

## **Mississippi Great River Road Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan**

*Contained within this Corridor Management Plan are the 14 key factors noted on [byways.org](http://byways.org) that should be identified. Please find them within sections below.*

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### **Executive Summary**

The Mississippi Great River Road Scenic Byway runs over 275 miles along the Mississippi River, following U.S. Highway 61 running through the counties of Wilkinson, Adams, Jefferson, Claiborne, Warren. At Onward, MS in Issaquena County the Great River Road joins MS Hwy 1, running through a corner Sharkey and returns to Issaquena County and continues through Washington, Bolivar and Coahoma Counties to U.S. Hwy 49 where the route turns east to the intersection of Old Hwy 61. At the point the byway head north through Tunica & DeSoto Counties to the town of Walls. The byway joins MS Hwy 161 in Walls for short distance before returning to U.S. Hwy 61 to the Mississippi/Tennessee State Line.. With the exception of Sharkey County, the route dissects each of the counties from south to north.

The byway represents an enormous wealth of historical, architectural, cultural and recreational resources for persons traveling through Mississippi. This byway's application is a joint effort between the already established Lower Mississippi Historic Byway and the Mississippi Delta Great River Road groups. It is our desire to create an extension to the Lower Mississippi section and establish a National Scenic Byway that runs the entire length of Mississippi's Great River Road. This corridor captures multiple sites of historical significance at the local, state and national levels. Our featured intrinsic quality is history; however, multiple intrinsic qualities are found along the corridor and every aspect of the scenic byways criteria can be found along this route.

The route is part of the Great River Road, which runs along both sides of the Mississippi River from the headwaters at Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the mouth of the river at the Gulf of Mexico. The Great River Road is overseen by the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, which is made up of legislatively mandated appointees from the ten states that the river flows through or beside. The commission is active in environmental and transportation issues that concern the river. The commission is also charged with marketing the route both domestically and internationally.

Mississippi's Great River Road connects four of the oldest settlements along the lower Mississippi River, including Natchez, Port Gibson, Vicksburg and Woodville to the Mississippi Delta where farmlands and forests surrounding the route are considered to be among the richest on Earth. However, the area is as well known for its poverty as for the richness of the soil. A journey along the Mississippi Great River Road allows visitors the opportunity to see firsthand why this region is often referred to as the most southern place on earth.

Moving from the southern portion north, travelers will find a part of the designated National Scenic Byway under construction, with the objective of converting U.S. Highway 61 from a two-lane highway into a four-lane highway. Once completed, this corridor will become an excellent connection between Interstates 20 and Interstate 10 for cross-country travelers with an interest in touring historic sites and experiencing cultural diversity. One can also enter and exit the Natchez Trace Parkway, also a National Scenic Byway that intersects this corridor, to provide even greater enhancement to the educational and scenic routes along this route.

The major communities along the lower portion of Mississippi's Great River Road are all connected by an attachment to the Mississippi River. From plantation life, the Civil War, Civil Rights efforts, river port commerce, raising livestock and farming crops, mechanization, out migration of African Americans to the industrial north, to modern-day riverboat gaming, there are numerous stories that can entertain and educate locals and tourists alike about life along the Mississippi. Few areas of this great country offer such rich heritage and folk lore as you will find along the Lower Mississippi Historic Byway and Mississippi's Great River Road.

As travelers venture north up Highway 61, the richness of the region can be found in the landmarks and legends that continue live through the residents of today. The people of the Delta remain loyal to these remarkable stories of resilience and recovery, of hope and hopelessness and of defeat and determination.

From these extremes was born a creative spirit that can be found in the music and literature of the Delta. The gospel and blues music of the Delta set the stage for the development of Twentieth Century popular music. From these truly unique musical forms came jazz, rock 'n roll and country music. Born in the fields of the Mississippi Delta, the music has reverberated around the world and continues to bring international recognition to the region. The newly developed Mississippi Blues Trail has numerous markers and visitor interpretive sites along byway. Tennessee Williams, William Alexander Percy, Walker Percy, Shelby Foote and hundreds of other authors have called the Delta home. The remarkable stories of the Delta were also the inspiration for many of the works of other authors, including William Faulkner and Eudora Welty.

The view shed of the Mississippi Delta Great River Road has an abundance of intrinsic scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archeological and recreational qualities that make it one of Mississippi's and America's most memorable roads. From these intrinsic qualities the committee will develop and market themes that will incorporate Native American culture, plantation life, African-American culture, music, literature, agriculture, Civil Rights and the Mississippi River. A journey through the Delta is a journey through the history of America. It is our mission to make this journey a destination.

The Mississippi Delta Great River Road will work with the Lower Mississippi Historic Byway to market the entire route from Helena to Woodville providing visitors with a continuous experience of life on the Mississippi.

The advisory committee of the byway sincerely believes that marking and marketing this entire route will be an economic development tool that will benefit the entire region.

### **Mississippi Great River Road Directionals:**

Entering Mississippi traveling north on U.S. Highway 61 from the Louisiana state line, eight miles north to Woodville. Continue north on U.S. Highway 61 through Wilkinson County until you reach the Adams County line and the corporate limits of the City of Natchez. Travel west on U.S. Highway 84 to the Natchez Intermodal Center at the Mississippi River Bridge. Return back to U.S. Highway 61, travel north to Jefferson county line.

From U.S. Highway 61, take Highway 552 west to view Alcorn State University and the Ruins of Windsor. Return to Highway 61 and head north to Claiborne County.

Upon entering Claiborne County continue traveling north on U.S. Highway 61 and enter Port Gibson. At the corporate limits of Port Gibson U.S. Highway 61 is locally known as Church Street because of the abundant number of old churches located on this stretch of highway. At the intersection of Church Street and Carroll Street; travel west on Carroll Street to Rodney Rd/Highway 552 to view the Shaifer House and grounds. Return to Carroll Street and travel north on Market Street four (4) blocks, past Drake & Burrell Law Office, Riverhills Bank, Meyer Marx building, Harriette Person Memorial Library, 'Matt Ross' Administrative Building, and the Mississippi Cultural Crossroads, until you reach Orange Street. Go east on Orange Street past the Claiborne County Courthouse and return to U.S. Highway 61/Church Street.

