

A Framework for Wayshowing:

The Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway

Routt and Rio Blanco Counties
Colorado



October 2015

Acknowledgments

This plan would not have been possible without the contributions of the Steering Committee of the Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic Byway:

Janet Ray, Ken Montgomery, John Anarella, Rita Herold, Barbara Hart, Stephanie Kobald, Lynn Lockwood, Scott Meszaros, Katelin Cook, Holly King, Dan Schwartz, Ellene Meece, Janet Ray, Tony Weiss, Jeff Goncalves, and Rita Alves

Thanks to who participated in the exit interview:

Dan Schwartz, Randy Ridgeway, Lynn Lockwood, Ken Coffin, Tori Hauser, Ellene Meece, Stephanie Kobald, John Anarella, Crystal Reinhard, Janet Ray, Bill Crawford, Necole Zayatz, Lonore Bates, and Dede Fay

Appreciation is also extended to the participants of the Wayfinding Assessment Team, who donated their time to spend a day behind the wheel.

Thanks to Front Seaters: Necole Zayatz (Artist) and Tama Baldwin (Artist) first time visitors to the Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic Byway)

Back Seaters: Dede Fay (Tourism Professional) and Bill Crawford (CDOT Engineer).

Special thanks to Lenore Bates, Scenic Byways Program Manager, Colorado Department of Transportation for her guidance throughout the project.

Special thanks to Rio Blanco County for recording and providing traffic counts on the byway.

The project was designed using concepts based on the work of David Dahlquist and the America's Byways® Resource Center.

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October 2015

Cover photo courtesy of Jon Schler

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Executive Summary: Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic Byway

Wayshowing is a collection of maps, signs and electronic media that have been developed to aid travelers in their journey. A system of information is critical to help travelers successfully choose a destination plan their itineraries, and then navigate once they arrive. The plan that follows assesses the current elements of the wayshowing system that guides travelers throughout the Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic Byway.

Its recommendations outline an action plan that addresses improvements in gateways, navigation, interpretation, and visitor information. These changes are aimed at improving the quality of experience for the traveler, and increasing economic gains for local businesses.

The two gateway towns of Yampa and Meeker are key to visitor information. Both towns are working to establish new visitor centers. In Yampa, the historic Crosson Building will reopen in September 2016 with the first floor dedicated to a new Visitor Center. In this center, travelers will be offered downloads of electronic information about the Byway, and offer interactive ways to connect with the distinctive local culture. The Chamber of Commerce in Meeker is seeking new space on Market Street with more parking for travelers, and more space for maps, brochures, and other information tools. In-town wayfinding signage would further increase business from travelers.

The two gateway towns differ in many ways. Meeker has been hosting hunters for 50 years. They have an array of tourism businesses, and excellent signage for both navigation and interpretation. The town is near the Meeker Massacre, a nationally significant historic site, and the gateway to the iconic Trappers Lake Lodge. The county has recently installed an extensive trail system for motorized recreational vehicles (summer and winter).

Yampa is smaller, quieter, still an authentic ranching community. The US Forest Service manages backcountry camping and recreation. The plan calls for public lands agencies to help clarify recreational zones on the full length of the Byway, so those new to the area can understand the recreational opportunities and restrictions in various areas. It also calls for an interpretive gateway installation on the Yampa side that mirrors the one on the Meeker side.

Electronic information is the most serious challenge facing the Byway, as neither cell service nor Internet connectivity is available outside the towns themselves. The byway needs to develop a website, and prepare traveler information so it can be accessed on various electronic platforms. This is also necessary so the Byway can take advantage of marketing opportunities with partners that include the Colorado Tourism Office and the Colorado Scenic Byways program.

To accomplish this work, the Byway must reestablish a formal organization. This Byway carries a national designation, yet traffic counts are low (Appendix B) and available campsites in the Routt National Forest fill to capacity only 3 weekends a year. For visitors, the Byway offers the opportunity to experience pristine nature in an unhurried, uncrowded way. For the gateway towns, it offers the opportunity to build revenues from travelers.

Flat Tops Trails Scenic Byway

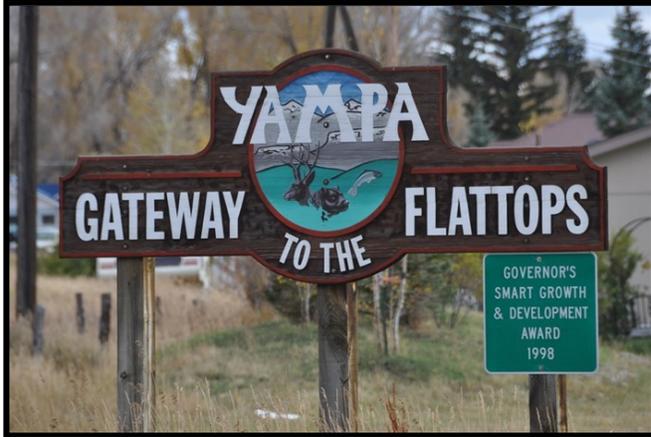


Photo courtesy of www.waymarking.com (By brwhiz)

This Welcome Sign is at the junction of Main Street, Lincoln Street (Colorado Highway 131, County Road 8, and County Road 17) the entry to the Town of Yampa from the north.



Photo courtesy of www.Yelp.com by Dominic C.

Antlers Café and Bar in Yampa National Register of Historic Places



Photo courtesy of Jon Schler

Byway sign near Lost Creek



Photo courtesy of Jon Schler

Information Kiosk at Scotts Bay Trailhead near Trappers Lake

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 Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic 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.



Photo courtesy of Jon Schlier

Flat Tops Scenic Trail information kiosk near Meeker with brochures

History of Wayfinding Development on the Flat Tops Trail Scenic & Historic Byway

The Flat Tops Scenic Byway follows a route first carved into the landscape by the Ute people traveling to hunting and fishing grounds. Later it became a route for Euro-American fur trappers and homesteaders. Today the official byway route travels along Routt County, Rio Blanco County, and Forest Service roads between the towns of Meeker and Yampa for 82 miles. Forty-six (46) miles of these roads are gravel.

