

## Chapter 8

# Economic Development

Economic development that supports and enhances communities and preserves and promotes intrinsic qualities is a primary focus of the byway program. This chapter proposes ideas for guiding economic development through tourism. It also describes ways that commercial traffic and access to businesses along the route can be accommodated while ensuring the safety of byway travelers.

### Regional Economic Assets

The economy of the North Shore region, where the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway (Byway) is located, is focused on health care, advanced manufacturing, creative economy, tourism and bio-tech business clusters.<sup>60</sup> Two of these industries – tourism and the creative economy - have direct relation to the economic opportunities of the Byway.

### TOURISM

Throughout the region, state, and nation, tourism is recognized as a powerful economic development tool. It creates jobs, provides new business opportunities and strengthens local economies. Tourism can also be a catalyst that helps communities protect natural and cultural treasures and improve the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. In multiple communities along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway corridor, tourism is the foundation of the local economy. In all byway communities tourism plays some role in the local economy. The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission's (MVPC) Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) states "foster tourism through the enhancement and protection of the region's natural resources and historic structures" as a goal and also highlights the region's ideal location and potential to attract visitors.

**Cultural heritage tourism**, the primary potential market of the Byway, is defined by The National Trust for Historic Preservation as "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural attractions."<sup>61</sup>



Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Salem

Tourism also includes travel for recreation. **Adventure tourism** includes a physical activity, along with a cultural exchange or interaction, and engagement with nature. The Essex Heritage Area, through which the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway passes, supports an established and growing adventure tourism market which includes activities such as kayaking, biking, boating, hiking, bird watching, fishing and scuba diving; these are activities that are linked to the exceptional natural areas along the Byway. Opportunities exist for increasing this economic niche through improved access and marketing, and expansion of outfitters and service providers. More about marketing and the Byway is included in Chapter 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (2009 Annual Update) MAPC and *Merrimack Valley Community Economic Development Strategy* (2008) MVPC.

<sup>61</sup>The National Trust for Historic Preservation, *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Cultural Heritage Tourism*



Kayakers and boats at Crane Beach, Ipswich

**Agritourism** can be generally defined as recreational travel undertaken to agricultural areas or to participate in agricultural activities.<sup>62</sup> It is often associated with, or can be defined more specifically as, the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agri-business operation for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation.<sup>63</sup> A number of communities along the Byway are positioned to highlight resources that support agritourism, working farms, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, farm stands, harvest festivals, and farmers markets. Agritourism is also supported by the “local food” or “eat local” movement: an initiative that seeks to build and support more locally based, self-sustaining food economies which contribute to greater economic, environmental and social health for the host community and region. The Byway’s story of human interaction with the landscape has a direct relationship to agritourism.

Supporting agriculture also has community benefits other than economic. In its regional plan, *MetroFuture*, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) recommends building a stronger market for local agricultural products as one of its Implementation Strategies to support protection of natural landscapes.



Apple orchards of Tendercrop Farms, Newbury

## CREATIVE ECONOMY

The creative economic cluster refers to the mix of commercial businesses and nonprofit organizations that produce cultural products. On the commercial side, this cluster includes artists and art galleries, graphic designers, architects, advertising, emerging media, and publishing. Nonprofits include museums, performing arts spaces, and art and music schools. The Greater Boston region (including the byway communities) is considered the New England center for this economic sector.<sup>64</sup> Merrimack Valley Planning Commission’s (MVPC) Community Economic Development Strategy lists “provide region-wide networking opportunities for artists and other creative economy participants” under actions to promote tourism in the region.

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.travel-industry-dictionary.com/agritourism>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.trailsrus.com/agritourism/definition>

<sup>64</sup> *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (2009 Annual Update) MAPC and



Gallery, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Firehouse Center for the Performing Arts, Newburyport

All of these business types are represented throughout the thirteen communities as both small and large employers. Local artists are well-represented in galleries and studios in most of the byway communities. Larger facilities such as the Lynn Memorial Auditorium, the new Shalin Liu Performance Center in Rockport and the Firehouse Center in Newburyport are among the numerous venues that host musical, theatrical and dance performances. Art and theatre programs are provided by Salem State University, Endicott College, and the Montserrat College of Art. Museums include the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM), the Cape Ann Museum, and a number of smaller exhibit spaces and historic properties.

## TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

The extent and diversity of the region's transportation networks – including road, commuter rail, bus, and bike -- are highlighted as an economic asset by regional planners and tourism organizations.<sup>65</sup> The interrelationship between the adequacy of transportation systems and economic development is widely recognized. Businesses, industries, and service providers rely on an efficient network to move products and supplies and to provide access for workers and other travelers. MAPC's MetroFuture regional plan addresses transportation's relationship with economic development in two of its Implementation Strategies – Focus Economic Growth and Coordinate Transportation Alternatives. The plan highlights consideration of transit access when identifying economic growth locations. It also supports implementing roadway design best practices that accommodate all transportation modes and establishing priority for transit and bicycles through dedicated lanes in congested locations. MVP's Community Economic Development Strategy lists -- prioritize pedestrian and bike-oriented transportation planning, promote transit-oriented development, and increase public transportation options – as actions to support the goal to direct investment to priority development sites and town centers.

In the byway region, transportation networks bring tourists in and enable local products to be distributed efficiently. At the same time, in the densely populated byway region, diversity of transportation options is essential. There are measurable economic impacts from roadway congestion—in lost productivity, increased costs of goods and services, and diminished quality of life.

Transportation options should be promoted as an important part of the byway traveler experience, expanding the visitor-base to a broader market. The Byway could be looked at as a series of pedestrian orientated nodes connected by roads, public transit, bikeways, and even waterways. Viewed this way, efforts could be made to improve access and safety for all types of transportation between these nodes and improve pedestrian and bicycle accommodations within the nodes. Marketing the Byway as a multi-modal route would be reinforced by increased connectivity between transit locations and visitor locations as well as by provision of convenient parking and shuttle services that enable byway travelers to stop along the way and easily get around without a car.

<sup>65</sup> Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2008) MVP "Existing Conditions", North of Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau web page ([www.northofboston.org](http://www.northofboston.org)).

## Potential Economic Benefits from the Byway

### LEVERAGING REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Initiatives that bring together business, government, and community groups around regional economic growth and development goals have been noted as a key component of the region's economic prosperity (and a key economic challenge).<sup>66</sup> MAPC's MetroFuture initiative was one such effort that involved more than 1,000 residents in a conversation about the region's resources, challenges, and prospects for the future. Similarly, the byway program is a means to bring together stakeholders and community members representing both the private and public sector to use the Byway as one more tool in the toolbox to support regional economic prosperity – encouraging regional partners to identify opportunities, pool resources, and make coordinated investments. One of Metrofuture's Implementation Strategies to increase regional collaboration is to “increase intermunicipal park/greenway/trail planning” which should be a priority project area of the byway program.

### GROWING LOCAL ECONOMIES

#### Cultural Heritage Tourism

Historic preservation is increasingly recognized as a major contributor to tourism, thereby supporting economic development and community quality of life.

- A 2002 study by the Massachusetts Historical Commission examined the statewide economic effects of historic preservation. The study noted that historic preservation has direct economic impacts -- from labor and material purchases made specifically for preservation activities – as well as indirect (and induced) economic impacts – through related expenditures to local businesses from households and industries.<sup>67</sup>
- The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission has identified the enhancement and protection of natural and historic resources as one of the primary goals for supporting tourism in its 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region.<sup>68</sup>

Some ways to strengthen preservation as an economic development strategy include:

- Publicizing the direct and indirect economic impacts of preservation activities;
- Creating local preservation plans;<sup>69</sup>
- Seeking out cooperative ventures that involve preservation and economic development agencies and organizations;
- Providing economic incentives to businesses and homeowners;
- Increasing funding for local preservation programs and activities;
- Integrating preservation into local government policy and regulations;
- Coordinating existing local area revitalization efforts in each community with byway initiatives.

For support with preservation planning and initiatives communities can look to agencies such as the Massachusetts Historical Commission and organizations such as Preservation Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Historical Commission is a state agency that provides technical and planning assistance to municipalities and administers the federal grants-in-aid program for survey and planning projects as well as a state matching grant program for restoration, rehabilitation, and research of properties listed in the State Register. Preservation Massachusetts is the statewide nonprofit organization that actively promotes the preservation of historic buildings and landscapes as a positive force for economic development and the retention of community character. Preservation Massachusetts focuses on legislative initiatives, education; partnership building; networking, and events.

<sup>66</sup> *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2009 Annual Update)* MAPC

<sup>67</sup> Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Massachusetts*, May 2002.

<sup>68</sup> Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, *Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> In 2005 most Byway communities took part in the Heritage Landscape Inventory program offered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation (DCR) and the Essex National Heritage Commission (Essex Heritage). The resulting documentation, local reconnaissance reports, identify significant unprotected landscape resources, discuss associated planning issues and offer survey and planning recommendations. These are useful documents to reference.

