# A Framework for Wayshowing:

# Tracks Across Borders Scenic & Historic Byway

Archuleta and LaPlata Counties, Colorado Rio Arriba County, New Mexico



August 16, 2018

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Cover photo by Jessica Ebel

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# **Executive Summary: Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway Two Tracks, Two Tribes, Two States**

Background of the "Long Museum"

Tracks Across Borders (TOC) is Colorado's newest scenic byway, a road corridor that spans 124 miles between Durango, Colorado and Chama, New Mexico. Its purpose is "To maintain, market and promote the Tracks Across Borders Byway as a 'long museum' over the pathways of the past so that travelers develop an understanding and appreciation of the rich railroad, cultural, historical, recreational, agricultural and natural features of the byway and ...to promote healthy and diverse tourism that helps communities and businesses along the byway thrive." (Byway nomination, 2014)

The route traces the narrow gauge right-of-way of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad (D&RG), the state's first, and the nation's largest, narrow gauge railroad system. It passes through lands of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe in Colorado and lands of the Jicarilla Apache Nation in New Mexico. In Colorado, the byway includes Town of Ignacio, which is home to the Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum, a high quality museum that offers an exceptionally engaging visitor experience. In New Mexico, the byway passes through the town of Dulce, headquarters of the Jicarilla Apache Nation.

Two gateway communities, Chama and Durango, anchor this new scenic byway with full visitor services. Two narrow gauge trains, both actively operating scenic railroad tours, are active partners in the establishment and promotion of the new byway. The first, the byway's primary partner, is the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad (CTTSR), owned jointly by the states of Colorado and New Mexico and operated for the benefit of the public. This historic train operates between Antonito, CO and Chama, NM (64 miles) every day during the tourist season, and provides onboard passengers a living history experience. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2012.

The byway's second partner is the privately owned Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, also a National Historic Landmark, which operates daily scenic trains between Durango to Silverton. These two partners provided financing for the start-up of the Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway, and continue to provide support through joint marketing and organizational support. Most notably, CTTSR has funded the ongoing development and maintenance of an OnCell location-based mobile APP which has successfully operated for a full year serving both rail passengers on the Cubres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and automobile passengers touring the Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway.

The Commissioners have coordinated a remarkably successful launch of this new byway. Following the Wayfinding installed by the Colorado Department of Transportation, two assessment teams easily found their way though the Colorado portion of the byway. When they reached the New Mexico Border, however, they found no navigational signage at all, and both teams struggled to find their way to Chama, especially through the Dulce segment. At the exit interview with stakeholders, the team presented their navigational challenges in New Mexico. That same night the Chama Lodgers Board allocated full funding to complete navigational signage on the New Mexico side. This is indeed nimble organization.

In summary, new byway navigation signs, now installed on both the Colorado and New Mexico segments, are a wayshowing tool that take the traveler from one end of the byway to the other. The organization's strategy to funnel all traveler information straight through a mobile App is bold and innovative. The Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad and Tracks Across Borders launched this App with detailed information on 20 historic sites that are important to both the history of the train and the history of the byway. New locations are being loaded regularly as financial and human resources become available.

Tracks Across Borders has taken the lead in learning how completely a byway information system can depend on electronic delivery. Colorado's other 25 byways are eager to examine the effectiveness of this fine experiment as they consider the challenge of embracing this new technology for their own byways.

# **Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway**



Chimney Rock National Monument, view from the "back-side"



olorado Byway navigational sign



Iglesias de San Juan (1927), located on a hillside out of flood danger



Jicarilla Apache Reservation entrance sign

Photo by Jessica Ebel

#### Introduction

The deployment of an effective system of wayshowing is an essential component of successful regional tourism strategies. Wayfinding and wayshowing are related but distinct concepts. **Wayfinding** is the mental process performed by travelers in identifying and locating their travel destinations.

**Wayshowing**, on the other hand, is the communication in the form of maps, signs, and other media intended to aid the traveler in their wayfinding.

The purpose of this document is to provide a preliminary plan for an enhanced wayshowing system along the Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway. In achieving this purpose, the plan aims to:

- Provide an outline of key concepts of wayshowing and wayfinding
- Assess the inventory of existing directional signage to key sites along designated routes.
- Provide recommendations for enhancing directional signage to key sites.
- Provide an outline for subsequent action.

