



Louisiana Great River Road

CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Louisiana Office of Tourism

Louisiana Byways Program



Updated May 2018



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The Louisiana Office of Tourism and the Byway Planning Team express their appreciation to everyone who participated in a meeting or discussion about the Louisiana Great River Road and this Corridor Management Plan.

Funding Statement

The original Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan was funded through a grant received from the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration. Subsequent Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan updates and CMP implementation efforts have been funded through the Louisiana Office of Tourism.

Web Site Information

Louisiana Great River Road National Byway information can be found at LouisianaByways.com and on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission website at ExperienceMississippiRiver.com.



Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Adoption

The original Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan and its reference library materials were adopted as the official management guide of the Louisiana Office of Tourism. This updated document replaces previous documents pertaining to the management of the Louisiana Great River Road as an official Louisiana Byway.

Approved and Adopted: May 18, 2018

By:



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PLEASE NOTE: Numbers in parenthesis refer to topics (Federal Register Vol. 69, No 96) that require attention by the Federal Highway Administration in a National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.



Executive Summary

The Louisiana Great River Road is the longest byway in Louisiana and indeed one of the most important corridors of archeology, history, culture, recreational opportunity, natural resources, and scenic beauty in the United States. More than 700 miles of public highways and streets connect leisure travelers—residents and visitors alike—with Louisiana’s rural towns, historic sites, antebellum homes and plantations, the State Capitol, New Orleans’ French Quarter, history of the Louisiana Purchase, and all the local food, music, and amazing sights in between. Louisiana’s hospitality and “Feed Your Soul” bring it all together with a road that delivers all the authenticity of more than 300 years of this country’s history.

The Federal Highway Administration; the Lieutenant Governor’s Office; the Louisiana Office of Tourism; the Louisiana Byways Commission; and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development along with scores of local agencies, organizations and individuals recognize that while the Mississippi River and the Great River Road are parallel, the fact that they exist side by side to connect people with their cultural, natural, and historic roots is unparalleled in the United States.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism provides the collaborative management of the Louisiana Great River Road as a designated Louisiana Byway. In doing so it has adopted **The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan** as the central mechanism for **stewarding** the intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road, **interpreting** those resources for the traveling public, and **planning** for the long-term future of this nationally treasured road. A proven and well-tested model for planning a byway is provided by the Federal Highway Administration in the form of its 14-point outline of key needs and opportunities that usually surround successfully managed and designated byways. Louisiana has adopted this format for all state-designated byways and key findings and recommendations for the Louisiana Great River Road follow:

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- 1. Great River Road Route:** The 717-mile Louisiana Great River Road is designated on the west and east banks of the Mississippi River using public highways, roads, and streets as well as 11 river crossings to provide a continuous route from Arkansas and Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.
- 2. Intrinsic Qualities:** Nationally and internationally significant intrinsic resources exist along the corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road including archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic resources.
- 3. Maintaining and Enhancing the Byway's Intrinsic Qualities:** The Louisiana Office of Tourism is well equipped with programs and expertise to manage and enhance many of the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road. Active partnerships with the private sector are essential to long-term stewardship of the byway's assets.
- 4. Responsibilities for the Byway:** The Louisiana Office of Tourism is the central corridor management organization for the Louisiana Great River Road. The Department of Transportation and Development and various local public and private organizations share specific intrinsic resource stewardship, interpretation, and travel responsibilities.
- 5. Development and Preservation Strategies:** Many of the significant intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road are in public ownership and under long-term public management. Efforts to recognize, sustain, and expand preservation of resources held in private ownership are being increased.
- 6. Public Participation:** The public—citizens and vested stakeholders—have continuous opportunities to communicate with the Louisiana Office of Tourism regarding concerns and opportunities for the Louisiana Great River Road. Likewise, Great River Road travelers have numerous opportunities to

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obtain information and express their satisfaction with the Great River Road travel experience.

- 7. Byway Safety:** Traffic safety on the Louisiana Great River Road is supported by Department of Transportation and Development roadway design standards, local enforcement of traffic regulations, and providing up-to-date roadway condition and traffic information to travelers.
- 8. Commerce and User Facilities:** All types of motor vehicle, including tour buses, are supported by the Louisiana Great River Road. The companion Mississippi River Trail (MRT) provides the main spine for pedestrians and bicyclists along the route. Emphasis is placed on maintaining and adding facilities and amenities that jointly support motorized and non-motorized travel.
- 9. Efforts to Minimize Intrusions and Enhance Experiences:** A wide variety of efforts—communications, information sharing, interpretation, roadside management, pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, visitor amenities, vegetation management and sensitive design in capital improvements—will be encouraged among all land and resource managers associated with the Louisiana Great River Road.
- 10. Outdoor Advertising:** The importance of reducing visual intrusions along the Louisiana Great River Road continues with effective and legal control, management, and regulation of outdoor advertising by local governments and the Department of Transportation and Development.
- 11. Signage:** A soon-to-be-undertaken comprehensive and uniform wayshowing program (maps, signage and travel directions) by the Louisiana Office of Tourism and the Department of Transportation and Development will provide travelers with practical and state-of-the-art assistance to support self- navigation of the route.



- 12. Marketing:** Success in sustaining and increasing leisure travel on the Louisiana Great River Road is the product of continual marketing and promotion programs at the international, national, state and local levels and delivering authentic visitor experiences.
- 13. Roadway Design Standards:** The physical environment—the roadway and its adjoining public right-of-way—of the Louisiana Great River Road responds to the daily demands of local traffic as well as meets visitor expectations by building awareness of the road’s importance among all stakeholders; supporting collaborative planning; and incorporating context-sensitive design with roadway improvements.
- 14. Interpreting Significant Byway Resources:** The Louisiana Office of Tourism and other partners have been working on programs to interpret the Louisiana Great River Road. An interpretive plan was developed in June 2016 and closely parallels the overall interpretive theme for the Louisiana Great River Road is: *“The Mississippi River is the flow of life shaping land and peoples,”* which was part of the ***Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit***, prepared by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission in 2004. Numerous secondary themes and stories support this overall major theme and a variety of interpretive media will be sustained and expanded to effectively communicate and inspire Louisiana Great River Road travelers. The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, a 14-parish nationally-designated area, also overlaps the Louisiana Great River Road in many areas. The heritage area has been implementing interpretive programs that also benefit the Louisiana Great River Road.



Introduction

Side by side and decade after decade, the “Father of all Waters”—the mighty Mississippi—and the “Grandfather of all Byways”—the Great River Road—bring more people together with their history, culture and natural worlds than any other North American river and road. The Louisiana Great River Road is the state’s longest and most significant byway and, when it was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2009, it is the longest state route in the 10-state multijurisdictional Great River Road.

This collection of highways, local roads, and city streets provides continuous routing along the west bank of the Mississippi River from the Arkansas state line to Venice, Louisiana, and on the east bank from the Mississippi state line to the Pointe a la Hache ferryboat crossing. The total length of the Louisiana Great River Road, including both the primary spine associated with each river bank and the specified river crossing, is 717 miles. The route passes through 18 parishes, approximately 35 cities and towns, and many named and historic places. There are seven designated bridge crossings and four ferryboat crossings of the Mississippi River. Several byways—Tunica Trace, San Bernardo, and Historic US 80 Byway—intersect with and provide interesting side trips off of the Great River Road. The State Capitol of Louisiana is the only state capitol located directly on the 10-state Great River Road.

The Louisiana Byways Program is an ongoing program function of the Louisiana Office of Tourism, a division of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor William “Billy” Nungesser. Lieutenant Governor Nungesser directed the Louisiana Office of Tourism to heighten its technical and financial assistance to rural communities throughout the state. To fulfill this directive, the Louisiana Office of Tourism has undertaken several initiatives including one to develop and sustain a viable and compelling collection of Louisiana byways. In 2006, the Louisiana Office of Tourism identified needs for a statewide byway program plan, statewide byway marketing materials, and new and updated corridor management plans for byways in the collection. Since that time, the plans have been updated and the Louisiana Great River Road has been marketed

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at international, national and regional trade shows and trade and special interest media. The corridor management plan, first completed in 2008 has been updated twice to keep current with changes in marketing and interpretation.

The corridor management plan guides the long-term enhancement of the Louisiana Great River Road, and supports consideration of the Louisiana Great River Road to be designated first as a National Scenic Byway by the Federal Highway Administration and then an All- American Road and, most important, to deliver the highest possible visitor experience of this most significant national treasure.

Organization of the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan

The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is organized in two parts:

Part 1: Louisiana Byways and Great River Road Overview—A summary of the Louisiana State Byway program as well as history and current status of the Great River Road in the 10 states of the Mississippi River.

Part 2: Essential Features of the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan—Specific discussion of the 14 topics that the Federal Highway Administration directs byway organizations to include in effective corridor management plans. Information required for All-American nomination and designation has been added in the event that nominations are open again by the Federal Highway Administration.



How This Document Was Prepared

The original Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan was prepared over a 15-month period beginning in mid-2007 and was adopted by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism in late 2008. After a series of two separate public meetings with partners and stakeholders along the Louisiana Great River Road, the document has been updated twice: once in 2009 and again in 2018. The document, its findings, and recommendations were prepared by following a number of sound professional byway planning and development procedures including but not limited to:

- conducting extensive field observation by driving along, as well as to and from, the route numerous times throughout the entire planning period
- visiting many of the hundreds of intrinsic resource sites
- interviewing a wide range of representative stakeholders along the Louisiana Great River Road
- conducting research and incorporating viable portions of previous planning studies, research documents and other sources of relevant information
- developing a GIS geo-database using data provided by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
- conducting meetings and information-sharing work sessions with local representatives along the Louisiana Great River Road
- conferring with representatives of other Great River Road states and the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC)

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- incorporating effective and proven management recommendations and procedures learned from other byway organizations
- basing the plan on the statewide plan
- offering opportunities for individuals and organizations to comment and make suggestions on preliminary drafts of this document as well as establishing a means for ongoing review and comment
- mobilizing the wide range of resources available through the Louisiana Office of Tourism

The majority of the work to update this document was done by the Louisiana Byways Program with assistance from the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. This included community meetings and getting public input on ways to improve the development, preservation and marketing of the Louisiana Great River Road.

How the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Can Be Used

The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is available to a variety of organizations and groups for several uses. Some examples include:

Organization/Group	Primary Use
Louisiana Office of Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy direction for strategic and annual plans for the four department offices and their human resources • A basis for preparing future grant and funding requests • A foundation for promoting the Louisiana Great River Road to the tourism industry and consumer markets
Department of Transportation and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basis for comprehensively improving, managing, and maintaining the roadways of the designated route

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Organization/Group	Primary Use
Parish convention and visitor bureaus and tourism commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction for cooperative promotion of the Louisiana Great River Road • Identification of local tourism development opportunities
Managers of public resource sites such as parks, historic sites, museums, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance and support for funding and managing local resources that in fact have national significance as related to the Great River Road
Owners and managers of private resource sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance that public efforts to sustain, interpret and promote intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road can support private and local economic development interests
Organizations with an interest in the overall Mississippi River environment such as the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC), Mississippi River Trail (MRT), etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of opportunities to collaborate on shared missions to serve public interests
Other state Great River Road organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tool to identify shared issues and opportunities that cross state and regional lines
Federal Highway Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance that the Louisiana Great River Road is being planned and managed according to the requirements associated with National Scenic Byway designation
All organizations and groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A record of conditions and a benchmark to measure progress

Figure 1: Corridor Management Plan Uses



Periodic Updates Are Essential

While this Corridor Management Plan provides long-term management direction for the Louisiana Great River Road, the Louisiana Office of Tourism and the Louisiana Byways Program recognize that effective management and development of state and nationally designated byways require periodic reviews and strategic updates of the corridor management plans that support those byways. Three levels of review and update of this corridor management plan are recommended:

- Immediate review and modification when significant milestones are reached, internal management and resource conditions change, or external events and conditions change beyond the control of the Louisiana Office of Tourism.
- Annual review by the Louisiana Office of Tourism staff and Louisiana Byways Program to account for progress toward implementing short-term actions. Annual reviews should include a drive of the entire route by the Louisiana Office of Tourism and Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development staff to observe any changes in conditions.
- Four- to five-year updates involving a complete review, and appropriate modification of all sections of the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan. This would include a thorough review of the route conditions, intrinsic resource inventory and improvement plans.

Principles and Characteristics of Byway Corridor Management Planning

The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is based on proven principles that have been long associated with successful byways and byway organizations.*

**Preparing Corridor Management Plans: A Scenic Byways Guidebook*, Federal Highway Administration, June 1994

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1. *Strive to manage activities in the corridor to balance the use and conservation of the intrinsic qualities that are the essence of the scenic byway. This ensures that the benefits will be maximized now and in the future.*
2. *Enhance the quality of the scenic byway experience by managing the byway and corridor to improve the visual quality and context of the intrinsic qualities and to explain the significance of the resources with a creatively developed interpretive program.*
3. *Increase the appreciation, understanding, and support for the scenic byway, its intrinsic qualities, and the management process.*
4. *Increase the benefits of the scenic byway, by targeting specific objectives and focusing available resources to achieve planned benefits.*

The following items characterize effective byway corridor management planning.

- *The process is dynamic, continuous, and adaptive.*
- *It creates a planning and management framework based on a vision statement for the byway.*
- *The corridor management plan provides a strategic direction for long term management; it generates action plans for short term implementation.*
- *The efficiency of efforts to maximize benefits and conservation will be increased by focusing and coordinating efforts on behalf of the scenic byway.*
- *Community participation in planning, managing, and receiving the benefits of the scenic byway is increased.*
- *Scenic byway corridor management planning coordinates with other planning efforts for the area through which the scenic byway passes.*
- *The corridor management planning process involves a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the scenic byway and its corridor.*



- *The corridor management plan is based on technical information developed by agency and organization staff, consultants, or local experts.*

Vision for the Louisiana Great River Road

Fundamental to an effective corridor management plan, to protecting and interpreting the byway's intrinsic qualities, and to providing a positive and authentic experience for travelers and supporters of the byway is a clear vision for its existence—a single statement that attempts to capture the essence of why the recognition of “byway” should be given to a roadway.

The vision for the Louisiana Great River Road is:

For local residents living just blocks away to travelers from across the world, the Louisiana Great River Road provides the most immediate and effective means to know, admire, and steward the intrinsic qualities of a great national and world treasure—the Mississippi River.



