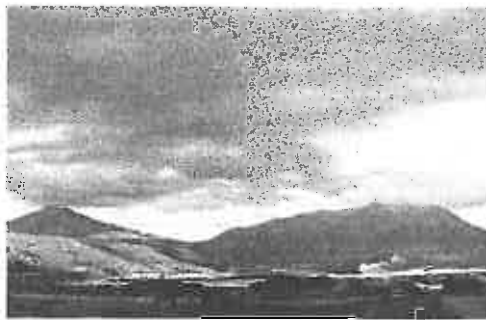


**Highway of Legends  
2003 Visitor & Resident Survey Report**



**"Home of the Rain gods"**

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**Project Sponsors:  
Scenic Highway of Legends, Inc.  
CSU/DOLA Community Technical Assistance Program,**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Highway of Legends Scenic and Historic Byway, on Highways 12 and 160, was designated as a Colorado State Byway in 1987 and a National Forest Byway in 1989. The Byway begins in Walsenburg, on the high plains of eastern Colorado, and proceeds upward through the San Isabel National Forest to cross the 9,994 foot high Cuchara pass. It continues across the mountains, past Monument Lake, and loops around to Trinidad. State Highway 46 connects Cuchara Pass with the Town of Aguilar, near I-25. This connection was designated an addition to the Highway of Legends in 2002.

A trip along the highway offers a panorama of historical, scenic and recreational sites along its 120 miles. Geology along the route figures prominently in the landmarks and many legends linger along the scenic byway. The charming mountain towns and villages of Aguilar, Cokedale, Cuchara, La Veta, Segundo, Stonewall, Trinidad, Walsenburg, and Weston dot the byway. Numerous places of interest and amenities along the byway include: two state parks, the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area, museums, motels, bed-and-breakfasts, guest ranches, cabins, campgrounds, restaurants, gift shops, bookstores, a small ski resort and three golf courses.

### **Survey Development**

With the assistance of the Colorado State University Technical Assistance Program, two surveys for about the Highway of Legends were developed and administered to Residents and Visitors along the byway during the summer and fall of 2003. The Visitor's Survey includes information about what visitors have done along the byway in the past year, desirability of types of activities, condition of the infrastructure, priorities for the protection and preservation of regional resources, basics of how they planned their trip, and demographic information. The Resident Survey includes the above information (except for the trip planning information) as well as their prioritization of types of economic development and SHOL objectives. (See Appendix 3 for copies of the surveys and the final report.)

The purpose of the surveys is to provide objective information from a representative sample of visitors and residents about their activities, interests and priorities that can be used to guide interpretive planning and marketing efforts for the Highway of Legends.

**Goals** of the surveys for both visitors and residents are to:

- Provide a better understanding of what draws people to the byway.
- Identify interests and use patterns that will help prioritize interpretive projects.
- Identify infrastructure needs that will enhance peoples' experience.
- Recognize priorities in terms of protection and preservation of intrinsic resources.

In addition, for visitors, to:

- Provide information about demographics that can be used in the development of marketing strategies.

- Understand the relationship of demographics, use patterns, trip planning and interest in activities.

For residents, it will also:

- Provide information to determine priorities for economic development that is compatible with byway objectives.

Funding for this study was provided by a grant obtained by the Colorado Byways Commission from the Colorado Historical Fund. The surveys were developed through the Community Technical Assistance Program, a partnership between the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and Colorado State University Cooperative Extension.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In collaboration with Mary K. Cooper and the Scenic Highway of Legends committee, two parallel surveys were developed for Highway of Legends (HOL), one for visitors and one for residents of the area. Diana Milner, a graduate student at University of Colorado at Denver, through the CSU Technical Assistance Program, helped prepare the questions, distribute surveys, analyze the data and prepare the final report. Previous and concurrent surveys were studied in the process of developing the questionnaires. Identical maps were used for each version of the survey, and several of the same questions were asked on each. Other questions were designed specifically for only visitors or residents. Demographic questions were included to help us assure a representative sampling. In Las Animas and Huerfano Counties, in which the Highway of Legends is located, the population is almost exclusively white, but they are of two distinct ethnic groups, Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Therefore, in order to assure that a reasonably representative sample had been obtained, respondents were asked whether they were of Hispanic origin.

Distribution of surveys began in June 2003. Visitor Surveys were left at businesses typically providing visitor services and accommodations, such as visitor's centers, resorts, state parks, museums, motels and B&Bs. Resident surveys were distributed at meetings, such as Chambers' of Commerce and Kiwanis; and work places, such as hospitals, elementary schools, and state parks. In addition, both resident and visitor surveys were distributed at two special events, "Art in the Park" in La Veta on July 5th, and the "Stonewall Century Bike Ride" in La Veta on August 24th. Both surveys were distributed to customers at several businesses along the byway, and resident surveys were distributed in Aguilar in September of 2003. Every effort was made to offer the opportunity to complete a survey to the widest possible variety of residents and visitors within the constraints of time and funding.

## VISITOR SURVEY RESULTS

This section first presents information from the Visitor survey. This is followed by information that can best be understood by combining or contrasting the information from both the Visitor and Resident surveys. Some results are printed in bold type to make it easier for the reader to quickly locate specific data or the main findings of a lengthy section.

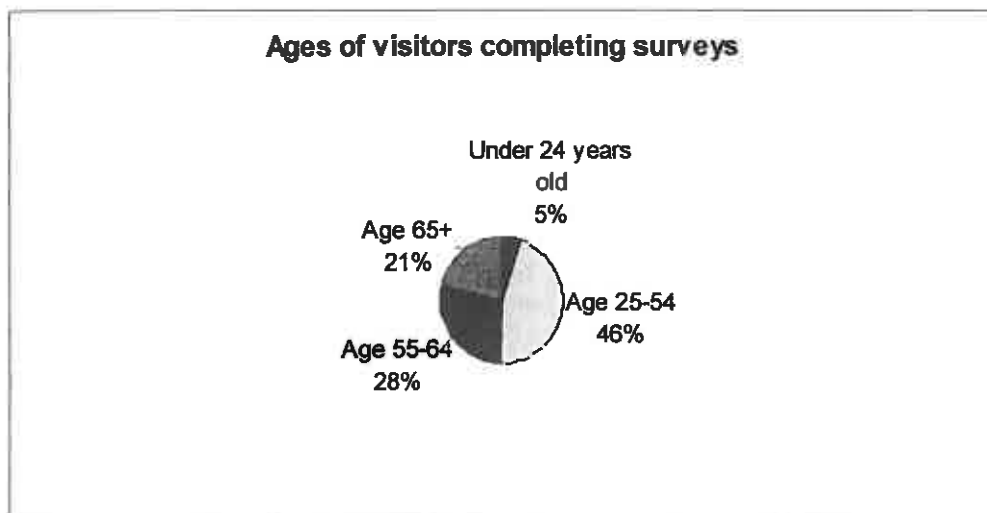
### Demographics

A total of 166 visitor surveys were collected. Of those, 23% were collected on July 5, 2003 at the Art in the Park event in La Veta, and 28% at the Stonewall Century Bike Ride event in La Veta. Sixteen individuals who were part of a tour group visiting the State History Museum in Trinidad were given surveys and 80% of them completed surveys that were returned by mail. Other visitor surveys were collected from Visitor Centers, libraries, the State History Museum in Trinidad, Monument Lake Park, Trinidad Lake State Park, La Veta-Cuchara Chamber of Commerce, Francisco Fort Museum in La Veta, The Walsenburg Mining Museum, Lathrop State Park and guest accommodation locations along the highway and in Trinidad, Stonewall, Cuchara and La Veta.

