

Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway

Corridor Management Plan

2018



Photo provided by Palmer Land Trust

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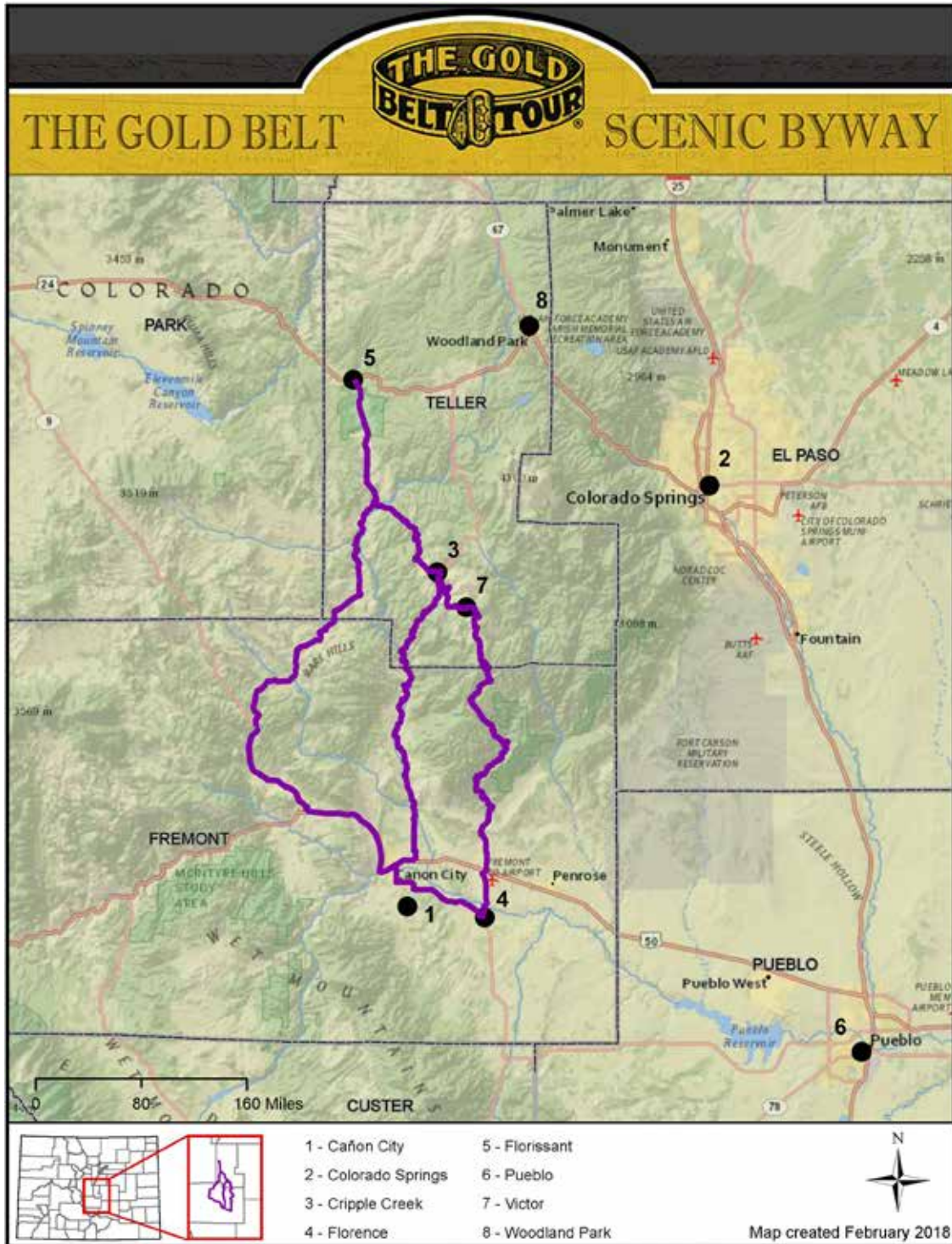
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MAP OF THE GOLD BELT BYWAY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gold Belt Byway travels 131 miles within Teller and Fremont Counties in Central Colorado. This unique road retraces the historic railroad routes, stagecoach roads, and trails that connected the Cripple Creek Mining District with communities to the north and south. Preservation of this Byway has local, regional, and nationwide significance. Benefits include:

- Preservation of important historic and cultural identity of a region
- Development of a community vision around a common goal
- Maintaining the important qualities that make this area unique
- Regional collaboration between agencies, municipalities, private landowners, and businesses

The Gold Belt Tour Back Country Byway (Gold Belt Byway) was established in response to the 1986 President's Commission on Americans Outdoors which revealed the ever-growing popularity of scenic driving as an American pastime. The scenic beauty, outstanding geological areas, and historical significance more than qualified the Gold Belt Byway as one of the first scenic and historic byways in Colorado. The Byway vision includes promotion of tourism, maintaining healthy habitat for native species, instilling appreciation for the diverse natural history and significant paleontology and geology of the area, preservation of the rural and small town lifestyles found along the Byway, and protecting open space and rural lands that help make the Byway special.

The Gold Belt Byway Association was formed to manage the Gold Belt Byway through the collaboration of citizens, organizations, business and industry, and governmental agencies. The Association is dedicated to preserving the rural lifestyle, natural environment, and rich cultural and historic heritage along the Byway. The Association not only helps promote and protect the Byway itself, but is a proud promoter and supporter of the communities and people that live and work along the Byway.

