

Chapter 10

Public Involvement and Byway Management

This chapter describes the process used to engage representatives of selected stakeholder groups and the general public in the preparation of the corridor management plan. It also recommends a management structure and ways to continue strong public participation during implementation of the plan.

Summary of Public Process for CMP

WHY PARTICIPATION

“Implementation begins the first day of planning.” This phrase guided planning and public participation from the start of this corridor management planning process. With a strong belief that those who participate in the plan will be most likely to support and participate in plan implementation, the project team established a two-tiered advisory group structure and developed outreach strategies to encompass as broad a constituency base as possible.

PARTICIPATION GROUPS

Participation groups were developed at the beginning of the planning process. The Corridor Advisory Group (CAG) was developed to focus on corridor wide issues and collaboration. It consisted of representatives from each of the thirteen communities through which the byway travels, plus two regional planning agencies and the regional tourism bureau. In addition, there were representatives from the state’s transportation and parks departments. All elected members of Massachusetts Senate and House representing the byway communities were invited to participate in CAG meetings and discussions.

The purpose of the CAG was to provide overall guidance to the planning project as well as input on broad-reaching questions that guided more specific data collection. Early in the process, members helped to identify additional stakeholders who should be engaged in the planning process. CAG members provided feedback on the Existing Conditions Assessment Review and helped draft the byway vision. As the process moved further into the creation of the corridor management plan, the Corridor Advisory Group’s role shifted to review of plan chapters and decision-making about a management structure for implementing the plan. The CAG met six times between June 2009 and February 2011, and most members attended one or more of the Local Advisory Group (LAG) and public meetings as well.

As an additional source of information and feedback, the project team established thirteen Local Advisory Groups (LAG) so each community could focus on local issues and opportunities. LAG members represented municipal boards, commissions, and committees as well as local organizations whose input and feedback was critical for documenting the intrinsic qualities that would be included in the plan: historic resources, natural resources, recreation, economic, arts and culture. These groups provided the vital link with ongoing planning efforts and other initiatives at the local level.

Neighboring byway community LAGs met in pairs to brainstorm and stimulate ideas across their boundaries. Their first two meetings late in 2009 and early in 2010 produced ideas not only for the consultant team to use for wider explorations, but also to stimulate conversations at the third and final meeting in March of 2010, designed as a single half day workshop that all local groups attended. The purpose of this meeting was to identify opportunities for cross-community coordination and collaboration as they explored local and regional strategies for implementing the corridor management plan. LAG members volunteered to review the draft plan chapters and participated in the public meetings in their communities.

EXPANDED PARTICIPATION

The consultants interviewed numerous other stakeholder representatives between December 2009 and December 2010 in preparation for drafting and revising the corridor management plan. These interviewees not only enhanced and expanded regional and local information, but also joined the growing ranks of byway stakeholders who look forward to sharing in plan implementation.

The public review of the draft corridor management plan took place during public forums held in each of the thirteen byway communities between October 2010 and January 2011.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Throughout the planning process, corridor and local advisory group members advised about and initiated local outreach to raise awareness about the Byway. These activities included speaking with representative groups: elected officials, commissions, boards, committees, chambers of commerce, non-profits, and others. They placed links on local websites to the byway planning site, made contact with local cable TV, and promoted the Byway in their organizations' media. These "ambassadors" incorporated the byway story, as relevant, to enhance the visitor experience at their local resources.

A project website⁸⁹ was established at the start of the process in 2009 and maintained throughout to provide updated information on the Byway and the Corridor Management Plan and process. The site included meeting schedules and notes, maps, local news articles, and documents for review.

Organizational Framework

The measure of success of any plan lies in how well it is implemented; and the cornerstones of implementation are an effective management entity and local grassroots support. Scenic byway status and a corridor management plan do not change the roles or responsibilities of landowners and resource managers along the Byway, but can help guide decisions. It is imperative that an organizational steward be in place to coordinate, assist and monitor the efforts of these separate entities and to encourage and support the on-going grassroots interest and initiatives that will sustain passion and involvement in managing the Byway. Over time, as the Byway develops the nature of its stewardship is likely to change form. This change will be a natural evolution that will occur as the Byway matures and engages a wider, more diverse audience.