### Visitor Age/Income/Ethnicity

The demographic profile for visitors to the Highway of Legends closely matches that of a study done by the Travel Industry Association of America in 2003. The Travel Industry Association found that “Baby Boomers, defined as between the ages of 35 and 54, generated more travel than any other age group in the U.S. They are also more likely than other age groups to stay in a hotel or motel and they typically spend \$1,000 on vacations, excluding the cost of transportation.” Ninety percent of the respondents were white, non-Hispanic. Most were between ages 25-54 (47%), followed by those from ages 55-64 (28%) and ages 65 and older (21%). Only five percent were younger than age 24. Among survey respondents, males slightly outnumbered females, although this was not statistically significant. See Figure 1 below.

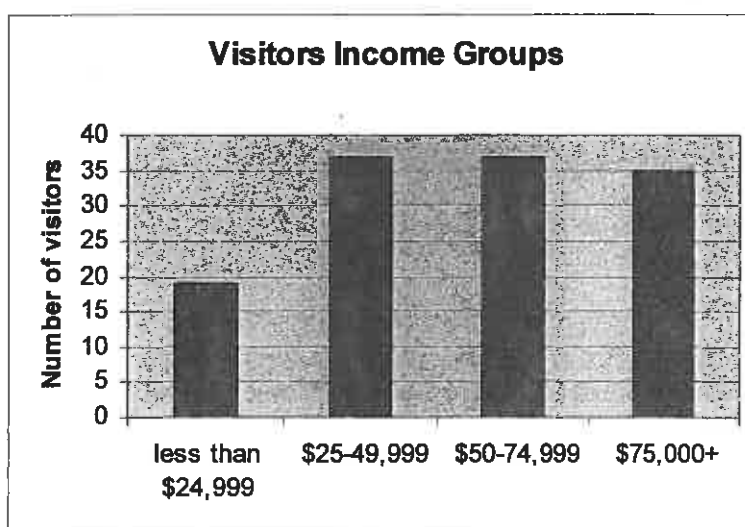
Figure 1



Visitors were asked about the composition of their travel party. Travel party size ranged from one to 17, with a mean of 3.3 people in a party. Nineteen percent were traveling alone, 46% in a party of two, 8% in a party of 3 and 14% in a party of 4. Thirty-eight percent of the visitors were traveling in parties including one or more senior citizens, and 15 % were in parties including one or more children.

Seventy percent of the sample group provided information on their annual household income. Fifty-six percent of this subset of visitors had household incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999 per year, and twenty seven percent had incomes of over \$75,000 per year. Fourteen percent had income of less than \$24,999. See the Chart 1 below.

Chart 1



### Visitor Occupations

Eighty percent of the visitor surveyed responded to the question about their primary occupation. Among these, twenty eight percent were retired. Twelve percent (16) were in retail business or sales, 11% (15) were educators, 9% (12) were in management or professional positions, 7% (10) were in the medical field, and 9% (13) worked in other service sector jobs. Five percent (7) worked in high technology areas, and 4% (5) each were artists, self-employed or housewives. Three percent of the visitors were in banking and 2% in farming and/or ranching. Three people were in transportation, manufacturing, and/or construction, and one was a student.

### Accommodations/Length of Stay

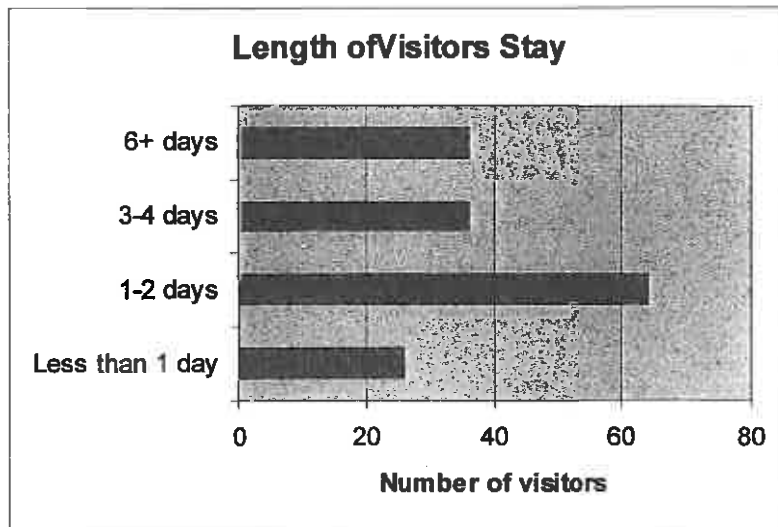
Ninety-seven percent (161) of the visitors reported on their length of stay in the area. Twenty-six percent of visitor respondents stayed less than one day, 40% stayed one or two days, 22% stayed three or four days and 22% stayed five days or longer.

Visitors in the HOL sample who were over the age of 65 stayed at least one or two days, and the average length of their stay was longer than that of younger visitors. Visitors from Southern

Colorado, Oklahoma/Texas and the Eastern United States were especially likely to stay more than four days. Visitors from the Denver area were likely to stay one or two days.

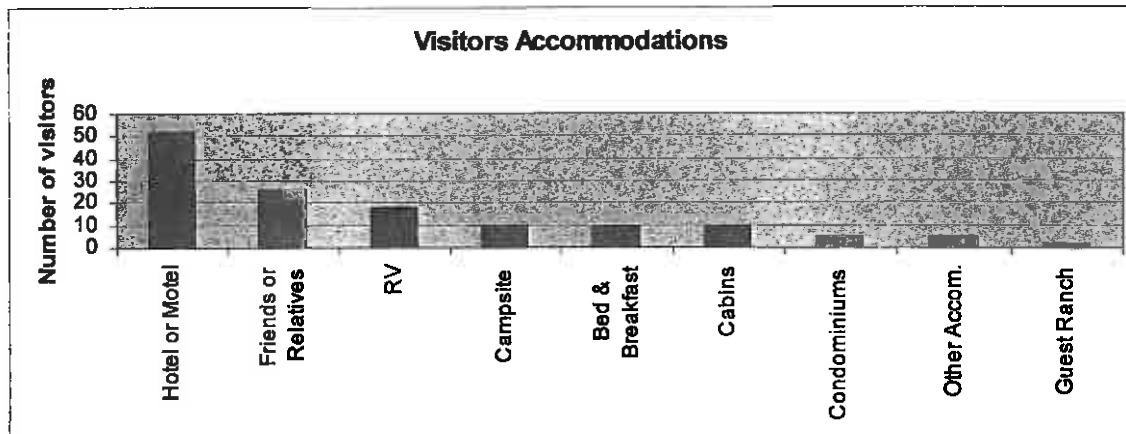
Among those visitors in the sample who attended the Art in the Park event, 23% were in the area less than one day, 41% stayed one or two days, 23% stayed three or four days and 13% stayed longer. Among those visitors in the sample who attended the Stonewall Century Bike Ride, 17% stayed less than one day, 65% stayed one or two days, 7% stayed three or four days and 13% stayed longer. See Figure 2 below.

Figure 2



One hundred thirty-six (82%) of the visitors indicated the type of lodging accommodations they used while in the area. **Thirty-eight percent of those reporting the type of accommodations stayed in a hotel or motel**, 19% stayed with friends or relatives, 12% stayed in an RV, 7% stayed at a campsite, 7% stayed at a bed & breakfast, and 1% stayed at a guest ranch. Nineteen visitors stayed in other accommodations, nine of them in cabins, five in condos, three in the high school gym. While 18% of the visitors who did not indicate the type of lodging accommodations, 16% of the visitors indicated that they had stayed less than one day. See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3



**Two-thirds of the visitors from New Mexico, half of those from the Denver area and one third of those from Southern Colorado stayed in a hotel/motel during their stay.** About half the visitors staying with friends were from the Denver area. Visitors whose age was between 55 and 64 were especially satisfied with their lodging accommodations. Of those staying one or two days, half stayed in a hotel/motel. Of those visitors staying three to four days, 46% stayed in a hotel/motel. Visitors staying with friends and family or in an RV tended to stay four days or longer.