The highest point on the byway is Ripple Creek Pass at 10,343 feet and the road is not open to wheeled vehicles in winter. It has been a popular snowmobile route during snow season.¹

The Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan of 1994 characterizes the byway with five interpretive themes; 1) Ute Indian “way of life,” 2) ranching “a lifestyle,” 3) Roosevelt “land of many uses,” 4) Carhart “Cradle of Wilderness,” and 5) Meeker “civilized-western culture agriculture.” The plan identifies natural resources, cultural resources, recreational opportunities, hospitality resources, access, human resources, entertainment, and visual resources. The precise location of most of these resources is not provided in the 1994 plan with the exception of sites with historical and scenic significance.

The Corridor Management Plan lists the following sites for their historical significance:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Ripple Creek Overlook | 6) Trappers Lake |
| 2) Bear Creek Sawmill | 7) Snell Creek Corrals |
| 3) Lake Avery/ Bel Aire Rearing Station | 8) Agency Park Overlook |
| 4) Lost Creek Ranger Station | 9) White River Indian Agency Overlook |
| 5) Miller Creek Ranger Station | 10) Towns of Meeker and Yampa |

The Corridor Management Plan lists the following sites for their scenic beauty:

- 1) Flat Tops
- 2) Trappers Lake
- 3) Chinese Wall(s)
- 4) Ripple Creek Overlook
- 5) Dunkley Pass Overlook
- 6) Spring Cave

Brochures, directional signs, kiosks, and informational signs were all recommended as part of the marketing strategy set forth in the 1994 management plan. Hill and Company, a Vail advertising agency, completed a marketing plan for The Flat Tops Byway in 2008. The Marketing Plan lists the following sites as key stopping points on the Byway:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1) The town of Meeker | 8) Ripple Creek Fire Interpretive site |
| 2) The town of Yampa | 9) Ute Creek Trailhead |
| 3) Trappers Lake | 10) Pyramid Ranger Station |
| 4) White River National Forest | 11) Town of Buford |
| 5) White River Indian Agency Overlook | 12) Bear Creek Interpretive pull out |
| 6) Routt National Forest | 13) Duckley Pass |
| 7) Ripple Creek Pass/Overlook | |

The Marketing Plan recommended a series of web initiatives including development of a Flat Tops Scenic Byway website, online trip-planning tools (itineraries, area tours, etc.), and audio presentation online (currently available on the CDOT website). An online touring presentation is recommended to showcase the experience of the byway and “motivate travel to the destination.” To encourage visitors to visit more of the byway the plan recommends adding downloadable trip itineraries to the byway website and printed itinerary rack cards distributed to all attractions and businesses along the byway.

¹ Flat Tops Scenic and Historic Byway Committee Members, “Flat Tops Scenic and Historic Byway Corridor Management Plan.” 1994.

Summary of Internet Pre-Planning: (Detail in Appendix A)

- A comprehensive list of sites along the byway was not found online.
- High quality maps or links to interactive maps (such as Google Maps) were not found online.
- Historical information about the byway found online was sparse and lacked detail.
- Approximate travel times from end to end ranged from 2 hours to 5 hours.
- Descriptions of road conditions found online were inconsistent between websites.
- Yampa did not have a Chamber of Commerce or “Town of Yampa” Website.

DRAFT

Timeline of Significant Events on the Flat Tops Trail National Scenic Historic Byway

- 1650: Ute Indians had acquired horses and traveled seasonally between winter and summer ranges.
- 1879: Battle of Milk Creek
- 1879: Nathan Meeker (Indian Agent on the Ute Indian Reservation) is killed
- 1883: Ute Indians are removed from northwestern Colorado by an Act of Congress
- 1883: Town of Meeker founded.
- 1885: Town of Meeker incorporated
- 1891: The Flat Tops area becomes the White River Plateau Timber Reserve
- 1901: The Timber reserve is renamed by President Theodore Roosevelt to be the White River Forest Reserve.
- 1906: The Town of Yampa is incorporated
- 1919: Arthur H. Carhart surveys the area around Trappers Lake and successfully advocates for its preservation in its natural state²
- 1932: Flat Tops Primitive Area established
- 1929: Roads and improvement projects are completed to increase access for ranching, hunting, and fishing to accommodate the growing population in the area
- 1961: Road from Phippsburg to Marvine is completed and graveled
- 1964: US Congress passes the Wilderness Act
- 1975: Flat Tops Primitive area becomes the Flat Tops Wilderness Area
- 1989: The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program is established
- 1990: The towns of Meeker and Yampa along with the counties of Rio Blanco and Routt propose a Scenic and Historic Byway designation by the State of Colorado
- 1991: The Flat Tops Trail Byway became the 101st National Scenic and Historic Byway
- 1994: The Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway Committee create a master plan for the development of the byway entitled, "Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway Management Plan." This document was intended to be used as "the guideline for planning, design, funding, project implementation, maintenance, operations, and marketing."
- 2008: Flat Tops Scenic Byway Marketing Plan completed
- 2015: Assessment of the wayshowing system that guides travelers through the Flat Tops Trail Byway.

² Willoughby, Scott. "Trappers Lake, a relatively unknown Colorado jewel, reaps benefits of a 2002 fire." *The Denver Post*, POSTED: 7/14/2012 (www.denverpost.com).

Method of Assessment

“Signage for Byway travelers is somewhat limited and at times confusing,”

- 2008 Flat Tops Marketing Plan.

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 from multiple sources can often provide conflicting information. In June 2015 an on-the-road experiment was conducted along the Flat Tops Trail 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 a travelers see through the windshield and what they read on maps, brochures, mobile devices, and web sites in their laps.

A list of the most significant historical, cultural, and recreational sites were identified by members of the Byway Organizing Committee. Representatives from both the Meeker Gateway and the Yampa Gateway were asked to list the top ten heritage, cultural, and/or recreational sites in their respective counties and to provide an assessment of the existing directional signage. The thirty-seven (37) attractions chosen by local stakeholders for inclusion in this exercise are listed below.