Initially, development of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway will continue as an initiative of the Essex National Heritage Commission (Essex Heritage), which will provide staff support and office space, subject to the availability of public and private funding to underwrite this function.

To formalize the process, Essex Heritage has created a standing byway committee (the "steering committee") as part of its existing corporate structure. The steering committee will be responsible for managing the Byway, primarily through the establishment of policy and creation of an annual byway work plan in accordance with the Corridor Management Plan. Implementation of the annual work plan will be managed by the Byway Coordinator and undertaken by various byway partner organizations as determined appropriate. The following matrix provides an overview of the proposed byway organizational framework. Further explanation on the roles is provided below.

⁸⁹ <http://www.essexheritage.org/scenicbyways/#cmp>

ORGANIZATION MATRIX

<i>Management Element</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Associated Costs</i>	<i>Composition</i>
Steering Committee	<p>Serves as decision-making entity for management of the Byway.</p> <p>Guides direction and activities of byway management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership group of the scenic byway committee of the Essex National Heritage Commission • Meets bi-monthly or quarterly • Develops annual work plan and budget • Develops and oversees fundraising strategy • Reviews CMP annually, adjusts priorities as needed • Manages retention and recruitment of Advisory Group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to coordinate meetings, correspondence and minutes • Meeting locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and regional leaders (individuals) • <i>Note: Size should be sufficient to represent the interests and needs of byway stakeholders without being so large as to be too cumbersome to manage.</i>
<p>Advisory Council <i>(aka Byway Coalition, Friends Group, etc.)</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: This is a critical piece of the National Scenic Byway program, which requires that a byway organization includes ways to build and sustain broad grassroots support.</i></p>	<p>Open to byway partner organizations.</p> <p>Provides support to byway activities.</p> <p>Potential source of members for the Steering Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets annually (or as needed depending on capacity of byway organization) • Members serve on ad hoc committees / work groups for specific activities as needed (as determined by Steering Committee) • In future, may evolve into a more permanent organization, that meets regularly and has fee for membership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to coordinate meetings, correspondence, and outreach • Meeting locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Byway municipalities • Regional natural, historic, recreational, cultural groups • Regional tourism and economic development organizations • Regional planning agencies • State agencies – MassDOT, DCR, MHC • Federal agencies -- NPS, USFWS
Ad Hoc Committees / Working Groups	<p>Formed by Steering Committee for specific tasks or projects related to CMP or funding (e.g. fundraising, marketing, interpretation).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow established meeting guidelines, decision making process • Have a clearly defined mission / purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to coordinate meetings • Meeting locations 	<p>Membership drawn from Advisory Group and additional experts as needed.</p>

<i>Management Element</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Associated Costs</i>	<i>Composition</i>
Fiscal Agent(s)	As an unincorporated entity, the scenic byway organization would need a fiscal agent(s) in order to hire staff and manage grants, fees, dues, and wages or cash donations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and dispense funds for byway projects • Assure the propriety of all expenditures of funds • Keep financial records in accordance with standard bookkeeping practices and produce a yearly financial report • Hire personnel as directed by the Steering Committee • Apply for project funding on behalf of the byway organization in coordination with the Steering Committee • Different fiscal agents could be used for different types of funding requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time to manage funds and produce yearly financial report • Staff time for researching grants and applying for funding • Staff time to meet and coordinate with Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary -- Essex National Heritage Commission • Others -- Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Municipalities, Non-profits
Byway Coordinator	Coordinates activities of byway organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates specific annual byway work plan activities as determined by Steering Committee (e.g. website, byway inventory, fundraising strategy). • Tracks status of byway related projects. • Coordinates with fiscal agent(s) as needed for grant applications and fundraising. • Helps prepare meeting agendas and correspondence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary • Fully equipped office space (access to phone, computer, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essex Heritage

Scenic Byway Steering Committee

The scenic byway committee of the Essex Heritage National Commission (the “steering committee”) will serve as the leadership team for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. The Steering Committee is composed of local and regional leaders and will be responsible for reviewing organizational bylaws, electing committee chairs, setting priorities, coordinating projects and initiatives, coordinating with fiscal agents and overseeing funding agreements, determining staffing needs, and developing a yearly work plan. In all of its endeavors, the Steering Committee will establish and maintain communication with the Advisory Group.

