Chapter 4
Experiencing the Byway

The region through which the Byway travels already has strong appeal for visitors – day-trippers, vacationers, and residents alike – for the diversity of attractions and variety of activities available and the accessibility of transportation options. The route itself provides direct access to over 55 visitor sites that are open to the public – museums, historic houses, parks, conservation areas, visitor centers, and beaches – and is a link to many more regional attractions. The Byway travels along a variety of natural areas, parks and other open spaces -- 4,600 acres of federal land, 2,000 acres of state land, 7,000 acres of municipal land, and thousands of acres of land owned by conservation organizations, land trusts, or private institutions. Travelers along the Byway encounter a variety of landscapes – historic downtowns, residential neighborhoods, waterfronts, farmland, forested uplands, town greens, urban centers.

This chapter begins with an overview of the existing visitor experience – who visits and why, what “visitor ready” attractions already exist, and what types of visitor services are available. Next, the chapter considers guidelines for enhancing the visitor experience in the future and how the byway program can support the region’s appeal to different types of visitors. Finally, the chapter identifies potential intrusions on the quality visitor experience and introduces possible improvements to strengthen the overall visitor experience.

Overview of Existing Visitor Experience

WHO

Events and activities in the byway region appeal to families, couples, and individuals of a variety of ages and interests. In the 2004 visitor survey at Essex Heritage Visitor Sites, most visitors to heritage tourism locations were between the ages of 46 to 65, and about one quarter of the sample population were families with children at home. While this data does not necessarily reflect the trends of the broader region, it will be necessary to have a sense of the target audience for byway programs and activities. A number of events around the area target families with young children. There is a nation-wide interest in targeting the “Baby Boomer” generation, which will be retiring over the next few years.

Although there is a lack of specific date about visitors to the region (Essex County), statewide statistics for Massachusetts indicate that domestic visitors (people from the United States) accounted for approximately 90% of all visitors to the state in 2009. Visitors from New England and the mid-Atlantic states (NY, NJ, and PA) accounted for 73.4% of all visitors to the state and the largest source of visitors was Massachusetts residents themselves (28.3% of all domestic visitors). Of international visitors to Massachusetts, 67% were from overseas, 33% were from Canada.26

HOW PEOPLE GET HERE

A unique aspect of this Byway is the multi-modal opportunities it offers. The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway can be experienced using a combination of modes — automobile, public transit, bicycle, walking, and boat. The ability to combine various modes to experience the Byway in different ways, for different lengths, and at different speeds expands opportunities and broadens the byway experience. More on transportation is included in Chapter 3.

WHAT PEOPLE VISIT

Visitors are drawn to the region for the variety of activities and experiences available, for the convenience of access, and because of the scenic and natural beauty of the area. State and regional tourism organizations and local Chambers of Commerce promote history, seafood, shopping, water-based activities, hiking, biking, and arts and culture. The convenience of getting to the Byway from Boston, as well as from points further north, also makes this region an appealing destination for travelers.

The 2004 Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Survey and Economic Impact Study reported that shopping, visiting beaches, and attending festivals or special events are the three most popular activities among visitors. The North of Boston

Convention & Visitor Bureau notes that the most frequently reported activities are visiting historical sites and museums, shopping, outdoor recreation, and attending cultural events and festivals. These activities are also listed in the Top 10 of visitor activities for travelers in the United States (see Table 1.) The collection of sites, attractions, and activities means that people might take in multiple sites in their visit rather than just heading to one location. The Byway provides the connection linking multiple destinations.

### Table 1: Top 10 Activities of Domestic Visitors in U.S. (FY 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attend Family/Social Event</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fine Dining</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Rural Sightseeing</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>10.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Urban Sightseeing</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>State/National Parks</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art Galleries</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Types of Historical Attractions and Sites Represented along the Byway

As introduced in Chapter 1, the history of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway region is characterized by how water resources (marsh, rivers, and sea) have shaped human settlement patterns and influenced the economy in the region. Following is a snapshot of the primary historic sites and attractions accessible to visitors along the Byway.

**Lynn**

Lynn Museum and Historical Society promotes the cultural heritage of Lynn through exhibits at the museum as well as through outreach and programs. Also known as the Lynn Heritage Visitor Center, the Museum is a designated Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Center, providing information to visitors about Lynn and surrounding communities as well as the entire National Heritage Area.

Located on Broad Street is the first home owned by Mary Baker Eddy—local author, publisher, speaker, and healer and one of the founders of the Christian Science Church. The house is open to the public by arrangement until renovations are completed.

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Swampscott

The **Olmsted Historic District** is a suburban neighborhood designed in 1888 by renowned landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted. This well-preserved residential area abuts the Byway to the north.

The **Elihu Thomson House**, currently Swampscott’s Town Hall, is a Georgian Revival building that was part of the estate of Professor Thomson -- scientist, inventor and co-founder of the General Electric Company. Designed by architect James Kelly, the building was originally flanked by an observatory.

Marblehead

**Jeremiah Lee Mansion** and the **Marblehead Museum Galleries** are located across from each other on Washington Street in the **Marblehead Historic District**. Both are part of the Marblehead Museum and Historical Society properties. The collections and exhibits focus on many aspects of Marblehead’s history.