Part 1: Louisiana Byways and Great River Road

Overview

What is a Byway?

Byways offer visitors and residents access to authentic experiences in treasured places. They provide alternatives to the monotony of linear, high-speed travel; open up vistas; and introduce travelers to places and riches they may otherwise overlook. A byway may be a spectacular destination sought by many travelers, or it may be a local route long admired and appreciated by nearby residents. A byway may be rural, suburban or urban. It may have one of many different names—a road, trail, backroad, backway, or historic roadway. As long as a community or responsible organization believes a road corridor provides access to respected and protected resources, the roadway may be considered a byway. In order to become a designated Louisiana Byway, however, it must meet certain minimum criteria; have a viable organization that accepts responsibility for its operation; and maintain relationships with interested individuals, organizations, and agencies.

The policy of the Federal Highway Administration defines a scenic byway as:

a public road having special scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, and/or natural qualities that have been recognized as such through legislation or some other official declaration. The terms “road” and “highway” are synonymous. They are not meant to define higher or lower functional classifications or wider or narrower cross-sections. Moreover, the terms State Scenic Byway, National Scenic Byway, or All-American Road refer not only to the road or highway itself but also to the corridor through which it passes.



What is a Corridor Management Plan?

The policy of the Federal Highway Administration also defines a corridor management plan as:

a written document that specifies the actions, procedures, controls, operational practices, and administrative strategies to maintain the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, and natural qualities of the scenic byway.

A corridor management plan is an organization's statement of actions to bring about a vision for a byway. It is a written outline of a set of intentions for a byway. The plan's complexity and the topics it addresses in detail vary from byway to byway. A corridor management plan, on its own, carries with it no regulation of property or property use. Instead, it represents a point of beginning or renewal. The corridor management plan assembles concerns, thoughts, and ideas in a single organized document. Thus, diverse issues and objectives like increased tourism development, roadway safety, an archaeological museum, and others are studied and planned by the byway organization. This helps all stakeholders work together, join forces on related projects, and resolve conflicts that sometimes occur when different organizations, groups or governments plan without consulting one another.

A corridor management plan does not need to solve problems. It may simply identify issues and suggest methods by which goals will be achieved. The corridor management plan does not need to outline the specifics involved with the development of programs and projects—it may simply identify needs and suggest ways a program might get started. The key to the success of a corridor management plan is follow-through by an energetic organization that executes programs and projects.

The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is designed to:

- develop another shared link between units of government
- assist local communities with corridor-wide issues
- provide support for continued protection of intrinsic qualities

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- increase communication among byway communities regarding tourism and economic development
- provide a framework by which economic development can be encouraged without compromising quality of life enjoyed by the residents of the region
- fulfill the corridor management plan requirements for nomination as a National Scenic Byway and
- be a flexible plan that can be modified over time

The Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is not designed to:

- impose regulations on a parish, city or town
- require the adoption of any new local ordinances or special districts
- prohibit new construction or development
- deny any community its right to pursue funding for local projects or
- require participation in corridor-wide projects or programs

The National Scenic Byways Program

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). A Scenic Byways Advisory Committee, working with the Federal Highway Administration, recommended that the program designate a system of “National Scenic Byways” and “All-American Roads.” For a route to be eligible for designation as a National Scenic Byway, it must possess one or more of the six intrinsic qualities (archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational or scenic); have a community or organization committed to its designation and management; and have developed a corridor management plan. From the best of these is chosen a very small number of All-American Roads. This designation is a very rare occurrence.

This program was eliminated. But the Louisiana Office of Tourism has continued to fund and improve its byway collection through state efforts. It has followed the guidelines and has hope that national and All-American Road designation will open again.



The Louisiana Byway Program

The Louisiana legislature first enacted byway legislation in 1991 when it declared several individual highway segments as Louisiana Scenic Byways. In succeeding years, the state used other administrative procedures to designate and amend byway routes. In 2003, the legislature created the Louisiana Byway Commission to oversee the program, and the Commission was subsequently placed within the Louisiana Office of Tourism under the auspices of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Louisiana Statewide Byway Plan

The success of a collection of state-designated byways in Louisiana depends on the strength of leadership and effectiveness of management applied to delivering unique visitor experiences associated with byway travel. To that end, the State adopted a Louisiana Statewide Byway Plan that provides essential guidance for the Louisiana Office of Tourism to create, lead, and manage the collection of Louisiana's most compelling travel routes.

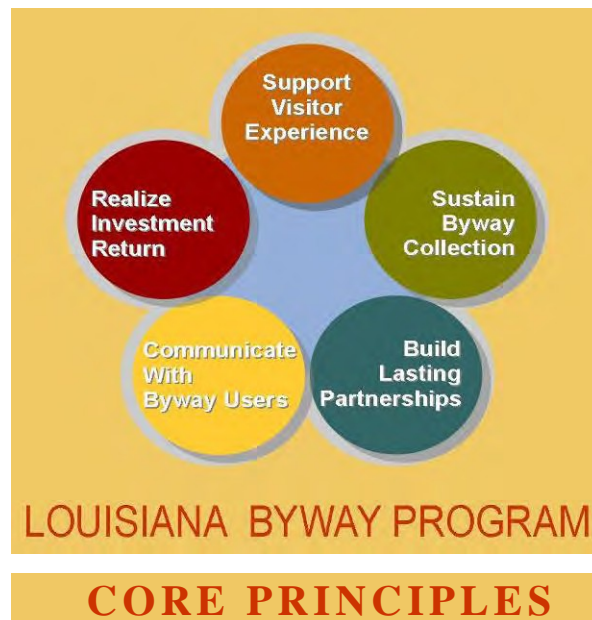
The Louisiana Statewide Byway Plan is intended to:

- communicate the long-range vision, direction, and provisions of the State's program and policies for designating and preserving Louisiana Byways
- provide long-term guidance for the Louisiana Office of Tourism and individual byway partner organizations relative to the designation of byways and the shared responsibilities for operating effective byways
- be reflected in the corridor management plans of individual Louisiana Byways

- present a competitive and representative collection of byways that exhibit the intrinsic qualities of Louisiana

Five Core Principles

The Louisiana Byway Program is built on five core principles (Figure 3) that in combination support the central program goal. The principles are:



Support Visitor Experience

The development and operation of the Louisiana Byway Program and the individual byways must first focus on providing authentic and enjoyable visitor experiences for byway travelers. Only with satisfied customers will byways and the Louisiana Byway Program achieve the desired benefits.

Sustain Byway Collection

Louisiana has important stories to share with its residents in all parts of the state and visitors from around the world. Sustaining its collection of viable byways offers highly effective means of engaging people with the



unique archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic resources that are intrinsic to Louisiana.

Build Lasting Partnerships

Successful byways, unlike other public assets that are centrally owned and managed such as parks or museums, must depend upon the support and cooperative partnership of a diverse collection of public agencies, not-for-profit organizations, philanthropic foundations, and the for-profit sector. Resource protection, story interpretation, visitor services, promotion, and traffic management are among the issues that byway partnerships must effectively address.

Communicate with Byway Users

The memories that byway travelers take home are perhaps the greatest treasure of a byway trip. Positive memories are the result of effective communication delivered at all stages of the byway experience through promotional brochures and websites; maps for planning and navigating the trip; travel instructions and tips; highway signs; interpretive exhibits and oral presentations; authentic local gifts and products. Accurate, engaging and responsive communications with all byway users—visitors, local citizens and byway partners—are essential for byway success.

Realize Investment Return

Successful byways deliver benefits to the immediate areas they serve as well as the entire state. While many benefits are economic, others include preservation, conservation, recognition, and appreciation of community values. Successful programs measure returns, communicate them to the community, and justify continuing participation.

The Louisiana Statewide Byway Plan envisions a beneficial, rich, competitive and diverse collection of all byways located (in whole or in part) within the state. The plan is to create this collection in and around the year 2010 and to include byways designated as State of Louisiana Byways, National Scenic Byways, and All-American Roads. See Figure 4 for a geographical vision for Louisiana Byways.



A Brief History of America's Longest Byway

For most Americans, a leisurely scenic drive is a classic way to relax. Yet as our nation continuously develops, there are fewer routes that offer escape. The national scenic and historic highway known as the Great River Road, celebrating its 70th birthday this year, is one of the oldest, longest, and most unique scenic byways on the North American continent. It offers respite to millions each year for a day's drive or for an extended vacation.

The 4,838-kilometer (3,000-mile) continuous Great River Road route stretches from near Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, picking up its first views of the Mighty Mississippi near its headwaters in Minnesota and crisscrossing the river through the 10 Mississippi River states. Travelers enjoying the scenery, history, and culture along the Great River Road can thank previous generations for their forethought in preserving and developing the river route for our enjoyment. The story of the continuing evolution of the Great River Road demonstrates what can be accomplished when state and federal officials work cooperatively with local communities to bring the best transportation, historical, and cultural facilities to the American people.

Franklin Roosevelt was president and automatic transmissions were the cutting edge of automotive technology when the Mississippi River Parkway Planning Commission was formed in 1938 to develop plans for what was to become the Great River Road. Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes had urged the governors of the 10 Mississippi River states to form the Commission after being convinced of the merit of a Mississippi River Parkway by a group of state planning officials. The planning officials had been developing the concept of a Mississippi River Road as an extension of an idea for a recreational river road that had been first put forward by the Missouri Planning Board in 1936.

The commission was to become instrumental not only in the early planning and development of the parkway, but in its construction, promotion, marketing, and development.



Now known as the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and headquartered in Wisconsin, the Commission continues to promote, preserve, and enhance the resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. Representatives of all 10 Mississippi River states serve on the Commission's Board of Directors. But the road from the Commission's beginnings in 1938 to the success of the Great River Road today has been a long one, full of starts and stops.

1939-1951: Feasibility Studies

As with so many government enterprises, the Great River Road began with a false start, followed by a feasibility study. The U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Public Lands held hearings in 1939 and 1940 to discuss a bill that would have authorized a feasibility study of the Mississippi River Parkway concept. While popular, the Parkway idea was soon overshadowed by World War II.

It wasn't until 1949 that Congress approved funding for a feasibility study. The study, "Parkway for the Mississippi River," was completed by the Bureau of Public Roads (predecessor agency to the Federal Highway Administration) in 1951.

Study Conclusion: A Scenic Route, Not a Parkway

The study concluded that a parkway for the Mississippi River would benefit the nation as a whole. However, the report made an important distinction. Because it would be too expensive to build an entirely new parkway, the Bureau of Public Roads recommended instead that a scenic route would be designated. The scenic route would consist of existing riverside roads, with new construction limited to interconnecting the existing roads so that a continuous route could be developed. The existing roads would be upgraded to parkway quality. The modified approach would save a great deal of land acquisition and new construction costs. Another consideration was that some of the most scenic locations along the river had already been pre-empted by existing highways, railroads, towns, and cities.

The concept of a scenic route rather than a national parkway was adopted. As a result, the Great River Road is not owned by the National Park Service, as is the case with true national parkways such as the Blue Ridge and Natchez Trace Parkways.



Instead, states have developed the Great River Road through a nationally coordinated program. The Bureau of Public Roads recommended “that the selected route shall be improved in a superior manner and that it should be dedicated to recreational purposes as well as to moving traffic.” The needed construction and improvements “can be done with regular apportionments under the federal highway act or by the states on their own...”

1954-1970: Planning Studies and Initial Route Markings

With the Federal Highway Act of 1954, Congress responded to the recommendations of the Bureau of Public Roads by appropriating planning funds. The Bureau of Public Roads was authorized to work with each of the states to develop specific criteria for the “parkway,” and to determine one specific route within each state for the “Mississippi River Parkway.” By the late 1950s, the familiar green-and-white pilot’s wheel marker began to spring up on various sections of the designated route.

Planning continued through the 1960s.

1974-1983: Development Begins

With the completion of all the planning reports in early 1970, actual development of the Great River Road was ready to begin. Although a number of states had put up Great River Road highway signs and used available state funds for scenic bluff protection and road improvements, full-scale development funds had not been readily available. Legislation to fund the development of the Great River Road was included for the first time as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973. From 1973 to 1982, Congress authorized a total of \$314 million in funds earmarked for the Great River Road. Most (\$251 million) of those funds were allocated directly to the states.

1976: Federal Guidelines Issued

With funds available, development could begin in earnest. In 1976, the Federal Highway Administration issued program guidelines setting criteria for the Great River Road. The states then set up their own individual process procedures for selecting the route of the Great River Road within their state boundaries.



“The Great River Road should be located within designated segments to take advantage of scenic views and provide the traveler with the opportunity to enjoy the unique features of the Mississippi River and its recreational opportunities,” the guidelines said. The criteria also specified that the Great River Road should provide for a variety of experiences or themes including history, geology, and culture, and that the road should provide convenient access to larger population centers. Protection of the Mississippi River corridor was required by “appropriate route selection, effective control and development, and scenic easement acquisition.”

State and Federal Routes

While the national Great River Road crisscrosses the river in each state, the states have designated alternative routes that provide Great River Road routes on both sides of the river from the headwaters to the Gulf.

The national or federal Great River Road route consists of sections that conform to the federal guidelines and were eligible for the Great River Road funds that were available in the 1970s and early 1980s. The state- designated alternative routes include sections with significant scenic, historic, and recreational interest. The Mississippi River Parkway Commission makes no distinction between the federal and state routes in its promotional efforts. However, some states do use highway signs that distinguish between a national and state route.

1990s: National Scenic Byways Program

State-designated scenic byways are now eligible to receive federal grants under the federal National Scenic Byways Program, which was first authorized in 1993 federal highway legislation and reauthorized in the 1998 highway bill. The 10-state Great River Road has received National Scenic Byway designation.



Part 2: Essential Corridor Management Plan Features

This part of the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan addresses the 14 key byway management topics required by the Federal Highway Administration in a National Scenic Byway. It has updated the plan to include the requirements for All-American Road designation in the event that the nomination process opens again in the future. Meanwhile, the Louisiana Office of Tourism has been working to implement and verify all of the requirements for All-American Road designation. Those are included as part of the updated Corridor Management Plan.

Each of the following chapters:

- Identifies the policy guidance provided by the Federal Register, National Scenic Byways Program and the Federal Highway Administration.
- Provides a discussion of the policy topic as it pertains to the Louisiana Great River Road.
- Outlines a general list of development and program actions that may be appropriate for the specific topic.
- Lists related resources and references.

CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

Louisiana Great River Road public meetings were held in early spring 2018 to update the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan and to discuss the interest of local communities in the All-American Road designation. All attendees at the public meetings were enthusiastic about an All-American Road designation if nominations were to open again.

Corridor Management Plan (CMP) Implementation:

Updated for All-American Road designation. When funding for byway programs was eliminated, this did not affect the Louisiana Byways collection. The Louisiana Byways Program continued and thrived through state-funded programs and initiatives.

The Louisiana Great River Road is part of the Louisiana Byway Collection. As such, the Louisiana Byways director holds annual byway partner meetings and conducts listening sessions/workshops to update the byway's corridor management plan and to prioritize its

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implementation and to provide educational outreach to byway partners on the responsibilities of being a byway provider. One of the main responsibilities of a byway organization is to keep visual intrusions to an absolute minimum. The Louisiana Byway Program has enforcement procedures in place to control outdoor advertising and coordinates with other offices within the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to control blight and improper development through its offices of historic preservation and archeology.

The Louisiana Byways Program has held regional meetings, meets regularly with stakeholders and has updated the corridor management plan on a regular basis, and meets with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Federal Highway Administration to address byway needs. The Louisiana Byways Program and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development have developed a state policy regarding outdoor advertising permits by which all Louisiana Byway adhere.

A regularly scheduled monthly meeting is held among the Louisiana Byway Program, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Federal Highway Administration to provide updates on the Louisiana Byway Collection. As a result of those meetings, driving tours of the Byway Collection, most recently the Louisiana Great River Road, are conducted to see what highway signage, interpretive signage and directional signage are needed and to check the condition of the roadways.

The Louisiana Byway Program has developed interpretive materials, signage and promotional materials for the Louisiana Great River Road. It conducts ongoing training to byway providers, evaluates the byway on an annual basis and is working to develop new interpretive centers and materials, including itineraries and short videos to enhance the Louisiana Byway website.

In 2019, it is expected that some of the state's official Welcome Centers will have a video wall and the availability to create electronic itineraries from a kiosks. The video wall will play the mini-videos being developed on the Louisiana Byways. The kiosks will highlight the Louisiana Byway Collection and the Welcome Center will provide visitor information on the byways such as maps and brochures. The first Louisiana Welcome Center to have this kiosks and video wall will be the center located at Slidell, at the intersection of I-10 and I-12. It is one of the most visited welcome centers in the state.



Great River Road Route (1)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location, intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the byway corridor.

Topic Discussion:

The Louisiana Great River Road Route

The Louisiana Great River Road is a collection of highways, parish and local roads, and city streets that provides a continuous routing on the west bank of the Mississippi River from the Arkansas state line to Venice, Louisiana, and on the east bank from the Mississippi state line to the Pointe a la Hache ferryboat crossing. The Louisiana Great River Road is the state’s longest and perhaps most significant byway and, when designated a National Scenic Byway, it will be the longest state route in the 10-state multijurisdictional Great River Road. The total length of the Louisiana Great River Road, including the highways, roads, and streets on both Mississippi River banks and the specified river crossing, is 717 miles. The route passes through 18 parishes, approximately 35 cities and towns, and many named and historic places. There are seven designated bridge crossings and four ferryboat crossings of the Mississippi River. Several state-designated Louisiana Byways—Tunica Trace, San Bernardo, and H US 80 Byway—intersect with and provide interesting side trips from the Louisiana Great River Road. The State Capitol of Louisiana is the only state capitol located directly on the 10-state Great River Road.

Louisiana Great River Road Basic Facts

The following table shows some of the vital characteristics of the Louisiana Great River Road. Maps illustrate the regional setting for the Louisiana Great River Road as well as nearby byways, and the alignment of the byway.

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Official Title:	Louisiana Great River Road
Length:	717 miles Includes public highway, road, and street segments on the west and east banks of the Mississippi River as well as Mississippi River crossings.
Road Surfacing:	Paved hard surface for the entire length.
Seasonal Accessibility:	All portions are accessible during all times of the year. Normal travel interruptions are anticipated and alternative routes are planned with seasonal tropical storms.
Parishes through which the Louisiana Great River Road passes (south to north):	Eighteen (18) total Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Bernard, New Orleans, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. James, Ascension, Iberville, East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Pointe Coupee, West Feliciana, Concordia, Tensas, Madison, East Carroll
Municipalities through which the Louisiana Great River Road passes (south to north):	Thirty-five (35) total Belle Chasse, Gretna, Westwego, New Orleans, Harahan, Kenner, St. Rose, Chalmette, Luling, Edgard, Destrehan, New Sarpy, Norco, Laplace, Reserve, Garyville, Gramercy, Litcher, Donaldsonville, St. Gabriel, White Castle, Plaquemine, Baton Rouge, Addis, Brusly, Port Allen, New Roads, Morganza, St. Francisville, Vidalia, Ferriday, Clayton, Waterproof, Tallulah, and Lake Providence
Adjoining states to which the	Mississippi East bank: US 61

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<p>Louisiana Great River Road connects:</p>	<p>West bank: US 84 and US 425 (Vidalia / Ferriday / Natchez, MS area) and I-20 and US 80 (Tallulah / Vicksburg, MS area)</p> <p>Arkansas</p> <p>West bank: US 65</p>
<p>Principle land uses associated with the Louisiana Great River Road (listed in rank order by estimated land area coverage adjoining the route):</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agriculture 2. Levee and flood protection 3. Public lands 4. Industrial uses associated with the Mississippi River 5. Urban residential 6. Urban commercial 7. Transportation related
<p>Mississippi River Crossings-Bridges (south to north):</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crescent City Connection (US 90 BUS) connecting Jefferson and Orleans parishes at New Orleans 2. Gramercy (Veterans Memorial) (LA 3213) connecting St. John the Baptist and St. James parishes 3. Sunshine (LA 70) connecting west bank and east bank in St. James Parish 4. Huey P. Long (US 190) connection West Baton Rouge and East Baton Rouge parishes 5. John James Audubon (LA 10) connecting West Feliciana and Pointe Coupee 6. Vidalia-Natchez (US 84 and US 425) connecting Concordia Parish with Natchez, Mississippi and the Great River Road in Mississippi 7. Vicksburg (I-20 and US 80) connecting Madison Parish with Vicksburg, Mississippi
<p>Mississippi River Crossings-Free public ferryboats for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcycles, automobiles and trucks (south to north):</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pointe A La Hache (LA 23 west bank and LA 39 east bank) in Plaquemines Parish 2. Belle Chasse / Scarsdale (LA 23 west bank and LA 39 east bank) in Plaquemines Parish 3. White Castle (LA 3075) connecting Iberville and Ascension parishes 4. Plaquemine (LA 75) connecting Iberville and Ascension parishes
<p>Table: Louisiana Great River Road Basic Facts</p>	



Byway Corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road

Before we define what is the byway corridor for the Louisiana Great River Road, let's review what a byway corridor generally means *and* doesn't mean. The concept of a byway corridor reflects needs and opportunities for:

- Stakeholders to understand the landscape or zone associated with the designated roads that comprise the byway
- Managing and enhancing visual characteristics that are generally perceived as desirable or positive and reducing intrusions to those characteristics
- Helping travelers who are new to the byway find their way and avoid getting lost or disorientated
- Providing visitor amenities and services
- Interpreting the intrinsic qualities and resource sites that are the fundamental basis to the byway
- Marketing or sustaining and increasing local and state economies that are enhanced because of the byway's designation

The road and its publicly owned right of way (the shoulder, the adjacent drainage ditches and lawn parking, public sidewalks if they exist, highway signs and utilities) form the "spine" of the byway. And the "body" of the byway is a corridor that extends outward from the roadway in both directions beyond the confines of the constructed road. Travelers need functional access, as well as safety and traffic control offered by a byway's spine roadway. But the quality of the byway travel experience focuses more on the views in the landscape features that are seen from inside the vehicle or on the motorcycle or bicycle. These are the features that byway travelers talk and think about, and remember in the corridor.

By nature, the width of a byway's corridor varies for two primary reasons:

- Topography (the lay of the land), vegetation, and the built environment determine the distance one can see from a motor vehicle traveling on the roadway. Sometimes that "viewshed" is less than 100 feet, such as in a downtown or metropolitan area, where tall buildings block long views. But in other places, for

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instance in open or hilly country, the corridor’s viewshed can extend for a distance of several miles.

- While they may not be seen from the byway, often specific sites that support a byway’s intrinsic qualities exist within a relatively short driving distance of the byway and are consequently included within its corridor.

Because the experience of leisurely traveling a byway inherently invites travelers to 1) enjoy what can be seen from their moving vehicles and 2) stop and explore sites identified to tell the big stories of the byway, practically speaking, the “byway” is the roadway itself *and* variable widths of land on each side of the designated road. Thus, management strategies for the byway pertain to the roadway as well as to its corridor.

It is worth recalling also that defining the byway corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road does not:

- impose regulations on a parish, city or town
- require the adoption of any new local ordinances or special districts
- prohibit new construction or development
- deny any community its right to pursue funding for local projects
- require participation in corridor-wide projects or programs

For the Louisiana Great River Road, its byway corridor exists on both sides of the designated route. On the Mississippi River side of the Louisiana Great River Road—the “inward” side—the byway corridor extends to the Mississippi River itself and beyond to the visual horizon (usually not further than three miles). Even though the continuous flood levee along most portions of the Great River Road prevents motorists from directly seeing the Mississippi River, the River is central to the Great River Road and there are a surprising number of places where motorists can park and obtain a pedestrian-level view of the River. Pedestrians and bicyclists using the Mississippi River Trail—on top of the levee—often have continuous views of the River.

On the “outside” of the designated roadway opposite the Mississippi River, the byway corridor extends a distance of two to three miles or to the visual horizon if it is a shorter length from the roadway. Given the relatively flat



terrain associated with the Louisiana Great River Road, even in the most open areas of agricultural fields, the outer limits of what one can recognize as a distinct landscape feature is approximately two to three miles. A few critically important sites for interpreting the stories of the Mississippi River, such as the Poverty Point State Historic Site, while located outside the defined corridor, are appropriately included in delivering the authenticity of the overall Great River Road story and visitor experience.

Gateway Communities

Louisiana Great River Road travelers are well served by communities, public and private services, and numerous connecting highways all along the route. These features coupled with strategically located visitor centers provide an extensive network of travel support. In turn, leisure travel along the Louisiana Great River Road and throughout its corridor affords significant contributions to local economies and exhibits potential for growth. As a tourism product, Great River Road-based travel holds clear promise for future growth.

Of the numerous routes and beginning points travelers can use to reach the Louisiana Great River Road, five community areas are significant for the numerous travel services and amenities they provide and the intrinsic resources they sustain that are so important to the overall Great River Road story. The primary gateway communities or regions for the Louisiana Great River Road are:

- The New Orleans Metropolitan Area
- The Baton Rouge Metropolitan Area
- The St. Francisville/New Roads Area
- The Vidalia/Ferriday/Natchez, Mississippi Area
- The Tallulah/Vicksburg, Mississippi Area

In addition to the highly effective visitor centers located in each of these gateway communities, numerous state and parish visitor centers promote Louisiana Great River Road travel and provide the full range of travel services.



Itineraries and Travel Segments

With the Louisiana Great River Road being more than 700 miles long— 484 on the west bank and 233 on the east bank—travelers will naturally want to consider and plan their time on the route in terms of day-trip itineraries where travel segments correspond to what or where can be explored in a day’s travel. Some travelers will want to experience the entire 717 miles of the Louisiana Great River Road in a seven- to nine-day trip, perhaps even as part of a larger multistate Great River Road adventure. But most Louisiana Great River Road travelers are expected to use one or two of the gateway communities or regions listed above as beginning and ending points for a one-to-two day trip on the Louisiana Great River Road.

Indeed, the lineal geography of the Louisiana Great River Road supports eight distinct yet interconnected itineraries or travel segments. Each Louisiana Great River Road itinerary segment is in effect a loop that includes travel along both west and east bank portions of the route.

Travelers can start a tour from a gateway community or major entryway, travel upriver or downriver on either the east or west bank and circle back on the opposite bank of the Mississippi River. Five of the itineraries occur fully within Louisiana, three offer opportunities to travel into Mississippi, and one connects with the Great River Road in Arkansas.