Northwest of Port Gibson is Grand Gulf Military Park off Grand Gulf Road. At this point U.S. Highway 61 is commonly referred to Grand Gulf Road. Travel west on Grand Gulf Road to Grand Gulf Military Park. Returning to U.S. Highway 61, continue north to Warren County.

Upon arriving in Warren County; from U.S. Highway 61 travel north on Warrenton Road to Washington Street; continue north on Washington Street, through downtown Vicksburg along the Mississippi River; Turn right, heading east on Clay Street; Ending at the Vicksburg National Military Park.

In Vicksburg visitors will find a Mississippi State Welcome Center and 3 welcome centers operated by the Vicksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau. From the Vicksburg National Military Park return to Washington Street and continue north past the Port of Vicksburg to intersection of U.S. Hwy 61 North turning north on the Great River Road. The byway continues north on Hwy 61 for thirty miles through the forests and farmlands of the lower Mississippi Delta to Onward, MS, at which point the route continues on MS Hwy 1 along the river to Mayersville, MS. Mayersville offers access to the Mississippi River and a large Indian mound site. At Mayersville the byway turns to the east and joins MS Hwy 14 for 3.5 miles to the intersection with MS Hwy 1 North. The byway continues north through Issaquena County to Washington County. At Glen Allan the byway runs along Lake Washington, an oxbox lake of the Mississippi River. At the intersection of MS Hwy 436 the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge is on the east the byway. Mt. Holly Plantation House is located on the banks of Lake Washington at Foote, MS. At Wayside, MS (intersection of MS Hwy 438) to four miles north of the City Greenville outdoor advertising is allowed at this section is segmented out. From the intersection of MS Hwy 438 to intersection of Broadway on the northern end of Greenville is four lane with turning lane. Greenville has number of historic attractions including the Greenville Writer's Exhibit, the Delta Center for Demonstration and Conservation and three casinos.

At the intersection of N. Broadway, MS Hwy 1 returns to two lanes and continues north along the Mississippi River through the flat fertile farmlands of the legendary Mississippi Delta. Four miles north of Greenville is Winterville Mounds and Museum, a pre-Columbian ceremonial site

of the Mississippi Mound Builders. A number of Indian mounds can be seen along the byway. The byway continues north to Bolivar County through the town of Benoit. Dahomey National Wildlife Refuge is just off the byway on MS Hwy 446E. The route continues through Beulah past the entrance to the Port of Rosedale to the historic City of Rosedale which is home to the Mississippi Great River Road State Park which offers RV hookups, camping, trails, disc golf, an observation tower and restaurant. The byway continues north through Bolivar County to Coahoma County.

At Sherard, MS, at the intersection of MS Hwy 322E (to Clarksdale, MS and the Delta Blues Museum), the byway continues north to Friars Point, MS through the communities of Farrell and Stovall. The North Delta Museum is located in downtown Friars Point. The byway continues north along the western edge of Moon Lake to the intersection of U.S. Highway 49E. Byway turns east to the intersection of Old Hwy 61 just south of the town of Lula, MS. The Delma Furniss Hospitality Station is located 1.8 miles east at the intersection of U.S. Hwys 49 and 61. Byway turns north on Old Hwy 61 through Lula to the Tunica County Line. The route continues north through Tunica County passing along side Cypress Lake and Beaverdam Lake through the communities of Dundee, Clayton and Evansville to the City of Tunica. The Tunica Museum, Veteran's Memorial Park and the Tate Log Cabin are located in Tunica. The downtown shopping area of Tunica has been meticulously restored. The byway continues on Old Hwy 61 north through Hollywood to Robinsonville, MS. Four lane begins here and ends at intersection of Harrah's Parkway and Old Hwy 61 just north of Harrah's Casino. At the intersection of Casino Strip Resort Blvd turn left and proceed 3.4 miles west to the Tunica River Park, nature trails and Tunica Queen paddlewheel riverboat excursions. In this area are the Tunica National Golf Course & Tennis Complex, Willows Sporting Clays, Cottonwoods Golf Course and an RV park. Byway turns left (west) on Harrah's Parkway and continues north to Old Hwy 61 and to DeSoto County and the community of Lake Cormorant. The Memphis Minnie Mississippi Blues Trial Marker is located just north of the intersection of Old Hwy 61 and Norfolk Road. Route continues into City of Walls and turns north on MS Hwy 161 north to intersection of U.S. Hwy 61 and continues north to the Mississippi-Tennessee State Line.

#### **Mississippi Great River Road Physical Description:**

The Lower Mississippi Historic Byway (a designated state and national scenic byway) begins on U.S. Highway 61 at the state line in Wilkinson County. Travel north on U.S. Highway 61. Clark's Creek and its scenic waterfalls can be found by traveling Mississippi 24 west of Woodville. In and around Woodville one can find historic sites such as Rosemont, St. Peter's Episcopal Church and the Wilkinson County museum. The byway traverses north along U.S. Highway 61 through Wilkinson County into Adams County.

As the byway proceeds to the City of Natchez it passes the St. Catherine Creek Wildlife Refuge. This portion of U.S. Highway 61 is a four-lane divided highway. After entering the City of Natchez the area surrounding the byway becomes more commercial in nature. The byway passes many historic sites in the area including the site of Grand Village of the Natchez, antebellum homes, the Natchez Trace Parkway and Jefferson College. The Natchez Visitor Reception Center can provide information about these and many other historical sites and attractions and provides an overlook to the majestic Mississippi River. The byway maintains four-lane and five-lane sections through the City of Natchez and the Washington community, located north of Natchez on U.S. Highway 61.

