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# The Benefits of Colorado's Scenic & Historic Byways

CLARION



Taking care to get you there



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Scenic and Historic Byways program is a statewide partnership that provides many benefits to Coloradans. The program features outstanding touring routes all across the state that offer travelers interpretation and identification of key points of interest and services along safe and accessible travel ways, while also helping to protect historic monuments, significant viewsheds, and important environmental resources. Directed by the Scenic and Historic Byways Commission and headquartered in the Colorado Department of Transportation, the program is supported by many public, private, and non-profit partners, including county and local governments, federal and state agencies, local tourism groups, and private citizens and businesses. The Colorado program will celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March 2014 and is one of the oldest state byways programs in the country.

This report offers an overview of the many benefits of Colorado's scenic byways and the Scenic and Historic Byways program. While the recreational and educational benefits of the byways are familiar to many travelers, the economic benefits are not as obvious. Several topics are addressed:

- The report first puts Colorado's Scenic and Historic Byways Program in context by summarizing its history, its current principal activities, and its major sources of funding.
- Next, the report looks at the economic benefits of scenic byways to all Coloradans. The report draws from economic studies and tools developed for Colorado and for other byways programs throughout the country. Such studies generally have found that byway designation may have direct economic impacts on communities and businesses along byways in terms of increased visitor traffic, visitor expenditures, and total retail sales, and this is especially the case in rural areas—but quantifying exact benefits is challenging because of inadequate data or research that distinguishes byways traffic from other types of visitors.
- The report then looks at several case studies to illustrate how scenic byways benefit communities throughout the state. Three case studies look at individual byways, including the Gold Belt Tour, Top of the Rockies, and Unaweep-Tabeguache. Three additional studies examine major CDOT programs that are closely related to the byways program: Healthy Highways, the CDOT Region 2 Wayfinding program, and Bike the Byways.
- Finally, the report summarizes the key types of information that byways organizations should collect in the future, to provide a robust source of data for future and more detailed economic impact studies.



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# OVERVIEW OF THE COLORADO SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

## History

The State of Colorado established its own scenic byways program in 1989, prior to the establishment of the National Scenic Byways Program in 1991. By executive order, Governor Roy Romer established the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission to guide development of Colorado roadways that have “exceptional scenic, ecological, cultural, and historic attributes.” The Commission was charged with developing designation criteria for the byways, evaluating nominations and selecting byways for designation, coordinating state efforts with related national programs, and developing funding sources and supporting promotional and interpretive programs for designated byways. Subsequent executive orders continued the Commission’s work for defined periods until, in 2002, Governor Bill Owens issued an open-ended order continuing the Scenic and Historic Byways Commission until further modification or rescission by the Governor.

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission designated 21 scenic and historic byways between 1991 and the spring of 1995, selecting routes based on nominations from local organizations around the state. Today, the Colorado Byways include 25 designated byways, 2,492 roadway miles (2,006 miles of which are part of CDOT’s system and 486 of which are off-system county/local roads), 47 counties, 10 U.S. National Forest Byways, two Bureau of Land Management Back Country Byways, and 11 byways designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation as America’s Byways®, giving Colorado more national designations than any other state.

## Major Program Activities

Today’s Colorado Byways program is a statewide collaboration intended to provide recreational, educational, and economic benefits to Coloradans and visitors by designating, interpreting, protecting, and promoting a system of safe and outstanding touring routes in Colorado. The Colorado Byways’ vision is “Guiding travelers to experience and be inspired by treasured places that comprise Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways.”

## Byways Program Manager

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program is administered on a daily basis by a full-time program manager, headquartered in the Colorado Department of Transportation (in the Bike/Pedestrian/Scenic Byways Section). The Program Manager is the CDOT authority on all actions involved in the program and helps create policy as well as short- and long-term program goals,

## Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Awards

*2012 – Southern Colorado Conservation Friends of Open Space Award: Gold Belt Tour and San Juan Skyway National Scenic Byways*

*2009 - AASHTO Santa Fe Trail Scenic and Historic Byway Marketing*

*2007 - AASHTO Colorado Grassroots Training Program*

*2001 - AASHTO San Juan Skyway Historic Preservation Project and Multimedia Package*

*1998 - Governor’s Award Western Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Smart Growth and Development*

*1996 - The Colorado Historical Society Stephen H. Hart Award*

*1996 - American Recreation Coalition Best State Guidebook*

*1992 - Colorado Preservation Honor Award Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway Commission*

## Byways Website Stats

Website traffic for the Colorado Historic and Scenic Byways main page on the CDOT website:

### Unique Pageviews

*(first-time viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 45,486
- Monthly Average: 3,791

### All Pageviews

*(includes repeat viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 89,232
- Monthly Average: 7,436

## Online Guidebook Stats

Website traffic for the Colorado Historic and Scenic Byways Virtual Guidebook:

### Unique Visitors

*(first-time viewers)*

- 2012 Total: 12,843
- 2013 Total: 27,758

### All Pageviews

*(includes repeat viewers)*

- 2012 Total: 536,817
- 2013 Total: 261,779

### Average Time on Site

*(all viewers)*

- 2012 Average:  
7 minutes, 25 seconds
- 2013 Average:  
7 minutes, 43 seconds

including the development of strategies to achieve those goals. Some of the key responsibilities of the Byways Program Manager include:

- Formulating policy for approval by the Scenic and Historic Byways Commission;
- Acting as a resource to local agencies, communities, and byway organizations across the state;
- Developing and implementing planning and marketing strategies;
- Writing grant proposals for public and private funding;
- Working with local byways organizations, state agencies, the US Forest Service and BLM, and other public and private groups to assist in the development of byways management plans;
- Administering federal grant contracts, and acting as a liaison with the FHWA and resource agencies for drafting, negotiating, and implementing intergovernmental agreements;
- Designing and providing training for local and regional byway organizations and boards and other volunteers; and
- Interfacing with CDOT's five regions on issues around signage, safety, and other transportation and roadway improvements.

A key aspect of the Program Manager's position is to develop and maintain collaborative relationships among CDOT and with a variety of partner agencies in meeting the byway program's goals. Some of CDOT's partners include:

- State agencies, including: the Colorado Tourism Office, History Colorado, the Department of Local Affairs, and Great Outdoors Colorado;
- Federal agencies, including the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service;
- Local agencies, including dozens of groups like local chambers of commerce, historical societies, and convention/visitors bureaus; and
- Other national and regional organizations focused on byway-related issues, such as the National Scenic Byway Foundation and Scenic America.

The Program Manager also develops and maintains statewide tools such as maps, promotional materials available in all Colorado Welcome Centers, and an extensive website, to publicize the byways, inform travelers, and enhance the visitor experience. In addition, most byways offer their own brochures, maps, websites, and roadside interpretive signs offering insight into and history of a particular byway. (Some byways also are exploring new media such as mobile apps.)

While the program is led by the CDOT Byways Program Manager, additional support for the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program is provided by the following agencies and organizations:

- **US Forest Service** - supports 10 US National Forest Byways in the state of Colorado;
- **Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** - supports two BLM Back Country Byways and five Byways that cross portions of BLM Land;
- **Land Trusts** - work closely for planning and to secure scenic easements along Colorado's Byways, and assist with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants;
- **History Colorado** – provides grant funding for historic planning, preservation, and interpretation projects;
- **Colorado Tourism Office (CTO)** – provides matching marketing grant opportunities, maintains the Byways online guidebook and webpage, distributes tourism information, and provides tourism training and other resources to byways organizations and users;
- **Colorado Creative Industries** - provides grant opportunities, designates creative districts (areas promoting local artists and their work – six of the currently seven certified districts are along a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway), and provides workshops and training; and
- **Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) Main Street Program** - provide technical assistance and other training and resources to Main Street communities (communities and candidates along the scenic byways include Granby, Lake City, Lamar, Fruita, Silver Cliff, Westcliffe, Victor, Ridgway, and Trinidad).

## **Byways Commission**

The Commission's role today is multi-faceted. The Commission consists of as many as 15 members, appointed by the Governor for staggered terms of three years. Members serve without compensation and at the pleasure of the Governor; the Governor may also appoint ex-officio members for terms expiring.

Generally, the Commission is a partnership to evaluate and designate Colorado Byways, to develop and recommend funding sources, and to provide program support to sustain the byways for future generation. Other specific responsibilities include:

- Develop and recommend funding sources, help coordinate the budgeting process and allocation of federal, state, and private funds for the purpose of byway development and management;
- Provide program support to sustain the byways for future generations; and
- Evaluate and recommend designation for Scenic and Historic Byways that depict Colorado's geographic, ethnic, natural, and historical diversity.

The current Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) legislation, the federal transportation funding determined by congress, does not fund the National Scenic Byways Program discretionary grant (as discussed on the following pages). Previously, the Commission prioritized National Scenic Byway

Program (NSBP) applications to be selected by Washington (NSBP funding was previously provided through the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) legislation).

## **Funding for the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program**

The major source of funding for Colorado's byways program has long been the national byways grant program funded through federal transportation legislation. Total grants from the National Scenic Byways Program for Colorado from 1992 through 2012 have totaled \$17,945,194. Pursuant to federal law governing the national program, the federal share is capped at 80 percent of any project, which means that there must be a minimum of 20 percent in matching funds for the project. This matching requirement can be satisfied in whole or in part with State, local government, private sector, Federal land management agency, or Indian tribe funds. Additionally, third party in-kind donations may be credited toward the State or Indian tribe's share of the project cost. Assuming that just the minimum of 20 percent in matching funds was achieved to complement the federal grants, at least \$4,486,299 in matching funds, and thus at least \$22,431,493 in total investment, have been made in the byways since 1992.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Congress and the U.S. Department of Transportation sought to promote a balanced transportation system to improve quality of life. In addition to traditional surface improvements like highways, federal policy encouraged investment in alternative transportation and nontraditional activities such as mass transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, historic preservation, and scenic byway programs. Federal law required that a portion of federal-aid highway allocations be set aside for nontraditional activities that enhanced the community benefits of these alternative and nontraditional transportation investments. These "Transportation Enhancements" supported a variety of sustainable and livable community goals, including historic preservation and scenic byways. The states administered the enhancements programs. Scenic byways in Colorado and throughout the country benefitted from these Transportation Enhancements, as well as other programs, especially the National Scenic Byways Program.

These long-time funding sources that have supported byways have been eliminated, however. Effective October 1, 2012, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) is a \$120 billion, two-year federal bill that dramatically restructures federal transportation programs and processes. Generally intended to reduce overall spending, consolidate programs, and reinvest in aging infrastructure, the law introduced significant changes to

various transportation funding programs that in the past have proven to be tremendously beneficial to scenic byways for many decades.

MAP-21 has major implications for the funding of scenic byways, specifically by eliminating direct funding for the National Scenic Byways Program (though not the program itself). The law also restructured the Transportation Enhancements program into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Program eligibility is limited; certain projects, for example scenic or historic highway programs (including visitor and welcome centers), are no longer eligible for funding. States receive an apportionment of the TAP funding, but are not required to use these funds for TAP projects. Overall, the funding for the TAP has been reduced and the dedicated set-aside for enhancements eliminated.

The national context for byway funding continues to evolve, and planning for the next transportation reauthorization is already underway. At the regional and local level, these changes in byway funding mean that fewer financial resources are available for byway facilities enhancements and programming. More competition among Colorado's byways will occur for ever-more limited resources. The ability of each byway to distinguish itself and create a unique and traveler experience will become increasingly important. As noted in the recently adopted Corridor Management Plan for the Unaweep-Tabeguache Byway, "Changes in federal funding for byways make it more important than ever that a byway have a unified, branded, and active presence. To remain economically viable, byways must maximize their resources and develop collaborative relationships with diverse partners and interests." (p.3)

In addition to federal funds, Scenic and Historic Byways statewide projects have leveraged funding through other sources, including but not limited to the following:

- Colorado State Historical Fund;
- Colorado Center for Community Development;
- Rural Housing & Economic Development Program; and
- Gates Family Foundation.

In addition to state and federal assistance, funding for local byway priorities and projects are sought out by the byway organizations and funded directly.