The eight itinerary segments for the Louisiana Great River Road are:

1. Plaquemines Parish to the southern end of the Great River Road
2. New Orleans Metropolitan Area
3. New Orleans to Baton Rouge
4. Baton Rouge Metropolitan Area
5. St. Francisville and New Roads Loop
6. St. Francisville/New Roads to Vidalia/Natchez, MS Loop
7. Vidalia/Natchez, MS to Tallulah/Vicksburg, MS Loop
8. Tallulah/Vicksburg, MS to Arkansas and Mississippi Connection



Important characteristics of all eight itinerary segments include:

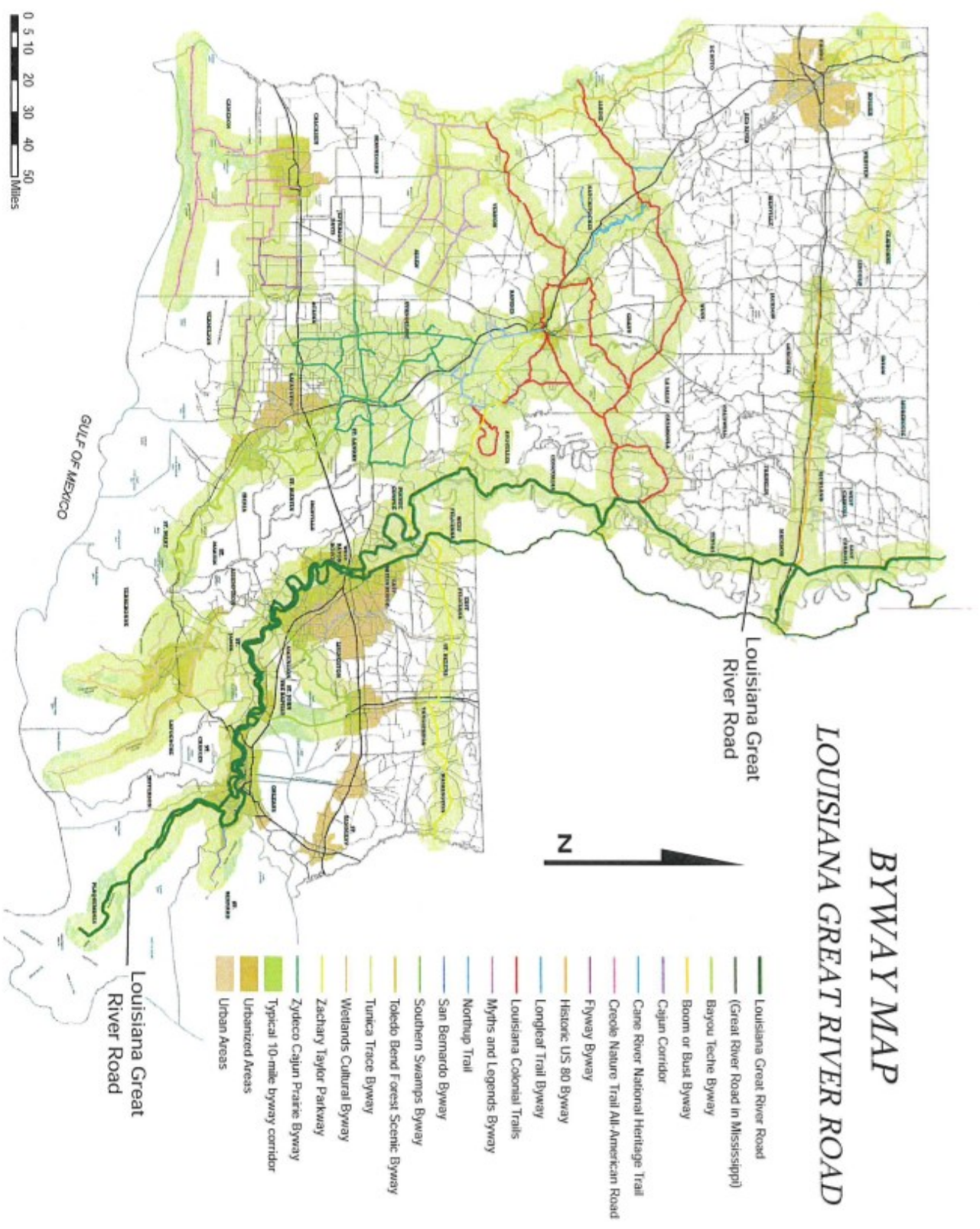
- multiple access points to view the Mississippi River
- support of several fully staffed visitor centers
- connection with one or several gateway communities
- a variety of public attractions that support the byway's intrinsic qualities
- connection with the Mississippi River Trail
- essential travel services and numerous establishments for lodging, fuel, food and restaurants, and shopping

Affiliated Byways and Themed Trails

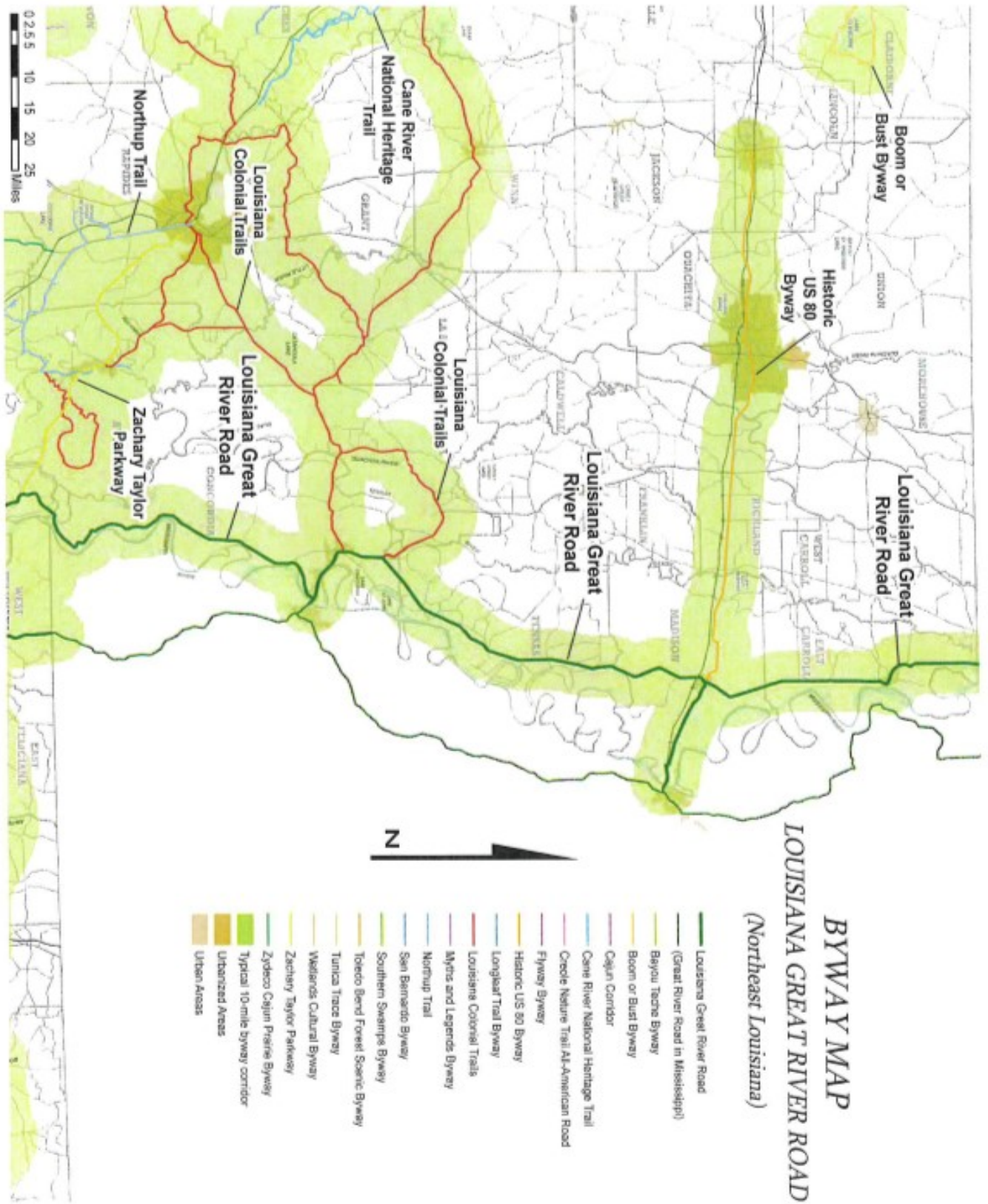
There are a number of state-designated byways and special themed routes that supplement the visitor experience of the Louisiana Great River Road. These include:

- San Bernardo Byway
- Tunica Trace Byway
- Colonial Trails Byway
- US 80 Byway (designation pending)
- LA 22/51 Byway (designation pending)
- Louisiana Culinary Trails
- African American Heritage Trail
- A variety of birding trails
- Audubon Golf Trail
- Ancient Mounds Trail
- Grant's March
- Louisiana Civil Rights Trail (under development due to launch June 2020)

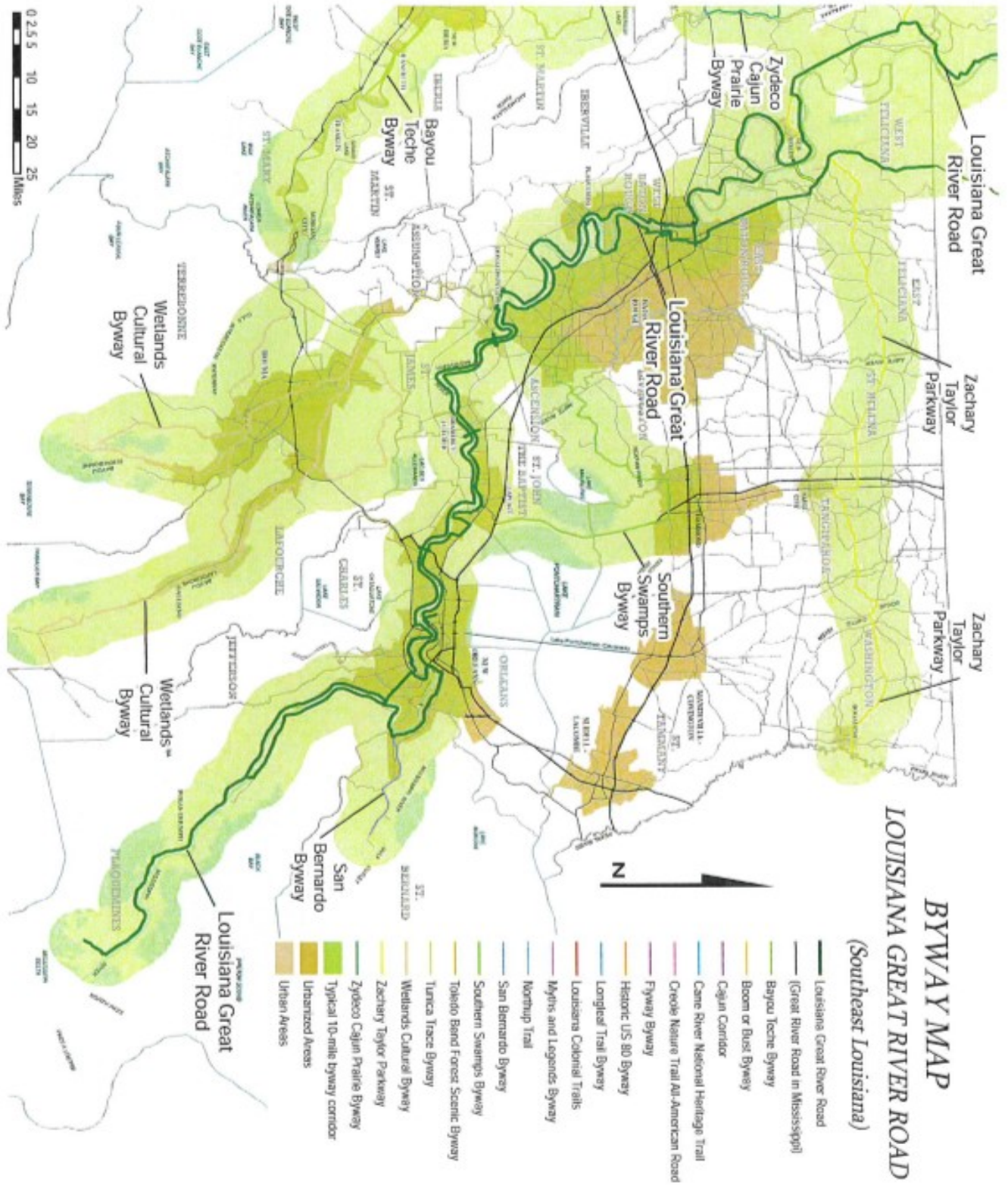
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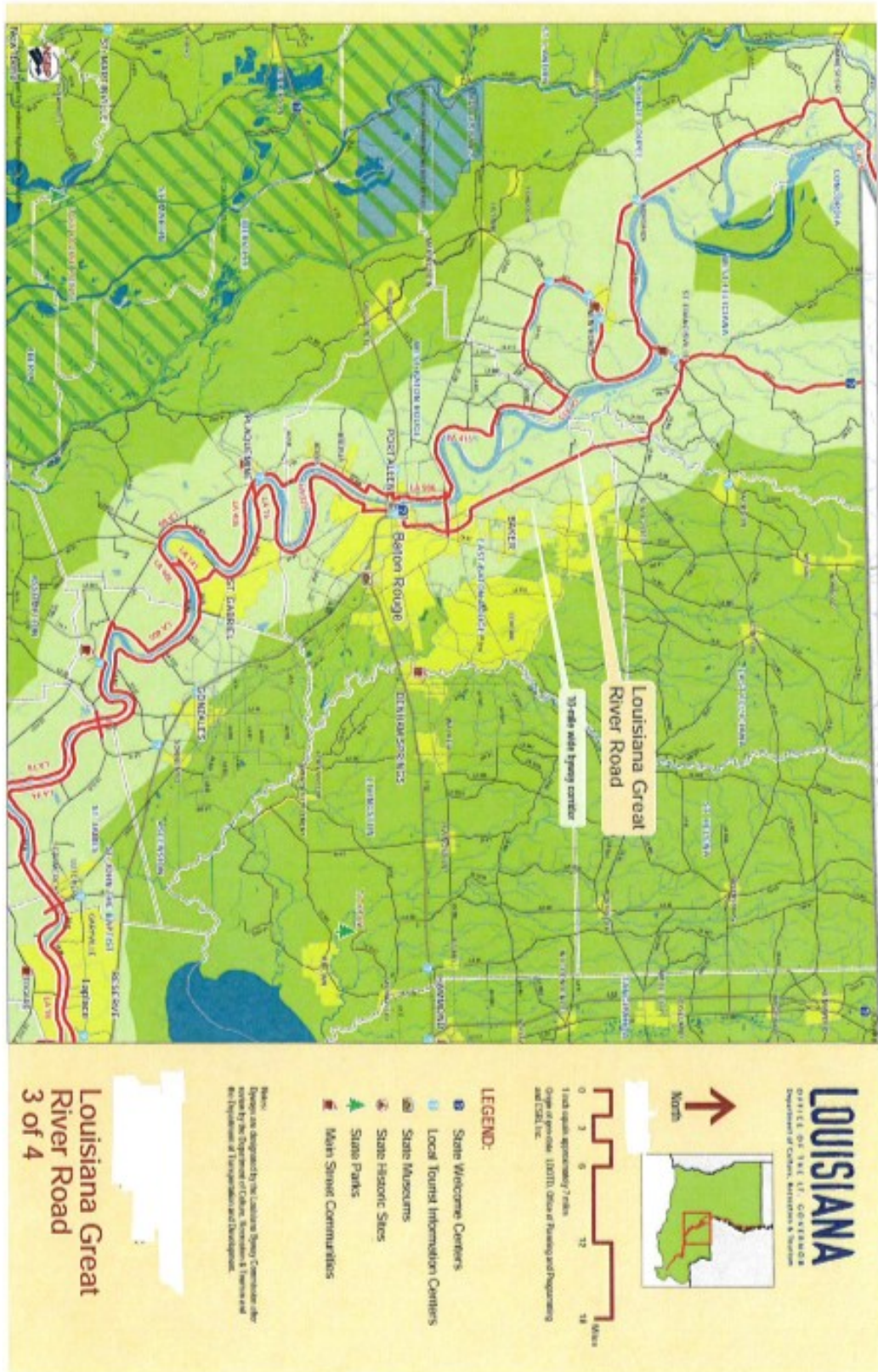
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Intrinsic Qualities (2)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

An assessment of the intrinsic qualities and their "context" (the areas surrounding them).