Cultural Heritage Sites

- Yampa Museum
- Pyramid Ranger Station
- Ripple Creek Lodge
- Trappers Lake Overlook
- Snell Creek Corrals
- North Fork Burn
- Lost Creek Ranger Station
- Buford
- Miller Creek Ranger Station
- Oak Ridge Burn
- Meeker Hotel
- White River Museum
- Meeker Visitor Center
- Milk Creek Battle Ground (NE of Meeker)
- Meeker Sheep Dog Trails Site
- Historic School Markers

Recreation Sites

- Crosho Lake
- Chapman Reservoir
- Sheriff Reservoir
- Flat Tops Wilderness
- Vaughn Lake
- Trappers Lake
- South Fork
- Lake Avery
- Fishing Streams
- 250 miles of OHV marked trails
- Trappers Lake

Pull offs

- Dunkley Pass Overlook
- Ripple Creek Pass Overlook
- White River Indian Agency Overlook
- Milk Creek Battleground
- Meeker Massacre Site

Visitor Information

- Yampa Visitor Center
- Meeker Public Lands Center
- Meeker Gateway Kiosk and Interpretive Installation
- Meeker Chamber of Commerce

A four member team was assembled to travel the byway 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 also allowed 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 by team members is found in the Appendix.

Recommendations and Action Plan

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Reestablish a formal organization that will enable byway partners to accomplish a shared vision and goals. The towns of Yampa and Meeker and the Counties of Routt and Rio Blanco worked together to successfully obtain state byway designation in 1990, then quickly achieved national byway designation in 1991. The organization created a Corridor Master Plan in 1994, and 14 years later contracted for a marketing plan. Since then, collective work of the entities has diminished, although the Meeker Chamber of Commerce has recently been active in Colorado's state byway programs. Realistically, to be well positioned to seek funding to accomplish the goals of the byway, the organization should apply to become a 501c3 (or other formal status).

GATEWAYS

Yampa and Meeker are clearly the two major Gateways to the Flat Tops Byway. To give the traveler a "start and finish" to the byway experience, the Byway Steering Committee should act to mirror the existing gateway installations on the Meeker end with identical design features at the Yampa end. This balancing would involve installing directional signage off 131, constructing a shaded kiosk well stocked with brochures, and duplicating the row of six low-profile interpretive panels with stone bases (with content appropriate the Yampa side). Two very good places exist for an expansive kiosk and (6) interpretive panels. The first is an existing pull off on USFS land about 12 miles from the town of Yampa where the snowplows stop plowing. It has a small kiosk, but no view, and is being expanded to accommodate parking for snowmobilers. A second possible site is on the north side of the Byway, a grassy open space with a spectacular view of Steamboat Springs. A pull off here would have to be constructed.

The byway should also take action to obtain highway signage for secondary decision points for travelers. These points are Craig and Rifle on the Meeker side and Steamboat Springs, I-70 and State Bridge on the Yampa side (where the Colorado River Headwaters Byway ends).

Immediately begin courting personnel at visitor centers that influence destination decisions for the traveling public face-to-face. These staffed visitor information centers include the Colorado State Welcome Center in Dinosaur (at the Utah border), the Visitor Center in Craig, and the Steamboat Springs Visitor Center. Use familiarization tours (FAM) to build their knowledge of the Byway.

Rewrite brochures to amplify the importance of visitor services in the gateway towns of Yampa and Meeker. Leaving town on either end of the Byway, visitors should be alerted with signs that read "No services for ___ miles." Kiosks at both ends should map exactly where travelers can find gas, food and lodging on the 82 miles between towns (currently only three establishments), and the anticipated duties of seasonal road closings due to winter conditions.

Both Yampa and Meeker are planning for new visitor centers. The restoration of the Historic Crosson Building in downtown Yampa is scheduled to be completed in September 2016, with its entire first floor

dedicated to a new visitors center. This will offer an excellent opportunity to provide downloads for Smartphone and other devices so travelers will be equipped with information before embarking on the Flat Tops Byway that has neither cell service nor Internet service. Meeker is seeking space on Market Street for a new visitor center that provides increased parking for travelers, and more inside space for maps, brochures and other visitor information.

NAVIGATION

Install additional navigational signs on the Yampa side, building reassurance for the traveler exiting town and heading up the road toward Dunkley Pass. As the USFS Ranger requested, “I just want more road numbers posted.” Heading east toward Meeker, it is also very easy to mistakenly turn onto CR15 to Phippsburg or CR25 to Oak Creek. The junction of county roads 17/21 needs a byway marker sign (blue columbine).

Install additional directional signage where the byway intersects with side roads. One Meeker businessman reported, “I’ve tried to send travelers to Yampa, and they end up in Hayden or the Williams Fork.” Although the traffic counts are very low (see Appendix), the Rio Blanco County road department has begun documenting the points where travelers have the most navigational trouble. The Byway can request similar involvement from Routt County to bring the signage up to the standard that exists on the Meeker side.

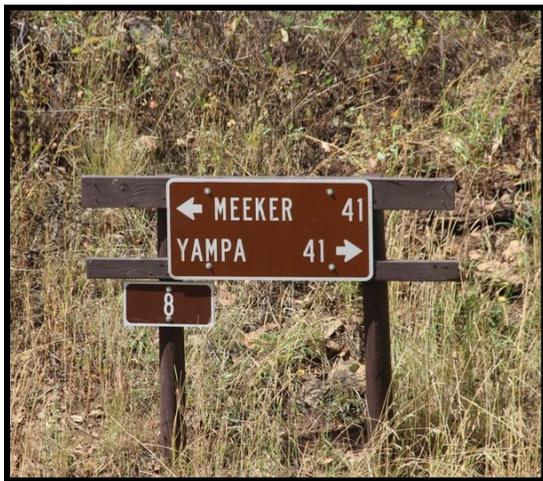


Photo courtesy of Jon Schlier

Midway across the Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway at the turnoff to Trappers Lake

Clarify if the posting of the byway blue columbine markers of the byway through The Town of Yampa is still acceptable to local citizens. The Byway was rerouted through town to give byway travelers exposure to local businesses, but there is some indication that townspeople may not support the change.

Flat Tops Byway joins Colo Highway 13 one mile east of Meeker at County Road 8. Address sign clutter at this junction. The signs are dense and confusing enough to pose a safety hazard as drivers slow to sort through the information. It also works as a counterpoint to the handsome interpretive installation that signals the beginning of the byway.

Evaluate signage in Meeker that identifies historic sites for southbound travelers. The assessment team found that historic sites and other locations were extremely well signed for travelers entering from the south end of town, but spotty for those coming in from the north.