After leaving Washington, the byway continues along U.S. Highway 61 North into Jefferson County. Through Jefferson County the corridor is either a four-lane divided highway or is under construction to become a four-lane highway. Near the town of Fayette, the byway has an excursion route that will carry the traveler to Springfield Plantation, the wedding site of Andrew Jackson. Continuing north along U.S. Highway 61 the byway passes Rosswood Plantation and enters Claiborne County. This section of byway is currently two-lane. Plans are underway by the Mississippi Department of Transportation to complete the four-laning of U.S. Highway 61 and bypass downtown Port Gibson. To date, a route for this bypass has not been finalized but is anticipated to travel west of Port Gibson.

Before entering Claiborne County there is an excursion route that travels from the intersection of U.S. Highway 61 and Mississippi Highway 552. Highway 552 travels westward, passing a number of historical sites, including old churches, Alcorn State University and then merges with Rodney Road. Rodney Road, a scenic two-lane, travels past the Ruins of Windsor, Shaifer House Road and other historical sites until it intersects with Market Street in downtown Port Gibson.

As the byway enters the City of Port Gibson by U.S. Highway 61 there are portions of two-lane roadway and undivided four-lane roadway. Passing through the city the byway travels along beautiful Church Street, past Oak Square, First Presbyterian church and seven other historic churches.

North of Port Gibson the byway returns to a divided four-lane roadway. A second excursion route runs along the byway in Claiborne County in Grand Gulf Road. Grand Gulf Road is approximately a quarter mile north of the beginning of the four-lane roadway and is a scenic two-lane rural road that traverses the countryside of Claiborne County to Grand Gulf Military Park. U.S. Highway 61 continues north into Warren County where the byway enters the City of Vicksburg. Through the city of Vicksburg the byway remains four-lane until you turn onto Warrenton Road, which rotates between two and three lane sections of city streets. The byway continues up Washington Street to Clay Street where it turns and continues east. At the Vicksburg National Military Park, the Lower Mississippi Historic Byway ends, and the state designated Mississippi Delta Great River Road begins.

In Vicksburg visitors will find a Mississippi State Welcome Center and 3 welcome centers operated by the Vicksburg Convention and Visitors Bureau. From the Vicksburg National Military Park return to Washington Street and continue north past the Port of Vicksburg to intersection of U.S. Hwy 61 North turning north on the Great River Road. The byway continues north on Hwy 61 for thirty miles through the forests and farmlands of the lower Mississippi Delta to Onward, MS, at which point the route continues on MS Hwy 1 along the river to Mayersville, MS. Mayersville offers access to the Mississippi River and a large Indian mound site. At Mayersville the byway turns to the east and joins MS Hwy 14 for 3.5 miles to the intersection with MS Hwy 1 North. The byway continues north through Issaquena County to Washington County. At Glen Allan the byway runs along Lake Washington, an oxbox lake of the Mississippi River. At the intersection of MS Hwy 436 the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge is on the east the byway. Mt. Holly Plantation House is located on the banks of Lake Washington at Foote, MS. At Wayside, MS (intersection of MS Hwy 438) to four miles north of the City Greenville outdoor advertising is allowed at this section is segmented out. From the intersection of MS Hwy 438 to intersection of Broadway on the northern end of Greenville is four lane with turning lane. Greenville has number of historic attractions including the Greenville Writer's Exhibit, the Delta Center for Demonstration and Conservation and three casinos.

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### **Intrinsic Quality Assessment**

- 1. Byway Recognition:** Is the entire byway already recognized regionally or nationally? If so, how? Recognition could be in the form of designation by federal agencies, non-profit groups, studies, or measurements performed at the regional or national level or designations by other entities that have a regional or national presence.

U.S. Highway 61 and MS Hwy 61 though the state of Mississippi are part of the Great River Road, one of this country's oldest and longest scenic byways. The Great River Road is a 3,000 mile network of roads extending from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The Great River Road has been designated by the Federal Highway Administration as a National Scenic Byway Route through many of these states. In Mississippi, the Lower portion of Highway 61, the Lower Mississippi Historic Byway, has been designated a state and national byway while the northern portion of Highway 61, the Mississippi Delta Great River Road has been designated a state scenic byway. The two roads wish to merge and become a national scenic byway together running through Mississippi.

The State of Mississippi is a Member of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC), a multi-state organization which works to foster economic growth along the corridor and develop the scenic and historical parkway known as the Great River Road.

2. **Resource Significance:** Explain how and why the combination of resources present along this byway are representative or distinctly characteristic of its region, or unique or irreplaceable within the region or nation. Demonstrate that the frequency of sites and resources along the byway is sufficient to lend significance to the byway.

This 275+ mile plus corridor that parallels the Mississippi River captures multiple sites of historical significance at both the state and national level. Every aspect of the scenic byway criteria can be found along this route that connects four of the oldest settlements along the Mississippi River to the Mississippi Delta known across the world.