Topic Discussion:

Overview of the Louisiana Great River Road Intrinsic Qualities

The National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration provides an effective and widely accepted means of categorizing the thousands of visual, tangible, and ephemeral resources of the Louisiana Great Road. Six intrinsic qualities—archaeological, cultural, historical, natural, recreational, and scenic—are valued qualities used to describe and categorize a byway's special sense of place and meaning to local residents and byway travelers alike.

Furthermore, these six intrinsic qualities aid byway stakeholders and managers in determining the local, regional (multistate) and national significance of each individual site, event, and story, and how they contribute to the authenticity of visitor experiences. In short, intrinsic qualities are representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctive characteristics of the byway's corridor. They are the important reasons for people creating and maintaining emotional attachment to the landscape of the byways, whether by living in the corridor of the byway or by forming lifelong memories from leisure trips along the byway.

Identified, categorized, and recorded, intrinsic qualities have value because they can be enhanced, managed, protected, interpreted, and promoted.

In other words, intrinsic qualities can and should be recognized for reasons that:

- support visitor experience
- instill local resident values such as pride, investment and conservation of natural and historic resources
- aid in fulfilling state agency initiatives
- serve vital roles in communicating the stories that are regionally, nationally, and internationally significant

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The existence of intrinsic byway qualities and their subsequent conservation and interpretation are used by the Louisiana Office of Tourism to designate Louisiana Byways and by the Federal Highway Administration to designate National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads.

Intrinsic qualities of a byway manifest themselves in two ways. First, an intrinsic quality of a byway can be more or less continually visible to the occupants of a vehicle traveling on the byway. Following the bank of a river; taking in views of one snowcapped peak after another; winding through the fields of the rich agricultural area; following the turns of the deep forest; or tracing the route of early explorers on a historic trail are a few examples of intrinsic qualities that manifest themselves continually through the windshield of a byway traveler's vehicle.

Secondly, intrinsic qualities of a byway manifest themselves as individual distinctive sites that, when taken collectively along and throughout a byway corridor, communicate a story that is larger and better well-rounded than that of any single site. Civil War sites, wildlife observation points, archaeological sites, scenic overlooks, trailheads, town squares and courthouses are examples of individual sites that taken collectively along a byway create a continuous visitor experience.

The Great River Road in Louisiana, as it does in the other nine Mississippi River states, provides excellent examples of both types of intrinsic qualities. Examples of the continual landscape character associated with the Louisiana Great River Road include:

- Adjacency to the Mississippi River and its earthen levee
- Historic land subdivision patterns (long narrow parcels oriented toward the Mississippi River)
- Floodplain topography
- Relationship to the Mississippi River Trail
- Winding or curvilinear roadway alignment
- Agricultural landscape in the consistency of field crops (cotton, sugar cane, corn, etc.)
- Ships and barges visible on the Mississippi River
- Small town residential character
- Large open green spaces
- River-related industries

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Examples of collections of individual sites that tell larger stories include:

- Civil War sites
- Towns and cities
- Ferryboats
- Plantations
- State Parks and wildlife management areas
- Wildlife observation areas
- Wetlands
- Mississippi River access points
- Flood and water control structures

Specific Intrinsic Qualities Associated with the Louisiana Great River Road

The corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road possesses features representing the six intrinsic qualities as defined by the Federal Highway Administration for byways. For each of the six distinct resource types, examples in the Louisiana Great River Road corridor include:

Archaeological: *Archaeological quality involves those characteristics of the byway corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The byway corridor's archeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence, have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.*

- Louisiana's Native American cultural sites, including Poverty Point World Heritage Site, Smithfield Place, Campus and Transylvania, ca. 2500 B.C. to A.D. 1700
- Tunican, Natchezan and Muskogean linguistic groups, ca. 1700
- Interpretative programs

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Cultural: *Cultural quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people that are still currently practiced.*

Cultural features include but are not limited to crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, and vernacular architecture.

- Music, various music genres, traditional and contemporary musicians and musical festivals
- Culinary cuisines, food products, locally grown and raised produce, seafood
- Art and crafts
- Folklife and folklore
- Occupations based on the Mississippi River
- Outdoors skills
- Various ethnic and community festivals and events such as Bonfires on the Levee
- River Road Interpretive Centers

Historic: *Historic quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.*

- Native American and immigrant Indians
- Spanish claims and explorers, including the site of the death of DeSoto
- French claims, explorer routes and French rule (1699-1763)
- Spanish rule (1763-1803)
- Louisiana Purchase (1803)
- American explorers
- Arpent and American Long Lot land survey systems
- West Florida rebellion (1810)

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- War of 1812, Battle of New Orleans, 1815
- European settlement and communities
- Los Isleños heritage and culture
- Pre-Civil War period (1812-1861)
- The Civil War in Louisiana (1861-1865)
- Parishes and parish seats
- African-American population growth and heritage sites
- River navigation, steamboat era
- Mississippi River flood events, flood control structures, flood crevasses
- Agricultural development and practices
- Lower Mississippi River industrial corridor
- World War I and II preparation and mobilization
- National World War II Museum
- National Register landmarks
- National Register historic districts
- National Register historic sites
- National Cemeteries
- Louisiana State Capitol—former and current
- Chalmette National Monument and Park
- Parish and state historical museums
- Private historic sites
- Interpretive programs—public and private

Natural: *Natural quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations and may include geological formations, fossils, landform, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.*

- Geology, landforms, river hydrology and mouth of the Mississippi River
- Wetlands, bayous and swamps
- Protected wildlife management properties and state preserves
- State and city parks
- Nature centers
- Interpretation programs and watchable wildlife programs and opportunities
- Birding trails and Waterfowl
- Tropical Storm and Hurricane Interpretive Programs

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Recreational: *Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include but are not limited to downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.*

- Water-based recreation opportunities for boating, fishing, hunting
- Protected wildlife management properties and state preserves
- State and city parks
- Nature centers
- Mississippi River Trail
- Primitive and modern campgrounds
- Wildlife viewing
- Antique and art shopping
- Performing arts and cultural events
- Evening entertainment, casinos
- Art museums
- The Audubon Golf Trail

Scenic: *Scenic Quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape—landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development—contribute to the quality of the corridor's visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.*

- The Mississippi River itself and various River vantage points
- Agricultural fields, farms, and plantations
- Distinct architecture
- Small town main streets
- Vegetation in all seasons
- Floodplain forests
- Wetlands, bayous and backwater
- New Orleans, including Audubon Park, the Garden District, and the French Quarter

When the Corridor Management Plan was updated in 2018, it was determined that if the nominations for All-American Road designations were to open, the two intrinsic qualities that the Louisiana Office of Tourism would submit for the Louisiana Great River Road are historic and cultural.

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All-American Road: Two Intrinsic Qualities: Historic and Cultural Assets: In 2009, the Louisiana Great River Road was designated a national byway by having an abundance of historic qualities and sites, road and river landmarks that are internationally and nationally significant. The Louisiana Great River Road has a mix of sites that represent the vast cultural and historical features of this well-traveled road. This includes such sites as Poverty Point World Heritage Site, Louisiana State Capitol and other sites that tell the story of governor and U.S. Senator Huey Long, including his grave and monument on the Louisiana State Capitol grounds, Port Hudson, a national landmark site where the longest siege of the American Civil War occurred and the first time that African American soldiers fought on the side of Union forces, Houmas House Great River Road Interpretive Center, the result of the largest National Scenic Byway grant awarded for a project, the National World War II Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian and tells stories of all World War II theaters, the National Park Service has several sites along the Louisiana Great River such as its French Quarter, Battle of 1812 battlefield site in Chalmette and the New Orleans Jazz Museum, Jazz was born in New Orleans and had national and international impact on the world of music. Communities along the Louisiana Great River Road are home to festivals that attract visitors from around the world. Festivals include the International Jazz and Heritage Festival, Essence Festival, the largest African American music and cultural event and unique events such as bonfires on the levee every Christmas Eve. These 20-foot tall structures built on the levee tops light the way for Santa Claus. The Louisiana Great River also has the end of the road and the mouth of the Mississippi River.

All-American Road one-of-a-kind features: The Louisiana Great River Road unique and one-of-a-kind feature is that it possesses the end of the entire 10-state national byway and the mouth of the Mississippi River. Additionally, it is the only state on the 10-state Great River Road that the state's capitol is on the road. Louisiana's Art Deco capitol, with its frieze carvings, statutes and murals is one of the most interesting and captivating buildings to be found along the Louisiana Great River Road. Built by Huey Long, the building is full of symbolism of pioneers and warriors. It looms over the Baton Rouge skyline and is one of the most visited places in the state.



Great River Road as a Destination unto Itself

From its beginning of its designation in 1936, the Louisiana Great River Road has been a popular and well-traveled route. It has been traveled by pirates selling stolen goods to plantation owners and merchants located in the river towns, peddlers later sold goods door-to-door to residents living along the Mississippi River, to Canadian snowbirds, weekend getaway travelers, antique hunters, bikers, motorcycle clubs and tour companies.

Domestic and international travelers and media have come to visit the iconic plantation homes, view the Mississippi River and the Louisiana levees, as well as enjoy the food and music found in all the river town communities. All visitor amenities are available including dozens of visitor information centers that provide travel information, brochures and maps, as well as clean restrooms. There are ample service stations and other comfort stops, state parks with camping facilities, national parks, Cajun, Creole and local restaurants, hotels, historic B&Bs at many plantations and historic homes along the Louisiana Great River Road and today, Air B&Bs.

For decades, the Louisiana Great River Road has been a popular tour bus itinerary and today offers other alternative transportation opportunities. The Mississippi River Trail (MRT) and many river communities offer biking, walking and jogging path on top of the levees. In many towns, bike racks with bikes for rent are available. Motorcycle clubs are traveling the Louisiana Great River Road in larger numbers and there are even horseback riding trails. It is not uncommon to see RVs traveling in caravans along the Louisiana Great River Road.

The Louisiana Great River Road and the sites located on its route have been made even more popular because of movies filmed in locations along the way. These movies have greatly influenced visitors to travel the Louisiana Great River Road. Movies such as Hush, Hush Sweet Charlotte, Dead Man Walking, Easy Rider, True Blood, Street Car Named Desire, Interview with a Vampire, The Big Easy, the television series North and South, among hundreds more, are of interest to international audiences in particular.



Maintaining and Enhancing Intrinsic Qualities (3)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM - FEDERAL

A strategy for maintaining and enhancing those intrinsic qualities. The level of protection for different parts of a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road can vary, with the highest level of protection afforded those parts which most reflect their intrinsic values. All nationally recognized scenic byways should, however, be maintained with particularly high standards, not only for travelers' safety and comfort, but also for preserving the highest levels of visual integrity and attractiveness.

Topic Discussion:

Louisiana Office of Tourism Guides Intrinsic Qualities Strategies

The Louisiana Office of Tourism is committed to maintaining, enhancing, and interpreting the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road. It allocates financial and human resources to fulfill that commitment, and encourages and facilitates other organizations to share roles in meeting the central objective. Due to its legislative mandate, public and industry support, and experience with similar large- scale projects and programs, the Louisiana Office of Tourism is well suited to facilitate the stewardship of the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road.

Core Strategies

The Louisiana Office of Tourism employs the following strategies for maintaining and enhancing the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road:

- Regular updates to the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan
- Management and collaboration within the Louisiana Office of Tourism for the effective application of existing programs and services
- Creation and maintenance of heightened awareness and appreciation of the

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importance of the Louisiana Great River Road among the diverse set of organizations associated with tourism, natural resources, historic and cultural preservation, economic development, land-use development, and transportation

- Promotion and market development in the consumer sector in ways to instill knowledge, appreciation, and respect for the corridor's intrinsic qualities
- Distribution and sharing of intrinsic resource inventory data and information with all interested parties
- Encourage local and regional government and nonprofit organizations to practice increased levels of collaboration when capital improvement projects are planned within the corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road
- Cooperate with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development related to transportation projects occurring in the corridor
- Support the securing of financial aid grants that are focused on maintaining and enhancing the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road
- Support, facilitate, and conduct training and other forms of professional development for stakeholders in the Louisiana Great River Road



Responsibility for the Byway (4)

Policy Guidance:

Federal Register – National Scenic Byway Program – Federal Highway Administration :

The agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the corridor management plan, including a list of their responsibilities and a schedule for the continuing review of how well those responsibilities are being met.

Topic Discussion:

Protecting, enhancing and interpreting the intrinsic qualities of a byway as well as supporting quality visitor experiences happens only when effective planning, leadership, and management are focused on these objectives. They don't happen on their own and the Louisiana Great River Road is no exception. Hence a central corridor management organization is essential to facilitating the effective stewardship, interpretation and marketing of the intrinsic resources as well as the management of the other important corridor issues and opportunities.

In fact, the Louisiana Great River Road has some unique characteristics that require a level of organizational response that exceeds that which is typically associated with other byways. These include:

- The length of the Louisiana Great River Road—more the 700 miles—suggests that a locally-based volunteer organization dedicated to the management of the byway may not be effective. Local representation, however, will remain important in reflecting local conditions in the overall management of the corridor.
- The diversity of intrinsic resources, their widespread distribution along the route, and consequently, the variety of responsible management organizations for those resources, requires a larger measure of collaboration to facilitate overall effectiveness.