Essex Heritage by-laws will be reviewed and amended as necessary to support the purposes of the scenic byway committee (steering committee). As they pertain specifically to the scenic byway initiative, the by-laws should establish or address:

- committee goals and objectives;
- committee membership roles and responsibilities;
- committee chairs election, roles, and terms;
- committee meeting rules and schedule;
- committee decision making including conflict resolution;
- byway coordinating staff;
- fiscal management;
- and committee dissolution.

Scenic Byway Advisory Council

A Scenic Byway Advisory Council will be established to advise on the management of the Byway and help implement the recommendations of the Corridor Management Plan. Advisory Council members will represent a diversity of interests, and skill sets, but will be committed to working together to bring about the vision of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. The suggested composition of the Scenic Byway Advisory Council is:

- An appointed representative from each of the thirteen byway communities
- Representatives of nonprofit historical and cultural organizations
- Representatives of nonprofit open space and environmental organizations
- Representatives of tourism and economic development organizations
- Representatives of private businesses (visitor services, hospitality, recreational activities)
- Appointed State agency representatives
- Appointed Federal agency representatives
- Interested citizens and organizations

The Scenic Byway Advisory Council is meant to be open, inclusive and representative of its host communities, their citizens and enterprises. It will include both appointed representatives and self selected representatives and individuals. The Advisory Council will meet regularly to discuss management issues, review the status of projects and monitor the progress of the CMP.

Tasks Forces / Working Groups

The Steering Committee can also create *ad hoc* task forces or otherwise organize its members to develop working groups based on projects or focusing on identified issues. The Advisory Council should be considered a source of enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and committed partners for a wide variety of byway programs, projects, and issues.

Fiscal Agent

Essex Heritage will be the fiscal agent for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. In this capacity the Essex Heritage will promote the mission of the account, safeguard the assets of the account, and assure the propriety of all expenditures of funds and disposition of account assets. It will keep financial records in accordance with standard bookkeeping practices and produce a yearly financial report. As the fiscal agent Essex Heritage has the capacity to receive and dispense funds for byway projects, and hire personnel as directed by the Steering Committee. Project funding can be applied for by Essex Heritage on behalf of the Scenic Byway Advisory Council, by municipalities and allowed nonprofits. In addition, different fiscal agents could be used for different types of funding requests.

Byway Coordinator

A Byway Coordinator will be engaged to coordinate the day-to-day activities of the Steering Committee. For the foreseeable future Essex Heritage has agreed to provide part time staff resources to work with the Byway Steering Committee. Responsibilities would include coordinating specific annual work plan activities, tracking statuses of byway projects, coordinating with fiscal agent(s) as needed for grant applications and fundraising, and preparing meeting agendas and correspondence.

EVALUATION

Just as the Corridor Management Plan must be evaluated and adjusted in response to changing conditions and evolving ideas, the management framework and organizational stewardship that is established to implement the CMP, must also be evaluated and adjusted as needed.

America’s Byways Resource Center was established (1999) and is funded by US Congress through the Highway Trust Fund. The Resource Center provides information and assistance about managing byways.⁹⁰ As an example it offers a set of tools for evaluating an organization’s key strengths and weaknesses. The tools address funding, organization and resources. Each indicator tool uses statements about key byway activities that allow users to consider where they feel their byway organization sits along a continuum. Using tools such as these to evaluate the various aspects of the Byway’s management structure and process on an on-going basis are critical to the long term success of the byway program.

The indicators are meant to be completed by individual members and shared in a group setting. The exercise allows members to see how others have rated the relative strength for each of the indicators and leads to a discussion that will contribute to more effective planning by the organization going forward. A modified version of these indicators was distributed to the Corridor Advisory Group in September 2010 to provide input into the design of the byway organizational framework. The numbers following the statements of sustainability indicate the number of responses. Six CAG members completed the questionnaire, however some did not respond to each item.

