



COLORADO SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAYS DESIGN GUIDELINES



COLORADO
Department of Transportation

NOVEMBER 2025



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Formal Adoption Letter

It is with great excitement that we, the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission, adopt the new Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways Design Guidelines. This document is more than regulations; it’s our shared vision for protecting the heart and soul of our state’s most incredible journeys.

Colorado’s 26 designated Byways are so much more than lines on a map. They are experiences, carefully chosen to inspire, teach, and bring joy and beauty to visitors. The real magic of a byway isn’t just where it takes you, but in the moments of discovery you find along the way. These routes are also vital economic engines for the state, guiding travelers to the local stewards who generously share the beauty and history of their homes and towns. Every journey taken along a byway supports local businesses and helps sustain the vibrant character of these communities.

To keep these experiences special for everyone, these guidelines represent our promise to preserve, maintain, and celebrate the unique character of these routes. We know that the magic of these places is the foundation of their economic vitality. That’s why this document champions a thoughtful approach, ensuring that any improvements enhance, rather than detract from, the scenic, historic, and cultural treasures that make each byway an unforgettable and valuable asset.

Adopting these guidelines is our commitment to being dedicated caretakers of these incredible places. As we look to the future, we’re excited to find new ways to support and champion the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways. We invite you to join us in celebrating this milestone and in dreaming up the new adventures that will enrich Colorado’s tourism appeal and economic prosperity for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Chris Bowles, Chair

Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission

Adopted November 5, 2025

Executive Summary

These design guidelines establish a strategic framework for the planning, design, and management of Colorado’s 26 designated Scenic and Historic Byways. The primary goal of the Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways program, established in 1989, is to preserve, maintain, and enhance the unique character of these corridors. Spanning 2,565 miles across 48 counties, the program is a significant driver of economic, recreational, and educational benefits, with heritage tourism alone contributing an estimated \$10.5 billion to Colorado’s economy in 2021. Critically, these guidelines recognize that uncoordinated, incremental projects can degrade the very qualities that make the byways valuable.

A central principle of this document is the adoption of a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach for all projects within a byway corridor. This collaborative methodology requires integrating safety and mobility improvements with the preservation of the scenic, historic, environmental, and cultural resources that define each byway. Success depends on identifying and protecting each byway’s unique features and intrinsic qualities—whether natural, recreational, historic, cultural, archeological, or scenic. Furthermore, the guidelines call for establishing a consistent identity for each byway through unified design themes, while ensuring all enhancements reflect the specific regional character and local context.

The guidelines offer several high-level recommendations to ensure all future development aligns with the program’s strategic vision. These recommendations aim to maintain the integrity of the byways while addressing modern demands for safety, accessibility, and multimodal travel.

Infrastructure and Alignment: Preserve the historic geometry of roadways where possible, as modernizing to conventional highway standards can diminish scenic appeal and increase driving speeds. When replacing character-defining features like historic guardrails or bridges, use durable, context-sensitive materials that replicate the original appearance.

Utilities and Signage: Place new utility lines underground wherever feasible to preserve scenic viewsheds. Ensure large-scale infrastructure, such as cell towers and solar farms, undergoes visual impact assessments and is sited to minimize intrusion. All signage must adhere to Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards but should be minimized and designed to blend with the landscape, with a prohibition on new billboards.

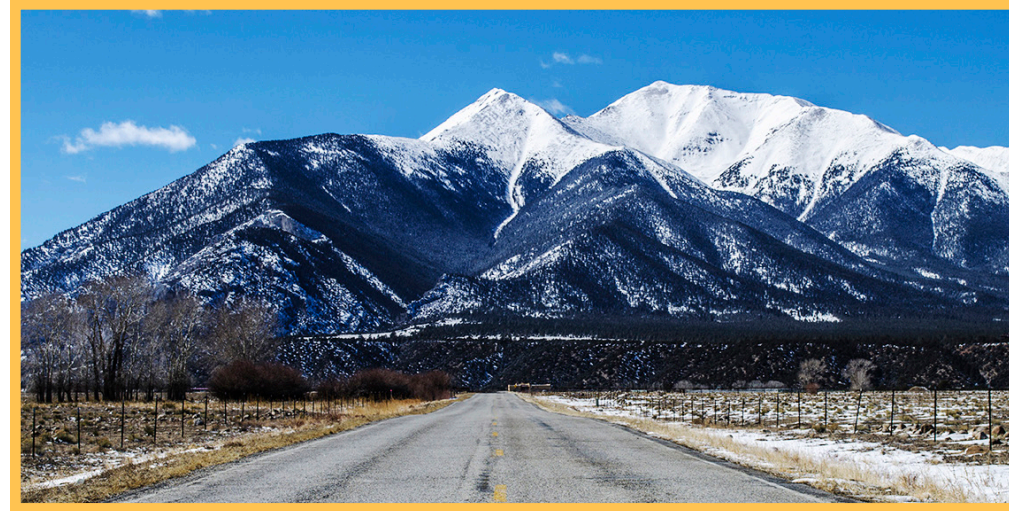
Visitor Accommodations: Design all facilities, including parking lots, overlooks, and trails, for universal accessibility in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Integrate accommodations for various vehicle types, including motorcycles, RVs, and bicycles.

Sustainable and Aesthetic Design: Use native vegetation in landscaping to enhance regional character, control erosion, and minimize maintenance. All lighting installations must be dark-sky compliant to reduce light pollution, with strict controls on lighting for EV charging stations to preserve the nighttime environment.

Next Steps

- To ensure the successful implementation of these guidelines, we recommend the following actions:
- ◆ **Adoption and Dissemination:** Adopt these guidelines as the governing standard for all projects on designated byways. Distribute them to internal departments, regional staff, and external partners, including local agencies and consultants.
 - ◆ **Presentation and Training:** Develop and deliver a presentation to introduce these guidelines to all relevant stakeholders, and conduct dedicated training sessions for Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) staff focusing on how to apply these standards effectively in their projects.
 - ◆ **Mandate Early Coordination:** Require all project managers to consult with the Colorado Byways Program Manager at the earliest planning stages for any project affecting a byway.
 - ◆ **Update Corridor Management Plans (CMPs):** Review and update all existing byway CMPs to ensure they align with these comprehensive design guidelines and delineate the characteristics of the byway that need to be preserved and enhanced.
 - ◆ **Develop Byway Master Plans:** Create a unique comprehensive master plan for each byway corridor, to be completed as soon as possible.

Ultimately, the adoption and implementation of these guidelines represent more than a set of procedural updates; they signify a profound commitment to stewardship. By championing these principles, the Department will ensure Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways remain vibrant and authentic treasures. This strategic focus will safeguard the unparalleled experiences these routes offer, fostering sustainable local economies and enriching the state’s tourism appeal for generations to come.



Introduction

The Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines for planning, design, and management support the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in preserving, maintaining, and enhancing Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways. They provide essential information to guide project development and broader programs by emphasizing the importance of the byways’ archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. Key considerations include safety, operational efficiency, maintenance, feasibility, cost, stakeholder input, and positive impacts on users and neighboring communities, all while ensuring regulatory alignment.

The essence of a byway lies not just in its destinations, but in the valuable experiences that unfold along the journey. A thoughtful integration of road design with the natural surroundings greatly enhances the travel experience, creating opportunities for people to connect with the landscape, its stories, and each other.

While CDOT plays a central role, it is important to recognize that many elements affecting the visual and experiential quality of the Colorado Byways—such as private land development adjacent to the roadways—are beyond CDOT’s jurisdiction and outside the scope of this document.

Over time, numerous individual actions—such as repairing culverts, improving intersections, or adding signs—shape the appearance and functionality of a road corridor. While crucial for maintenance, these actions can either improve or diminish the travel experience for residents and visitors. When undertaken without considering the byways’ unique qualities, the cumulative impact of these individual actions can be unexpectedly damaging.



The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program, housed within CDOT, is overseen by a 15-member commission appointed by the governor. This statewide partnership aims to deliver recreational, educational, and economic benefits by designating, interpreting, protecting, and promoting a network of exceptional touring routes throughout Colorado.


Colorado’s Byways

Established in 1989, the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program is a statewide partnership providing recreational, educational, and economic benefits to residents and visitors. This network of exceptional touring routes showcases the state’s rich cultural, historical, and natural resources, offering travelers opportunities for discovery and access to points of interest while protecting significant landscapes and heritage sites.

The byways inspire pride in Colorado’s unique identity and improve the impressions of visitors traveling along the state’s most scenic, historic, and culturally meaningful roads. They reflect the state’s values of place and stewardship, support local economies through tourism, and create memorable experiences for all who explore them.

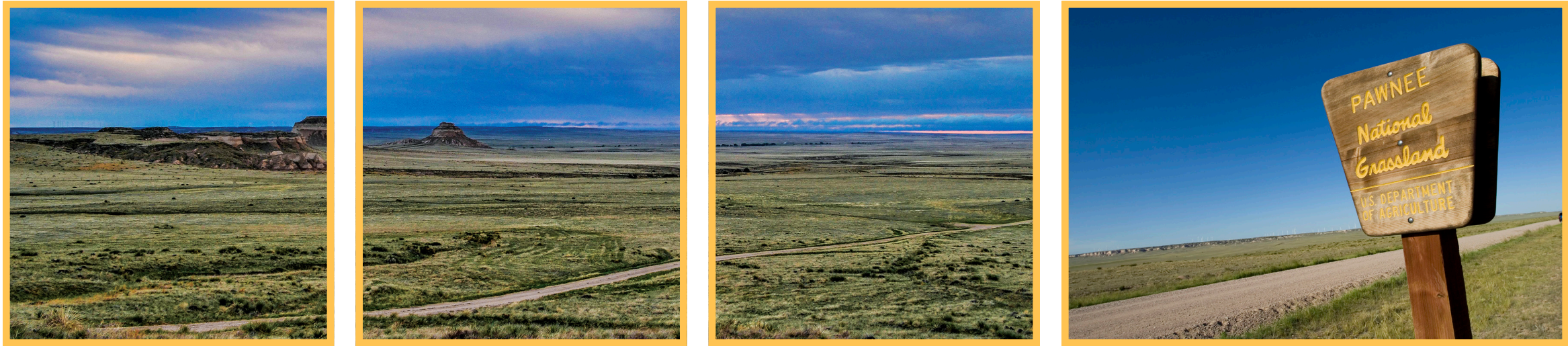
The economic impact of the Byways program, especially for rural areas, is significant. Every stop along a byway represents an opportunity to support local businesses and invest directly in communities that are often overlooked in mainstream tourism. This form of grassroots economic support is sustainable, empowering, and reinforces the state’s values of place and stewardship.

These routes reveal compelling stories of both people and place. They trace the journeys of Ute tribes, silver seekers, ambitious



Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Statistics

- 26 Routes, 2,565 Miles
- Counties Covered: 48
- Nationally Designated: 13
- National Forest Scenic Byways: 10
- Bureau of Land Management Back Country Byways: 2



entrepreneurs, and crafty engineers. They also tell the story of the Rocky Mountains’ remarkable creation and show how much of this wild landscape remains untrammelled today.

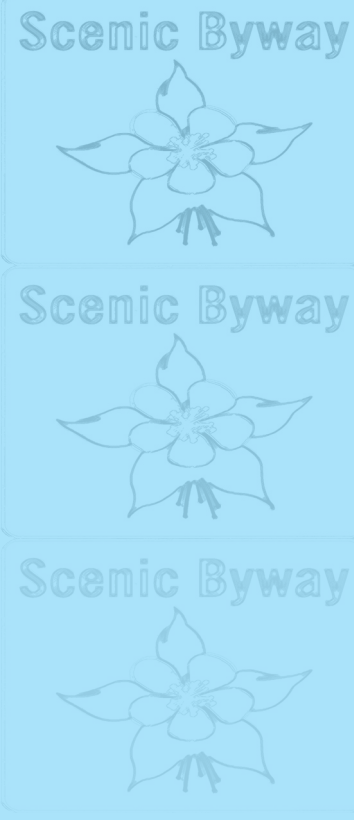
Colorado’s 26 designated byways link historic landmarks with breathtaking scenery, stretching across red-rock canyons, towering Rocky Mountain peaks, and golden sun-kissed prairies. Thirteen of these byways have earned the prestigious America’s Byways® designation from the U.S. Secretary of Transportation—more than any other state. The collection also includes ten National Forest Scenic Byways and two Bureau of Land Management Back Country Byways, underscoring the diverse beauty and significance of Colorado’s roadways.


When to Use these Guidelines

These guidelines are intended to support—project managers, design teams, consultants, environmental managers and staff, access permit managers, contractors, district maintenance personnel, relevant permitting agency staff, and engaged citizens—in preserving the scenic and historic integrity of Colorado’s designated byways. The guidelines are applicable across all project development phases: planning, design, construction, maintenance, and ongoing operations.

Whether your role involves implementing safety enhancements, conducting roadside planting, managing access permits, or performing routine maintenance, it is essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of Colorado Byways and the significance of their designation. Protecting these unique corridors is a collaborative, interdisciplinary responsibility that depends on informed decision-making across all project activities.

The Environmental Programs Branch (EPB) holds the primary expertise on Colorado Byways, specifically through the Colorado Byways Program Manager. When a project is proposed along a designated byway, the environmental project manager must consult the Byways Program Manager, other relevant EPB staff, and Regional Environmental staff early in the process. Following the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) protocols, the Environmental Project Manager must also notify the project Engineer and EPB if a byway may be affected by the proposed project. This early coordination helps the project team integrate byway considerations into planning and decision-making, ensuring the proper evaluation of significant byway features and the effective representation of the byway’s interests.





What to do when your project is located on a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways

- ☞ Check the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways map to identify byway routes. If you are unsure the project is on a byway, call the Colorado Byways Program Manager (303.757.9727).
- ☞ Determine if CDOT is the only road manager or if other jurisdictions also hold responsibility.
- ☞ Follow these guidelines and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) principles.
- ☞ Determine appropriate treatments to preserve character-defining features, maintain the byway character and/or enhance the special character of the road.
- ☞ Review the Byway’s Corridor Management Plan (CMP).
Note: CMPs should reference these guidelines.
- ☞ Review the Byway Master Plan (if completed).



Working and Planning within the Byway

Identify the Byways Character-defining Features

Understanding the overall significance of a byway corridor requires a comprehensive evaluation of both the tangible and intangible elements that contribute to its unique character. This evaluation is crucial because it lays the foundation for future planning and preservation efforts.

Identify the intrinsic qualities.

What are the attributes that led to the road being designated as a Colorado Byway? These may include views of the mountains, historic trails utilized by early settlers, and historic mining sites located near the road, among others.

What are the notable resources?

What types of resources—such as archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic —contribute to the overall significance? In what locations and ways are these resources represented along the byway?

What is the quality of the traveling experience?

Does the travel experience reflect the essence of a small town? Is it defined by expansive landscapes and wide vistas? Does it involve journeying through mountainous passes? Or is it defined by navigating a two-lane road with narrow shoulders, closely clustered trees creating intermittent sun and shadow patterns, all while following a winding river?

The character of the road and roadside are key elements.

What aspects of roadway and roadside design contribute to the character of the road and shape the traveler’s experience as you have identified? Elements of roadway design encompass both the horizontal and vertical alignment of the road, and the structures involved in its construction. These elements may include paved or grassy shoulders, sidewalks, hiker and biker trails, landscaped medians, traffic signs, lane and edge pavement, striping, and buried utilities, as well as bridge designs that offer picturesque views from vehicles.

Identification of the Intrinsic Qualities.

What intrinsic qualities does the Colorado Byway have? To qualify as a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway, a route must display at least one regionally significant intrinsic quality. For designation as an All-American Road, it must demonstrate at least two nationally recognized qualities that are unique or exemplary. All intrinsic qualities—archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic—are valued equally in this assessment, as defined by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The features that define the corridor’s distinct intrinsic qualities are acknowledged for their regional significance.

The Context Classification of the Byway needs to be identified.

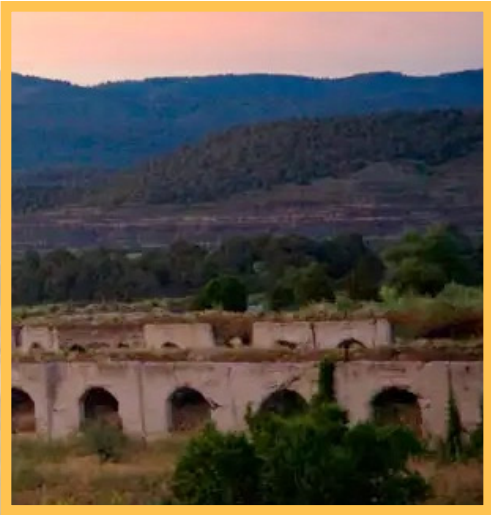
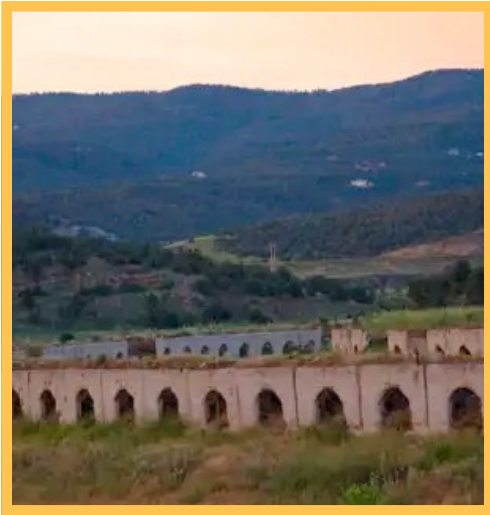
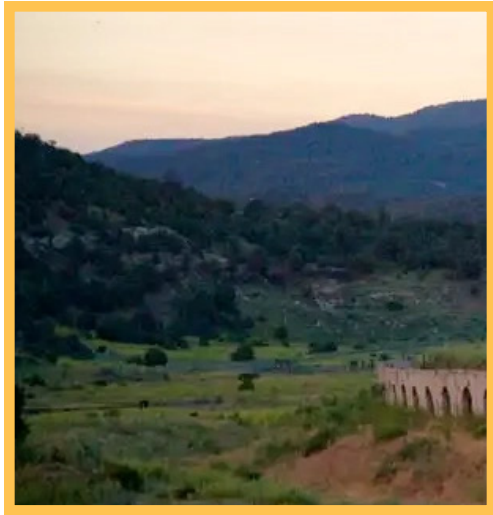
A Colorado Byway can be classified under a single category or may traverse multiple classifications. The CDOT Roadway Design Guide provides a more in-depth discussion of these Context Classifications. It is important that design elements along the byway remain consistent, even when the Context Classifications vary along the corridor.

