



# 2020 KENTUCKY GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
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*Gunsmoke and the sounds of cannon blasts, rifle fire, hoofbeats, clashing swords and marching Union and Confederate soldiers rise into the autumn sky as the Battle of Belmont is reenacted at Columbus-Belmont State Park. This battle initiated the opening of the Union campaign to win the strategic Mississippi River.*

Updated April 30, 2020 by Purchase Area Development District in conjunction with  
the Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Original dated December 1, 2008 prepared by:  
HNTB Corporation

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people and organizations were important to the development of this corridor management plan.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi River is one of the world's premier natural attractions. It is the largest river in North America and with its major tributaries, the Missouri and the Ohio rivers, it boasts an immense watershed spreading south of the Great Lakes from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Appalachians in the east, covering nearly one-third of the continent and most of the interior of the United States. This is the land that the Founding Fathers thought would become a great inland empire with the Mississippi River as its supporting spine. Events here helped determine the boundaries and path forward of our young nation. This is the critical confluence that had to be held if the Northwest Territories were to become part of the United States.

The National Route of the Great River Road provides a continuous roadway parallel to the river from the river's headwaters in Minnesota's Lake Itasca to the delta in the Gulf of Mexico. The road follows the river through ten states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. In 2018, these states worked together to create a 10-state Great River Road Corridor Management Plan as a blueprint for designation as an All-American Road. That plan is attached for reference as Appendix B. All-American Road designation will allow the Commonwealth of Kentucky to continue with the other nine Mississippi River states in developing a single continuous route with a common strategy for marketing and management.

By jointly developing the corridor's intrinsic resources and coordinating the experiences of tourists, Kentucky can leverage the federal government's investment in the Great River Road to the advantage of a region in need of economic growth, community development and environmental conservation. The National Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) was created in 1938 as the umbrella organization that coordinates multi-state programs on behalf of the member states. Each state has its own individual commission which is established by state statutes or Governor's Executive Order. Historically, the MRPC has coordinated efforts on federal, state, and local levels to leverage federal dollars for highway improvements, nature trails and facilities, bikeways, scenic overlooks, and historic preservation. The MRPC also coordinates marketing and promotion of the river valley and facilitates efforts to enhance economic development and resource awareness.

The Great River Road route includes a network of federal, state, and local roads. Nearly 3,000 miles long, the Great River Road tells a unique story in each state and offers a gateway to America's history—the coming together of its cultures and its people—while providing both educational and recreational opportunities to all who journey through the Mississippi River Valley. While the Mississippi River provides a north-south route, the Ohio River links this portion of the country to the east. Historically, the area where these rivers join represents a unique historical and natural location found only in west Kentucky.



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## KENTUCKY GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

### America's Byway of the Mississippi River

## CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN PURPOSE

The Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway was established in 1986 to serve as the local coordinating agency for the development of the Great River Road. The commission consists of the following ten (10) members: Four (4) citizen members, appointed by the Governor, and consisting of one (1) member from each of the four (4) counties that border the Mississippi River, who shall serve a term of four (4) years and may serve until a successor is appointed. Four (4) members shall be the respective county judges/executive of Ballard, Carlisle, Fulton and Hickman Counties in Kentucky. Other members shall be the secretary of the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet or his/her designee; and the secretary of the Transportation Cabinet, or his/her designee. The commission's mission is to assure that the proper direction is taken in developing a corridor of scenic, historical, and archaeological significance through the Kentucky counties of Ballard, Carlisle, Hickman, and Fulton.

This corridor management plan (CMP) describes fundamental responsibilities and actions to assure that the Kentucky Great River Road continues to be a consistently signed and mapped byway that intentionally provides access to the Mississippi River's scenic, natural, historic, archaeological, cultural and recreational intrinsic resources. The CMP will guide the Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission and its partners on how to manage the byway's roads so they tell the river's stories, encourage active living, enrich quality of life for today's residents and tourists alike, foster sustainable economic development and steward river resources for future generations to come.



By implementing the CMP, the Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission along with the other nine states comprising the national MRPC and their partners will continue to provide and promote a superior Mississippi River travel experience within a scenic byway setting. The Kentucky CMP provides a unifying framework that allows all stakeholders to work in an independent, yet coordinated, manner to fulfill Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission mission and state statutes.

### Corridor Management Plan Process

This CMP was developed by the Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission based upon our 2008 document with the updates necessary to meet the requirements of All-American Road designation.



## INTRINSIC QUALITIES

This corridor has all of the intrinsic qualities identified by the National Scenic Byways Program: scenic, natural, cultural, historic, recreational and archeological. However, the historic and recreational intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road are of national significance.

### Historic Intrinsic Qualities

Along the Great River Road in far western Kentucky, you can follow the path of Union and Confederate forces that converged on the Mississippi River in 1861. Stretches of US 51 and KY 123 provide spectacular views of the Mississippi, particularly from the vantage of the bluffs in Columbus-Belmont State Park. Considered the most heavily fortified place in North America -- the "Gibraltar of the West" -- when the Union Army attacked this stronghold in 1861, it marked the beginning of the Union's Western Campaign and General Ulysses S. Grant's first battle of the Civil War (known today as "The Battle of Belmont"). The following is a list of regionally and/or nationally significant historic resources:

- Confluence of Ohio and Mississippi Rivers: On the evening of 14 November 1803, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark camped on the point between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Clark had been to this place at least three times in the 1790s, and in 1795 drew a map of the confluence. The confluence is on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.
- Wickliffe Mounds State Historic Site: A Native American village once occupied the site of Wickliffe Mounds, about A.D. 1100 to 1350. Here, people of the Mississippian culture built earthen mounds and permanent houses around a central plaza overlooking the Mississippi River. A museum exhibits excavated features with displays of Mississippian pottery, stone tools, artifacts and artwork showcasing their way of life and the archaeological history of Native American tribes in Kentucky. Visitors have a spectacular view of the bluff area on top of the Ceremonial Mound, the largest mound on the site. This registered archaeological site is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Kentucky Archaeological Landmark.
- Fort Jefferson: George Rogers Clark's fort at the mouth of the Ohio River represented Virginia's physical claim to her western eighteenth-century border. It was also the only eighteenth-century military and civilian settlement in Kentucky constructed at the command of the Virginia government. First sanctioned by Patrick Henry, then reaffirmed by Thomas Jefferson in 1780, George Rogers Clark built Fort Jefferson as his economic hub and a military stronghold for the Illinois Battalion. Continual attacks by the Chickasaw Indians during the summer of 1780, led by a representative from the British southern Indian Department, foiled Clark's plans for Fort Jefferson and the community bearing his namesake. Although home to more than five hundred and fifty soldiers and civilians throughout its occupation, Fort Jefferson had to be abandoned only thirteen months and twenty days after it was settled.



- **Fort Jefferson Cross:** A 90-foot-tall cross, the Fort Jefferson Memorial Cross at the Confluence, was completed in 2000 on Fort Jefferson hill in Wickliffe.

- **Ballard County Courthouse:** The Ballard County Courthouse, located at Fourth and Court Streets in Wickliffe, is the center of government of Ballard County, Kentucky. The courthouse was constructed from 1900 to 1905. It was the first permanent courthouse in Wickliffe and replaced a courthouse in Blandville that burned down in 1880. Architect Jerome B. Legg designed the courthouse; his design features an octagonal cupola atop the building, Ionic porticos over three of the entrances, and a central pavilion on each side.



*Ballard County Courthouse*

- **Columbus-Belmont State Park:** Columbus-Belmont State Park is an official site of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail. The John Benge detachment, with about 1,100 Cherokees, took a route to Oklahoma by way of Tennessee through Hickman County, Kentucky, and then through Missouri and Arkansas. Benge's group arrived in Columbus, Kentucky in mid-November, 1838 and awaited transport across the Mississippi River by ferry to Belmont, Missouri. The Cherokee most likely spent several days camped around the ferry landing in the area of Columbus-Belmont State Park. The park is also on Kentucky's Civil War Heritage Trail. At one time, national leaders considered moving the country's capital from Washington to Columbus--a nod to Columbus-Belmont's important role in American history. The site was considered a strategic location for control of the Mississippi River, and the struggle to control the river led to the Battle of Belmont on November 7, 1861. Confederate General Leonidas Polk



*Civil War Reenactment*

established camps on both the Kentucky and Missouri sides of the river and named the more heavily fortified Columbus the "Gibraltar of the West." But a Union General destined for the White House, Ulysses S. Grant, outflanked the "Gibraltar" and forced evacuation of the Confederates in 1862. Today, you can still see the massive chain and anchor used by the South to block passage of Union

gunboats and the earthen trenches dug to protect over 19,000 Confederate troops. The farmhouse that served as a Civil War hospital is now a museum that interprets many historic events at this site.