**Abbot Hall** is the Town Hall and contains the original of the widely-reproduced *Spirit of '76* painting by Archibald MacNeal Willard, another painting by Primitivist J.O.J. Frost and other historical artifacts.
Salem

**Old Burying Point** or the Charter Street Cemetery is the oldest cemetery in Salem, and the second oldest known cemetery in the country, started in 1637. It is located on Charter St. next to the Witch Trials Memorial and contains many famous individuals such as Jonathan Corwin and John Hawthorne, who were Judges in the Salem Witch Trials, Samuel Bradstreet who was a Governor of Massachusetts and many more interesting historical figures.

**Salem Maritime National Historic Site**, the first such designated site in the National Park System (1938), was established to preserve and interpret the maritime history of New England and the United States. The site encompasses about 9.5 acres at the center of what was once the main waterfront section of the city. It is located just off the byway route.

**Peabody Essex Museum**, the nation’s oldest continually operated museum, and the former **Salem Armory**, now a National Park Service Visitor Center, are located just off the Byway on East India Square at the eastern end of Essex Street.

The **Salem Witch Museum** is located along Washington Square across from Salem Common and interprets the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.

**Salem Common** is known as the site of the first “muster.” The country’s first militia assembled on Salem Common in 1637, which began the foundation for what would become the National Guard. This early designed public landscape is also known for the fine homes and historic buildings that surround the Common including the **Hawthorne Hotel**, which was built by the City of Salem in the 1920s.
Salem Common (Essex Heritage) and the Hawthorne Hotel, Salem

Beverly

Fish Flake Hill Historic District surrounds the Byway north and east of the Route 1A bridge and is the oldest neighborhood in Beverly.

Along Route 127/Hale Street some of the late 19th century “Grand Estates” designed by well-known architects are now part of the institutional campuses of Endicott College and the Landmark School.

The Byway also passes through the villages of Pride’s Crossing and Beverly Farms, along the MBTA commuter rail, which developed during the 19th century as the popularity of the fashionable North Shore grew and wealthy families built lavish estates.

Manchester-by-the-Sea

The Manchester Village Historic District features buildings that represent virtually every type of vernacular architecture from the 17th to 20th Centuries.

The Trask House Museum on Union Street (home to the Manchester Historical Society) was built in 1823 by local businesswoman Abigail Hooper. The museum’s collection includes examples of the furniture built in Manchester during the mid-19th century, as well as artifacts and art reflecting the town’s important maritime history, and its later prominence as a summer vacation destination for the wealthy.

Guide books providing information on three walking tours on the Town’s oldest and most historic sites are available from the Manchester Historical Society. Portions of two of the walks follow the Byway (Route 127) and the other streets are all immediately adjacent to the byway route.
Gloucester

The historic Stage Fort Park was the site of the city’s first settlement in 1623. The Welcoming Center is a designated Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Center, providing information to visitors about Gloucester as well as the entire area.

The Blynman Canal drawbridge (1907) brings travelers across the “Cut”, originally excavated in 1643 to connect the Annisquam River to the Harbor. Stacey Boulevard Park runs along Route 127 overlooking historic Gloucester Harbor and is home to the historic Gloucester Fishermen’s Memorial – featuring its well-known Man at the Wheel statue commemorating the numerous Cape Ann fishermen lost at sea.

On August 5, 2001, the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association (GFWA) dedicated a monument to honor the women who have been - and are - the soul of fishing communities. It is located along the waterfront on Stacey Boulevard.

Just north of the Byway in the heart of Gloucester downtown is the Cape Ann Museum, which maintains and exhibits material relating to the major themes of the Byway.
Built in 1926, the National Historic Landmark the *Schooner Adventure* is currently berthed off Rogers Street just a few blocks north of the Harbor Loop. The wooden fishing vessel was built in nearby Essex and is one of the last of the region’s famous Grand Banks fishing schooners.

Located on the Harbor Loop, the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center includes a marine railway (originally constructed in 1849), a 19th century mill building, and a former ice house (which is now a boat building workshop), exhibits and a small aquarium. The Center’s three wharves are the home of several fishing vessels representing different periods in the fishery industry. Also situated on Harbor Loop is the former home and studio of renowned 19th Century luminist painter *Fitz Henry (Hugh) Lane*.

**Rocky Neck Art Colony** is in the East Gloucester Arts District, where artists display their work in various galleries and studios. The Colony has been a destination for artists from the turn of the 19th century. Artists worked, demonstrated innovations, and debated on art theory. **East Gloucester Square Historic District** is located along Gloucester’s Inner Harbor and exemplifies an intact fishing village with both residential and maritime-related buildings.

On Eastern Point in Gloucester - just off the Byway and visible from Gloucester Harbor - is **Beauport**, the historic summer home of the collector and interior designer Henry Davis Sleeper. Crowned by towers, the structure’s many rooms are decorated to evoke different historical and literary themes.
Rockport

Along Route 127 in the south of Rockport, the Byway passes Babson Field and Babson Museum, a stone cooperage shop built by James Babson about 1658.

Rockport center has three local historic districts; a walk along the streets provides a strong sense of the history of this small seaside community. Many of the historic buildings that once housed fish houses, taverns, or residences, are now used as retail shops or artist galleries. The T-Wharf provides a view of Rockport Harbor and “Motif #1” (located on nearby Bradley Wharf) -- a fishing shack built in 1884 that is known as the most painted / photographed building in the country. The Old Stone Fort at the end of Bearskin Neck is the site of a small stockade that was used for protection against the British.

The Rockport Art Association is located in the Old Tavern Building, built before 1787 and once the terminus for the Rockport/Salem stagecoach. The Sandy Bay Historical Society, located on Granite Street, was built in the mid-1800s by a granite quarry owner and now houses local historic artifacts.