Each journey along a byway presents travelers with a series of valuable and memorable experiences. The thoughtful integration of road design and natural surroundings contributes significantly to the overall appeal and satisfaction of the travel experience.




Intrinsic Qualities

Archeological	Natural
Cultural	Recreational
Historic	Scenic

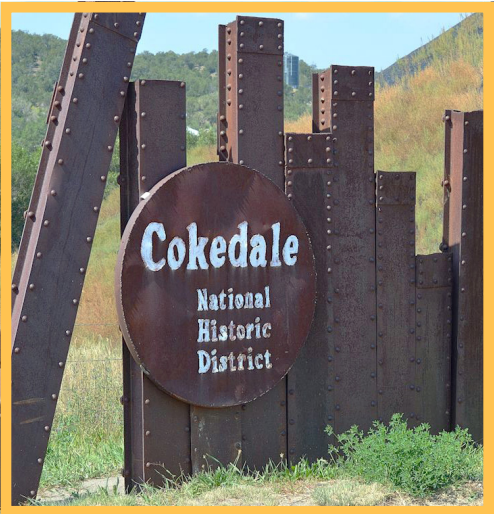
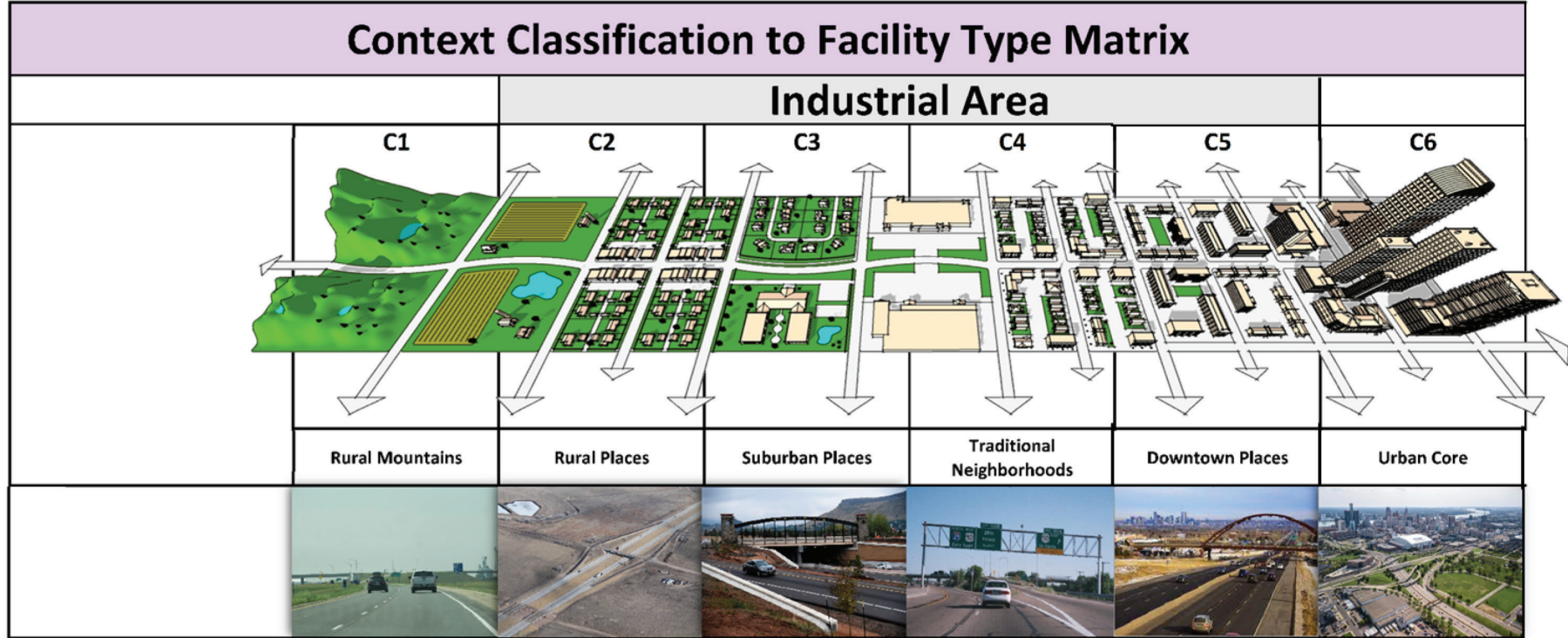


FHWA defines Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) as:

“CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist. CSS principles include the employment of early, continuous and meaningful involvement of the public and all stakeholders throughout the project development process.”



All infrastructure and maintenance projects must match and complement the surrounding environment of the byway.





These CSS principles for Colorado Byways include:

- ◆ Identify the features that define the character of the byway.
 - ◇ Recognize specific intrinsic qualities or resources.
 - ◇ Determine the elements of the road and roadside that contribute to the scenic and/or historic character of the byway.
- ◆ Preserve character-defining features whenever feasible.
- ◆ Maintain the overall character of the roadway.
- ◆ Enhance the byway to support its unique character.
 - ◇ Where character-defining features are absent, create solutions that align with the byway’s characteristics.
 - ◇ Incorporate roadside enhancement into the project to enrich the traveler’s experience.

Use CDOT Roadway Design Guide and Bridge Design Manual to incorporate this concept into planning, designing, and maintaining the Colorado Byways.

To ensure successful implementation and long-term stewardship, it is essential that every single byway develop its own comprehensive master plan for its unique corridor. This plan must be created as soon as possible and will serve as the foundational document for all of that byway’s planning, design, and maintenance.

The master plan must provide a detailed outline of existing corridor conditions and establish clear goals with a long-term vision (spanning 5 to 15 years). It must also define the consistent design elements needed to maintain the byway’s unique character, identify sensitive areas requiring protection, and designate opportunity areas for enhancement.

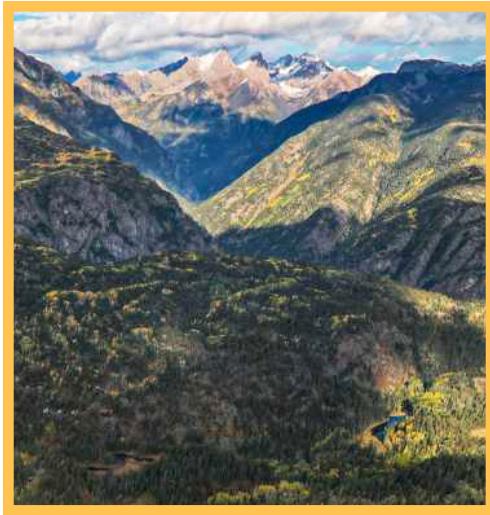
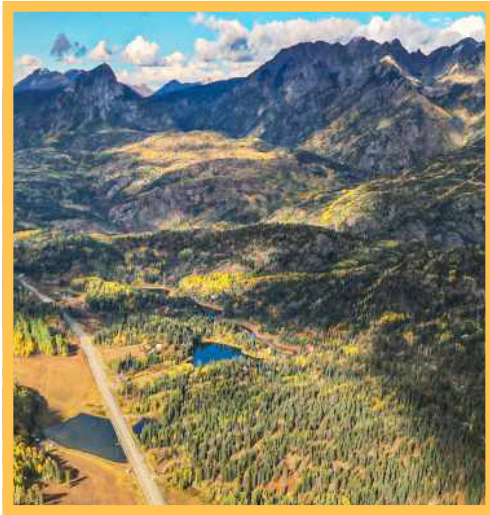
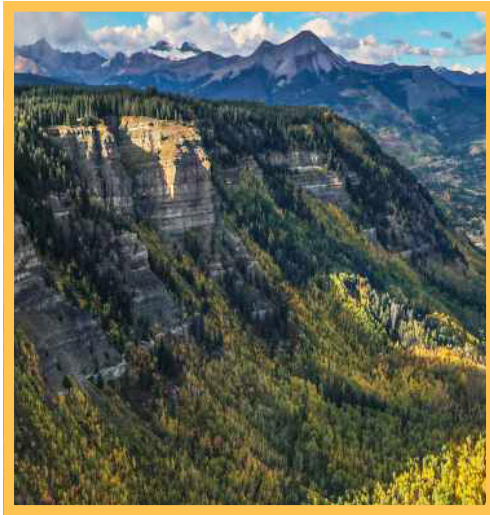
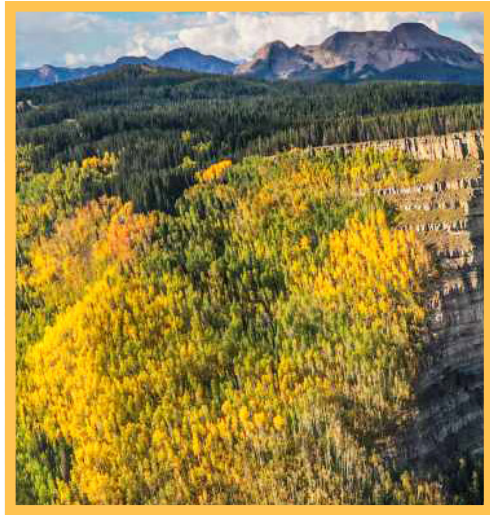
The plan must conclude with a practical implementation guide. This guide will function as a clear roadmap for all stakeholders, ensuring that all future projects align with the byway’s core values and preservation objectives.

Preserve and Maintain the Character-Defining Features

Preserving and sustaining the character-defining features of the Colorado Byways is crucial. When a historic feature is identified, the primary focus is usually on maintaining and repairing the original materials and elements. However, some historic features go beyond physical structures and extend to the land itself—such as farming, mining, and early settlements. In these cases, it is equally important to preserve and emphasize the views and landscapes that contribute to the historical significance of the area. For example, along the Dinosaur Diamond Colorado Byway, CDOT has worked to protect key vistas that highlight the area’s prehistoric significance, ensuring that the views of the landscape, where fossils and early settlements are found, are preserved for both educational and aesthetic purposes.

When preserving a character-defining byway feature in its original physical state is not feasible—due to safety concerns or material durability—the design should aim to replicate the feature using modern, more resilient materials that maintain its original appearance and significance. For example, when the original stone guardrails along the San Juan Skyway Colorado Byway were found to be deteriorating





and posed safety risks, CDOT replicated the stone appearance using durable concrete materials that blend seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, maintaining both safety and the byway’s historic character.

In some projects, the defining character of the Colorado Byway may be beyond repair for its intended use. Consider repurposing it in new ways—perhaps for viewing purposes only or by incorporating its materials into other features such as walls, seating, or signage. If the element in question is a bridge, it could be transformed into a pedestrian-only pathway or scenic overlook. In some projects, the defining character of a byway feature may be irreparably impacted or no longer suitable for its original use. In such cases, mitigation should focus on preserving the byway’s overall experience by either repurposing the affected element or replacing its benefits elsewhere along the corridor. For example, if a scenic overlook must be removed, a new one can be developed in a different location that offers comparable or improved views and amenities. Similarly, if a historic bridge can no longer support vehicular traffic, it might be transformed into a pedestrian-only pathway or scenic viewpoint. Materials from impacted features may also be creatively reused in new elements such as walls, seating, or interpretive signage. These strategies not only help offset the loss of the original resource but also reinforce the byway’s character and enhance its appeal for future travelers. Coordination with the Colorado Byways Program Manager and local stakeholders is essential to ensure that mitigation efforts align with the byway’s values and interpretive goals.



The character of the Colorado Byway is shaped by its distinctive qualities, attributes, and features within the road and right-of-way, as well as the intrinsic qualities found beyond it. This character may stem from physical elements such as the road’s vertical and horizontal alignment or its relationship to scenic views—whether dramatic natural landscapes or pastoral farmland. Preserving these character-defining features is essential throughout all phases of a project, including planning, design, and construction. This approach also applies to access permit decisions and routine maintenance activities like planting, mowing, and snow removal—ensuring that every action considers the byway’s overall context.

The essence of Colorado’s designated byways lies in the positive experience of traveling them—whether by car, bicycle, or on foot. The physical character of the byway plays a crucial role in enhancing this experience. However, if individual actions are taken without consideration for preserving and enhancing the byway’s overall character, its unique and appealing qualities may be diminished or lost.



Enhance the Byway to Support the Character-defining Features

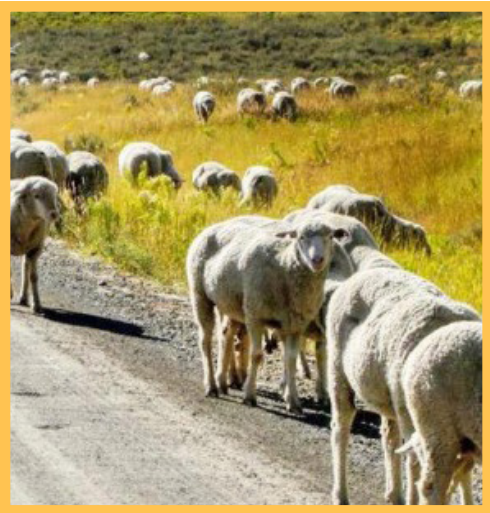
Colorado Byways benefit from three main types of projects:

- ◆ **Restoration and Enhancement Projects:** These projects restore and enhance a byway’s unique characteristics, especially in areas where key defining features are lost or threatened.
- ◆ **Roadway Improvement and Safety Projects:** These address necessary improvements and safety concerns on the roadways.
- ◆ **Roadside Enhancement Projects:** These projects add value to the traveler’s experience.

If a proposed project doesn’t directly affect an identified character-defining feature, consider how it can still complement the byway’s unique qualities. Can the project be designed to enhance both the byway’s visual and physical appeal?

Roadside enhancement projects include streetscape improvements like gateways, traffic calming measures, pedestrian safety features, landscaping, lighting, and signage. They also encompass trailheads for recreational access, wayfinding systems for directions and visitor





information, and interpretive signs. These projects significantly enhance the experience for both residents and visitors.

To effectively implement any Byway project, all stakeholders must actively participate in project working groups, regardless of the lead agency. CDOT will spearhead some initiatives, while local agencies will lead others. Involving all parties ensures comprehensive coordination throughout the process.

Other Stakeholders

External stakeholders are individuals or groups with an interest in Colorado Byways projects. Understanding who these stakeholders are and what matters to them is crucial for planning and executing successful projects. Therefore, identify all project stakeholders and assess factors like their influence, interests, and potential impacts on the project.

While CDOT has jurisdiction, many stakeholders operate under their own design standards, policies, or procedures. For example, projects on byways that cross federal lands must adhere to the Forest Service Scenery Management System and the BLM Visual Resource Management System, which are the required frameworks for managing scenic resources on those lands. Stakeholders can strengthen a byway's character by shaping policy, while others contribute through their direct efforts.



Design Resources

Each Colorado Byway is guided by a CMP, which outlines the goals, strategies, and responsibilities for preserving and enhancing its key qualities. The CMP covers various aspects, including tourism development, roadway safety, highway signage, and the preservation of historic structures and natural features – all with a focus on community livability and visitor experience. For example, the historic Alpine Tunnel, a 19th-century railroad tunnel along the Scenic Silver Thread Colorado Byway, has been preserved to maintain its cultural significance and provide educational opportunities for visitors.

Other resources to consider include:

- ◆ CDOT Roadway Design Guide
- ◆ CDOT Bridge Design Manual
- ◆ CDOT Landscape Architecture Manual
- ◆ CDOT National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Manual
- ◆ America's Byways (<https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/bywaysp/>)
- ◆ CDOT Archaeologist, Historian, Landscape Architect, Paleontologist, other Environmental Programs Branch (EPB) staff, and Regional Environmental staff
- ◆ Project Landscape Architect
- ◆ Colorado Preservation, Inc.
- ◆ Colorado Downtown Streets
- ◆ Other projects on the same byway



COLORADO SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAYS

Stakeholders Examples

- ☞ Municipalities
- ☞ Counties
- ☞ National Park Service (NPS)
- ☞ U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- ☞ Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- ☞ Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)
- ☞ State Land Board
- ☞ Historic Districts
- ☞ Creative Districts
- ☞ Heritage Areas
- ☞ Byway Foundations/Non-Profit Organizations
- ☞ Main Streets



Design Considerations

Designers must maintain or enhance a distinctive and recognizable byway image while carefully blending the facilities into the surrounding landscape and local community. Designers are responsible for selecting materials and construction methods that ensure durability and low maintenance while minimizing resource use. Additionally, we must design projects on the Colorado Byways to safely accommodate a diverse range of visitors, each with varying needs and preferences, traveling by different modes of transportation. Planning and designing byway improvements require a thorough analysis of the user needs and potential future land use patterns, resource access and protection, facility maintenance, aesthetics, the suitability of built features, and the economic impact on the local community.

