settings around the state to provide technical assistance and information aimed at strengthening byway organizations, and helping groups begin planning and writing their updated corridor management plan (CMP). Handouts included “Requirements and Recommendations for CMP Update,” “Buzzwords for Scenic Byways,” and “Ohio Byway Organization Timeline Worksheet.” These documents were aimed at giving byway organizations as many tools as possible to use during the next two years while working on their revised CMPs.

In Phase Three, the consultants reviewed draft management plans and provided additional technical assistance to ODOT and byway organizations as they worked towards the June 30, 2015 deadline for submission of final Five Year Updated Corridor Management Plans. As part of this phase, a series of monthly conference calls with byway organizations and ODOT was held, from January through April 2015, to provide additional information and technical support.

During Phase Three, the consultants reviewed and provided comments on the following plans:

Tappan Moravian	Amish Country Byway
Lincoln Highway	Land of Cross Tipped Churches
North Ridge	Big Darby/Union County
Ohio National Road	Hocking Hills Byway
Presidential Pathways	Old Mill Stream/Hancock County
Welch Scenic Byway	Maumee Valley
Lake Erie Coastal	Miami and Erie Canal
Jefferson Township	Ohio River Scenic Byway

Good CMP Byway Examples

As requested by ODOT and based on the review of CMPs submitted to ODOT by the June 30, 2015 deadline, the consultants find that the following CMPs provide good examples of the six basic components of a corridor management plan.

1. **Setting the Stage:** Intro/Byway Description/Intrinsic Qualities/Conditions
 Introduction: Big Darby
 Table of Contents: Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail
 Byway Description: Land of the Cross Tipped Churches
 Intrinsic Qualities: Hocking Hills, Presidential Pathways
 Description of Current Conditions: Welch Scenic Byway, Ohio Lincoln Highway Historic Byway

2. **The Work Plan:** Mission/Vision/Goals/Action Plan
 Mission and Vision: Tappan Moravian Trail
 Goals: Amish Country Byway
 Action Plan: Tappan Moravian, Amish Country Byway

3. **The Visitor Experience:** Interpretation/Preservation
 Interpretation, Themes/Subthemes: Lake Erie Ohio Coastal Trail
 Interpretation, Future Communication Strategies: Welsh Scenic Byway
 Preservation: Historic National Road

4. **People Involved:** Byway organization/Public Participation
 Organization: National Road
 Public Participation: Amish Country Byway

5. **Getting the Word Out:** Marketing/Promotion
 Marketing, Internal: Land of the Cross Tipped Churches
 Marketing, current products: Hocking Hills Scenic Byway
 30 and 50 word descriptions: Presidential Pathways
 Top attractions/descriptions: Presidential Pathways

6. **Technical Details:** Mapping/Signage inventory/Photos
 Maps: Ohio Lincoln Highway Historic Byway
 Signage Inventory: Welsh Scenic Byway, Amish Country Byway
 Photos: Big Darby, Tappan Moravian

Additional Information

The consultants are also pleased to provide additional information on the following important topics on issues identified during the review of Ohio CMPs.

INTRINSIC QUALITIES

The Federal Register, in outlining the National Scenic Byway Program in 1991, defined a *Corridor Management Plan* as a written document that specifies the actions, procedures, controls, operational practices, and administrative strategies necessary to maintain the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, and natural qualities (or intrinsic qualities) of the scenic byway. Thus, everything within a corridor management plan revolves around the primary and secondary intrinsic qualities of a particular byway, so it is important for the byway organization as well as the reader of a management plan to understand what are the key qualities that define the byway.

According to the *Federal Register*, Intrinsic Quality refers to “scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, or natural features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area.”

- *Scenic Quality* is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway corridor.
- *Natural Quality* applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state.
- *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.
- *Cultural Quality* is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people.
- *Archeological Quality* involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted.
- *Recreational Quality* involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape.