## **Keys to Effective Wayshowing**

An effective system of wayshowing responds to the needs of travelers at all stages in their journey. At a minimum, effective wayshowing for the traveler must:

- Support how people find their way in unfamiliar travel environments
- Provide a guidance system of reliable and consistent components on the Byway
- Respond to the unique characteristics of the Byway
- Integrate pre-visit, visit, and post-visit stages of the Byway experience
- Contribute to a safe roadway and travel environment
- Become a widely practiced body of knowledge among Byway providers

With the assistance of an effective wayshowing system, successful travelers should be able to:

- 1. Identify origin and destination
- 2. Determine turn angles
- 3. Identify segment links and directions of movement
- 4. Recognize on-route and distant landmarks
- 5. Mentally embed or visualize the route in a larger reference frame: a cognitive map

#### Stages of Wayshowing

Effective wayshowing is essential not only to ensuring good experiences for the visitor, but also in attracting that visitor in the first place. While wayshowing may seem to begin and end with the traveler on the road, it also plays an important role in attracting visitors, assisting in their trip planning, and in enhancing their recollections with others after their trip is complete. Consider the travel experience as five distinct stages:

#### **Choose**

The point at which the traveler decides his or her travel destination or destinations. Wayfinding Needs: What are the travel routes? What is there to see and do and where are these activities located? How much time is required for the trip?

#### Prepare

This is the stage in which the prospective traveler plans and prepares for their trip, including making reservations or other advance travel arrangements. Wayfinding Needs: How will we get there? Where will we stay, eat and stop? How much time should we allot to travel to and on the travel route? Where are the heritage, recreational, and cultural attractions of the area?

#### Go/Do

This stage is the event itself as the visitor makes his or her way to or around their destination. Wayfinding Needs: Where are the entry points to the route? How do we get back on track if we get off the route? Where are the attractions along the route? Where can we get information along the route? Where do we get gas, food, or lodging?

#### Recall

This is the stage in which the memories of the trip extend its enjoyment beyond the time spent away from home. With travel completed, visitors typically want pictures, maps, souvenirs or other items to assist their recollection of a memorable trip. Wayfinding Needs: What will help us recall the good times we had on the trip? Where were the sites we really enjoyed?

#### Do Again

It is hoped that with an enjoyable and memorable trip, many visitors will return. Wayfinding Needs: Where are those good maps from our last trip? We need to show our friends and family what they might like.

# The Components of Wayshowing

A successful wayshowing system includes multiple components that not only direct the traveler, but also provide interpretive information. Wayshowing does not start and stop on the road, but exists to provide the traveler with information to plan their trip and assist in the recollection of it afterwards through maps, websites and other media that can be accessed away from the physical roadway. Essential elements of a wayshowing system include the following:

- Entrances, Exit and Gateway Signage. Identification of where to enter and exit a route or Byway so that travelers know their position relative to accessing and leaving a Byway or other route.
- Orientation Stops. Pull-offs, turn-outs and other places for motorists to stop and help them create, refresh, and expand their mental maps of a Byway or other route, its intrinsic qualities, and overarching interpretive theme with exhibits, maps, and other means of communication.
- Repetitive Route Markers. A sequence of visual cues for motorists to follow along a Byway or other route.
- Direction Signage to Planned Destinations. Signs that alert and guide motorists to featured stops and attractions along or near a Byway or other route.
- A Portable Map. A carry-on map of a Byway corridor or travel region and its various attractions and amenities.
- Electronic information available for the planning, and accessible on mobile platforms like Smartphone that can be used on-site to guide travelers in real-time.



The new byway crosses the Old Spanish Trail



Tracks Across Borders traverses private land

# History of Wayfinding on Tracks Across Borders Scenic & History Byway

The byway commissioners have been very strategic in planning the wayfinding system for this new byway, capitalizing very effectively on the fact that the railroads and the byway hold in common the same historic, cultural and natural assets. They also share the story of the development of the railroad, though from different points of view.

First phase elements of a wayfinding system are in place and operational. Repetitive route markers (byway signs) are now installed in both states, existing Department of Transportation directional signage to gateway communities (Durango and Chama) seems adequate, and a portable map is available at regional visitor centers on a standard rack card. Paid staff and volunteers in visitor centers throughout the region are well informed about the map and about the ease of using the mobile APP.