Regional Character


One of the main reasons people travel Colorado Byways is to experience the unique physical and cultural features of specific regions. Projects should aim to preserve those qualities by avoiding the kind of uniform development that makes one place indistinguishable from another.

When planning along a byway, look to the local landscape and traditional architecture for inspiration for scale, materials, texture, and color. Incorporating these regional elements into facility design helps maintain and celebrate the area's identity. Colorado Byway travelers are drawn to what's authentic and different—they're looking to connect with something real and learn what makes an area truly unique.

Here are a few examples:

- ◆ Along the San Juan Skyway, stone walls and timber elements echo the region's mining and railroad heritage, while interpretive pullouts framed by natural rock blend seamlessly into the dramatic mountain landscape.
- ◆ On the Pawnee Pioneer Trails Byway, a simple rest area with weathered wood fencing and native prairie grass landscaping reflects the region's homesteading past while preserving the vast, open views of the grasslands.
- ◆ At an overlook on the Grand Mesa Byway, using the same dark basalt rock that forms the mesa itself creates a structure that feels born from its surroundings, connecting visitors directly to the area's unique geology.

Each of these designs reinforces the sense of place and history that defines the byway, creating a more memorable and authentic experience for travelers.



The design of all constructed elements must be appropriate to its particular byway and its context within the landscape, the community, and its history. It must take into account expectations and behavior of its visitors, maintenance requirements, stewardship responsibilities of the local community, the economy of the area, safety of the visitors, and the preservation of the unique intrinsic qualities of the byway.





Sense of Place and Identity

A well-defined sense of place is essential to the success of a Colorado Byway and is established through its identity—the image or theme that reflects the route’s unique character and personality. This identity is shaped by the surrounding landscape, local culture, historical context, and community values. Each element creates a distinct impression, influencing how travelers perceive and remember the byway.

Features such as mountain vistas, small towns, or cultural landmarks contribute to a cohesive and memorable travel experience. For example:

- ◆ The Highway of Legends Byway builds its identity around the folklore and unique geology of the Spanish Peaks region. Its name evokes mystery, and the route intentionally guides travelers past the iconic stone dikes and mountains that inspired the legends, reinforcing its story at every turn.
- ◆ The Gold Belt Tour Byway establishes its identity through its direct connection to the Pikes Peak Gold Rush. The byway follows historic railroad and stagecoach routes, where preserved mine headframes and Victorian architecture in towns like Cripple Creek and Victor serve as constant visual cues to its gold-seeking heritage.

A strong, clear identity helps visitors easily recognize when they are on the byway and navigate their way along it with confidence. Landscape architects support this effort by designing with sensitivity to the natural and cultural environment. Through site planning, view preservation, and the integration of interpretive and aesthetic elements, they help convey the Colorado Byway’s story and reinforce its distinct identity. Their work ensures the byway remains visually engaging, contextually appropriate, and meaningful to both visitors and local communities.

Consistency

To maintain a consistent and recognizable identity for the Colorado Byway along its entire route, a unified design approach is essential, even as it passes through diverse environments and includes different types of facilities. While some elements may need to be adapted to suit specific locations or purposes, they should still reflect the byway’s overall character.

Here are examples of how this can be achieved:

- ◆ **Signage:** Maintain a consistent sign design, including typography, color palette, and artistic style for all graphic elements. However, the base structure of the signs can be varied to suit the specific environment or purpose.
- ◆ **Building Materials:** Employ uniform materials on buildings, but adjust colors to better match the surroundings. For instance, consider using pitched roofs for structures in mountainous designs, while opting for flat, low, or barn roofs in plains areas. Similarly, the contrast between stucco and log materials can be used to reflect regional architectural styles while maintaining overall consistency in material quality.
- ◆ **Landscape Architectural Elements:** Design elements like pullouts, retaining walls, and benches with the same materials and scale.

Repeating these key visual elements creates a cohesive, organized look that helps motorists focus on the information provided and enhances their experience. To guide future work, projects can develop corridor-specific design guidelines or aesthetic treatment plans that ensure consistency for all subsequent projects along that corridor.





Architectural Theme

The architecture of facilities and structures along the byway should reinforce its identity. Ideally, visitors should be able to recognize a building as part of the byway experience—even before reading any signage. The design doesn’t need to be bold or unusual to be effective; often, drawing from local architectural styles creates a more natural, complementary look that blends with the surrounding environment.

While structures don’t need to be identical, a consistent image can still be achieved. In fact, thoughtful variation adds visual interest and allows each structure to fit its specific context. Repeating design elements—such as rooflines, colors, materials, column styles, or window details—helps unify the overall appearance and strengthens the byway’s sense of place.

For example:

- ◆ On the Trail of the Ancients Byway, the architectural theme could draw from Ancestral Puebloan structures found at Mesa Verde. A family of facilities could be unified by using common materials like stacked stone and earthen-toned stucco. Repeating elements might include flat rooflines, heavy timber beams (vigas), and small windows. While a visitor center might be a larger building integrated into a hillside, a simple shade ramada at an overlook would use the same core materials and style in a much simpler, open-air form.
- ◆ Along the Collegiate Peaks Byway, facilities could adopt a consistent “mountain ranch” aesthetic inspired by the area’s agricultural heritage. The unifying elements could be steep-gabled roofs made of dark metal, vertical board-and-batten siding, and foundations of local river rock. A larger welcome center could be designed to look like a historic ranch house, while smaller restrooms or kiosks along the route could resemble barns or sheds, all clearly belonging to the same architectural family.



Safety

All facilities developed along the byway must prioritize the safety of both motorists and pedestrians. To prevent structures from becoming fixed-object hazards for vehicles that may inadvertently leave the travel lane, they should be set back a sufficient distance from the roadway, in accordance with the FHWA’s Highway Safety Manual, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guidelines, and the CDOT Project Delivery Manual.

When making safety-related design changes, it’s essential to preserve the byway’s unique character. Conventional highway improvements—like widening lanes and shoulders, installing guardrails, or altering the road’s geometry—may not be appropriate for scenic routes. These measures can diminish the visual appeal that defines the byway and often encourage higher driving speeds. This is especially problematic on scenic roads that share the pavement with cyclists, as users may be unfamiliar with the route, and wish to drive slowly to enjoy the views. In such cases, traditional safety strategies could unintentionally increase the risk of accidents by widening the speed gap between different users.

Instead, consider alternative safety measures that are sensitive to the byway’s character. These may include:

- ◆ Reducing design speeds.
- ◆ Traffic calming techniques.





- ◆ By integrating purposeful design elements to highlight hazards—instead of removing them or installing unsightly warning devices—we boost safety by sharpening awareness and fostering more vigilant behavior.
- ◆ Enhancing the visibility of hazards rather than removing them.
- ◆ Improving sight distances.
- ◆ Installing appropriate signage.
- ◆ Using pavement markings, raised markers, and street lighting.

When addressing excessive travel speeds, focus on influencing driver behavior through context-sensitive traffic calming methods. These approaches help maintain the byway’s scenic and cultural identity while enhancing overall safety.

Accessibility

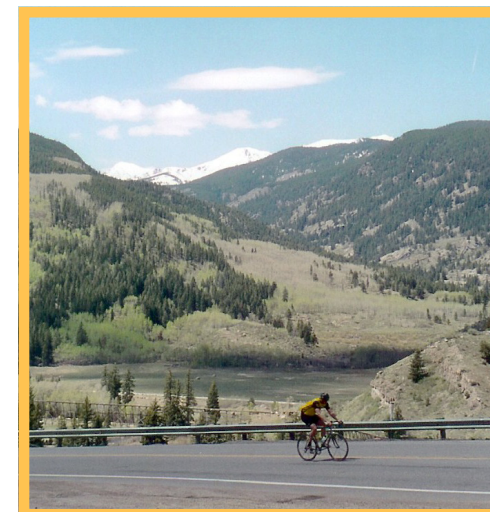
Facilities along a Colorado Byway must be designed and planned to guarantee that all visitors, regardless of their abilities, can equitably access and fully experience the byway’s unique features. This requires careful consideration for individuals with visual, hearing, cognitive, and mobility impairments, ensuring that everyone can safely and completely engage with the site.

Adhering to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is fundamental for creating environments that are not only accessible but also inclusive and respectful. At its core, ADA compliance goes beyond meeting technical standards; it is about upholding dignity, promoting equity, and providing every individual with the opportunity to participate in and enjoy the byway experience.

Furthermore, it is essential to anticipate that visitors may be unfamiliar with Colorado’s specific environmental conditions. These can include significant changes in elevation, the presence of steep slopes, or unique climate factors such as high altitude or sudden weather shifts. By applying universal design principles, we can enhance the safety and accessibility for all users, encompassing a wide range of visitors from seniors to parents navigating with strollers, regardless of their age, background, or prior experience.

Finally, compliance with applicable AASHTO design criteria and the procedural requirements outlined in the CDOT Project Delivery Manual is crucial.

When a byway facility or program is located on federal lands, projects must also adhere to the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968. For byways that traverse national forests, the U.S. Forest Service has established its own legally enforceable standards in the Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines and the Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines. This ensures that all facilities meet statewide standards while also delivering context-sensitive, user-focused solutions that authentically reflect the byway’s unique character and serve the needs of the broadest possible audience.



Scenic Byway

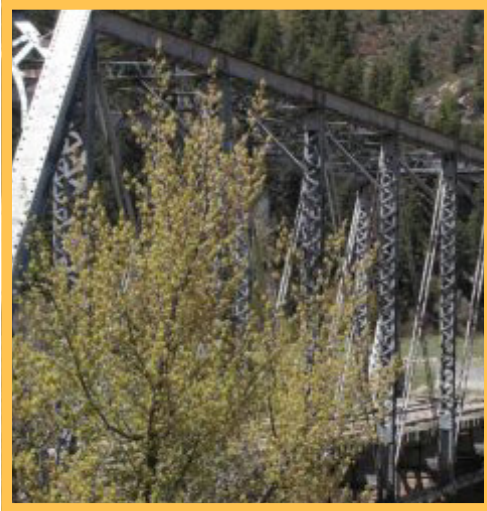


Scenic Byway



Scenic Byway





Mobility and Connections

Mobility and connectivity are vital to the success and sustainability of Colorado Byways. These scenic routes do more than connect points on a map—they link communities, support tourism, and provide access to invaluable natural, cultural, and historical resources. Integrating multimodal options and well-designed roadside features enhances the byway experience, ensuring more people can explore Colorado in accessible ways. This approach fosters a shift from passive observation to active participation, allowing visitors to engage more deeply with their surroundings and enriching their connection to the corridor.

Public Transit

Bustang, Colorado’s interregional express bus service operated by CDOT, plays a key role in connecting rural communities to urban centers along major corridors that intersect with several Scenic and Historic Byways. Bustang routes serve as a convenient and eco-friendly option for travelers looking to explore Colorado Byways without needing to drive the entire way themselves. For instance, visitors can take Bustang from Denver to Glenwood Springs, where travelers can then rent a car to explore the West Elk Loop or the Top of the Rockies Byways.

In addition, programs like Road Scholar (formerly Elderhostel) make educational travel more accessible for older adults, many of whom rely on group travel infrastructure to experience Colorado’s scenic routes. Road Scholar programs often incorporate Byways into their itineraries, combining guided tours with opportunities to learn about geology, wildlife, Native American cultures, and historic landmarks along the way.

Programs like these expand access to the Colorado Byways for a wider range of travelers and enrich the overall experience. To build on their success, similar initiatives should be developed and supported—particularly those that serve youth, underserved populations, and travelers with disabilities. Whether through guided tours, educational partnerships, or affordable transit options, such programs can help ensure that the benefits of Colorado’s Byways—scenic beauty, cultural education, and community connection—are available to all.

Main Streets and Downtown Connections

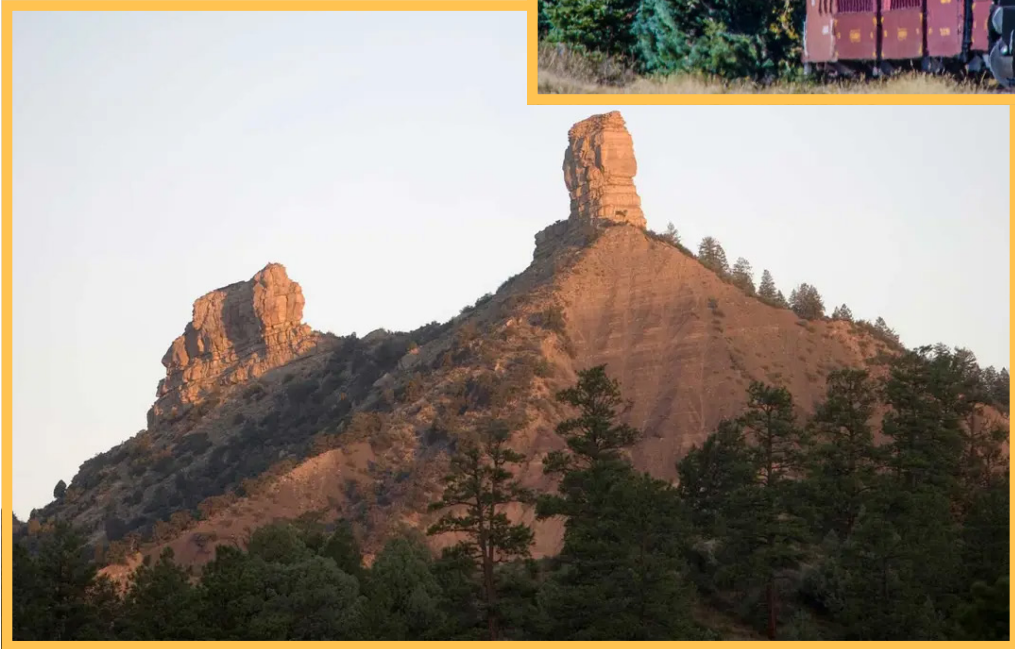
Colorado Byways often weave through the heart of its charming small towns and historic districts. These areas boast vibrant main streets, offering easy access to local shops, eateries, museums, and cultural attractions. Towns such as Salida, Durango, and Paonia act as vital links, connecting the byway experience with the rich heritage of their regions.

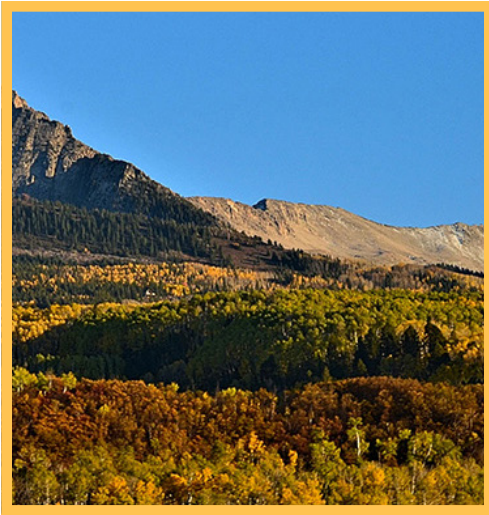
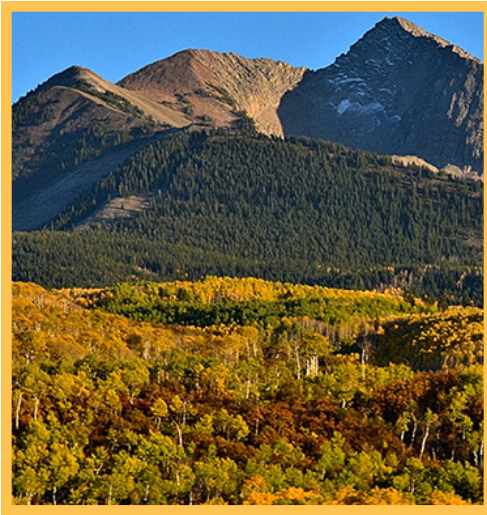
Fostering economically healthy and vibrant main streets requires strengthening the connection between byways and their adjoining communities. The Colorado Downtown Streets Guide provides Best Management Practices (BMPs) to achieve this, focusing on enhanced wayfinding, improved sidewalks, and new bike facilities. These improvements boost mobility and economic vitality by encouraging visitors to explore beyond the scenic drive, leading them directly into the heart of Colorado’s unique towns to support local businesses.

Rail Connections

Several Colorado Byways intersect with the state’s train stations and rail lines, offering unique travel opportunities. Amtrak’s California Zephyr, which travels between Chicago and San Francisco, stops in cities like Grand Junction, Glenwood Springs, and Denver. These cities act as gateways to various byways, allowing travelers to begin their journey by train and continue via shuttle, bicycle, or rental car. Revitalizing these stops as comprehensive travel hubs can connect more people to the byway system.

Future rail projects, such as the Front Range Passenger Rail and Colorado Mountain Rail, present further opportunities to enhance this multimodal approach. These proposed lines could significantly boost economic activity in the smaller communities along their routes. By linking more towns and cities to the existing rail network and the byway system, these projects will establish new travel hubs and provide





easier access for visitors, fostering sustainable tourism and economic growth across the state.

Regional and Local Airports

Colorado’s small and regional airports—such as those in Montrose, Durango, Gunnison, and Alamosa—further enhance access to remote areas served by Colorado Byways. These airports serve tourists looking to quickly access mountain or plateau regions without long drives from Denver. Improved shuttle services, rental car availability, and visitor information centers at these airports help facilitate smooth transitions from air to byway travel.