In a corridor management plan, the intrinsic qualities or significant features should be described in at least one substantive paragraph for each intrinsic quality identified. Listing features that fit a primary quality and a secondary quality is highly recommended rather than listing features that fit all six qualities. It is also recommended that updated plans include a list of the top 5-10 features that best represent the primary and secondary intrinsic qualities.

Ohio Byway CMP that best represent Intrinsic Qualities:

Amish Country CMP provided a table/list of Primary and Secondary Intrinsic Qualities and the resources under each category. They also included location as documented with GPS coordinates, and a brief description of each feature. Cultural was identified as the primary quality with Historic and Scenic as secondary qualities. This plan also has a nice list of the top 5-10 sites that best represent the primary and secondary intrinsic qualities.

Welch Scenic Byway CMP also used a table to identify the name, location, primary and secondary intrinsic quality, and a description. They identified Cultural and Historic as their primary qualities with some Recreational and Scenic qualities in the secondary category.

Hocking Hills CMP identified their primary and secondary intrinsic qualities of the Hocking Hills Scenic Byway as Natural and Recreational. They provided a narrative description of the features that make up the two qualities.

THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE/INTERPRETATION

Byway travelers discover and remember a byway and its story through effective wayshowing (the communication of information to aid travelers to find their way to and along byways), interpretation, visitor information centers, design elements, and marketing. All of these components and more are part of the total Visitor Experience.

The Byway Visitor Experience encompasses the entire encounter a visitor has with the byway. Not being able to find a public restroom on the byway or stopping to take a picture of a breathtaking view, both are part of the Visitor Experience. A short discussion of the Byway Visitor Experience is available through The Byways 101 chapter under “What is a Byway?” (online through the National Scenic Byway Foundation at: <http://byways101.org/byways101/program-overview/what-is-a-byway/what-does-visitor-experience-mean>). Most important is that there are other resources in Byways 101 and on the National Scenic Byway Foundation website to develop a good CMP and to identify ways to enhance the visitor experience. These resources can be shared with Ohio Byway organizations.

Interpretation of a Byway starts with identifying intrinsic qualities and the resources that accompany them. The second step is to develop an interpretive plan. Most interpretive plans have a story or thematic approach. Byway themes should be unique and distinctive of the area. Communication techniques for sharing these themes should consider the intended audience(s). The third step for Byway interpretation is to develop an action plan with goals and specific objectives to carry out the plan.

There are several Ohio Byways that have separate interpretive plans. Most have included an outline or summary of their byway story and their goals and action plans for byway interpretation in their CMP’s.

Ohio Byway CMPs with best Visitor Experience or Interpretation Sections:

Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail CMP provided the themes and subthemes for current and future interpretation of the Byway. Digging deeper, these themes and subthemes will help interpretive planners decide which stories to tell depending on the audience and location along the Byway.

Welsh Scenic Byway CMP explained how their story will be communicated in the future. Communication tools for the future included iPod tours, interactive mapping options and driving CD tours.

Historic National Road CMP identified the interpretive books and products they have already designed and installed along the Byway. Under their Visitor Experience section the National Road story was summarized and thus presented challenges to preservation with priorities identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The consultants provide the following recommendations for improvements to the Ohio Byway Program.

CMP Evaluation as Feedback to Byway Organizations

Byway organizations are primarily made up of motivated volunteers. People appreciate feedback both positive and negative since they generally want to do good work and please others. Thus, it is important to provide evaluative feedback to byway leaders upon receiving their CMP submission.

1) ODOT should either accept or reject the submission – either way the byway organization/byway leader should be notified as soon as possible.

2) Feedback in some form will help the byway organizations identify both strong and weak areas of their

CMP. Five years pass quickly. Byway leaders could start learning and planning on how to improve their CMP update for the future.