INTERPRETATION

The 400,000 acre Routt National Forest is the second oldest National Forest in the U.S. Twenty-two percent of its acreage is designation “wilderness.” The trail systems used by hikers, bicyclists, hunters and snowmobilers mark the wilderness boundaries, and so recreationists understand restricted areas. The closest the wilderness-designated area comes to the Byway, however, is about one and one half

miles in from Pyramid Ranger Station. Information about the values and uses of the wilderness should also be accessible to those who take the scenic drive, but do not get out on the trails.

Address the transition in land use. Driving west from Yampa, traveling mile after mile through pristine forest, one suddenly enters a new zone, posted with multiple signs indicating an ATV trail. Likewise, ATV riders going east pass from a marked trail into a wilderness area. Insure that materials on websites, on maps and brochures, make these different zones clear to visitors. Although public agencies, county officials and local citizens know how different zones are managed, the traveler new to the region needs tools to understand the mosaic of recreational regulations. Define transition areas, and understand the limitations of boundaries. Trappers Lake turnoff is one natural transition spot.

Clarify the sequence of events that led to the Meeker Massacre, and help travelers identify how to find the two different locations where conflict occurred. The Milk Creek Battle site is located 17 miles beyond the Byway on a gravel road that travels through farmland, and there is no interpretive information that explains why the Meeker Massacre conflict happened. The Byway Committee should consider applying to extend the Byway out to the White River Agency, as the site is very significant. Here, Ute Indians discovered Meeker ripping up a long-established track they had used for horse racing, and attacked him. The second location is east of town, where the US Cavalry that was moving to assist Meeker was attacked by the Utes. This is a nationally significant story, one that would keep cultural heritage travelers in town to delve into the history. There is no interpretive information that explains why the Meeker Massacre conflict happened. The Byway Committee should consider applying to extend the Byway out to the White River Agency, as the site is very significant.

Modify the brown historic school signs, which dot the landscape, but are not self-explanatory. Some schools are still standing; other locations are signed in locations where schools have been moved or destroyed. Without a brochure in hand, it was impossible for our assessment team to figure out the significance of the sites. The Thornburg School, which is restored and located on the Thornburg Battle Site, is labeled and sets a good standard for the system. QR codes may be a good way for visitors to connect with stories of individual historic school sites.

At Dunkley Pass (elevation 9,764), install a low profile panorama, naming the mountain ranges and peaks that stretch across this spectacular view. Geology on Dunkley pass is unique to Colorado, showing flows of lava that pushed up and eroded, exposing sandstone and granite underneath.

Seek funding for an interpretive plan for the Yampa side, making it as thought provoking as the Meeker side. Routt National Forest is the second oldest national forest in the US. Themes should include geology, fire, wildlife, the pack trails that led to Trappers Lake, and the Ute trails that led to the valley.



Buford School Site
historic marker

Photo courtesy of Jon Schlier

Partnerships and Financial Resources

Projects to be developed through consultation with regional office of Colorado Department of Transportation

- Work with regional engineer to request signage off I-70 and US 40

Projects to be developed in partnership with counties

- Work with Road Departments in both counties to install directional signage where the Byway intersects with county roads

Projects to be undertaken in partnership with the towns of Yampa and Meeker

- Develop wayfinding signage within each town
- Promote the rich variety lodging opportunities all along the byway
- Develop state-of-the-art electronic delivery systems for visitors in all visitors centers

Projects to be undertaken by the byway organization

- Create a dedicated website for Flat Tops Trail
- Redevelop the byway brochure
- Develop historical information in electronic format so it can be downloaded by travelers and local alike

Projects to be developed with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and USFS

- Improve watchable wildlife program along the Byway
- Develop information for public access to fishing along the Byway
- Promote the full range of lodging stay experiences along the Byway
- Develop the historical information in a digital form tied to sites along the Byway
- Integrate wildlife into the expanded interpretive program



Photo courtesy of Jon Schler

Interpretive Signage near Meeker

APPENDIX A

Byway notes and observations from the Wayfinding Assessment Teams during their tour on the Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway on September 16, 2015.

OBSERVATIONS by Individual Assessment Team Members

Volunteer, Bill Crawford – CDOT Engineer, Driver

- Found a map at Rangers Station (signage does not make clear that visitor information is located here)
- Found a route description at Kum & Go in Yampa
- Excellent directional sign to Crosho Lake (no interpretive signs)
- No directional or interpretive signs found for Yampa Museum
- Yampa Visitor Center does not say “visitor center”, it indicates Forest Service
- Did not know we went through Flat Tops Wilderness (no interpretive signs)
- Pyramid Ranger Station sign is small
- Is the small brown Buford sign historic?
- There were no directions to White River Indian Agency Overlook
- Couldn't find signs to Meeker Hotel, White River Museum or Meeker Visitor Center; there was good signage to Historic Downtown Meeker
- Unclear what the signs for the Historic School Sites mean

Volunteer, Necole Zayatz – Never Ever, Front Passenger

- The following online resources were used: Webpage specific to the byway
- The following resources were used to research or navigate the byway: iphone, people at convenience store, and Ranger Station in Yampa
- Directional signs were excellent for Chapman Reservoir, Sheriff Reservoir, Vaughn Lake and Ripple Creek Lodge
- Directional signs were adequate for Crosho Lake, Pyramid Ranger Station, Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Trappers Lake and Lodge, Snell Creek Corrals, and Lost Creek Ranger Station
- There were not enough directional signs for Yampa Visitor Center, Dunkley Pass Overlook, Buford, or the Meeker Hotel
- No directional signs were found for Yampa Museum, Flat Tops Wilderness, North Fork Burn, Miller Creek Ranger Station, South Fork, Lake Avery, Oak Ridge Burn, White River Museum or Meeker Visitor Center (construction in town that day)
- There were interpretive signs for Pyramid Ranger Station, Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Trappers Lake and Lodge and Oak Ridge Burn
- Is there camping at Crosho Lake?
- Is Little Flat Tops at Chapman Reservoir?
- Overlook for Flat Tops Wilderness needs better sign
- Is there a picnic area at Dunkley Pass Overlook?
- Need to add another overlook near Ripple Creek Pass Overlook
- Is there a dam at Lake Avery?
- A physical map was found at Yampa Ranger District