The following section of this report discusses the tools and techniques that have been used to measure the economic benefits of scenic byways, both in Colorado and nationally. Case studies then follow to illustrate specific examples of how Colorado's scenic byways are economically benefitting local communities throughout the state.

## MAP-21 Implications for Colorado's Byways

*At the regional and local level, the MAP-21 changes in byway funding mean that fewer financial resources will be available for byway facilities enhancements and programming. More competition among Colorado's byways will occur for ever-more limited resources.*

## MEASURING THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF VISITORS AND BYWAYS

### CO Key Industry: Tourism and Outdoor Recreation

*“Outdoor recreation and tourism are woven through the fabric of Colorado’s culture and define the state. Domestic and international visitors are invited to “Come to Life” in Colorado. And while experiencing the outdoors is a large part of the lifestyle in Colorado, it is also a significant economic driver. Colorado’s tradition and passion for outdoor access is due in large part to unparalleled natural resources, as well as a long history of environmental conservation and stewardship.”*

- Colorado Office of  
Economic Development and  
International Trade

### Tourism in Colorado

The beautiful scenery, rich history, and outdoor adventures accessible from scenic byways help draw many visitors to the state and thus are important contributors to Colorado’s strong tourism industry. In fact, tourism and outdoor recreation is one of several key industries for the state identified by the State Office of Economic Development and International Trade. According to the Colorado Travel Impacts report prepared for the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) by Dean Runyan Associates, total direct travel spending in Colorado from 1996 to 2012 was over \$16.6 billion. This travel spending supported 144,600 jobs with earnings over \$4.3 billion, and generated \$918 million in state and local tax revenues. Per person, this amounts to approximately \$473 in tax revenue per household in the state.

Travelers visit the state for many reasons, and the economic benefits of tourism vary by region. While the Denver Metro Region has the highest levels of overnight travel spending compared to other regions (51%), the impact of tourism on the Mountain Resort Region is most significant, accounting for nearly 12% of that region’s total earnings. Regardless of the region, tourism plays a significant role in the state’s economy, and Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways are one type of amenity that attracts and enhances the experience for visitors.

According to the Colorado Travel Year 2012 Report, commissioned by CTO and prepared by Longwoods International, “for most touring vacationers, the Colorado trip in 2012 was a driving vacation.” Of all of the overnight visitors to the state, approximately 60 percent arrived in their own vehicle, 40% arrived by plane, and about one third of non-Colorado residents rented a vehicle while visiting (a growing segment of Colorado’s visitors). Driving tourists are target byway users, since they tend to do a lot more and see more attractions than other visitor segments. Historic places and cultural activities and attractions continue to be major draws for visitors to the state – elements that also add authenticity and appeal to many of the state’s byways.

While the economic benefits of Colorado’s tourism industry are annually measured and reported, it can be difficult to assess the individual impacts of small segments and amenities that contribute to the overall tourism industry. Scenic and historic byways are one such segment – they are a visible and important part of the state’s offerings to driving visitors, yet they are difficult to separate from other elements that draw visitors to a byway region, like beautiful scenery and historic towns.

## Quantifying the Economic Impacts of Visitors to Scenic Byways

To date, there have been only a handful of efforts to quantify the economic impacts of scenic byways. Such impacts arise mostly from the byway's direct effect on visitor attraction and visitors' spending, as well as indirect generation of new business activity and economic development. Key variables affecting the magnitude of any one byway's economic impact include tourism market area, traffic mix, opportunities to capture visitor spending, and local attractions.

One such study in Colorado resulted in a 1997 report by John Sem, Patrick Goff, and Sally Pearce, entitled "Interim Report on Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways," which attempted to quantify the benefits of byway designation in Colorado. The research focused on three areas of inquiry: (1) the general impacts of travel and tourism in Colorado, (2) traffic along the byways, and (3) survey results of community tourism businesses located along the scenic byways. Key conclusions from that report are quoted below:

*Estimating the economic impact of byway designation is difficult. First, byways are only a small component of the travel and tourism industry. Second, it is sometimes difficult to separate byway-related effects from general-tourism effects. However, various studies did find that byway designation increased visitor traffic, visitor expenditures, and the retail sales of tourism-related businesses.*

- *Although the weakness of the traffic data and Colorado's rapidly growing population made it difficult to separate byway traffic growth from increases created by population growth, the Colorado Byways Traffic Analysis concluded that byway designation increased traffic on 8 of 21 byways.*
- *Recent visitor profiles in four western states indicated that average expenditures per party varied from \$86 to \$143.57. The Colorado expenditure estimates were higher due to larger party sizes and an older and more affluent audience attracted to byways and scenic drives.*
- *A survey of tourism-related businesses along two byway routes in Colorado indicated that a majority of business owners and managers estimated a 10 percent increase in sales due to byway designation.*

In summary, the report found that byway designation may have direct economic impacts on communities and businesses along the byways in terms of increased visitor traffic, visitor expenditures, and total retail sales, and this is especially the case in rural areas. Moreover, surveying along two byway routes "indicated that a majority of business owners and managers estimated a 10 percent increase in sales due to byway designation." The study discussed the difficulty in measuring impacts along a byway, especially in terms of distinguishing general growth from tourism growth, differentiating byway specific-impacts from general tourism and growth impacts, and the limited availability of data from before and after byway designation.

Another Colorado effort to examine the impacts of byways occurred in 2004, with *America's Scenic Byways: The Colorado Report*. Commissioned by the America's Byways Resource Center and prepared by the Colorado Center for Community Development at the University of Colorado Denver, the report explored whether the designation of "National Scenic Byway" had measurable impacts (economic, usage, other) along the byways. Based mostly on an impressive user survey, the report found that few respondents were aware of the byway designation, though their overall satisfaction with the byway driving experience was positive.

Colorado is not unique in its efforts to evaluate and assess the economic impacts that byway designation provides. Several other regions and states have also undertaken similar efforts. One helpful earlier compilation of such studies from 1997 is in "Scenic Byways: A Review of Processes, Administration, and Economic Impacts." The report looked at over a dozen states that have considered the economic impacts of their scenic byways. The authors concluded: "The most common finding was that most states had not conducted any type of economic analysis for scenic byways. There was often a perception of positive economic impact, but no data to support the suspicions. From the states who had conducted research, the following summarizes their findings:

- Marketing plays a very important role in creating positive benefit.
- Signage plays a very significant role.
- Tourism-related industry is ready to receive or support traffic growth for positive economic benefit to occur.
- Scenic byways programs have been met with overwhelming approval.
- Positive economic benefit is either perceived or has been measured.
- Byways must be of a high quality to gain a favorable response from travelers."<sup>1</sup>

A similar but more recent and quantitative compendium was assembled by the Economic Development Research Group in 2001 for the National Scenic Byways Resource Center. The report looked at 21 byway impact studies, along with similar studies for national parks and non-scenic byway highways. Based on all the studies, the report provided ranges of impacts for various indicators:

- 19 – 33 jobs per \$1 million of visitor spending
- \$74,000 - \$1,450 million in "total" business sales due to scenic byway
- \$0.045-\$0.08 State & Local tax receipts per \$1 visitor spending
- 3.4% - 20% increase in annual traffic
- \$65,000 extra visitor spending with 1% increase in vehicle miles traveled
- \$104 Visitor group spending per trip

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<sup>1</sup> Sipes, J. L., James, A. P., Lindley, J., Campbell, T., Gragg, R., & Harbert, C. (1997). Scenic byways: A review of processes, administration, and economic impacts. *Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, 1599, 96–103.

- \$50 - \$188 Visitor group spending per day
- \$32,500 annual, visitor spending per mile.

A number of recent studies have looked at individual byways. A good example is from the Paul Bunyan byway in Minnesota. According to a 2010 study:<sup>2</sup>

- In 2010, an estimated 23,800 travelers visited the central Minnesota region specifically because of the byway.
- These travelers spent a total of \$21.6 million dollars while in the region, including \$14.6 million on locally produced goods and services.
- Byway travelers created a total of \$21.2 million in economic output (sales) in the regional economy, including 331 full -time, part - time, and seasonal jobs and \$7.2 million in labor income.

## **Byways Economic Impact Tool**

Due to the growing interest in understanding and quantifying the economic benefits of byways, an analytical tool to measure the benefits of byways was developed for the America’s Byways Resource Center. The Byways Economic Impact Tool, made available to the public through the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), enables users to measure the economic benefits of byways and byways-related activities to communities. The tool, a customized software program based in Microsoft Excel, uses economic multipliers to estimate the direct and indirect economic impacts of byways based on user-input data.

### **Data Inputs**

The Byways Economic Impact Tool (“the tool”) is highly scalable, meaning that it will accept data for any size of jurisdiction, and it does not need data for all categories in order to be successful. However, in order to produce reputable estimates, the input data does need to be accurate and clearly account for efforts that can be directly attributed to the byway designation, not just coincidence. For example, all expenditures of a visitor fulfilling a quest to drive every byway in the state should be included in the analysis. However, the expenditures of a visitor who merely happens to drive on a byway because she is visiting town for a wedding should not be input because the byway had no bearing on the decision. The nuances related to whether or not to count certain expenditures can of course be difficult to determine and depend on accurate and detailed survey data. Careful examination of each data input is necessary in order to ensure accuracy and credibility of the economic impact analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> “Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway: Awareness, impact on quality of life & economy.”

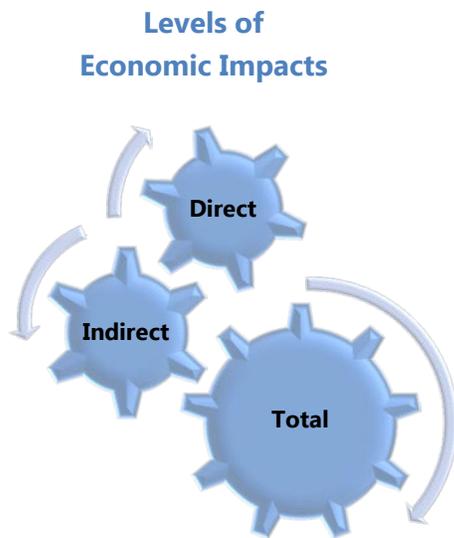
Rachel S. Liechty, Graduate Research Assistant, Ingrid E. Schneider, Ph.D., University of Minnesota Tourism Center, A collaboration of University of Minnesota Extension & College of Food, Agricultural & Natural Resource Sciences & Brigid Tuck, M.S. University of Minnesota Extension: Center for Community Vitality December, 2010.

Potential data inputs to use in the tool include the following categories:

- **Visitor profiles** – the general travel patterns and behaviors of visitors to the byway or region.
- **Visitor spending** – the amount spent by visitors to the byway or region on various trip-related expenditures.
- **Visitor counts** – the total number of visitors seeking out the byway as a destination.
- **Investments** – the public and private expenditures on byways-related projects and improvements.
- **Property values** – the change in assessed value of properties in areas influenced by the byway.
- **Other inputs** – the necessary background information such as regional tax rate and economic multipliers necessary to make the tool function properly.

### Understanding the Impacts

Using the various inputs available, it is possible to generate estimates of the overall impacts of the byway using the tool or the application of economic multipliers. The outputs of the analysis, or economic impacts, are often expressed at three different levels: direct, indirect, and total impacts, discussed below.



- **Direct impacts** are impacts immediately attributable to the byway. For example, a \$50,000 investment in labor and materials for an interpretive kiosk along a byway is a direct impact.
- **Indirect impacts** are the spinoff and other associated impacts resulting from the direct impacts. For example, the daily lunchtime expenditures at a local restaurant from the workers doing the construction on the interpretive kiosk would be considered spinoff, or indirect impacts.
- **Total impacts** are the sum of the direct and indirect impacts. Using the examples above, the total impacts include the \$50,000 investment in the interpretive kiosk labor and materials, plus the spinoff expenditures from those workers.