## Creative Economy

An effective way to support the area’s creative economy is to enhance quality-of-place and quality-of-life, objectives shared by the byway program. Richard Florida, social theorist and author notes “the dramatic advances in technology that have helped empower talent, have also made work forces more mobile and less tied to traditional employment centers. This has enabled young, creative professionals to make place and quality-of-life issues their first priority in choosing where to live and pursue work.” Further research on the subject by James Richards, ASLA, revealed a number of physical attributes most favored by participants of the creative economy.<sup>70</sup>

- An interconnected green framework of parks and paths
- Walkability, connectivity, route choice and corner locations for commerce
- Distinctive, self-contained neighborhoods
- Mixed-use urban villages
- A range of viable transportation choices
- A vital realm of public spaces and walkable streets
- A wealth of “third places” distinct from home and work that foster informal gathering, conversing, and exchanging ideas
- Old buildings and districts that lend character, authenticity and provide low rent options
- A range of cultural opportunities
- A stimulus-rich environment that engages both the senses and the intellect

The urban centers along the Byway should consider these community characteristics and evaluate their capacity to build upon their current community inventory to move toward these ideals.

## Agritourism

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway’s economic strategies should include promotion of **art, antiques, and food**. These are all prominent cultural elements of byway communities and examples of authentic local businesses. Activities that can be coordinated and promoted byway-wide include:

- Open studio tours of artists and artisans (already offered in many byway communities);
- Farmers markets and farm stands (Essex Heritage developed a guide to farm and farmstands);
- Specialty cuisine and fine dining with a local flavor.
- Food Festivals (such as the Essex Clam Fest)



Farm and Farm Stand, Newbury

These businesses and events help define communities along the Byway, are substantial tourist draws, and are integral to local economies. Byway communities should consider policies and regulations that help grow these businesses as well, including supportive live-work housing, outside dining, and innovative sign ordinances.

<sup>70</sup> Placemaking for the Creative Class by James Richards, ASLA, Landscape Architecture, February 2007

## Adventure Tourism

The growing number of adventure travelers will expand the need for increased services for cyclists and paddlers, and other adventure seekers, including **retailers, outfitters and guides**. Finding adventures off the beaten path such as paddling the miles of coastal or inland waterways, scuba diving off the rocky Cape Ann coast, or hiking or biking woodland trails can be made more accessible to a wider audience when a guide is part of the experience. An economic strategy for the Byway should encourage local outfitters, and area experts, to provide guide services that can be featured in byway promotional materials. Local colleges or land managers may be interested in creating a certified guide training program to increase awareness of the area's natural resources and to provide technical and leadership training.



Sign for scuba divers, Rockport

Communities should seek ways to support adventure travelers by increasing access to, and amenities at sites they would visit. This could include identifying and installing new launch sites for paddlers, increasing parking at launches and trail heads; increasing and improving off road bike trails and increasing visibility of assets through signs, and web and printed promotional material. Bicycle and paddle clubs, as well as local and regional merchants and service providers are potential partners.

## Year-Round Attractions

Presently, the tourism season of the Byway is largely concentrated within the summer months when the full glory of the coast is on display; although harvest and the “leaf peeping” season creates activity within many communities, and Halloween is of particular prominence to Salem. The Byway should seek to **distribute demand across the seasons** by working to increase visitation in the fall, winter and spring. Historic sites are accessible and enjoyable year round [depending on heating of site], birding is often at its best outside the summer season, New England’s fall and winter holidays offer abundant opportunities for tourism in the out-of-doors and in decorated homes, and art, literary, theater and music venues are year round resources.

## Alternative Transit

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway has a tremendous opportunity to expand the typical byway user base due to the variety of transportation choices available to visitors. Alternative transportation options also increasingly appeal to tourists interested in reducing their “carbon footprint.”

A wonderful feature of the Byway is that transportation options already exist and only need to be promoted as part of a coordinated byway marketing strategy (see Chapter 5). Goods and services related to alternative transportation include:

- Water-based – kayaks and canoe rentals, ferry services, charter boats, services for private vessels
- Cycling – bicycle rentals, bike service shops, guided tours
- Walking – self- and leader-guided tours
- Rail – shuttle services to and from train stops
- Bus – guided bus tours

## Restaurants and Lodging

Restaurants and lodging make a significant contribution to local economies along the Byway. For example, an informal count of lodging options along and near the Byway note over 125 hotels, motels, inns, and Bed and Breakfast establishments. Restaurants and food services are even more prevalent and are not only integral to the local economy, but contribute to the character and quality of life in many byway communities as well. Because restaurants and accommodations are required services for most all byway travelers, these businesses are well positioned to benefit from the byway program, through partnerships in promotion, marketing, event planning and fund raising.