**Historical sites along the byway include:**

The Mississippi Blues Trail  
Vicksburg National Military Park  
Cedar Grove Mansion  
The Corners  
The Beidenharn Museum of Coca Cola Memorabilia  
Grand Gulf Military Park  
First Presbyterian Church-Port Gibson  
Picturing Our Past-Housed in Port Gibson City Hall  
Samuel Gibson House  
Shaifer House  
Ruins of Windsor  
Alcorn State University  
Springfield Plantation  
Springhill Plantation  
Wilkinson County Museum  
Emerald Mound (Second Largest Indian Mound in the United States)  
Historic Jefferson College (National Register of Historic Places)  
Natchez National Park-Melrose Plantation  
Rosemont Plantation (Boyhood home of Confederate President, Jefferson Davis)  
William Hester Brown House  
Valley Park Railroad Museum  
Sharkey County Courthouse  
John Cameron House  
Phelps House  
Mount Helena  
Historic Districts  
The Birthplace of Kermit the Frog  
LeRoy Percy State Park (State's oldest and largest state park)  
Belmont Plantation House  
Dockery Plantation (birthplace of the Blues)  
Delta and Pine Land Company  
Delta Blues Museum  
Robinson-Slack-Marinelli Homes (headquarters of Napoleon Bonaparte Buford)  
Friars Point Community (one of the last antebellum communities still on MS Rv)  
Hopson Plantation



Theodore Roosevelt's Delta Bear Hunt  
Mississippi Blues Trail  
The Tunica Museum and Tate Log Cabin  
The Tunica River Park

**Scenic and natural sites along the byway include:**

Clark Creek Natural Area (includes hiking trails to five waterfalls)  
Scenic overlook of Mississippi River-located in Natchez Visitor Reception Center  
Historic Jefferson College-(nature trail along St. Catherine Creek)  
St. Catherine Creek Refuge  
Scenic overlook of Mississippi River-located adjacent to State Welcome Center in Vicksburg  
Theodore Roosevelt Wildlife Refuge Complex  
National Forests, Wildlife Management Areas and refuges  
Lakes and Rivers (numerous)  
The Mississippi River and Levee System  
The Mississippi Delta  
Friars Point  
Valley Park

**Cultural sites along the byway include:**

The Southern Cultural Heritage Center  
First Presbyterian Church  
Samuel Gibson House  
Picturing Our Past Exhibit-Housed at Port Gibson City Hall  
Claiborne County Courthouse (civil rights movement)  
Springfield (story of Andrew Jackson's wedding)  
Grand Village of the Natchez Convention Center  
St. Catherine Creek Refuge  
Melrose (Interpretive site of plantation life)  
Natchez Visitor Reception Center (exhibition area depicting all aspects of Natchez cultural heritage)  
Delta Foodways  
Greenville Writers' ExhibitLiterary Heritage  
Delta Blues Museum  
The Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival (nation's oldest)  
Cultural Festivals  
Music Heritage

**Recreational sites along the byway include:**

Grand Gulf Military Park  
Natchez State Park  
Historic Jefferson College  
Clarks Creek Nature Area  
Casino Gaming  
Hunting & Fishing  
Water Sports  
Biding & Wildlife Viewing  
Biking  
Camping & RV Accessibility  
Canoeing  
Golfing

Tara Wildlife  
Great River Road State Park  
DeSoto Lake  
Tunica River Park

**Archeological sites along the byway include:**

Vicksburg Military Park  
Grand Village of the Natchez  
Shaifer House  
Grand Gulf Military Park  
Emerald Mound  
Grace Mounds  
Mayersville Mounds  
Aden Site  
Mount Helena  
Carter Mounds  
Rolling Fork Mounds  
Swan Lake Site  
Winterville Mounds and Museum  
Arcola Site  
Christmas Mound  
Clark Mounds  
Carson Mound Group  
Salomon Mound  
Barbee Mound

At every stop along the proposed scenic byway travelers will find significant historical sites that have achieved national recognition.

3. **Quality of the Interpretive Story:** Explain the regional or national significance of this byway's story. Demonstrate that the story will be relevant and appealing to travelers and that the interpretive strategy for the story will be engaging, creative, and effective.

There are at least six different themes or stories that can be marketed related to the proposed Mississippi Scenic Byway:

**A Historic Theme**

The majority of the resources referenced on this scenic byway are listed on the National Register of Historic Places or are Mississippi Landmark properties. For tourists visiting Mississippi and interested in civil war history or heritage tourism this proposed byway offers one of the best opportunities in Mississippi to visit some of the best maintained and interpretive sites in the state.

**An Expression of Southern Culture and Plantation Life Prior to the Civil War**

Many of the sites along this route date to the 1716-1865 era and preserve the culture and history cotton plantations and development of the first European communities along the Mississippi River.

**Civil War**

Along Mississippi's portion of the Mississippi River there are sites that hold regional, national and international value to visitors interested in the Civil War. From the Military Battlefields at Vicksburg and Port Gibson and the boyhood home of Jefferson Davis, to the plantations along the

Mississippi Delta and the headquarters of soldiers known around the world, this route tells a large part of the Civil War involvement by the state of Mississippi. The region is preparing for a two-year long observance of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War.

#### **African American and Civil Rights Movement Themes**

In many ways this region can depict the entire African American heritage. From arrival in the new world, into slavery and life on the plantations, fighting in the Civil War, the formation of one of the oldest African American universities in the country, music born uniquely to this area known as the Blues to the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi can be seen traveling along this byway.

#### **River Themes**

The major communities along this scenic byway are all connected by an attachment to the Mississippi River. From gaming, river port commerce, raising livestock and farming crops to promoting tourism there are untold numbers of stories that can entertain and educate tourists about life along the Mississippi, The Father of Waters.

#### **4. Additional Information:**

A significant portion of this roadway is under construction with the objective of converting U.S. Highway 61 from a two-lane roadway to a four-lane. Once completed, this corridor will become an excellent connection between Interstate 20 and Interstate 10 for cross-country travelers' with an interest in touring historic sites and experiencing cultural diversity. There are also several opportunities for travelers along this byway to enter and exit the Natchez Trace Parkway which would provide even greater enhancement to the scenic and educational routes along this corridor. The Mississippi Blues Trail also covers much of this byway and is a draw to tourists from around the world.

Four State of Mississippi Welcome Centers and nine county-operated information centers are located on this 275+ mile route. All of these welcome centers are open year around and offer parking assessable to the public and offer turnaround space for RVs and commercial buses. These welcome centers are located at the Natchez Visitor Reception Center, Historic Jefferson College, Port Gibson-Claiborne County Chamber of Commerce, Vicksburg Welcome Center (located on I-20), Vicksburg Military Park, Vicksburg Visitor Information Centers on Clay and Washington Streets, Washington County Welcome Center, Washington County CVB, Bolivar County, Coahoma County, Tunica and DeSoto Counties. Each participating community involved in the development of this scenic byway application is committed to a partnership which will help develop and market this proposed scenic byway.