THE BYWAY ROUTES

Phantom Canyon Road follows the abandoned railroad grade of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad (F&CC). The F&CC, completed in 1894, was the first railroad to reach the Cripple Creek mines. The F&CC was the most profitable narrow gauge railroad of its day. Today, a drive along Phantom Canyon Road takes travelers through tunnels, over bridges and past the remnants of train stations used by the F&CC.

Shelf Road, built in 1892, was the first direct route connecting the Arkansas Valley to Cripple Creek. Before the arrival of the railroads, this road was heavily traveled by freight wagons carrying supplies to the mining district. Today, travelers experience “The Shelf” – a narrow, winding section of road perched high above Fourmile Creek – much as it was in the 1890’s. Remains of the toll collector’s cabin are visible from the road. When the road reaches the outskirts of Cripple Creek it passes by several historic mine and mill sites. The lower portion of Shelf Road passes through the Garden Park Fossil Area, an area rich in both natural and human history. The area is world renowned for the wealth of dinosaur fossils excavated here. The Garden Park Fossil Area is a National Natural Landmark.

Teller One leads north from the mining district to the town of Florissant. Teller One was the first route used by the Hundley Stage Company to carry passengers and freight between the Colorado Midland Railway Depot at Florissant and Cripple Creek. Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument also lies along Teller One. The fossil beds preserve an impressive array of plant and insects fossils – giving a detailed picture of life 34 to 35 million years ago. The historic Hornbek Homestead also lies within the National Monument and along the byway; it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

High Park Road traverses a high elevation “park” – historic mountain grasslands and modern cattle ranching country. The ranches along High Park Road represent over 150 years of ranching history in the region. Historic ranches and buildings, such as the Switzer Ranch and the Fourmile Community Building, line the byway route. These places and many others continue to be vital parts



Photo provided by Palmer Land Trust

BYWAY AND ASSOCIATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Completion of the Land Preservation Plan which helps guide the Association in identification of high priority parcels for protections, funding, and interpretation.
- Permanent protection of more than 10,000 acres of land along the Byway
- Creation and distribution of educational and interpretational materials for Byway visitors
- Creation and installation of Byway signage
- Restoration and preservation of the Historic Garden Park School
- Completion of the Byway Economic Development Plan

USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Gold Belt Byway Corridor Management Plan is intended for regular use by the communities, counties, federal and state agencies, and the people and organizations that brought it to fruition. This plan is the starting point between the people, private industry, and government, to move forward toward a common vision.

The vision and goals describe the philosophy of the plan. Actions and other logistics of implementation must be flexible and capable of change in response to shifts in public demand or administrative focus of the community byway partnership.

Note: The Byway may be referred to as any of the following: Gold Belt Tour Back Country Byway, Gold Belt Tour Byway, Gold Belt Byway, Gold Belt Scenic Byway, Gold Belt National Scenic Byway

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the 2018 Gold Belt Tour Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is to update the existing Partnership Plan, originally completed in 1997, and to combine all planning documents into a single, comprehensive plan. The CMP will provide the overall framework for managing the Gold Belt Byway's resources and uses and provides the future direction for the Gold Belt Byway. The CMP should be reviewed and updated at least every 10 years.

LOCATION

The Gold Belt Byway is located in Fremont and Teller Counties in central Colorado, 40 miles southwest of Colorado Springs. The Byway consists of Teller County Road 1, High Park Road, Shelf Road, and Phantom Canyon Road. The Byway is connected by State Highway 115 and U.S. Highway 50 on the southern end of the Byway and intersects U.S. State Highway 24 and Colorado State Highway 67 on the northern end. The Byway also includes city streets in Victor, Cripple Creek, Florence, Florissant, and Cañon City.

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The original Gold Belt Tour Byway Partnership Plan came from a partnership that formed in 1994 for the purpose of developing a collective vision for the Byway. This partnership was formalized through an agreement whereby the original 10 representatives from managing agencies appointed and empowered a 38-member steering committee, chosen to represent a broad spectrum of community interests. This committee, through the solicitation of public opinion and visitor surveys,

public meetings, personal interviews, and the media, invited public feedback in order to develop a plan that would reflect the hopes and desires of the entire Gold Belt Byway community. The Gold Belt Tour Byway Association was formed in 1999 to accomplish the goals laid out in the Partnership Plan. Board members for the Association are selected or appointed to ensure uniform representation from the entire region. The Gold Belt Byway was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2000.

The Association currently meets 4 times a year to work on projects across the Byway. Some highlights of completed projects include: permanent protection of scenic views, important wildlife habitat, and lands of historic significance; creation and installation of interpretive and directional signage; historic district walking tours; completion of safety improvements along the routes; creation of historic and geological guidebooks; Garden Park School preservation work; creation of marketing and business plans; creation and implementation of the Heritage Landscape Preservation Plan; partnership building throughout the region; and other creation and update of additional educational materials including a Byway website, audio tour and app, and Byway brochures and newsletters.

The original Partnership Plan was a well thought-out document that has guided the Gold Belt Byway since its inception. However, in light of the Gold Belt's recent accomplishments, the formation of the Association with a new mission statement, and a changing funding climate, an update to the Partnership Plan is now appropriate. Note: Though the Association named the original plan a "Partnership Plan", the decision to rename the document a "Corridor Management Plan" was made. These types of documents are most commonly referred to as Corridor Management Plans throughout the industry, and to minimize confusion, the Association has decided to stick with the new vernacular. The 2018 Gold Belt Byway Corridor Management Plan is a direct follow-up to the 1997 Gold Belt Byway Partnership Plan.