Twin Lights Historic District (or Cape Ann Light Station) is located on Thacher Island and is visible from points along the Byway in Rockport. The Twin Towers, which distinguish this station, are not accessible to the public, but the island can be accessed by boat or kayak.
Halibut Point State Park, the site of a former granite quarry, is now a state park with a visitor center, interpretive signs, and trails.

Essex

Halibut Point State Park

Essex Shipbuilding Museum

The Cox Reservation along Route 133 includes the Cox House. Built in 1785, it is the former home and studio of renowned muralist Allyn Cox and now serves as the headquarters for the Essex County Greenbelt Association. The property’s inspiring scenery is often a subject for landscape painters. Another popular painting subject, known as Motif #2, is visible from Cox Reservation as well as from Route 133. This house was the site of Ebenezer Burnham’s ship building workshop, converted to a house in the early 1800’s.

The Essex Shipbuilding Museum is owned and managed by Essex Historical Society. It is a complex of historic buildings, shipyard, and boats that includes exhibits and artifacts related to the shipbuilding industry, as well as a gift shop. The Evelina M. Goulart is one of seven historic Essex-built schooners that still survive. Built in 1927, the boat is now part of the Museum. The Lewis H. Story was commissioned by the Museum in 1998 and is a recreation of the Chebacco, a precursor to the grand fishing schooners that sailed from Cape Ann. Located behind the Museum is the Old Burying Ground, which was originally laid out in 1680.

29 Mr. Cox’s murals adorn many locations in Washington D.C., including the Capitol Rotunda and corridors in the Senate and House wings of the Capitol building.
30 Essex Reconnaissance Report, Essex County Landscape Inventory, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program.
**H.A. Burnham Boat Building and Design** abuts the Museum complex. This private shipyard specializes in constructing traditional wooden sailing vessels and has been family-owned and operated since 1819. Services include master boat design, building, repair, and sail-making as well as sailing charters aboard the Pinky Schooner *Maine*.

**Ipswich**

Surrounded by the South Green Historic District and including the historic County Road cemetery, the **South Village Green** is an open grassy common that runs along the Byway in the southern part of downtown Ipswich. Ipswich is recognized for its intact 17th century streetscapes, many of which are close to the Green.

Owned by the Town of Ipswich, the **Mary Hall-Haskell House** is located in the center of town, and is a designated Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Center, providing information to visitors about Ipswich as well the entire region.

Two other historical house museums owned by the Ipswich Historical Society are also located along the Byway: the **Heard House** and the **John Whipple House**, a National Historic Landmark. The Heard House displays artifacts and furniture from the height of the West Indies and China trade; the Whipple House, built between the mid-1600s to early 1700s, provides an example of the houses and furnishings that were familiar to wealthier New England colonists.

The **Choate Bridge** (1764) is the oldest operational stone-arch bridge in North America and is a Massachusetts Historic Landmark. It brings byway travelers across the Ipswich River just south of the **North Green** overlooking the downtown.
Rowley

The Rowley town common and surrounding homes are part of a local historic district containing 55 properties. The Platts-Bradstreet House (1677) is owned by the Rowley Historical Society. Tours are available and events are held at this location.

Town Common and Platts-Bradstreet House, Rowley

Newbury

Two of Newbury’s historic town greens are located along the Byway. The Lower Green was the original center of the town and may have been the site of the first meeting house. Upper Green, opposite the Town Hall and near the First Parish Church and Burying Ground, was used for military training.

Lower and Upper Greens, Newbury

Historic New England owns a collection of historic properties representative of First Period architecture that are open to the public either by arrangement or during regular visitor hours. The Dole-Little House is located just north of the Parker River bridge, the Tristram Coffin House and the Swett-Isley House are within the Newbury Historic District. The Spencer-Peirce Little Farm, a National Historic Landmark on Little’s Lane just off the Byway, features a stone manor house dating from 1690 that once served as the country seat of wealthy Newburyport merchants and today features family-oriented activities and programs.

Spencer-Peirce Little Farm, Newbury

Newburyport

Owned by the Historical Society of Old Newbury, the Cushing House Museum and Garden is a National Historic Landmark whose house and grounds showcase the riches of the prosperous shipbuilding era. The Society hosts special events, lectures, and children’s programs that are open to the public.
The Custom House Maritime Museum (1835) is located just off Market Square and is an Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Center. The Museum provides information to visitors about Newburyport as well as the entire region. The Custom House was designed by Robert Mills, architect of the Washington Monument and U.S. Treasury Building. Originally used as a custom house in which the federal government collected taxes on imported goods, the Museum maintains original artifacts from the prosperous trade era, and exhibits highlight Newburyport’s connection to the sea and rich maritime heritage.

Virtually all of Newburyport’s historic buildings, including the commercial properties in its restored downtown are located within the Newburyport Historic Register District. The district, featuring over 2,500 properties, is the second largest National Register district in Massachusetts.

Types of Recreational Activities and Attractions along the Byway

The byway region’s varied and accessible natural landscapes invite travelers to actively explore and participate in outdoors activities such as swimming, bicycling, birdwatching, paddling/boating, and hiking.

Paddling and Boating

Sea kayaking and canoeing as well as other types of motorized recreational boating are popular activities enjoyed within every byway community. Boaters can access waterways directly from the Byway in many cases -- including freshwater rivers and creeks, estuaries, protected bays, and the open sea. A list of boat access locations is included in the Appendix and water access sites are noted on the Byway Resource Maps.

