

Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways

Strategic Plan Retreat Number One

July 15, 2015

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Invited participants. Those marked “yes” were in attendance.

	Members:		Ex-Officio Members:
No	Kelly Barbello, CTO	No	Shailen Bhatt
Yes	Rep. CK Becker	No	Irv Halter
Yes	Charlotte Bumgarner	No	Mike King
Yes	Georgianna Contiguglia, Retired, Former History Colorado	No	Ed Nichols
Yes	Shannon Gifford, Transp. Commission		
No	Margaret Hunt, CO Creative Ind.		Representatives:
Yes	Robert Mutaw, Former History Colorado Board	No	Shay Ives, DOLA Main Street
Yes	Leah Quesenberry, BLM	Yes	Cynthia Nieb, History Colorado
No	Christopher Spurl, USFS	Yes	Jack Placchi, BLM
Yes	Roger Ben Wilson, Western Slope Representative	Yes	John Ricks, CO Tourism
Yes	Greg Yankee, Open Space		
	CDOT:		
Yes	Lenore Bates, CDOT		
Yes	Betsy Jacobsen, CDOT		
Yes	Debra Perkins-Smith, CDOT		
Yes	Elizabeth Watson (Consultant)		

Welcome and Introductions

People went around the room and identified themselves and their association with the Byways Commission/Program.

Review

Elizabeth provided an overview that she spoke with 24 people about the Byways and identified issues discussed as priorities with each person. Part of today is about identifying the priorities.

Goals need to be identified first, then strategies will be developed for each goal. Elizabeth passed out sticky notes for participants to jot down goals as they come.

These notes are basically comments and thoughts presented by attendees:

Key Topic #1: Tourism and the state system of Scenic and Historic Byways. Should the program be expanded or retained in its current size? The moratorium should stay in place for now; in order to lift the moratorium there should be a criteria of what a new byway would bring. Any growth should avoid conflicts with existing byway experience (any new byway should be different from current byways). Dillution of the Byways Brand is a concern with adding more.

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The moratorium was put in place to take a breath to determine what criteria would be defined.

There's a financial sustainability issue that's not addressed with adding new byways, but there are agencies that could help us with that.

Tourism and the Traveller – we have to figure a way to elevate the byways to products. The more people we can get in and off the main roads, into communities where the traveller can experience more and have an overnight stay, is how the economy benefits.

The byways has to be ready for the traveler.

Every byway should have to pass a test that qualifies/certifies them.

Oregon is a model of their scenic bikeways program. Communities have to meet criteria to be on the bikeway. They have to fulfill requirements and keep up.

75% of our bikeways have no form of organization.

Mainstreet program needs to report every quarter.

CDOT doesn't have anyone to keep byways' feet to the fire.

What are the consequences if a byway isn't meeting requirements.

Award the byways that are doing well.

Develop an inventory of each byway and identify what they're doing.

What measurements could be reported by each byway.

Maybe there's a tour we do every 5 years or so to check on the byway.

What are we trying to achieve with a report? Is it to identify that the byway is engaged and active; or is it to identify weaknesses in which we can assist.

Success is defined as visitors and tourism.

There should be defined expectations of what it means to be a byway.

Let's look back at when the byway was nominated and their purpose. Each byway is different and not all of them needs to have a full staff, etc. But in becoming a byway, they had certain reasons for being a byway.

Elizabeth: there was no requirement by FHWA that the byway have an organization.

The designation itself is an economic generating tool, and a preservation tool.

The designation is also tied to recreation.

For designation, they have to have a corridor management plan and an organized group to manage the byway. Do they have buy-in from the local community? Do they have financial help? It could be a one-page e-mail.

There's no dedicated funding for helping the byways. There might be a way for local groups to compete for various types of fund. At the national level they're trying to change the limits from FHWA for the new transportation bill.

Lenore provided background on an economic impact study and tool that CDOT is working on.

What is the visitor's experience?

Lots of variety among the byways. Some are open all year; some attract more winter activities; etc.

A negative experience: the variation in infrastructure that's available (i.e. run-down restrooms/stops).

This is an issue across a lot of byways and needs to be addressed.

When I think of stopping at a restroom, I think of it as a marketing experience to tell the traveler what's available.

It's important to emphasize the importance of the program with the political arena.

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We need to be careful in that we don't say everything can be solved with funding.

Funding isn't going to be available for a long time.

What is the role of this program? What are we trying to accomplish? In the absence of funding. What's the role of the Byways Commission and the role of the byways program.

Adventure Travel people – we don't have many in-bound adventures for organizers like REI Adventures. Instead they made connections with existing providers to develop adventures.

I think there's a role in the Commission to look for funding, and nationally to lobby for funding.

We do two things on a state level: training and promoting. Roger would like to see that expanded so each byway can add specific information to the byways map and web site.

What is the purpose of the byways? What should it be in the future? What's the vision? What's the role of the Commission in the future?

Is this a system that Colorado needs?

Is this so important for rural communities and for tourism that Colorado needs the program?