CHAPTER 2: THE GOLD BELT BYWAY

COMMUNITY FEATURES

There are eight local communities associated with the Gold Belt Byway. These include the communities of Florissant, Cripple Creek, Victor, and Woodland Park at the northern end of the Byway; Cañon City, Florence, and Pueblo at the southern end; and Colorado Springs, the Front Range gateway to the Byway. The following is a brief description of these communities and their relationship to the Byway.

1. CAÑON CITY

Cañon City, the main commercial center for the southern end of the Byway, supports a diverse economy dependent on historic and modern sources. A wide variety of businesses and industries ranging from tourism to correctional facilities to retirement homes are located in Canon City. Incorporated in 1872, Cañon City grew rapidly once its link to the mining towns of Cripple Creek and Victor via the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad was established, and became a major supply center for the mines and miners. U.S. Highway 50, a major east-west artery, links the City to the Royal Gorge and the front range of the Rocky Mountains, making Cañon City a western gateway community. The City has begun to restore and revitalize its historic downtown area. Cañon City supports several popular annual events including the Blossom Festival, Art on the Arkansas, and the Royal Gorge White Water Festival. The City sports numerous motels, restaurants, and a developing tourism industry. Several walking and biking trails are available within the City and in nearby areas for the more active visitor.

2. COLORADO SPRINGS

Colorado Springs to the east, serves as the Front Range's gateway to the Gold Belt Byway. Byway traffic entering the region from Interstate 25 funnels first through Colorado Springs.

Additionally, the Colorado Springs Airport has rapidly become a major national artery for air travelers venturing to Colorado's natural amenities. Colorado Springs has a large and diverse economy heavily supported by military installations. Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, the Air Force Academy, Schriever Air Force Base, and NORAD are located in and around Colorado Springs. Local tourism is also a major contributor to the economy with Pikes Peak, *America's Mountain*, the City of Manitou Springs, Garden of the Gods Park, and other attractions within a few miles of the city. Colorado Springs envisions itself as a "base camp" community, a center that would supply tourism packages to travelers bound for the Gold Belt Byway and other attractions throughout the west. The community is linked to the Byway via the Gold Camp Road and State Highway 24 to the north.

3. CRIPPLE CREEK

Cripple Creek (<https://visitcripplecreek.com/>) is a major destination community along the Gold Belt Byway. It has a vibrant service industry that focuses on heritage tourism and gaming. It features a Heritage Tourism Center, 4 museums, antique and gift shops, restaurants, numerous hotels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals. It also has a growing arts community. Each year the City hosts several live plays and art and music events that reflect the heyday of a turn-of-the-century Cripple Creek at the famous Butte Theatre. In the early 1900s, Cripple Creek was the center of the busiest and most profitable mining district in the world. The surrounding Gold Belt communities, Victor, Cañon City, and Florence linked to Cripple Creek to support the hundreds of mines located here. In 1991, the addition of high stakes casino gambling and the resurgence of modern gold mining brought new life to the community and has allowed for the continued preservation of this historic gem.

4. FLORENCE

Florence, the southern entrance to the Gold Belt Byway, is linked historically to the Cripple Creek and Victor gold mines. Much of the ore produced was shipped via the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad to smelters and other processing facilities in Florence. Coal miners from Florence worked in the gold mines and travelled frequently between the two cities. Additionally, Florence has a long and colorful mining history of its own. Numerous active and historic mines are located here, along with the oldest operating oil field in the United States. Florence's population declined as the mining industry declined, but has maintained a population of 4,000 people for many years. Florence entered a new period of growth as a result of several new State and Federal correctional facilities locating here. This new growth has increased demand for housing and services, which Florence is working to provide. Florence is busy working to preserve much of its historic character, including the restoration

of the Rialto Theater and other key landmarks. Florence pays tribute to its glorious past through annual celebrations of Pioneer Days. The community has also shown an interest in trails and parks with their support of the Arkansas Riverwalk and the American Discovery Trail. Florence hopes to develop a strong, diverse economy supported by, but independent from, tourism, that enhances the community's identity as the gateway to the Wet Mountains, the Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Gold Belt Byway.

5. FLORISSANT

Florissant, originally known as Twin Creek, is the northern gateway for the Gold Belt Byway and connects itself to Colorado Springs via U.S. Highway 24. Florissant is strategically placed at the crossroads of two historically important Ute Trails, the east-west Ute Pass Trail into South Park, (what is currently U.S. Highway 24) and the north-south East Oil Creek trail into Denver (CR3 N to Hwy 67 N). Historically, this trail traversed from the Arkansas Valley, through Florissant, then northward to Denver.

Sites of interest include the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, one of the richest and most diverse fossil deposits in the world featuring massive petrified redwood stumps, hundreds of detailed fossils of ancient plant life, insects, fish, mammals and birds. Along the Byway, on County Road One, you can tour the preserved Hornbek Homestead located a few miles south of the community. Volunteers from the area have worked hard to restore a number of historic locations in the immediate area. Federal Grant money allowed the recent restoration of the 1887 schoolhouse compound now known as the Florissant Grange #420 and home to the Florissant Heritage Museum. Just east of town on US Hwy 24 you'll find a motor vehicle pull-off and informative kiosk overlooking the Fortification Hill camp and battlefield.

In 1887 the Colorado Midland Railroad ran its lines (now US Hwy 24) through Florissant. This extension of the railroad made Florissant home to six helper engines, more than fifty CMRR employees and their families, thereby necessitating the building of a new school. With this expansion, Teller County Road One became the main route with 12 to 15 stagecoaches each day meeting the train and transporting their passengers and freight south to the gold mining districts of Cripple Creek and Victor.