- **Hickman County Courthouse:** Court records, surviving working drawings and a cornerstone prominently placed as the pedestal of the main (north) entrance all credit the noted Louisville firm of McDonald Brothers as the architects of this courthouse. This firm, in its various transformations from the late 1870s until well into the twentieth century, was one of the most prolific in Kentucky, and indeed in the South, specializing in courthouses and other public buildings. The Hickman County Courthouse is almost identical to those in Columbia, Adair County, Williamsburg, Whitley County, and London, Laurel County. There were and may still be



others of the same type, all with slight variations and some alterations. The Hickman County structure has unfortunately lost its tower, in two stages: the characteristic attenuated Mansard roof with clock-faces was removed after a cyclone in 1917; the square drum or pedestal, which had been retained with a truncated roof, was removed about 1938. Aside from an unobtrusive addition in the southwest corner, the building has otherwise remained intact and unspoiled and presently in good condition on a relatively large courthouse square. The prominent site at the intersection of two roads, the 19th-century scale of the surrounding commercial and residential blocks, and of the town as a whole, allow the courthouse to remain the focal point of the community architecturally as well as socially, politically, and historically.

- **Carnegie Library Museum and Visitors Center:** A restored 1906 Carnegie Library Museum in the City of Hickman, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, sits on the bluffs at the confluence of the Mississippi River and Bayou de Chien providing a spectacular scenic view of Missouri and Kentucky. It contains significant resources for visitors eager to gather information on the rich history of river and rail transportation, the American Civil War and Mississippian Era culture. The Carnegie Library Museum is strategically located as a southern portal visitor center for travelers coming from Missouri and the Tennessee's Great River Road National Scenic Byway.



*Fulton County Carnegie Library*

- **Fulton County Courthouse:** The courthouse, built in 1901, was designed by architect Frank P. Milburn of Columbia, South Carolina. It is most unusual among the county courthouses in Kentucky, in the nature of the county it represents, its dramatic river bluff location, and in the



way its noted architect took advantage of these factors to create a unique design. The courthouse is made of rich red brick trimmed with stone with four octagonal towers at the corners, lavishly curved Flemish gables as additional features of the picturesque skyline, and modest square porches on three sides. Its most distinctive feature is a Seth Thomas 8-Day Clock in the tower. Milburn combined an ingenious plan for the courthouse, utilizing the apparently decorative towers for circulation and subsidiary chambers, with a dramatic exploitation of the possibilities of the site.

The towers and gables sit like a crown on the forehead of the bluff, vivid against the sky and the river, yet in its domestic material harmonizing with the residential area around it. The ability of competent eclectically-oriented architects to work in different historical styles at the turn of the century is effectively demonstrated here, in an efficient, economical, yet imaginative solution to the common problem of the county courthouse. The courthouse and the residential part of the town is situated atop the bluff with spectacular views in all directions and a share of summer's precious breezes. Approached from the south or the east, the courthouse is seen across a shallow dip just between the incoming traveler and the final height of the east-west ridge that terminates above the Mississippi River.



### **Recreational Intrinsic Qualities**

- Ballard Wildlife Management Area (WMA): Ballard WMA includes 8,373 acres and is an annual Mississippi flyway stop for 100,000 Canada geese and 35,000 mallard and black ducks and has an observation tower for wildlife viewing. This area is widely considered to be a birding and photography paradise. The habitat consists of sloughs and agricultural bottomlands, with some stands of hardwoods. Waterfowl, deer, squirrel, dove, eagles, wintering bald eagle and nests can be found there as well as. Prothonotary warbler, yellow-throated warbler and Mississippi kite may also be seen. Fishing is allowed in the eleven (11) oxbow lakes in the area and canoeing is also permitted. Primitive camping is allowed in designated areas. The WMA is closed mid-October to mid-March but a barrier-free observation platform with interpretive display and elevated wetland walkway are open year-round.



*Cypress Trees*

- Boatwright WMA: This area is in the Mississippi River floodplain along the Ohio River and contains 8,000 acres including Swan Lake, which is Kentucky's largest natural lake. It also contains bottomland hardwoods, interspersed with numerous oxbow lakes, tupelo and cypress tree swamps and agricultural fields. The areas provide wintering habitat for migratory waterfowl and a rich ecosystem for wildlife diversity.



- Winford WMA: Managed by the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, the Winford WMA includes 236 acres including mostly forest: open land 1%, forest 49%, wetland 47%, open water 3%.
- Wright's Area 252: Discover over 12 miles of ATV trails stretched across a 252-acre farm, located in Carlisle County, KY along the banks of the Mississippi River. Wright's Area 252 is located near an unincorporated city of Burkley, Kentucky – between Bardwell, Arlington, and Columbus – Belmont State Park.



- Doug Travis WMA: The US Fish and Wildlife Service once considered a site where Hickman and Carlisle counties meet in the bottomlands along the Mississippi River as a potential national wildlife refuge. Doug Travis WMA features sloughs and swamps carved from centuries of Mississippi River floods. Tens of thousands of ducks often converge on the area in winter, but

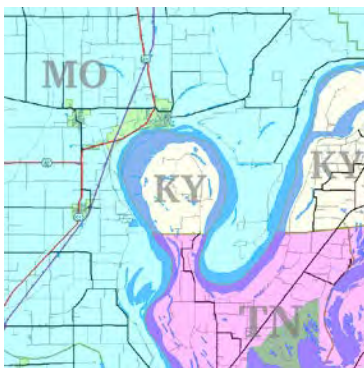


*Wild Turkey*

visitors can see waterfowl all year long. There are also cypress tree ringed sloughs and wetlands on the property that more closely resemble Louisiana than Kentucky. Fishing for panfish, bass, catfish and Asian carp exists in the management area's sloughs. There is access to the Mississippi River at the Laketon Road boat ramp at the northern border of the property. This part of the Mississippi is excellent for blue, flathead and channel catfish. March and April are also excellent times to view neo-tropical songbirds such as warblers, rose-breasted grosbeaks and wood thrushes. There are also bald eagle nests on the

area. Bird watchers may also catch a glimpse at one of the rarest raptor species in Kentucky, the Mississippi kite. Wood ducks stay on the area year-round.

- Columbus-Belmont State Park: The bluffs here offer spectacular views of the Mississippi River, and there is a nature trail where a variety of trees, birds, and other wildlife can be viewed. At least two-dozen species of warblers, plus the flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, tanagers and orioles have been spotted here.
- Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge: This lake, located between Tennessee and Kentucky, was created by the massive shocks of the Great New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811 and 1812. The lake is a stunning 25,000-acre lake and wetland, which provides extraordinary habitat for shorebirds, wading birds, as well as golden and American bald eagles.
- New Madrid Bend: The New Madrid Bend, variously called the Kentucky Bend, Madrid Bend, Bessie Bend or Bubbleland, is an exclave of Fulton County, Kentucky encircled by the states



*New Madrid Bend*

of Tennessee and Missouri. It is a portion of a peninsula defined by an oxbow loop meander of the Mississippi River, and its inclusion in the state of Kentucky stems from uncertainties of the course of the Mississippi River when the boundary between Tennessee and Kentucky was established. The border predates the separation of Kentucky from Virginia and Tennessee from North Carolina. Its location stems from the Royal Colonial Boundary of 1665, which was meant to delimit overlapping inland claims of the Colony of Virginia and the Province of Carolina, respectively.