3) Posting the acceptable CMPs on the website is a good idea. It might be helpful to make them more visible on the ODOT Scenic Byways site/page rather than in a separate file. For example, copies of all plans, including marketing and interpretive, are available on the Colorado DOT site under each byway's separate page (<https://www.codot.gov/travel/scenic-byways>). The Maryland DOT also posts its CMP documents on its website (<http://www.marylandroads.com/Index.aspx?PageId=567>). Note also that the Maryland Scenic Byways program has its own strategic plan.

4) A sample CMP Evaluation Form has been developed for ODOT or representatives to complete in providing feedback to byway organization leaders (attached as a separate document).

5-Year CMP update program requirement

Benefits – Progress and promotion. This requirement is a good way to keep track of the plans for each specific Ohio Byway organization and the progress achieved, especially with the turnover in Byway Leader contacts and volunteers. A 5-year CMP update is an efficient way to gather the “state of the byways” and communicate needs through the ODOT organization and share it with partner organizations such as the Ohio Travel Association, the Humanities Council, Scenic Ohio and, of course, Ohio Byway Links which functions as a “Friends of the Byways” organization. Completing a byway 5-year CMP also provides ODOT and its partners with updated byway interpretation and marketing messages to promote a byway.

Consequences – Suspension and de-designation. Failure to meet the submission deadline for the 5-year CMP requirement could result in a six month suspension beginning at the end of the year the updated CMP is due. Suspension calls for ODOT to remove any reference about the Byway from the ODOT Scenic Byway website. During the period of suspension, ODOT will not publicize, promote or market the Byway in any way. The suspension can be lifted within six months if the Byway organization reconciles its issues and comes into compliance with the CMP update requirement. During the period of suspension, an ODOT representative and the Byway organization representative should communicate monthly to monitor progress toward compliance with the reporting requirement. Failure to gain approval of a CMP will result in deactivation or de-designation of the Byway from the Ohio Byway collection. A byway has as many as three opportunities to submit an acceptable CMP during the six-month suspension period.

Current Byway Status related to de-designation

Rely on the ODOT Scenic Byway Advisory Committee for advice on the status of qualified byways. Submission of an acceptable Annual Report and Corridor Management Plan (CMP) are significant qualifying events, as well as current local contact leader information and an active byway organization.

Byways must meet the minimum requirements for an acceptable 5-year CMP and annual report. When submitted to ODOT, if a CMP or annual report does not meet the minimum acceptable standards, then the CMP or report will be returned and given a new deadline to resubmit. This may continue up to 3 times. After three unacceptable submissions, the process of suspension begins, then de-designation.

Establish steps to de-designation of non-compliant Byway organizations. This is the formal process that will result in removal of the byway status of a current Ohio Byway. De-designation results in the immediate removal of a Byway from the Ohio Byway website, state map, byway marketing and other

data bases. If a byway seeks re-establishment of Ohio Byway status, the Byway organization must re-apply under the current new byway guidelines.

Establish and strengthen a public-private partnership on behalf of the state's byways. By this we recommend that the planning arm of the ODOT District Office and representatives of the Byway organization communicate on a regular basis and engage in mutually beneficial actions. The Ohio Scenic Byway program is managed by ODOT. The District Office(s) have a direct understanding of the roadways within its jurisdiction. They should be compelled to engage with the local byway representatives regarding all mutual concerns such as highway safety, road conditions, wayfinding, Byway signs and traffic patterns near tourism and visitor destinations.

Support creative options as a possible alternative to de-designation. Example: Encourage the option of a "failing" Byway organization to merge with different "successful" Byway organization, depending of course on the Intrinsic Qualities of the Byway.

Annual Report – due annually March 31

Continue this requirement; a good way for the State Byway Coordinator to keep in touch with Byway leader contacts and to find out if there is support needed for the Byway organization.

Design the survey so that minimal work is required. It should take less than an hour or two to complete online. An annual report provides the following:

- Contacts: Confirm Byway Leader(s) contact information
- Progress: A short summary of progress on action plan goals (refer to goals/objectives in the current CMP)
- Highlights: A short summary of 1-3 successes the previous year
- Pictures: Several new pictures to share for marketing and promotion purposes
- Public participation documentation: Dates of byway organization meetings
- Special needs: Opportunity for Byway Leaders to express their frustrations and needs

Byway Organization meeting minutes - Byway organizations are expected to maintain a record of meeting dates and minutes. The meeting notes do not have to be submitted to ODOT, but they would be made available upon request.