Today, Florissant is a small community with about 5200 residents within its zip code, all of whom work together to support each other for the mutual survival and posterity of their rural Rocky Mountain life style. Florissant supports several popular annual events including the Florissant Heritage Days, a historic recreation of the community during the early 1900's as well as various music and dance venues and a weekly Farmers Market featuring local produce, herbal remedies, and mountain arts and crafts. The town is home to the Pikes Peak

Historical Society Museum and has a small service industry, including a U.S. Post Office, Library, Volunteer Fire Department, Water Processing Plant, unique restaurants, antique and mercantile stores, and a developing tourism industry.

6. PUEBLO

Pueblo is a multicultural community at the crossroads of Interstate 25 and US Highway 50, naturally serving as a gateway to the Southwest and the Rocky Mountains. From Pueblo, US Highway 50 is the entrance to the Southern Rocky Mountains at Cañon City and the Gold Belt Byway. The Frontier Pathways Byway connects to the Gold Belt Byway from the south. The Historic Arkansas Riverwalk in downtown serves as the centerpiece for the City's Creative Corridor of eateries, galleries, cultural destinations, and events. One such festival is the largely popular Chile & Frijoles Festival, celebrating Pueblo's famous green chiles. The Pueblo community prides itself on its rich culture, diverse ethnic heritage, and history dating back to 1842. One of the largest steel-producing cities in the U.S., Pueblo is sometimes referred to as the "Steel City". The climate is enjoyable year-round with outdoor activities available for every season. The Lake Pueblo State Park is the number one visited State Park in Colorado offering fishing, boating and water sport, mountain biking, camping, and wildlife refuges.

7. VICTOR

Victor and Cripple Creek have been closely linked since the discovery of gold by Bob Womack in 1891. Victor thrived during the mining boom and was home to many of the largest and most productive mines and the rugged miners who worked them. Victor's population declined as the mining industry declined and today supports about 400 residents. The recent resurgence of mining has spawned new growth in Victor. Victor is working to restore and revitalize its downtown area in response to the growth in Cripple Creek as the result of gaming and a new interest in tourism. Many turn-of-the-century buildings have been faithfully restored, helping to recapture Victor's image as a genuine mining center circa 1900. Victor's plans include improvement of its service industry and defining itself as a thriving, working community with modern amenities proudly linked to its historic past. Victor is the closest Byway community to parts of the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area and the west side of Pikes Peak, two important natural resources.

8. WOODLAND PARK

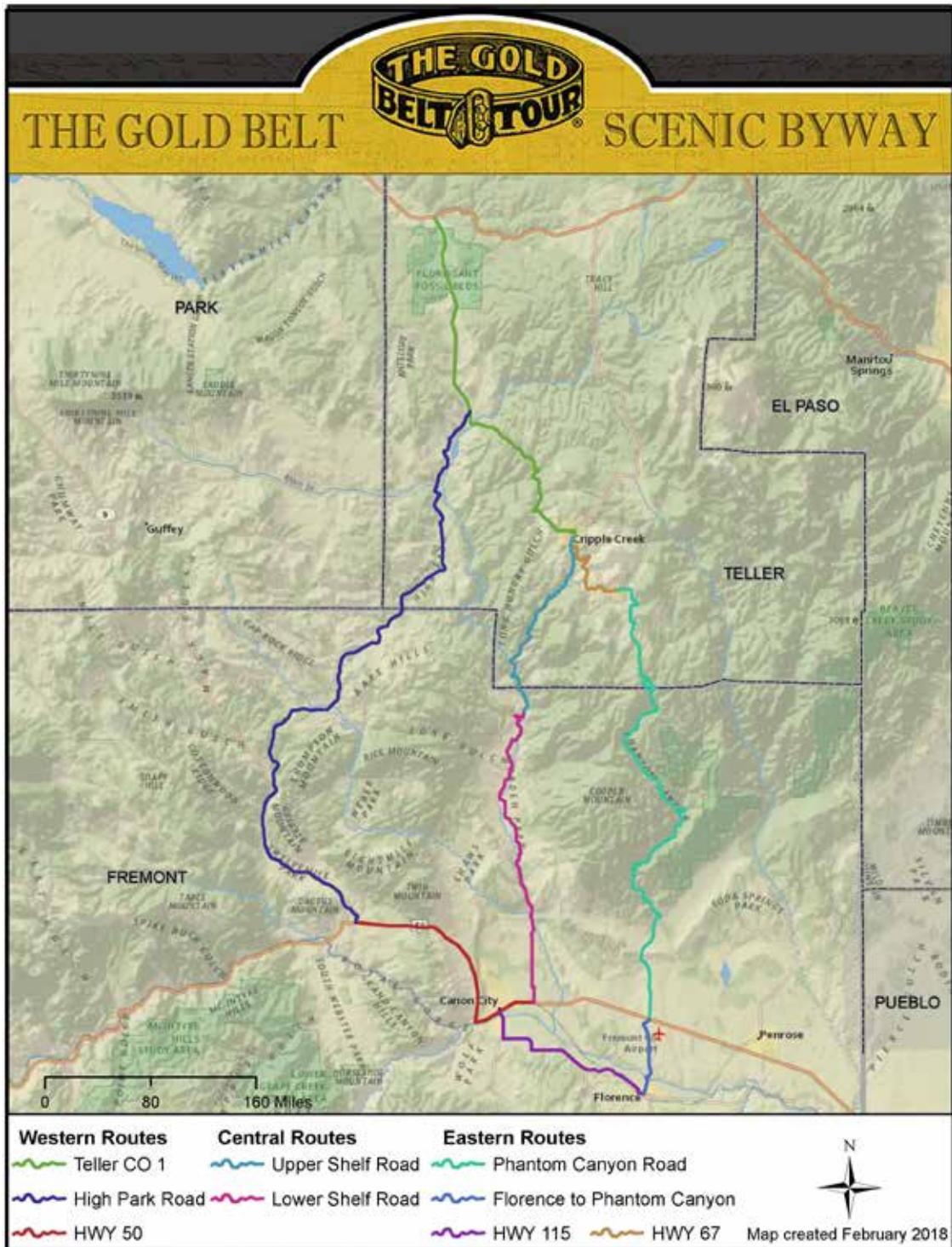
Woodland Park, at an elevation of 8,465 feet is known as “The City Above the Clouds”. Today it’s a city of about 8,000 year round residents, but for several hundred years the area was home to the Ute Indians, known as the Blue Sky People. The Tabeguache Utes called themselves “People of the Sun”, dubbing Pikes Peak Mountain as “Tava” meaning “the sun”.