#### **Strategy for Maintaining/Enhancing Intrinsic Quality**

Throughout the proposed byway the opportunity exists to create a corridor linking a variety of natural, historic, scenic, recreational, archeological and cultural activities and points of interest. According to the National Scenic Byways Program there are several methods to manage scenic byway resources:

Significant resources can often be protected by informing a landowner about the location and importance of a historic resource on their property. A letter and follow-up visit by corridor advocates or local government representatives is often enough to persuade the landowner to implement protective measures.

Recognition of a landowner who exhibits good stewardship of a property by preserving the historic integrity of the property should be accomplished through an awards program. The award, in the form of a framed certificate or plaque, should be designed to reinforce the property owner's pride in land ownership and preservation of history. The award should be sponsored by the Corridor Advisory Committee addressed in "Responsibility Schedule" below. Such cooperation entails non-binding agreements, which outline long-term stewardship measures for resource protection. These low cost measures are not strong direct methods but they offer a good starting point for developing an effective long-term conservation program.

A preservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement that protects a significant historic, archaeological, or cultural resource. An easement provides assurance to the owner of a historic or cultural property that the property's intrinsic values will be preserved through subsequent ownership. In addition, the owner may obtain substantial tax benefits. Historic preservation easements also are used to protect a historic landscape, battlefield, traditional cultural place or archaeological site. Under the terms of an easement, a property owner grants a portion of, or interest in, property rights to an organization whose mission includes historic preservation. Once recorded, an easement becomes part of the property's chain of title and usually 'runs with the land' in perpetuity.

Tax incentives may be used to reduce property taxes and to encourage the preservation and enhancement of significant resources. Grants and loans are other types of incentives for resource protection.

The designation of a road as "historic" or "scenic" is the official recognition by a local, state or federal agency of the significant cultural, historic, scenic, geological or natural features within the corridor. The major objectives of scenic designation often include the following: to educate the public about the unique scenic, historic, cultural and natural resources of a region; to protect and enhance the resources within the corridor which contribute to the character of the community and its quality of life; and to induce new economic development in communities through tourism and recreation.

While designation without controls is not very strong, it is a useful protective measure. This type of indirect protection is less controversial than land use and zoning restrictions, and may be easier to adopt by local governments. Stronger protection measures can be adopted in the future, after educational initiatives have achieved a strong base of community support.

Only a few Mississippi counties have zoning ordinances. Adams County is currently working with Central MS Planning and Development District to develop a comprehensive plan. One of its components would detail zoning requirements. The remaining counties along the byways should find it beneficial to seriously consider at least a limited form of zoning in order to protect historic, cultural and scenic resources.

Clustering may be used to maintain the ratio of dwelling units to acreage. This allows for the concentration of housing through smaller sized lots, and provides for the preservation of open space. This open space preserves the integrity of the corridor while providing recreation facilities such as multiple purpose trails and picnic areas.

Overlay zones provide specific zoning requirements in addition to existing zoning. This prevents distinctive landscapes from being mauled by development. In this respect, overlay zones can be designed to protect historic homes, sites and road corridors. This type of legislation occurs

through the adoption of a city or county ordinance that permits the recognition of historic properties or the creation of a locally recognized historic district through a zoning overlay.

Since the proposed byway encompasses over a 275-mile linear area and is comprised of several major and several small communities, it would be beneficial to establish a Corridor Advisory Committee. This committee would work in concert with county and municipal officials. Design guidelines could be identified in a design manual, with historic preservation and corridor integrity considered. The overriding factor would be to keep the corridor as close to its historic appearance as possible. The Corridor Advisory Committee could keep the focus on the “big picture” of historic preservation and visitor interpretation’ which enhances tourism and economic development without sacrificing the elements that made the community initially desirable. Maintaining the corridor’s historic and interpretative signage, landscaping and literature printing, distribution, and storage must be addressed. The Corridor Advisory Committee would ensure uniformity of development by coordinating with local public and private entities. A maintenance plan should be in place before signs are installed. The corridor is an opportunity to showcase the communities, and the managing entity should foster a sense of ownership and custodial authority among the localities.

In addition, local governments, whose ordinances and procedures have been certified by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), may make application of join the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. The CLG program, managed by MDAH, qualifies a participating community or nonprofit organization to receive grant funds for preservation or restoration. Cities and counties along the route participate in the CLG program.

### **Byway Committee Structure & Responsibility Schedule**

A Corridor Advisory Committee will be established by the communities involved in the development of the Mississippi Great River Road National Scenic Byway. The advisory committee will be comprised of:

- Two persons from each county including Wilkinson, Adams, Jefferson, Claiborne, Warren, Washington, Bolivar, Coahoma, Tunica and DeSoto Counties and one representative from Sharkey and Issaquena Counties and;
- One representative from the MS Department of Transportation (MDOT);
- One representative from the MS Department of Archives & History(MDAH);
- One at-large committee member.

These twenty-five (25) persons will then elect officers, including a chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer.

The Corridor Advisory Committee will work with the elected officials and staffs of the city and county governments, tourism information offices, MDOT, and if applicable private landowners, to ensure that signage is in accordance with applicable laws and to coordinate maintenance work with the appropriate municipal/county government.

The Corridor Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to discuss development, funding, marketing, maintenance and other issues of importance. When not meeting, staff will tend to pressing needs and report to the committee.

### **Development Strategy**

Directional and interpretive signage will greatly enhance the proposed scenic byway and the Corridor Advisory Committee will work with state and local agencies for the placement and interpretation of signage. The committee will also assist state and local agencies in cooperative strategies for funding, development and management of the proposed scenic byway.