Awareness and Marketing of a state's scenic byway collection

The Byway CMP documents, updated every 5 years, can be used to support the statewide awareness and marketing of the state byway collection. Below are examples of ways the state department of transportation, along with their state tourism partners could use information and interpretation submitted from the byway CMP's. Seasonal pictures, interpretive stories, short and long byway descriptions, all are important to use through print and electronic media through the DOT and DOT partners.

1. Create a strong state tourism partnership:

Examples – Maryland and Colorado State Departments of Tourism website links:

<http://www.visitmaryland.org/list/maryland-scenic-byways>

<http://www.colorado.com/articles/quick-guide-colorados-scenic-historic-byways>

2. Continue state department of transportation outreach:

Examples - Iowa and Florida DOT website marketing efforts:

Iowa, you can order a 17 page “Official travel guide to Iowa’s Byways” from their DOT website, <http://www.iowadot.gov/iowasbyways/IowaBywaysTravelGuide.pdf>

Florida, you can explore each byway and find kid’s activities to download from the website: <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/projectmanagementoffice/highwaybeautification/scenichighways.shtm>
<http://floridascenichighways.com/kids-corner/>

Interactive byway maps available on the Minnesota Byways website

3. Partner with other state departments or statewide organizations to promote byway travel:

Examples: Idaho and Colorado are partnering with other agencies to promote byways:

Idaho – Birding along the state’s birding trail
<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/ibt/site.aspx?id=ec19>

Colorado – PDF map showing byways and various partners statewide;
<https://www.codot.gov/travel/scenic-byways/assets/state-byways-partners-map.pdf>
Colorado - Printed bike map showing bike routes along byways is available along with an online map
<http://dtdapps.coloradodot.info/bike>

4. Ohio Byway collection marketing strengths and opportunities based on the 5-year CMP updates:

ODOT state travel map – continue to identify Ohio Byway Routes with green highlighting; explore highlighting Ohio Byway interpretative messages for all or different byways each time the map is reprinted (see previous map edition which featured each Ohio Byway).

ODOT Ohio Byway website – update the website based on the marketing short or long messages and seasonal pictures sent in with the updated CMP’s.

ODOT Ohio Byway website featured pictures – update the website featuring the pictures of the Byways that met the original CMP deadline in the rolling pictures section on the front page; also feature new pictures each year from pictures submitted with the Annual Report.

ODOT Byway picture library, especially used for marketing/promotion requests; update the ODOT Byway pictures library every year – with pictures totally rotated within 5 years to keep pictures fresh (the exception might be a category for ‘historic Byway photos’).

Recruit and appoint an ODOT intern to support Ohio Byway marketing goals, partner with Ohio Byway Links volunteers to guide Ohio Byway marketing needs and priorities.

Help support funding for an annual or bi-annual Ohio Byway brochure publication; both an online version and a limited print version for presentations and direct marketing outreach opportunities (ie: ODOT state fair exhibit).

Byway Organization and Byway Leader Training

Continue to cooperate with the Ohio Byway Links organization and the National Scenic Byway Foundation to provide education and support for Byway Leaders.

Offer annual meetings for education, support and Ohio Byway program updates.

Provide opportunities for ODOT District planning representatives to meet with Ohio Byway organization leaders, share opportunities, support mutual goals

Provide opportunities for byway leaders to attend leader training, support fees for participation costs and travel – especially for train the trainer options.

Offer conference calls by phone on byway topics of interest. Some calls could be offered as “program updates” (no more than 2 times a year) while some calls should be focused on one or two topics only to engage the byway leaders to discuss a specific topic in depth. Could contact “speakers” to join the call for specific topic discussions.