In the mid-1800’s prospectors and settlers traveled to the area seeking to develop the land. In the 1880s, the Colorado Midland Railroad brought more people to the region. In 1891 Woodland Park was incorporated with a population of 127 residents. The timber industry dominated the area providing lumber first for railway construction and later for the gold mines in Cripple Creek and Victor. Piles of lumber and railroad ties stretched along the entire length of Woodland Park’s main street. In the late 1880s tourism became a part of the economy, with people seeking the healing properties of the clean mountain air. The Crest Hotel opened in 1889 and the Woodland Hotel invited tourists in 1892, with a distinctive “witch’s hat” roof over the front cupola. The area was dotted with dude ranches. The first to open was the Skelton Ranch. It operated from 1906 for 21 years, was later known as the Paradise Ranch, fell into disuse and was eventually demolished in 2017. Many working ranches continue in the area with a heritage going back to Homestead Act of 1862. Woodland Park celebrated 125 years in 2016 with a yearlong agenda of events. Check out the history mural on the east side of the cultural center identifying the history of the city from the Ute’s to modern times, visit the new city park in the heart of the town offering a play park, covered picnic areas plus the Pikes Peak panorama. Visitors can take part with water activities at the new Woodland Aquatic Center. Tours of the Ute Pass Historical Society History Park can be arranged historic walking tours are offered during the summer.

BYWAY FEATURES

The Gold Belt Byway features many points of interest. In order to facilitate discussion of each important feature, the Byway has been divided into nine road segments. The map below illustrates those segments.

MAP OF BYWAY SEGMENTS - OVERVIEW



WESTERN ROUTES

1. U.S. HIGHWAY 50 (CAÑON CITY TO STATE HIGHWAY 9)

This route includes U.S. Highway 50 and is the most heavily traveled portion of the Byway. This segment features numerous attractions including the Royal Gorge Bridge, Skyline Drive, Territorial Prison Museum, the Dinosaur Experience, and numerous tourist and recreational opportunities including whitewater rafting, horseback riding, theme parks, and campgrounds. The Twin Mountain Geologic Area is also along this route.

Highway 50 begins a rapid climb out of the plains and gives the visitor their first real view of the Rocky Mountains. A spectacular view of the Sangre De Cristo Range is visible as you crest Eightmile Hill.

Travelers may find High Park Road via Highway 9, accessed from Highway 50, a safer and more convenient drive to get to Cripple Creek, as both Shelf and Phantom Canyon roads are considered back country roads that may require 4-wheel drive to pass safely.

2. HIGH PARK ROAD

Isolated and open, the heavily traveled High Park Road supports few businesses or services. It traverses open and rugged country with a significant increase in elevation and corresponding changes in ecosystem as one travels north. This route traverses the 39-mile volcanic field, Deer Haven Ranch, with its abundant wildlife, and other large and historic private ranches.

High Park Road is a beautiful drive with spectacular views of high mountain parklands and wild, open spaces. This road is most suitable for all travelers along the Gold Belt Byway, as it is the only Byway thoroughfare that is completely paved and does not require 4-wheel drive.

High Park Road (CR-11) terminates on the northern end in an intersection with Teller County 1. At this intersection is the Four Mile Scenic Park which features a lovely picnic area and a pedestrian bridge over Hay Creek that was branded by local cattle ranchers with their historic brands.