Meetings will be held with various groups and individuals to discuss development and marketing opportunities for this corridor. An initial partnership has already developed by the communities through which this byway is proposed. Resources have been identified at the local, state and federal level that will play a major role in the development of a long range plan for this byway. A key to promoting this corridor will be the development of maps and other marketing material which will be made available at the various visitor/welcome centers along the corridor.

A large portion of this corridor (U.S. Highway 61) is currently under construction, converting the two lane roadway to a four lane system. Once construction is complete, the signage and branding of this corridor will be very attractive to visitors both for the historic value and the ease of travel along the 275+ mile system.

Other methods of development while preserving the intrinsic qualities of the proposed scenic byway are discussed in the "Intrinsic Quality Management Strategy."

### **Public Participation Plan**

The development of the proposed scenic byway was done in consideration of the communities involved and the potential commercial users, to include farmers, truckers and loggers.

In order to have sufficient input, a series of public notices appeared in local newspapers announcing public meetings. The Corridor Advisory Committee will make efforts to hold periodic public meetings to keep the public informed as to the byways development.

The rural nature and sparse traffic pattern of the proposed scenic byway, coupled with the good road conditions, accommodates the commercial vehicles while ensuring the safety of sightseers in recreational vehicles and passenger automobiles.

The Mississippi Great River Road scenic byway follows U.S. Highway 61, MS Hwy 1 and Old Hwy 61 in Tunica, DeSoto and small portion of Coahoma Counties. Major sections of the southern portion of this highway are being upgraded from two lane standards to four lane standards. This upgrade is scheduled to be completed within the next 24 months. The entire length of the northern portion of this route with the exception of Broadway Ext. on the northern edge of Greenville to Wayside is two lane. Once completed this byway will be one of the more attractive routes in the state in terms of its scenic value and its safety aspects when compared to two lane routes. In addition, the route is in excellent condition due to recent resurfacing by MDOT. Intersection and directional signage, as well as Great River Road identification along the route allows for easy travel.

### **Scenic Byway Design and Maintenance Standards**

The byway route takes the traveler along U.S. Highway 61 through Wilkinson, Adams, Jefferson, Claiborne, Warren, Issaquena Counties. At Onward, MS the byway continues on MS

Hwy 1 through a corner of Sharkey County, returns to Issaquena County and continues through Washington, Bolivar and Coahoma counties to U.S. Hwy 49 and continues on Old Hwy 61 through Tunica and DeSoto Counties. The southern portion of the highway, Wilkinson to Adams, is primarily either a four-lane divided highway or is under construction and will soon be. There are some sections that pass through more developed areas that may have four-lane undivided or five-lane sections. Because of the recent design and construction of most of U.S. Highway 61 along with the Mississippi Department of Transportation's maintenance, the recent resurfacing of the entire length of MS Hwy 1 and the excellent condition of the county roads in Tunica and DeSoto Counties no problems with safety and traffic along this main portion of the route are anticipated at this time.

The portions of the route not along U.S. Highway 61 are primarily two lane rural roads that through appropriate speed limits, signage and maintenance can be traversed safely by those unfamiliar with the route. . Intersection and directional signage, as well Great River Road identification along the route allows for easy in travel

The portion of the byway between Wayside, MS and Broadway St. in the northern area of Greenville is five lane. The portion of Old Hwy 61 from Robinsonville to Harrah's Casino in Tunica County is five lane.

The maintenance of the byway's historic signage and scenic routes will be accomplished by the Mississippi Department of Transportation and local jurisdictions along the route. An advisory committee will be established that can aid in the implementation of a plan that unifies the byway for the traveler and fosters a sense of ownership and custodial authority among the local jurisdictions. Because the byway primarily follows U.S. Highway 61 and MS Hwy 1, maintenance, upkeep and improvements fall under the auspices of the Mississippi Department of Transportation. Along those sections of the byway that are not state maintained there are roadways which may have frequent sharp turns, narrow roadway width with little or no shoulders and many hills. A to-be-established advisory committee will consider improvements to these roads only if such improvements do not interfere with the preservation of the roadway's scenic or historical character

### **Scenic Byway Signage**

Byway signage is important for the overall visitor experience while traveling the corridor. The traveler must sense the continuity of signage in order for the signs to be most effective. This continuity is important to maintain the highest quality of visitor experience and the lowest amount of confusion. The signage is also important for safety and location.

One of the more important signage issues faced is that of safety. Safety can be maintained through a uniform use of safety related signs. This can be accomplished by placing all signs in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. This would apply to all standard highway signs placed in the right-of-way of the road and would include all direction, regulatory, warning and speed advisory signs. This standard would be in effect for the entire route.

Another issue for signage is location. It is important for visitors to the byway to know where they are and how to get where they want to go. Directional signs will be placed to indicate the beginning and end of the byway as well as the location of excursion routes and resources. National Scenic Byway signage will be installed throughout the entire length upon nomination

approval. Other signs will be placed to indicate scenic excursions and resources. There will also be signs on intersecting highways to inform motorists how to reach the byway. These will be placed in accordance with Mississippi Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration guidelines. Mile markers are a very useful tool in location. They help visitors navigate unfamiliar roadways. They can also enhance the sense of an uninterrupted visitor experience. The placement of mile markers is also anticipated along this byway.

The advisory committee will work with the Mississippi Department of Transportation, local elected officials, private landowners and commercial sign companies to control outdoor advertising and to ensure that local, state and federal laws on the control of outdoor advertising are being met.