### **Enhancement of Historic Intrinsic Qualities**

The Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission will work with our byway partners to enhance our historic intrinsic qualities through the following goals:

- Increase awareness of the value of historic preservation.
- Strengthen and enhance historic preservation as an economic development tool.
- Assist in the continuous identification, evaluation and protection of historic resources.
- Enhance cooperation and partnerships among government entities, institutions and the private sector.
- Integrate historic preservation into planning of local, regional and state priorities.



### **Enhancement of Recreational Intrinsic Qualities**

The Kentucky Mississippi River Parkway Commission will work with our byway partners to enhance our outdoor recreational intrinsic qualities through the following goals:

- Expand and improve the quantity and variety of outdoor nature opportunities.
- Develop and promote recreational opportunities associated with tourism.
- Implement an integrated strategy of trail development utilizing the funding resources and selection criteria of the Recreational Trails Program Fund, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Transportation Alternatives Program and other sources.
- Increase awareness and use of recreational resources, facilities and programs.
- Promote the social and health benefits of recreational activities.
- Preserve natural, environmental, historical and cultural assets.
- Maintain public participation in the planning, development and management of outdoor nature programs.
- Increase and promote coordination among the various federal, state, regional, local and private agencies that are responsible for the planning, programming and implementation of recreational facilities and opportunities.

## **CMP TEAM**

The CMP team consists of all of the agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan. The following chart outlines the key responsibilities of the team and a schedule for implementation.

CMP Team Responsibilities						
Responsibility	Schedule	Kentucky MRPC	Local Government	Public Agencies	Private Agencies	Public
Report changes in Kentucky MRPC management structure.	As needed	X				
Report changes to intrinsic resources or their content.	As needed	X	X	X		
Recommend changes to byway vision, goals and objectives.	Continually	X	X	X	X	X
Report changes in policies or procedures that affect the Great River Road.	As needed	X	X	X		
Report changes in land use that may alter character or context of the Great River Road.	As needed	X	X	X	X	X
Report status of CMP implementation.	Yearly	X				
Identify new projects including schedules, budget and funding.	As needed	X	X	X		
Identify partnerships for developing the byway.	Continually	X	X	X		X
Maintain byway signing.	Continually		X	X		
Update CMP.	Every 5 yrs	X	X	X	X	X

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Existing Development**

US 51 traffic volumes have declined significantly since the opening of I-55 in Missouri in the late 1970s. Reduced traffic robbed the economic vitality and lifeblood of the communities along this route. However, there remains a significant number of historic structures that can be preserved and, in some



cases, adaptively re-used for new purposes emphasizing and supporting businesses related to heritage tourism. Going forward, strategies for preserving and protecting existing development include:

1. Seek National Register of Historic Places designation for properties that still retain integrity or rarity.
2. Identify properties worthy of stabilization and rehabilitation.
3. Facilitate actions for property conservation and/or adaptive reuse.
4. Encourage establishment of locally designated “community heritage areas” to bring awareness to historic resources along the Great River Road.
5. Establish policies that help preserve and enhance route related resources.
6. Encourage local financial institutions to consider loan programs specifically targeted to improvement of existing infrastructure.

### **New Development**

Like many others in the United States, the small towns and rural communities along the Great River Road are looking for ways to strengthen their economies, provide better quality of life, and build on local assets. The challenges for these areas include increasing urbanization, declining rural populations, and loss of farms and working lands. The towns and communities along the Great River Road would like to maintain their distinctive rural and scenic character while being able to achieve their goals for growth and development through the following “smart growth” strategies:

1. Encourage any growth in town.
2. Create walkable main streets so families can live close to their daily destinations.
3. Implement policies that protect the rural landscape, help preserve open space, protect air and water quality and provide places for enjoying the natural environment.
4. Create tourist attractions that bring investment into the local economy.
5. Support walking, biking, and public transit to help reduce air pollution and improve overall health.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

During the preparation of this CMP, a planned public meeting was not held due to a restriction on public meetings necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the draft document was e-mailed to community leaders and stakeholders along the Great River Road to provide written comments before submission.

## **ROADWAY SAFETY**

### **Existing Conditions**

The entire Great River Road in Kentucky is paved and maintained by the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. There are several geometric issues with the current route including narrow lanes and shoulders, sharp curves, steep hills, lack of left turn lanes and roadside obstacles such as trees and utility poles. However, because of relatively low traffic volumes the incidence of crashes is relatively low except for US 51 in Ballard and Carlisle Counties.

### **Proposed Improvements**

Currently, the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has plans for two (2) improvements. The replacement of the US 51/60/62 Ohio River Bridge connecting Cairo, Illinois with Wickliffe, Kentucky and improvements at the intersection of US 51 and US 62 in Bardwell, Kentucky. Any proposed improvements along the Great River Road should include the following key project goals:

1. Mitigate the negative impacts of commercial traffic.
2. Preserve downtown business and community character.
3. Maintain appropriate traffic controls and traffic flow conditions.
4. Avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate property takings as well as other community and environmental impacts.
5. Improve roadway geometry and drainage.



6. Enhance vehicle and pedestrian safety.
7. Enhance the visual aspects of the community infrastructure.
8. Provide improved bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

## COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC

Traffic along the Great River Road consists of heavy commercial, agricultural, and standard passenger vehicles. KY 1203 in Carlisle County has a bridge with a 13-ton weight limit, but a close detour down US 51 south and KY 123 south puts traffic back on the Great River Road. Aside from this short detour, the route could handle commercial motor coaches although there are few wayside areas large enough at this time to accommodate motor coach parking. Most of the byway segments have little commercial traffic. Because of its predominately rural and agricultural, it would be important along the road to alert and educate byway travelers to the presence of farm machinery.

## CONTROL OF ADVERTISING

To maintain the existing intrinsic qualities and avoid visual pollution it is vital to have commercial billboard controls. Kentucky is required by agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to maintain effective control of its outdoor advertising. Kentucky statutes and administrative are consistent with federal law on advertising devices for scenic byways or those highways that are maintained by the state. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet maintains the Protected Areas for Outdoor Advertising interactive online map that displays protected areas in locations across the Commonwealth of Kentucky, including the Great River Road.

## SIGN PLAN

A scenic byway needs a sign plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not interfere with the scenery but still be adequate to help tourists find their way. Presently, uniform Great River Road pilot wheel logo signs are posted along the entire length of the Kentucky Great River Road to identify the designated route. As the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has management and maintenance control for the entire byway and its right of way, it has the responsibility of for maintaining the signage. Periodically, Kentucky Transportation Cabinet staff review the route to determine that traffic signing is maintained and effective. The Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices would control the addition of any new signs in the right of way in the future.