3. TELLER COUNTY 1 (FLORISSANT TO CRIPPLE CREEK)

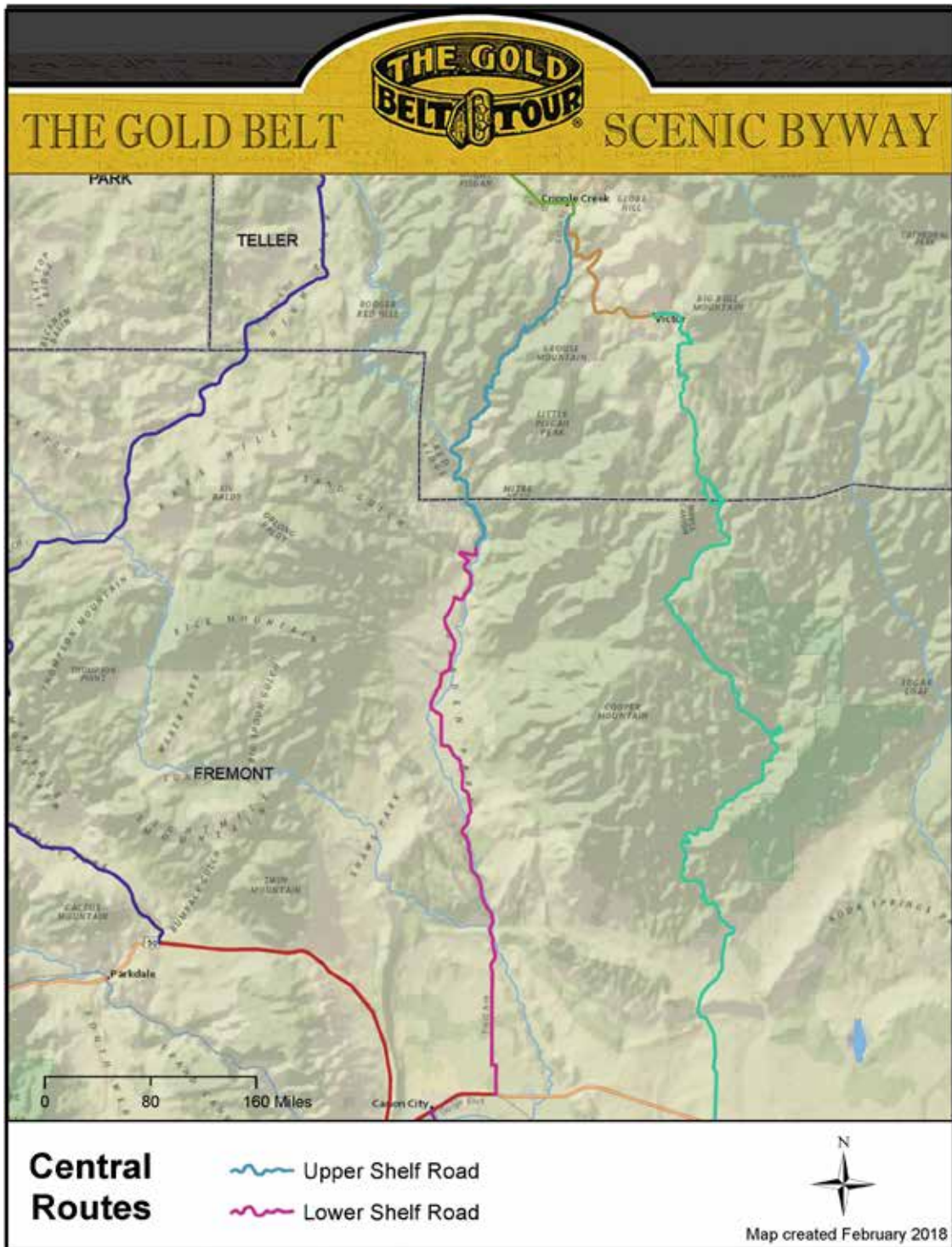
This route is a paved county road that connects the communities of Florissant and Cripple Creek. Historically, Teller County 1 was once the Ute's East Oil Creek Trail. This trail allowed the Utes to travel from the Arkansas River Valley north into Denver without fear of encountering their enemies, the Cheyenne or Arapahoe, on the plains below. State Highway 24 follows the historic Ute Pass Trail which led the Utes from their ancient hunting grounds in South Park to their sacred mineral springs at Manitou Springs and sacred campgrounds at the Garden of the Gods Park in Colorado Springs.

Later this trail became a stagecoach route that provided the primary access to Cripple Creek when gold was discovered in 1890. It continued in this capacity until it was displaced by new railroads into the District in the mid-1890s.

Today, just south of the town of Florissant is the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, including the restored Hornbek Homestead. The Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument is an internationally significant paleontological site that features plant and insect fossils about 35 million years old. A small collection of fossils and other exhibits and a two mile self-guided walk are featured. The Fossil Bed's 12 miles of hiking trails and picnic areas offer year-round recreation opportunities to the Monument's 100,000 yearly visitors. Giant petrified stumps of redwoods and other trees can be seen there. Also the historic Hornbek Ranch, a restored 19th century ranch listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Teller County 1 provides scenic views of the historic landmark, Twin Rocks (called Los Ojos Ciegos, or Blind Eyes by the Utes) at the trailhead in Florissant, and Dome Rock further south and east, lying within Mueller State Park. Breathtaking views of Cripple Creek and the Cripple Creek caldera can be seen from Mt. Pisgah.

MAP OF BYWAY SEGMENTS - CENTRAL



CENTRAL ROUTE

This route is commonly known as the Shelf Road, named for its spectacular middle section. This winding, roller-coaster drive is not for the weak of heart. The Shelf Road offers a driving experience unlike any other, and is not soon forgotten. We have divided the Shelf into two segments, the Upper (northern), and Lower (southern) portions for ease of discussion.

1. UPPER SHELF ROAD

This is a very rugged, scenic, and true backcountry road. It starts just south of Cripple Creek, and ends at the southern end of the shelf. 4-Wheel drive is recommended when the road is wet or snowy and a higher clearance vehicle is recommended year-round. The road is narrow in spots and when meeting on-coming traffic you may need to find a wide spot to pull over.

The north end of the road offers fantastic views of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains far to the south, as well as much visual evidence of the mining industry that for years dominated the Cripple Creek culture and economy. Traveling south, the road begins a dramatic descent that traverses very rough and rugged terrain as it parallels Cripple Creek. Steep canyon walls, spectacular granite out-croppings, and an occasional bighorn sheep can be seen here, as can Window Rock, an unusually eroded sandstone boulder, and a popular landmark along the route.

The outlets to two tunnels that still drain the water from mines in Cripple Creek can be seen here. Water still drains the lower Carlton Tunnel into Fourmile Creek after going through a series of settling ponds and other treatments.