Hiking and Walking

Each community along the Byway offers multiple hiking, walking, or strolling options. Day-hiking is a popular activity at public parks as well as many of the conservation areas, reserves, and refuges (within designated areas). Many trailheads are located right off the Byway and others accessed by a short drive from the route. A sampling of these is highlighted below to demonstrate the range of possibilities.

Three self-guided walking tours of Manchester-by-the-Sea’s Historic District highlight some of the Town’s oldest and most historically significant buildings. The West Walk, which starts at the Town Common follows Central Street, Bridge Street, Ashland Avenue, and Bennett Street and includes several of the buildings that comprise Manchester’s original commercial
center. The **East Walk** follows North Street, Washington Street, and Union Street and provides glimpses of a variety of architectural styles and periods as well as views of the waterfront, the **Abigail Hooper Trask House**, the 1661 Cemetery and the handsome HH Richardson Romanesque style public library (1887). The North Walk, which follows School Street to Rosedale Avenue begins with commercial buildings and moves along to some of the Town’s historic and architectural gems, the Union Cemetery (1845), and the granite Crowell Chapel (1902).\(^{31}\)

Swampscott’s **Olmsted Historic District** invites strollers to enjoy its peaceful residential streets that wind gently along rolling hills, mature street trees and beautiful plantings. The North Shore’s first planned subdivision (1888) provides a contrast to the organic development of other early residential clusters and insight into relationships between landscape and people.

**Downtown Rockport** offers an exceptional venue for strolling through a distinctive seaside community. Its human scale, tight development pattern, and maritime setting combine with unique shopping and dining experiences to make it popular throughout the changing New England seasons.

In contrast to neighborhood strolls, there are numerous chances for hikes through peaceful wooded uplands, many of which also provide an opportunity to learn about local histories. The former **Dogtown** settlement within a collection of preserved public lands in Rockport and Gloucester is both a great hiking location with miles of varied trails and a mysterious landscape that tells the story of an abandoned village. Likewise **Coolidge Reservation** in Manchester-by-the-Sea provides wooded trails and rocky overlooks giving majestic views of the Atlantic. Once home to a wealthy family, its landscape provides traces of this past. Rockport’s **Halibut Point** features an old granite quarry, majestic views of the Atlantic and a myriad of gentle trails.

To catch views of the ocean and still vibrant harbors, a stroll along Gloucester Harbor at **Stacey Boulevard Park**, **Lynn Shore Drive**, and Newburyport’s **Waterfront Park** provides a good chance to enjoy the scenery and glimpses of the area’s maritime past, while taking a walk along well-maintained pedestrian ways.

**Swimming**

Swimming and enjoying the beaches of the area are hallmark activities of summer in the region for residents and visitors alike. Beaches are abundant and yet often crowded and limited in capacity by parking. A list of beaches along the Byway is included in the Appendix.

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\(^{31}\) Booklets describing each of the three tours are available for a small fee at The Manchester Historical Society.
**Bicycling**

Both on- and off-road bicycling are activities enjoyed by visitors to the region. On-road bicycling is a popular activity for day excursions (with varying skill levels). Off-road bicycling is available at multiple parks and open spaces and along an increasing number of improved bikeways. Information about parks that allow off-road biking is provided in the Appendix and the location of existing and proposed bicycle trails is included on the Transportation Options and Accessways Map.

- **The Lynn-Nahant Beach Reservation Trail** -- (a little over one mile of which is on the Byway) is a multi-use path along Lynn Shore Drive that offers an alternative to busy Lynn Shore Drive.
- **The Marblehead Trail** is an unimproved trail that starts at the Byway at the Salem line and loops into Marblehead for about four miles.
- The existing one-mile **Salem multipurpose trail** connects with the Marblehead Trail and provides an alternate route to Route 114 near Salem State College. A proposed two-mile extension would extend west of the Byway.
- The one-mile **Salem Bypass Road path** is one-quarter mile from busy Bridge Street and provides access to Winter Street and the downtown.
- The 1.1-mile **Clipper City Rail Trail** in Newburyport runs between the MBTA rail station and the Merrimack River, connecting directly to the Byway on High Street.
- The Clipper City Rail Trail is part of the 28-mile, eight community **Border to Boston trail**, which begins at the New Hampshire border in Salisbury, passes through Newbury, and terminates at the Peabody line in Danvers.
- A part of the **Bay Circuit Trail**, a two hundred-mile corridor from Kingston in the south to Plum Island in Newburyport, crosses Route 1A in Newburyport.

A number of paths have also been proposed, including:

- **The Swampscott Rail Trail** would be 1.3-miles starting at Walker Road, paralleling part of Route 129, and continuing to the Swampscott/Marblehead line where it would intersect the Marblehead recreational trail.
- A 1.8-mile extension to the **Clipper City Rail Trail** in Newburyport would run along the waterfront and loop through the South End neighborhood east of downtown.
- There is active discussion in **Ipswich** concerning a proposed trail on Argilla Road that would start at the Byway and end at Crane Beach.

**EcoTourism**

With over 400 species of birds living or passing through Essex County, the area in and around the Byway is ideal for year-round birding, attracting both local enthusiasts and professional and amateur birders from all over the world. There are a few popular destinations, but birding and wildlife viewing spots are located throughout the byway region, including rivers and estuaries, marshes, dunes and sandy beaches, rocky coastlines, forests and upland meadows.

**Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury, Newburyport)**

Accessed via the northern byway community of Newbury, the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge on Plum Island is noted as one of the finest birding areas in the nation. The refuge’s wide range of habitats includes salt pannes where birders can see a large variety of shore birds during fall migration, as well as egrets and herons from spring through fall. Freshwater impoundments and an extensive swamp support numerous waterfowl, waders and shorebirds, as well as woodlands that offer views of migrating songbirds. Migratory waves of warblers, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers are primary attractions. Peregrine Falcons can be seen regularly through the fall. When the season turns cold, the waters attract a diversity of ducks and other divers including wintering loons, grebes and sea ducks. The uplands in the refuge give rest to such intriguing species as the bald eagle, rough-legged hawk, northern shrike and snowy owl.

**Joppa Flats Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary (Newburyport)**

A Mass Audubon facility is within minutes of the refuge and provides over fifty acres of habitat, plus programs that take visitors throughout the sanctuary as well as the nearby Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and the greater North Shore
region. Overlooking the Merrimack River, the solar-powered center includes interpretive displays, a conference area, a guest service area, and second story observation areas.

**Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary (Marblehead)**

Owned by Mass Audubon and located on scenic Marblehead Neck just a short ride from the Byway, a 16-acre sanctuary features swamps, thickets and woodlands that draw birding enthusiasts from afar to witness both common and rare migratory birds.

**Eastern Point Wildlife Sanctuary (Gloucester)**

Another Mass Audubon property is located on the dramatic shore of East Gloucester. The fifty-three acre Eastern Point Wildlife Sanctuary hosts migrating monarch butterflies and offers opportunities to view countless shorebirds, loons, sea ducks, and other coastal birds.

**Events and Activities**

The popularity of birding along the North Shore is highlighted by events as well as by preserved and protected environments. For example each winter, bald eagles return to the Merrimack Valley and are celebrated during the Merrimack River Eagle Festival, an event sponsored by Mass Audubon’s Joppa Flats Education Center and the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. The celebration welcomes about two thousand visitors and entertains them with on-site interpreters at eagle spotting locations, guided bus tours, live eagle demonstrations, and children’s nature activities and stage performances.

At the southern end of the Byway the love of birds is celebrated with the Cape Ann Winter Birding Weekend, offering birders from around the world an opportunity to view impressive concentrations of the area’s seabirds including loons, grebes, gannets, sea ducks, alcids and gulls. The weekend festival caters to all ages and skill levels with expert guides and tours of the Cape’s birding hot spots, including a sea trip on the Seven Seas Whale Watch boat.

While abundant wildlife other than birds exists in and around the corridor, perhaps the most popular with visitors is whale watching. Charters can be found in the byway communities of Salem, Gloucester and Newburyport.

**Types of Cultural Attractions Available along the Byway**

The cultural attractions along the Byway area represent traditions and local practices that have evolved from historical activities in the region.

**Locally Harvested and Prepared Food**

Though no longer major industries in the region, farming, fishing, and shellfish harvesting are still practiced in the byway communities. These trades, whose tools and traditions are passed along from one generation to the next, have been a part of life in the region since the first settlements were established along the coast. Appreciation of locally grown food attracts visitors to the region’s many farmers markets and farm stands. Local restaurants, as well as a number of communities, actively promote the region’s renowned seafood. The increasing interest in local fare has also sparked an interest in “farm to table” events -- meals held by local chefs and farmers in farm fields complete with tents, music and candlelight.
Artists and Artisans

Inspired by the natural landscapes of the North Shore, local artists display their work in studios and art galleries around the region. Other artisans also make a living by specializing in trades of years gone by, such as boat-building.

Music and Theatre

Most byway communities feature venues that host live musical, theatrical and dance performances. Small, independently owned movie houses are located in several communities. Additionally, student art, theatre, and music programs and performances are offered at Salem State University, Endicott College, and Montserrat College of Art.

Festivals and Shopping

Local and regional Chambers of Commerce and merchant groups support a variety of special events and festivals that attract visitors to the unique and attractive retail town and village centers along the Byway. Many of these events focus on a theme related to the historic or natural qualities of the region.

Visitor Services

Many variables can influence how travelers discover and remember a byway and its story. One key element of a successful and appealing visitor experience is the availability and quality of visitor (or traveler) services. Visitor services are directed at the needs and desired comforts of visitors and include retail and food services, information, and comfort stations and accommodations.

At present, most of individual visitor destinations categories referenced above provide visitor services at their location. However the types of services and facilities available typically vary by site, and the visitor information provided could be more consistent both in design and content.

A coordinated byway traveler services program can augment and enhance existing regional efforts by creating a coordinated traveler services package that will provide visitor information and facilities for byway travelers at regular intervals along the route. The byway visitor information should include driving directions, list of activities along the way, information on accommodations, location of comfort stations, places to shop, and suggested itineraries.

More on visitor services related to interpretation is provided in Chapter 7 and wayfinding is discussed in Chapter 6.

Retail and Food Services

Shopping and dining are listed as the top two activities for visitors to Massachusetts, and a number of the byway communities are appealing for these visitors because they provide a scenic and attractive ambience with a concentration of local retailers and variety of dining options. According to the business directories maintained by the region’s Chamber of Commerces, approximately 260 businesses classified as retailers and specialty shops are located in the byway communities. Many of these are along the Byway or a short drive off the byway route.
Travelers along the Byway will have no trouble finding places to dine and snack at a variety of restaurants and cafes located both along the Byway as well as a short drive, walk, or bike elsewhere in the byway communities. There are over 650 food service locations in the byway communities. These range from cafes, to mom and pop sandwich shops, to fast food, to fine dining. Map 8 shows the distribution of food service establishments within the byway communities and a list is included in the Appendix. Table 3 lists the number of restaurants recommended by two travel guides – AAA and Forbes. Restaurants in the byway region received ratings of between 1 and 3 marks by both of the travel organizations, reflecting the overall quality and affordability of the region’s dining options.