## MARKETING

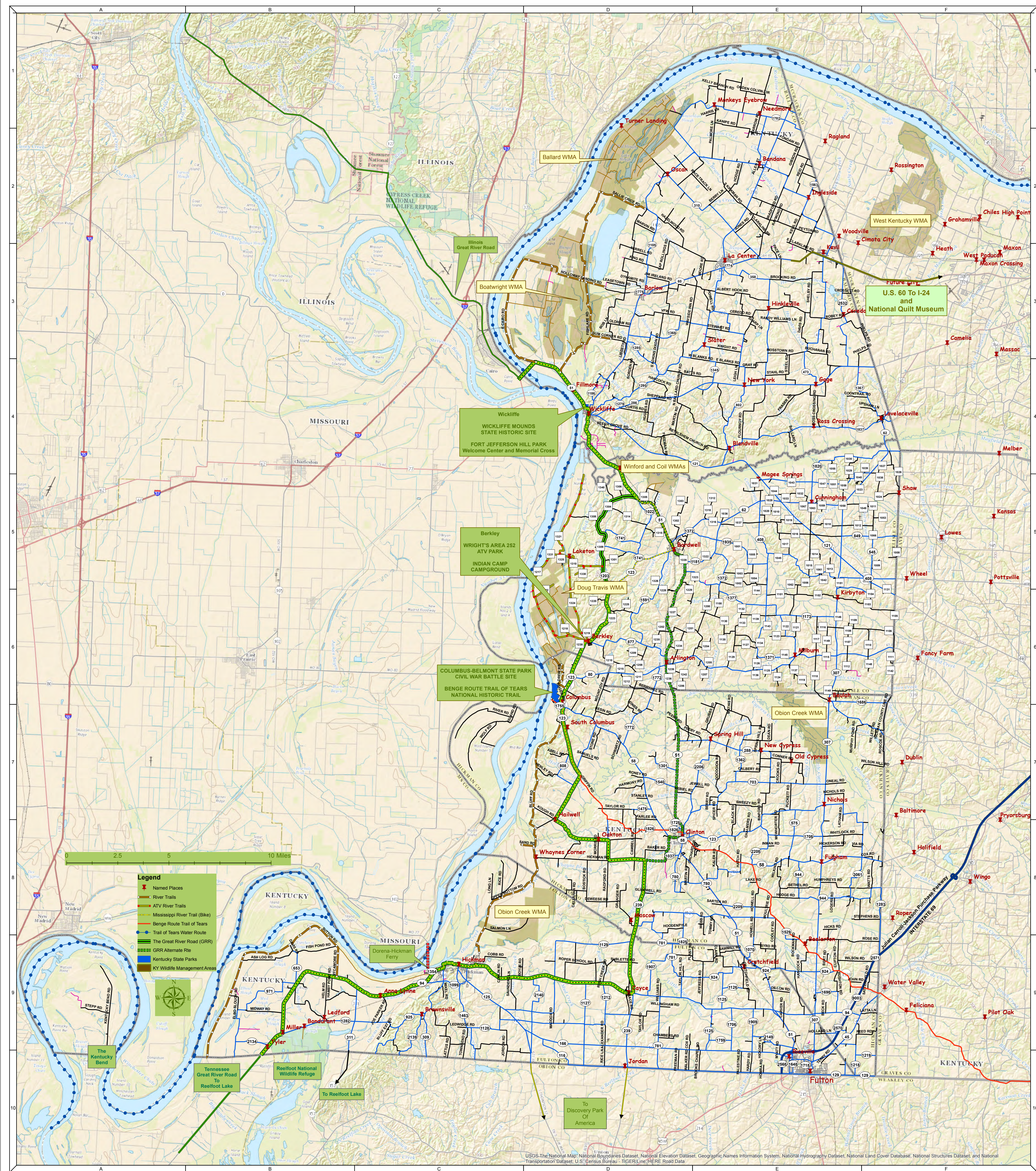
1. Work with the national MRPC to development a common Great River Road marketing strategy among all ten states.
2. Partner with Kentucky's Arts, Heritage, and Tourism Cabinet; destination marketing organizations (such as River Travel Magazine); Great River Road Interpretive Centers; local governments; and other river attractions to innovatively promote the Great River Road.
3. Place marketing materials in rest areas and visitor centers.
4. Actively participate on the national MRPC's Communications/Marketing Committee.
5. Update existing website to further interpret the story of the Great River Road.
6. Work with regional institutions such as West Kentucky Community and Technical College and Murray State University to translate interpretive materials and byway information into languages of international byway visitors. The most common of these languages for the Kentucky Great River Road are German and French.



## APPENDIX A

Kentucky Great River Road Map (see next page)





- Legend**
- Named Places
  - River Trails
  - ATV River Trails
  - Mississippi River Trail (Bike)
  - Benge Route Trail of Tears
  - Trail of Tears Water Route
  - The Great River Road (GRR)
  - GRR Alternate Rte
  - Kentucky State Parks
  - KY Wildlife Management Areas



## APPENDIX B

### 2018 Ten-State Great River Road Corridor Management Plan

For reference, attached is the corridor management plan that will guide the national Mississippi River Road Commission and its partners on how to manage the byway to tell the river's stories, encourage active living, enrich quality of life for residents and tourists, promote economic development and steward river resources for future generations to come (16 pages).





# 2018 TEN-STATE GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi River Parkway Commission 701 E. Washington Ave., Suite 202 Madison, WI 53703



# 1963 Mississippi River Parkway Commission "Story of Progress"



## The Story of Progress

THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER VALLEY IS RICH IN HISTORIC, SCENIC, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND RECREATIONAL VALUES which if interwoven into a definite Master Plan which will utilize these natural gifts and assets, using coordinated effort of all the states and provinces involved, something will be developed that will be of lasting benefit not only to the valley but to the whole nation.

SO OUR MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY PLANNING COMMISSION IS WORKING HARMONIOUSLY AND PERSISTENTLY to develop the Great River Road on both sides of the river as the backbone to which will be attached many existing and proposed parks, historic places, magnificent and breath-taking lookouts and vistas, roadside parks and rest areas, public launching ramps for boats, wild life preserves, fine fishing and hunting, floral adornments, recreational areas, thousands of lakes, peaceful vistas of rural scenery, palms and pines, corn and cotton fields, beautiful cities and towns and many places where our people can lose themselves among nature's gifts and away from the tension and problems of life.

ENCOURAGING PROGRESS REVEALS THAT CONGRESS created a Federal Aid Parkway or Great River Road by appropriating \$250,000 for a complete study of factual information which when completed was presented to Congress and a second \$250,000 was appropriated by Congress for detailed plans for each state and for supervision by the Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service. These plans show a recommended route through each section of land and provide for scenic easements and embellishments that will make our Parkway not just another road but something different and unique.

THE TOTAL NECESSARY AREA, 300 feet wide on each side of roadway right-of-way from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, is equal to only 10% of the area of Yellowstone National Park.

THE CHANNEL OF PROCEDURE IS THROUGH THE FEDERAL AGENCIES, the state legislatures and Highway Commissions of each state who utilize primary, secondary and urban money as it accumulates each year to work on an adopted plan. Other agencies, federal, state, county, city, Chamber of Commerce, Service Clubs and many other organizations are contributing their energy and finances to do their part.

MANY OF THE STATES HAVE SELECTED THE PERMANENT ROUTES through their states and have marked it with Parkway Markers. Other states are either in progress or planning to fix permanent and temporary alignment and mark the Parkway.

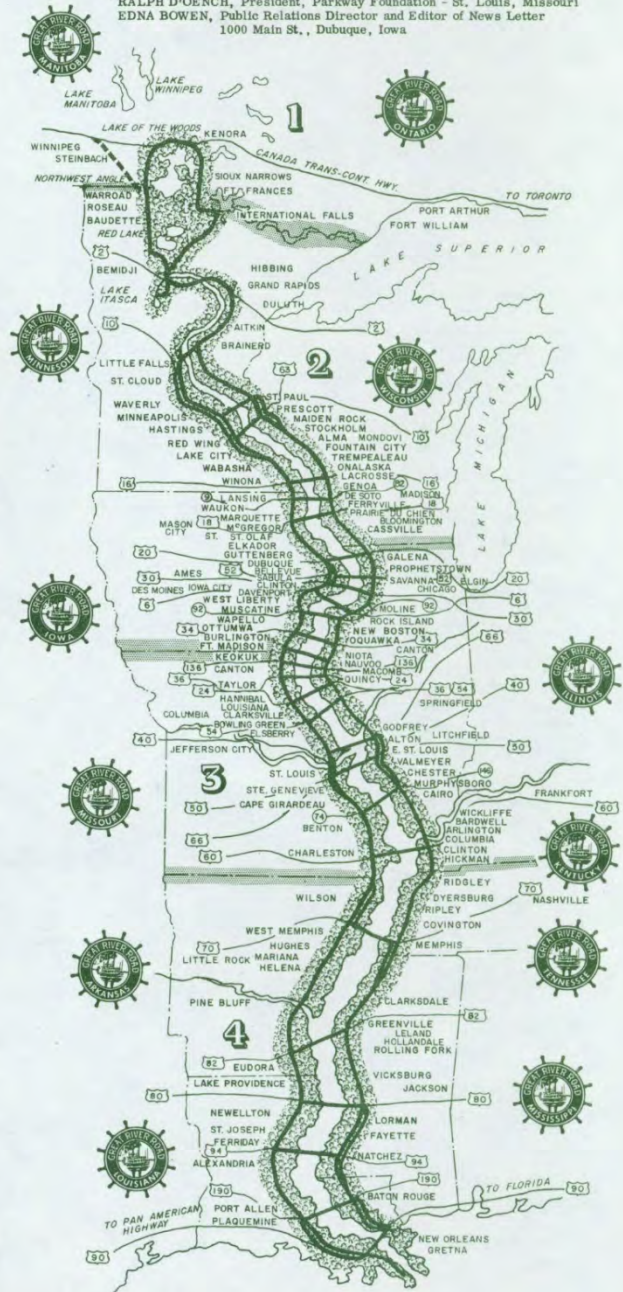
A TABULATION OF FEDERAL REPORTS REVEAL 3,287 miles total in United States of which 736.4 miles will be new roads, 410.3 miles are local, 1,715.5 miles trunk highways, 336.5 miles interstate and 41 miles Natchez Trace Highway. The total population in the 10 states bordering the Parkway, in the 1950 census is 32,006,393 in the United States. About 60% of the existing highways in the United States are to Parkway Standards except embellishments. Ontario and Manitoba in Canada have 360 miles of trunk highways suitable for Parkway Standards and are energetically developing and marking them.