Forty percent of the visitors whose household income was less than \$25,000 a year stayed in a hotel/motel, and 47% stayed with friends or relatives. Half the visitors with household incomes between \$25,000 and \$49,999 stayed in hotels and motels, as did one third of the visitors with higher incomes.

Among those visitors in the sample who attended the Art in the Park event and who reported their type of lodging, 41% stayed with friends/relatives, 21% stayed in an RV, 10% stayed at a campsite 17% stayed in a hotel/motel, 3% stayed in a bed-and-breakfast, 3% stayed at a condominium and 3% stayed at a guest ranch. Among those visitors who attended the Stonewall Century Bike Ride, 46% stayed in a hotel/motel, 15% stayed with friends/relatives, 8% stayed in a bed-and-breakfast, 5% stayed at a campsite, 3% stayed in an RV, and 25% stayed in cabins, condos, or the high school gymnasium. Volunteers dealing with the registration for this event stated that all hotel/motel/bed-and-breakfast rooms in the area were reserved in advance of the event.

David Eby's 2000 study, *Importance of scenic byways in route choice*, found that "for trips in which the primary accommodation was camping or staying in a hotel/bed-and-breakfast rather than staying with friends or relatives, scenic byways were given a higher importance rating in regard to route choice."<sup>1</sup> Visitors to the HOL who were camping or staying in a hotel/motel/bed-and-breakfast were also more likely to have been influenced by knowing it was a scenic byway than other visitors, but this tendency failed to reach statistical significance.

## Route Choices

**One hundred fifteen (71% of the 162 visitors who answered this question) indicated that they knew in advance that this was a scenic by-way, and forty-seven (29%) indicated they did not know in advance. If they indicated that they knew in advance that it was a scenic byway, respondents were asked if this advanced knowledge influenced their decision to take this route. Fifty-seven percent of the 124 respondents to this question indicated that knowing it was a scenic byway did influence their decision to take this route, and 43% indicated it did not. Visitors in the sample from the Denver area and Kansas were especially likely to have been influenced in their choice of route by knowing in advance that it was a scenic byway.**

David Dahlquist and Karen Peterson's 1994 study, *Assessing Visitor Responses to Iowa Scenic Byways Pilot Program*, found that 48% of the Iowa visitors had heard of the byways before their visit.<sup>ii</sup>

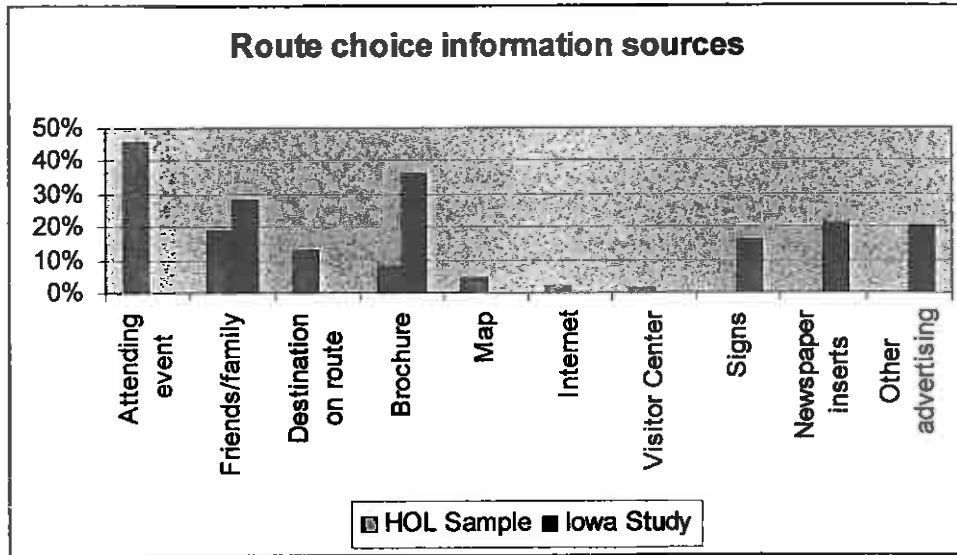
In order to better understand what information sources may have influenced the visitors' choices regarding the route, visitors were given the opportunity to choose from a list of information sources. Those visitors who were attending either the Art in the Park or Stonewall Century Bike Ride were counted as attending that event regardless of where on the survey form this information was found. Respondents were able to choose an unlimited number from the list of information sources. Therefore, the total (225) is greater than the number of visitors completing the survey (166). Percentages shown are based on the overall number of responses to the question rather than the number of visitors completing surveys.

**Forty-six percent of visitors indicated that they were attending an event on this route. Of those attending an event, 17 % were attending Art in the Park, 21% were attending the Stonewall Century Bike Ride, 6% were on a bus tour event and 2% were attending other events. Nineteen percent were visiting friends or relatives; 13% indicated that their destination was on this route; 8% had found information on highway signs; 8% had obtained a brochure; 4% had seen information about the route on a map; 3% had found information on the Internet; and 1% had picked up information from a visitor center.**

The Dahlquist and Peterson's survey, which was conducted in 1994, asked about information sources on route choices of scenic byway visitors. Their list of options and results were somewhat different. They found that 36% of the Iowa scenic byway visitors had learned about the by-way from a brochure. Twenty-eight percent of the visitors in the Iowa study were told about it by others, 21% learned about it from a newspaper insert, 20% from other advertising, and 16% "just saw the byway signs<sup>iii</sup>." See Figure 4 below for a comparison of the route choice information sources.



Figure 4



There are several possible explanations for the wide range of responses in the two studies, some of which will be mentioned here. For example, the two surveys had different lists of options. The Iowa study was done before the Internet was a significant source of information for most travelers, and that option was not included in their list. Brochures and newspaper inserts were significant sources of information in Iowa, whereas maps were not included as an option. Only the HOL survey included destination and attending an event as options, and nearly half the respondents in the HOL study were asked to complete a survey at an event.

### Mode of Travel

Visitors were asked about their mode of travel. They could choose as many modes of travel as they wished, and some chose more than one. Personal auto was the most frequent mode of travel indicated. Sixty-five percent of the survey sample indicated that they traveled by personal automobile, 17% rode a bike, 8% were on a tour bus, 8% traveled in a recreation vehicle, and 2% rode a motorcycle. All those who indicated they had traveled by bike also indicated they had traveled by personal automobile and were participants in the Stonewall Century Bike Ride event. There was also one respondent who traveled by plane and one who traveled by horseback.

### Visitor Expectations

Meeting or exceeding the expectations of visitors has been found to be important in attracting new visitors and return visitors. Therefore, visitors were asked how well their expectations for this trip had been met. Forty-five percent of the 160 who answered the question indicated that their expectations had been exceeded, 54% indicated that their expectations had been met and 1% indicated that they were disappointed. The visitors who came from New Mexico were especially likely to indicate that their expectations had been exceeded (67%), as were those from Northern Colorado and the Denver area (54%).

Visitors who rated their lodging accommodations highly were very likely to also rate the restaurants and food highly. These same visitors were also very likely to indicate that their expectations had been exceeded. A low rating on food and restaurants was more closely

associated with a lower expectation rate than a low rating on lodging accommodations. These correlations reached a level of statistical significance as measured by Pearson's chi-square at  $p < .01$ . See Figure 5 below.

### Visitor Zip Codes

Of the 153 visitors who indicated their zip code, **forty percent were from zip codes in the Denver metropolitan area. Twenty four percent were from Southern Colorado**, mostly along the Front Range. Fourteen percent were from Texas and Oklahoma, ten percent from New Mexico, six percent from Kansas, six percent from the Eastern United States, and one each from Arizona and California. One visitor was from Austria. All the youngest visitors, those less than 24 years of age, were from Colorado and New Mexico.