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<td>Marblehead Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>Sources: Chamber of Commerce membership directories, queried by type of business</td>
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<td>Rockport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ipswich</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rowley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newburyport</td>
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</table>

*AAA and Forbes do not necessarily rate the same restaurants in each community.

**AAA – restaurants rated in the byway region ranged from 1 to 3 diamonds, 2 diamond = relaxed family fare, noticeable enhancements to food and service, 3 diamond = entry level fine dining, highly trained staff.

***Forbes (Mobil ratings) – restaurants in the byway region ranged from 1 to 3 stars, 2 stars = provides freshly-prepared food and a cordial and efficient waitstaff in a clean and well-maintained setting, 3 stars = offers skillfully-prepared food with a focus on a specific style or cuisine, warm and professional service, décor is well-coordinated and in keeping with the atmosphere.

**Accommodations**

A list compiled by Essex Heritage identified approximately 120 inns, hotels, bed and breakfasts within the byway communities. This inventory does not include the number of establishments located a short drive or train ride from the Byway in other communities bordering the byway region. Map 8 shows the distribution of food service establishments within the byway communities and the list is included in the Appendix. North of Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau advertises that Essex County has “3,500 rooms priced to fit every budget and a selection to fit every vacation need.”

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33 From survey of business yellow page listings.
Map 8: Restaurants and Accommodations in the Byway Communities

Map created by Brown Walker Planners, Inc. 
Source: MassGIS, Google Maps, Chambers of Commerce, Essex Heritage
Visitor Information

**Essex National Heritage Area Visitor Centers**
In partnership with local and regional entities, Essex Heritage maintains 10 satellite visitor centers throughout the Essex National Heritage Area. Each of these is housed within an existing heritage site or visitor center and provides an assortment of information on unique places and activities in the region.

Five of the Essex Heritage affiliated visitor centers are located along the Byway:

- Lynn – Lynn Museum & Historical Society
- Salem – National Park Service Regional Visitor Center
- Gloucester – Stage Fort Park Welcoming Center
- Ipswich – Hall-Haskell House
- Newburyport – Custom House Maritime Museum

**North of Boston Convention & Visitor’s Bureau**
The North of Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau (NBCVB) is a private, nonprofit, membership-based organization whose mission is to promote Essex County as a travel destination. To accomplish its mission, the NBCVB works cooperatively with state, regional, and local partners, including the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, Essex Heritage, and local chambers to promote visitation throughout the region.

The NBCVB operates the Maria Miles Visitor Center located at Exit 60 on Route 95 Southbound in Salisbury, MA - about four miles from the northern end of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway in Newburyport. According to the NBCVB, about 500,000 visitors pass through the visitor center annually. The staffed facility is equipped with restrooms and provides visitor information.

Visitor information available from NBCVB includes:
- Visitor guide (on-line and print)
- Topical list of activities and sites (on-line)
- Calendar of events (on-line)
- Regional map and driving directions (on-line and print)
- Travelogues (on-line)
- Weather (on-line)
- Special promotions (on-line)
- Hotel reservations (on-line)
- *Escapes North* guide to cultural events (on-line and print)

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35 NBCVB is one of 13 regional tourism councils that are part of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT).
Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce

This organization serves the communities of Essex, Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport. The Chamber runs a seasonal information booth located on the Byway in Rockport and a visitor center on Commercial Street in Gloucester.

Visitor information provided by the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce includes:

- Cape Ann Visitor Guide (on-line and print)
- Trip planner – capeannvacations.com
- Driving Directions
- Themed list of activities and attractions (on-line)
- Calendar of events (on-line)
- Dining and shopping guide (on-line)
- Community visitor information websites for Gloucester, Essex, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport (on-line)

Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce

Located in downtown Newburyport, the Chamber represents businesses and organizations from Newburyport and surrounding communities as well as from around the North Shore and Southern New Hampshire. In addition to the information provided during office hours year-round, the Chamber runs a seasonal information booth near Newburyport’s Waterfront Park located on the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway.

Visitor information provided by the Greater Newburyport Chamber of Commerce:

- Visitor Guide (on-line and print)
- Stay in the Loop monthly e-mail newsletter
- Dining, lodging, shopping guide (on-line)
- Themed list of activities (on-line)
- Calendar of events (on-line)

Visitor Services for Non-Auto Travelers

Due to the multi-modal nature of the Byway, visitor services for those travelers not using cars are also an important consideration.

Bicyclists

Unlike some byways that are very remote—a deterrent to some cyclists—the Byway’s services found at nodes along its length enable cyclists to travel light and stop as needed. Nine bicycle shops providing a variety of services (sales, repairs, rentals) are found along the Byway.

Several organized bicycling clubs, in addition to many local ad hoc bicycling groups, exist along the corridor. North Shore Cyclists is a recreational bike club that offers programs and activities for the entire range of bicycle enthusiasts with or without membership status. Essex County Velo (ECV), a nonprofit, volunteer organization, is dedicated to spreading the joy of cycling and actively supports advocacy and volunteerism. The ECV yearly hosts races known as the Gran Prix in Gloucester, Salem, and Beverly attracting competitors from all over the US, Canada, and Europe.