What's the benefit for the investment instead of look at it as a need? We could get by without a tourism office, but what's the benefit to the state by having a tourism office?

There's a role for the byways for Coloradans, and there's a role for visitors. In-state people think less about it being a byway. If the byways go away, the road doesn't go away; but my experience the first time I stopped and learned about a specific byway was important. Reading about it taught me a lot.

Do the byways have a role in supporting the existence of rural communities? With the doubling of population in the future, will the rural areas draw people to a certain quality of life.

Rural areas/byways, need help with capacity. Rural areas want to thrive, but they need help.

The byways lack focus. When comparing main streets, you know immediately what a main street is. The byway is a route to get to other recreational opportunities.

Travelers don't sit at home and say to each other, "hey, let's go to Colorado on a heritage, agri tourism trip" The language has to change to explain that Colorado has what the consumer wants.

"Follow the green dots." Rand McNally identifies the byways on their maps with dots.

The byways are places along a route. It's a very cheap investment that help generate economics.

Do the byways have to be here? Is it important to keep them?

Is this something Colorado has benefitted from? Is it something communities benefit from?

There's a small group of byways that have gotten together and stayed together. Byway Foundation. 13 byways and 5 land trust groups. It came together because the funds were expiring and we felt there was value in working together. We got a big grant for conservation originally, but we wanted to stay together. Partnerships and collaborations strengthen the participants. The groups that joined this

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collaboration are already the highly-functioning byways and land trusts. What happens with the lower-performing groups?

Elizabeth reviewed the top priorities from her hour-long interviews with everyone.

More promotional materials – digital promotions

Interpretive signage

Wayfinding signage

Funding (all kinds)

Training/education for byway leaders

Educating our communities about byways

Dedicated staff

Be a champion (this is the role of the Commission) – linking can fit under this. Developing a vision fits under this. Be a voice for local byways.

Strengthening existing byways

Expand the number of byways

Economic development

Tourism & visitor experience

Regularly visit local byways

Create definitive criteria for the entire system – nominate or de-list

Understand economic impacts

Help local byways identify and develop new sources of funding

Assist communities with preserving resources

Teach byways how to work together as a group

Clearinghouse for best practices

More federal funding

Maintenance, renovation, reconstruction of existing infrastructure

Scenic easements

Public education about importance of preservation, conservation (stewardship)

More reporting/visibility about effectiveness of individual byways

Seek innovation (electric charging stations on some byways as an example)

Cross pollination that links resources to each other.

Create a vision and then there's a lot of linking that we do with resources.

What's CDOT's role? Why? What's the purpose of the Byways?

Goals of CDOT:

Maintain our assets

Address mobility (relieving congestion)

Safety

Economic vitality

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Is there an existing Byways strategic Plan – Not in Colorado. There are a few examples of byways strategic plans from other states, but not very many. Utah, Maryland have them.

What's our mission and vision statement?

Role of commission – preserve and highlight areas for economic development. That's done through the designation of the byway. Once a byway is designated, you achieve this through promotion, coordinating among the byways and their stakeholders, etc. Things are happening without the byway commission intervention.

Lenore provided background on the purpose of the commission (designating byways and selecting projects for national funding). After MAP-21, funding went away. Started to develop mission and vision; but last year we had our anniversary, and this year we had the designation of a new byway. Both efforts took the time that we would've otherwise spent furthering the role of the Commission.

LUNCH BREAK

VISION: Guiding travelers to experience and be inspired by treasured places the comprise Colorado's Scenic and Historic Byways.

COMMISSION MISSION: The Commission is a partnership to evaluate and designate the state's Scenic and Historic Byways and to develop and recommend funding sources and provide administrative support to sustain the Byways for future generations.

Isn't the purpose of the Byways: To improve the state of Colorado and be of service for the enjoyment of the people of Colorado and the visitors of Colorado.

The purpose of the Byways is also to tell stories of the landscapes and histories, etc. of travelers on the Byways. It's the interpretation of the geological and historical areas. Is this the "how" of the mission?

To encourage deep interactions with Colorado's treasured places.

In Colorado, we have all these cool little places where people can go and be away from a lot of things, but also be in touch with local things to do.

"Come to Life" is a theme used by Tourism office. It's an old Maslow thing about "being". States of being and a state of mind. It's being alive. Tourism wants to brand Colorado with being alive.

The Byways connects people and places.

Younger generations don't want to "be" as much as they want to "do"

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Part of the whole “alive” this is a connectedness to a place. “I’m going to go places that I perceive fits with me.” People go to places that share their same values.

Connect. Engage. These are good descriptions for what the byway should be doing.

In the absence of money, is there a role for the Commission?

KC reviewed what the Main Streets program does – very similarly to the Byways.

Each Byway highlights that specific community. But what’s the role of the Commission? Maybe our role is to find funding. Is there a role for us to provide resources, technical training, services, etc.

What is the Commission doing vs. what are the byways doing?

If the Commission is the umbrella organization that keeps the byways together, what is the role of the Commission? The designation in itself has a value. So then is it up to the individual byway to take advantage of the designation.