Two thirds of the visitors from New Mexico, half the visitors from the Denver area and one third of those from Southern Colorado stayed in a hotel/motel. Visitors from New Mexico and Denver area were especially likely to indicate that their expectations had been exceeded. Aside from these tendencies, there were no statistically significant differences in the opinions or demographics of the visitors based on their place of residence.

Figure 5



Information about the responses of both visitor and resident samples are discussed below with regard to three categories; satisfaction with the infrastructure, participation in recreational activities and the importance of preservation and protection of regional resources. A comparison of the responses of the two sample groups is appropriate in this section of the report because it shows the similarities and differences in the groups' responses, here in the context of visitor demographics. Information on the demographics for the resident sample group follows this comparison section, starting on page 17.

## Visitor and Resident Satisfaction with Infrastructure

Visitors were asked to rate their satisfaction with the infrastructure along the HOL. The rating scale ranged from 1=not satisfactory to 5=very satisfactory. Thus, the higher the mean score, the more satisfied the visitors were with the infrastructure.

**The roads received the highest rating (3.87), followed closely by lodging accommodations (3.72), and restaurants and food (3.67).** Signage, including informational signs about HOL was rated somewhat lower at 3.43, scenic turnouts (frequency and safety) at 3.35, adequate parking at 3.33, and access for the disabled at 3.25. Rated lowest of all was the availability of restrooms and drinking water at 3.13. See Table 1 below.

Women rated the availability of restrooms and drinking water lower than men did. **Those attending an event (extra portable toilets were available during the event) rated the availability of restrooms and drinking water higher than those not attending an event.** These correlations reached a level of statistical significance as measured by Pearson's chi-square at  $p < .05$ .

Residents also rated the road conditions as the most satisfactory in a somewhat different list of infrastructure types, but the group gave the highway a lower mean score of 3.28. Residents also rated the signage, giving it a mean score of 3.10, which was the second highest score in their list, whereas signage was not that high on the visitors' list.

**Table 1: Visitor ratings of infrastructure along the Highway of Legends**

<b>Infrastructure: Visitor</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
<b>Road conditions</b>	<b>3.87</b>
<b>Lodging accommodations</b>	<b>3.72</b>
<b>Restaurants &amp; food</b>	<b>3.67</b>
Signage, including informational signs about SHOL	3.43
Scenic turnouts (frequency & safety)	3.35
Adequate parking	3.33
Access for the disabled	3.25
<b>Availability of restrooms, drinking water</b>	<b>3.13</b>

## Visitor and Resident Participation in Recreational Activities

Both visitors and residents were asked about their household's participation in 10 types of recreational activities. The order of frequency is nearly identical in both lists, but rates of participation in each recreational activity are much higher for residents. This pattern resembles the findings of G. Godbey in his 1997 article, *Recreation and Parks in a Changing World: Becoming a health service*. Godbey found that 4 out of 5 Americans use local recreation and park facilities.<sup>iv</sup> See Table 2 below.

**Watching wildlife/sightseeing was by far the most common recreational activity. Sixty-one percent** of the residents participated in watching wildlife/sightseeing, as did 43% of the 166 visitor households. The Forest Service Use Monitoring Survey also found that viewing natural

features was the most popular outdoor recreational activity in their areas of service, with 52% of visits including this activity and 38% viewing wildlife<sup>v</sup>. Visitors in the sample who were from Southern Colorado and New Mexico were more likely than visitors from other areas to participate in watching wildlife/sightseeing. Visitors from Oklahoma/Texas rated watching wildlife/sightseeing higher than visitors from other areas.

**Community activities and events** were second in popularity. Among both groups, Forty-seven percent of resident households had participated in community activities and events in the past year, as had 29% of the visitor households. Residents completing surveys in Weston and at all the Trinidad locations were especially unlikely to participate in community activities and events. More than half the visitors from Oklahoma/Texas participated in a community event, as did 42% of the visitors from Southern Colorado. Enjoyment of community events also received especially high ratings from both these groups.

**Hiking/backpacking/camping**, and community activities and events, were in a close third with both groups. Forty-seven percent of the resident households had participated in hiking/backpacking/camping in the past year, as did 28% of the visitor households. The National Forest Visitor Use Monitoring Survey found that 36% of visits to National Forests included hiking.<sup>vi</sup>

**Hunting/fishing** were as popular with residents as hiking/backpacking/camping and, community events/activities. They were the fourth most frequent recreation activity category on the visitor survey list. Forty-seven percent of the resident households and 23% of the visitor households in the sample participated in hunting /fishing. Seventy-five percent of the visitors from Oklahoma and Texas participated in hunting/fishing, as did 38% of the visitors from Southern Colorado. Hunting and fishing also received an especially high enjoyment rating from visitors.

**Historical/cultural activities and events** were participated in by 41% of the resident households and 22% of the visitor households. While there are no directly comparable national studies, the Travel Industry Association's 2003 study does offer relevant information regarding traveler participation in historical/cultural activities on a national level. Their study included all travel done in the past year, where this survey only related to travel to locations along a single specific byway. The Travel Industry Association study showed that "81% of U.S. adults who traveled in the past year included historical/cultural activities on their trips." They further reported that;

(T)hese travelers spend more money on historic/cultural trips compared to the average U.S. trip (average \$623 vs. \$475, excluding transportation)...in fact, for 30% of historic/cultural travelers, their destination choice was influenced by a specific historic or cultural event. Many historic/cultural travelers agree that trips that include cultural, arts, historic or heritage activities or events are more enjoyable to them (39%) and that they prefer to visit destinations that have some historical significance (38%). A select group feels that a leisure or vacation trip away from home is not complete without visiting a museum, historic site or landmark (26%) or attending a cultural event or arts performance (17%).<sup>vii</sup>

Thirty percent of the visitors from the Denver area reported participating in historical/ cultural events, as did 29% of those from Kansas and the Eastern United States. **The visitors from Denver rated their enjoyment of historical/cultural events especially highly.**

Resident respondents from the Trinidad, Walsenburg, and Aguilar areas completing surveys were especially unlikely to report having participated in historical/cultural activities and events. Residents may have thought the survey referred only to events on the byway, not in Trinidad or Walsenburg, which they may not necessarily consider as part of the byway.

**Artistic activities** were participated in along the byway by 25% of the resident households and 15% of the visitor households. While this finding might have been somewhat influenced by the number of responses obtained from both groups at the Art in the Park event, there was not a statistically significant difference between the participation of residents or visitors who completed surveys at other times and locations. Visitors from Oklahoma/Texas were especially likely to participate in artistic activities along the byway.

**Winter sports** were participated in along the byway by 25% of the resident households and 10% of the visitor households. The low participation rate may be a reflection of the lengthy closure of the only ski resort in the area, and a prolonged drought.

**Vehicular sports** were participated in along the byway during the past year by 17% of the resident households and 6% of the visitor households.

**Water sports** were participated in by 13% of the resident households, as well as by 5% of the visitor households. The low participation rate may be a reflection of the drought and low water levels in area lakes, streams and reservoirs.

**Healing arts activities** were the least frequent recreation activity for both resident and visitor households in the sample. Eleven percent of resident households participated in healing arts activities as did 4% of the visitor households

There was an opportunity for both groups to list other recreational activities in which they participated. **Biking and eating out were the most frequently mentioned. Several visitors indicated that they would like to see expanded biking and hiking trails developed in the area.**

**Table 2: Recreation participation by residents and visitors along the HOL**

<b>Recreation Activity</b>	<b>Number of resident households</b>	<b>Percentage of resident households</b>	<b>Number of visitor households</b>	<b>Percentage of visitor households</b>
<b>Watching wildlife/sightseeing</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Community activities &amp; events</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Hiking/backpacking/camping</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>28%</b>
<b>Hunting/fishing</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Historic/cultural activities &amp; events</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>22%</b>
Artistic activities	57	25%	25	15%
Winter sports	56	25%	16	10%
Vehicular sports	39	17%	10	6%
Water sports	28	13%	9	5%
Healing arts activities	24	11%	6	4%

### **Visitor Recreation Activity Enjoyment Ratings**

Visitors were asked to rate their enjoyment of the same 10 recreation activities along the byway that they had reported above. The rating scale ranged from 1=not enjoyable to 5=very enjoyable. See Table 3 below.