Information and guides for cyclists are relatively sparse. Rubel Bike Map’s Eastern Massachusetts Bicycle Map is a widely available bike map for cyclists traveling through the byway communities. Salem has a municipal map showing bike facilities; Newburyport and Marblehead have free commercial ad maps that include bike trails, but not bike lanes or recommended...
on-street routes. Salem is also in the process of preparing a bicycle plan that will identify on- and off-street paths and lanes, bike routes, and shared roadways.

**Rail Travelers**

Traveler information available at the thirteen commuter rail stations along the route is limited to train schedules and emergency services. Visitor services that might connect rail travelers to byway destinations is provided in some locations, but not consistently in all communities.

**Recreational Boaters**

Several paddling clubs extensively use the Byway’s water resources for training, tours, day trips and expeditions. North Shore Paddlers is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping paddlers safely enjoy the sport of sea kayaking. Its members range from novice to seasoned adventurer, and its offerings include frequent and varied outings, community outreach, and environmental stewardship opportunities. North Shore Outrigger Canoe Club based in Salem Sound promotes the sport of Hawaiian outrigger canoe racing by providing recreational and competitive paddling opportunities.

The depth of the Byway’s paddling resources within the Great Marsh from Rockport to Newburyport (and beyond) are well illustrated in *The Kayakers Guide to the Great Marsh*. This web-guide is map based and delineates car-top boat put-in/take-out locations, suggested water trails, and a selection of historic, cultural and recreational prospects with map icons. It also offers other information including photographs of access sites and scenic vistas, general information on boating hazards that may be encountered, parking availability, site access conditions, web links and more.37

**Hikers**

Although a number of the communities provide self-guided walking tour maps and brochures, hiking guides are primarily provided for individual properties owned by The Trustees of Reservations, Essex County Greenbelt, and those managed by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Local advisory group members and participants in the byway corridor management plan public meetings indicated interest in creating trail maps and guides (both print and online) for open space properties within their municipalities.

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**Recommendations for Enhancing the Visitor Experience**

A primary goal of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway should be to help visitors enjoy and appreciate the corridor’s resources. At the core of the visitor’s experience is the ability to easily find sites and services along the Byway that are welcoming and informative or contemplative. Regardless of the intensity or interest of the scenery, the route should be a pleasant part of the travel experience, with minimal intrusions and inconveniences. Sites themselves should be high quality and engaging, whether the visitor is looking for information, relaxation, or recreation.

The following chapters focus on different elements of the Visitor Experience and address a variety of ways to help improve and enhance the Byway’s appeal for visitors. Highlighted here are some of the key ideas that are addressed in more detail in other chapters. Many of these ideas were raised in discussions with Local Advisory Group members as well as in interviews with byway stakeholders.

**Provide Gateway Entry Points**

Gateway entry points are the primary access points to the Byway and provide an opportunity to announce and introduce a traveler to the Byway. These may also be located near a significant byway traveler site or have particular scenic attributes. When a scenic byway route is linear and does not intersect with other major routes, its two endpoints provide logical locations for gateway areas. However, the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway is more complex; instead of two clearly defined starting points, there are multiple access points to the Byway. Nevertheless, there are a few principal points of entry to the Byway based on prevailing travel patterns and can be classified as the primary gateways.

**Lynn Heritage State Park, Lynn**

From the south, Route 1A in Lynn intersects the Byway at the intersection of Market Street and the Carroll Parkway. The Lynn Heritage State Park, just north of this point, represents a logical and attractive southern beginning point for the corridor. Services at this site include parking and a waterfront park area with harbor views and boat access. To create a

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37 [http://www.8tb.org/kayak.htm](http://www.8tb.org/kayak.htm).
compelling beginning for the Byway, amenities need to be expanded to include restrooms and orientation. Orientation should include a map of the Byway showing key landmarks, natural features, and visitor sites. Information should also be available to help visitors take advantage of local resources and services including historic sites and the cafés along Broad Street. In the immediate area of the Lynn Heritage State park, opportunities exist to improve the physical environment with beautification, lighting, and wayfinding from the train station and parking area.

Grant Circle, Gloucester
At its mid-point in Gloucester, the Byway intersects Route 128 at Grant Circle (Route 127 and Washington Street). A gateway welcome sign at Grant Circle would provide a highly visible invitation to the Byway. Following Washington Street one mile south from Grant Circle brings travelers to Stacy Boulevard Park on Gloucester Harbor and the famous Man and at the Wheel statue. This scenic and symbolic setting could be a location for a gateway information kiosk or booth for the Byway. Parking is available along the road.

Atkinson Common, Newburyport
From the north, travelers from I-95 can join the Byway via Storey Avenue in Newburyport at Atkinson Common, a historic park. Parking is available along the road, and the park offers a pleasant area for relaxing and strolling. Gateway features could include both a welcome sign as well as orientation information about the Byway. An historic lookout tower, currently inaccessible due to construction needs, would be a compelling location for the orientation, though other signage may also be needed as the Tower is interior to the site and not immediately visible.

Add Wayside Contact Stations
Most communities along the Byway cater to visitors with varying intensities of local attractions and services. Contact stations should be dispersed along the corridor to provide visitors easy to identify stopping and orienting points. At a minimum, these contact stations could be a kiosk in an existing park, plaza or visitor site, or at a business location with an accommodating outdoor space. This effort should be coordinated with related initiatives to serve a variety of visitor needs and to enhance marketing opportunities for the host community.