The byway has shown real leadership in deciding how to tackle the remaining elements of a wayfinding system. electronic information for preplanning and for decision-making once travelers have arrived on the byway itself.nd how to use wayfinding to boost the economic activity of byway towns.

The group is skipping the expense of development and installation of a new website (and there is a small presence through the Colorado byways website) and testing the effectiveness of the A mobile APP recently developed in conjunction with OnCell.

#### **Method of Assessment**

Often the difficulty in providing effective wayshowing lies in understanding where travelers require assistance and in what form. Additionally, maps, signs, brochures and other media sometimes present conflicting information. In October 2015 an on-the-road experiment was conducted along the Tracks Across Borders Scenic & Historic Byway to answer some of these questions. Specifically, the experiment sought to:

- Identify gaps in navigational clues for travelers by identifying points of certainty, and points of confusion; and
- Identify points of disconnect between what travelers see through the windshield and what they read on maps, brochures, and mobile devices.

#### **Identifying Sites for Evaluation**

A list of historical, cultural, and recreational sites that could be meaningful for travelers was identified by Muriel Eason, Director of the Byway. The thirteen (13) attractions listed below comprised the targets for assessment. Responses by Assessment Team members to each these 12 locations are detailed in the Appendix.

#### **Cultural Heritage Sites**

- Ute Cultural Center & Museum
- Southern Ute Reservation
- Jicarilla Apache Nation lands
- Durango Silverton RR Depot
- Chimney Rock National Monument
- Gato (Pagosa Junction), Historic Railroad buildings, tracks and water tower

#### **Recreation Assets**

- Cumbres & Toltec Narrow Gauge Railroad
- Durango-Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad
- Navajo Lake State Park and Visitor Center

#### **Towns with Visitor Services**

- Durango (population 16,000)
- Ignacio (population 800)
- Dulce (population 2,623)
- Chama (population 1,167)

A four-member team was assembled to travel the byway from Durango to Chama using a "front seat, back seat" approach. In the front seat were neophytes, new to the region with no knowledge of the area. They were given the list of stakeholder-identified attractions and sites to locate using highway signage, verbal directions and printed materials such as brochures and maps available at Visitor Centers and other public outlets. The "front seaters" were encouraged to use any mobile devices available to them.

Transportation and tourism specialists occupied the backseat. The "back seaters" recorded the experience of the "front seaters" in detail. "Back seaters" recorded the exact locations where the "front seaters" encountered confusion or uncertainty in navigating the region. They also recorded any disparities between written information in maps, brochures and other media and actual conditions as observed through the windshield.

While the neophytes in the front seat navigated their way through unfamiliar territory, the specialists in the back seat were given the following assignment:

- Observe the actions and discussions of the "front seaters"
- Record locations where "front seaters" expressed uncertainties and confusion and note apparent reasons
- Quiz "front seaters" on effectiveness of signs, maps and other driving instructions
- Note which wayshowing tools "front seaters" are using most often, and which they are not
- Resist giving any travel or driving advice unless an immediate safety issue warrants
- Conduct post-trip discussion with "front seaters"

After the conclusion of the wayfinding exercise, participants were asked to record observations and make recommendations based on their on-the-road experience. A full list of the comments and observations regarding each location is found in the Appendix.

#### **Recommendations and Action Plan**

#### **Navigation**

The wayfinding assessment team, following a full day of driving, reported to stakeholders at the Exit Interview that excellent signage made it easy to navigate all parts of the Colorado segment, but that team members had considerable difficulty finding their way once they passed over the border into New Mexico. That same evening the Village of Chama Lodgers Board awarded the byway \$4,400 to complete navigational signage on the New Mexico side. As Murial Eaton noted after listening to the assessment team report, "They realized that nobody could find them!" As of June 2019, only one sign awaited installation. The signs are similar to Colorado's in size, with a logo instead of the Colorado Columbine and directional arrows where needed.

#### **Navigating Tribal Lands**

Byway travelers who are driving the corridor located near the Colorado/New Mexico border must assume that the corridor is within tribal lands and therefore must be respectful and adhere to crossing regulations. No crossing permits are required by the Jicarilla Apache Nation, as the route is already a designated New Mexico Scenic Byway known as the Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway.