Volunteer, Tama Baldwin – Never Ever, Front Passenger

- An iPhone was used to find the following resources online:
 - Webpage, a Colorado map, route descriptions and approximate travel time
 - The approximate travel time found online was not realistic!
- Directional signs were excellent for Pyramid Ranger Station, Vaughn Lake, Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Ripple Creek Lodge, Trappers Lake and Buford
- Directional signs were adequate for Crosho Lake, Chapman Reservoir, Sheriff Reservoir, Snell Creek Corrals, Lost Creek Ranger Station, and Meeker Hotel
- There were not enough directional signs for Dunkley Pass overlook and White River Indian Agency Overlook
- No directional signs were found for Yampa Museum, Yampa Visitor Center, Flat Tops Wilderness, North Fork Burn, Miller Creek Ranger Station, South Fork, Lake Avery, Oak Ridge Burn, Meeker Visitor Center, Aldrich Lakes
- There were interpretive signs for Vaughn Lake and Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Trappers Lake, and White River Indian Agency Overlook
- A physical map was found in Meeker
- "I felt no concerns; the road is in superb condition."
- "The Forest Service Center in Yampa is marvelous – full of great materials and helpful people."

Volunteer, Dede Fay – Tourism Professional, Backseat Passenger

- The following online resources were used:
 - CDOT webpage and Colorado map
 - The CDOT website gave good overview
 - Brochure is nice
- Directional signs were excellent for Pyramid Ranger Station, Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Ripple Creek Lodge, and Trappers Lake
- Directional signs were adequate for Crosho Lake, Chapman Reservoir, Sheriff Reservoir, Dunkley Pass Overlook, Vaughn Lake, Snell Creek Corrals, Lost Creek Ranger Station, and Buford
- There were not enough directional signs for Meeker Hotel and White River Museum
- No directional signs were found for Yampa Museum, Yampa Visitor Center, North Fork Burn and Meeker Visitor Center
- There were interpretive signs for Crosho Lake, Chapman Reservoir, Sheriff Reservoir, Dunkley Pass Overlook, Pyramid Ranger Station, Vaughn Lake and Ripple Creek Lodge
- Came too late to see Yampa Museum
- Crosho Lake is 6 miles off route
- Dunkley Pass Overlook – Spectacular at picnic area
- White River Indian Agency Overlook – Need pre-notification on highway

Volunteer, Janet Ray – Yampa Byway Committee, Front Passenger

- No directional signs were found for Yampa Museum or Snell Creek Corrals
- Directional signs were excellent for Crosho Lake, Chapman Reservoir, Sheriff Reservoir, Dunkley Pass Overlook, Pyramid Ranger Station, Vaughn Lake, Ripple Creek Pass Overlook, Trappers Lake and Lost Creek Ranger Station.
- Directional signs were adequate for Yampa Visitor Center, Ripple Creek Lodge and Buford
- Physical maps were found at both the Yampa Town Hall and Yampa Ranger District

Navigation (Team Observations)

Gateway Orientation (*places where you enter onto the byway and where you exit-was there a sense of arrival/departure? Features that helped orient you to the surrounding area? Anything to announce the presence of the byway or to draw you in to the byway experience?}):*

- Signs were there, but needed a brochure and map to start
- From Yampa there was sense of entrance once we were driving onto the byway
- I found the entrance to the byway in Yampa hard to find and once found not at all that clear
- The kiosk at the start of the Meeker side is excellent but the last of signage the last 20 miles heading into Meeker makes it easy to forget you were on a special route. There was one good pull out with historical information near the close of Meeker side, but there were no signs warning of its presence.
- Meeker entrance clear and well signed – good kiosk with brochure
- Did not really feel Yampa entrance was clear and obvious

Navigation Concerns (*points along the byway where the route was unclear, or navigation became difficult}):*

- Need the Flat Tops Trail Scenic and Historic Byway map and guide at the beginning instead of at the end. Didn't get in one Yampa where we started but in Meeker when we were done.
- No Dunkley Pass Overlook sign from the road
- Dunkley Pass Overlook – Bunker Basin Unit 12 Elk sign to picnic area is very small and obscure
- White Mountain signs were there, however it was not on our list to look out for
- Rivers should be marked on Byway map
- Flat Top Wilderness – no signs
- Brown signs state how far Meeker is after Trappers, but no mention of Buford
- Once we were on the byway the route was clear.
- Need guard rails at pull outs
- Crosho Lake (Reservoir) beautiful drive, scenic aspen trees turning, lake is low, well worth the drive. Road is firm, hard packed, drivable.

Safety Concerns (*points along the byway that felt dangerous or presented safety concerns}):*

- Roads are great, no problem
- Open range sign for out-of-towners at Crosho Lake
- Cows and sheep on turns

Interpretation (Team Observations)

Interpretation (*what themes emerge in the interpretative information found along the byway? Do you have questions about the history, geology, or hydrology of particular places?}):*

- Need more on geology, history and hydrology of area. There were interpretive signs but I did not have time to read.
- Brown “historic signs” at Buford – not sure what this means

- Ranch, working history of the land
- Sense of self sufficiency
- Geology formed by glaciers especially at Trappers Lake
- Significance of forest fires, trappers lodge, and road into lodge
- I would greatly appreciate more information on the geology of the route.
- Also, I would appreciate a sign in the major passes that identify names of specific peaks (visible on the horizon).
- Yampa Forest Service, add “Visitor Center” to bottom of sign (not say “Ranger Station”)
- Pyramid Ranger Station – cool, it is great to have this museum manned with a volunteer in the summer
- Excellent kiosk at entrance at Meeker
- Overlook picnic area was so spectacular that it deserves pre-notification sign
- Scenic Byways sign has geo-map on the background and that makes it harder to read. Maybe consider an uncluttered background or a replacement design.