### **Marketing and Publicity**

The marketing effort for the Mississippi Great River Road National Scenic Byway will be coordinated by the Corridor Advisory Committee in conjunction with the respective convention and visitors bureaus of the impacted communities. Marketing initiatives will increase public awareness of the scenic byway encourage visitation to the byway and Marketing initiatives include:

1. **Collateral Material:** The development of printed material. The Corridor Advisory Committee should seek funding for the development of printed material, beginning with general overview brochure specific to the proposed scenic byway. This brochure would note the historic, scenic, cultural, recreational and archeological points along the byway and would assist the traveler with directions. A brochure promoting events along the byway will also be considered. As time and budget allow, production of niche marketing brochures for themed itineraries will be developed. In addition, the committee will look to develop stationary and jacket covers for presentations and correspondence.
2. **Website:** With more tourists planning vacations and getaways using the internet, it is vital that Mississippi's Great River Road National Scenic Byway establish a website. The site will include detailed maps that are comprehensive and easy to read with places of interest highlighted. The site will also include themed itineraries, links to all tourism offices in the region, a festival guide, dining and hotel information. Multilingual interpretation of the website will be provided. This website will highlight resources along the scenic byway(s) and will link to [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org) and other state and national byway links.
3. **Map:** The Corridor Advisory Committee should ensure that the scenic byway is depicted on Mississippi state maps.
4. **Partnerships:** The Corridor Advisory Committee should work closely with Mississippi Development Authority/Tourism and Mississippi Tourism Association to market the proposed scenic byway and to receive a special designation on the state's tourism website.

A planning session will be held with Mississippi's other scenic byways to discuss cross marketing opportunities, including exhibits at welcome centers and kiosk pavilions.

The byways numerous visitor/welcome centers are open daily to the public. The centers and programs will be planned to educate and promote the designation of this byway and its intrinsic qualities.



5. **Paid Media:** Advertising in regional and national travel and special interest publications. Contributions for paid media will be sought from the counties along the byway and grant funding will be sought from available sources. Advertising for the byway will also be included in the annual media buys of the tourism offices of the area.
6. **Public Relations:** Develop an awareness campaign. The byway committee will work with the Mississippi Division of Tourism and the destination marketing organizations along the byway to host travel writers and broadcast journalists. The committee will establish a media contact list and provide regular press releases concerning new attractions, special events and promotions. Press releases will be prepared around the scenic byways designation. Each CVB, chamber of commerce, welcome center and Main Street will be contacted and provided with byways information. A professional advertising and public relations firm will be contracted to insure proper and timely placement.
7. **Media Kit:** A media kit will be developed containing press releases and feature stories about the Mississippi Great River Road National Scenic Byway, high resolution photographs, interpretive CD, calendar of events and byway contact information.
8. **Interpretive CD:** Development of travel CD that features a narrative interpretation of the Great River Road and music of the region.

#### **Multilingual Information Plan**

Select print material will be prepared and made available to international visitors. German, French, UK, Spanish and Japanese are the primary languages used by international travelers. The byway's website will have multilingual capability as well.

It is also proposed that internet access will be provided at select points along the byway which will provide interpretation of the sites in the five languages that are prominent among international visitors. A resource listing of multilingual tour guides will also be maintained and published on the byways website and each welcome/visitors center will also be given an updated list of these tour guides.

#### **Interpretation Plan**

The Mississippi Great River Road Scenic Byway interpretive plan is a two-pronged approach that involves (1) working with the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission to interpret the stories that the states have in common along the river, and (2) developing interpretive activities that tell the unique stories along the Mississippi Delta Great River Road National Scenic Byway. It is important in both of these areas to ensure that as visitors travel from state to state, they experience a sense of continuity.

#### **National**

At present, primary interpretation at the national level includes the consistent green Pilot's Wheel markers indicating the national route of the Great River Road throughout each state. These are

placed at all major intersections along the route and are easy to follow throughout the Mississippi Great River Road.

The second major interpretive initiative at the national level is a series of official interpretive centers located along the route throughout the ten-state region. These currently designated interpretive centers in Mississippi are the Great River Road Welcome Center in Greenville, Vicksburg National Military Park, Mississippi River Commission History Center in Vicksburg and the Natchez Visitor Reception Center. The Corridor Advisory Committee will work toward having the new State of Mississippi Welcome Center (the Delma Furniss Hospitality Station) near Lula at the intersection of U.S. Highway 49 and U.S. Highway 61 recognized as an official interpretive center. Other interpretive centers will be considered in communities along the route.

## **Mississippi**

Interpretation of sites along the Mississippi Great River Road is currently through brochures available from the tourism offices in Natchez, Warren, Washington, Bolivar, Coahoma, Tunica and DeSoto Counties. The route is also interpreted through the Mississippi Division of Tourism's Mississippi Travel Planner and the Mississippi Delta Tourism Association. The Theodore Roosevelt Wildlife Refuge Complex provides brochures available that cover birding, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing at facilities throughout the region. A slide presentation at the Great River Road State Park in Rosedale interprets the Mississippi River. As there are no tourism offices in some counties, the byway committee will work with those counties to develop marketing materials.

The Mississippi Delta Great River Road National Scenic Byway will work with National Mississippi River Parkway Commission to coordinate the design and distribution of interpretive materials including maps and brochures. The byway will also work with communities along the route to develop interpretive materials of specific interest to these particular areas. But, more importantly the byway committee will work to develop interpretive materials that deal with themes common to the entire region. Among these themes important to the entire route of the Mississippi Great River Road, both the Delta and the lower Mississippi portion are: Native American, Archeological, Agriculture, The Mississippi River Levee System and the Taming of the River, African American, Music, Literature, Civil Rights, Birding/Nature Viewing and Natural Assets.

As implementation of the corridor plan begins, a substance, coordinated interpretive program should be implemented. Brochures and tour maps will not in and of themselves provide adequate interpretation. Once initial campaign sites have been interpreted, interpretive locations for the proposed historic corridor should include, as a minimum, the resource sites listed in the "Intrinsic Quality Assessment".