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- The history, performance, and current status of the Louisiana Mississippi River Parkway Commission (LMRPC) indicate that it is a useful advisory group for the activities of the Louisiana Office of Tourism.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism is not equipped or authorized to deliver all of the activities needed for effective corridor management of the Louisiana Great River Road. The table below indicates general responsibilities for the Louisiana Office of Tourism as well as other key organizations and groups.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Beneficial Ongoing Responsibilities</i>
Louisiana Office of Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall facilitation and implementation of the Louisiana Great River Road Corridor Management Plan including updates of the Plan and Resource Library as needed ■ Promotion and market development surrounding travel on the Great River Road ■ Identification of sources of funding to support the various needs and opportunities of the corridor ■ Continued protection and enhancement of State of Louisiana properties—historic sites, state parks, etc. ■ Provide a central source of information related to the Louisiana Great River Road ■ Serve as a facilitator to identify and resolve problems and issues related to the Louisiana Great River Road ■ Serve as the contact point for public involvement and participation in the development of the Louisiana Great River Road ■ Provide communications and participation with activities of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission ■ Partner with the Department of Transportation and Development to administer policies for the Louisiana Great River Road
Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Roadway management ■ Traffic control devices including lane marking, signage and intersection controls ■ Access (driveway) control ■ Outdoor advertising management and control ■ Roadside vegetation and litter control

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<i>Organization</i>	<i>Beneficial Ongoing Responsibilities</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Official Highway Map ■ Partner with the Louisiana Office of Tourism to administer/review the byway
Louisiana Secretary of State Museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Management and operations of state museums and museum collections ■ Interpretive and education programs for the public
Parish, convention and visitor bureaus and tourism commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Promote the Louisiana Great River Road in parish- based promotional programs ■ Assure that local hospitality providers— lodging, vehicle, food, entertainment, etc., are aware of and promote their relationship to the Great River Road ■ Monitor visitor satisfaction with the experience of traveling on the Great River Road
Mississippi River Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocate and facilitate the development, maintenance and use of the Mississippi River Trail as a primary companion to the Great River Road
US Department of Interior National Park Service (NPS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Management, protection, enhancement, and interpretation of NPS resources related to the Louisiana Great River Road, including the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve and the Chalmette Battlefield and National Cemetery ■ Participation planning a network of trails related to the Mississippi River
US Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintenance of flood control structures ■ Regulation of public access to river side of the flood control structures ■ Public education programs and interpretation of the history and operations of the US Army Corps in flood control and navigation on the Mississippi River
Mississippi River levee commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vegetation management of levees ■ Participation in planning for public access (pedestrians, bicyclists and other users permitted to have access to levee top trails) ■ Take advantage of positive public communication opportunities and interpretation of the history and function of levees

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<i>Organization</i>	<i>Beneficial Ongoing Responsibilities</i>
Municipal governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Land use planning ■ Transportation planning and improvements ■ Zoning enforcement ■ Traffic regulation enforcement ■ Local outdoor advertising permitting and enforcement
Parish governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Land use planning ■ Transportation planning and improvements ■ Zoning enforcement ■ Traffic regulation enforcement ■ Local outdoor advertising permitting and enforcement
Mississippi River Parkway Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall marketing programs for the Great River Road domestically ■ Forum for discussion of issues and opportunities that affect all Great River Road states ■ Professional and organization development for stakeholders along the Great River Road ■ Mississippi River Country, a committee of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, markets the Great River Road internationally
National Trust for Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Assistance with protection and preservation projects ■ Public awareness of the importance of history and historic resources
Mississippi River-based industries, and industry organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Take advantage of interpreting and telling the good stories of river-based industry and occupations ■ Sensitive property development and operations
Individual property owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recognize the value and benefits of the Great River Road in relationship to the identity, appearance and economy of individual properties



Development and Preservation Strategies (5)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A strategy describing how existing development might be enhanced and new development might be accommodated to preserving intrinsic qualities of the byway.

Topic Discussion:

Numerous Strategies are Available for Preserving Intrinsic Qualities

The Louisiana Great River Road is indeed rich with intrinsic qualities as well as places and sites where qualities are evident, interpreted, and protected. More important, a number of accomplishments, practices, and services are now in place to enhance and protect the Road's many assets. Where intrinsic resources are threatened by nature, neglect, or destruction there are likewise strategies and tactics that are available for individuals and organizations that can choose to use them in the interest of the Louisiana Great River Road.

Let's review a sampling of the development and preservation strategies that are in place along the Louisiana Great River Road.

Privately owned land and resources: The majority of land (and hence the majority of what is seen by travelers) in the Louisiana Great River Road corridor is privately owned. Large scale or plantation agriculture and tree farms, acreages, in-town residential, industrial, and commercial are the primary private land uses observed across the length and width of the Louisiana Great River Road corridor. It is also apparent that the majority of private property owners show pride and care in their land, buildings, and operations. Continued support and recognition of good property stewardship is an important strategy for resource development and preservation in the Louisiana Great River Road corridor.

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Owner-initiated resource conservation easements: The establishment of owner-initiated conservation easements on private property is a preservation strategy that is growing in popularity in many parts of the country. Often nonprofit land trust organizations can assist property owners in realizing tax advantages along with long-term conservation of scenic, natural, and historic resources.

Public ownership of resources: Many of the Louisiana Great River Road's intrinsic quality resource sites are publicly owned and managed. Museums, state parks, historic sites, wildlife management areas, river accesses and frontages, and recreation trails as well as the highways, roads and streets of the Louisiana Great River Road itself are publicly owned, protected, managed, and often interpreted for the public. The largest portion of the protected land along the Louisiana Great River Road is that of the levee system of the Mississippi River: the earthen embankment provides essential flood protection, a corridor for the Mississippi River Trail and a mostly continuous visual reference or landmark for traveling the route.

National Register of Historic Places designation: Hundreds of properties in the Louisiana Great River Road corridor are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the inventory of registered properties is expected to grow.

Public agency land use and transportation planning: An essential tool for enhancing and protecting intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road is local public agency land use and transportation planning that can address a variety of growth management issues on a continuous basis. Maintaining and sustaining long-range land use plans, context sensitive transportation improvement plans, zoning, and building codes are important strategies in the Louisiana Great River Road corridor.

Professional and technical services: Professional and technical services are available to public and private landowners and land managers throughout the Louisiana Great River Road corridor from a wide range of public and private organizations. Land-use planners, landscape architects, engineers, historians, architects, ecologists, graphic designers, wildlife and vegetation scientists as well as legal and financial experts are among the professionals that are available to property owners and resource managers for purposes of protecting, managing, enhancing and interpreting the intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road corridor.

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Public interpretation and education programs: Educating the public, including most particularly travelers of the Louisiana Great River Road, about its intrinsic resources, their values to local and national society, and the risks the resources face is an extremely important step in building support for enhancement and protection of those resources.

Cooperative agreements between separate units of government: Practical and creative uses of cooperative agreements between different jurisdictions and levels of government need to be explored as part of the strategy of offering services to property owners and resource managers interested in protecting and enhancing intrinsic qualities.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism and other state agencies within the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism offer a broad spectrum of options for preserving the intrinsic qualities of Louisiana Byways and the Louisiana Great River Road. These include but are not limited to:

The Louisiana State Museum and its 13 properties, which house collections, exhibits, programs, and resources, are helpful to byways in developing and implementing preservation strategies.

The **Louisiana Division of Archaeology** performs state and federal roles relating to recording, protecting, and distributing information about the state's archaeological sites.

The **Louisiana Division of the Arts**, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council, is the catalyst for participation, education, development, and promotion of excellence in the arts and awards grants to artists, arts organizations, governments, colleges/universities, schools, and school systems, etc.

The **Louisiana Division of Historic Preservation** with its mission “to achieve the preservation of Louisiana objects, sites, structures, and districts deemed significant in the broad historical development of the United States, Louisiana, and subdivisions thereof, through direct action and through influencing the actions of others.”

The **State Library of Louisiana** fosters a culture of literacy, promotes awareness of the state’s rich literary heritage, and ensures public access to and preservation of informational, educational, cultural and recreational resources, especially those unique to Louisiana.



Public Participation (6)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

*A plan for on-going public participation in the implementation of
corridor management objectives.*

Topic Discussion:

Creating and sustaining avenues for effective public participation are essential to the success of the Louisiana Great River Road. Much of the protection and enhancement of intrinsic qualities, as well as the delivery of authentic visitor experience, relies on cooperative and volunteer partnerships between otherwise unrelated organizations and individuals.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism provides a variety of mechanisms for engaging public and private organizations as well as individuals in the implementation of the objectives of this corridor management plan. Equally important is the agency's ability to gauge overall byway user satisfaction with the travel experiences offered by the Louisiana Great River Road.

In addition to being continually accessible to organizations and interested individuals through its staff in the Office of Tourism and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, the Louisiana Office of Tourism provides the following communication and participation activities:

- Disseminates information related specifically to the Mississippi River and the Louisiana Great River Road as well as Louisiana Byways in particular
- Serves as a clearinghouse by directing comments, suggestions, complaints, and recommendations to the proper offices and departments of the state of Louisiana

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- Reports on travel and tourism trends as well as performance indicators for the tourism industry

A short-term implementation activity that has been achieved is the revitalization of the Louisiana Mississippi River Parkway Commission. The Commission's structure, membership, and organization, as defined by state statute, should be examined to assure that the Commission:

- Becomes and stays an effective and efficient “sounding board” for the management and operational activities the Louisiana Office of Tourism undertakes relative to the Louisiana Great River Road
- Provides geographic representation across the 18 parishes through which the Louisiana Great River Road passes
- Represents a broad spectrum of interest groups that rely on the enhancement and interpretation of the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road
- Will successfully serve as a conduit for representing Louisiana with the 10-state Mississippi River Parkway Commission, and vice versa

As updates are needed to this corridor management plan—annual as well as five-year updates—the Louisiana Office of Tourism provides structured opportunities for organizations and individuals to participate in implementing and updating the objectives for protecting and enhancing the intrinsic qualities as well as providing positive byway travel experiences for visitors of the Louisiana Great River Road.



Byway Safety (7)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A general review of the road's safety record to locate hazards and poor design and identify possible corrections.

Topic Discussion:

The majority of the roads that comprise the Louisiana Great River Road are state and federal highways. A relatively small portion of the overall route includes municipal streets and parish roads. All portions of the route including the selected bridge and ferryboat crossings of the Mississippi River occur on public rights of way and are enforced and maintained by appropriate levels of government. Traffic regulations are enforced throughout the route, and emergency services are available through local and state response procedures.

The entire route has hard surface paving. Roadway improvements and upgrades occur through normal local and state transportation improvement processes. Traffic control devices generally conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Access management control for commercial and private property driveways is an important issue in many areas due to relatively rapid commercial and industrial development and urban fringe locations.



But, as with many other roads that carry motorists on leisure travel, the Louisiana Great River Road shares needs and opportunities for improvements

Roadway Safety Issues and Opportunities

Over the last 10 years, progress has been made in many areas to provide a safer route for bicycling and pedestrian travel along the Louisiana Great River Road. Many miles of levee tops have bike/pedestrian paths. The Mississippi River Trail has added directional signage indicating the safe biking and pedestrian paths as well. And, Louisiana Great River Road signage has improved.

- Access management and control from the roadway to commercial and industrial properties
- Route marking, proper placement of traffic control devices, and other wayshowing components to aid first-time travelers on the Louisiana Great River Road
- Provisions for pedestrian access and crossing of the Louisiana Great River Road
- Provisions for bicycle traffic (shared lane or separate path)
- Traffic calming procedures and improvements
- Designated opportunities for traffic to turn around and change directions on the Louisiana Great River Road
- Parking areas and safe pull-offs for motorists to observe roadside attractions and access top-of-levee trail system
- Maintenance of appropriate clear zone
- Establishment and maintenance of roadway shoulders



Commerce and User Facilities (8)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.

All-American Road User Facilities: The Louisiana Great River Road is a well-traveled and popular route. It has plentiful communities and river towns that provide user services. There are ample service stations, restaurants, RV parks, state parks and motel and B&B accommodations. There are services for bikers, motorcyclists, joggers, tour buses and vehicles. Parts of the levee system accommodate horseback riding as well. The Louisiana Great River Road is not remote and visitor services of all kinds are readily available.

Accommodation of Tour Buses: The Louisiana Great Road is already a popular tour bus route. The Louisiana Great River Road plantations, Poverty Point World Heritage Site, the many festivals, the New Orleans French Quarter and the visitors that travel to the mouth of the Mississippi River for charter deep sea fishing – tens of thousands travel by tour bus coach. The road easily accommodates vehicles of all types: tour buses, RVs, bikers, motorcyclist and cars. The cruise lines carry passengers on field trips and optional excursions along the Louisiana Great River Road all year. The roads are properly maintained by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and have directional and wayfinding signage. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development provides information on the Louisiana Byway road system on the official state map and the Louisiana Tour Guide provides information on ways to locate Louisiana Great River Road sites and attractions.

Safety is an issue on the Louisiana Great River Road that is as important as protecting and enhancing its intrinsic qualities. Along its entire course, travelers will find nearly all imaginable driving conditions and situations with the exception of winter driving conditions and mud or gravel roads.

Some portions of the Louisiana Great River Road, such as in the northeastern part of state, are characterized by very low traffic volumes while others, as in the Baton Rouge and New Orleans metropolitan areas, are marked by high traffic

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counts, multiple high-speed lanes, and considerable commercial traffic. Motorists traveling along the Louisiana Great River Road across several of its itineraries will participate in a wide diversity of traffic conditions and will need to be attuned to changing traffic conditions as part of their travel experience. That said, roadway conditions throughout the entire route do support all types of motor vehicles, including commercial level coach tour buses.

For bicyclists and pedestrians, travel along and adjacent to most of the Louisiana Great River Road is provided by the multistate Mississippi River Trail (MRT). The primary development objective of the MRT is to achieve a continuous hard surface trail on top of the earthen levee along the Mississippi River wherever feasible. Multiple local improvement projects have been implemented and more are in the development and funding stages. Maintenance vehicle access using the levee tops already exists and adding trail improvements (hard surfacing, trail heads, parking areas, rest areas, etc.) represents a cost-effective means of leveraging an existing public infrastructure investment. Plus, the levee-top trail system affords byway users, local and long-distance bicyclists, and pedestrians with continuous visual access to the Mississippi River environment, wildlife scenery and, most important, safe separation from motor vehicle traffic on the roadway.

Other existing modes of transportation that are integral to parts of the Louisiana Great River Road include the ferryboat crossings of the Mississippi River and the streetcars of New Orleans. The ferryboats are free to the public, offer spectacular views of and on the Mississippi River, provide byway travelers with a unique experience and also serve as a vital transportation route for local traffic. The streetcars of New Orleans--St. Charles Avenue, Canal Street and Riverfront Line—indeed world famous, are one of the many intrinsic resources of New Orleans that are part of the Louisiana Great River Road experience.