Local Business Presence (Team Observations)

- Adequate services in both Yampa and Meeker, but little forewarning of business district in Yampa.
- Meeker’s Chamber of Commerce visitor Center is well-signed and has good brochure information
- Yampa is in the process of developing a plan for wayfinding within town limits

Visitor Services and On-Site visitor Information (Team Observations)

Visitor Services (*availability of food, fuel and lodging along the byway*):

- Kiosk on Forest Service
 - o No restrooms or interpretive signs
 - o Snowmobile/cross country skiing (New parking and kiosk)
 - o Sign gone/shot up
- Gas Yampa, Buford and Meeker
- Would not have known about Trappers Lake Lodge if it was not our destination for lunch. Need a full day to experience this byway
- Need a fuel sign with distance to Buford
- Dunkley Rest Stop and Ranger Station in Yampa, I felt these were sufficient – though not clearly marked.
- Ripple Creek Overlook – good job with interpretive trail signs – well done. Restrooms?
- Excellent lunch at Trappers Lake Lodge!! Gas stations (3 locations) well marked on map but Buford was weakly marked.
- Meeker’s Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center is well signed and has good Brochure information available. On the day we stop by the staff were at a meeting and some high school girls were watching



Photo courtesy of Jon Schler

“Information” sign in Meeker

the front desk, they were very nice, but didn't know a lot about Meeker area or the Byway.

Recreation (*list any recreational opportunities that appear on signs, brochures, maps, etc. along the byway*):

- Hiking, snowmobile-OHV, fishing, hunting, museums, geology
- Skiing, hiking, camping, hunting
- On the Meeker entrance there is an excellent list of activities for both summer and winter.
- The Forest Service Center in Yampa is marvelous – full of great materials and helpful people
- Hunting, biking, hiking, ATVs, horseback riding, fishing, and photography

Top Attractions and Unique Qualities (Team Observations)

Top attractions (*please list what you would consider to be the top 3 attractions on this byway*):

- Forest fire area, geology, Trapper Lake and Lakes
- To Trappers Lake – burn area is spectacular, glad to see the fire is done.
- Trappers lodge
- Trappers Lake, Dunkley Pass, sheep herds, and General Store in Yampa
- The Dunkley Pass, Trappers Lake Overlook, and Pyramid Ranger Station
- Flat Top Wilderness Overlook, Trappers Lake, and Vaugh Lake

Unique Qualities (*what do you believe makes this byway special?*):

- Sheep and cattle herds – Open Range
- Pyramid Ranger Station – very cool
- Ranch life, unspoiled landscape, appreciation for what the landscape needs to regenerate after forest fire
- Views of mountains, marines, lakes, wildlife, geological education, glacier land forming History of ranch life, traditional use of land
- It is unspoiled, unpretentious, and gorgeous
- I felt like I was driving through time, forward from Yampa to Meeker, the 1930's to the present
- Would love to see public access/use of Pyramid Ranger Station
- Geology is amazing – would like to see scenic interpretation of that along the Byway.
- Meeker/Indian Conflict especially interesting to international visitors

Internet Preplanning

- A Google search for Flat Tops Scenic Byway resulted in five listed sites: 1) Colorado.com, “the official site of Colorado tourism,” 2) codot.gov, the Colorado Department of Transportation website, 3) ColoradoDirectory.com, a commercial travel guide, 4) uncovercolorado.com, an online travel guide and blog about things to do in Colorado, and 5) meekercolorado.com, which appears to be the website of the White River Community Association. None of the sites appear to be directly populated by the Flat Tops Scenic Byway Committee.

- Colorado.com (the top site listed in Google search) described the byway as 82 scenic miles that “winds its way through lush river valleys, skirts the bountiful Flat Tops Wilderness and climbs over two of Colorado’s least-traveled passes.” The recommended travel route is from Yampa to Meeker with suggested stops in Yampa, Ripple Creek Pass, Trappers Lake, Meeker, and the Milk Creek battle site located approximately 20 miles beyond the byway. This site recommends a 5 hour drive time from Yampa to Meeker with side trips. There is a link to the Colorado Department of Transportation site (codot.gov). Road conditions are not mentioned.
- Codot.gov provides the official site for the Flat Tops Byway, as well as the twenty-five other Colorado scenic byways. The site has links to corridor management plans and audio tour downloads, however it is vague on traveler information. Distance is given as 82 miles, drive time: 2 hours. There is a five sentence synopsis of the byway which describes the area as a timber reserve and the “cradle of wilderness,” and the byway as a “working” byway. The map provided lacks detail and regional scope and does not show public lands or interstates. Under special considerations the site mentions “Fill tank in Yampa or Meeker” and “Roads muddy when wet.” There is some mention of winter closures, but no mention of unpaved conditions.
- Coloradodirectory.com provides info on byway history and conditions. The site states erroneously that “the byway is open all year round, and offers fishing, camping, hiking, and horseback riding.” The drive is described as “82 miles (40 of which are unpaved, but still accessible to any vehicle) long and will take about 2 hours to drive.” The map on this site is illustrated and focuses more on recreational opportunity than navigational clarity.
- Uncovercolorado.com provides a description of the byway that states “half the trip is on smooth gravel road and the other dirt.” It gives a clear warning to gas up in Yampa or Meeker as there are no gas stations between the two towns. This site has the most comprehensive list of activities available along the byway; boating, camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, OHV driving, and scenic driving. Out of the top 5 sites, this site has the only link to a local business along the byway, Trappers Lake Lodge.
- Meekercolorado.com mentions “The byway is closed for much of the winter, but is used extensively by snowmobilers.” Nothing about snowmobiles was noticed on the other sites. Map lacks detail.
- Flat Tops Scenic Byway was found to be listed on TripAdvisor.com with two posted reviews and a link to the CDOT site about the Flat Tops. One review mentions a few places to stop including Montgomery's General Merchandise, a local diner in Yampa, the Forest Service Information Center in Yampa, the Pyramid Ranger Station, Trappers Lake, and the Holiday's Bar n' Grill in Meeker. The same review speculates on having more time by saying, “Another night would give us a chance to check out Meeker's historic buildings and visit The Battle of Milk Creek.” The TripAdvisor website about the Flat Tops Byway did not show up on the



Buford gas station

Photo courtesy of Jon Schlier

first page of results from a Google search for “Flat Tops Scenic Byway” and was discovered only after searching TripAdvisor directly.