## Considerations for the Byway Program

### ASSESSING THE BYWAY'S IMPACT

As part of its Congressionally-designated function of providing technical assistance to local byway groups, America's Byways Resource Center has developed an Economic Impact Tool that allows local byway staff and/or volunteers to easily measure the impacts of Byways and byway-related activities in their communities. The Economic Impact Tool is a Microsoft Excel-based software program with a user-friendly interface, allowing even novice computer users to generate economic impact figures for their regions. Assessing the Byway's economic impact should be a part of any economic strategy.<sup>71</sup>

### SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMIC GOALS

While communities along the byway corridor share a collection of resources (historic sites, parks, natural and scenic areas) that together define the character of the Byway, each community has different economic development goals that are related to particular economic assets, quality of life, and overall fiscal health. For this reason, each community may choose to utilize the Byway's economic benefits in different ways. To some communities, the primary economic goal related to the Byway may be preservation of community character by increasing capacity to preserve local historic or natural resources. For others, the primary goal may be to generate increased tourism traffic to support existing local tourism-related businesses. In other cases, the community may identify a new opportunity for economic development that is created by the Byway. Local and regional economic development goals will need to carefully consider these differences.

### BYWAY BICYCLE ROUTE

As discussed in Chapter 4, a companion bikeway route could be established that follows byway roads. Once the route has been developed through both online and on-the-ground methods, private mapping companies and tours could be approached about including the bikeway on their maps.

### ACCOMMODATING COMMERCE ALONG THE BYWAY ROUTE

Commercial traffic along the Byway includes cargo trucks, construction equipment, trucks that transport large boats, and other oversized vehicles. In general, all modes of commercial transportation can be accommodated on the byway roadways without additional separation or restrictions. These oversized vehicles do not experience difficulty operating on most byway roadways as the roads typically have twelve-foot or greater travel lanes plus at least a narrow shoulder area.

Consideration should be given to locations along the Byway where non-motorized accommodation is desired for roads or highways considered for potential National Scenic Byway designation. The Commonwealth's *Complete Streets* approach to roadway design begins with the premise that the right-of-way will be designed and maintained to enable safe access for all users. Analyzing byway roadway segments to assess the needs of commercial traffic and other large vehicles focuses on determining if there is a need to provide separation between users and how this could be accomplished if necessary.

Key factors to assess the need to separate pedestrians and cyclists from commercial traffic and other large vehicles include:

- Width of travel lanes
- Motor vehicle speeds
- Daily traffic volumes
- Daily pedestrian and bicycle volumes
- Truck and bus activity per hour

Massachusetts law does not allow truck exclusions on state-numbered routes. Further, truck exclusions from municipal roadways are permitted only under certain circumstances. The key criteria for truck exclusion on a local roadway include if there a suitable alternative route available; if there is at least five percent heavy commercial vehicles, if heavy wheel loads will result in severe deterioration of the roadway, and if land use is primarily residential and the municipality has requested exclusion only during hours of darkness.

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<sup>71</sup> America's Byways Resource Center's Economic Impact Tool can be accessed through America's Byways Resource Center's website: <http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/resources/specialprojects/economicimpacttool/>

For other types of separation of trucks and other motor vehicles from non-motorized vehicles, the *Project Development and Design Guide* released in 2008 by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation recommends separate accommodations for all users in moderate to high-density areas with high levels of activity, where speed differentials are great, where there are high motor vehicle volumes and high pedestrian and bicycle volumes, and relatively high speeds. Very little of the Byway is characterized this way. Widening the road to accomplish complete separation is not necessary in most instances and is not feasible in many locations due to severe right-of-way constraints.

Most byway roads have generous travel lanes; vehicle speeds under forty mph; motor vehicle volumes between 10,000 and 18,000 vehicles per day (vpd); and low pedestrian and bicycle volumes. Although some byway roads carry high volumes of vehicle traffic, the percent of trucks and large vehicles is estimated to be modest (2.5%) in most cases, generally fewer than thirty per hour. One roadway along the Byway provides complete separation of users: Lynn Shore Drive in Lynn in the southern end of the Byway carries the highest volumes of any roadway segment along the Byway (25,400 vpd). A DCR parkway, Lynn Shore Drive is restricted to pleasure vehicles only and has a separate waterside path for pedestrians and cyclists. This treatment requires extensive right-of-way that is not typically available along most of the Byway without potentially impacting the roadway environment and scenic qualities.

Partial sharing and overlap between motor vehicles and cyclists is the more desirable accommodation for most of the Byway. In areas of moderate to high density, including town centers, with low to moderate speeds, providing travel lanes wide enough for truck and bus traffic with four-foot shoulders and sidewalks provide appropriate separation. In some of the rural stretches of the Byway where pedestrians are not present, marked shoulders (no sidewalk) can accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. In dense town centers with high levels of activity, low average speeds, and limited right-of-way, some travel lanes can be narrowed to maintain a narrow shoulder for bikes. Where parking or other constraints eliminate any usable shoulder, "Share the Road" signs and the newly approved "shared lane markings" may be used to alert all users that cyclists may occupy a portion of the travel lane.