Corridor markers become destination points as they illuminate the surrounding landscape by creating a permanency of experience and complementing printed materials carried by visitors. Designing, fabricating, installing and maintaining clear and adequate markers should be an immediate action taken toward developing the scenic byway.

All signage located throughout the corridor should be standardized to the greatest possible extent. Since the corridor will complement other proposed state scenic byways, special effort should be devoted to ensuring that the various scenic byway markers match in shape and style. Such a unified approach will encourage travelers to feel that a "seamless" corridor exists, thus furthering

the concept of a unified and organized system of byways, and encouraging the visitor to travel the various state scenic byways.

**Highway Directional Signs:** It is of special importance that Highway Directional Signs be standardized, since the presence of the sign itself becomes an important aid to navigation. The byway will use the approved National Scenic Byway signage. The following suggestions are offered:

- \* Mount signs of a metal (or other permanent material) post that has been painted dark brown, green or black; and
- \* Paint the back of each sign the same color as the post, so that when approached from the rear, the painted back and post will “disappear” into the landscape.

Highway Directional Signage is an important part of any road landscape. However, because virtually all highway directional signage will necessarily be placed in or closely adjacent to the roadway right-of-way, it is strongly recommended that any decisions as to sign type or placement should be carefully coordinated with MDOT. For the campaign roads associated with the Scenic Byway, signs will generally fall into three categories.

1. Standard Highway signs, which will be placed in the right-of-way of the road, will include all direction, regulatory, warning and speed signs. These signs must conform to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Corridor signs devoted to this purpose will necessarily be supplemental to existing federal, state and local traffic control signs, and they should be employed only at locations and in situations where Corridor traffic will require special consideration and great care must be taken in placement. The points where the proposed scenic byway meets modern four-lane Highway 61 is examples where such signage is needed.
2. Visitor Directional Signs are roadside markers, usually, but not invariably, placed in the right-of-way of the road. If carefully located and designed, Visitor Directional Signs can greatly enhance the aesthetic qualities of scenic and historic roads. Many standard street name signs are used as directional signs for visitors. However, a major area of confusion is introduced by the fact that many historic names have been replaced by modern names. Thus, a visitor following a historical map or description is often unable to relate the modern road network to the historical network. In order to overcome this potential source of confusion, it is recommended that all street and road names at intersections within the historic road network of the corridor identify both the modern and the historic name of the road. At least two devices for achieving this goal have been widely used:
  - \* Two different signs, with the historic road identified by an “antique” character style;
  - \* Both names on a single sign, with the historic name identified by an “antique” character style.”

It is emphasized that the design of all the highway directional signs of Mississippi Scenic Byways should be standardized, so that the visitor follows precisely the same display scheme throughout the state scenic byways.

In general, highway directional signs should be placed at the following location:

- \* Distance notices placed just beyond critical intersections and turns, informing the visitor of the approximate distance to the next significant marker;
- \* Advance notice of a turn;
- \* Turn arrows placed at intersections;
- \* Confirmation of a successful turn; and
- \* “Straight Through” notices to avoid confusion at intersections where no turn is required.

Mile markers can be an important aid to navigation along an unfamiliar road network. However, implementing a mile-marker system is not as simple as it might appear. The problem is that the scheme must have a specific origin and termination for each set of numbers. The designers of the interstate highway system solved the problem by starting the number sequence such that 0.0 marks the western or southern border, and termination is at the eastern or northern border. This numbering scheme is practical for the proposed scenic byway, because the road is still essentially intact. It would be highly useful to visitors if the road were fitted with mile markers, with the system originating the intersection of U.S. Highway 61 and Highway 24 in Woodville and terminating at the Mississippi/Tennessee state line. However, both origination and termination of the numbering system would have to be very carefully and distinctly marked, to avoid confusion, and tour maps and other tour guides would need to include a prominent notice as to the nature of the numbering system. The actual mile markers could follow either the pattern adopted by the Natchez Trace Parkway, or the US Interstate highway system, but with a color selected as appropriate to the scenic byway.

**Entry Point Kiosks:** The byway should be delineated by Entry Point Kiosks, which should be large and easily identifiable structures with signage describing the scenic byway in general terms, as well as describing the features and delineating the boundaries. One could be placed in each participating county, with an exact location for each kiosk to be determined. Components specific to the kiosks could be:

- \* A description of the scenic byway in the simplest of terms;
- \* A graphic depicting the scenic byway driving tour route;
- \* A description of the sites visitors will encounter along the tour route, including scenic and historic roads, village communities and visitor services; and
- \* A “You are here” designation for visitor orientation.

**General Location Markers:** Located at every point of interest along the scenic byway, General Location Markers should include interpretive texts and graphics to illustrate each. Such points might include rivers, fords, roads, buildings, crossroads and road junctions and terrain features relevant to the byway. Such reference points are found in abundance throughout the landscapes of the scenic byway. Ideally, each general location marker would contain any appropriate combination of the following:

- \* A description of the site and its significance to the Scenic Byway written in an easy-to-read style;
- \* A graphic illustrating the geographic context of the feature;
- \* A “You are here” designation for the visitor orientation;
- \* A “human interest” sidebar that serves to introduce the campaign story and its “ripple effects” into the surrounding community;
- \* Quotes, particularly from civilians witnessing the historic events, thus making possible a more personal connection between the visitor and the historical events; and portraits and excerpts from diaries, thus giving “face” and personality to the site.

### **Letters of Support**

A number of communities along the byways passed resolutions supporting the efforts of designating U.S. Highway 61 as a Mississippi Scenic Byways. Municipalities that passed resolutions supporting the byways include Natchez, Vicksburg, and Woodville. Counties along the corridor that passed resolutions of support include Adams County, Claiborne County and Wilkinson County.

In addition, a number of letters were received from citizen, state agencies and interested citizens supporting this byways effort. These letters are available on request and have been submitted with the National Scenic Byway Nomination.