The Shelf Road gets its name from the narrow cut-bank that runs about five miles through the center of the Upper Shelf section. Steep drop-offs, 400 feet high in places, along the narrow, twisting road give the Shelf Road its deserved reputation as one of the most harrowing and exciting drives anywhere.

The Upper Shelf Road carries considerably less traffic than any other route along the Gold Belt Byway. It is envisioned this section will retain its rough character in order to preserve its scenic and historic nature as one of the truly great back-country routes in existence.

2. LOWER SHELF ROAD

This section of the Shelf Road includes the residential Garden Park Area and four major tourist destinations: the Shelf Road Recreation Area, the Oil Well Flats trail system, the Garden Park Fossil Area, and Red Canyon Park.

The residential Garden Park area is an open valley with views of the surrounding mountains. This is an irrigated ranching area with acreage in hay production and cattle grazing. Many historic ranches still exist in this area, but some have been subdivided into smaller “ranchettes”, 5 to 35-acre parcels for development.

At the north end of the residential Garden Park Area is the Shelf Road Recreation Area managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Recognized as one of the premier sport rock climbing areas in the world, the Shelf Road has become increasingly popular since first developed in the early 90’s. There are plans to increase parking and camping facilities to accommodate the increase in use and to reduce resource impacts. Near the middle section of the Lower Shelf Road is the entrance to Red Canyon Park, managed by the city of Cañon City. Intense summer heat and cold winter winds have combined to sculpt fantastic and often eerie formations in the soft, russet sandstone out-croppings throughout this popular hiking and picnicking area.

Just past the Shelf Road Recreation Area is a new attraction, BLM’s Oil Well Flats trail system. Oil Well Flats is a collection of single-track trails through native vegetation with the Sangre De Cristo Mountain range visible in the distance. Approximately 12 miles of intermediate and advanced trails make this an increasingly popular location for trail enthusiasts.

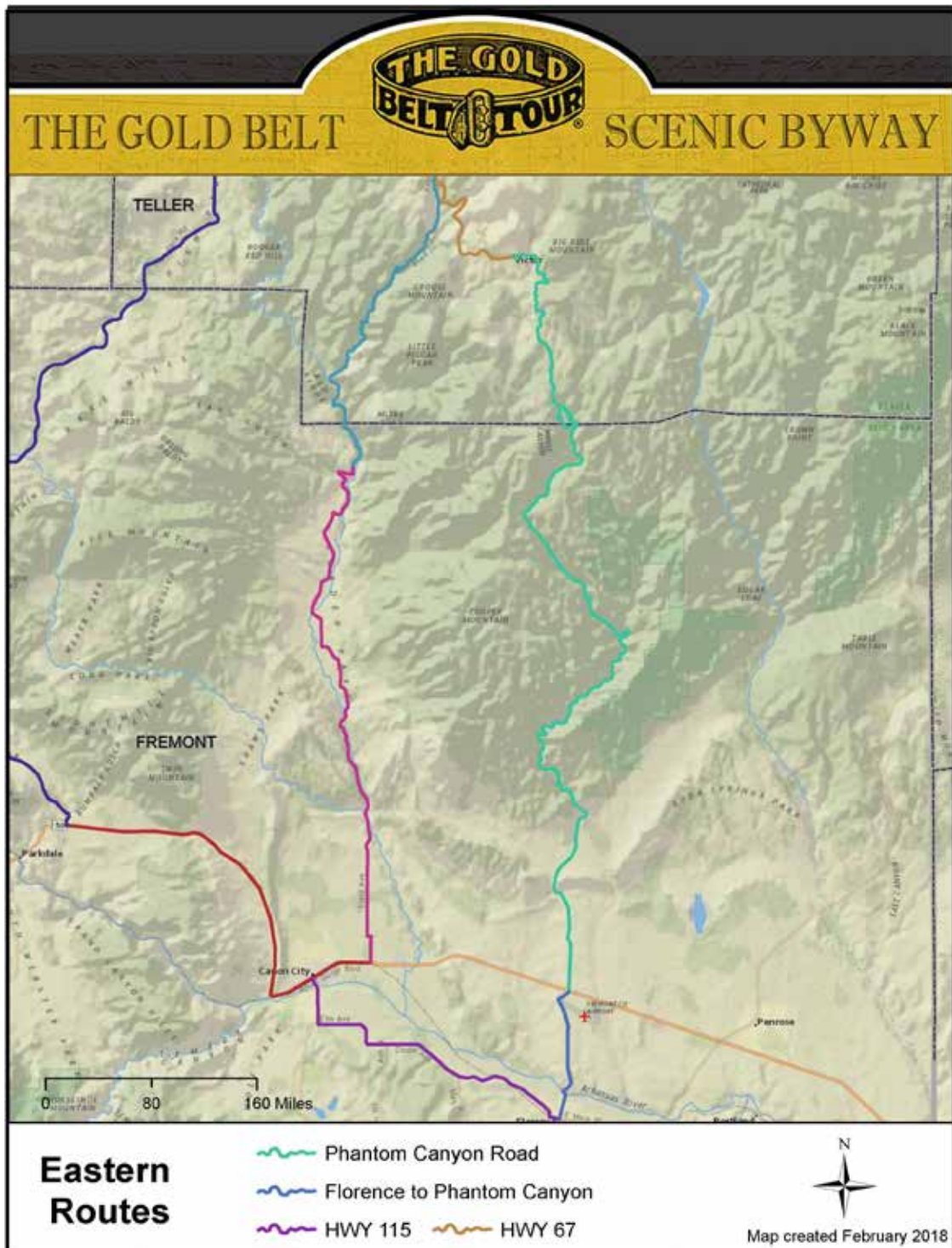
About half way thru this area, sits the historic Garden Park School. The building was built by residents in 1895. This is a great example of the historical conditions, and is in the middle of a revitalization effort undertaken by the Association and our many partners.