Trail Connections

Connecting Colorado Byways with trail systems offers a significant opportunity to attract travelers who prefer active transportation and recreation, such as biking and hiking. Developing well-marked access points and supporting infrastructure like bike rentals, repair stations, and direct trail links from byway towns will encourage visitors to explore the scenic and cultural attractions on foot or by bike. Integrating byways with existing and planned trail networks, such as the Colorado Trail or local greenways, will provide a seamless experience for outdoor enthusiasts, boosting local economies through increased visitation and demand for related services. This integration also promotes sustainable tourism by reducing reliance on personal vehicles and enhancing the overall health and wellness benefits of exploring Colorado’s natural beauty.

Enhancing the Journey


True connectivity along Colorado Byways extends beyond paved roads; it emerges from a thoughtfully designed network of transportation options that invite people to explore, learn, and connect. Integrating services like Bustang, educational programs like Road Scholar, vibrant Main Streets, strategic rail hubs, accessible regional airports, and robust trail networks creates a richer, more inclusive travel experience. These layered connections not only support local economies and reduce environmental impacts but also ensure that the beauty and heritage of Colorado Byways are accessible to travelers of all kinds.

Livability and Sustainable Design

In alignment with FHWA’s livability principles, roadside enhancements along Colorado Byways should improve quality of life, foster stronger communities, and promote environmental and economic sustainability. Livable communities feature diverse transportation options, convenient access to amenities, and a distinct sense of place, and Colorado Byways contribute to these goals through context-sensitive design that honors each locale’s unique attributes. This thoughtful integration breathes new life into rural towns and Main Streets, connecting travelers to local heritage and businesses. In doing so, the program provides sustainable economic support that reinforces local identity and improves the quality of life for residents.

Leveraging Existing Community Assets

It is crucial to “capitalize on the value of existing (context-sensitive) community amenities,” as highlighted in the *Livability in Transportation Guidebook*. Facilities and infrastructure should be designed to complement the inherent strengths of the surrounding environment, seamlessly integrating with existing parks, trails, historical sites, and cultural landmarks. This approach not only optimizes public investment but also deepens the connection between travelers and the communities they encounter.



Colorado Byways enhance tourism and community connections by integrating diverse transportation options like Bustang, trains, regional airports, and trail systems, making the state’s natural and cultural heritage accessible to all.





Sustainable Materials and Construction

Materials and construction techniques for roadside improvements must prioritize durability, sustainability, and environmental stewardship. Whenever feasible, designers should use deconstructed or reclaimed materials to minimize waste, conserve resources, and authentically reflect the byway's local character. Incorporating locally sourced materials, such as stone or timber, can also strengthen this connection. Opting for materials that require minimal resources for production and infrequent long-term maintenance lessens the environmental impact and supports cost-effective management. Furthermore, integrating strategies like natural ventilation, passive solar heating, and renewable energy can decrease energy consumption and operational costs.

Optimizing Facility Placement and Landscaping

To optimize a facility's overall performance, carefully consider its positioning, orientation, and landscaping. Strategically site buildings to harness natural light and seasonal shade, which boosts energy efficiency and improves the user experience. In addition to a building's orientation, install overhangs on south- and west-facing doors and windows to lower heating and cooling costs and provide shade for visitors. Enhance visitor comfort by using trees or other structures to shade picnic tables. Ensure all designs account for both daily operational needs and long-term upkeep so that facilities remain inviting and effective for years to come.

Embracing Native Vegetation

Native vegetation is essential for sustainable and authentic landscapes. Native plants are uniquely adapted to local climate and soil conditions, significantly minimizing the need for artificial irrigation, chemical fertilizers, and ongoing maintenance. Furthermore, they are crucial for soil stabilization and erosion control. Beyond these ecological advantages, native plantings play a vital role in reinforcing the regional character of the byway, contributing to a visually cohesive and authentic sense of place.





Byway Appropriate Treatments

After project goals are determined and the byway's character-defining features are identified, an assessment should be made as to which of these features will be impacted and which features can be preserved. If it is not possible to preserve all the character-defining features of the byway, it will be very important to mitigate impacts to maintain the overall character of the traveler's experience on the byway. Understanding the features that make up this experience and applying creative approaches to meet project goals such as those suggested in these guidelines, it should be possible to preserve, maintain, and enhance the byway's special character.

Occasionally, an existing feature may not align with the visual or thematic character of the byway—perhaps due to an incompatible style, poor condition, or unsightly design. In such cases, replacing the feature presents an opportunity for enhancement. A new structure that reflects the surrounding landscape, incorporates regionally appropriate materials, and includes design elements that complement the byway's unique character can elevate the travel experience and strengthen the sense of place.

Remote sites often offer or require minimal amenities. In many cases, adding too many features can detract from the experience by disrupting the sense of solitude and pristine nature that visitors seek in these areas.

However, as visitor numbers grow or as a site is located closer to a populated area, the expectation for additional amenities increases. In these more developed or frequently visited areas, it may be appropriate to provide features such as restrooms, lighting, water fountains, vending machines, designated dog areas, and other conveniences to meet visitor needs.

Many byways across the country have faced challenges. Here are several strategies that have been successfully used to manage increased traffic volumes without compromising the charm and character of the byway (see corresponding photos):

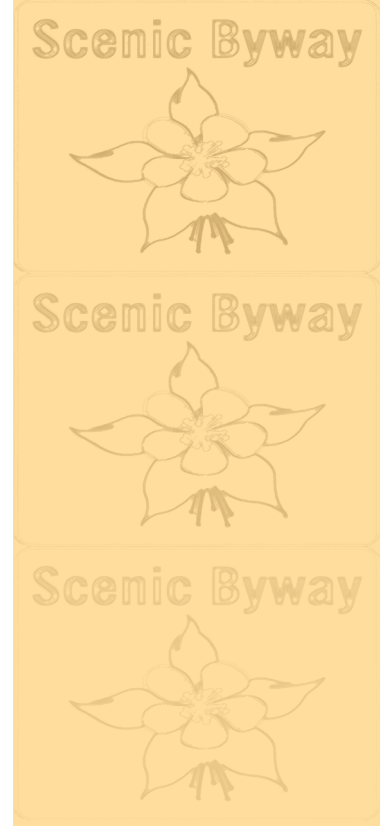
1. Context-Sensitive Design - Example: Blue Ridge Parkway (NC/VA)
 - ◆ Instead of traditional highway widening, the National Park Service worked with transportation planners to use narrower lane expansions, low-profile guardrails, and landscape buffers that preserved the parkway's visual experience.
 - ◆ Curves and vistas were maintained, and any road modifications respected the natural topography and vegetation.
2. Traffic Calming and Reduced Speeds - Example: Historic Columbia River Highway Scenic Byway (OR)
 - ◆ Installed strategic pull-offs and viewpoints to reduce road distractions.
 - ◆ Used narrow lanes, interpretive signage, and pavement treatments that encourage slower driving, helping visitors take in the views without causing congestion.
3. Shuttle Systems and Alternate Modes of Transport - Example: Zion Canyon Scenic Drive (UT)
 - ◆ Faced with severe congestion, Zion National Park replaced car access during peak season with a mandatory shuttle system.
 - ◆ Visitors now park outside the canyon and enjoy the byway from clean-energy shuttles that stop at key points of interest—preserving peace and minimizing environmental impact.





4. Improved Parking and Visitor Management - Example: Going-to-the-Sun Road (MT) – Glacier National Park
 - ◆ Developed a timed-entry reservation system and enhanced parking areas off the main road to manage peak visitation without widening the road.
 - ◆ Parking areas were designed with natural materials to blend into the landscape.
5. Visitor Education and Trip Planning Tools - Example: San Juan Skyway (CO)
 - ◆ CDOT and local partners use informational kiosks, brochures, and websites to promote off-peak travel and less-visited stops, spreading out traffic and reducing bottlenecks.





Examples of Traffic Calming Techniques

Optical Speed Bars (California, Minnesota, Texas)

Example: painted lines on the pavement that get closer together as drivers approach a curve or intersection, creating a visual illusion of increasing speed, prompting deceleration.

Dynamic Speed Feedback Signs (Colorado, Florida, Oregon)

Example: radar-equipped signs that display a driver's speed in real time and flash warnings when they exceed the limit.

Chicanes and Road Diets (California, New York, Washington)

Example: road realignments and narrowing techniques that make long straightaways feel less open, reducing speed without requiring additional signage.

Textured Pavement and Colored Road Surfaces (Arizona, Pennsylvania, South Carolina)

Example: brick, cobblestone, or stamped asphalt in key areas like curves, pedestrian crossings, or village centers, providing a visual and tactile signal to slow down.

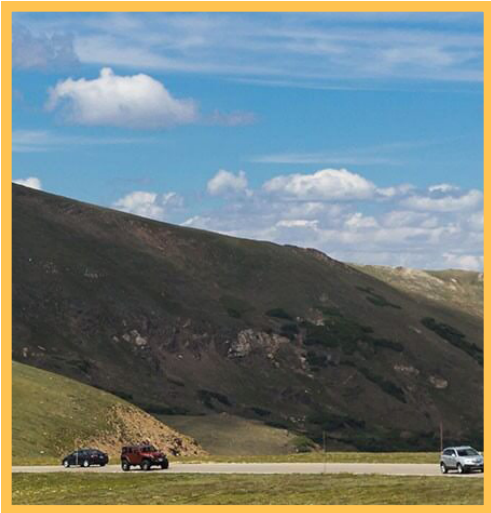
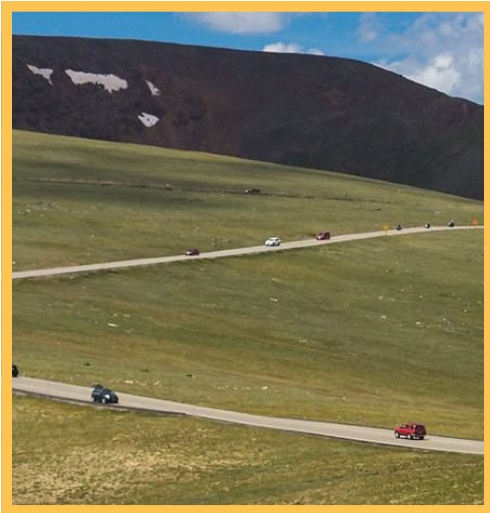
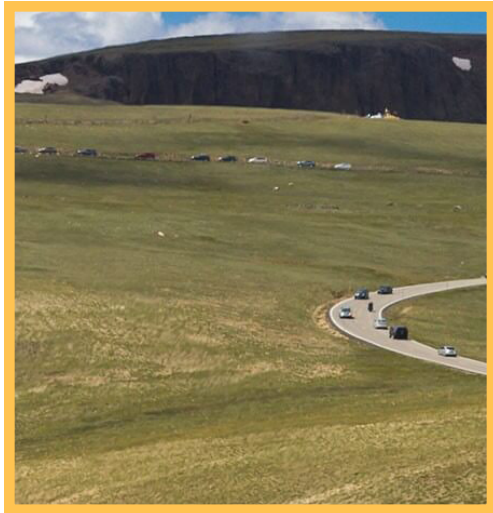
Gateway Treatments (Colorado, Maine, Vermont)

Example: narrowing roads, adding decorative entry features, or incorporating signage and landscaping at the entrance to a slower-speed area.

Scenic Pull-Offs and Slow-Traffic Bays (Arizona's Desert View Drive, Colorado's San Juan Skyway, Virginia's Blue Ridge Parkway)

Example: dedicated areas for slower-moving vehicles to pull over safely without affecting the main flow of traffic.





Byway Compatible Enhancements

Make context-sensitive improvements to byways that protect their unique intrinsic qualities while enhancing safety, accessibility, and function. Carefully integrate these enhancements—such as subtle roadway adjustments, interpretive signage, native landscaping, and other thoughtful design elements—into their surroundings. This preserves the distinctive character of the Colorado Byway experience. The following highlights the most anticipated enhancements. While not exhaustive or applicable to every project, it provides a general overview of many key improvements.

Alignment and Geometry

A byway's alignment should not slice through the land, but rather move in harmony with it. The road itself becomes an integral part of the landscape when its design rises and falls with the natural topography. This approach offers access to nature while celebrating it, transforming the roadway into a feature that invites a journey of humility and wonder, thereby preserving the byway's unique character.

Many scenic roads derive their unique character from their historical origins. Roads that meander along riverbanks, wind through narrow canyons, or trace the edges of mountains and mesas often began as footpaths or wagon trails. Over time, as travel demands grew and vehicles evolved, these routes were updated—but only as much as the rugged terrain allowed.


Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park offers a strong example of how road alignment can enhance a byway's identity. Rather than diverting around rock formations, the road cuts through them, bringing travelers closer to the rugged alpine terrain. This decision reflects a desire to immerse travelers in the raw, rugged character of the alpine landscape. The design reinforces the byway's dramatic mountain identity and creates a more memorable, immersive experience by making the road feel like a natural extension of the landscape.

Balancing Preservation with Modern Demands

When roads are modified to accommodate increased traffic—such as through realignment or the expansion of passing lanes—it is essential to carefully evaluate how these changes will impact the byway's character. While safety is a critical concern, any realignment or expansion must be thoughtfully balanced with preserving the historic and scenic qualities that define the byway experience. The natural topographic features of the roadway, including its alignment and geometry, should be preserved as much as possible.

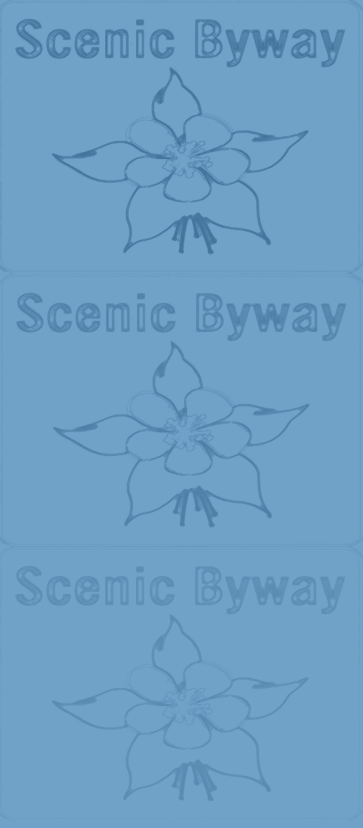
As a Colorado Byway's popularity grows, increased traffic can present new challenges. While widening the road may improve traffic flow and safety, it can also compromise the scenic charm and intimate driving experience that define the byway. To avoid this, engineers and landscape architects must work collaboratively to assess the scope of necessary improvements, identify the most effective locations for intervention, and thoughtfully integrate these changes to preserve the byway's visual and experiential appeal.

Bringing non-conforming byways into compliance with applicable standards requires the active involvement of byway managers and stakeholders in the transportation planning process. This collaboration ensures any changes align with the byway's unique character and a consistent user experience. While maintenance crews may use on-hand inventory for immediate emergency repairs, they must update these temporary fixes to meet full compliance standards as soon as feasible.



By focusing on consistency in design, material selection, and natural integration, the rebuilt section will seamlessly extend the existing roadway, preserving both safety and the byway's unique character.





Strategies for Seamless Integration

To ensure seamless integration of rebuilt sections with existing areas, the following design strategies can be employed:

- ◆ **Consistent Road Geometry:** Maintain similar curves, turning radii, road widths, and grade changes to match existing sections. Abrupt changes in alignment can create confusion for drivers and lead to unsafe behaviors. For example, a new section should avoid introducing sharp, sudden curves if the rest of the byway is characterized by gentle, meandering turns.
- ◆ **Matching Cross-Sections:** Replicate the cross-section of the existing road—including lane widths, shoulders, and surface materials—to maintain consistent driver expectations regarding safe travel speeds. For instance, if the historic portion of a byway has narrow lanes and gravel shoulders, a new segment should match that design rather than introducing wide, paved shoulders that might encourage higher speeds.
- ◆ **Preserving Natural Features:** Retain existing vegetation and avoid major alterations to the land’s natural contours. New landscaping should blend with existing growth, and the road should integrate naturally into the topography. An example of this is protecting key vistas along the Dinosaur Diamond Byway that highlight the area’s prehistoric significance.
- ◆ **Consistent Roadway Elements:** Use guardrails, barriers, signs, and lighting that match the style and material of existing sections to maintain visual continuity. For example, when deteriorating stone guardrails along the San Juan Skyway needed replacement, CDOT replicated the original stone appearance using durable, modern concrete materials to maintain both safety and the byway’s historic character. Furthermore, rustic mottled brown is the designated color for guardrails and posts on all Colorado Byways to ensure they blend with the landscape.
- ◆ **Seamless Transitions:** Design gradual transitions at junctions, curves, and intersections where old and new sections meet. For example, this can be achieved by using optical speed bars—painted lines on the pavement that get closer together—to create a visual illusion that encourages drivers to decelerate as they approach a curve or intersection.
- ◆ **Context-Sensitive Design:** Incorporate elements that reflect the byway’s cultural, historic, or aesthetic identity. A specific example is on the Pawnee Pioneer Trails Byway, where a simple rest area with weathered wood fencing and native prairie grass landscaping reflects the region’s homesteading past while preserving views of the grasslands.
- ◆ **Traffic Calming Measures:** Where appropriate, use techniques like narrowing lanes or leveraging natural features to encourage slower speeds and create visual continuity. An example of this is using textured pavement, such as brick or stamped asphalt, in key areas like village centers or pedestrian crossings to provide a visual and tactile signal for drivers to slow down.
- ◆ **Maintaining Visual Continuity:** Use consistent materials for paving, shoulders, and sidewalks to match the existing road. If the existing section includes scenic pull-offs or resting areas, these should be replicated in the new section to ensure they align with the overall scenic experience of the byway.
- ◆ **Safety for All Users:** Ensure new sections maintain or enhance safe facilities for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists. This can be accomplished by designing pedestrian crossings at viewpoints with clear sight lines and appropriate signage or by physically separating bicycle paths from vehicular traffic with landscaped buffer zones or berms.