The categories of impacts measured depend on the data available to analyze. Common ways to summarize the economic impacts of byways activities include the following:

- **Total visitor spending**, or the estimated impacts of the sum of all purchases made by byway visitors, in dollars. For example, an economic impact case study on the Blue Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway and All-American Road completed by HDR revealed that the byway was supporting nearly \$1.5 billion in total sales, of which \$880 million were direct results of visitor spending and the remaining \$574 million were spinoff, or indirect sales from those direct sales.
- **Investments**, or the estimated impacts of the sum of all public and private investments into a byway. The total impacts of capital

investments in the Blue Ridge Parkway, for example, was approximately \$40 million, of which \$22.8 was direct impacts of the investments, and \$17.5 million was impacts generated indirectly from the direct investments.

- **Employment**, or the total number of jobs supported, in terms of full time equivalent (FTE) positions. The employment impacts include the direct number of jobs supported, the spinoff jobs supported, and the total number of jobs supported as a result of visitor spending and byway investment. For example, using the same Blue Ridge Parkway example, the byway sustained a total of 9,302 jobs in the byway region, 6,475 of which were the direct result of visitor spending and investments, and the remaining 2,827 of which were the result of spinoff spending and expenditures from those direct investments.
- **Earnings**, or the average annual employment-derived income as a result of visitor spending and byway investments. The Blue Ridge case study revealed that \$251.7 million in total earnings annually result from the byways-related employment. This equated to approximately \$27,000 per employee. Of this total \$251.7 million in total earnings, approximately \$152.2 million was directly related to byway investments and visitor spending, and the remaining \$99.5 million indirectly resulted from those direct earnings.
- **Taxes**, or the revenue generated by property, sales, use, lodging, and income taxes as a result of byway visitor spending, investments, earnings, and employment. For example, total tax revenues in the Blue Ridge Parkway byway region are estimated to range from \$231 to \$242 million.
- **Property Value Appreciation**, or the increase in property values as a result of byway designation. See the hypothetical example above for details about how property value appreciation as it relates to byways is calculated and reported.

## Benefits and Challenges of the Tool

To summarize, success in quantifying the economic impacts is extremely dependent upon the level, quality, and accuracy of available data. While the tool described above is a potentially helpful resource, significant research and time will be required to obtain better data and thus generate meaningful results. Specifically, in order to estimate the total economic impacts of byways in Colorado using the tool or through any other type of analysis, it will be necessary to have detailed visitor profiles and counts for each of the 25 byways across the state, as well as extensive records regarding public and private investments, property records, and tax rates.

It is unrealistic to assume that the state's Byways Program Manager could reasonably obtain and maintain this data annually, and it is imperative for the byways organizations and other partners to monitor and report their own progress and impacts. The Byways Program Manager can play an important role in monitoring and maintaining statewide data in some cases, and could act as a

resource for byways organizations in their efforts to collect and maintain their own data. See the final section of this report for discussion of data needs and recommendations for future monitoring and analysis.

However, despite the lack of a simple grand total of economic impacts, based on other similar research and endeavors, and analysis of several case studies across the state, is clear that Colorado's byways play a vital role in the state's economy, enhancing tourism offerings, as well as providing opportunities for land conservation, historic and cultural resource preservation, and myriad other tangible and intangible benefits. Specific examples of these impacts are described in the case studies later on in this report.

### **Other Benefits of Byways**

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Beyond economic and tourism benefits, byways offer many other advantages to the state and local communities. For example, byways routes are usually located in some of the state's most scenic areas –high priority places for land conservation and natural resource management. Byway designation and corridor planning provides opportunities for enhanced coordination and collaboration between byways organizations and local, state, federal, and nonprofit land conservation and management agencies to conserve these sensitive lands.

Moreover, byways can serve as catalysts for community building. Many small and rural communities have limited resources for local planning and improvement projects, and byways designations and organizations can help bring local residents and businesses together around a common vision for the future.

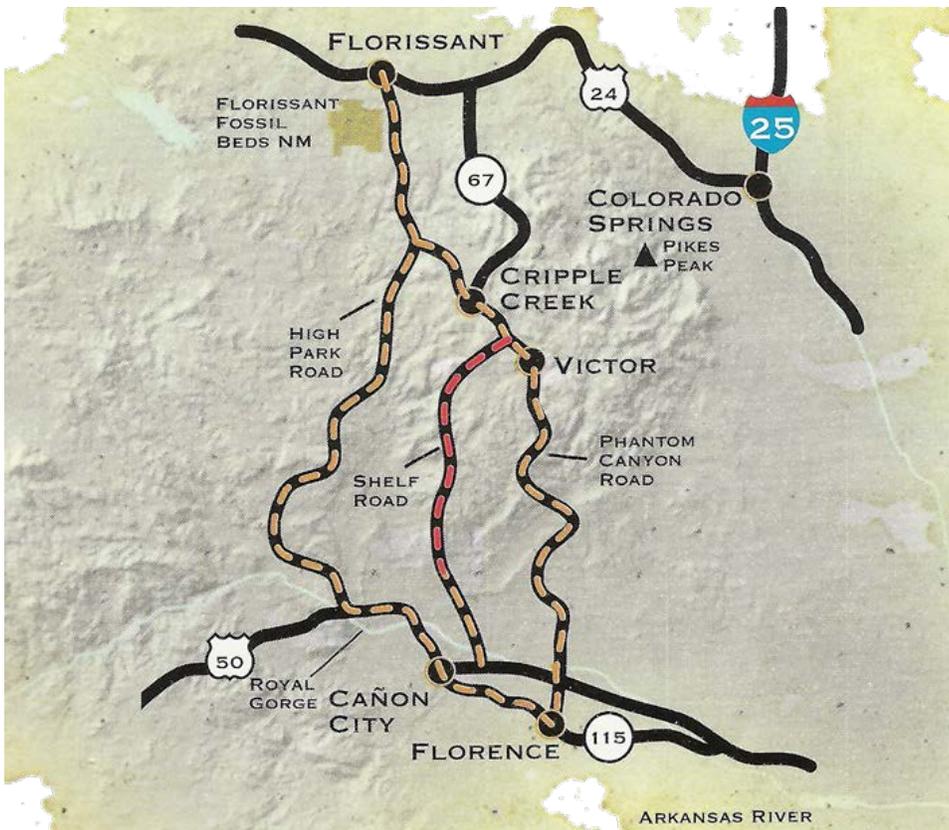
The myriad other benefits of byways, as well as the economic and tourism benefits, are highlighted in the following section which presents a series of case studies focusing on the many successes and achievements of Colorado's byways program.

## SUCCESS STORIES FROM COLORADO'S SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

To illustrate how the Scenic and Historic Byways Program benefits individual communities and regions throughout Colorado, this section includes several case studies that discuss specific byway-related programs and accomplishments. The first three case studies look at individual byways, including the Gold Belt Tour, Top of the Rockies, and Unaweep-Tabeguache. Three additional studies examine major CDOT programs that are closely related to the byways program: Healthy Highways, the CDOT Region 2 Wayfinding program, and Bike the Byways.

### Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway: Investments in Byways Pan Out

The 131-mile Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway passes through two counties (Fremont and Teller), while also touching five communities (Florence, Victor, Cripple Creek, Canon City and Florissant). It tours historic towns, gold camps, and significant fossil areas. In addition, the route offers spectacular scenery and views of the Colorado high-country including Pikes Peak, the Royal Gorge, Phantom Canyon, and Shelf Road.



*The Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway (credit: Colorado Department of Transportation).*

*Red designation indicates 4-wheel drive only.*

## 2013 Website Stats

Website traffic for the Gold Belt Tour page on the CDOT website:

### Unique Pageviews

*(first-time viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 2,848
- Monthly Average: 237

### All Pageviews

*(includes repeat viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 3,487
- Monthly Average: 291

The Gold Belt Tour Byway was first designated a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) **Back Country Byway** in 1989 and then a **Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway** the same year. Later, in 1997, the Gold Belt Tour Vision and Partnership Plan was completed. In 2000 the **Gold Belt Tour Byway Association** received 501(c)(3) non-profit status, and a few months later the byway was designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation as a **National Scenic Byway**, making it one of eleven designated America’s Byways® in Colorado.

Through a formal cooperative agreement, ten managing agencies are committed to jointly manage the Gold Belt Byway, within their authorities. The managing agencies include the cities of Florence, Florissant, Cripple Creek, Victor, and Cañon City, the Bureau of Land Management - Royal Gorge Resource Area, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado Department of Transportation Region 2, and Fremont and Teller counties.

## Leveraging Investments

Since designation in 1989, the Gold Belt Tour has been awarded more than \$717,000 in grant funding from the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) National Scenic Byway Program (NSBP) for a variety of efforts including interpretative information and markers, corridor management planning, marketing, and resource protection. More than \$179,000 has been leveraged by local partners to satisfy the minimum 20 percent match required for these grants, resulting in more than \$897,000 in investments in the Gold Belt Tour Byway.

Matching and other grant funds for the Gold Belt Tour Byway have come from various partners including the Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Historical Society, US Forest Service, CCV Gold Mining Company, and myriad other local communities and organizations. The association is also supported through memberships and the sales of books and driving tour CDs.

Since designation, the Gold Belt Tour has **completed projects valuing more than \$2 million** using grants and other funds. Some noteworthy Gold Belt Tour accomplishments include:

- Interpretive signage and kiosks
- Paving in Garden Park area
- Signs and walking tours in Cripple Creek and Victor
- Historic and geologic guidebooks
- Audio Tour CD
- Historic DVD
- Brochures, newsletter, and website
- Safety improvements on Shelf and High Park Roads

National Scenic Byway Program Grant Funding	
Total Grants Awarded 1989-2013	\$717,000
20% Match Leveraged	\$179,483
Total Investment	\$897,413

*Source: Colorado Department of Transportation*



*Interpretive signage at Florissant  
(credit: Gold Belt Tour).*

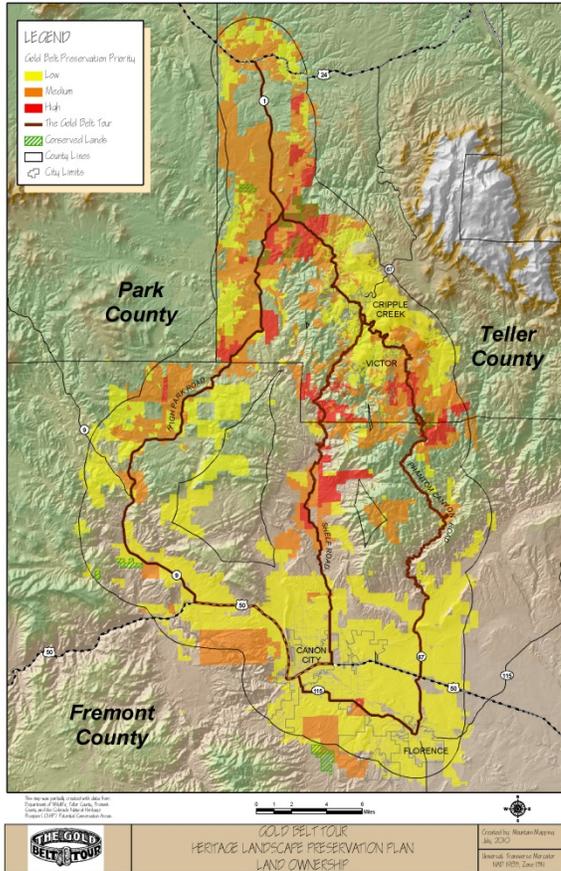
## **Balancing Risk and Reward**

Promoting tourism and growing local economies were early goals of the Gold Belt Tour. Since designation, the byway's routes have all experienced dramatic increases in visitor and traffic counts. For example, High Park Road (Fremont County Road 11), the most traveled route along the byway, saw traffic counts grow from 538 per week in 1989 to 1,371 per week in 2010—a 250 percent increase.

While some of this increase is likely due to changes that allowed gambling in nearby Cripple Creek, additional signage and increased knowledge of the byway are also contributing factors. Despite the economic benefits to local businesses and economies resulting from the increased traffic and visitor numbers, they can also present safety issues. Recent safety-related improvements along the byway have helped address some key challenges, but balancing traffic and safety needs in the future remain important priorities for the byway.