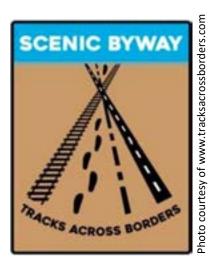
The portion of the byway that crosses lands of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe are managed through the Lands Technicians/Permits and Rights-of-Way Coordinators. A crossing permit is not required for individuals whose purpose is to experience the byway route by driving completely within the confines of the county-maintained roadway. Periodic stops are permitted for photos and viewing, provided that drivers pull to the side of the road and not cross the boundary between the roadway and tribal land.

The Assessment team recommends that as this new byway builds its full information system for travelers, restrictions on tribal lands are clearly spelled out so byway travelers can be certain that they are not trespassing, and that the two tribes are confident that the byway has fully informed travelers of restrictions for each tribe. If this information could be presented in electronic form for preplanning purposes, the advance notification may make the warning signs less ominous for travelers who encounter the without warning.



Photo by Jessica Ebel

Colorado Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway sign



New Mexico Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway sign

#### **Gateways**

A gateway is a portal to the byway, the place where travelers enter into the byway experience. Byways are the "starting place" most often located in gateway communities. They offer an orientation to places and experiences that lie on the road ahead. A kiosk that contains a map and a "You are here" arrow are standard, and are often accompanied with location and descriptions of the major attractions. There are usually "byway begins" and "byway ends" navigational signs on the landscape.

Gateway orientations set expectations. On Tracks Without Borders, this gateway orientation is primarily delivered face-to-face with travelers in visitor centers, and then followed electronically as part of the TravelStory APP.

In the future, the byway might consider working with two other communities that could be equipped with enough information so they too could function as gateways to the byway: 1) Pagosa Springs has considerable visitor traffic, a strong visitor center staff, and an alternative roadway to Chama, especially in bad weather. 2) The Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum is a natural draw for cultural heritage travelers who most certainly will be interested in tribal culture and railroad history.

#### Interpretation

Interpretation is a communication process, a method of revealing meanings and relationships of natural and cultural heritage to the public. It is also a means of providing first-hand experiences through objects, artifacts, landscapes and historic sites. Currently, the byway's interpretive strategy is to use electronic information via the TravelStorys App. The ongoing work is straightforward as the App continues to be tested.—It is the process of adding additional historic, cultural and natural sites to the inventory of twenty significant locations that were originally "loaded" when the App was launched.

The Byway Nomination of December of 2014, notes that "the greatest significance of this corridor today is the fact that it connects the sovereign nations of the Jicarilla Apache in New Mexico and the Southern Ute in Colorado. J-9 facilitates the exchange of commodities and religious and cultural heritage between the two tribes.

"This significance is in early stages of unfolding. There are opportunities ahead to work together with the tribes to explore different ways they might tell their stories to travelers, and different ways they might benefit economically from byway travelers.

# **Wayfinding Partnerships**

Projects to be developed in partnership with counties

• Add mileage from/to key attractions on signs where possible

Projects to be undertaken in partnership with Byway communities and tribes

• Develop wayfinding signage within each town, especially Dulce (both cars got lost)



This backcountry byway runs along the route of the older Denver & Rio Grande Railroad

#### **APPENDIX**

Byway notes and observations from the Wayfinding Assessment Teams during their on-the-road tour of the Tracks Across Borders Scenic and Historic Byway on August 16, 2018.

**Kat Olance**, Front Seat "Never Ever" Director, San Luis Valley Museum Association

- -Durango, lots of Lots of signs in the lobby of the Durango Silverton Railroad Depot about the Tracks Across Borders Byway and the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad
- -At the Durango Visitors Center (not the Depot), the volunteer knew about the TAB Byway because the Pagosa Springs Visitor Center called to ask about it. They had a rock card, but the map is too small. The volunteer had to use a magnifying glass to try to look the TAB up on the map.
- -Grace, the Director, did know all about the Tracks Across Borders Byway

The Southern Ute Cultural Center and Museum was beautiful, wonderful!!!!