Bridges and Tunnels

If a bridge or tunnel is considered a character-defining feature of a Colorado Byway, every effort should be made to preserve it through regular maintenance and thoughtful repair. These structures often hold historical, architectural, or cultural value that contributes to the overall identity of the route.

Greenways and trails are often an essential part of the byway experience, offering travelers a more personal, immersive connection to the surrounding landscape. When designing features such as bridge abutments along these routes, it is important that structures visually blend with the natural environment—especially in terms of nearby rock formations, soil colors, and vegetation. Thoughtful detailing and material choices can greatly enhance the pedestrian experience and maintain the authenticity of the setting.

Using materials and finishes that reflect the local environment—such as natural stone, earth tones, or textured surfaces—helps preserve the scenic character of the corridor. A cost-effective strategy is the use of form-liners or shotcrete to replicate the look and feel of stone or other natural materials. This approach provides visual harmony without the high cost and complexity of custom masonry work.

In areas where elevation changes or constrained corridors are a concern, designers should consider using retaining walls to accommodate trails instead of relying solely on concrete slope embankments. Retaining walls can reduce the footprint of construction, minimize grading, and allow trails to more closely follow the terrain, all while preserving nearby vegetation and scenic views. When designed with care and contextual sensitivity, these solutions contribute to a cohesive, accessible, and visually appealing trail network within the byway corridor.

When a bridge or tunnel needs to be replaced, compatibility with the byway’s character can be maintained by reconstructing the structure in-kind—replicating the original design—or by incorporating similar architectural details and materials that reflect the look and feel of the original structure.



Fences, Walls, Noise Walls, Guardrails

Fences and walls significantly contribute to the character of byways, and in some regions, they are defining landscape elements, such as the rustic split-rail fences common along Colorado’s ranchlands and mountain corridors. These traditional wooden fences not only reflect the state’s agricultural and western heritage but also blend naturally with the surrounding landscape, reinforcing the scenic and cultural identity of the byway. With a wide variety of styles and materials available, the design of these barriers should carefully consider both their functional purpose and their visual impact on the environment. To ensure harmony with the landscape, designs should respond to the local context and reflect the overall theme of the byway. This can be achieved by selecting materials and forms that are characteristic of the region or that complement nearby structures and natural features.

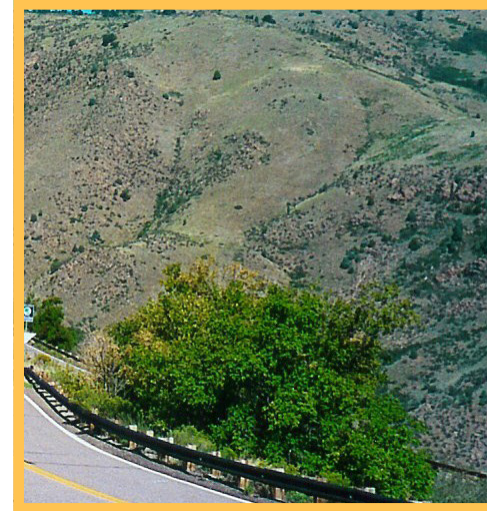
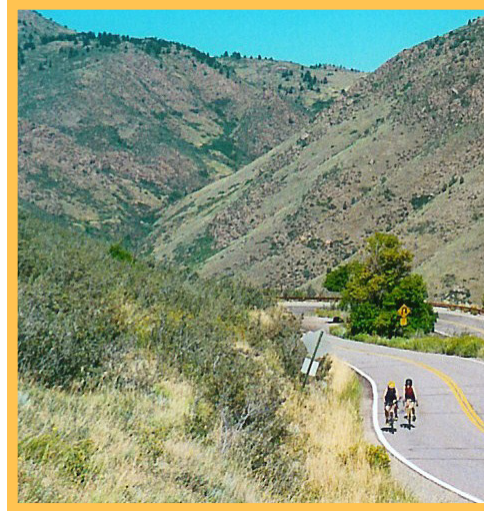
Human scale is particularly important in areas where people will be in proximity. Large or intrusive barriers can dominate the view and diminish the experience. Careful attention to design elements such as height, panel width, and post dimensions helps maintain a visually balanced and welcoming appearance. For retaining walls, this means that tall, monolithic walls next to trails can feel less comforting and more imposing than stepped walls, which break up the height and integrate more naturally with the terrain. While poorly designed fences and walls can interrupt the visual continuity of a byway, those that are thoughtfully planned and constructed can enrich the landscape, frame key views, and add lasting interest along the route.



Regional Materials

- ☞ Natural Stone (Granite, Sandstone, Moss Rock): Common in retaining walls and ranch-style fences.
- ☞ Rustic Timber or Split Rail Wood Fencing: Reflects the area’s ranching and mining heritage.
- ☞ Wrought Iron or Weathered Steel: Works well in high-altitude or arid environments where durability and aesthetics matter.
- ☞ Log or Post-and-Rail Fencing: Blends with the forested landscape and open grasslands.





To better complement natural landscapes or reflect architectural themes, engineers have developed and tested several aesthetically pleasing alternatives to traditional guardrails. For instance, rustic, mottled brown steel guardrails offer a muted appearance that blends more seamlessly into the environment than highly reflective galvanized steel. Other effective options include wood rails with steel backing for added strength, stone walls with reinforced concrete cores, precast guardrails that mimic natural stone, and glue-laminated wood guardrails. Each of these alternatives has undergone crash-testing and received approval from the FHWA, ensuring they meet safety standards while enhancing visual harmony along scenic roadways.

When noise walls are needed along byways to reduce traffic noise, it's important that they do more than just block sound—they should also fit in with the beauty and character of the landscape. Unlike typical highways, byways are all about the journey and the views, so bulky, generic walls can feel out of place. Using materials like natural stone, or earth-toned concrete can help these structures blend into their surroundings. Adding texture, patterns, or even climbing plants can soften their look and make them feel like part of the landscape instead of something imposed on it. In places with historic or cultural significance, the design should reflect local styles or traditional building methods. When done thoughtfully, sound walls can do their job while still respecting the scenic and cultural value of the byway.

Gateways

Gateways are crucial for placemaking as they clearly mark entry, exit, or transition points along a route. Many byways feature multiple gateways, often signaling the entrance to a town or historic district. These gateways help forge a unique identity for an area and convey a sense of pride by indicating a significant change within a corridor.

Gateway Types and Design Elements

A gateway can be a specific structure or a broader zone that incorporates various design elements. You can create gateways using a combination of:

- ◆ Planting
- ◆ Lighting
- ◆ Signs
- ◆ Art
- ◆ Structures

Gateways do not always demand grand gestures; they can also be subtle cues that effectively mark a shift in the journey.

Where to Apply Gateways

You can strategically apply gateways at several key locations, including entry points to the designated scenic corridor, entrances to towns or villages, or entries to larger sites of special significance.



Scenic Byway

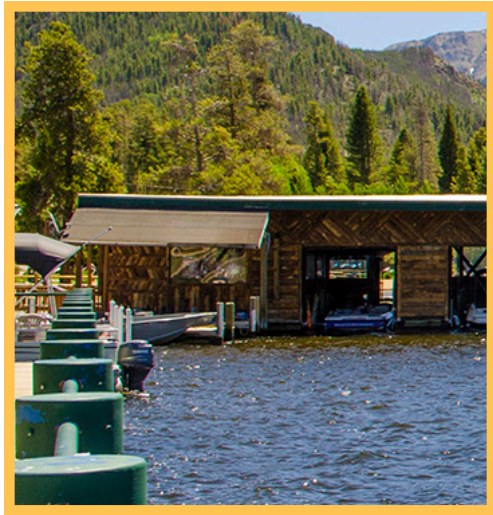


Scenic Byway



Scenic Byway





Context and Design Consistency

Every gateway is unique and requires consideration of its specific surroundings. While each gateway should possess its own character, it must also reinforce the overall identity of the byway. You can achieve this by:

- ◆ Using regionally characteristic materials.
- ◆ Employing variations on a particular form.
- ◆ Establishing rhythms and spacing of elements within a zone.
- ◆ Selecting specific plant types.

Creating Effective Gateways

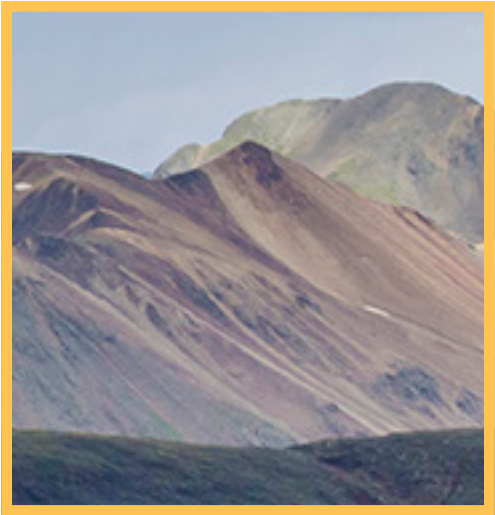
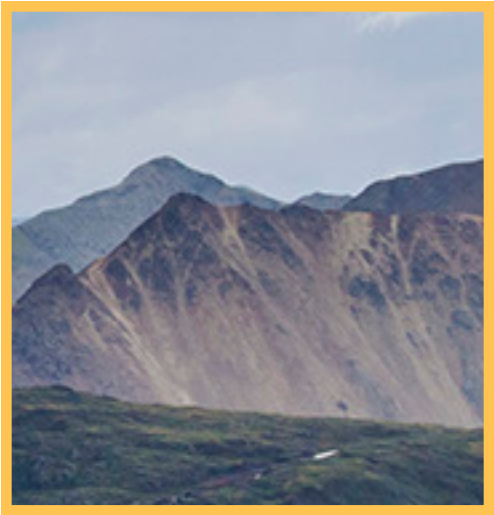
- ◆ “Event” Design: Design gateways as an “event” or a specific point of passage.
- ◆ Existing Structures: Highway overpasses or bridges can serve as gateway structures. Enhance these structures so people perceive them primarily as gateways, rather than solely as highway infrastructure.
- ◆ New Structures: When building specific gateway structures, especially at town entrances, ensure they don’t dominate the environment or lose their meaning as gateways. For the gateway concept to be effective, the landscape must visibly change from one side to the other.
- ◆ Public Art: Incorporate public art pieces, typically sculptural, as gateway markers. Scale and placement are critical for their effectiveness. Natural or built features can offer important contextual conditions for siting art. Avoid placing art too far from the roadway, where people might not perceive it as a gateway.
- ◆ Symbolism: Art installations can strongly express a place’s announcement, offer seriousness or fun, and symbolize important aspects of the corridor.
- ◆ Traffic Circles: At town entries, a change in road condition that includes a traffic circle with a central art piece can serve as a notable gateway.
- ◆ Vegetation: Use different types of vegetation, suitable for the landscape and corridor, in varying patterns to create diverse gateway conditions.



Grading and Drainage

Grading and drainage should be designed in a way that preserves and enhances the existing character of the byway. When changes require modifications to adjacent slopes, biological and natural methods should be prioritized over structural and man-made methods.

Highly engineered and constructed slopes—those characterized by steep angles, uniform geometry, or the use of artificial materials that contrast with the natural terrain—should be avoided. Instead, cut and fill slopes should be designed to look natural and integrated into the surrounding landscape. Techniques such as slope rounding, contour blending, and context-sensitive grading should be used to achieve



a more natural appearance. These naturalized slopes not only enhance visual quality and the sense of place, but they also provide better erosion control by allowing for vegetation establishment and reducing surface runoff. Implementing this approach may require coordination with adjacent landowners or acquiring more right-of-way than usual. However, the result is often a more stable, aesthetically pleasing, and environmentally beneficial slope—potentially at a lower overall cost.

Slope rounding and warping are essential techniques for designing byways, aimed at enhancing both aesthetics and safety. Slope rounding involves softening the sharp edges of cut and fill slopes by creating a more natural, curved transition between the roadway and the surrounding terrain. This not only improves visual harmony with the landscape but also reduces erosion and facilitates vegetation growth. Warping, on the other hand, refers to gradually changing the cross slope or elevations of the roadway to match natural contours or transition smoothly through curves and grade changes. Together, these methods of context-sensitive grading practices help preserve the scenic quality of byways while providing a comfortable and visually pleasing driving experience.

Berms can be used to screen undesirable views or equipment from the traveler’s sight. Berms should be planted with native plants, creating a natural-looking barrier that both screens and enhances the visual appeal of the corridor.

Water quality and stormwater facilities should be designed to blend seamlessly with the natural environment. An example of this concept: a stormwater pond designed with natural contours, native plantings and a meandering shape to resemble a natural wetland. The pond uses gently sloped banks that filters runoff, supports wildlife, and visually integrates into the surrounding landscape. This approach not only manages water but also enhances the ecological and aesthetic value of the byway area.

Landscape

Landscaping along Colorado Byways should be held to a higher standard than other roadways because these routes serve as gateways to the natural and cultural treasures of a region. Colorado Byways are often designated for their exceptional views, historical landmarks, and unique landscapes, making the aesthetic quality of their surroundings essential to the overall experience of travelers. High-quality landscaping not only enhances the visual appeal but also helps preserve and protect the natural environment, contributing to the preservation of wildlife habitats, reducing erosion, and managing stormwater runoff. By elevating landscaping standards along byways, we ensure that these routes offer a memorable, immersive experience that reflects the value of the area’s natural and cultural resources. Moreover, well-designed landscapes can improve safety by reducing visual clutter, calming traffic, and promoting slower driving speeds, further enhancing the enjoyment and sustainability of the byway.

Conservation

Research shows that travelers are more likely to choose routes with distinctive natural scenery.

Conserving native and traditional plant materials, along with existing tree cover, enhances the scenic quality of byways and supports the meaningful visitor experience envisioned in their designation.

Screening and Buffers

Strategic use of evergreen buffers can effectively reduce noise pollution and provide visual screening in a variety of landscapes.





Incorporating landscape materials as screening devices supports project enhancement goals while minimizing the visual and auditory impacts of adjacent development or infrastructure. (For maintenance guidelines, please refer to the Maintenance and Management Guidelines section.)

Contributing Resource

Highlighting the value of preserving historic landscapes, heritage tourism contributed approximately \$10.5 billion to Colorado’s economy in 2021, as reported by History Colorado.

In historic areas, elements such as street trees, stone walls, and gardens often reflect the cultural identity of a site and should be preserved as valuable contributing resources.

Traffic Calming

Studies have shown that the presence of street trees can reduce vehicle speeds by creating a visual narrowing effect on roadways.

Well-designed landscape features, including street trees, create a sense of enclosure that naturally encourages drivers to reduce speed, improving safety for all users.

Erosion Control

Native plants reduce soil erosion by up to 90% compared to bare ground, according to scientific studies.

Regionally native plant materials are highly effective at stabilizing slopes and controlling erosion.

Lighting

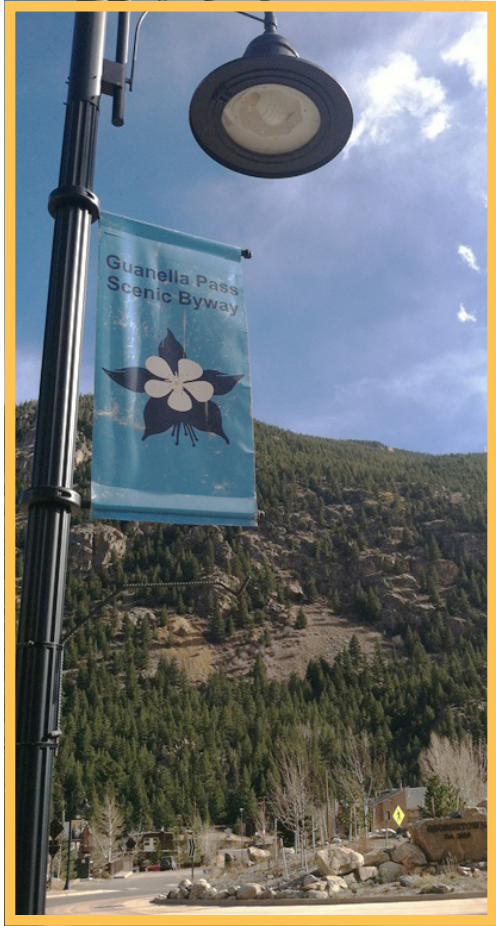
Street lighting installed along Colorado Byways must be meticulously designed to minimize glare and significantly reduce light pollution, thereby preserving the intrinsic beauty of these scenic corridors. This includes adhering to dark-sky principles, especially since some byways or the towns they dissect are dark-sky certified. For comprehensive guidelines and resources on minimizing light pollution, refer to darksky.org (the International Dark-Sky Association).