## **The Prospects of Preservation**

With much of the interpretive work on the byway complete, the Gold Belt Tour is entering a new era of corridor management focused on resource conservation and cultural heritage preservation. Colorado's scenic views and open spaces draw tourists, and the Gold Belt Tour recognizes the importance of protecting these assets for future generations. Moreover, due to heavy population growth and land development throughout the region, private lands along the byway are extremely vulnerable to residential subdivision development that would change



Preservation plan priority land conservation areas (credit: Gold Belt Scenic Byway Preservation Plan).

the rural, open, and scenic character of the travel corridors that attract byway travelers

In 2007, with assistance from a \$24,000 FHWA National Scenic Byways grant, the association developed a Preservation Plan, a collaborative effort that focused on maintaining the cultural, scenic, wildlife, and natural values of the Gold Belt Byway. Since adoption of the plan, more than 12,000 acres along the byway corridor have been protected through conservation easements, and future priority conservation areas are identified in the plan.

Important partners in the byway corridor planning and land conservation efforts have included private landowners, CDOT, the Palmer Land Trust, Great Outdoors Colorado, and various other federal agencies.

### Restoring a Gem

The Garden Park Schoolhouse rehabilitation is another example of the Gold Belt Tour’s recent preservation successes. Built in 1879, the adobe brick schoolhouse is located in a highly visible location along the byway, about nine miles north of Canon City on the Garden Park Road that leads to Cripple Creek. The school closed in 1961, and since then the structure and building exterior started to deteriorate, exposing the original adobe bricks.



The Garden Park School was added to the Colorado State Register of Historical Properties in 2008. Over the years, many people have tried to preserve the building but with minimal success. Finally, a 2010 grant from the State Historical Fund jumpstarted the rehabilitation work by stabilizing the schoolhouse’s collapsing walls. Additional grants followed. In total, grant funds of \$77,860 plus a required 25 percent matching contribution resulted in an investment of more than \$88,600. Community volunteers played an integral role in the rehabilitation efforts as they learned to make adobe bricks and repaired the exterior. The community benefits will extend beyond this single activity when the structure opens to the public as a community center in the future.

Adobe brick repair work on the historic Garden Park Schoolhouse (credit: Gold Belt Tour).

## Top of the Rockies Scenic and Historic Byway: Accomplishments at Altitude

The Top of the Rockies National Scenic and Historic Byway is located in Lake, Summit, Eagle, and Pitkin Counties, and includes portions of US Highway 24, and State Highways 91 and 82. It passes through the towns of Aspen, Copper Mountain, Leadville, Minturn, Red Cliff, and Twin Lakes, crosses the continental divide, and travels through portions of the White River, Pike, and San Isabel national Forests.



*Top of the Rockies Scenic and Historic Byway (credit: Colorado Department of Transportation).*

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission designated the Top of the Rockies as a state scenic and historic byway in 1993, and the Top of the Rockies Scenic Byway Committee was formed by an Intergovernmental Agreement among Lake, Summit, and Eagle Counties shortly thereafter. Five years later, the byway was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 1998. Then a decade later, in 2008, the byway was extended to include the segment from Twin Lakes to Aspen, which crosses over Independence Pass.

Since designation, the Top of the Rockies Scenic Byway has been awarded more than \$290,000 in FHWA National Scenic Byways grant funds. Combined with the minimum required 20 percent match, these grants have provided more than \$365,000 towards projects and improvements aimed at satisfying the vision and goals of the byway. As identified in the 2012 Top of the Rockies Corridor

National Scenic Byway Program Grant Funding	
Total Grants Awarded 1995-2013	\$292,300
20% Match Leveraged	\$73,075
<b>Total Investment</b>	<b>\$365,375</b>

*Source: Colorado Department of Transportation*

## 2013 Website Stats

Website traffic for the Top of the Rockies page on the CDOT website:

### Unique Pageviews

*(first-time viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 5,232
- Monthly Average: 436

### All Pageviews

*(includes repeat viewers)*

- 2013 Total: 6,357
- Monthly Average: 530

Management Plan, the vision for the byway is to create “a unique, cohesive, elevated experience in the midst of Colorado’s highest mountains, crossing the Continental Divide adjacent to wilderness and journeying through vital, historic towns.” This plan was a coordinated effort led by the Top of the Rockies National Scenic and Historic Byway Board of Directors and the US Forest Service. Other key partners in the byway’s corridor planning, funding, and management include the Independence Pass Foundation, CDOT, Climax Mine, and the area’s municipalities and county governments.

## Enriching the Experience

Throughout the corridor, the addition of new interpretive signage and information kiosks has been a major focus of past efforts, and most of that interpretation work is now nearing completion. One significant example of the interpretation achievements along the byway is at the Climax Mine on Fremont Pass. Climax, a large and highly visible molybdenum mine, began in 1914, and has operated intermittently in this location since that period, with operations last resuming in May 2012. As one of the largest molybdenum mines in the world, the mine played a very important role in the historical development of the region. However, due to its expansive scale, byway visitors often viewed the mine as an interruption in the area’s dramatic and scenic views. Because an average of 3,400 travelers passed by the site each day in 2005, it was apparent that more could be done to share the unique story of the mine.



*Climax mine Interpretive Site  
(credit: Sally Pearce).*

A \$17,300 FWS National Scenic Byways grant in 2005 provided funding for interpretive information at Climax Mine to enhance the visitor experience along this byway segment. The grant involved close collaboration with and matching contributions from Phelps-Dodge, Inc., the corporate parent of the Climax Molybdenum Company. The signage tells the story of Climax Mine, including the development of one of the first ski areas in Colorado, life in the company town of Climax, a top-secret World War II observatory, underground blasts rivaling nuclear explosions, the first television reception in the mountains of Colorado, and more. Now, as traffic along the corridor continues to increase (estimated at 4,600 vehicles per day in 2013), the addition of interpretive elements like these has helped transform the site into one of the busiest, most interesting, and authentic along the Top of the Rockies Byway.

### **Conservation Collaboration**

As with the Gold Belt Tour byway, conservation and open space preservation is a priority of the Top of the Rockies Byway Association. Through partnerships with groups like the Lake County Open Space Initiative, and the Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas, the byway is able to leverage resources to provide protection and stewardship of the corridor's land and water resources.

This collaborative approach to conservation is particularly evident along the Independence Pass corridor. When this segment, the most recent addition to Top of the Rockies, joined the byway, increasing visitor traffic was not identified a primary goal. Instead, the corridor already had high traffic and visitor levels, and the Independence Pass Foundation, a non-profit organization that serves as caretakers of the pass, was originally concerned about the potential negative impacts of byway designation on the corridor. However, due to the potential availability of additional resources, and the opportunities to strengthen and grow new partnerships, the foundation eventually decided to join the cause and include the corridor in the Top of the Rockies byway route.

The decision to join the byway is beginning to pay off for both independence Pass and the local economy. Recently, a \$58,000 federal transportation grant was matched by and awarded to the foundation to complete revegetation work at the top of the pass. Designations as state and national scenic byways have been key tools



*Volunteers from the local mountain club installing some seedling trees near the summit, (credit: Independence Pass Foundation).*

in applying and obtaining the grant funds. To keep the money circulating throughout the state economy, the foundation has hired a Denver-based company to complete the specialized revegetation work. The foundation hopes that there will be many more opportunities to partner with the byways efforts to enhance Independence Pass.



**INTERPRETIVE KIOSK/STRUCTURE** (SIGNAGE IN FRAME/STRUCTURE)



**INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE ON SITE WALL** (LINE)

Top Of The Rockies National Scenic & Historic Byway  
DESIGN GUIDELINES

2.26

*Design guidelines for signage  
(credit: Top of the Rockies Corridor Management Plan).*

## Elevating Expectations

Recent improvements along Independence Pass have concentrated on repairing the physical condition of the roadway, and those efforts have been very successful. Now, the focus is on moving beyond conservation towards crowd management and enhancing the travel experience and safety along the byway. A planning process is currently underway to explore potential improvements and redevelopment of existing facilities at the pass' summit. Presently, the pass includes very basic facilities and minimal interpretive information, and future improvements could include enhancements such as a shelter and expanded interpretive displays, such as those at Climax Mine.

Any future improvements at the pass summit will be subject to the design guidelines established in the recently adopted Top of the Rockies Corridor Management Plan (2012). The design guidelines provide a simple framework for designing and planning sustainable improvements along the byway, and address topics such as materials, signage, and other site design considerations. Many of the design principles are based on some of the Independence Pass Foundation's previous projects, and if all future improvements projects utilize the guidelines they will help add visual consistency throughout the Top of the Rockies network.

## Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway: Boosting Tourism in Canyon Country

Located in southwestern Colorado, the 132-mile Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway (UTB) passes through the canyon country of the Colorado Plateau, stretching along Highway 141 from Whitewater in Mesa County, southwards through Montrose County, and continuing along Highway 145 to Placerville in San Miguel County. The byway passes through numerous small towns, including Gateway, Uravan, Nucla, Naturita, Redvale, and Norwood. The byway also passes through large tracts of federal public lands, administered mostly by the BLM and the USFS.



*Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway (credit: Colorado Department of Transportation).*

Historically, agriculture and mining were the dominant industries in the region, but today outdoor recreation and tourism are playing larger economic roles. A new Corridor Management Plan (adopted in September 2013) emphasizes the increasing importance of tourism along the byway as an economic development goal, while still preserving the unique regional character. “Today, UTB stakeholders seek to balance the economic benefits of tourism, and the desire to respect and protect the rural landscape and quality of life, the rich history of the byway and its communities, the natural splendor of the corridor and the peaceful solitude found there.... Finding a balance that allows for appropriate increases in tourism without compromising the byway’s intrinsic qualities and character is critical to the future of the UTB.”

*Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway (credit: Interpretative Association of Western Colorado)*



## 2013 Website Stats

Website traffic for the Unaweep-Tabeguache page on the CDOT website:

### Unique Pageviews (first-time viewers)

- 2013 Total: 1,751
- Monthly Average: 146

### All Pageviews (includes repeat viewers)

- 2013 Total: 2,120
- Monthly Average: 177

## Partnering on Priority Programs and Improvements

The byway has a Board of Directors, which was established at the time of the original designation as a scenic byway. In addition, the non-profit Interpretive Association of Western Colorado (IAWC) actively assists in the management of the byway and coordination with surrounding jurisdictions. Founded in 1988 (and formerly known as the Western Colorado Interpretative Association), the IAWC was established to assist the US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and other government agencies in “scientific, educational, historical, and interpretive activities of the resource areas in western Colorado.” As a 501(c)(3) organization, the IAWC is qualified to receive and administer grants from the State Historical Fund, the scenic byways program, and other state programs. The IAWC has administered grants along the corridor since 1993.

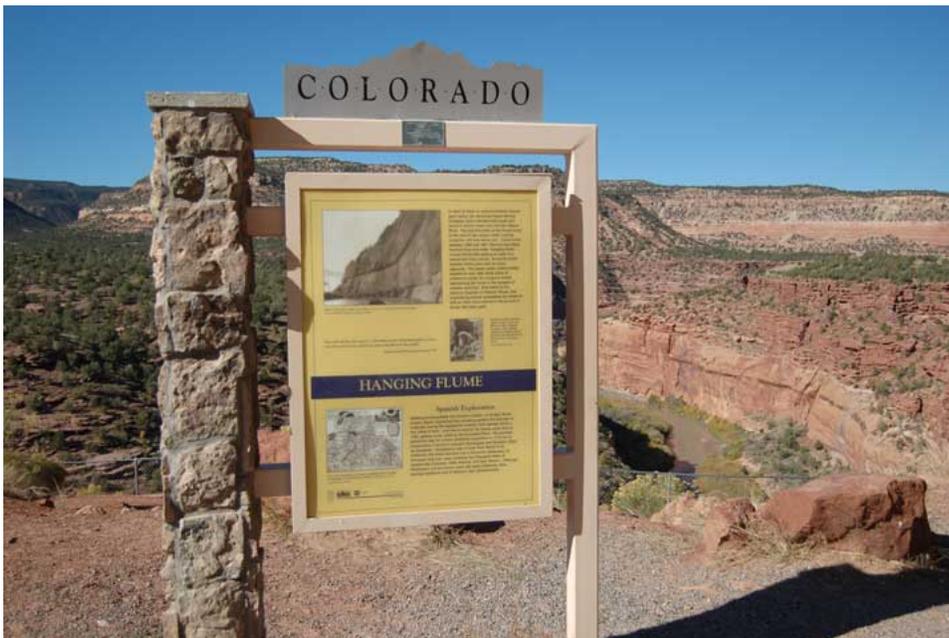
The Board of Directors and the IAWC are pursuing a variety of programs aimed at increasing visibility, tourism, and economic development along the UBT. Improvements to facilities and signage are seen as essential to this effort since, IAWC officials note, some portions of the route currently function more as rural county roads than as true byways. Examples of specific programs and improvements include:

- Providing better **signage** along the byway, especially at portals to the byway, or “gateways,” and wayfinding/directional signs along the byway. The IAWC’s Executive Director Chris Miller has driven the byway along with CDOT representatives to identify challenges with existing

signage (e.g., too far from the road, poor visibility). Better signage is desired to help people better enjoy and appreciate the resources along the corridor (as well as to increase awareness of the limited services, such as the handful of gas stations). Currently, the IAWC estimates that the byway has only about one-tenth of the recommended State Scenic Byway signs needed (blue Columbine with byway name), which translates into lower recognition by visitors that they are experiencing a scenic byway.