- -We didn't see the designation for "Ute" until we got right next to the museum.
- -Renee and Linda were very helpful, and shared great information. We are going to start talking about collaboration with museums in the SLV.
- -Running late so we didn't get to stop in the Town of Arboles or Navajo Lake State Park Visitors Center.
- -At the Chimney Rock National Monument Visitor Center, staff didn't know about the Byway.
- -Good sign at the Arboles to Pagosa Junction turn
- -Gato (Pagosa Junction)
- -Beautiful church, white with red roof
- -Some cool old structures and a bridge
- -Town of Juanita. Couple of old buildings on the left. Owners' dogs on the right came out to chase us off
- -Jicarilla Apache Nation. No sign "entering New Mexico" or anything about the byway. Looked intimidating if you can proceed across.
- -Town of Dulce, Headquarters of the Jicarilla Apache Nation. No signs from the main intersection Dulce to direct us how to follow the Byway. Tourism Information did have any information. Tourist rack with pamphlets was around the corner from the front desk in a dark area under the staircase. When we checked the NM state scenic byway website, they had it named as Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway.
- -There was a historic marker for the Continental Divide, but with no pre-notification
- -Town of Chama had a rack card and knew about the scenic byway.

#### Vicki Nash, Tourism Professional, back seat

- -I had issues finding the new phone APP we were testing. Kat was using Garmin GS, and Jane was using a paper map and the APP. Vicki's App notified us of the Southern Ute Reservation, and the Ute Cultural Museum
- Ignacio museum is gorgeous! KD's café is awesome, with super friendly owners
- -In Arboles, There is a Byway sign before the CDOT green sign before mile marker
- -Navajo Lake State Park Visitor Center. The APP did notify us.

- -Chimney Rock National Monument Visitor Cabin. Jane and I noted the nice view from here. App ping right at the entrance, good signage to the cabin, and a Byway sign right after the Monument exit
- -Gato (Pagosa Junction) had two byway signs. For a gravel road, it was decent shape, with graders and water trucks working. Pretty white church with red roof. APP did not function. Interesting ruins, beautiful rock croppings
- -Juanita, site of pre-railroad Hispanic settlements. Cemetery and ghost ranch.
- -Jicarilla Apache Nation. Not a very welcoming sign. "No No No" Neat yellow water tank and RR bridge
- -Town of Dulce, App notification for the Wild Horse Casino Monero, New Mexico app notification for the Narrow Gauge Scenic Byway
- -Town of Chama. Didn't see any New Mexico Scenic Byway Signs.
- -Cute mini train, and good advertising signage for CTNGRR

#### Jane Rhett, Front Seat "Never Ever"

- -In Town of Durango, Byway signs in Wal-Mart, 550/160 (Farmington Hill) at 172 intersection
- -Ignacio. Sign for Museum is beautiful! It is right on 151, mm4, Lake Capole. KD's Café is Awesome
- -Town of Arboles. Sign for Navajo
- -Good signage at the Visitor Cabin, but no information or knowledge of Tracks Byway from Monument staff
- -There is a better view of Chimney Rock from this road (151) vs. view from highway 160
- -Gato: There was a sign at the turn on 151 onto CR 500; also sign at CR700 cutoff
- -Hard to find Pagosa Junction easily, as County Roads don't give any good directions.
- -Town of Juanita. Cute cemetery!
- -Jicarilla Apache Nation. Tribal sign is NOT welcoming or encouraging
- -Town of Dulce "Bad to No Signing" We have not seen one single byway sign!
- -No signs to the Byway. One old Welcome to Chama Valley sign, one Continental Divide sign, one Narrow Gauge Gift Shop Sign, 2 Narrow Gauge signs right outside Chama, a Historic Marker and a Welcome Sign.