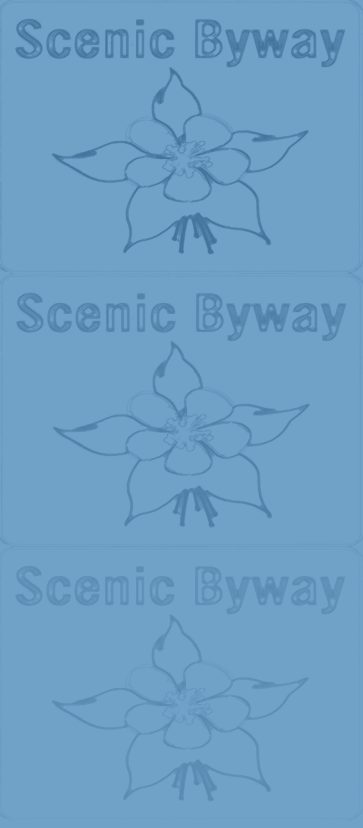
All light standards and fixtures shall be fully compatible with the visual character *and context of the area they serve*. Fixtures should also be appropriately scaled to effectively meet project-specific objectives, whether illuminating pedestrian pathways, vehicular traffic, or mixed-use environments.

Conditions for Installation of Street Lighting

Street lighting on Colorado Byways should only be considered and may be required under the following specific circumstances:

- ◆ Major Access Points and Intersections: To enhance safety and navigation at critical entry points or junctions along the byway.
- ◆ Documented Security Concerns: In areas where legitimate and documented security issues necessitate increased illumination for public safety.
- ◆ Roadway Geometry Challenges: Where the physical design of the roadway, such as poor vertical or horizontal alignment, presents





significant visibility challenges to drivers or pedestrians.

- ◆ **Traffic Safety Justification:** In locations with a history of traffic accidents or consistently high traffic volumes that clearly justify the need for enhanced lighting to improve safety.

Requirements for New and Replacement Street Lighting Installations

All new and replacement street lighting installations along Colorado Byways must adhere to the following stringent requirements:

- ◆ **Appropriate Scale and Context-Sensitivity:** Lighting infrastructure must be appropriately scaled to its surroundings and designed to be context-sensitive, blending harmoniously with the byway’s natural and built environment.
- ◆ **Functional and Aesthetic Alignment:** Designs must clearly reflect and achieve both the functional safety requirements and the aesthetic goals of the specific project, contributing positively to the overall visual experience.
- ◆ **Preservation of Scenic Quality:** Installations must be carefully planned to avoid visual clutter and, critically, to maintain and enhance the scenic quality of the byway corridor, ensuring that the lighting does not detract from the natural or cultural landscapes.

Light Pollution Control

To safeguard the visual quality and environmental health of byways, all lighting installations must adhere to the following principles for light pollution control:

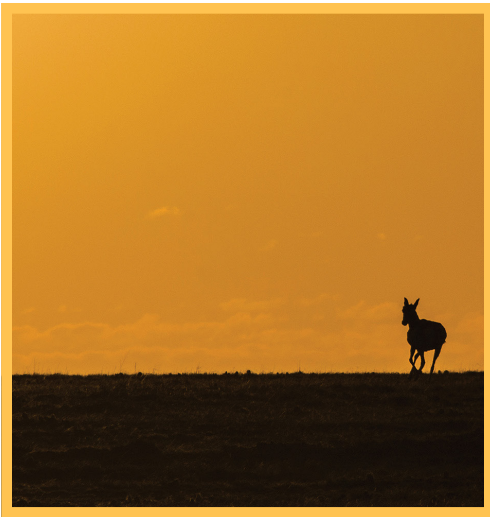
- ◆ **Full Cut-Off Luminaires:** All luminaires shall be of the full cut-off type, or utilize other dark-sky compliant technologies, to ensure that no light is emitted above the horizontal plane. This helps preserve the natural night sky.
- ◆ **Targeted Illumination:** Lighting fixtures must be precisely aimed downward. This minimizes “skyglow” (the brightening of the night sky) and prevents “light trespass” (unwanted light spilling onto adjacent properties or natural areas).
- ◆ **Adherence to Dark-Sky Standards:** Lighting designs shall fully conform to all applicable dark-sky standards and certifications, particularly in areas where such guidelines are already established. Compliance with relevant local lighting ordinances is also mandatory.

Lighting for Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Stations

When EV charging stations are integrated into byway corridors, their lighting design and overall integration must prioritize safety, functionality, and the preservation of the byway’s visual and environmental integrity.

- ◆ **Minimal and Targeted Illumination:** Lighting shall be limited to the absolute minimum necessary to ensure safety and functionality for users. Fixtures must employ full cut-off optics and be precisely positioned to prevent any light spill beyond the immediate charging area.
- ◆ **Discouragement of Digital Signage:** To maintain the aesthetic and reduce visual clutter within byway corridors, the use of bright or constantly illuminated digital signage associated with EV charging stations is strongly discouraged and, where possible, should be banned.
- ◆ **Energy Efficiency and Light Reduction:** The incorporation of motion sensors or dimming controls is highly encouraged. These technologies can significantly reduce light levels when charging stations are not in use, further minimizing light pollution and conserving energy.





- ◆ Preservation of Nighttime Character: Design solutions must prioritize the preservation of the nighttime character of the byway and protect natural viewsheds from light trespass and skyglow.
- ◆ Context-Sensitive Design and Mitigation: EV charging station projects should implement context-sensitive solutions that respect local architectural styles and encourage the use of native plants for landscaping. Additionally, visual impact mitigation techniques should be employed to seamlessly blend the stations into the surrounding environment.
- ◆ Promotion of Non-Intrusive Technologies: Local agency planners and developers along the byway should actively explore and encourage the use of passive charging station options and the development and installation of non-intrusive charging technologies as they become available. This foresight ensures future installations are even less impactful on the byway's natural and scenic qualities.

Maintenance and Management Guidelines

Ensuring ease of maintenance should be a key consideration for any project. Byways require a specific level of upkeep to support safe public travel for various vehicles, including automobiles, motorcycles, bicycles, and agriculture-related equipment, all while preserving the corridor's unique character.

The primary goal of maintenance practices on state highways, including byways, is to maintain clear areas and sight distances, minimizing roadway and utility easement hazards. Additionally, byway maintenance programs can enhance the roadway's aesthetic appeal and surrounding environment

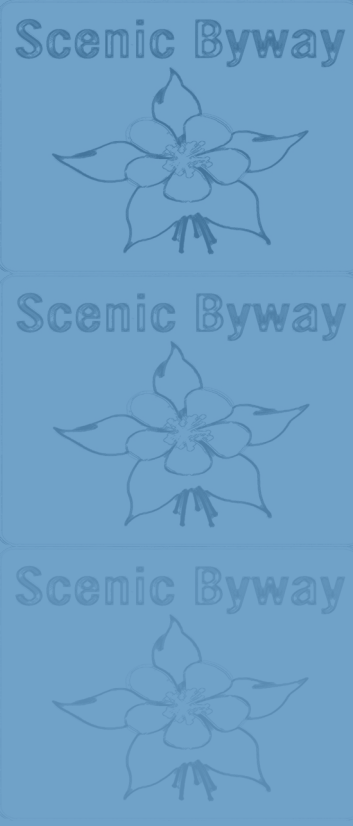
Recommended strategies include:

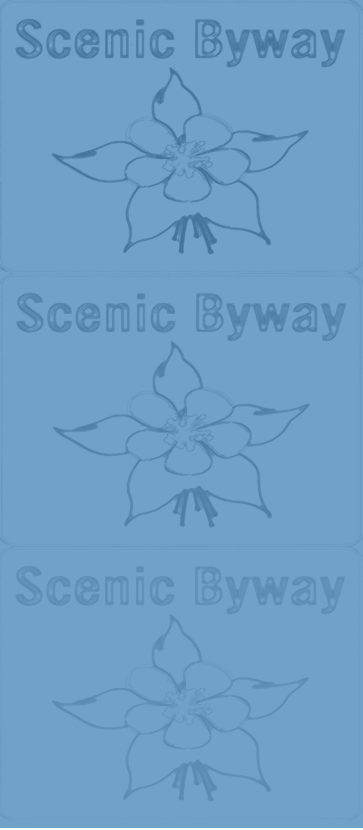
Landscaping and Vegetation Management

- ◆ Adjust mowing schedules to allow roadside wildflowers to bloom longer, which supports local pollinators and enhances the byway's visual appeal.
- ◆ Develop thorough landscape design plans or use native seed mixes to promote natural revegetation. This practice reduces the need for frequent mowing and fosters a more sustainable and biodiverse roadside.
- ◆ Selectively remove and prune trees using sound arboricultural practices to preserve scenic vistas and maintain the roadway's character. Consult with the CDOT Colorado Byways Program Manager to determine when tree cutting is necessary.

Infrastructure and Beautification

- ◆ When repairing bridges or tunnels, use methods that carefully preserve the structure's scenic and historic integrity.
- ◆ Rustic mottled brown is the designated color for all Colorado Byways guardrails, signposts, and light posts. This color helps these infrastructure elements blend harmoniously with the natural and cultural landscape of the byways. This standard must be followed unless specific Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards require an alternative color or a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) specifies different materials and colors.
- ◆ When replacing guardrails, use materials specifically designated for Colorado Byways to maintain a consistent and cohesive appearance. (Note: During emergency repairs or maintenance, using non-designated byway materials is acceptable, provided these





materials are replaced with designated byway materials as soon as circumstances allow).

- ◆ Implement ongoing highway beautification programs that include strategic plantings and regular litter removal to improve the travel experience.

Community Involvement

Stakeholders should encourage local citizens and organizations to help maintain planting areas, such as community entrances, medians, and roadside pull-offs. This participation cultivates local pride and a sense of shared responsibility for the byway.

For example, a local “Friends of the Byway” volunteer group could partner with one of the stakeholders to adopt a scenic overlook. The group could take responsibility for planting native, drought-tolerant flowers in designated beds, watering them during dry spells, and organizing quarterly litter cleanup days along that stretch of the road.

Other Vehicle Types

Motorcycle Accommodation

Design considerations for Colorado Byways should account for the unique needs of motorcyclists to ensure safety, comfort, and accessibility. Pavement surfaces must be smooth, well-maintained, and free of debris, as uneven or slippery conditions pose greater risks to motorcycles. Shoulder areas should be stable, well-graded, and constructed with materials that provide adequate traction. Curves should be designed with appropriate radii and clear sight lines to support safe maneuvering. Signage warning of sharp turns, elevation changes, or gravel should be prominently placed and visible in all weather conditions. Where feasible, rest areas or scenic pull-offs should include designated spaces for motorcycles, offering firm, level surfaces for parking. Additionally, riders and planners can reference road ratings and other safety resources provided by the Colorado State Patrol’s Motorcycle Operator Safety Training (MOST) program, available at <https://csp.colorado.gov/community-outreach/most-motorcycle-safety-training/rider-resources>.

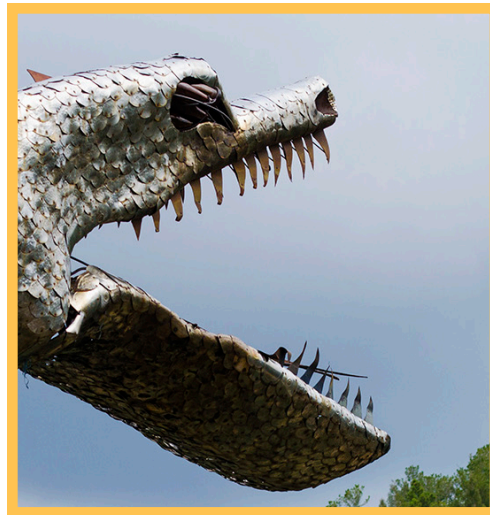
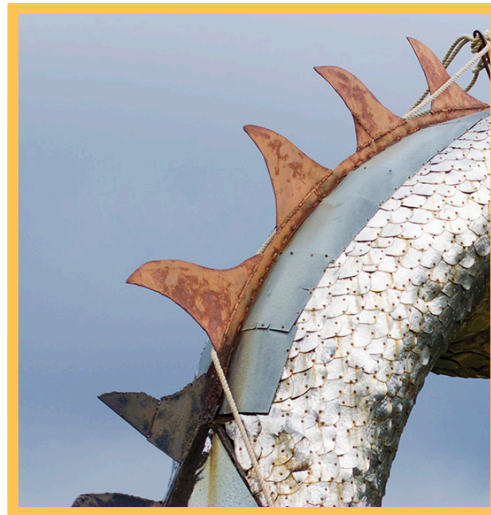
Recreational Vehicle (RV) Accommodation

Colorado Byway design should consider the operational needs of RVs, which are typically longer, taller, and have wider turning radii than standard passenger vehicles. Roadway geometry, including curve radii, lane widths, and vertical clearances, should be evaluated to ensure safe and comfortable passage for RVs. Pull-outs, scenic overlooks, and rest areas should include extended parking spaces with adequate turning space to accommodate RV length and trailer combinations. Signage should clearly indicate height restrictions, steep grades, or limited turnarounds ahead of time. Facilities such as dump stations or potable water access, while not required, may enhance the RV traveler experience and support longer stays along the byway.

Bicycle Accommodation

Byways should be designed to safely and comfortably accommodate bicyclists, recognizing their presence as both recreational users and alternative transportation modes. Where feasible, dedicated bicycle lanes or wide paved shoulders should be provided to offer separation from vehicular traffic. Surface conditions must be smooth and well-maintained, free from potholes, debris, or drainage grates that may pose hazards to cyclists. Clear, consistent signage should alert motorists to the presence of bicyclists and identify shared roadway conditions. In





areas with scenic pull-offs or rest stops, bicycle parking or racks should be provided. Route planning should also consider grade changes and offer amenities such as water stations or repair areas where appropriate to support longer-distance cycling.

Public Art

Public art significantly enhances the sense of place and community pride along scenic byways. To effectively integrate art, scenic byway CMP should include a comprehensive public art plan.

Public Art Plan Requirements

A strong public art plan must define acceptable and unacceptable. It should also adhere to the CDOT Guidelines for Integrating Artwork into CDOT Facilities, local agency guidelines, and establish a straightforward review process for all art proposals within the scenic byway corridor. In some instances, the local agency might already have a public art plan, guidelines, and committee in place.

Key Considerations for Public and Roadway Art

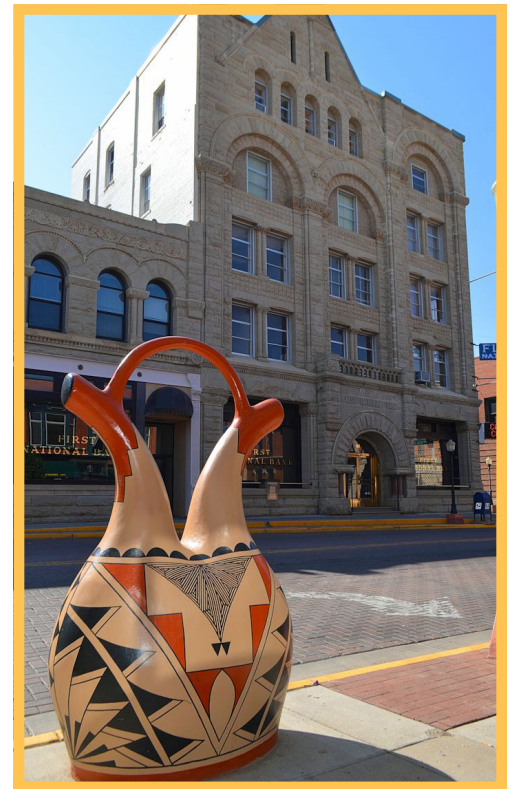
When evaluating proposed public art, consider the following:

- ◆ **Community Contribution:** Evaluate how the art and/or artist contributes to the unique character of the community.
- ◆ **Impact Assessment:** Assess the proposed art's potential social, cultural, and environmental impacts.
- ◆ **Legal Compliance:** Confirm the art complies with all applicable laws.
- ◆ **Safety and Security:** Public art must not negatively impact safety. It must also not create an attractive nuisance, which might entice unauthorized or dangerous interaction.
- ◆ **Scale and Context:** Ensure the art is compatible with the surrounding landscape and land use.
- ◆ **Subject Matter:** Assess the appropriateness of the art's theme.
- ◆ **Traffic Distraction:** Proposed art must not distract motorists. Ensure the art is appropriate for the speed and angle at which drivers will view it.
- ◆ **Visibility:** Art visible from the main roadway must contribute to corridor continuity and enhance the view for motorists. Art visible to the community or on the neighborhood side of a structure allows for greater design flexibility than art viewed from the main road.
- ◆ This includes plans for ongoing upkeep, the projected lifespan of the artwork, and procedures for its eventual disposal or replacement once it reaches the end of its serviceable life.

Integrating Art into Infrastructure

Consider infrastructure elements as opportunities for artistic expression:

- ◆ **Thoughtful Design:** Design bridges, retaining and noise walls, and other infrastructure as works of art through meticulous design, detailing, and construction.





- ◆ **Local Materials:** Utilize local materials and construction techniques to differentiate byway engineering from standard designs enforcing the unique regional identity.
- ◆ **Surface Decoration:** Apply decorative elements (e.g., paint or tiles) to existing infrastructure surfaces, especially large, empty areas like overpasses, transforming them into canvases.
- ◆ **Intimate Settings:** Integrate artistic treatments into smaller, more intimate structures such as benches, seat walls, and railings.

Historic and Cultural Elements

The CMP should prioritize the preservation of existing artwork. Highlight the importance of safeguarding these cultural assets for future generations. As an example, if a structure featuring Civilian Conservation Corps or Mission 66 era artwork is scheduled for demolition, consider how that artwork can be seamlessly integrated into any new building or replacement.