Sustainability Indicators

The development of strong partnerships and successful planning efforts to support byways can be measured in direct correlation to a byway organization’s attention to these “core elements” that are essential to a byway’s sustainability. CAG members were asked to review the list of sustainability indicators below and mark if, in their opinion, this is a priority for the byway management organization during the Transition (Immediately), Eventually (next 2 to 4 years), or Long-Term (if at all).

Table 7: Byway Management Sustainability Indicators, Summary of Corridor Advisory Group Responses

Indicator	now	2-4 years	long term
Mission, vision and plan to make it all happen.	6		
Action plans that flow from the integrated vision, mission, and CMP.	5	1	
Process for prioritizing work, delegating responsibility and managing completion.	5	1	
Space(s) available to meet and operate.	5	1	
Formalized organizational structure that is defined in written documents.	4	2	
Decision-making method that is used at all meetings.	4	2	
Active core of volunteers, strategy for ongoing recruitment of new volunteers	4	2	
Ongoing involvement of stakeholders who impact the character of the byway.	4	2	
Process for resolving conflicts.	3	3	
Fiscal vigor – dependable cash flow, investment and savings, annual budget adequate to cover basic costs of staff and support for a few years.	3	2	1
New member recruitment program.	2	4	
Funding diversity, flexibility, and agility – variety of sources, plan for adjusting if funding sources are eliminated.	2	4	
Multi-year budget plan, fundraising strategy, fiscal officer.	2	3	1
Executive director or other paid staff.	2	3	1

⁹⁰ For more information of the Byway s Resource Center see: <http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org>

Indicator	now	2-4 years	long term
Byway assets categorized by intrinsic quality.	2	2	2
Regular review of management plan and adjustments where needed.	2	1	3
Necessary support for successful fundraising – capable volunteers, grant writers, and donors.	1	4	1
Long-term plan outlining how the byway will be managed sustainably (and indefinitely).	1	3	2
Member retention program.	1	3	1
Written resource inventory	1	3	1
Strategy for preparing new leaders and leadership succession plans.	1	2	2
Corporation status (nonprofit and/or for profit).	1		3
Means to protect byway resources outright – hold conservation easements / deeds to byway properties, raise funds for preservation of byway properties.		3	3

SUSTAINING PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT

An effective management entity needs ongoing participation and support from the public it represents and serves. Opportunities for public participation will occur periodically as byway focused projects are undertaken and review of projects and progress is requested. Additional opportunities should also be developed to ensure that constituents are kept informed of the Byway’s many activities, projects and issues on a more regular basis. Invitations for participation can range from byway representatives giving presentations on various topics, to the Scenic Byway Advisory Council requesting presentations from others, to celebrations of milestones or kick off events, or to requests for information through surveys or other means. Two opportunities for public participation that have been identified by Local Advisory Group members as a part of this planning process include:

- host a community party as a kick off event to create interest and excitement
- hold fundraiser events that showcase the Byway and raise funds for local projects which benefit the organization and the Byway, e.g., Historic New England (regional entity), local historical society, local cultural organization (Rockport Music), etc.

As a best practice, the Steering Committee should prepare and distribute throughout the year updates to all stakeholder organizations and the general public for review and responses. These communications will:

- summarize and document projects undertaken
- indicate the status of CMP action items;
- share information on potential projects (draft annual plan); and
- highlight any relevant issues along the Byway.
- invite suggestions for how to manage the Byway.

It is recommended that the steering committee create and implement a stakeholder review and comment process which can be used to inform development of an annual work plan. Useful responses to seek from stakeholders will:

- indicate the level of satisfaction with the management process and projects;
- outline planned or potential projects for which the review organization or individual is responsible;
- document any concerns; and
- make recommendations for the annual work plan.

The framework recommended herein for implementing the strategies of the CMP has been developed through the participation of the Corridor Advisory Groups and Essex Heritage and with guidance by the consultant team. While it represents a solid foundation for managing the Byway, it anticipates and is dependent on on-going public participation and financial support. Funding for byway management and projects must be a focus for the Byway to be sustainable. More about funding is included in Chapter 11.