Maintain Livability of City, Town and Village Centers
City, town and village centers are an integral part of the byway travel experience. They are some of the most likely stopping points because they offer basic traveler services: food, fuel, and lodging. They can also offer a counterpoint to the resources or experience the traveler is seeking. They may provide a neighborhood playground, toy store or movie theatre, a quality music venue, or a unique shopping experience.

It is important to maintain a high quality visitor experience within these centers. To maximize community benefits as well, municipalities should focus on physical characteristics including walkability, local character, cleanliness and safety. The look and feel of city, town and village centers can be addressed through zoning and regulations, local clean up, beautification, or safety initiatives, as well as capital improvements. Many centers are home to historic sites and districts that should be highlighted. Walking or bicycling tours are an excellent tool for inviting visitors to these important resources. More on management of the Byway is included in Chapter 9.

Improve and Maintain Quality of Resources
Visitors will judge the Byway by the quality of the sites they visit as well as by the journey along the roadway itself. The experiences should be complementary; with the journey providing context to the sites and resources, and the sites offering opportunities for immersion, whether for education, relaxation, or recreation. The quality of visitor facilities and resources is of critical importance.

Key Visitor Sites
Key visitor sites listed in previous sections should act as cornerstones of the byway experience and should provide a distinct and rewarding encounter. To ensure a quality and consistent visitor experience, these visitor sites should:

- Be easy to find and accessible to visitors of varying abilities.
- Provide basic visitor information and services: restrooms and orientation materials.
- Provide interpretation that connects to all or a piece of the byway story (though other information and stories may be featured as well.)
- Engage a variety of skill and interest levels to satisfy a broad visitor base.
Provide byway representatives (staff or volunteers) who act as the face of a destination, can share knowledge about available resources, and tell how the site fits into the byway story.

**Trails and Launches**

Recreational sites including trails and boat launching areas may be the primary destinations for byway travelers interested in hiking, bicycling, paddling and boating. Signage, parking, and accessibility are needed. Key components include:

- Trailheads, trails, ramps, piers, parking areas and other facilities that are well maintained, attractive, and safe
- Entry points should have basic information about the site, including trail lengths and conditions, rules for use, applicable warnings, and other helpful information
- When appropriate, interpretative signs and displays should be integrated into these sites to add another dimension to the visitor’s experience.

Stewardship and maintenance, for trails in particular, is often heavily dependent on volunteers. Bike clubs, scout troops, environmental organizations, and others are excellent partners for one time projects or on-going maintenance. All volunteers should be given appropriate training and oversight as well as recognition and credit.

Trail maintenance was mentioned as a priority need among site managers during byway stakeholder interviews. Community members identified the need to more comprehensively map trails and launches to improve local use and enhance regional marketing.

**Byway Bicycle Route**

The on-road bicycling experience of the Byway could be enhanced through the establishment of a companion bikeway. This could become a more formalized route through a combination of online mapping and on-the-ground signs. There are a number of options for “establishing” the Essex Coastal Scenic Bikeway, from state legislation creating the route as one of the Commonwealth’s numbered bike routes (like the Boston–Provincetown Claire Saltonstall Bikeway), to posting and promoting it through state, regional, and local tourism agencies and organizations and including the route on MassDOT’s online interactive Bicycle Facilities Map. ⁴⁸

**View Corridors**

The Byway’s scenic views range from passing glimpses of historic homes or marshland to expansive ocean views. These are important resources, which should be managed to highlight and preserve community resources and enhance tourism. Efforts should be made to increase opportunities for visitors to enjoy these glimpses by developing pull offs where appropriate and trimming excess vegetation that may limit views. Efforts should also focus on maximizing the impact of views by protecting the supporting landscape, such as by controlling incompatible development nearby. Another opportunity for improving scenic views is to add meaning through interpretation. For example an interesting idea - from a local advisory group meeting - is to create interpretation tools that tell the story of former grand hotels and summer mansions that once graced the oceanfront in Swampscott (and blocked ocean views during that era).

**Commercial Services**

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway is blessed with a multitude of services oriented to the traveling public including service stations, motels, bed & breakfasts, restaurants, outfitters, and various entertainment venues. The key to enhancing visitors’ experiences is to ensure desired services are visible through appropriate signage and marketing. Byway marketing should include commercial services along the Byway that meet specific needs of travelers. Local marketing should also help visitors find services off the Byway. Marketing is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 5 and more information on signage for the Byway is provided in Chapter 6.

**Universal Accessibility**

For the Byway to be welcoming to all travelers, accessibility for people with different levels of physical ability and mobility must be established consistently throughout the corridor. Access applies to both buildings including shops, restaurants, comfort stations, and visitor destinations as well as outside resources and activities including walking trails, beaches and waterways. Appropriate parking, wide doorways, level entrances, handrails, paved trails, smooth sidewalks, motorized or

⁴⁸ http://services.massdot.state.ma.us/MapTemplate/BikeNetwork
specialized transport and proper height of amenities including fountains, sinks, tables and signs are some elements of universally accessible sites.

In addition to addressing access for mobility limitations, the byway program must consider how to make interpretation and other information easy to access and enjoy for people with limited hearing, sight, motor skills and knowledge of English. Access should be considered when developing marketing tools and visitor information as well as on-site interpretation. Some ways to increase access to a universal audience are with guided audio tours, easy to read print, Braille and tactile signage, multi-language interpretation.

While many visitor sites today meet building and access codes, byway stakeholders identified needs for accessible boardwalks and trails, ramps for historic homes, and interpretation that is more considerate of various limitations.