Maybe there are things that we provide, but then the individual byway has to pay for it (i.e. we coordinate/provide training, but the byway has to pay to attend).

Maybe we should do a gap analysis that identifies holes in the program.

Lenore distributed the FY16 Work Program, and the contributions that each of the various agencies make to the Byways.

Did the work program have value in the past and should we continue doing them in the future? CDOT isn’t willing to commit to doing all the things in the FY16 work program other than signage. What’s important to do and who should do what, and who should fund what?

When the Executive Order was developed, there was a lot of discussion as to where the program should live. And it seemed that it should stay in CDOT; but it doesn’t really fit within CDOT’s mission. It was in CDOT originally because the funding came from FHWA. Now that the line item is gone, what happens. If the general legislature was asked to fund this, the program would have to justify the program – that it’s a cost benefit to the state.

Regarding why and how -- Preservation of resources, economic vitality (rural economic development).

What are we trying to prove? Are we trying to come up with a plan so state legislators fund this program?

The Byways doesn’t fit neatly under any one department.

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Are we needed?

Is funding needed to meet the need?

What do byways need?

Who's meeting the need?

How support meets the need?

What's the gap analysis?

If it goes away, what's lost?

How does this Commission leverage resources and what's the Commission's plan of work? If you come up with a plan of work, then you know where it needs to live.

It's either all ad-hoc, or leveraged with other agencies.

Perhaps we could gather information regarding expert advice and provide our list. We're expertise rich, money poor.

Creative Industries has compiled a list of resources and asked the experts to provide guidance when needed. Stephanie Troller is the lead on that.

Funders don't talk to each other.

Agencies don't talk to each other.

This Commission is the authorizing body that says who's a byway. We're the only ones that do that. This Commission provides recognition. Is this all we do?

Could we ask each byway to identify their top two projects; the Commission reviews and identifies the top ten; then work with resources from Commission resources to try to assist in getting the project done.

The Commission has a lot more weight with department heads than individual commission members requesting help.

Role of Commission: Evaluate and designate state scenic byways. Be a clearinghouse for the individual byways. Soft advocacy/visibility for the system of byways. Is there something we need to do for all the byways (i.e. we create the mapping that shows all the byways for the state). Do we have a role that has a collective service that all byways need?

This could be considered a membership organization where participants pay to be part of it.

Why does a community want to be a Byway? Elizabeth is considering doing a survey to the byways and ask them what they see as benefits of being a byway. "What have you gotten out of being a byway?"

What's the value in this commission?

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***Going forward. What should the final Byways system look like? Expand? Contract? Quality of experience? Variety? This can be a charge for the Commission to determine.**

Seek Innovation – 2 dots. Staying fresh, creative. It's more of a philosophy as to how we look at things. To stand out is to look at a different way of doing things.

Public Education about connecting people and places and sustain for future generations – 2 dots

Clearinghouse for best practices – 4 dots. Standards and success stories. Inspiring to try things rather than doing the same things over and over. Not everything needs to be created from scratch.

Create definitive criteria for the entire list – 4 dots.

Tourism and visitor experience – 1 dot. The individual byways need to do their own development of the byway experience.

Economic development – 1 dot. Byways do it, but the Commission want it.

Strengthen existing byways – 1 dot. This one could be combined with training for byways leaders.

Be a champion – 8 dots.

Training/education for byways leaders – 1 dot.

Funding (all kinds) – 1 dot. Should there be a Colorado Byway Foundation that is specifically designed to raise money for the Byways. It would be a 501 c 3.

Colorado Resource Center is in business to help non-profits do business. CRC is generally a charge to use. But very few of the Byways are a 501 c 3.

Colorado Preservation Inc. is another group that could help byways. They're free.

Who else should be at the table?

DOLA. Andy Hill or Tim Stroh are people who do the work; but maybe getting a little higher level like Charlie Chantelle would be good.

DNR. Maybe Gary Thorsen.

There's a difference between a Commission member and someone who helps does the work.

Colorado Preservation Conference in February – would be a good opportunity to present the Byways. Governor's Conference on Tourism Sept. 13-15 might be another opportunity for a breakout.

In addition to training and byways leader support, the Commission could be utilized by providing more exposure to the Byways.

The Commission should also meet in other places besides Denver. Perhaps when Lenore goes to specific Byways, a Commission member should go out with her to represent the Commission.

Letters to the Editor or Op Ed regarding specific exposure for Byways and have it come from the Commission.

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Goals as identified on the yellow stickies:

Develop the detailed selection byway criteria

Firm economic analysis of all the byways – what's their economic impact

Develop a mechanism to help byways that are faltering

Develop best practices for the items that are general for all byways

Develop a needs assessment – what is the experience of the traveler on the byway – so we have a sense of what's out there currently. (i.e. Byway test – inventory of what's available).

What is the Byway Commission and the Byway interface? How does the communication work?

What's the mechanism to help the byways when they need something?

Any thoughts on what the Survey Monkey needs to ask to the main stakeholders?

What would they like to see from the commission and the byways program?

What are the benefits of being a byway?

How many people are involved locally and how often do they meet?