THE MAP SHOWS THE LIMITS OF EACH DISTRICT, the officers of which are shown on the reverse side of this sheet.

THE MAP ALSO SHOWS THE HIGHWAYS ON EACH SIDE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, of which many sections and feeder roads have blossomed into completed stretches and many other sections are contemplated or in progress.

THE MAP SHOWS AN OUTLINE OF OUR OBJECTIVES WHICH WILL DEVELOP AND PRESERVE HISTORICAL AND SCENIC VALUES - A PARKWAY FOR EACH SIDE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, FOR THE PLEASURE AND GENERAL WELFARE OF OUR PEOPLE.

COL. J. LESTER WHITE, Pilot - Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
J. W. CLARK, Pilot Pro-Tem - St. Paul 1, Minnesota  
CHARLES H. YOUNG, Pilot Emeritus - Muscatine, Iowa  
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The 2018 Corridor Management Plan carries forward the vision established by previous Great River Road plans.



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# TEN-STATE GREAT RIVER ROAD CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

## America's Byway of the Mississippi River

### Corridor Management Plan Purpose

The Great River Road was established in 1938 by Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes and the ten Mississippi River state Governors. The Great River Road's purpose is to 1) serve as a byway providing access to intrinsic resources along the river's length, 2) honor the river with planned context sensitive and complete streets transportation design, and 3) celebrate the Mississippi River as a national icon applying meaningful interpretation and compelling storytelling. The Great River Road gets people out, actively engaging with the river's landscapes and cultures, fostering economic opportunity for river communities large and small.



Since then the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) in each state, and collectively as a ten-state organization, have served as the Great River Road's byway organization, with support described in [statute](#).

This ten-state corridor management plan (CMP) describes fundamental responsibilities and actions to assure that the Great River Road continues to be a consistently signed and mapped byway that intentionally provides access to the Mississippi River's scenic, natural, historic, archaeological, cultural and recreational intrinsic resources. The CMP will guide the MRPC and its partners on how to manage the byway's roads so they tell the river's stories, encourage active living, enrich quality of life for today's residents and tourists alike, foster sustainable economic development, and steward river resources for future generations to come.



By implementing the CMP the ten states comprising the MRPC and their partners will continue to provide and promote a superior Mississippi River travel experience within a legible byway setting. The CMP provides a unifying framework that allows the ten states to work in an independent, yet coordinated, manner to fulfill the MRPC mission and state statutes.

Because the Great River Road and Mississippi River corridor are so complex and enormous this CMP is more general than site specific, acknowledging the byway, river landscape and supporting agencies and partners are unique and evolving in each state. This CMP updates the MRPC's tradition of an ambitious shared vision to carry forward the national Great River Road within the context of each state.

### Corridor Management Plan Process

This CMP was developed by the MRPC based upon past national and state design and corridor management plans, MRPC Board of Directors and four standing committees work, and general session reviews during MRPC meetings. Initial implementation priority and responsibility will be determined during the 2018 Strategic Planning meeting and MRPC Annual meeting, then incorporated into the final Plan.

The CMP development process resulted in the following:

- A 10 to 15 year 10-state byway corridor management plan,
- National, ten-state and partner synergy required for plan implementation, and
- Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway corridor management plan components met.



The Great River Road is designated by the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration as a national scenic byway in all 10 states, with some exceptions in Illinois and Missouri. If FHWA opens nominations, the MRPC will seek All American Road designation in all ten states.



## Ten-State Great River Road Corridor Management Plan Components

Ten areas define Great River Road corridor management to guide 10 to 15 years of coordinated effort across ten states. Some areas include more detailed management strategies, but each is vitally important. Implementation of some of the specific strategies (e.g. mapping) will support implementation of other strategies, thus may have priority, although much of the implementation will be done concurrently and become ongoing.

Implementation priority and responsibility will be determined by MRPC Standing Committees and Board of Directors.

1. Designated Route Mapping
2. Wayshowing Guide Signs
3. Byway Design
4. Intrinsic Resources
5. Interpretation and Storytelling
6. Marketing
7. Organization – Mississippi River Parkway Commission
8. Partner Education and Engagement
9. Byway Traveler
10. Funding and Resources



### 1. Designated Route Mapping



Knowing which state and local roads are designated as the Great River Road is critical to managing the byway infrastructure, partner communication, traveler information, and to providing a safe and pleasant byway experience.

A. The MRPC will work with the ten state Transportation agencies to provide ***the official***, correct and maintained Geographic Information System (GIS) inventory of the Great River Road for the purpose of:

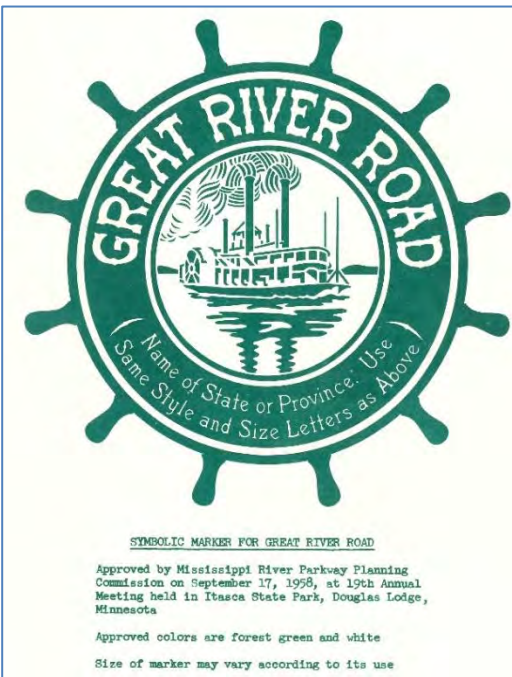
- Informing Transportation agency planning, scoping, design, construction and maintenance of roads designated as the Great River Road.
- Assisting travelers with trip planning and while traveling by providing accurate and drivable print, website, mobile app, interpretive panel, and other maps,
- Marketing by MRPC, state Commissions, state Tourism departments, destination marketing organizations, Great River Road Interpretive Centers and other river attractions
- Working with in-car navigation and online mapping companies to encourage indicating the GRR as a selectable route by providing them with the GRR alignment files;



## 2. Wayshowing Guide Signs

Wayshowing guide signs are critical to successful byway exploration, and are a proven branding and marketing tool. The Great River Road is a complicated route, using hundreds of state and local roads as it follows the meandering Mississippi River through ten states from its headwaters in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. While online maps, apps and paper maps supplement wayfinding, byway travelers need real time on-site signage, too.

- A. Work with the ten state Transportation agencies to use existing GIS data and/or to conduct GIS collector app field surveys of Great River Road wayshowing guide signage to determine system integrity on both the state and local road systems designated as the Great River Road.
- B. Incorporate the data/survey findings into state Transportation asset management systems to serve as *the official*, correct and maintained GIS inventory of Great River Road wayshowing and review the status of each state's wayshowing annually.