- Working with CDOT to identify and sanction key **pullouts** at interpretive sites, scenic overlooks and vistas, and authorized access points to the river(s).
- Improving **visibility** of adjacent public lands (including spur and forest access roads), through better roadway signage, and by including them on maps and promotional materials.
- Providing better **public access** to recreational lands along the byway. CDOT and the three counties all control parts of the right-of-way, resulting in the need for extensive coordination between the bureaucracies to consider access improvements.
- Increasing the supply of **lodging** available along the byway to further encourage visitation.

Working with the CDOT byways program has provided certain benefits to the IAWC and other byway stakeholders. According to local stakeholders, the CDOT program manager has provided valuable coordination assistance, especially between the traffic planners and local byway stakeholders. This centralized focus on byways is important because each CDOT transportation region has a different approach for coordinating how and whether the traffic planners interact with and focus on scenic byway issues. (For example, the IAWC director noted that regions have different policies on whether to allow certain signs that advertise byway amenities at gateway locations.)



*Example of Byway Signage  
(credit: Interpretative Association of  
Western Colorado)*

The CDOT program manager also has been helpful in securing improved directional signage for the byway. The IAWC Executive Director Chris Miller notes that the CDOT byways program is the “backbone for regional economic development,” and that the CDOT administration of the program provides crucial support for economic development along the Unaweeep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway corridor.

In the future, byway advocates hope for continued support by CDOT for the byways program. They hope for improved signage along the Unaweeep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway (especially advance notice for drivers of pullouts). They strongly support the notion that the state should have a single byways advocate who can tie together and coordinate various marketing efforts from the local, county, regional, state, and even national levels.

### **Solving Problems Creatively**

Key attractions along the byway include the Hanging Flume, located on the San Miguel River in Montrose County, and the historic Driggs mansion between Whitewater and Gateway. Both attractions have been highlighted with promotional brochures and videos. Highway pullout lookouts have been added to help visitor access to the mansion.

According to Miller, the organization is always working to find creative solutions to tough problems. Examples of frequent challenges include tight funding, limited access, and poor visibility. One example of a current project is the Mesa County northern portal to byway, at the junction of highways 50 and 145, where the IAWC is working with local businesses to secure space at a new commercial/gas station development for a pullout, with a new kiosk devoted to explaining and interpreting the byway. The project will hopefully be a win-win, with the byway receiving a much-needed new pullout and interpretative site for visitors, and the developer providing land that may count against locally required open space.

A new Corridor Management Plan (CMP) was recently adopted in September 2013. The plan, which updates the original 1995 CMP, provides an overview of the byway’s intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. It pulls forward relevant goals, objectives, and implementation actions from a variety of other regional planning documents, such as the West End Planning Area Master Plan and the San Miguel County Master Plan. The funding for the plan, which came from a state byways grant and local matching fund, was used to hire a consultant, conduct outreach, and prepare materials (website, brochure).

Following adoption of the new plan, the IAWC intends to present the new Corridor Management Plan to the counties and request that they appoint new representatives to the byway commission. In the past, coordinated oversight of the entire byway has been challenging due to limited resources for the three smaller counties. To increase local interest by the counties and hopefully make byway management easier, the new strategy embraced in the plan is to divide ongoing byway oversight into three geographic segments. The plan identifies a large list of current and potential partners for the IAWC, ranging from informal groups like local bicycling clubs, to the various local governments, to local chambers of commerce, business community to the state and federal land agencies like Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the U.S. Forest Service.



*Hanging Flume  
(credit: Interpretative Association of  
Western Colorado)*

## **Measuring Economic Impacts**

Since designation 25 years ago, the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway has been awarded just under \$380,000 in grant funding from the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program. A variety of programs have been funded, including facilities construction, interpretative plans and materials, interpretative centers, and the development of a marketing plan and the new Corridor Management Plan (mentioned above).

Matching and other grant funds for the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway have come from various partners. For example, the \$72,000 grant for the Corridor Management Plan was matched by approximately \$18,000 in matching funds secured by the IAWC through local partners (including Montrose and San Miguel counties, the BLM Montrose Field

<b>National Scenic Byway Program Grant Funding</b>	
Total Grants Awarded 1989-2013	\$379,590
20% Match Leveraged	\$ 94,898
Total Investment	\$ 474,488

*Source: Colorado Department of Transportation*

Office, and Colorado State Mining and Reclamation). Overall, just under \$95,000 has been leveraged by local partners to satisfy the minimum 20 percent match required for these grants, resulting in more than \$474,000 in investments in the Unaweeep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway.

Currently, little data has been collected to track visitors, local spending, or other local economic activity. Some limited data has been collected in the new Corridor Management Plan (including visitor counts at the Nucla-Naturita Area Chamber Visitor Center, and volume-to-capacity ratings for the highways). The counties also maintain their own separate traffic counts. Moving forward, the IAWC intends to use the CMP as a baseline and to collect additional data on an ongoing, regular basis as a way to measure progress towards achieving the goals set forth in the new CMP.

## Driving Families Healthy with Healthy Highways

The Colorado Byways' program has recently collaborated with Colorado Kids Outdoors, the Colorado Tourism Office, National Park Service, United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Colorado State Parks and Wildlife to develop a groundbreaking program: Colorado Healthy Highways. The goal of the program is to build connections between Colorado's rural byway communities and health-conscious families who are interested in active, nature-based travel.

Five of Colorado's twenty-five Scenic and Historic Byways were selected to help develop the pilot program (Gold Belt Tour, Highway of Legends, West Elk Loop, Los Caminos Antiguos, and Santa Fe Trail). The pilot program addresses the essentials of kid-healthy family vacations: family-friendly lodging, reliably clean public restrooms, kid-healthy food in restaurants, age-appropriate outdoor activities for every season, and emergency information.

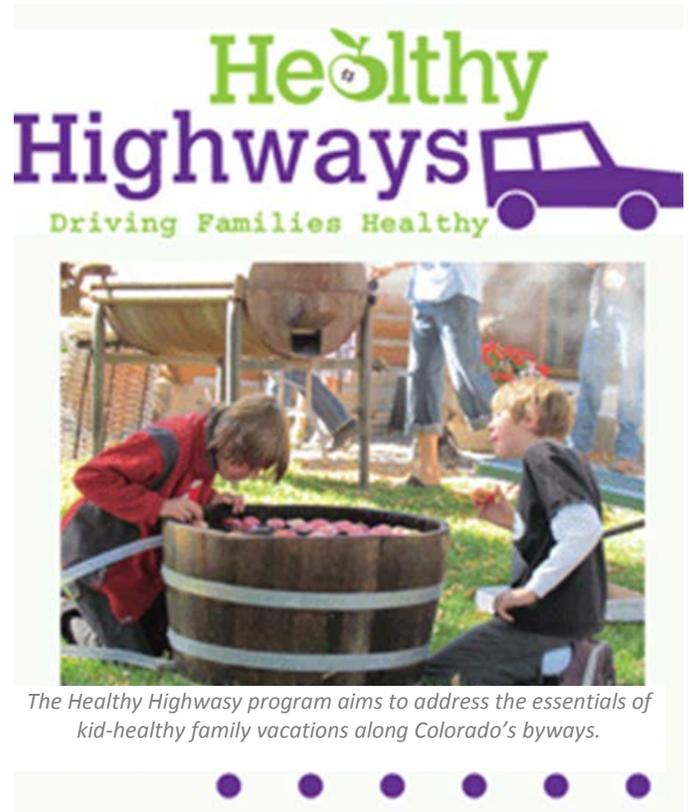
In addition to supporting the five pilot byways, the program's initial efforts have also focused on the production of statewide marketing tools and developing a press strategy. The launch of the program was made possible from a \$7,500 grant from the Colorado Tourism Office, matched with a \$15,000 contribution from the Colorado Department of Transportation.

Looking forward, key objectives for next phases of the program include the development of an electronic guide of recreational opportunities, developing model trip packages and itineraries for families, conducting technical trainings for restaurateurs, lodging owners, and retail businesses. Funding for these efforts will be provided through a \$40,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) from the US Department of Agriculture, and other successful future grant applications.

### Benefitting Local Byways Communities

Rural businesses on many Colorado byways are struggling to recover from the recent economic downturn. Family budgets are suffering too, and this is driving the trend toward "staycations" that are typically spent as long weekends close to home. To date, few rural areas have kept their businesses open on weekends or changed their product offerings to take advantage of this pattern.

Byways organizations in the state have typically targeted the touring drive market, Baby Boomers who come for the scenic beauty, and the festival/special



events market. According to state travel research by Longwoods International, nearly half of Colorado's overnight and day-trip visitors have at least one child age 18 or younger. These statistics show that traveling families present significant tourism and economic opportunities for Colorado's byways and local communities. Moreover, many of the families traveling within and to Colorado seek experiences that involve nature, recreation, and support a healthy lifestyle.

In order to satisfy the different needs and interests of these traveling families, byway organizations need to build capacity among their businesses and to recruit other local partners to get kids outdoors, to stay active, and to eat well. They may engage local partners to help develop activities in the evening, between dinner and bedtime. The Healthy Highways program will assist the local byways communities in these efforts by providing technical training for businesses (e.g., what can restaurants offer kids beyond chicken fingers and mac and cheese, what can lodges do to become more kid-friendly), and statewide marketing and public relations for new health-focused byways experiences.

A major part of the program will be the development of meaningful packages and itineraries that target different aged youngsters: 1) toddlers and preschoolers, 2) elementary age, and 3) middle school/high school age. These efforts will engage private partners with their byways organizations, including restaurants, lodging providers, rental car companies, and retailers. In fact, approximately 28 restaurants have signed on for the first round of technical training in the fall of 2013, which shows the excitement and need for such information. The trainings and the resulting kid-friendly meals that will appear in local menus will begin to make the program more tangible and attractive to other local businesses, which in turn, will help grow the program even more and increase benefits to local byways communities.

Progress will be measured by asking businesses about the impacts of the efforts during their high travel season. Questions such as "How much did business from families (local and traveling) increase after kid-healthy menus were installed? Were you able to extend business hours or hire more employees?" and "Have revenues increased over high season last year?" will help monitor the success of the program and the impacts it is having on local communities and businesses.

### **Marketing Milestones**

The Healthy Highways program is creating a new target market for the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program. Colorado byways have traditionally targeted Baby Boomers, the RV market, and travelers perceived to have abundant time to enjoy the back roads and scenic beauty. This new market— young families with children—will introduce byways to the power of product

geared to health-seeking customers, and open the door for more healthy options for adults as well.

Thanks to matching grant funding from the Colorado Tourism Office, the program now has the following marketing and public relations tools to assist in the recruitment of both travelers and local business partners:

- New Healthy Highways logo and tagline “Driving Families Healthy”;
- New website designed by En Passant Design [www.healthyhighways.org](http://www.healthyhighways.org) (not yet live);
- Press releases to 180 family-related media outlets distributed by Orr Communications;
- Scheduling three press trips; and
- Two itineraries developed for the press trips that will serve as models for ongoing itinerary development for individual byways.