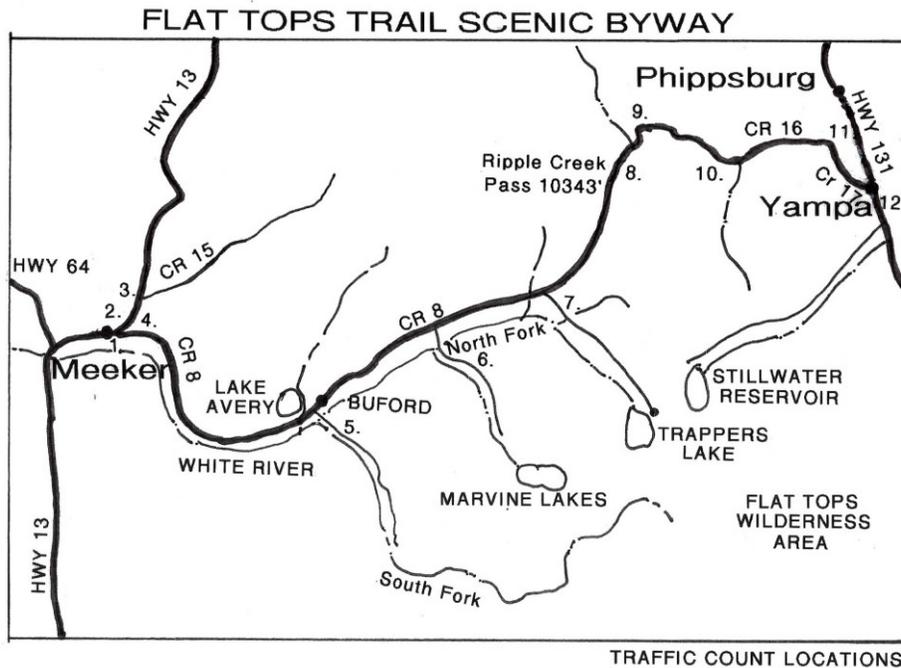
- A Google search for Meeker, Colorado resulted in four listed sites: 1) townofmeeker.org, the official website of the town Meeker, 2) meekercolorado.com, which appears to be the website of the White River Community Association, 3) meekerchamber.com, Meeker Chamber of Commerce Website, and 4) mapquest.com/us/co/meeker, the *MapQuest* Website for Meeker, Colorado with map & directions.
 - Townofmeeker.org is the official town government website featuring the “Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway: Visitors to Northwest Colorado are encouraged to trace the footsteps of this area’s original residents, the Ute Indian tribes who roamed the country they called “The Shining Mountains.” Also included on the website are links to departments, courts, emergency services, education and health referrals, and calendar of events.
 - Meekercolorado.com appears to be the website of the White River Community Association and features a Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway link with a brief history and description of the byway. Also including in the link is special considerations (“*Fill tank in Yampa, Buford, or Meeker; roads muddy when wet. The byway is closed for much of the winter, but is used extensively by snowmobilers.*”) and special features (“*White River National Forest, Flat Tops Wilderness Area*”). The website also includes information on big game hunting, hiking, backpacking, fishing, horseback, camping, and vacations.
 - Meekerchamber.com features “Explore the Flat Tops Scenic Byway” link with a brief description of the byway and surrounding area. The Meeker Chamber website also features a Calendar of Local Events, Your Guide to Meeker, and a Local Business Directory. Meeker’s history, dining and lodging, and things to do in Meeker in the summer and winter are also included on the website.
 - Mapquest.com features a map and links for directions to travel services including: hotels, restaurants, gas, grocery, parking, bars, post offices, attractions, parks and urgent help (auto repair and hospitals). Also on the website is a “+ more info” link to Census Bureau information and a brief history of Meeker.
- A Google search for Yampa, Colorado resulted in three listed sites: 1) Colorado.com, “the official site of Colorado tourism,” 2) ColoradoDirectory.com, a commercial travel guide, and 3) mapquest.com/us/co/yampa, the *MapQuest* Website for Yampa, Colorado with map & directions.
 - Colorado.com (the top site listed in Google search) described the byway as 82 scenic miles that “winds its way through lush river valleys, skirts the bountiful Flat Tops Wilderness and climbs over two of Colorado’s least-traveled passes.”
 - ColoradoDirectory.com provides info on byway history and conditions.
 - Mapquest.com features a map and links for directions to travel services including: hotels, restaurants, gas, grocery, parking, bars, post offices, attractions, parks and urgent help (auto repair and hospitals). Also on the website is a “+ more info” link to Census Bureau information of Yampa.
- Attempting to get directions from Yampa to Meeker via the Flat Tops Scenic Byway on apps like Google Maps and Apple Maps was difficult as they defaulted to US Highway 40, a paved route through Craig that bypasses the byway entirely.

APPENDIX B

Flat Tops Trail Traffic Counts

Location Name	Count	Notes
1. HWY 13 just W. of CR8	2908	CDOT (2014)
2. HWY 13 just N. of CR8	2400	CDOT (2014)
3. HWY 13 just S. of CR15	1800	CDOT (2014)
4. CR8 just E. of HWY 13 INT.	241	County(Sat. July 4) 2015
5. ON CR17 at CR8 INT.	124	County(Tues. July 7)
6. Off CR8 to Marvine Camp.	48	County(Sun. July 12)
7. Off CR8 to Trappers Lake	193	County(Sat. July 11)
8. Top of Ripple Creek Pass	150	County(Mon. Sept. 7)
9. Above Ripple Creek Lodge	123	County(Sun. July 12)
10. Dunkley Going towards Yampa	195	County(Mon. Sept. 7)
11. On HWY 131 and Routt CR17	1400	CDOT(2014)
12. On HWY 131 at Moffat Ave.	1000	CDOT(2014)

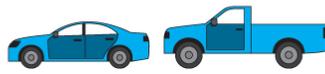
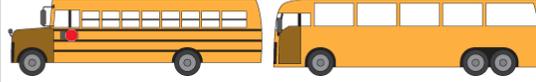
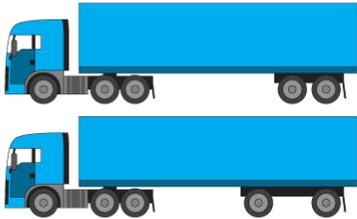
Note: Highway counts are from Colorado Department of Transportation for the year 2014. Traffic counts for the Flat Tops Trail were done by Rio Blanco County from June thru September 2015. Road Counters were left at each location for a week. Traffic counts shown are for the highest day of that week at that location.