**Watching wildlife and sightseeing received the highest rating of 4.54.** Visitors from Southern Colorado and New Mexico were especially likely to give high enjoyment ratings to watching wildlife/sightseeing.

**Community activities and events** came in second with a mean enjoyment rating of 4.36. Visitors from Oklahoma/Texas were especially likely to indicate a high level of enjoyment of community activities and events.

Third highest rating of 4.24 went to **historical/cultural activities and events**. Visitors from the Denver area indicated the highest level of enjoyment of historical and cultural activities. See the section on participation below for related information.

In fourth place was **hiking, backpacking and camping** with a rating of 4.17. Visitors from all places rated hiking, backpacking and camping uniformly.

**Artistic activities** received a mean enjoyment rating of 3.93. Visitors from Oklahoma and/or Texas rated their enjoyment of artistic activities especially highly. Most of the Oklahoma and/or Texas visitors surveyed were attending the Art in the Park event.

**Hunting and fishing** were rated at 3.84. Visitors from Oklahoma/Texas rated their enjoyment of hunting/fishing especially highly, as did those from Southern Colorado.

Enjoyment of **winter sports** received a mean enjoyment rating of 3.15. **Vehicular sports** were rated 2.80, **water sports** was rated 2.54 and **healing arts activities** were rated 2.39.

**Table 3: Visitor enjoyment of 10 recreational activities.**

<b>Recreation Activity: Visitors Enjoyment</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
<b>Watching wildlife/sightseeing</b>	<b>4.54</b>
<b>Community activities &amp; events</b>	<b>4.36</b>
<b>Historical/cultural activities &amp; events</b>	<b>4.24</b>
<b>Hiking/backpacking/camping</b>	<b>4.17</b>
Artistic activities	3.93
Hunting fishing	3.84
Winter sports	3.15
Vehicular sports	2.80
Water sports	2.54
Healing arts activities	2.39

### **Visitor and Resident Ratings on the Importance of Protection and Preservation of Regional Resources**

Both the residents and visitors were asked about the importance of protection and preservation of some regional resources. The visitors and residents did not have identical lists of resources to choose from. Water resources were listed on the resident’s survey, but this choice was not included on the visitor’s list, and recreation facilities were listed on the visitor’s survey but not the resident survey. Additionally, the item “current cultural features: small towns, farms, ranches” was on the visitor’s survey, and “cultural traditions” were listed separately from existing small businesses, farms and ranches on the resident’s survey. Residents and visitors were asked to rate the preservation and protection of listed regional resources on a five point scale where 1=don’t protect and 5=must protect. Thus, the higher the mean score, the better the rating and the higher the desire for preservation.

Visitor and resident ratings on the items were similar and are found on Table 4 below. **Visitors gave the top three items nearly identical mean ratings. Archaeological sites had a mean score of 4.67, and both wildlife corridors and preservation of historic architecture, sites and trails had scores of 4.65.** These were closely followed by scenic view sheds with a mean rating score of 4.57; current cultural features such as small towns, farms and ranches rated at 4.51; and recreational facilities with a score of 4.44.

The high ratings given to these activities are similar to the findings of the Travel Industry Association of America regarding “Geotourism-tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place being visited, including its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents.” They found that Geotourism was a rapidly increasing segment of the market, and that Geotourists were willing to pay more for an experience that enhanced and protected the place being visited.<sup>viii</sup>

The residents gave the preservation and protection of water resources, an item not included in the visitor survey, their highest mean rating; 4.71. This was followed by wildlife corridors, rated at 4.52, and existing small businesses, farms and ranches, rated at 4.40. Residents rated protection and preservation of historic architecture, sites and trails at 4.27, archeological sites at 4.22, cultural traditions at 4.18. Lowest, but still very important on a 5 point scale, was scenic view sheds rated at 4.11.

**Table 4: Protection and preservation of regional resources rated by both residents and visitors on a scale of 1 to 5: 1=don't protect, 5=must protect**

<b>Regional resources: Residents &amp; Visitors</b>	<b>Mean score Visitors</b>	<b>Mean score Residents</b>
Water resources	NA	4.71
Wildlife corridors	4.65	4.52
Existing small businesses, farms, ranches	NA	4.40
Historic architecture, sites, trails	4.65	4.27
Archeological sites	4.67	4.22
Cultural traditions	NA	4.18
Scenic view sheds	4.57	4.11
Current cultural features: small towns, farms, ranches	4.51	NA
Recreational facilities	4.44	NA

### Visitor Frequency of Travel

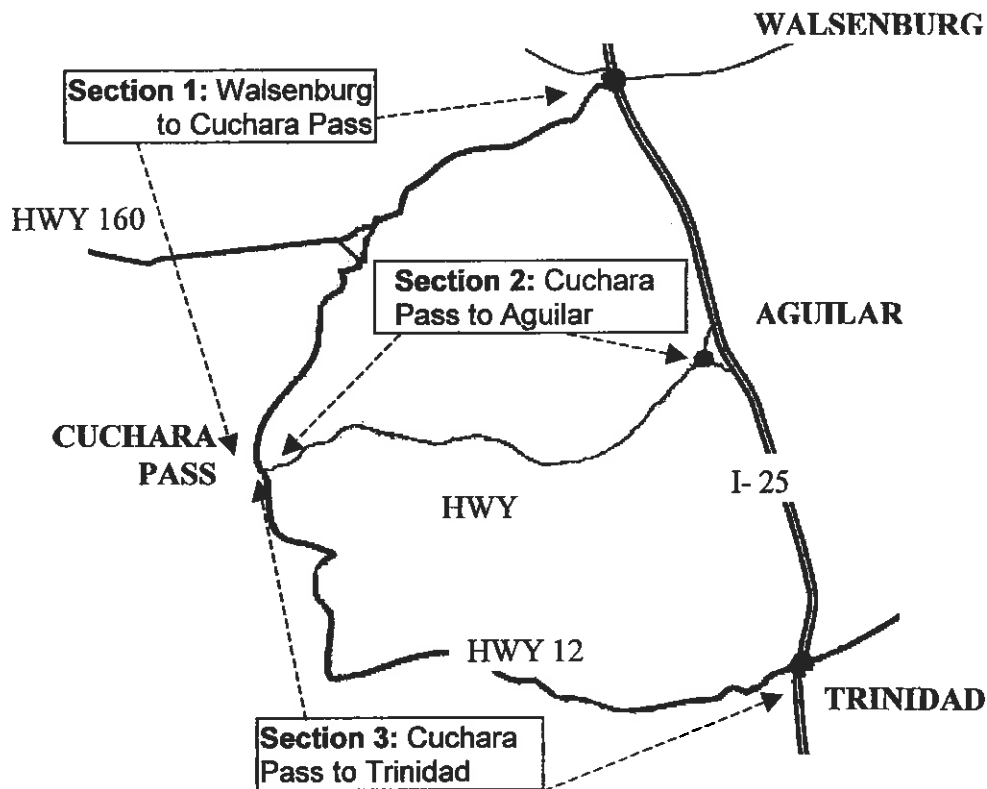
Visitors and residents were provided with the map shown below and were asked how many times in the past year they had driven on any part of the Highway of Legends. Ninety-four visitors indicated they had traveled on both **Sections 1 and 3, between Walsenburg and Trinidad via Highway 12**, in the past year. Of those 94, 56% had driven on the HOL once. The average number of times visitors had driven on both Sections 1 and 2 in the past year was six times, with a range of 1 to 200.