In addition to the specific improvements associated with the Louisiana Great River Road that support bicyclists and pedestrians who seek experiences similar to those sought by leisure motorists, four additional provisions exist and will be expanded.

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Education: Continual education for local roadway users as well as leisure travelers is an important part of the Louisiana Great River Road experience. In all forms of communication with travelers on the Louisiana Great River Road—promotional literature, guidebooks, website, visitor center staff interaction, etc.—the importance of travel safety and the fact that the Great River Road is a “working highway”, with agricultural, industrial, commercial, and commuter traffic, will be stressed. Equally important will be the communications with local motorists—private citizens to commercial, industrial, and agricultural interests—that stress how the Louisiana Great River Road is also an important tourism (economic) attraction unto itself and awareness and respect for all types of roadway users is appropriate.

Enforcement: Enforcement of the full range of traffic regulations and appropriate use of the roadway is an important part of accommodating side-by-side Louisiana Great River Road leisure travel with local commercial travel.

Wayshowing: Effective byway wayshowing in the form of consistent and uniform highway signs that clearly mark the route of the Louisiana Great River Road and provide directions to its various intrinsic resource stops is an important component of assuring positive visitor experiences.

Infrastructure Improvement Planning: A variety of infrastructure improvements are appropriate to support increased use of the Louisiana Great River Road. Because of the length of the Louisiana Great River Road and the diversity of projects, an accurate listing of specific projects needs to be prepared and updated annually. The types of projects include but are not limited to parking areas that serve as trailheads for the Mississippi River Trail; turnabouts and traffic circles that will manage continuous flow of traffic with turning movements; pedestrian crossings; orientation stops; turning lanes for traffic entering major attractions; and appropriate traffic combing features. The Louisiana Office of Tourism provides an annual clearinghouse to identify and prioritize the various infrastructure improvement projects along the 700-mile route of the Louisiana Great River Road.

All-American Road Plan to Accommodate Increased Tourism Impact

In 2018, Louisiana hosted over 51 million visitors, generating nearly \$19 billion in visitor spending. Louisiana is well equipped to host increased numbers of visitors. It has ample and diverse accommodations, including camping, hotels, B&Bs, overnights at Louisiana Great River Road attractions such as the U.S.S. Kidd and several plantation homes. There are ample internationally-renown and local restaurants and activities of all types to entertain byway travelers.

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Large influxes of visitors is not new to Louisiana. Mardi Gras and the International Jazz and Heritage Festival bring millions of additional visitors to Louisiana Great River Road towns and cities.



Efforts to Minimize Intrusions and Enhance Experiences (9)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A discussion of efforts to minimize intrusions on the visitor's experience and make improvements to enhance that experience.

Topic Discussion:

For Louisiana Great River Road many of the efforts to minimize intrusions on the visitor experience and enhance that experience are closely aligned with other points in this corridor management plan. Ongoing efforts include the following and are covered in more detail in other sections of the document:

- Creating awareness of the unique intrinsic resources that Louisiana Great River Road travelers experience, and instill respect for those resources.
- Sustaining awareness among the wide array of Louisiana Great River Road stakeholders including: public resource managers; state and local political leaders; the hospitality service industry; major industries along the route; affiliated nonprofit organizations and special interest groups; and property owners.
- Sharing the successful strategies and techniques for intrinsic resource protection, project formation, communicating with travelers, and byway services among the stakeholders in the Louisiana Great River Road that can be learned from other nationally-and-All-American Road-designated byways. This is a key function of the Louisiana Office of Tourism.

Primary improvements are currently underway in the area of wayshowing and integrating Louisiana Great River Road improvements that also support the Mississippi River Trail (MRT). This includes installing improved signage, providing orientation stops for Louisiana Great River Road travelers and providing detailed mapping via visitor centers and the Internet are highly effective means of enhancing visitor experience. The MRT offers

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the most effective means of fulfilling the natural desire of travelers to “see the River.” Efforts in this regard include providing parking areas that serve as trailheads for MRT users and orientation and interpretation stops for Louisiana Great River Road travelers.



Outdoor Advertising (10)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising.

Topic Discussion:

Historic Basis for Controlling Outdoor Advertising

Historically, the importance of reducing visual intrusions along the Great River Road has been well-recognized. Previous Great River Road planning studies, which were intended for roadway improvements, have emphasized the need to control and regulate billboards and other forms of outdoor advertising. A number of local jurisdictions and parishes have signage and billboard policies that restrict, manage, and in some cases, fully prohibit the installation and maintenance of outdoor advertising.

Assistance is available to all interested communities along the Louisiana Great River Road corridor for improving their signage policies. And along the Great River Road, public agencies and private conservation organizations often acquire scenic and conservation easements to sustain intrinsic resources from uncontrolled or insensitive development.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism works to ensure that the character and quality of the Louisiana Great River Road are maintained and enhanced. And the Louisiana Office of Tourism will continue efforts to educate potential advertisers of the vision and goals of the Louisiana Great River Road and encourage alternative advertising media.



Federal Requirements

By principle and federal law, outdoor advertising (billboards, etc.) are managed on the Louisiana Great River Road. Title 23, Section 131 of the United States Code outlines the specifics for controlling outdoor advertising associated with designated scenic byways.

Title 23, Section 131(s) describes control of outdoor advertising along designated scenic byways:

Scenic Byway Prohibition.--If a State has a scenic byway program, the State may not allow the erection along any highway on the Interstate System or Federal-aid primary system which before, on, or after the effective date of this subsection, is designated as a scenic byway under such program of any sign, display, or device which is not in conformance with [subsection \(c\)](#) of this section. Control of any sign, display, or device on such a highway shall be in accordance with this section. In designating a scenic byway for purposes of this section and section 1047 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, a State may exclude from such designation any segment of a highway that is inconsistent with the State's criteria for designating State scenic byways. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall preclude a State from signing any such excluded segment, including such segment on a map, or carrying out similar activities, solely for purposes of system continuity.

Title 23, Section 131(t) defines the terms "primary system" and "Federal-aid primary system":

Primary System Defined.--For purposes of this section, the terms "primary system" and "Federal-aid primary system" mean the Federal-aid primary system in existence on June 1, 1991, and any highway which is not on such system but which is on the National Highway System.

Title 23, Section 131(s) references subsection 131(c) which explains what signs, displays, or devices are allowable along designated scenic byways: Effective control means that such signs, displays, or devices after January 1, 1968, if located within six hundred and sixty feet of the right-of-way and, on or after July 1, 1975, or after the expiration of the next regular session of the State legislature, whichever is later, if located beyond six hundred and sixty feet of the right-of-way located outside of urban areas, visible from the main traveled way of the system, and erected with the purpose of their message being read from such main traveled way, shall, pursuant to this section, be limited to (1) directional and official signs and notices, which signs and notices shall include, but not be limited to, signs and notices pertaining to natural wonders, scenic and historical attractions, which are required or authorized by law, which shall conform

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to national standards hereby authorized to be promulgated by the Secretary hereunder, which standards shall contain provisions concerning lighting, size, number, and spacing of signs, and such other requirements as may be appropriate to implement this section, (2) signs, displays, and devices advertising the sale or lease of property upon which they are located, (3) signs, displays, and devices, including those which may be changed at reasonable intervals by electronic process or by remote control, advertising activities conducted on the property on which they are located, (4) signs lawfully in existence on October 22, 1965, determined by the State, subject to the approval of the Secretary, to be landmark signs, including signs on farm structures or natural surfaces, or historic or artistic significance the preservation of which would be consistent with the purposes of this section, and (5) signs, displays, and devices advertising the distribution by nonprofit organizations of free coffee to individuals traveling on the Interstate System or the primary system. For the purposes of this subsection, the term "free coffee" shall include coffee for which a donation may be made, but is not required. Additional information from FHWA on outdoor advertising control can be found here: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate/out_ad.htm.

The Department of Transportation and Development and the Louisiana Office of Tourism process formal requests pertaining to the construction and replacement of outdoor advertising according to the procedures and enforcement functions that are legally available to the Department of Transportation and Development. State law--LA Revised Statute 48:461, Part XIX--and Chapter 1, Title 70 of the Louisiana Administrative Code further establish the legal basis for regulating and restricting the erection and maintenance of outdoor advertising in areas adjacent to the interstates and primary highway systems of Louisiana.

For approximately 40% to 50% of the Louisiana Great River Road, the adjoining land is in some form of public ownership and management. Levee commissions control the vast majority of this public land where no outdoor advertising or billboard structures are allowed due to their inappropriateness with levee and flood control management.



Signage (11)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

A signage plan that demonstrates how the State will ensure and make the number and placement of signs more supportive of the visitor experience.

Topic Discussion:

The Louisiana Office of Tourism together with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development are working toward implementing a comprehensive and uniform wayshowing plan and program for all byways in Louisiana, including the Louisiana Great River Road.

The project will benefit byway travelers by providing systematic wayshowing components and easy-to-follow information at all stages of the byway experience—pre-visit, visit, and post-visit. The project will feature: uniformly identified byway entries and exits; orientation stops at visitor centers; route markers and guide signs; directional signage to and information on plantations, wetlands, historic districts and sites; as well as where to enjoy Louisiana's best cultural food and music. Accurate and attractive byway maps will be widely distributed to travelers so they can plan, enjoy, and recall their love of travel on Louisiana Byways.

The Louisiana byway signage program recognizes and incorporates all appropriate standards and guidelines of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices as applied and practiced by the Department of Transportation and Development.

In the spring of 2018, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and the Federal Highway Administration staff drove the entire length of the Louisiana Great River Road to evaluate signage and interpretive signage needs. As a result, new Louisiana Great River Road byway logo signs are being installed since many have been damaged or removed. All signs should

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be installed by April 2020.

For the Louisiana Great River Road, the pilot wheel symbol serves as the primary route marker identification. To be effective, this symbol is also incorporated on the widely distributed Official State Highway Map, in web-sites, and printed travel directions and literature. For travelers navigating the 10 Great River Road states, consistent application of this iconic emblem is essential.

The Louisiana Office of Tourism serves as the chief facilitator of the uniform byway signage program and the Department of Transportation and Development provides implementation services since the vast majority of the state's byway mileage, including that of the Louisiana Great River Road, occurs on state highways.



Marketing (12)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A narrative describing how the byway will be positioned for marketing.

Topic Discussion:

A Comprehensive Marketing Approach

Many organizations, public and private, work to sustain and expand the leisure travel market for the Mississippi River and the Louisiana Great River Road as well as their intrinsic qualities for local, national, and international travelers. The State of Louisiana, individual regions of the state, and the gateway communities of the Louisiana Great River Road as well as many individual attractions and intrinsic resource sites of the Louisiana Great River Road support byway travelers with information services and products for all stages of the travel experience.

Domestic and International Marketing

All-American Road Promotion, Interpretation and Marketing: The Louisiana Great River Road is fully promoted by the Louisiana Office of Tourism and the many convention and visitor bureaus and tourist commission located along the route. The Louisiana Office of Tourism attends a wide array of trade shows and media events at which the Louisiana Great River Road is highlighted. The Louisiana Office of Tourism maintains international representatives in the top tourism markets of France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada. Through partnerships with organizations such as Travel South USA it also markets to Australia and through Mississippi River Country to Japan, where the entire focus is on the Great River Road.

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Additionally, it is promoted by the Mississippi River Road Commission domestically and Mississippi River Country internationally. The Louisiana Great River Road is promoted as a visitor destination to domestic and international travel and trade outlets. Stories of the Louisiana Great River are pitched to domestic and international media at such events as International Pow Wow, the largest international trade show in the United States, and overseas in France, Great Britain, Japan, China and Germany. Canadians are especially interested in traveling the Louisiana Great River Road. Currently, the Louisiana Byway Program is updating its Louisianabyways.com website by adding itineraries and mini-videos promoting the byways. The Louisiana Great River Road itinerary planning and updating the interpretive signage is scheduled for the Spring of 2020.

All-American Road Multi-Lingual Needs: By marketing to increased numbers of international visitors, the Louisiana Office of tourism and its partner convention and visitors bureaus and tourist commissions are increasingly producing materials in multiple languages and are hiring internationally-speaking staff. Many communities along the Louisiana Great River Road cherish their French heritage and many signs and interpretive signs are in both English and French. Since Louisiana has a variety of international visitors, many brochures and promotional information is printed in foreign languages including French, Spanish, Japanese and Chinese.

Statewide Byway Market Development Goal

An overarching marketing goal for Louisiana Byways is to promote the “Louisiana Byway Experience” to in-state and out-of-state consumers. The “Louisiana Byway Experience” is defined as a traveler experiencing one or many byways by driving, stopping at various sites and attractions, and spending money in local communities along the Louisiana Byways. Market development objectives for Louisiana Byways include:

- Increase awareness of Louisiana Byways in:
 - The Louisiana tourism industry and local communities
 - State and local agencies
 - Existing and potential visitor markets
- Generate visitor traffic in the rural areas of the state serviced by Louisiana Byways



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- Support marketing efforts of designated Louisiana Byways
- Ensure compatibility with the Federal Highway Administration's
- National Scenic Byways Program marketing efforts

Louisiana Great River Road Brand Components

The official logo and primary brand image of the Louisiana Great River Road is the traditional pilot wheel symbol as used in the other nine Great River Road states.



This symbol is used in route wayshowing signage; promotional literature; websites; on travel maps; tour guide materials; interpretive exhibits, and, with limited and controlled use, on tangible products. Strict standards will be set for its application to assure a faithful and accurate replication of the imagery.

Multiple Market Development

Achieving success in attracting people to experience the Louisiana Great River Road requires multiple marketing activities and strategies organized in a “bottom up” manner, from local to international levels. The order presented here does not suggest priority – all levels are critical to presenting and fulfilling the travel promise that the Louisiana Great River Road offers distinct, vital, and rewarding travel experiences. Let’s start with the Louisiana Great River Road itself and the market development role of its numerous attractions.



Louisiana Great River Road and Intrinsic Sites

Indeed the roadway itself and its intrinsic quality sites must “market themselves.” The roadway must be kept reasonably free of litter and debris, highway signage and wayshowing components must be complete and well maintained, and the roadside environment must be reasonably attractive and free of unsightly development. Likewise, attractions must continually provide an authentic appearance and presentation in all areas open to and visible by the public.