#### **Jessica Ebel, CDOT Transportation Specialist**

- -In Durango, Tracks sign at the intersection of 550 and 160. Information Center should be at the Park when the water treatment plant is finished.
- -Signs at Wal-Mart, sign at turnoff to at S 350, sign for turn off to 172
- Ignacio. Sign to turn for the Museum could be located way before(earlier). Very impressive sign! Very good exhibits and signage throughout
- -Leaving Ignacio, a sign after the turn east on 151, and a great scenic road.
- -Navajo Lake turnoff signs both south and north to Chimney Rock. Good view of Chimney Rock up valley. Can see all of the mesa from this direction.
- -Sign for Byway is just after the turnout to the visitor cabin at Chimney Rock National Monument. Sign faces the turnout-Gato. Saw bridge, tracks, car, and what is left of the water tower...all are falling down. There is a Byway sign to the right at the split in the road.
- -Town of Juanita. Old houses, cemetery, part of an adobe house, old farm equipment. Still a Southern Ute sign in New Mexico
- -Jicarilla Apache Nation. Big sign noting a flash flood area, and a rock fall area. Very nice scenic area with a, water tower, bridge and paved road. First New Mexico Byway sign near a recycle center.

- -Town of Dulce. No signs at the intersection with 64. Which way? We went straight, gassed up, then saw a casino down the road on the left. The Wild Horse Casino did not know about the Byway, but on their hidden information rack found a New Mexico Byways brochure which had a 'Narrow Gauge Railroad' scenic byway route. No signs for any byway in this town.
- -Total number of Scenic Byway Signs was 15--all were in Colorado. In defense of New Mexico, the road to Dulce is not a regular road
- --Town of Chama. Vintage Welcome to Chama sign, a Continental Divide sign, and an old (leaning) Historical Marker.
- -I used the new APP and read descriptions all the way!

Exit Interview in Chama on August 16, 2018. Meeting notes from Muriel Eason

#### OnCell:

- Need keyword search by "tracks across borders byway" to find the OnCell app in Google Play and iTunes. Currently only searchable by "Cumbres & Toltec" or "TABB."
- Need audio narration when we finalize content. Hard to look at screen while driving. The OnCell app worked very well and descriptions were very helpful, otherwise would not have appreciated sites like Juanita.
- Need to add info about where to look to find each point of interest. "coming up on left ahead is...."
- Include Church pullout in Pagosa Junction
- Mark NM/CO border in OnCell
- Add more info about scenery, geology, views and wildlife
- Add more about culture of tribes
- Include more local knowledge
- How far in time is left to travel from various points along the way until the end? This would help travelers know how much time they have to spend.
- How far to next gas station, rest stop, etc.
- Make the GPS range for pings bigger
- Warning about bad road ahead before The Gap and alternate route for winter or wet conditions
- No advanced warning about visitor's centers

#### Signs:

- A+ on CO byway signs.
- A sign at the NM/CO border would be helpful to let travelers know they are crossing.
- No NM signs at all.
- No signs for train either until Chama.
- Jicarilla signs unwelcoming/unnerving in the isolated area near "The Gap"

#### Google Map:

- Weren't sure how to display or hide layers or zoom in to see individual historic locations, railroad artifacts, etc. Need a little guidance.
- They were able to download the map to a smart phone for offline use
- The GPS unit they used tried to send them along other routes that were shorter.

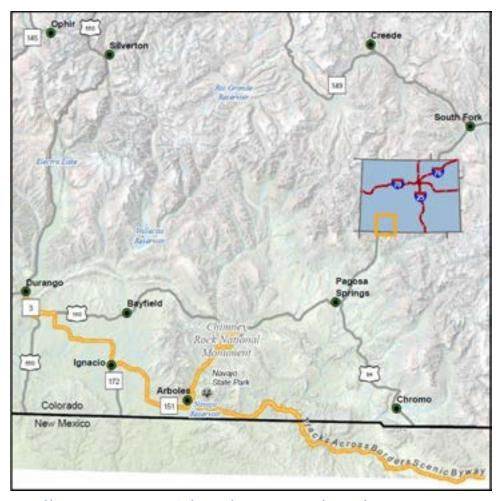
#### Marketing:

- Partner with other area attractions
- Get all visitor's centers knowledgeable about the TABB
- Post "drop dead scenery" photos on a web site or in a blog

- It would really help us to get Visit Pagosa Springs to help us. They are a very effective organization.
- The Chama Visitor's Center folks said lots of people were asking about the byway
- The wayfinding audit team talked about how the lack of signage made it harder for them to feel confident they were on the right track

## **Tracks Across Borders Scenic Byway (89 miles)**

Colorado Byway communities include Durango, Ignacio, and Arboles, New Mexico Byway communities include Chama



http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-Byways/assets/scenic-Byways-maps