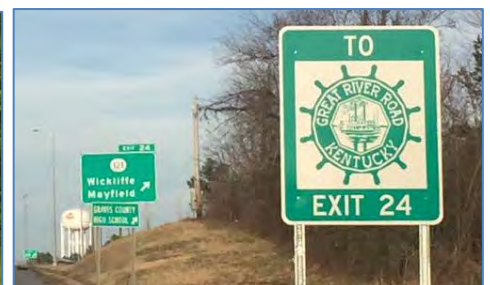


- C. Use the Manual On Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) to measure consistency with requirements for location, size, colors, graphic format, assembly and condition and address any wayshowing deficiencies.

- D. Educate state and local Transportation agency staff responsible for planning, scoping, design, construction and maintenance of roads designated as the Great River Road about the correct wayshowing signage locations and assemblies so the wayshowing is maintained as part of statewide transportation system management in all ten states.



- E. Promote the Pilot's Wheel sign as branding, describe its meaning and instruct travelers to look for the signs to know where to turn.
- F. Work with FHWA and the ten state DOTs to allow adding signage on non-byway river crossings and nearby National Highway System routes providing direction *to* the Great River Road.
- G. Co-locate Great River Road signs with Mississippi River Trails signs, when possible, to increase maintenance efficiencies, improve wayshowing effectiveness and leverage reciprocal branding.



### 3. Byway Design



Since its inception in 1938 the Great River Road is intended to be developed and maintained as a parkway-like byway celebrating and providing access to the Mississippi River. From forest road to Interstate river crossing, each segment of Great River Road *is* a river place and a river experience. Each of the hundreds of segments frames moments in time that cumulatively *are* the byway experience.

The MRPC needs to work with each transportation agency that owns a section(s) of the Great River Road to implement CMP byway strategies. Working together, the roads will collectively reinforce an intended sense of place, uniting the individual roads with a byway context applied to planning, design and maintenance so that *each* segment evokes a river experience, even when you can't see the river. This byway aims for an experience that is safe, predictable, comfortable and rewarding to the mind, body and spirit of each traveler.

Applying the byway concept to each road segment is necessary to achieve the vision, and the investment of time and funding is worth it. People from around the world, and our fellow neighbors, follow the Great River Road to experience the many activities the Mississippi River offers: from history buff to hiker, bicyclist to motorcyclist, antique car club member to excursion boat passenger, to bird and wildlife watcher, to fisher and hunter, to art hound, to foodie, to shopper, to photographer and more.



Travel, tourism, and the intrinsic resource management that supports tourism are important industries to our local and national economies. According to the U.S. Travel Association in 2017 domestic and international inbound travel and tourism:

- Generated \$2.4 trillion for the U.S. economy,
- Supported 15.6 million American jobs.
- Tax revenues generated reduced each U.S. household's taxes by \$1,310.
- Direct spending by resident and international travelers in the U.S. averaged \$2.8 billion a day, \$118.2 million an hour, \$2.0 million a minute and \$32,840 a second.
- Directly and indirectly supported one in every nine U.S. non-farm jobs.
- Was the 7th largest employer of all industries in the U.S.

(Source: <https://www.ustravel.org/economic-impact>)

Applying the byway concept to designated roads will help assure the Great River Road serves these industries' transportation needs now and into the future across ten states. While marketing can get people to visit once, the byway setting along the length of the Mississippi will have Great River Road travelers planning return visits.



Much has been built since 1938 and a strong built legacy remains in place. However institutional knowledge about these byway features has waned as MRPC Transportation staff have retired and new staff are not replaced or have difficulty participating in out of state meetings.

The good news is today's increased use of geographic information systems (GIS) by transportation and intrinsic resources management is timely as byway assets and intrinsic resources management require digital inventories and analysis to successfully compete for transportation and other funds.

Digital trip planning and travel aids are also needed to attract and retain byway explorers, so the work to understand what is in place will yield additional traveler service benefits as this data is incorporated into travel aids and marketing.

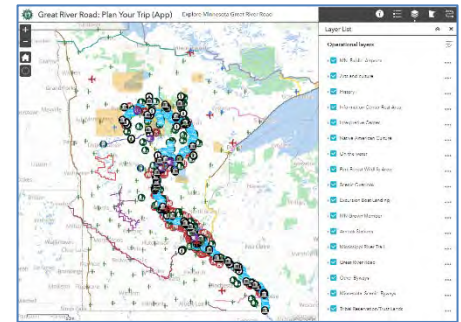


## Byway Design (continued)

Below are specific byway attributes and strategies to develop and maintain the Great River Road.

- A. Byway Asset Mapping: Improve MRPC and Transportation agency understanding of the Great River Road and transportation assets within the right of way of state and local segments by mapping the location, condition and improvement needs of:

- alignment of the designated Great River Road route,
- alignment of the designated Mississippi River Trail (MRT),
- wayshowing guide signage locations for Great River Road/ MRT,
- scenic easements and scenic areas
- rest areas, overlooks, interpretive waysides, travel information centers,
- interpretive panels within the byway right of way.



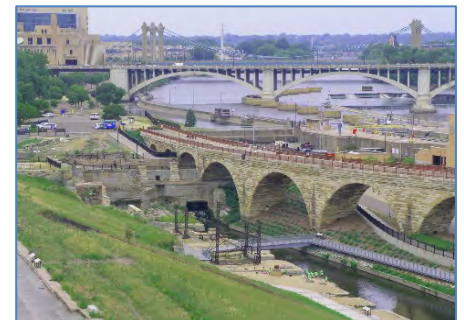
- B. Byway Management Training: Develop training for state and local transportation agencies so they understand where the mapped assets are, how each asset improves the byway experience, and how ongoing transportation projects can help contribute to the intended outcomes.

- C. Accessibility: Incorporate ADA-compliant accessibility in scoping, design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure.

- D. Multi-modal traffic management: While byways are roads and thus focused on motorized travel, byways encourage walking, hiking, bicycling, and boating along the river, and trains, planes and transit to travel its length. A byway integrates traveler movement between travel modes.



- Work with state DOTs and local agencies to assess travel rates, safety, and efficiency issues, including accident types and hotspots, to determine potential improvements. Ongoing, measure increases in tourism travel/expenditure and its effects on safety, efficiency and economic impact.
- Provide traffic calming, pedestrian access, and crossing of the Great River Road near overlooks and waysides, local attractions, Great River Road Interpretive Centers, and multimodal facilities.
- Provide bicycle accommodation (shoulder, shared lane or separate path) along the entire length of the Great River Road, but, particularly in areas that share the MRT designation.
- Verify MRT signage and shoulder/trail conditions in each state to assess if they are in accordance with bicycle design guidance and work with DOTs and County/local road managers to program needed improvements. Use MRT route data to help market facility conditions to appropriate bicyclists.



- Map multi-modal travel options and encourage transportation agencies to expand and connect these options along the length of the byway.





- f. Map and promote multimodal options and connection points by partnering with different entities that operate Amtrak, local transit, excursion ports, marinas and airports.
- g. Address car/ride/bike/scooter/paddle, etc. share programs as local regulations become more established.

- h. Pave an unpaved Great River Road segment in Aitkin County, MN to allow greater use by bicyclists, motorcyclists, RVs, coach buses, collector cars, etc. Confirm no other unpaved segments exist to pave too.



- i. Adjust the route as needed to best showcase Mississippi River by getting people closer to the river, intrinsic resources and multimodal travel options.
- j. Identify new places within the right of way to tell the river's stories and to offer visual and physical access to the Mississippi River where there are none.
- k. Protect the byway experience by encouraging State Patrol and local jurisdictions to enforce weight limits.
- l. Encourage byway community festivals and events to provide advance communication about site access and egress to reduce byway traffic issues.

E. Billboard Controls: Demonstrate compliance with existing local, State, and Federal laws on the control of outdoor advertising by working with state DOTs to enforce the Highway Beautification Act Outdoor Off-Premise Advertising Control regulations.

F. Structural Materials: Reflect and honor the scenic and natural intrinsic qualities of the Mississippi River by specifying regionally sourced stone, wood, metal and other materials in transportation infrastructure construction designs and maintenance. This may or may not cost more to procure and/or install, so scope projects to account for designs incorporating intrinsic materials.