The Art of Place

Recognize and preserve unique sites within inhabited areas, especially rural ones, that are deeply embedded in the local culture. These sites significantly contribute to the “art of the roadway.”

Freestanding Art

Freestanding sculptures can serve as effective identifying or orientation markers. For branding and tourism, consider installing oversized figurative sculptures—perhaps with a touch of humor—to draw visitors and give a place a unique identity. However, avoid placing too many sculptures along one byway; this ensures each artwork retains its distinct presence and impact.

Community Engagement

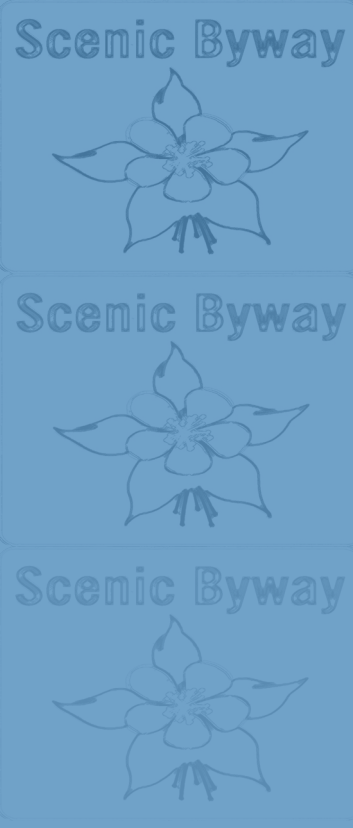
Leverage local artists for byway development and improvements. Their unique perspectives can beautifully interpret and enrich the landscape, infusing it with authentic local flair and strengthening both cultural values and community pride.

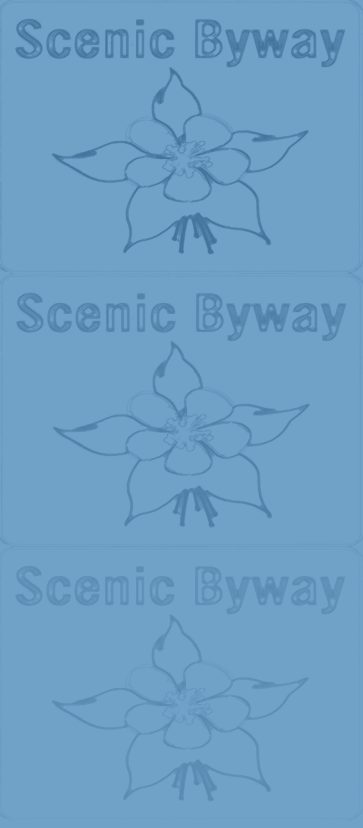
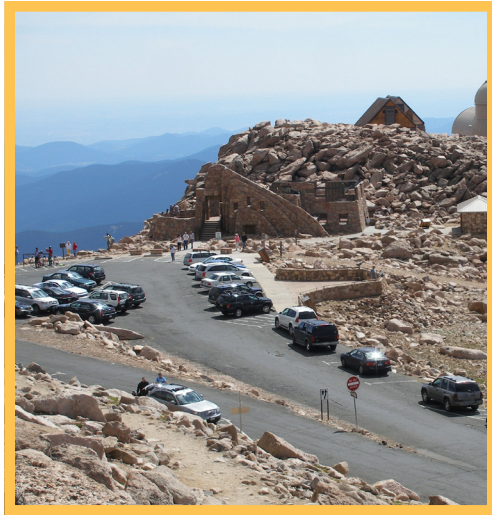
Permitting

To encourage community engagement and reduce barriers, permitting for public activities along byways—such as events, filming, commercial use, right-of-way (ROW) access, and advertising—should be minimized or eliminated. Excessive permits can lead to delays and hinder local business and tourism.

When permits are necessary, they should be streamlined, consolidated, or issued for longer terms to reduce administrative burdens. This approach may require increased community outreach and coordination by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). For low-impact activities, such as small-scale advertising, temporary events, or limited-duration use, permits may not be required, provided that safety and operational standards are met.

Throughout this process, the scenic quality of the byway—including its natural vistas, historic landmarks, and cultural features—must be prioritized and preserved. To support this balance, clear permitting guidelines and user-friendly online resources should be developed. These resources will simplify the application process and ensure that permitted activities do not compromise the visual integrity of the byway.





The Colorado Byways Program Manager (or their designee) and the Colorado State Patrol must review and approve all permits for activities, events, or developments along a byway. Additionally, CDOT has established its own permitting procedures for state highways.

Roadside Enhancements

Roadside enhancements along Colorado Byways enhance the traveler’s experience by offering opportunities for rest, reflection, learning, and deeper engagement with the landscape. When well-designed and appropriately scaled, these features can become significant destinations themselves, while also supporting the byway’s overall function, identity, and aesthetic appeal.

Sizing and Placement

Enhancements such as rest areas, overlooks, and interpretive sites on Colorado Byways must be designed and sized to align with both anticipated visitor use and the surrounding environment. It’s crucial to strike a balance: overbuilding can disrupt natural viewsheds and necessitate unnecessary land clearing, detracting from the byway’s inherent beauty. Conversely, underbuilding may lead to congestion, safety concerns, and a diminished visitor experience. When determining placement, factors like topography, visibility, accessibility, and proximity to points of interest should always be considered. This approach ensures ease of use for all visitors while minimizing visual or environmental impact on the scenic corridor.

Parking Areas

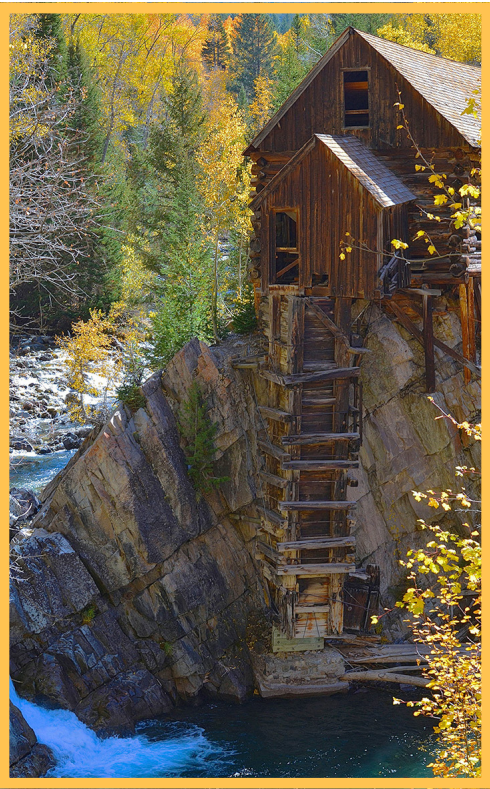
Adequate parking is essential to accommodate various types of vehicles, including cars, RVs, trailers, and motorcycles, preventing overflow onto roadways and maintaining safety. To determine the required amount of parking, it is important to conduct planning and analysis, especially considering peak seasons to understand the maximum demand. Planning for slightly more than the estimated peak demand can help prevent congestion and ensure a positive visitor experience.


When designing parking areas, pedestrian considerations are vital. This includes:

- ◆ Clear Walkways: Designating clear, well-marked pathways for pedestrians to safely access amenities from their parked vehicles.
- ◆ Crosswalks: Incorporating visible crosswalks where pedestrians might intersect with vehicle traffic.
- ◆ Lighting: Providing adequate lighting for safety during dawn, dusk, or nighttime hours.
- ◆ Accessibility: Ensuring compliance with accessibility standards for ramps and pathways to accommodate all visitors.

Scenic Features and Overlooks

Turnouts and overlooks are crucial for allowing travelers to safely pause and appreciate the natural beauty and historical context of the byway. These features should be carefully sited to take advantage of panoramic views, notable landmarks, or historically significant locations. Materials used should blend with the surroundings—such as stone walls, natural wood railings, or earth-toned paving—to preserve the sense of place and minimize visual intrusion.





Appropriately sized roadside enhancements along Colorado Byways enrich the traveler’s experience and preserve the byway’s identity and aesthetic appeal.





Amenities and Comfort

Enhancements can include various amenities that support comfort and accessibility for a wide range of visitors (For architectural guidelines, please refer to the Consistency and Livability, Architectural Theme, and Sustainable Design sections):

- ◆ Rest Stops: Basic facilities like restrooms, picnic areas, and trash receptacles should be incorporated discreetly and maintained regularly.
- ◆ Kiosks and Shelters: Structures for shade, information, or weather protection should reflect the byway's character, utilizing materials and designs that align with the local architectural style.
- ◆ Benches and Seating Areas: Placed at scenic or restful spots, these should be constructed with durable, low-maintenance materials and arranged to take advantage of natural views or gathering spaces.

Historical and Cultural Interpretation

Many Colorado Byways traverse areas of significant historical and cultural importance, including Indigenous homelands, early trade routes, and historic engineering landmarks, railroads, or agricultural sites. Roadside enhancements offer an opportunity to honor and share these stories. Interpretive signage, monuments, or interactive exhibits should be designed to respectfully convey the area's historical importance, incorporating input from local historians, Indigenous communities, and cultural experts when appropriate. Interpretive areas should provide context without overwhelming the visual landscape. Low-profile signage, audio narratives, and thoughtfully placed kiosks can enrich understanding while maintaining scenic integrity. These features should foster respect and curiosity, helping travelers connect to the layered human history embedded in the land.

Special Treatments

In certain areas, roadside enhancements may include special treatments that highlight the unique character of the byway. This might include:

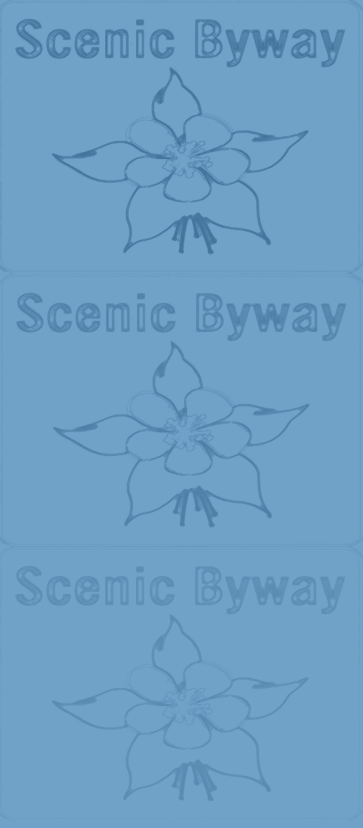
- ◆ Native landscaping to reinforce ecological integrity and reduce maintenance needs.
- ◆ Public art installations that reflect local heritage, folklore, or cultural themes.
- ◆ Context-sensitive lighting to improve visibility at night while minimizing light pollution to ensure dark skies.
- ◆ Custom fencing, bollards, or paving that adds to the corridor's identity without compromising function or safety.

By thoughtfully designing roadside enhancements with attention to scale, context, history, and user experience, byways can serve as living corridors that preserve and share the stories, cultures, and beauty of the regions they traverse—transforming each stop into a meaningful part of the journey.

Signage

Roadway signs on Colorado Byways, including guide signs, route markers, regulatory signs, and warning signs, must strictly adhere to the MUTCD to ensure uniformity, clear visibility, and safety for all road users. Transit-oriented directional signs are specifically permitted to guide





travelers to public transportation options. To preserve the visual integrity of these scenic corridors, all signs, including those for transit, should be limited in both quantity and size. Their primary function is to convey essential information clearly and efficiently at appropriate travel speeds, while minimizing their impact on the surrounding landscape.

Reducing the total number of signs is essential to eliminate visual clutter and ensure the natural scenery remains the central focus of the byway experience. This can be achieved by combining information and only placing signs where they’re absolutely necessary. For instance, an abundance of repetitive warning signs, like “Motorcyclist Use Extreme Caution for the Next 10 Miles” posted every mile, creates unnecessary visual noise and detracts from the scenic drive. This kind of information can often be communicated more efficiently and less intrusively.

Signs must be placed strategically for safety and guidance without obstructing scenic views. This balance enhances the traveler’s experience while preserving the byway’s unique character.

Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado, is an excellent example of effective and limited signage. Along this byway, signs are intentionally minimized and used only when necessary. Interpretive panels at overlooks and trailheads are made from weathered steel and set on native stone bases, blending seamlessly with the rugged, mountainous environment. Scenic viewpoints are preserved by positioning signs to the side or embedding them into low-profile walls, ensuring expansive views remain uninterrupted and the natural landscape remains the central focus.

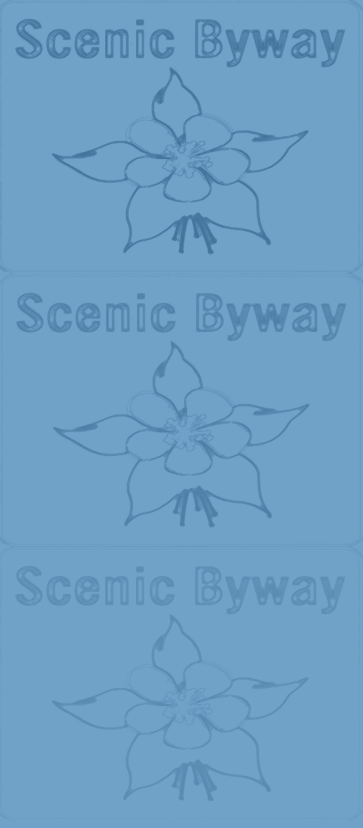
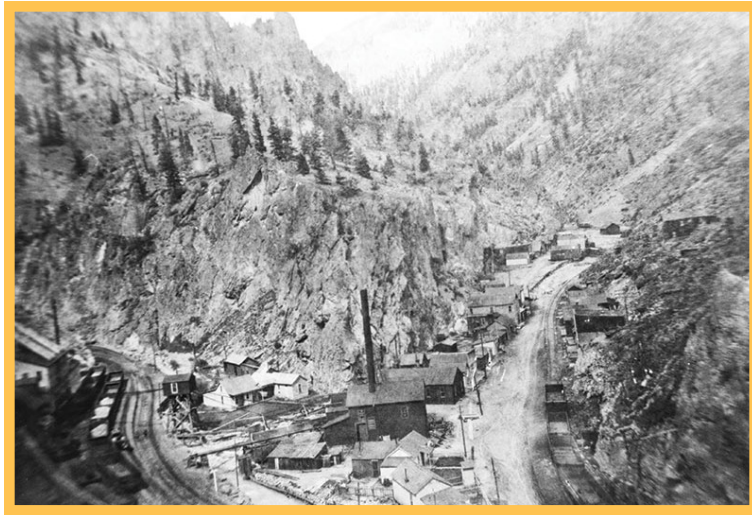
All officially designated Colorado Byways must feature specialized signage to distinguish them from standard roadways and highlight their unique character. These signs serve both practical and symbolic purposes, facilitating essential wayfinding while reinforcing each byway’s identity and statewide recognition. Each route is marked with the official Colorado Byway emblem and the specific name of the byway. Sign placement should be carefully planned to ensure visibility for travelers without detracting from natural views. Signs are typically installed at:

- ◆ Key entry points.
- ◆ Major intersections.
- ◆ Important decision-making locations.
- ◆ Regular intervals of approximately every 10 miles.

Thoughtful and consistent signage enhances traveler navigation and fosters a strong sense of place and pride in Colorado’s diverse landscapes and rich heritage. If a Colorado Byway carries additional designations—such as National Scenic Byway or All-American Road—supplemental signage must be installed to reflect those honors appropriately. For specific sign design and placement standards, refer to Part 2 of the current edition of the MUTCD and the Colorado Supplement to the MUTCD.

Billboards and off-premise advertising are generally incompatible with the scenic, cultural, and natural values that byways are meant to protect and showcase. To preserve the integrity and visual quality of the byway experience, new billboards should not be permitted, and existing advertising structures should not be renewed or expanded. Exceptions may apply only to billboards that are legally grandfathered under state or local regulations. Even in these cases, their presence should be carefully evaluated to ensure they do not detract from the traveler’s experience. Limiting commercial signage helps maintain the unspoiled views and character that make byways unique and memorable.





Trails and Paths

Trails and paths within byway corridors offer opportunities for recreational and non-motorized travel, enriching the visitor experience while safeguarding the area’s natural, cultural, and aesthetic attributes. Effective design prioritizes safety, accessibility, and a visual harmony that respects the corridor’s character.

Separation for Safety and Experience

The primary strategy for improving safety and the overall user experience on pedestrian and bicycle paths is to physically separate them from vehicular traffic. This separation minimizes potential conflicts between trail users and motorized vehicles while simultaneously creating a more peaceful environment along the corridor. Designers should incorporate buffer zones, such as landscaped strips, berms, retaining walls, or guardrails, to visually and physically delineate the trail from the adjacent roadway.