The personal hospitality offered by the public representatives (front desk people, interpreters, volunteers, and maintenance staff) of Louisiana Great River Road attractions must be positive and informative. Presenting positive and effective hospitality service to the traveling public needs to be coupled with the use of the features of the Louisiana Great River Road brand along with a basic level of knowledge of the geography of the Great River Road in Louisiana and adjoining states.

Local Communities

Local communities are intended to be one of the primary beneficiaries of the multifaceted marketing effort for the Louisiana Great River Road.

Local communities are where most Louisiana Great River Road travelers will spend money to stay overnight, eat, service and fuel their vehicles, shop and enjoy local entertainment. In turn, the people of local communities need to continually be mindful of the presence and importance of the Louisiana Great River Road and the travelers who follow this road. Sustained positive community appearance, attentive personal hospitality, and presenting the Louisiana Great River Road brand imagery are critical facets of the Louisiana Great River Road marketing strategy.

Area Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Parish Tourist Commissions

The Louisiana Great River Road is also presented and promoted by cooperating area convention and visitor bureaus and parish tourism commissions. These organizations have readily assumed primary

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responsibility for managing and marketing Louisiana Byways. Most operate local information centers that are close to byways and thus provide daily on-the-road services for byways visitors.

While all of the state's area convention and visitor bureaus and parish tourism commissions provide information about the Louisiana Great River Road, the local and parish-based organizations listed below will have primary responsibilities since the Louisiana Great River Road passes directly through the geographic territory they represent:

- Ascension Parish Tourism Commission
- Baton Rouge Area CVB
- Jefferson CVB, Inc.
- New Orleans Metro CVB
- River Parishes Tourism Commission
- St. Bernard Parish Tourism Commission
- West Baton Rouge Tourism Information Center
- West Feliciana Tourist Commission
- Vidalia Riverfront and Conference Center
- Louisiana Welcome Centers operated by the Louisiana Office of Tourism at St. Francisville, Baton Rouge State Capitol, New Orleans and the Atchafalaya (located on I-10 and serves as a gateway to the Louisiana Great River Road).

Plans are in development to place permanent byway orientation and interpretation exhibits designed to provide travelers with useful information about Louisiana's state byways and its unique nationally designated byways.

Louisiana Office of Tourism

The Office of Tourism markets the collection of all designated byways in Louisiana. In that role it provides byway information on the state tourism website, publishes a brochure detailing Louisiana Byways in the state, provides basic visitor information; participates in consumer and trade show events and markets the Louisiana Byways at all official Louisiana Welcome Centers. The Louisiana Office of Tourism has promoted the Louisiana Great River Road nationally and internationally through promotional literature distributed at trade shows and to media outlets. These international markets include France, Canada, Japan and China.

Specifically for the Louisiana Great River Road, the Office of Tourism provides the following services and products directly to consumer travel

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market:

- A printed brochure and website for Louisiana Byways
- A printed travel guide and website for the Louisiana Great River Road
- Consumer-oriented digital/electronic data such as downloadable podcasts and GPS applications

The Office of Tourism provides the following services and products to and with other partners in the multi- faceted market development approach for the Louisiana Great River Road:

- Information and data for other websites including www.byways.com and www.experiencemississippiriver.com
- Awareness and training services
- Representation of the Louisiana Great River Road at national and international trade shows
- Access to intrinsic resource inventory and GIS geo-data
- Information regarding the availability of financial assistance to support local market development interests
- Facilitation of wayshowing projects for the Louisiana Great River Road
- A clearinghouse for coordination with other Great River Road states individually and through collective efforts of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development is charged by statute with maintaining official maps of all designated Louisiana Byways. In addition, the Department of Transportation and Development delineates Louisiana Byways on the official Louisiana State Highway map that receives widespread consumer distribution.

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development will also be the lead agency for installing and maintaining a portion of the brand identity of the Louisiana Great River Road by continuous route marking using the pilot wheel logo.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission

With its “Experience the Mississippi River” program, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission affords the exclusive single source for market development dedicated to the overall Great River Road. Its focus is on the domestic traveling public. With local development of the Louisiana Great River Road program, the recognition associated with the anticipated National Scenic Byways Program designation, and the prospect for collaborating with the adjacent state market development activities, the potential for increased effectiveness of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission to serve new travel markets is significantly increased. The Louisiana Office of Tourism has increased its participation with the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, expecting that mutual benefits will continue to accrue for both organizations.

Mississippi River Country

Mississippi River Country, a sub-committee of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, markets the Great River Road to international markets. For the last three years, it has marketed directly to Japanese tour and trade operators based in California and Tokyo. Plans are to expand the market to Canada.

Companion National Programs

The Louisiana Great River Road provides experience opportunities to leisure market segments that are well supported by other companion organizations. Bicyclists, hunting and fishing enthusiasts, environmentalists, history and geo-cache hobbyists are but a few of the market segments that are also served by public and private organizations such as Mississippi River Trail, the National Park Service, America’s Wetland, and the Audubon Society to name a few. Through its responsibilities to serve the travelers of the Louisiana Great River Road, the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism will seek to identify opportunities to collaborate with national and international organizations for market development projects that can provide mutual and beneficial connection with shared travel segments.

National Scenic Byway Program

When it was active, the National Scenic Byways Program and its website (www.byways.org) was critical in connecting prospective travelers from

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around the nation and the world with the Louisiana Great River Road. Hopefully, this program will be re-instated.



Roadway Design Standards (13)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

A discussion of design standards relating to any proposed modification of the roadway. This discussion should include an evaluation of how the proposed changes may affect the intrinsic qualities of the byway corridor.

Topic Discussion:

The Louisiana Great River Road exhibits a wide range of roadway conditions along its 717-mile course. It travels through rural open areas often adjacent to flood control levees; past entry driveways to plantations and numerous historic sites; over the Mississippi River; through the heart of two large cities; and next to precious wetlands. These environments are what make the Louisiana Great River Road so special for travelers. Yet for decades, the Louisiana Great River Road is actually a “working highway”--hundreds of thousands of people commute on it daily; river- based industries, agriculture, petro-chemical complexes, and seafood suppliers rely on it for the prompt delivery of materials, vendors and products; and, because of the area's attractiveness, investors and developers know that many of the Great River Road’s highways and streets are key to community development and growth. In short, the Louisiana Great River Road is a dynamic environment where diverse and sometimes opposing forces come together to protect *and* profit from this most treasured road.

Most of the highways of the Louisiana Great River Road are controlled by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, which on May 26, 2006 embraced the concept of context sensitive solutions in all of the Department’s transportation and public works projects, including Louisiana Byways.



This policy reads[†]:

“The Secretary’s Policy for Achieving Context Sensitive Solutions.

The Department is committed to partnering with communities to provide Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) to transportation and public works projects. CSS is a collaborative approach to decision making whereby transportation solutions are developed that fit within the context of their surroundings. Context Sensitive Solutions can address a wide range of community needs such as cultural and historic preservation, community growth and sustainability, access, cohesion, aesthetics, safety, mobility, and cost effectiveness. Applying CSS principles is important, because it improves the quality of life for Louisiana citizens, enhances business recruitment, and improves DOTD’s image and reputation, while building a great state of which we can all be proud.

It is the Department’s policy to consider CSS for all of its transportation and public works projects, regardless of whether the projects are state or federally funded. The Department recognizes that solutions will vary depending on a project’s complexity and potential impacts to the surrounding community. This is a policy, not a standard. The intent is to deliver better projects for the community and the State as a whole. CSS are developed from a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to fitting projects into their surroundings and taking into account community needs. To develop CSS, the Department must engage stakeholders early, and sometimes often, to discover their needs. Applying CSS does not mean that all the desires of the community and other stakeholders will be incorporated into a project. The Department must balance all needs with the project’s purpose and need, as well as the project’s budget. When applying CSS principles, the Department will strive to address and comply with the current American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines. The final decision, regarding the scope of a project remains with the Department. The Department will work with local officials to find ways to implement CSS in every project. This may include asking local governments and metropolitan organizations for funding participation, or suggesting alternative funding sources for specific project features desired by the community that are beyond the Department’s normal project budget. To assist in the consideration and implementation of CSS in all stages of project development, the Department will train project managers as well as other project development staff in CSS principles and effective public involvement techniques.”

[†] Source: www.dotd.louisiana.gov

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Another factor that influences design standards associated with the Louisiana Great River Road is that it travels through areas that are relatively fixed in their condition. Being adjacent to earthen levees, public parks, and wildlife management areas provides long-term stability for the design standards associated with the Louisiana Great River Road. Areas such as the State Capitol grounds in Baton Rouge as well as St. Charles Avenue and the French Quarter in New Orleans likewise bring long-term stability to the design nature of the roadway.

At least two major projects have been implemented in the corridor of the Louisiana Great River Road. The construction of the John James Audubon Bridge crossing the Mississippi River near St. Francisville and New Roads. Second, in the area of St. Francisville, US 61 has been improved from a two-lane cross-section to a four-lane cross-section bringing its design to be consistent with Great River Road segments in other states.

In the end, the Louisiana Great River Road exists by being integral with an appropriately dynamic environment where forces of change will almost always be present somewhere along the route at any particular time. The Louisiana Office of Tourism and the Department of Transportation and Development have the capacity to anticipate and influence change in ways that can respect the intrinsic qualities of the Louisiana Great River Road. In facilitating effective management of the Louisiana Great River Road, these departments seek to:

- Build awareness among all stakeholders on the Louisiana Great River Road
- Support collaborative long-range professional transportation and land use planning that recognizes the value of the Louisiana Great River Road

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- Advocate the application of context-sensitive design approaches to transportation improvement projects on the Louisiana Great River Road
- Support special study projects undertaken by academic institutions such as the recently completed study of the Louisiana Great River Road by the LSU landscape architecture graduate program



Interpreting Significant Byway Resources (14)

Policy Guidance:

FEDERAL REGISTER – NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY PROGRAM –
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

*A description of plans to explain and interpret the byway's
significant resources to visitors.*

Topic Discussion:

Byway travelers on the Louisiana Great River Road enjoy the benefits of numerous independent and well-established interpretation and education programs. Archaeology; Native American and pre-settlement history; exploration; international, national and Louisiana history; customs and traditions; natural history; and the arts and folklife are all interpreted with a connection to the Mississippi River along the Louisiana Great River Road; in its gateway communities; and on each of the eight itineraries and travel segments. Interpretation providers range across a broad spectrum including: the National Park Service; the various offices of the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism; parish-level convention and visitor bureaus; and an extensive offering of commercial or private tours and trips. Many travelers take advantage of the myriad of travel, history, and tour guide books available in libraries, bookstores and online to supplement interpreter-led programs and hundreds of static exhibits.

Underpinning all of the interpretation offerings associated with the Louisiana Great River Road, the renowned hospitality of Louisianans and the state's travel industry is deeply based on delivering authenticity.

Traveling the Louisiana Great River Road is rich with opportunities to learn, feel, and engage with its intrinsic qualities.

The Louisiana Great River Road Reference Library provides what is, by necessity, a partial catalogue of intrinsic qualities, resources and sites that are supplemented by structured interpretation opportunities

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The Louisiana Office of Tourism recognizes the wealth of the interpretation outlets available to travelers and has addressed the challenges and opportunities in interpreting the intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road through strategic plans for and annual operations of all four of its sister offices:

- Cultural Development
- State Museum
- State Parks
- State Library

Agency missions, goals, and objectives of all four offices place high importance on interpreting Louisiana's archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic heritage to residents and visitors alike.

Furthermore, the Louisiana Office of Tourism recognizes the value of the guidance provided by the *Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit* produced by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. No other document provides such a thorough and unifying overview for the interpretation of the many resources of the Great River Road. The *Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit* is an integral part of this Corridor Management Plan

The overall theme and 11 individual themes are outlined below. Additionally, the *Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit* provides more than 50 sample stories to illustrate the various themes.

Overall Interpretive Theme for the Great River Road

Overall Theme:

***THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER IS THE FLOW OF
LIFE SHAPING LAND AND PEOPLES.***

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Theme 1: *The Mississippi River is a ribbon of life for people, plants, and animals.*

Theme 2: *As the river has influenced people, people have influenced the river.*

Theme 3: *The Mississippi River has nurtured prehistoric and historic cultures.*

Theme 4: *The Mississippi River inspires a variety of folk life, literary, fine art, and musical forms.*

Theme 5: *The Mississippi River has profoundly shaped American history.*

Theme 6: *The strategic importance of the Mississippi River has resulted in conflict between nations and peoples.*

Theme 7: *Mississippi River architecture reflects distinctive styles affected by cultural and natural resources.*

Theme 8: *The Mississippi River is one of the world's great rivers noted for its beauty, grandeur, and diversity.*

Theme 9: *The history of Mississippi River transportation is a dramatic story reflecting the river's economic and commercial importance.*

Theme 10: *Mississippi River towns and cities reflect mid-19th century life.*

Theme 11: *The Mississippi River is a working river sustaining many industries.*

So that the intrinsic resources of the Louisiana Great River Road and the experiences that its travelers enjoy are more rewarding, the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism will work toward:

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- Expanding brand identity of the Louisiana Great River Road associated with existing interpretation programs offered by the Department and its four offices.
- Increasing the number of Great River Road Interpretive Centers recognized by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission on the Louisiana route.
- Incorporating new wayshowing components with interpreting the Louisiana Great River Road.
- Offering training opportunities for interpretive staff and program managers to provide a “big picture” view of the Great River Road.
- Observing the quality of interpretation and make resources available to improve the delivery of interpretive messages to the public.
- Focusing on upgrading accessibility standards for facilities and communication media.
- Implementing alternate language options into the interpretive programs and travel information associated with the Louisiana Great River Road.



All-American Road Designation Requirements

In the event that the Federal Highway Administration opens national and All-American Road nominations, the Louisiana Great River Corridor Management Plan addresses the additional requirements for All-American Road designation.

The Louisiana Great River Road meets all of the requirements for qualification as an All-American Road. It has long been a popular tour bus itinerary, with the most popular section being from St. Francisville to New Orleans and then from New Orleans to Venice, Louisiana, the end of the entire 10-state road. Today, tour buses carrying tens of thousands of cruise line passengers the entire length of the road. With Poverty Point World Heritage site anchoring the northern part of the Louisiana Great River Road to the mouth of the Mississippi River anchoring the southern end of the road, the Louisiana Great River Road is well-equipped for vehicles of all kinds: RVs, bikes, motorcycles, tour buses and cars.