Ninety-one visitors indicated they had driven on **Section 1**, between Walsenburg and Cuchara Pass, with 47% having done so once. Seven was the mean number of times visitors had driven on Section 1, with a range of 1 to 190.

Only 36 of the visitors surveyed had driven along **Section 2** of the HOL, between Aguilar and Cuchara Pass, sections of which are not paved. Of those 36 visitors who had driven on Section 2, 58% had driven on Section 2 once. Five was the mean number of times visitors had driven on Section 2, with a range of 1 to 50.

Sixty visitors indicated they had driven on **Section 3**, between Cuchara Pass and Trinidad in the past year. Of those 60 visitors who had driven on this section, 53% had driven on this section once. Six was the mean number of times visitors had driven on Section 3 in the past year, with a range of 1 to 100.





Of those visitors who had driven on the various sections more than a few times, in the past year, all of them were working along the highway when they completed a survey, and reported traveling on the HOL for work as well as pleasure. When offered a choice of resident or visitor surveys, they indicated that they lived outside the area, chose the visitor survey.

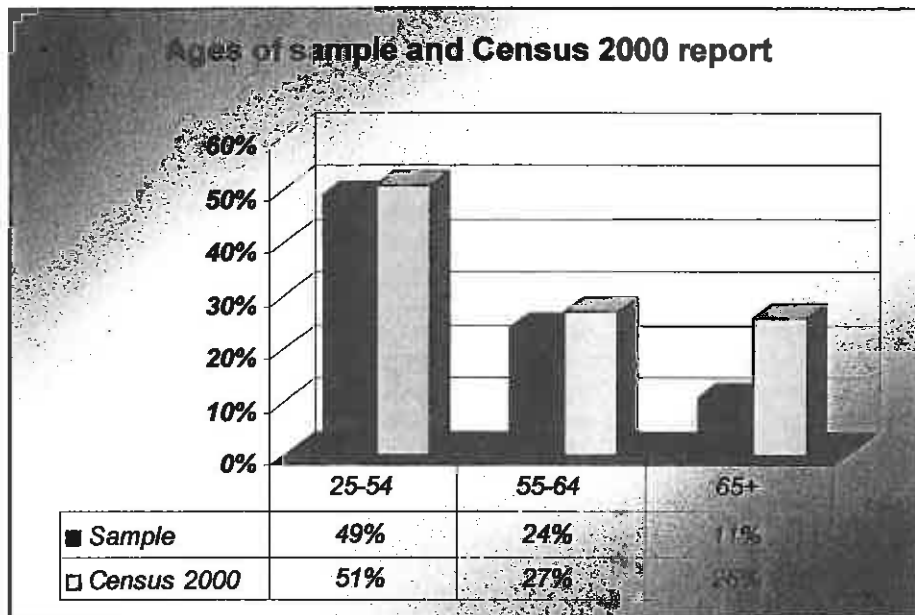
## RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

### Resident Gender/Age/Income/Occupation

A series of demographic questions were included in the survey so they might be compared to the demographic information found in the Census 2000 report of the area, which includes Huerfano and Las Animas counties. The sample group included a total of 224 residents. Forty-five percent of the residents indicated that they were male, 47% indicated they were female, and 7% did not respond.

The resident sample group included 8% between the ages of 16 and 24, 49% between the ages of 25 and 54, 24% between the ages of 55 and 64 and 11% over the age of 65. While Census 2000 does not provide data specific to the group between ages 16 and 24, the percentages of the sample is similar to the census figures for residents of Huerfano and Las Animas Counties. See Figure 6 below.

Figure 6

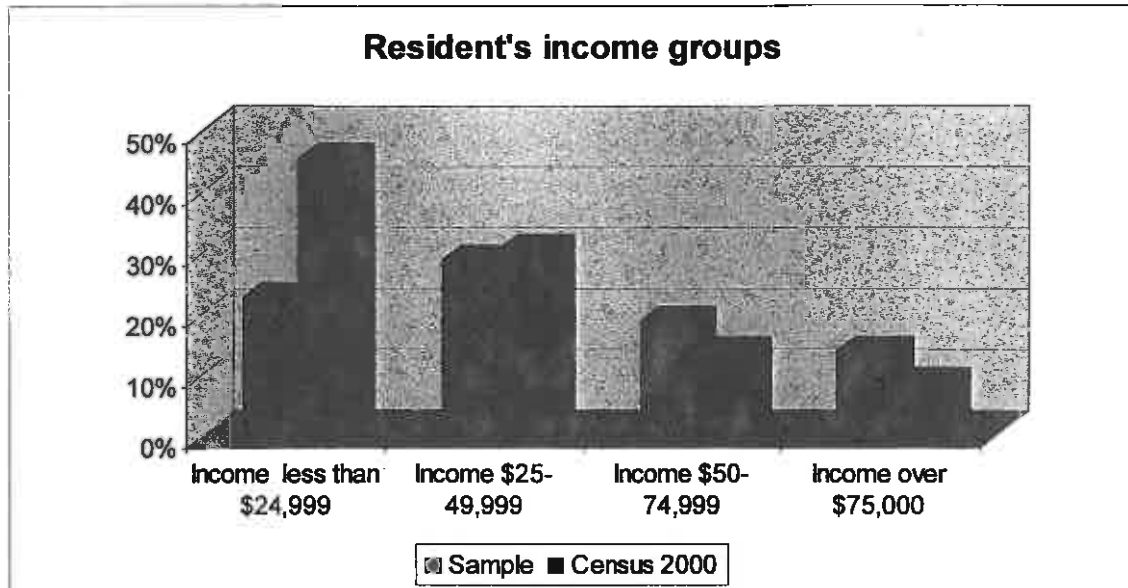


There are a large number of Hispanics in the area. Therefore, a question was included which asked if the residents were of Hispanic origin. Twenty-two percent of the 179 residents answering the question were of Hispanic origin. The 2000 Census found that 39% of the area population was of Hispanic origin, indicating that Hispanics are under-represented in this survey sample. Unfortunately, a relatively small percentage of Hispanics were in attendance at some of the meetings and events where the surveys were distributed.

One-hundred twenty resident respondents (57%) lived in a household with two adults. Forty-eight (21%) lived in a household that included at least one senior citizen, and 62 (28%) respondents lived in a household which included children 18 or younger.

For easy comparison, the incomes of the resident respondents are listed in the table below, along with the Census 2000 percentages for Huerfano and Las Animas Counties. While the wealthier residents were somewhat over represented and the lower income residents were somewhat under represented in this survey sample, the sample group appears to be a good representation of the county residents. Note that our figures are for year 2002 and census is for 1999. See Figure 7.

Figure 7



### Resident Primary Occupation

Residents were asked to list their primary occupation. One hundred fifty-three residents indicated that they are employed outside the home. The greatest number (66) listed occupations falling into the service sector. These include food service, government services, health care and education. Thirty-six of those employed in this sector were employed in the education field. See Table 5 below.