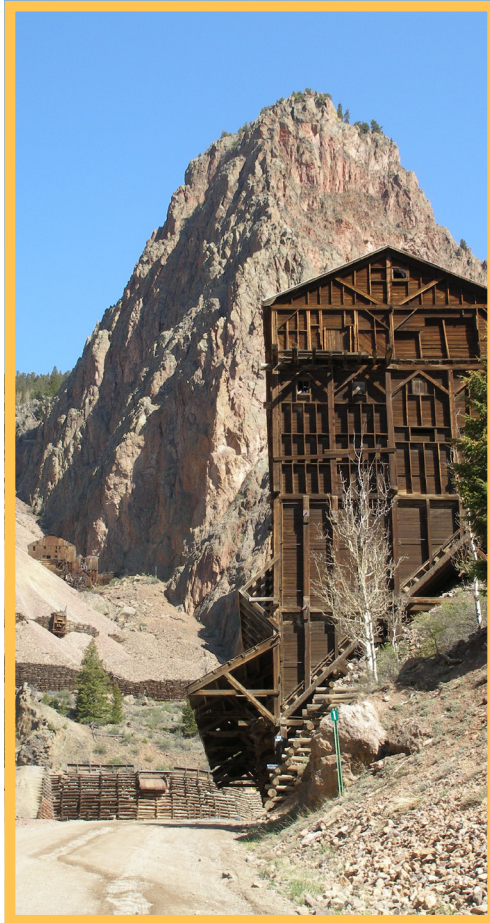
Handling Situations Where Separation Cannot Be Achieved

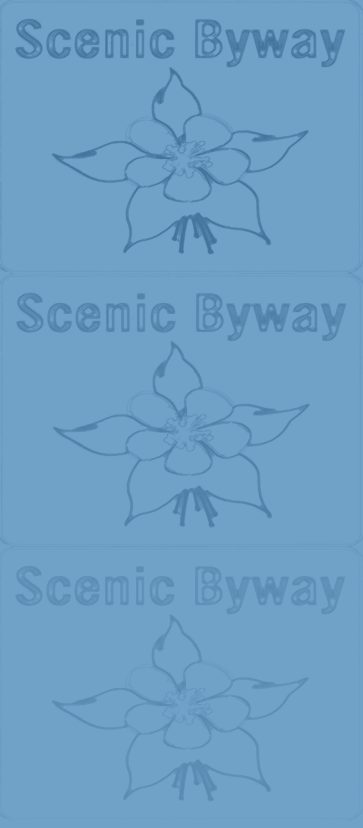
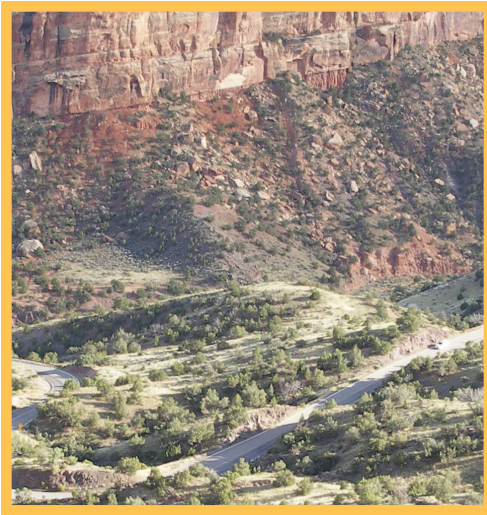
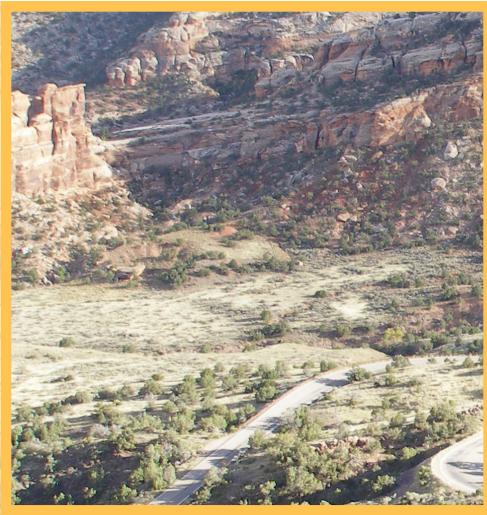
In instances where physical separation of trails from vehicular traffic is not feasible due to spatial constraints or existing infrastructure limitations, alternative strategies should be implemented to mitigate risk and maintain the trail’s aesthetic and functional quality:

- ◆ **Enhanced Signage and Markings:** Install clear, high-visibility signage to alert drivers to the presence of trail users. Pavement markings and painted crosswalks can provide additional guidance, emphasizing the shared nature of the space while delineating safe crossing points.
- ◆ **Shared-use lanes:** In low-traffic, low-speed areas, shared-lane markings and traffic-calming features (e.g., narrowed lanes, signage, or textured pavement) can alert drivers to the presence of trail users.
- ◆ **Traffic Calming Measures:** Where trails and vehicular traffic must coexist closely, consider incorporating traffic calming measures such as reduced speed limits, speed humps, or chicanes. These interventions help slow down vehicles and create a safer environment for trail users.
- ◆ **Use of Landscaping as a Soft Barrier:** If full physical separation isn’t possible, strategically placed landscaping elements such as shrubs, trees, or mounded earth can serve as natural buffers that mitigate potential conflicts. While not as effective as a dedicated physical barrier, these elements provide visual cues and a level of protection without significantly impacting the scenic value of the corridor.
- ◆ **Designated Crossing Points:** For sections where trails must intersect roadways, develop safe crossing points equipped with pedestrian refuge islands, flashing signals, or overpasses/underpasses where practical. This targeted approach focuses on critical risk areas while maintaining overall connectivity along the trail.
- ◆ **Community Education and Enforcement:** Engage local communities, law enforcement, and transportation agencies in developing educational campaigns about shared roadway etiquette and the importance of vigilance in mixed-use areas. Enhanced enforcement of speed and parking regulations near critical crossing areas can also help improve safety.

Aesthetic Integration

Trails and paths should not only be functional but also contribute to the scenic appeal of the byway corridor. Designers should select materials, alignments, and features that blend seamlessly with the natural landscape. Options include using natural stone, wood, or earth-toned surfaces, and incorporating native plant species in landscaping. Infrastructure elements such as signage, railings, and benches should





be designed in a context-sensitive manner that complements the overall vision of the byway.

Context-Sensitive Routing and Accessibility

Routing should prioritize the preservation of sensitive natural and cultural resources. Alignments that follow the natural contours of the land and existing clearings can help minimize environmental disruption while reducing the need for extensive grading. Additionally, universal design principles must be integrated to ensure that all trail users—including individuals with disabilities, older adults, and families with young children—can safely enjoy the byway.

Utilities

Utility infrastructure along Colorado Byways requires careful placement or relocation to preserve and enhance the unique character of the surrounding landscape. These corridors are highly valued for their natural beauty and cultural significance; therefore, utility infrastructure should support, not detract from, this character.

Undergrounding and Minimizing Visual Impact

To maintain a byway’s visual integrity, placing utilities underground is the preferred solution whenever feasible. Burying utility infrastructure significantly improves the safety and aesthetics of our landscapes, reducing visual distractions and providing travelers with a more seamless, natural experience. The removal of mature vegetation or the introduction of vertical elements can permanently scar the landscape and diminish the very qualities the byway designation aims to protect.

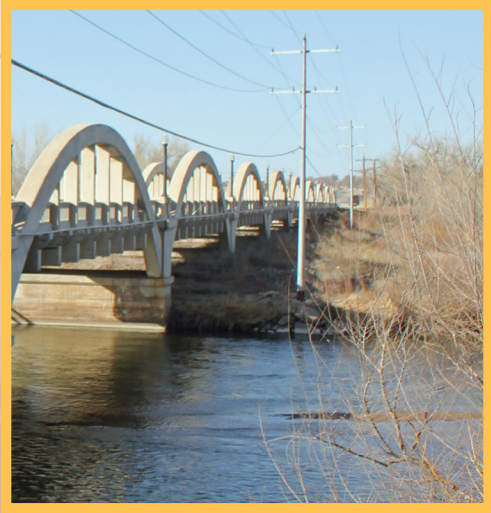
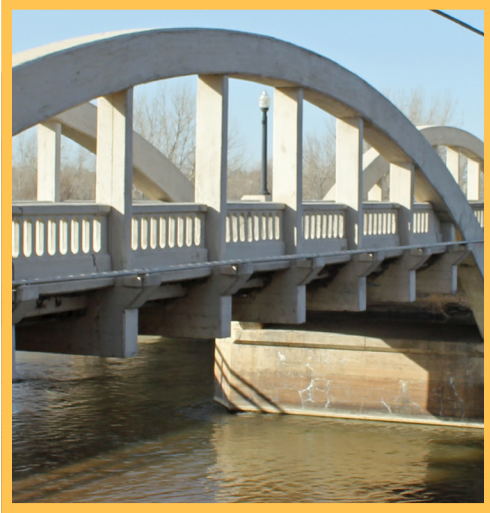
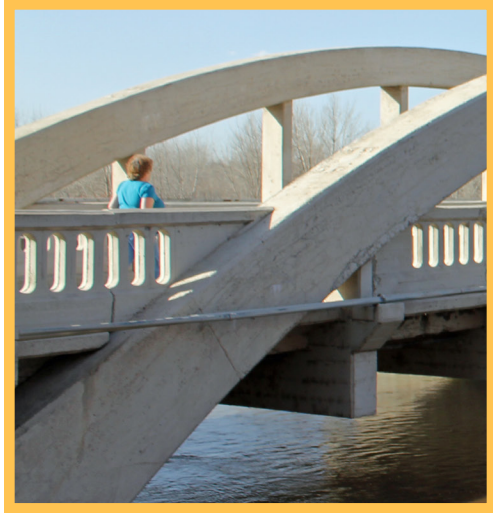
When overhead utilities are unavoidable, a thorough visual assessment is critical to identify and protect important views within the corridor. A dense mass of overhead lines creates visual blight and can obstruct key vistas. To mitigate this, projects should evaluate several alternatives, such as burying lines along the entire byway or focusing on undergrounding them in the most visually sensitive areas. If lines must remain above ground, their height should be no greater than the surrounding trees to minimize their profile. Furthermore, the design must account for vehicular access required for maintenance, as access roads can introduce their own set of visual and environmental impacts that require careful planning.

The prospect of cutting down significant trees or erecting new utility structures within key viewsheds serves as a stark reminder that progress should not come at the environment’s expense. Installing new infrastructure can permanently compromise scenic vistas and disrupt the irreplaceable archeological, cultural, historic, and natural resources that define a byway’s character. Removing mature vegetation or introducing vertical elements can scar the landscape and diminish the very quality the byway designation aims to protect. To avoid such compromises, utility projects must prioritize alternative solutions that minimize their visual and physical footprint.

Siting of Large-Scale Infrastructure

When planning the placement of larger infrastructure elements like cell towers, solar farms, and wind farms near byways, preserving natural viewsheds and the landscape’s visual integrity must be prioritized. This infrastructure should be sited outside of primary view corridors whenever possible, utilizing existing topography, vegetation, or generous setbacks to minimize visibility. Designers should use muted color treatments, non-reflective materials, and context-sensitive designs to reduce visual intrusion. For example, position wind turbines to avoid “skylining” against prominent backdrops, and orient and landscape solar arrays to blend with the surrounding terrain.





Planning, Coordination, and Long-Term Protection

Projects involving utilities near byways must undergo comprehensive visual impact assessments during their early planning stages, incorporating public input as a vital part of the design process. This ensures that utility development supports modern needs and the long-term protection of the byway's resources. Where appropriate, interpretive signage and educational features may be added to connect infrastructure with themes of sustainability and environmental responsibility, aligning with the core values of the byways program.

Crucially, close coordination with local preservation authorities, CDOT, and environmental agencies is paramount. This ensures that infrastructure development supports both modern utility needs and the long-term protection of the byway's scenic, cultural, and historic resources. CDOT permitting processes must also actively safeguard Colorado Byways. By thoughtfully planning utility placement and diligently minimizing disturbance to the landscape, byway projects can effectively ensure that essential infrastructure coexists harmoniously with the scenic, recreational, and cultural values these corridors celebrate.



Scenic Byway



Scenic Byway



Scenic Byway



Appendix

Definitions

- ◆ All-American Road: A prestigious national designation from the U.S. Secretary of Transportation for a byway that showcases at least two nationally recognized intrinsic qualities that are truly unique or exceptional.
- ◆ America’s Byways®: A designation awarded by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to outstanding touring routes that highlight their intrinsic qualities.
- ◆ Byway Compatible Enhancements: Thoughtful improvements that protect a byway’s special intrinsic qualities while making it safer, more accessible, and more functional. These can include subtle roadway adjustments, interpretive signs, native landscaping, and other design elements that blend with the surroundings.
- ◆ Character-Defining Features: The noticeable and less obvious elements that give a byway its unique character and importance. This includes its intrinsic qualities, physical features like the road’s path and structures, and how it relates to scenic views or historical landscapes.
- ◆ Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program: A statewide partnership CDOT that designates, interprets, protects, and promotes exceptional touring routes across Colorado for recreational, educational, and economic benefits.
- ◆ Context Classification: A way to categorize a road based on its surrounding environment, such as Rural Mountains, Rural Places, Suburban Places, Traditional Neighborhoods, Downtown Places, or Urban Core.
- ◆ Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS): A team-based approach involving all relevant parties to design transportation projects that fit their environment. This method preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources while ensuring safety and smooth traffic flow, considering the entire setting of a project.
- ◆ Eco-Friendly Construction: A sustainable building approach that minimizes environmental impact by using native plants and locally sourced, reclaimed, or durable materials. It also integrates energy-efficient designs and strategically blends infrastructure with the natural landscape to preserve scenic beauty.
- ◆ Environmental Programs Branch (EPB): A part of CDOT that provides expertise on Colorado Byways, including where the Byways Program Manager is located.
- ◆ Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): The U.S. federal agency responsible for highway programs and standards, including defining intrinsic qualities and approving safety barriers.
- ◆ Intrinsic Qualities: The distinct and equally valued characteristics of a byway, which can include its archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic values. These are all considered when a byway is being evaluated for designation.
- ◆ Light Trespass: Unwanted light from a fixture that spills onto neighboring properties or natural areas.
- ◆ Livability Principles: Guidelines from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) aimed at improving quality of life, strengthening community bonds, and promoting lasting environmental and economic sustainability through infrastructure development.
- ◆ Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD): A national standard that specifies the design, application, and placement of traffic control devices—like signs, markings, and signals—to ensure consistency and safety on roadways.
- ◆ Roadside Enhancements: Features along a roadway that improve the traveler’s experience, such as rest areas, scenic overlooks, interpretive sites, landscaping, and public art. These are designed to complement the byway’s purpose, identity, and appearance.
- ◆ Right-of-way (ROW): Designates the entire strip of land legally allocated for public road or highway use. It encompasses more than just the paved or actively traveled sections.
- ◆ Skyglow: The brightening of the night sky caused by artificial light pollution.
- ◆ Slope Rounding: A grading technique that softens the sharp edges of cut and fill slopes, creating a more natural, curved transition between the road and the surrounding landscape. This improves aesthetics and helps reduce erosion.
- ◆ Slope Warping: A grading technique that involves gradually changing the cross slope or elevations to match natural contours or to create smooth transitions through curves and changes in road grade.
- ◆ Stakeholders: Individuals or groups with an interest in a project, including local governments (municipalities, counties), state and federal agencies (e.g., NPS, USFS, BLM, CPW), historic districts, and byway organizations.

Resources

- ◆ ADA Accessible Trail Improvement with Naturally Occurring, Sustainable Materials, <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/ada-accessible-trail-improvement-with-naturally-occurring-sustainable-materials>
- ◆ Built Environment Image Guide; https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/TheBuiltEnvironmentImageGuide-2001-09.pdf
- ◆ CDOT Landscape Architecture Manual
- ◆ CDOT National Environmental Policy Act Manual, <https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/nepa-program/nepa-manual>
- ◆ CDOT Project Development Manual
- ◆ CDOT Roadway Design Guide
- ◆ CDOT Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways, <https://www.codot.gov/travel/colorado-byways>
- ◆ CDOT Visual Mitigation Library
- ◆ CDOT Guidelines for Integrating Artwork into CDOT Facilities, <https://www.codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/assets/documents/art-in-the-public-right-of-way-guidelines.pdf>
- ◆ Colorado Downtown Streets
- ◆ DarkSky International, <https://darksky.org>
- ◆ FHWA Flexibility in Highway Design, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/publications/flexibility/flexibility.pdf>

- ◆ Forest Service Accessibility Resources, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/national-forests-grasslands/accessibility/resources>
 - ◆ Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
 - ◆ National Scenic Byway Foundation, <https://nsbfoundation.com>
 - ◆ National Scenic Byways & All-American Roads, <https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/bywaysp>
 - ◆ Scenic America, <https://www.scenic.org>
- ◆ Scenic Byways: A Design Guide for Roadside Improvements, https://pubs.nps.gov/eTIC/NCRW-OLST/NPSG_999_107723_0001_of_0230.pdf
 - ◆ Sustainable Recreation Site Design Guide; https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf22232803/2223%E2%80%93SRSDG_240408_LoRez_508.pdf
 - ◆ United States Access Board Outdoor Developed Areas, <https://www.access-board.gov/files/aba/guides/outdoor-guide.pdf>

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Acknowledgments

Author

- ◆ Trent W. Hart, CDOT

Contributors

- ◆ Lenore Bates, CDOT - Administration and supervision
- ◆ Pamela Cornelisse, CDOT - Intellectual discussions and advice

Reviewers

The following provided help with editing, proofreading, and technical advice.

- ◆ Aimee Way, CDOT
- ◆ Anthony Lovato, CDOT
- ◆ Emily Byers, CDOT
- ◆ Jennifer Kerns, CDOT
- ◆ Jennifer Klaetsch, CDOT
- ◆ Joe Carter, CDOT

- ◆ Kenneth D. Howlett, CDOT
- ◆ Liia Koiv-Haus, CDOT
- ◆ Sarah Meyer, CDOT
- ◆ Stephanie Prochaska, CDOT
- ◆ Summer Slama, CDOT
- ◆ Nicole Hill, USFS

Byway Colors



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