		CLASS OF VEHICLES															
Location* & Date		Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9	Class 10	Class 11	Class 12	Class 13	Class 14	Class 15	All Classes
Location 4 July 1-7	Percentage	0.46	43.08	24.82	1.66	8.76	12.82	0.09	5.26	1.94	0.65	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.37	100.00
	Totals	5	467	269	18	95	139	1	57	21	7	0	0	1	0	4	1084
Location 5 July 7-13	Percentage	0	39.77	33.00	0.29	11.82	4.47	0.00	6.63	3.31	0.72	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
	Totals	0	276	229	2	82	31	0	46	23	5	0	0	0	0	0	694
Location 6 July 7-14	Percentage	1.28	43.59	23.40	2.24	12.50	0.32	0.00	14.42	0.96	0.96	0.00	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.00	100.00
	Totals	4	136	73	7	39	1	0	45	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	312
Location 7 July 7-13	Percentage	0.4	43.19	22.55	0.70	11.72	15.33	0.10	3.01	2.30	0.40	0.00	0.00	0.20	0.00	0.10	100.00
	Totals	4	431	225	7	117	153	1	30	23	4	0	0	2	0	1	998
Location 8 Sept 1-9	Percentage	3.66	41.11	34.17	2.27	11.85	1.13	0.00	4.54	0.63	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.25	100.00
	Totals	29	326	271	18	94	9	0	36	5	1	0	0	2	0	2	793
Location 9 July 7-13	Percentage	2.6	49.81	31.23	0.37	10.59	0.00	0.00	4.83	0.19	0.19	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	100.00
	Totals	14	268	168	2	57	0	0	26	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	538
Location 10 Sept 1-8	Percentage	3.61	37.41	38.06	0.74	10.28	5.09	0.09	4.35	0.37	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
	Totals	39	404	411	8	111	55	1	47	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1080

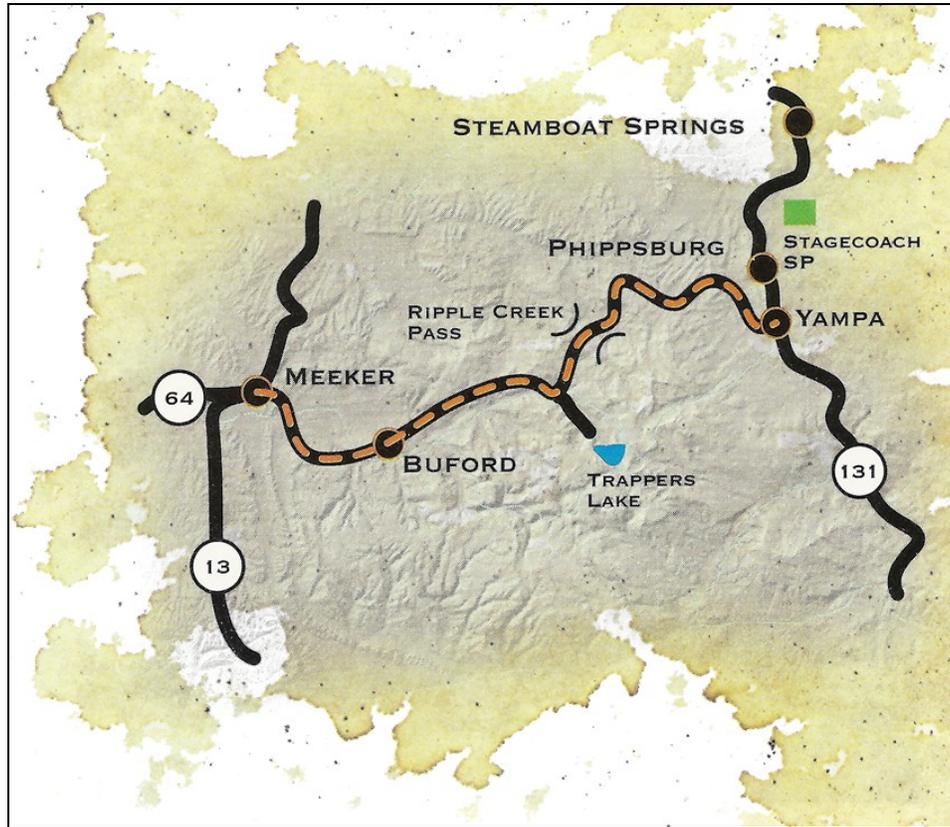
*See FLAT TOPS TRAIL SCENIC BYWAY, Traffic Count Locations Map on Previous Page

FHWA Vehicle Classifications

<p>1. Motorcycles 2 axles, 2 or 3 tires</p> 	<p>2. Passenger Cars 2 axles, can have 1- or 2-axle trailers</p> 	<p>3. Pickups, Panels, Vans 2 axles, 4-tire single units Can have 1 or 2 axle trailers</p> 	<p>4. Buses 2 or 3 axles, full length</p> 
<p>5. Single Unit 2-Axle Trucks 2 axles, 6 tires (dual rear tires), single-unit</p> 	<p>6. Single Unit 3-Axle Trucks 3 axles, single unit</p> 	<p>7. Single Unit 4 or More-Axle Trucks 4 or more axles, single unit</p> 	<p>8. Single Trailer 3- or 4-Axle Trucks 3 or 4 axles, single trailer</p> 
<p>9. Single Trailer 5-Axle Trucks 5 axles, single trailer</p> 	<p>10. Single Trailer 6 or More-Axle Trucks 6 or more axles, single trailer</p> 		<p>8. Single Trailer 3- or 4-Axle Trucks 3 or 4 axles, single trailer</p> 
<p>11. Multi-Trailer 5 or Less-Axle Trucks 5 or less axles, multiple trailers</p> 		<p>12. Multi-Trailer 6-Axle Trucks 6 axles, multiple trailers</p> 	
<p>13. Multi-Trailer 7 or More-Axle Trucks 7 or more axles, multiple trailers</p> 			

Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway (82 miles)

Byway communities include Meeker, Buford, Phippsburg and Yampa



<http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/assets/scenic-byways-maps>