To date, this media outreach has resulted in two publications: a 2014 story from Encompass, and a 2013 story from Denver Latin Magazine. Additional publications and press coverage are expected following the press trips and launch of the website.

## **Recreating on the Road**

Although Colorado was ranked in 2010 as the leanest state in the country with an adult obesity rate of 19.1 percent, between 2003 and 2007 the state’s child obesity rate skyrocketed from 4<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, the second-fastest increase in the nation (behind only Nevada). Youngsters are spending more time engaged in electronic entertainment (an average of five hours a day), and increasingly less time in the outdoors. Consequences include poorer academic performance, a lack of familiarity with the natural world, and fewer physical abilities.

Although Colorado aggressively markets itself to travelers as a first-rate outdoor playground, many Colorado families have never taken advantage of the recreational activities available throughout the state. There are real barriers that keep families from trying—cost, not knowing where to go or what to do, apprehension about how the hours of the day will be filled when they are “on the road.”

One of the objectives of the Healthy Highways program is to produce an electronic guide of age-related recreation opportunities with public land agencies. The realities of tight family budgets will be addressed by highlighting activities that run the full range of cost, from flying a kite, building a snow cave or having a snowball fight to camping, fishing, snow shoeing, paddling, tubing, skiing and hunting. The program will help families with expected level of difficulty for each activity, and with building a progression of related activities.



*A catchy logo and tagline have been developed during the first phase of the program.*

One tangible outcome of the first phase of the program includes a new partnership with the Lathrup Training Center and Lathrup State Park in Walsenburg to market the kid-healthy program to families who book into the state park camping sites. As the other program materials and website are launched in coming months, more and more visitors will be able to experience the byways in healthy ways.

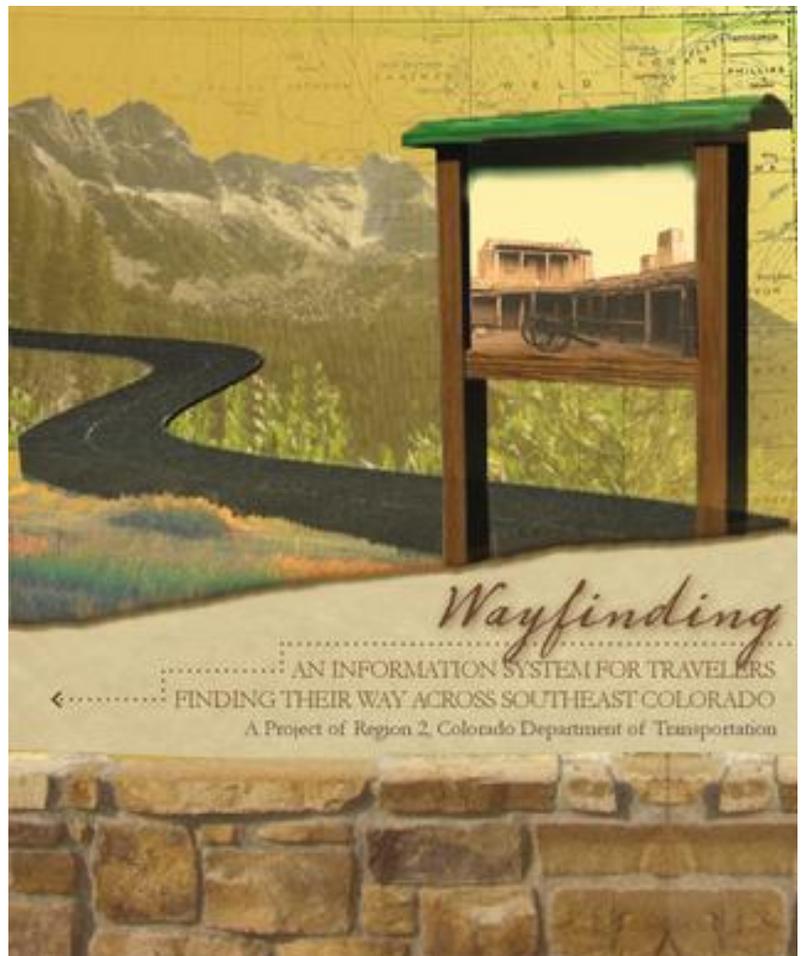
## Wayfinding in CDOT's Region 2

Over the past three years, the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program has been working with CDOT Region 2 staff in southeastern Colorado on a wayfinding project that is focused on improving interpretative and directional signage throughout the region, especially along scenic byways. Region 2 includes four scenic byways (Frontier Pathways, Gold Belt Tour, Highway of Legends, and Santa Fe Trail) and local officials believe that the byways provide a useful organizing principle for recreational and heritage travel throughout the region.

Conceived as “an information system for travelers finding their way across southern Colorado,” the wayfinding program is designed to improve visibility of regional highways, increase visitor traffic and spending, and bolster regional and local economic development. The program is also sometimes referred to as the “wayshowing” program, reflecting the perspective of the sign provider (for example, CDOT), as opposed to the sign reader (the driver).

The program builds on longstanding regional efforts to promote heritage tourism. CDOT's Region 2 includes 11 counties, which separately have organized themselves into two heritage tourism regions: the five western counties are the “Southern Rockies: Crossroads of Culture” region, and the six eastern counties are the “Canyons and Plains” region. Both regional groups are made up of local elected officials, federal and state agencies, and local representatives such as chambers of commerce and tourism-related businesses. Both groups focus on marketing and promotion of historic sites, education and training, research, technical assistance to local property owners, and general promotion of heritage tourism. Both groups originally developed their own wayfinding initiatives, which today have merged into a consolidated Region 2 effort.

The system is intended to help provide travelers with more historical and geographical context and uniform, consistent signage to provide reassurance in navigating throughout the region. While still in development, the Region 2 wayfinding system ultimately will be



*Region 2 Wayfinding Report (credit: Colorado Department of Transportation).*

## Wayfinding vs. Wayshowing

**Wayfinding** is the job of travelers. They look for clues to reassure them they are where they planned to be, and they look for information and amenities to make their experience pleasant and enjoyable.

**Wayshowing** is the job of byway providers and includes preparing travel information, designing maps and travel brochures, planning or installing signs, or providing other navigational help in person or by electronic means.

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comprised of both gateway installations, which will highlight the overall history of the region and list major attractions, and individual kiosks, which will provide more specific stories and history unique to local communities. Other products will include maps and supporting materials showing the byways that can be distributed to local heritage and tourism groups.

The program developed out of initial efforts introduced in the Canyons and Plains Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan in 2007. Several important funding milestones grew out of that initial effort:

- In 2009, the group received \$80,000 in funding for interpretative signage at four gateway locations from the Colorado Division of Wildlife and Preserve America (\$40,000 each).
- In 2010, the group received \$170,000 in federal Transportation Enhancement funds to add 15 additional local kiosks. As with all Enhancement funding, this grant required a local 20 percent match.
- In 2012, the Southern Rockies group was awarded \$370,000 by CDOT for 23 interpretative kiosks, based on a formal wayfinding assessment completed the previous year.

Implementation and development of the content for the kiosks currently is underway, with the full build-out of all 38 kiosks expected by 2013. Due to changes in federal funding under MAP-21 mentioned earlier, the Enhancements source of funding is no longer be available, so program organizers are focused on implementing the current program and there will likely be no additional CDOT funding going into the program.

### An Important Coordinating Role

Since Region 2 has four byways, the Scenic and Historic Byways Program has played a coordinating role in implementing the CDOT program. While additional support has come from other agencies, most notably the Colorado Tourism Office, local officials stress that CDOT leadership has been key, due to the important public safety issues involved in kiosk design and installation along busy roadways.

The wayfinding program illustrates an effective partnership between CDOT and numerous local and regional partners, and also demonstrates an effective linkage between the byways program and the core transportation functions of CDOT. CDOT's lead on the program, Region 2 planner Wendy Pettit, notes that Region 2 has traditionally had a close connection to the byways program, resulting from strong support for the byways from a succession of Region 2 directors, dating back to the original formation of the byways commission. Pettit serves on several regional byways commissions (including Frontier Pathways and Gold Belt). Through Region 2's participation with the Gold Belt byway, CDOT staff became involved with statewide efforts to improve

“wayfinding” and “wayshowing” systems. The byways program offers a good opportunity for CDOT to say “yes” to economic development. This is an opportunity for the state’s transportation agency to participate constructively with economic development and tourism, rather than just saying “no,” which can be the CDOT stereotypical reputation.

The initial wayfinding effort in Region 2 was funded by transportation enhancements. Due to the positive results, the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program requested State Planning and Research (SPR) funding to fund a Wayfinding project in 2013. The goal was to reach out to other CDOT regions and their traffic engineers and planners. At the start of the 2013 project, a wayfinding overview was provided at the State Traffic Engineers Bi-Monthly meeting. CDOT’s traffic engineers participated on these assessments. The Wayfinding Reports have been posted online. Additional funding has been budgeted for 2014, to provide wayfinding along another five to six scenic byways. Within two more years, wayfinding assessments along all 25 routes will be complete.

### **Monitoring Progress and Economic Activity**

The wayfinding program is just getting underway. Moving forward, progress will be measured in the number of roadside kiosks installed. Currently, close to 40 are scheduled to be installed, as well as new visitor materials (maps, etc.) that will be designed and distributed to local visitor groups, chambers, etc.

More broadly, Region 2 and local officials continue to develop plans and strategies to better understand and increase the economic impact of tourists in southeastern Colorado, building on the strengths of the four scenic byways. For example, the five western counties in Region 2 recently prepared *Southern Rockies Crossroads of Culture: An Action Plan to Build a Heritage Tourism Economy in South Central Colorado* (March 1, 2013). The document is an action plan intended to help build a “heritage tourism economy” in the region. The plan describes the economic climate in southeastern Colorado and identifies the increasingly important role that tourism could play. As of 2011, there were approximately 101,000 total jobs in the five-county region, with tourism providing approximately 5.28% of regional jobs—a relatively low percentage compared to other regions in the state.

The plan notes that there is a “tremendous opportunity to capture revenue from pass-through visitors,” especially since southeastern Colorado does not experience the well-known traffic congestion common in central Colorado. The plan also acknowledges some of the challenges involved in estimating the economic impact of byways, as noted above. For example, current visitor survey data does not allow local officials to distinguish local trips (which will

### **Basic Wayfinding Needs**

*In most cases, travelers all have basic wayfinding needs. Travelers need to learn and employ five skills that will lead to their having a successful visit. Travelers need to:*

- *Know where a byway begins and ends, when they are accessing a byway, and when they are leaving a byway environment;*
- *Create, refresh, and expand their mental maps of a byway corridor;*
- *Establish and strengthen their orientation to a byway and the corridor that surrounds a byway;*
- *Follow a reliable and easily recognizable sequence of visual clues to follow when travelling along a byway; and*
- *Locate and safely travel to planned stops and special places to fulfill their desired byway experience.*

- Wayshowing for Byways:  
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have less economic impact on the byways) from cross-regional trips (which likely will have greater impacts).

To allow for finer-grained analysis in the future, officials have drafted the action plan as a baseline, identifying the types of data that need to be collected on a regular basis moving forward. For example, data is collected in the following areas:

- Transportation
  - Population vehicle counts for the five county seats
  - Vehicle counts for travelers through southern Rockies on I-25
  - Vehicle counts for travelers on major highways in southern Rockies
- Visitor Counts
  - Yearly visitation to the Colorado Welcome Center in Trinidad
  - Royal Gorge visitation by state and city
- Tourism Impacts
  - Dean Runyan Regional Travel Impact Model (RTIM) figures for all five counties
  - Travel spending (\$M), earnings (\$M), employment (jobs), local taxes (\$M), state taxes (\$M)

The ultimate goal is consistent future updates of this type of data, which could then be input into analytical tools like the Byways Economic Impact Tool discussed earlier in this report, thus improving monitoring and analysis of economic activity along the byways and in the region.

