

Chapter 1

The Byway Story, Vision, and Goals

The Byway Story

Traveling along the Byway - whether by auto, train, or bike - is a journey that offers a window on the evolution of people's relationship to the land and sea in this coastal region. This is the byway story -- how people have interacted with the natural environment and made a living off the resources of the land and sea and later through innovation and industry. Today, remnants of the early history in maritime trade, shipbuilding, and industry merge with activities that have continued through the centuries – farming, fishing, and the arts. Traces of human interaction with the natural world are evident in today's natural landscapes – drainage channels through the salt marshes, stonewalls and abandoned quarries in the uplands, and waterways and harbors that are still populated with fishing and pleasure boats. The built environment offers different clues -- the farms and first period architecture hearken back to the Early Settlement period, the fine homes and vibrant downtowns represent the booming maritime heritage, mill buildings give evidence of the Industrial Revolution in the urban cores, and the grand estates and art galleries reflect the region's transformation to a summer retreat and artist enclave.

The byway story continues today in the collection of diverse and distinctive communities that stretch along the Byway. These communities continue to draw their livelihood and inspiration from the timeless natural resources of the land and sea.

A Vision for the Byway

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway links and interprets important natural, scenic, historic and recreational resources through the coastal communities of the Essex National Heritage Area, demonstrating the pattern of human settlement in this region, as it has been shaped by the natural environment.

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway will present the coastal part of the Essex National Heritage Area story and resources in a coherent manner, so that people visiting one part of the Byway will quickly gain an appreciation for the full range of resources offered by the region. People from around the nation and world will be able to learn about and appreciate what makes this place special. The Byway will attract visitors who share an appreciation of the natural environment and will be interested in the region's history, culture and nature-based recreational opportunities.

The development and management of the Byway will complement the region's historic and natural qualities and reinforce the sense of being in a special place. More than simply providing access to natural and recreational resources, the byway route will become a distinctive feature within the landscape, and traveling along the byway will be an integral part of the visitor experience.

The Byway will thus become central to the region's community development, economic development and natural heritage conservation efforts. In so doing, the Byway will be a model for groups and individuals to work together to create a healthy economy based on heritage tourism and nature-based recreation.

Scenic Byway Goals

In order to achieve our vision, it is our hope that the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway program (as outlined in this Corridor Management Plan) will:

Help *promote* the region's resources, by...

- Building local awareness, appreciation and pride in byway resources
- Bringing an influx of visitors to local businesses and visitor sites
- Marketing and increasing awareness of the byway communities and regional tourism opportunities
- Defining a regional identity
- Improving the overall visitor experience

- Coordinating wayfinding signage and directionals

Reinforce local and regional efforts to *preserve and enhance* these resources by...

- Supporting community stewardship of byway resources
- Protecting community character
- Encouraging adoption of local policies and regulations to preserve byway resources
- Maintaining the authenticity and character of the route
- Striking a balance between encouraging and accommodating access to historic and natural sites and places and preservation objectives
- Coordinating wayfinding and signage

Provide a framework within which to coordinate *planning* efforts and coordinate *management* of the byway corridor by...

- Striking a balance between encouraging and accommodating access to historic and natural sites and places and preservation objectives
- Improving the roadway corridor through locally-appropriate management of streetscapes, increased safety, and accommodation of multi-modal transportation
- Actively encourage travelers to explore the area by walking, biking, boating, or train travel
- Leveraging existing funding and expanding funding for byway initiatives
- Engaging community involvement and local actions to support the Byway
- Encouraging regional collaboration and inter-community communication
- Encouraging adoption of local policies and regulations to preserve and enhance byway resources
- Promoting context sensitive planning and design
- Forging a connection between byway management and local community goals