- a. The Great River Road markets intrinsic Mississippi River resources including highly valued natural bluffs, granite outcrops, sand plains, and other geological features. Use no artificial stone (rusticated concrete, form liner) on Great River Road, river bridge, rest areas, walls and other transportation infrastructure as it degrades the byway setting by imitating the natural attributes that Mississippi River tourists and residents are coming to see. Instead use form liners to add classic architectural lines, images or symbols that reflect, not mimic, byway intrinsic qualities.



- b. Develop a transportation infrastructure materials palette of best and not best practices to help Transportation agencies understand this principle.





G. Vegetation: Incorporate the vegetation management byway outcomes below into state and local transportation roadside vegetation management plans and road designs in order to:

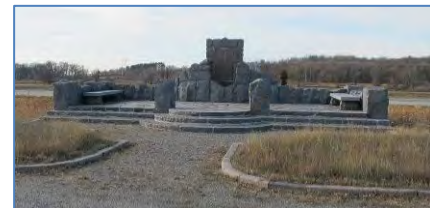
- a. protect water quality,
- b. stabilize slopes
- c. provide unobstructed wayshowing and other signage
- d. use native plants in construction and maintenance operations,
- e. increase native habitat for pollinator/native/migratory species
- f. disperse precipitation impacts,
- g. act as living snow fences,
- h. calm traffic,
- i. preserve or enhance views to and from the river/GRR/MRT,
- j. enhance byway curb appeal, and
- k. manage removal of trees affected by Emerald Ash Borer and reestablish native vegetation.



H. Scenic Easements/Areas: Protect scenic easements/scenic areas by incorporating them in Great River Road mapping so they are known to transportation project managers and local authorities.

I. More and better river crossings: Work with adjacent states to enhance opportunities to cross the river safely by vehicle, bicycle and foot. Include opportunities to interpret the river, provide wayshowing and pedestrian resting.

J. Historic Roadside Properties: Map/restore/maintain historic roadside properties (e.g. New Deal) along the Great River Road according to the Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.



K. Provide and maintain safe pull-offs and rest areas for motorists to experience the Mississippi River from the roadside. Tell the river's stories and encourage longer stays at these locations by incorporating and maintaining Great River Road interpretation seen and accessed from the byway as an intended part of the byway experience. Map sites for marketing, travel and maintenance uses.

L. Anticipated Intrusions: Minimize intrusions on the Mississippi River Valley visitor's experience by:

- a. Analyzing potential impacts in a state or states utilizing the Great River Road asset mapping and other geospatial data related to the proposed intrusion.
- b. Recommending impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation.
- c. Recommending screening views from the byway and river of adjacent developments and existing conditions that are not aesthetically compatible with the character of a byway.
- d. Using a minimum 50' native vegetative buffer to screen utility corridors seen from the byway. Work with Utility Commissions to require this by the utility companies.
- e. Applying dark sky principles to transportation design to safeguard the night views.



#### 4. Great River Road Intrinsic Resources



The following strategies will enable the MRPC to protect, enhance and promote byway intrinsic resources:

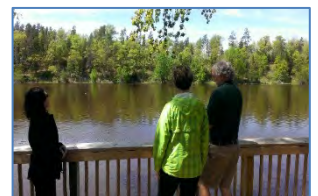
- A. Map Great River Road intrinsic resources by working with the ten state Natural Resource and Historical Society agencies, Network of Great River Road Interpretive Centers (IC), Mississippi River Connections Collaborative and local intrinsic resource managers to provide the official, correct and maintained GIS inventory of Great River Road intrinsic resources for the purpose of:
- Informing MRPC, Natural Resource and Historical Society agency and partner planning, management and promotion of Great River Road intrinsic resources,
  - Assisting travelers in trip planning and while traveling with drivable print, website, mobile app, interpretive panel, and other maps including this information,
  - Informing marketing by MRPC, state Commissions, state Natural Resource, Historical Society, and Tourism agencies, destination marketing organizations, ICs and other intrinsic attractions.
  - Informing Transportation planning, scoping, design, construction and maintenance to improve wayshowing and byway access to the sites;

Great River Road Intrinsic Resources to Map:

- a. Scenic, recreational, natural, historic, archeological and cultural
- b. Great River Road Interpretive Center Network,
- c. Wayshowing from the byway to intrinsic resources,
- d. Interpretive panels not within the right of way, and
- e. Other travel amenities within the right of way,



- B. Assess mapped intrinsic resources to determine their significance and applicability to CMP strategies.
- C. Confirm which Great River Road Interpretive Plan theme(s) Interpretive Centers feature, their relationship to the byway, visitor accessibility, and comfort features.
- D. Compile examples of ordinances and laws that protect, enhance and promote intrinsic resources.
- E. Enhance and promote facilities for recreating on and along the river, e.g. boating, fishing, hiking, sitting.
- F. Identify agricultural tourism sites that interpret how food is produced, transported, and ends up on dinner tables.
- G. Map Great River Road designated scenic easements and scenic areas, then work with local communities to protect them as part of local decision-making and permitting.
- H. Expand use of MN-MRPC's Visual Resource Protection Process, adapted from National Park Service's Great River Road process, to all ten states to preserve, enhance and promote views to and from the river. Include public nominations of views, then assess scenic views with CVBs, engineers, and elected officials so they can better consider scenic resource management when permitting and marketing.
- I. Encourage scenic conservation throughout the byway corridor. Partner with organizations (Departments of Natural Resources, Trust for Public Land, Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, etc.) to protect scenic resources through conservation or scenic easements, transfers of development rights, or guidelines for development.



## 5. Great River Road Interpretation and Storytelling

The following strategies will enable the MRPC to protect, enhance and promote the Great River Road:

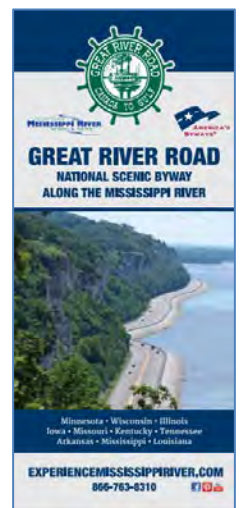
- A. Continue implementing the Great River Road Interpretive Plan and Toolkit.
- B. Map and assess existing Great River Road interpretive panels in all ten states. Develop a palette of existing interpretation, guidance for new designs aiming for some consistency, add to maps, and encourage needed maintenance.
- C. Use the Interpretive Center themes to develop stories of the river. Examples:
  - “Flash Cards” feature interpretive themes and associated ICs
  - Passports to move people from IC to IC along the Great River Road.
  - Interpretive Center trails developed by theme.
- D. Make at least one visit annually to every Interpretive Center.
- E. Train and inform Destination Marketing Organizations, local businesses and ICs about the GRR and IC network through a front-line training session/kit.
- F. Maintain Interpretive Center GRR network signage.
- G. Add new Interpretive Centers to print and online maps, apps etc.



## 6. Great River Road Marketing

The following strategies will enable the MRPC to promote the Great River Road and intrinsic resources:

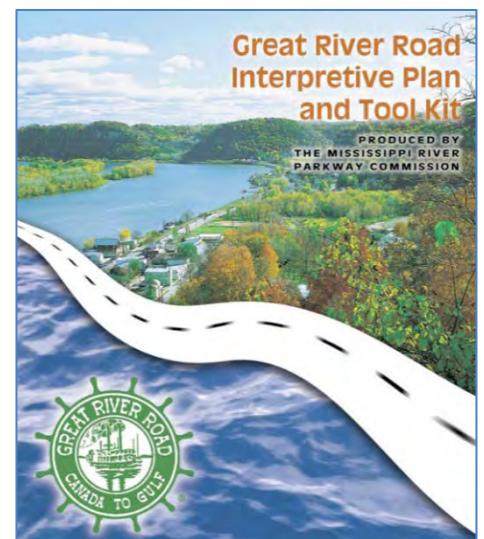
- A. Incorporate ADA-compliant accessibility in website, app, and print materials.
- B. Develop GRR/MRPC marketing sponsorship package(s).
- C. Consider updating the app and online map with the MRT alignment as a GRR recreation resource once it has been assessed for bicycle facility design guide compliance and rider safety guidance is developed.
- D. Map and promote multimodal options and connection points by partnering with Amtrak, local transit, excursion ports, marinas and airports.
- E. Work with Mississippi River Country to develop downloadable themed itineraries and hospitality training for Interpretive Center staff.
- F. Work with Mississippi River Country to integrate multiple languages, where applicable and feasible, in online/app/print material.
- G. Research Chinese and other foreign market interests in agritourism and hands on experiences, then develop interpretation options in those languages.
- H. Utilize the logo usage policy when providing GRR alignment and Pilot's wheel files to city/DMOs/IC/county/city/state/Federal for use on their maps.