## Keeping Up with Bike the Byways

Colorado has an active bicycling population and is a top destination for bicycle tourism. A 2000 CDOT study showed 699,000 visitors ride a bike during their visit and generate up to \$76 million in revenue. Additionally, Colorado continually receives attention for its bicycle-friendliness, and in 2013, the state was listed by the League of American Bicyclists as the second most bicycle-friendly state in the country, only behind Washington. However, state leaders envision more. In response to this second-place ranking, Governor Hickenlooper said, “We’re proud that our bicycle-friendly policies have skyrocketed Colorado’s rank up 20 places in just five years, and **we are committed to being No. 1 in the near future.**”

In the rankings, Colorado received high marks for its legislative and enforcement activities, education and encouragement efforts, and its bicycle-related policies, and programs. One noteworthy example of how Colorado is leading the nation in bicycle encouragement and programs is the innovative Bike the Byways efforts.

In 2007, Bicycle Colorado, an organization dedicated to improving bicycling in the state, partnered with the Colorado Department of Transportation to secure a \$46,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) National Scenic Byway Program (NSBP). The organization had long realized that Colorado’s scenic and historic byways were not only incredible automobile routes, but also some of the state’s most scenic and challenging bicycle routes. Their original grant request sought funds to develop bicycle-specific maps for the state’s 25 byways.

### Shifting Gears

As the grant cycle progressed, so did advancements in technology and websites. And so, the project evolved from a paper-based resource into an online platform – one with interactive maps and a feedback mechanism for users to provide comments on different byway bicycle routes. In addition, the site enables users to register and track their progress on riding each of the 25 across the state. Much like the Colorado 14ers project for enthusiasts of Colorado’s highest mountain peaks, the Bike the Byways site functions as a multi-faceted informational guide,



*Colorado’s byways offer some of the best bicycling routes in the state (credit: Bicycle Colorado).*

bucket-list, and discussion forum for bicycling supporters.

More than 150,000 first impressions have been tracked on the website, including numerous registered users who have provided myriad comments on various topics including potential hazards and safety tips, seasonal closures, photo opportunities, rest stops, and more. While the website does not count the number of bicyclists on the byways, Bicycle Colorado has received positive feedback on the site, and it continues to gain momentum and popularity. The site continues to evolve and byways travelers are suggesting new information and features.

The screenshot displays the Bicycle Colorado website interface. On the left, there is a vertical orange sidebar with several logos and social media links, including 'bicycle-friendly Colorado', 'Bicycle Colorado' with a 'Like' button showing 4,482 likes, and logos for 'Colorado DOT' and 'U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration'. The main content area features a map of a byway route in Colorado, highlighted in blue, passing through Pawnee National Grassland and North Sterling State Park. The map includes navigation controls (Map, Sat, Ter, Earth) and a 'Map data ©2013 Google - Terms of Use' notice. Below the map, there is a text description of the byway: 'This byway traverses the rugged Colorado Piedmont, a wide-open region anchored by the towering Pawnee Buttes. The landscape provides refuge for coyotes, prairie dogs, rattlesnakes, pronghorn antelope, and hundreds of bird species. Travelers can imagine how the shortgrass prairie appeared to Native Americans many centuries ago, and to the frontiersmen, cattle ranchers, and homesteaders who followed. Nineteenth-century settlers endured the hardships of wind, drought, and isolation; railroad towns sprang up, flourished, and declined. The communities that remain are as tough and resilient as the land they occupy, hardy symbols of America's pioneering spirit. (128 miles)'. To the right of the text are three red play button icons with labels: 'SEE ALL BYWAYS', 'LINK TO WEATHER.COM', and 'CDOT BYWAY'S HOME'. Below the text is a section for user comments, starting with 'ADD A COMMENT OR TIP ON THIS BYWAY'. A comment from 'Dave' dated 'Jun 22, 2011 at 10:19 pm' is visible, describing a trip to a designated campground. A red text prompt asks users to 'Register for a FREE account or log-in to flag an inappropriate comment.'

Users can learn about the byways routes and share comments and tips on the Bike the Byways interactive website: [www.bikebyways.org](http://www.bikebyways.org)

## Building Momentum

Beyond the website, Bicycle Colorado and CDOT provided public relations support to announce and promote the efforts. Another valuable resource for bicycle enthusiasts is the new consolidated bicycle and byways map, which shows the byways with different colors to match the shoulder widths and traffic volumes.



*Bicycle events and tours generate economic benefits across the state and can take advantage of the Bike the Byways efforts and resources (source: Bicycle Colorado).*

This map, as well as the Bike the Byways website, are also potential resources for large statewide and regional bicycle tourism events such as the Pro Cycling Challenge, Ride the Rockies, the Bicycle Tour of Colorado, and Pedal the Plains.

The benefits of the Bike the Byways efforts continue to materialize, and interestingly, the State of Washington (2013 No. 1 Bicycle Friendly State) has borrowed this idea from Colorado. Looking to the future, partners envision even more technological advancements to integrate Colorado's Bike the Byways to applications such as MapMyRide and Strava, which would allow users to track and comment via their mobile devices. Continued collaboration and future funding opportunities are key components in taking the site to the next level. In addition, it may be worth considering housing or linking the Bike the Byways website more directly with the Colorado Tourism Office's Colorado.com website so that is easily accessible for visitors with an interest in bicycling.

## **MOVING FORWARD: RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

The success stories in this report illustrate how Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways program has made many positive contributions to the state and local economy, as well as numerous other educational and recreational benefits to communities throughout the state. As the program nears its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the list of accomplishments is long, and there is an opportunity to take the program to the next level, with additional byway designations and refinements in the coordinating role that the state program provides. However, with the changing funding situation and less money available for byways at the federal and state levels, this also is an opportunity to take stock of the byway communities generally and how they can improve and refine their own planning and record-keeping, to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on state and federal resources.

### **Improving Economic Data Collection and Reporting**

One important step the local and regional byway organizations can take to ensure a firmer footing in the future is to improve how they collect the information that demonstrates the benefits they provide to local communities, especially the economic benefits.

In these endeavors, it is important for the Byway Program Manager to continue his/her leadership role with the byways organizations, and to establish common standards and expectations for the monitoring and reporting of data. This does not mean that the Byway Program Manager should be responsible for collecting nor maintaining all data. Rather, the Byway Program Manager should serve as a resource for the byways organizations by monitoring and distributing statewide or regional data when it is available, and by maintaining standard forms and centralized records for byways organizations’ own monitoring efforts. The following types of data are most helpful (and are the input types used by the Byways Economic Impact Model mentioned earlier in this report):

- Visitor profiles
- Visitor spending
- Visitor counts
- Investments
- Property values
- Economic multipliers
- Website activity

The following sections discuss the purpose of each of these data sets, sources for information, and suggestions for monitoring progress.

## Visitor Profiles

Visitor profiles are information about the general travel and spending patterns of visitors. The best sources for this data are local, regional, state, or corridor-specific visitor surveys. While specific visitor profiles for byways segments are provided in several of Colorado's byways' corridor management plans, this type of information is often difficult and expensive to gather.

Fortunately, the State of Colorado's Tourism Office (CTO) continually monitors the state's travel industry and makes much of its visitor-related research available to other organizations. These resources include Colorado Welcome Center research, an annual review of Colorado's travel and tourism market including visitor profiles prepared by Longwoods International, and annual estimates of the economic impacts of travel to and through Colorado prepared by Dean Runyan Associates. These resources can be used to help calibrate the visitor profiles in the Byways Economic Impact Tool to the state, and sometimes regional level. Using data from the Colorado Longwoods 2012 Report, the following data provides a snapshot of Colorado visitors in 2012.

2012 State of Colorado Visitor Profile Data	
% Daytrippers	51%
% Overnight Visitors	49%
% Living Within the Byway Region	40%
% Living Outside of the Byway Region	60%
% Staying in Paid Accommodations	72%
% Staying with Friends/Relatives	28%
Average Length of Stay in Region (Days) for All Visitors	4.5
Average Number of People in Travel Party	2.9

*Source: Colorado Longwoods 2012 Report*

So, for example, generally 72 percent of a given sample of tourists in Colorado will be staying in paid accommodations like a hotel or bed-and-breakfast on their trip, while the remaining 28 percent in that sample will be staying with friends or relatives.

While byways organizations are encouraged to obtain more specific visitor profile data applicable to their own byways and/or regions, at a minimum, it is important to monitor this level of state-level visitor data annually. It is recommended that the Byways Program Manager takes the lead in monitoring this statewide data, and providing it to all byways organizations, annually or as CTO tourism studies are periodically released.

It should be the responsibility of the byways organizations, in collaboration with their local business and tourism organizations, to monitor and periodically collect visitor profiles in their applicable regions or corridors. The Byways Program Manager could assist in these efforts by maintaining and distributing a

standardized visitor profile survey for byways organizations to use to collect visitor information. The Byways Program Manager could also maintain a centralized database of completed visitor surveys from the byways organizations and share this data, as well as any applicable regional data, with other similar byways organizations.

### Visitor Spending

An important tool for understanding the economic impact of byway visitors is how much they spend—on hotels, gas, food, or other goods and services. This type of data may be available from local chambers of commerce or business organizations, or can be gathered through visitor and business surveys.

The *Dean Runyan: Economic Impact of Travel on Colorado* studies report total direct travel spending for the state, regions, and counties. For example, visitors to Colorado in 2012 spent nearly \$14.8 billion on travel at their destinations. Roughly a quarter of this spending (nearly \$3.8 billion) was on food service or purchases at food stores.

2012 State of Colorado Visitor Spending Data	
Visitor Spending By Commodity Purchased	(\$ million)
Accommodations	2,838
Food Service	3,165
Food Stores	652
Local Transportation & Gas	2,328
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	1,917
Retail Sales	2,112
Visitor Air Transportation	1,779
<b>Total Destination Spending</b>	<b>\$14,791</b>
Other Travel (includes resident air travel and travel agencies)	1,860
<b>TOTAL DIRECT TRAVEL SPENDING</b>	<b>\$16,651</b>

*Source: Dean Runyan: The Economic Impact of Travel on Colorado, 2012*

As with visitor profiles, it is recommended that the Byways Program Manager serve as the leader in monitoring and disseminating the statewide visitor spending data to the byways organizations when it becomes available each year. And, it is recommended that the byways organizations, in coordination with their local business and tourism organizations, monitor and periodically collect information on visitor spending in their applicable regions or corridors. Again, the Byways Program Manager could serve as a resource in these efforts, by providing a standardized survey instrument, and maintaining a database of results.

### VISITOR COUNTS

Another important source of data to understand the economic impact of byways is the estimated number of travelers visiting the byway. When analyzing byways, it is important not only to monitor the total visitors to the

region or state, but also the total number of additional visitors that visited the region as a result of the byway.

One common method to derive estimated visitor counts is from visitor surveys, such as those occasionally conducted by some of the Colorado Welcome Centers. Such information is not available for most of the gateways to the scenic byways, however.

Another way to estimate visitor counts is by applying assumptions to modify the total visitor or traffic estimates for a specific byway corridor or region over a selected period. The following example from the Top of the Rockies Byway demonstrates the use of traffic counts to generate an estimated byway visitor count. Average annual daily traffic counts (AADT) were gathered for two points of analysis (2004, before interpretive signage improvements and 2013, the current year) for a specific point along the byway (the Fremont Pass summit). Because detailed analysis has not been completed to determine the percentage of traffic that is from byway visitors, some assumptions have to be made. In this example, it is assumed that only one percent of vehicles traveling the corridor do so solely because of the byway designation. This assumption is based on knowledge of the corridor and is a conservative estimate because this is the only route connecting communities in this region, and therefore most travelers of this segment of roadway are doing so because it is their only option, not solely because of the byway designation.

Using this assumption, it is possible to estimate the number of byway visitors, based on the total AADT. The example below shows a minor increase in the number of byways-specific trips to this corridor over the eight-year period – approximately 12 new trips. In terms of overall visitors, assuming an average of 2.9 people per travel party, these 12 additional trips mean an increase of nearly 35 visitors to the byway segment, or slightly more than 4 visitors per year.