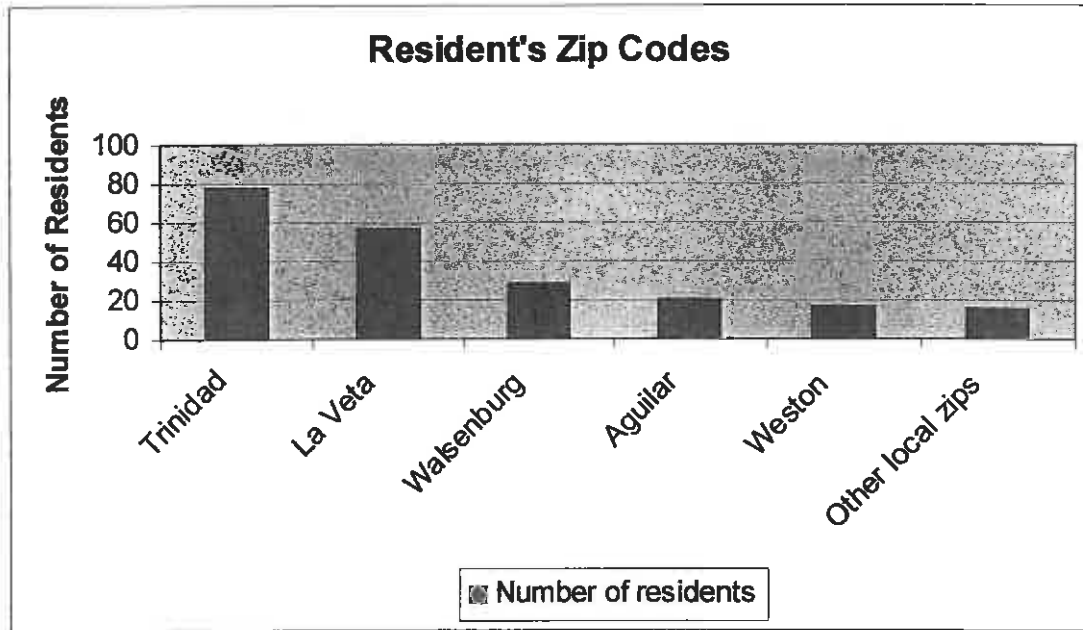
Table 5: Employment sector of HOL residents

Employment sector	Number of HOL Residents	Percentage of HOL respondents employed outside the home
Services/food/law enforcement/fire/education	66	43%
Management/professional	23	15%
Sales/offices	28	18%
Construction /extraction	12	8%
Transportation/production	13	8%
Agriculture/forestry/fishing	5	3%
Self-employed	6	3%
<b>Not employed</b>		
Retired	40	
Disabled, unemployed, students	3	
Housewives	6	

### Resident Zip Codes

Thirty-six percent of the 184 residents who listed their zip code lived in Trinidad. Twenty-six percent lived in LaVeta, 13% lived in Walsenburg, 8% lived in Aguilar; and 8% lived in Weston. The remaining 8% were scattered among 11 other zip codes in the area. See Figure 7 below.

Figure 7



### Resident Travel Frequency

Residents were asked how many times they had driven on any of the sections of the Scenic Highway of Legends shown on the map above.

Residents reported the following information regarding the frequency with which they traveled on the Highway of Legends. Forty-five was the mean number of times residents in the sample group had traveled on both Sections 1 and 3. On Section 1, mean was 35, on Section 2, the mean was 15, and on Section 3, the mean was 95. More than half the residents reporting how many times they had driven on each section in the past year indicated they had driven there less than 8 times.

### Highway of Legends Objectives Ratings

Residents were asked to rate the importance six HOL objectives. The rating scale for the objectives ranged for 1=not at all important to 5=really important. Thus, the higher the score, the more important the objective. **Preservation of natural resources, e.g., wildlife corridors, water, animal/plant habitat was the highest rated objective, with a mean score of 4.59.** Highway safety was the second highest rated objective with a mean score of 4.36, followed by historic preservation and public education with a mean score of 4.35, then preservation/promotion of recreational resources with a mean score of 4.25. Tourism

development and promotion received a mean score of 4.00, and encouragement of economic development received the lowest mean score of 3.85, still relatively high on a five point scale. This information was cross tabulated with the sample residents' zip codes, and no significant differences in their ratings were found. See Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Objectives ratings for the Highway of Legends**  
**1=not at all important, 5=really important**

SHOL Objective	Mean rating
<b>Preservation of natural resources e.g. wildlife corridors, water, animal/plant habitat</b>	<b>4.59</b>
Highway safety and scenic pullouts	4.36
Historic preservation and public education	4.35
Preservation/promotion of recreational resources	4.25
Tourism development and promotion	4.00
Encouragement of economic development	3.85

Antonia Besculides, Adam McClory and Marty Lee's survey, *Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway 1999 Visitor Study*, conducted in the San Luis Valley of Colorado, asked residents how important it was the Los Caminos Antiguos Byway be managed in a way that would provided various benefits. Four of the items on the extensive Los Caminos Antiguos list were similar to four of the HOL objectives. Those were; the protection of the natural environment, highest on the Los Caminos Antiguos list of benefits; preservation of traditional architecture, third highest; marketing of the byway to visitors, seventh; and new development, twenty-third.<sup>ix</sup>

### **Economic Development Ratings on the HOL**

Resident respondents were asked to rate the appropriateness of 10 types of economic development. The rating scale ranged from 1=not at all appropriate to 5=very appropriate. Thus, the higher the mean score, the more appropriate the residents rated the type of economic development. This section of the resident survey received the widest variety of responses. Many respondents, who had marked all responses in the importance of protection and preservation of regional resources as high priority, assigned widely varying ratings to the various economic development types. This suggests that people have a wider range of opinions on economic development than on the other topics.

**Retention and expansion of small businesses and support of home based businesses received the highest mean "appropriateness" score of 4.25, and clean/green businesses was second with a mean rating of 4.12. The development of visitor accommodations was third with a mean rating of 3.74.** There was a significant gap between these three and all the other types. In fourth place, telecommunications received an appropriateness rating of 3.28. Large resorts received an appropriateness rating of 2.63, as did timbering. New homes on 35 acre plots were rated at 2.62. At the lower end of the development list were the methane gas industry, with a mean appropriateness rating score of 2.42; new cluster-type housing developments, with a

score of 2.20; and heavy industry (including mining and gravel pits), with a score of 2.09. See Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Mean ratings of appropriateness of economic development types  
1=not at all appropriate, 5=very appropriate**

Economic development type	Mean rating
<b>Retention &amp; expansion of small businesses, support home based businesses</b>	<b>4.25</b>
<b>Clean/green businesses</b>	<b>4.12</b>
<b>Visitor accommodations (food, lodging)</b>	<b>3.74</b>
Telecommunications industry	3.28
Large resorts	2.63
Timbering	2.63
New homes on 35 acre plots	2.62
Methane gas industry	2.42
New cluster-type housing developments	2.20
Heavy industry, including mining, gravel pits	2.09

Cross tabulations were done between the zip codes of the residents in the sample and their ratings of the appropriateness of various economic development types. Residents in Trinidad and La Veta rated the development of new cluster-type housing more favorably than the residents of other zip codes. This difference reached statistical significance as measured by Pearson's coefficients at  $p < .05$ . The following tendencies were discernable, but failed to reach statistical significance. The residents in La Veta and Walsenburg were generally opposed to heavy industry, including mining, and gravel pits. Residents in Trinidad were mildly opposed, while those Weston were mildly in favor of heavy industry and mining. This is may be due to the availability of jobs in the methane and timbering industries in this area. Residents in La Veta and Walsenburg were generally opposed to methane gas industry development and timbering. Residents in Weston favored timbering development, but were equally divided in their opinions regarding methane gas development. La Veta residents were generally opposed to the development of new homes on 35 acre plots.

Occupation was a factor in the resident respondents' rating of timbering and methane gas production, as measured by Pearson's chi-square at  $p < .05$ . More than 50% of residents engaged in management and professional work rated both timbering and methane gas industry development as not at all appropriate, while 46% of those in production and transportation rated timbering as very appropriate.

Men rated the appropriateness of timbering as a type of economic development more highly than women, as measured by Pearson's chi-square at  $p < .05$ .

Residents who rated methane gas industry development also tended to favor timbering and heavy industry/mining development, as demonstrated by Pearson's chi-square with a significance level at  $p < .01$ . Also statistically significant at  $p < .01$  was the positive relationship between residents favoring the development of clean/green businesses, residents favoring the retention and

expansion of small business, and residents favoring the development of visitor accommodations. These two groups were not necessarily similar in age, gender, occupation, zip code, income, or ethnic group.