## 7. Great River Road Organization – Mississippi River Parkway Commission

The following strategies will enable the MRPC to develop the Great River Road and protect, enhance and promote its intrinsic resources:

- A. Reinforce the MRPC Mission by including it on all MRPC documents: *To lead in preserving, promoting, and enhancing the Great River Road National Scenic Byway along the Mississippi River benefiting communities and travelers.*
- B. Include MRPC and Great River Road state statutes in new member orientation and MRPC state PowerPoints, and ensure each Board of Director and standing committee member read them as a guide for their MRPC activities and requests for state agency support.
- C. Use the benefits of MRPC membership document to express gratitude for support and accomplishment to dues paying states, then to engage state transportation, natural resources, agriculture, historical society, commerce and tourism in CMP implementation of specific strategies.
- D. Use the benefits of MRPC membership document to express gratitude for specific support and accomplishment provided by non-dues paying states, then encourage dues payment and increased participation by state transportation, natural resources, agriculture, historical society, commerce and tourism in CMP implementation of specific strategies.
- E. MRPC Board of Directors and Technical Committees to identify member agency and legislative priorities that align with and could leverage value from Great River Road corridor management plan implementation to encourage participation of Technical members.
- F. Invite Federal agencies from the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative, plus FHWA, Commerce and US Forest Service to MRPC meetings as partners in CMP implementation who can provide technical and fiscal project support for specific strategies that facilitate their agencies' work.
- G. If FHWA opens nominations, the MRPC will seek All American Road designation in all ten states.
- H. Ask Congress (Non-Technical members only) to reinstate the National Scenic Byway grants for eligible activities described in Transportation Alternatives Program as well as interpretation, planning, and marketing described in Transportation Equity Act for The 21st Century.
- I. Develop corporate partnerships offering byway travelers discounts or coupons, Great River Road brochures at corporate locations, and sponsor active living strategies. Examples:
  - a. Sporting goods
  - b. Healthcare providers
  - c. Bicycle companies
- J. Develop an Interpretive Center recognition program to encourage MRPC CMP implementation and meeting participation.



## 8. Great River Road Partner Education and Engagement

The following strategies will enable the MRPC to develop the Great River Road and protect, enhance and promote its intrinsic resources:



- A. Increase MRPC/byway awareness using the Pilot's wheel and MRPC mission on correspondence and collateral materials.
- B. Tailor messages to the subject matter expertise of the audience so they can assist or benefit from specific MRPC efforts without being overwhelmed by the breadth of Commission work.
- C. Invite governors, legislators, tribal members, mayors/Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative, Transportation, Natural Resource, Historical Society, Agriculture, and Tourism state agency leaders, host state businesses, tourism professionals, IC staff and Geotourism sites to attend MRPC meetings.
- D. Meet with governors, legislatures and mayors/Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative to align efforts, support programs and projects, leverage resources, and seek Federal support.
- E. Work Federal and state agencies to identify the economic benefit of the Great River Road, the apply byway benefits as part of the benefit/cost analysis on Federal or state projects in the river corridor.
- F. Create an annual MRPC Great River Road report for online posting, partner education, and funding requests/thank yous, meetings, press releases, and e-newsletters including:
  - a. Ten state commerce data illustrating byway tourism, transportation and intrinsic resource sectors.
  - b. ICs visitation rates, including MRPC promotion effects.
  - c. Great River Road economic impact and traveler interest/satisfaction/spending report.
  - d. Compiled and summarized state commission, MRPC and MRC accomplishments.
  - e. Corridor Management Plan implementation accomplishments and next steps.
- G. Send a letter of gratitude and annual report to those who provided state dues or other resources each year.
- H. Train MRPC members to participate in DOT project and planning public engagement meetings for project and modal plan development along the GRR and MRT.
- I. Build corridor management synergy and competence with a periodic CMP implementation newsletter that may include:
  - a. "Did You Know..." section about Great River Road trivia
  - b. "How To" section with resources, projects, best practices, etc.
  - c. MRPC member agency corridor management success stories
  - d. Frequently asked corridor management question/answer
  - e. A suggestion box to collect (and respond to) feedback
- J. Encourage cities and businesses to promote the Great River Road as an amenity to attract young professionals.
- K. Conduct geotourism-themed photo events featuring Great River Road eco-friendly places or activities.
- L. Encourage on-site meetings. While use of technology can reach many with less, CMP implementation is most effective for MRPC and local partners when on-site meetings provide context and personal interaction.
- M. Work with tourism councils, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce and visitor centers to:
  - a. Identify local restaurants, groceries, and locally grown food to promote healthy food options or specialties
  - b. Leverage local river-related events
  - c. Train them to promote the Great River Road as a local national treasure



## 9. Great River Road Byway Traveler

The following strategies will enable the MRPC to develop the Great River Road so it serves byway traveler needs today and in the future:

- A. Measure effectiveness of byway traveler benefits including: 1) Great River Road route/wayshowing, 2) access to intrinsic resources, 3) interpretation, 4) marketing, and 5) trained IC and CVB front desk staff.
- B. Assess how byway intrinsic resources attract travelers to the Great River Road and vice versa. Determine if marketing and wayshowing to the intrinsic resources encourage travelers to stop, spend more time in the corridor, repeat visitation. Determine if byway travelers help sustain local intrinsic resources and how the byway affects local economies.
- C. Developing a feedback tool to determine traveler recommendations for route improvements and to know what is working well.
- D. Continue to use the National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure 2018 survey of American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials Committee on Planning to develop measures that demonstrate if byway traveler needs are being met and to encourage that transportation infrastructure is maintained and developed according to the ten-state CMP and each of the ten-state's Great River Road CMPs.




## 10. Great River Road Funding and Resources

The following strategies will assure resources the MRPC needs to develop the Great River Road and to protect, enhance and promote its intrinsic resources:

- A. Develop talking points and presentation materials for MRPC Board of Directors, state Commission non-technical members, local champions and partners to use to ask Congressional members to reestablish the National Scenic Byway (NSB) grant program with the eligible activities as described in the Transportation Equity Act for The 21st Century. Use strategies from the ten-state and ten state's CMPs as examples of need and opportunity, and past projects funded by NSB grants as examples of Great River Road success.
- B. Visit local state and Federal agency/legislature/Congressional offices to encourage reestablishing the NSB grant program. As needed, the MRPC should go to Washington, D.C. to continue the discussions.
- C. Meet with each non-dues paying state to identify how to secure a commitment to pay the National MRPC dues, as well as fund agency staff time and travel to participate as MRPC members.
- D. Continue to research and pursue Federal, state and non-profit grant and private sector funding opportunities for byway activities no longer eligible for transportation funds, including marketing, interpretation, visitor centers and planning. Earmark MRPC reserves for specific CMP implementation that can be used as local match, if required.
- E. Use the MRPC Endowment Fund to solicit donations for specific CMP strategy implementation, then report back on accomplishments to donors.
- F. Establish Great River Road vehicle license plates in each of the ten states with funds going to the Endowment to facilitate CMP implementation.





America's Byways® is the umbrella term used for marketing the collection of 150 distinct and diverse roads designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. The definition of "scenic" reaches beyond breathtaking vistas. All of America's Byways® are "scenic", representing the depth and breadth of scenery in America--natural and man-made panoramas; electrifying neon landscapes; ancient and modern history coming alive; native arts and culture; and scenes of friends, families and strangers sharing their stories. America's Byways® are gateways to adventures where no two experiences are the same.

The Federal Highway Administration invites YOU to come closer to America!!!

come CLOSER