<b>Example Byway Visitor Count Data: Top of the Rockies Byway at Fremont Pass</b>	
Start Date Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts (AADT 2005)	3,400 vehicles
End Date Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts (AADT 2013)	4,600 vehicles
% of Daily Traffic Volumes Assumed to be Byway Traffic	1%
Estimated Daily Byway Traffic (2005)	34
Estimated Daily Byway Traffic (2013)	46
Total Change in Byway Traffic (2005-2013)	12
Average Number of People in Travel Party	2.9
<b>Estimated Increase in Byway Visitors (2005-2013)</b>	<b>34.8</b>
<b>Estimated Annual Increase in Byway Visitors (2005-2013)</b>	<b>4.35</b>

*Sources: Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Longwoods 2012 Report, Clarion Associates, 2013.*

It is recommended that local byways organizations should take the lead in tracking visitor counts, in coordination with local tourism organizations. This data may be collected through visitor surveys, using the traffic count method highlighted above, or other methods that may be relevant to the region.

The Byways Program Manager can serve as a resource in maintaining a database for visitor counts reported by the byways organizations, and can also assist the byways organizations in accessing traffic count data along state highways from CDOT.

### Investments

Another set of valuable data point to track is the various public and private investments in byways. Types of public investments typically include the following:

- **Capital Investments** – all federal, state, local, and institutional expenditures in infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, property enhancements, and similar investments.
- **Wages and Benefits** – paid to employees of the byway organization and any other public entity whose jobs would not exist if not for the byway designation.
- **Purchases of Goods and Services** – purchases made in the region either by the byway organization or by other entities that were only able to make such purchases because of increased funding and/or economic activity attributable to the byway.

Data about public investments is usually available from organizational budgets and reports. It is important to provide details about the investment type and source, when possible. In the example below, the investment made in safety fencing on High Park Road along the Gold Belt Tour is considered a public investment in a capital improvement. This investment was made possible via a federal grant (National Scenic Byways Grant Program), of which 100 percent of the grant funding and improvements were attributable to this roadway being designated as a byway.

Example Public Investment Data				
Investment Name	Total Amount	Amount Attributable to Byway Designation	Investment Type	Investment Source
Gold Belt Tour Scenic and Historic Byway High Park Road Safety Fencing	\$65,600	100%	Capital Investment	Federal Grant

*Source: National Scenic Byways Grant Program*

Data about private investments is often much more difficult to obtain, compared with public investment data, because the data usually must come from business and property owners, who often are unwilling to share that information. As with public investments, for all private investments it is important to consider the role the byway does or does not play in any of these investments, and to exclude any investments that are not directly linked to the byway. Types of byways-related private investments typically include the following:

- **Property Investments** – includes property acquisition, site preparation/development, building development, and building renovation.
- **Business Investments** – includes investments in retail, dining, accommodation, and service enterprises along the byway corridor that are at least partially attributable to the byway’s existence.

In the following hypothetical example, a private land conservation group purchased a key piece of scenic property within a byway corridor for \$2.5 million, and placed it under a conservation easement to protect it from future development. While byway designation was an important factor in acquiring this land, it was not the only factor influencing the transaction, so a conservative assumption is that 25 percent of the overall investment is attributable to the byway designation.

Example Private Investment Data				
Investment Name	Total Amount	Amount Attributable to Byway Designation	Investment Type	Investment Source
Property Acquisition	\$2.5 million	25%	Property Investment	Private

*Source: Clarion Associates, 2013*

It is recommended that the Byways Program Manager continue to maintain a database of all federal and state byways grants. Ideally, this database should include the grant applications and matching contribution information, in addition to information about the investment type and source.

Local byways organizations should be responsible for providing all successful byways-related grant award information to the Byways Program Manager. Additionally, it is recommended that local byways organizations work with their local governments, chambers of commerce, and other businesses and organizations influenced by the byway to track and monitor all public and private investments, to the degree possible.

## Property Values

The last type of data that may be collected and analyzed to determine the benefits of byways is property value appreciation – the difference in property assessments over a period of time for properties influenced by the byway, compared to those not influenced by the byway. Property value data is available from local assessor’s offices. Assumptions must be made, based on the best professional judgment of the byway organization and/or local real estate experts, regarding the percentage of the jurisdiction located in the byway area, the byway’s growth in relation to the overall area’s growth, and the amount of growth attributable to byway activity.

In the hypothetical example below, the 1989 valuation of a property adjacent to a byway corridor was \$100,000, and in 25 years that property tripled in value to \$300,000. Using a series of assumptions about the percentage of the jurisdiction located in the byway corridor, the relative growth of the byway area compared with the jurisdiction as a whole, and the total amount of appreciation estimated to be attributed to byway activity, it is estimated that about \$2,000 of that total appreciation is attributable to the byway.

Example Property Value Investment Data	
Jurisdiction	Colorado Town
Base Year Valuation (1989)	\$100,000
End Year Valuation	\$300,000
Total Appreciation (1989-2013)	\$200,000
% of Jurisdiction Located in Byway Area	10%
Ratio of Value Change in Byway Area as % of Jurisdiction’s Overall Growth Rate	100%
Percent of Appreciation Attributable to Byway Activity	10%
<b>Appreciation Attributable to Byway Activity</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>

*Source: Clarion Associates, 2013*

It is recommended that byways organizations begin tracking the assessed values of a few key pieces of property along the byway corridor. It may be valuable to track similar properties in the same jurisdiction that are not influenced by the byway for comparison. In most jurisdictions, assessor records are updated every two years, so it may take some time to be able to evaluate long-term trends, unless historical data is also available.

It is not recommended that the Byways Program Manager take an active role in the tracking or reporting of property value appreciation due to the extensive knowledge about the local real estate markets that is required for this type of analysis to be effective.

## Other Data Needs

### ECONOMIC MULTIPLIERS

In addition to the byways-related data listed above, it is important to have access to economic multipliers, which can be used to measure the effects of economic activity in a region. Multipliers from the Regional Input-Output Multiplier System (RIMS II), from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis are available at the regional level, and are periodically updated and released. There are three types of multipliers:

- **Output** – estimate the total activity (in dollars) resulting from an amount of direct spending.
- **Employment** – estimate how many jobs are created resulting from an amount of direct spending.
- **Earnings** – estimate how much will be paid in wages and benefits resulting from an amount of direct spending.

It is recommended that the Byways Program Manager maintain a database with the region's current economic multipliers (or maintain a relationship with the appropriate staff person with Colorado's Office of Economic Development and International Trade, who has access to these multipliers) and provide this information to byways organizations upon request. In the long term, use of the multipliers may be an area for future training opportunities for the byways organizations.

### WEBSITE TRAFFIC

Another important set of byways-related data to monitor is website traffic. CDOT maintains webpages for the byways program in general, as well as specific page(s) for each byway segment. Looking forward, it will be beneficial for the Byways Program Manager to work with the website manager to monitor and document the traffic on these pages (in terms of the number of pageviews and unique pageviews) on an annual basis. Moreover, the Byways Program Manager should reach out to the Federal Highway Administration to obtain traffic data for the Colorado byways listed on the America's Byways website (if possible).

Finally, for the local byways organizations that have and maintain their own websites, it is recommended that they also monitor their website traffic and submit an annual summary of that data to the Byways Program Manager.

## Enhancing Collaboration and Partnerships

Beyond tracking and monitoring data, the Byways Program Manager should continue to play an important role in the marketing, managing, and seeking out of funding opportunities in collaboration with the local byways organizations and communities. Furthermore, the Byways Program Manager should continue

to be a liaison for the many state, federal, and nonprofit agencies that involve and support the byways. This also means that the Byways Program Manager should advocate for the inclusion of byways in local, regional, state, and federal planning and policy-making for myriad topics including economic development, tourism, land use, natural resources, and transportation.

## **Observations on the State Byways Program from Case Studies**

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Given the changing nature of federal funding for byways and tightening state and local economies generally, local and regional officials responsible for protecting and promoting byways will need to be more creative in securing funds and marshaling support and resources for future byways improvements.

We spoke generally with contacts in all the case study communities about the services that the state byways program provides. All expressed strong appreciation for the important coordination role that the state program plays, while also recognizing that there are opportunities for refinements and improvements in any state program. The following are observations from some of the case study contacts:

- The role of CDOT and the Byways Program Manager in assisting with funding, training, and marketing is seen as an important and valuable service in all the case study communities we researched. No regional or local leaders, especially those serving in a volunteer or part-time capacity, have the time or knowledge to successfully navigate the changing grant applications and other materials that are necessary to tap into national funding sources.
- Further, the ability of the Byways Program Manager to coordinate and collaborate with the different byways around the state serves an important role as an information clearinghouse. Leaders of regional byways organizations all feel that they can learn from their peers in other communities, and appreciate the ability of the state Byways Program Manager in facilitating contacts and sharing best practices for how to promote the byways, suggestions for creative funding sources, etc.
- However, there is recognition that other agencies beyond CDOT must play a role in effective byways management and promotion, and protection of the resources along byways. The Byways Program Manager's role as a leader among multiple agency partners also is seen as a valuable service that is working well.
- CDOT has cut funding for one-on-one assistance from Byways staff. However, members of local byways organizations (not just the directors) would like to have opportunities for more interaction to develop stronger relationships with the Byways Program Manager.
- The training opportunities facilitated by the statewide Program Manager are valued. However, there is a need to develop more

advanced training in some areas for some of the more established byway organizations.

Stakeholders recognize that there is discussion about whether the byways program should remain headquartered in CDOT, or perhaps would be a better fit in another agency. There is recognition that the state byways program may not always reside in CDOT. There are differing opinions as to the importance of the CDOT-Byways relationship.

- On the one hand, some see a disconnect between CDOT agency goals of moving people and cars swiftly and efficiently, versus a byways program that seeks to slow traffic down to enjoy the view and spend money in local businesses. Others, however, believe that public safety must be a critical concern in all byways planning, and thus CDOT is a perfect home for the byways program. Moreover, some view CDOT’s mission” to enhance the quality of life and the environment of the citizens of Colorado by creating an integrated transportation system that focuses on safely moving people and goods by offering convenient linkages among modal choices” as well-aligned with the vision for the byway’s program.
- Every byway is different. In some cases, the core CDOT functions of efficient and safe transportation may be closely aligned with a byway’s goals; in other cases, a byway more focused on conservation and open space protection may need support from agencies such as BLM and the Forest Service.
- Some have suggested that it might make sense to have the byways program more closely related to the Colorado Tourism Office (notwithstanding that the CTO may not have funding or capacity to take on the program). On the other hand, others prefer that the Byways Program Manager remain in CDOT, where the position can ensure a broad, even focus on both rural and urban areas (and not be focused on just the areas with greater marketing and tourism dollars).
- Caution is needed if the program is moved to another state organization. Many see it as an essential program, and some think that shifting it to another state organization could destroy the established relationships and the program.

All those interviewed saw a continued need for a single Byways Program Manager to help tie together various efforts across the state – someone to “connect the dots.” This is particularly important in a state with 25 diverse scenic byways led by organizations that bring widely varying levels of community support, technical expertise, and access to funding opportunities.

Based on our detailed review of the program and information gathered through conversations with byways organizations and other stakeholders, we recommend that the Byways Program Manager position remain based in CDOT, due to the considerable institutional knowledge that exists within the organization, the extensive technical coordination required for byways-related

## CDOT’s Byways Program Manager Connects the Dots

*In a state with 25 diverse scenic byways led by organizations that bring widely varying levels of community support, technical expertise, and access to funding opportunities, a single Byways Program Manager is needed to help tie together the efforts and “connect the dots.”*

*CDOT is a natural home for the Byways Program Manager due to the recognition from Federal Highways Administration that this is a transportation program; the technical coordination required for byways-related transportation issues; the extensive institutional knowledge of the program within CDOT; and the connections among other regional, state and federal organizations.*

transportation improvements, and the complexities and evolving nature of federal and state transportation legislation and funding. The Program Manager should continue to provide leadership and expertise on the state's byways, and should also continue to seek opportunities to enhance collaboration with other regional, state, and federal organizations to add value to the program and the byways communities.