### **Resident Ratings of Infrastructure**

Residents were asked to rate the condition of seven types of infrastructure along the Highway of Legends. The infrastructure rating scores ranged from 1=not satisfactory to 5=very satisfactory. Thus, the higher the score, the more satisfactory residents rated the item. The condition of the road received the highest rating with a mean score of 3.19, somewhat lower than the mean 3.87 rating score that the visitors gave the road conditions. However, the mean ratings of the road conditions of both visitors and residents was the highest, or most satisfactory, form of infrastructure on their list. The second highest rating, a mean score of 3.16, was given to the signage and informational signs about HOL. This item was also rated fairly highly by visitors, who gave it a mean score of 3.43. The third highest score went to emergency services, with a score of 3.09. This was followed by the water supply with a mean score of 2.75, and medical services with a mean score of 2.67. At the lower end were telecommunications with a mean rating score of 2.64 and affordable housing with the lowest score, 2.41. The ratings of the infrastructure did not differ significantly with any demographic factor. See Table 8 below.

**Table 8: Resident ratings of infrastructure along the SHOL**

<b>Infrastructure type</b>	<b>Mean rating score</b>
<b>Roads</b>	<b>3.19</b>
<b>Signage, SHOL information signs</b>	<b>3.16</b>
<b>Emergency services</b>	<b>3.09</b>
Water supply	2.75
Medical services	2.67
Telecommunications	2.64
<b>Affordable housing</b>	<b>2.41</b>

### **Resident Comments**

Residents were encouraged to comment on their priorities in preservation and protection, and many offered lengthy verbal comments to the surveyors. There were some common threads in their comments. Many residents between Trinidad and the Picketwire store tend to prefer to be left alone and allowed to make their living from the land and care for the land as they have for many generations. Those who offered written comments feel that the extractive types of development, such as methane gas production facilities, mining, and timbering operations, are less invasive and harmful to the natural habitat than new homes and population increases. They do not seek more visitors, and they would really like to see those visitors passing through learn more about mountain driving. At the same time, others area residents are amenable to visitors and housing development.

In contrast to the above residents, those between the Picketwire store and La Veta have a different economy. Visitor services have been a significant source of revenue there for many

generations. Many current summer and full-time residents in this area, or their ancestors, originally came to the area as visitors as opposed to coming to farm or ranch. Year-around residents in La Veta are cautious regarding the development of more high-end, year-around housing. Those offering written or verbal comments are concerned about the possibility of losing La Veta's small town uniqueness. At the same time, some are concerned that local businesses will fail and people, especially the younger people, will leave to find work elsewhere unless a steady stream of visitors is maintained. They are hoping for the development of more affordable housing. They worry about the negative consequences of the escalation of land and housing values if the area becomes too popular with wealthy visitors who are seeking second homes. They tend not to like mining, timbering or methane gas production, and feel that those forms of development are more harmful to the area than are visitors and visitor accommodations, as long as the visitors don't purchase property in the area. However, mixed among them are people favoring extractive type economic development.

Residents in Aguilar tend to see visitors as neither a threat nor a significant annual revenue source. The town held a very successful historical/cultural event in 2003 called Aguilar Days. They marketed the two-day event in the Denver and Front Range areas and New Mexico and thousands of people attended. The food vendors ran out of food the first day, and were scrambling to bring in more. Aguilar residents would like to expand their efforts to appeal to the historical/cultural tourists, but they are concerned about the negative consequences of a radical increase in housing values if very many visitors decide to purchase/build second homes or retirement homes in the area. Some offered written and verbal comments that there is a need for revenue for improving local roads and town services, and for developing additional affordable housing.

## **Conclusions**

Regarding the two surveys recently conducted along the HOL, there appears to be no significant gap between the opinions, activities and priorities of samples of residents and visitors. Visitors and residents participate in the same kinds of recreation activities, possibly because the area is best suited for those activities or because those recreation options were developed generations ago and have attracted and held people with the same values and interests. Watching wildlife/sightseeing is the most popular with both groups, followed by community activities and events and hiking/backpacking/camping. Visitors and residents also rate the importance of preservation and protection of regional resources very similarly. The both rated the preservation and protection of wildlife corridors as a high priority, followed by the protection and preservation of historic architecture, sites and trails, and archeological sites.

Visitors appear to be well informed about the scenic highway designation, and this knowledge affected their choice of route. The factors and sources of information influencing their choice of route were, in the following order; they were attending an event, they were visiting friends and family, their destination was on the route, or they got information from highway signs, brochures, maps and the Internet.

In the sample surveyed, the greatest number of visitors and those most likely to pay for lodging were from the Denver area and other Front Range communities. Visitors from the Denver area were the most interested in historical and cultural activities, and they tended to stay one or two



days in paid lodging accommodations. Their expectations for the trip were frequently exceeded. Older visitors had higher incomes, stayed longer, and were more likely to stay in an RV than younger visitors. Younger, lower income visitors were more likely to stay in a hotel/motel and to stay only one or two days.

There are four points of consensus within the resident community. First, their highest priorities are the preservation and protection of the water supply and the wildlife corridors. Second, they are concerned about the escalation of housing values due to an influx of new residents. Some residents expressed the opinion that they do not want to see the kind of development that has occurred in Vail and Aspen. They felt that the radical increase in housing/land values and costs there has caused several problems. For example, older residents can't keep up with the taxes, and younger people and professional people, like police officers and teachers, are not able to afford homes. Third, they want to retain or expand existing small businesses. Fourth, they would like to see increased sources of revenue that would maintain and/or expand local incomes and area services. Many want to maintain a steady stream of visitors. In general they seek ways to expand the area's appeal to visitors who come for a couple of days, spend freely, go home, and return with friends/family for a couple of days the next year.

### **Recommendations for future marketing strategies**

- ❖ Expand advertising to attract more visitors in Denver, other Front Range areas, and New Mexico, especially for Art in the Park and other artistic and/or cultural events.
- ❖ Develop more historic/cultural activities and events to attract new visitors of the type that respect the culture and environment, spend freely, and don't try to move to the area.
- ❖ Continue and/or expand the Stonewall Century Bike Ride, and develop other recreational events which appeal to Front Range and New Mexico visitors.
- ❖ Provide additional restaurants with good food and good service, a key to visitor satisfaction, and a popular proposal with residents.
- ❖ Add bike and hiking trails, and improve maps of local trails.
- ❖ Provide more public restrooms.
- ❖ Improve access for the disabled.
- ❖ Improve parking.
- ❖ Add or improve the frequency and safety of scenic turnouts.
- ❖ Improve signage.

## ENDNOTES/CITATIONS

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<sup>i</sup>David W. Eby and Lisa J. Molnar, "Importance of scenic byways in route choice: a survey of driving tourists in the United States," *Transportation Research* 36A ( 2002): 95-106

<sup>ii</sup>David Dahlquist and Karen. Peterson, "Assessing Visitor Responses to Iowa Scenic Byways Pilot Program," *Transportation Research Record* 1599 (1997): 81-86

<sup>iii</sup>David Dahlquist and Karen. Peterson

<sup>iv</sup>G. Godbey, "Recreation and Parks in a Changing World: Becoming a health service," *Parks & Recreation*. 32 (1997): 91

<sup>v</sup>*Geotourism: the New Trend in Travel*. (Travel Industry Association of America: Washington, DC, 2003)

<sup>vi</sup>"National Forest Use Monitoring National and Regional Project Results"  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/nvum/reports/year2/2002national> viewed 1/21/2004

<sup>vii</sup>"Traveler's Desire to Experience History and Culture Stronger Than Ever". Press release and summary of an article in *The Historic/Cultural Traveler*, 2003. (Travel Industry Association of America: Washington, DC, 2003)

<sup>viii</sup>Antonia Besculides, Adam McClory, and Marty Lee *Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway 1998 Visitor Study and Community Survey*. (Flagstaff: School of Forestry, Northern Arizona University, 1999)