At the southern end of Garden Park is the BLM managed Garden Park Fossil Area, an internationally significant dinosaur quarry from which some of the most significant dinosaur discoveries have been made. The first complete Stegosaurus skeleton was discovered here, as were numerous other important finds, some of which can be viewed at the Dinosaur Depot in Cañon City. The Garden Park Fossil Area has received numerous designations in the paleontology community, signifying its importance. The Garden Park Fossil Area has provided generations of local people varied recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, and target-shooting. Recently, signs have been placed directing target and sport shooters to areas isolated from other users, ensuring more organized and safer conditions.

The Garden Park Paleontology Society (GPPS) supports the use of the area for educational purposes. Two sites in the fossil area display interpretive signs, and GPPS conducts guided tours to the fossil area.

The Lower Shelf Road ends at north Cañon City. Cañon City provides a mix of open space, with views of the surrounding mountains, and urban development.

MAP OF BYWAY SEGMENTS - EASTERN



EASTERN ROUTES

1. HIGHWAY 67 (CRIPPLE CREEK TO VICTOR)

This fascinating road offers views of some of the many mines and mills that dominated the area in the early 1900's. The road is paved and winding, and traffic is slow. Pull-offs have been developed along this road to encourage safe and convenient stops for travelers to view the many historic structures and the spectacular scenic vistas. A tourist train parallels the road about half way from Cripple Creek to Victor.

South of Cripple Creek, Highway 67 has been re-routed to accommodate construction of the world's largest cyanide heap-leach gold mine. The character and appearance of the area will continue to change for the next several years as the result of this activity.

The mine operators continue educational interpretation of historic and active mining operations.

2. PHANTOM CANYON (VICTOR TO SOUTHERN END OF PHANTOM CANYON)

Considered by many the most scenic route along the Byway, the Phantom Canyon Road is steep, winding, and narrow, and offers a driving experience the un-initiated will not soon forget. A dramatic decrease in elevation north to south of more than 4,500 feet with corresponding changes in vegetation occurs here; from sub-alpine aspen-conifer mix, to the juniper-pinyon mid-elevation areas, to the cholla and grasslands of the arid plains below.

Phantom Canyon Road generally follows the bed of the historic Florence and Cripple Creek narrow gauge railroad constructed in 1894, which served to link the towns of Cripple Creek and Victor on the north with Florence on the south. Several small communities served the train along the route, but their tenure was brief; a devastating flood in 1912 destroyed much of the rail line, which was never rebuilt. Remnants of these towns and the rail line can still be seen along the Phantom Canyon.

Visitors may access the spectacular Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area at the Steel Bridge Interpretive Site. Beaver Creek is one of the most beautiful and rugged wilderness study areas in the state and is one of the closest to a major metropolitan area, Colorado Springs.

The Phantom Canyon Road now includes interpretive sites and two restrooms. Scenic qualities continue to be protected and restoration has been completed where there was over-use, particularly those sites along Eightmile creek.

3. FLORENCE TO PHANTOM CANYON

The Phantom Canyon Road intersects U.S. Highway 50 just south of Phantom Canyon. The rugged, granite walls of the canyon give way to the semi-arid plains and grasslands, with spectacular open vistas of the Wet Mountains, and the many buttes and outcroppings along the southern portion of the Arkansas Valley.

Though this area remains largely undeveloped, several businesses have been developed here and the area continues to grow. Florence High School is along the route, as are state correctional facilities.

4. HIGHWAY 115 (FLORENCE TO CAÑON CITY)

Possibly the least known portion of the Gold Belt Byway, Highway 115 is also one of the most interesting. The route parallels the Arkansas River Valley with views of cottonwood galleries and small farms and ranches. Interesting rock formations, like Castle Rock, can be viewed from this route. An area known as Fawn Hollow is home to a herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. This herd was transplanted onto the National Forest in 1987 and then migrated to the Fawn Hollow area. Also within viewing distance of this route is the state prison facility. Several small historic coal mining towns can be accessed from this route.

In Cañon City, the route passes many private residences and restaurants and small businesses before crossing the Arkansas River. The Arkansas Riverwalk can be accessed at this point, providing a spectacular nature walk within the city limits.

STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

There are many significant areas along the Gold Belt Byway. The following statements give a simple overview about the local, regional, national, and international significance of the area.

TRANSPORTATION

Roads and Railroads - Moving materials and manpower formed the lifelines of the Cripple Creek Mining District. Construction of roads and railroads played a crucial role in the prosperity of the Cripple Creek Mining District.

Transportation by stagecoach and by railroad was necessary to supply the materials and the manpower to the Cripple Creek Mining District.

Transportation of materials and people between the Cripple Creek Mining District and regional commercial centers presented many challenges. The rugged terrain along the Phantom Canyon Road and the Shelf Road illustrates the challenges faced in linking Cripple Creek to the cities and towns vital to its prosperity.

The Gold Belt Byway follows the historic routes of the roads and railroads that were crucial to the prosperity of Cripple Creek Mining District. Supplies, raw materials, and manpower were transported to the mining district, and gold ore left the district for processing along these transportation routes.

Phantom Canyon - In 1892, the newly built Florence and Cripple Creek Free Road was busy with freight wagons and stagecoaches traveling between the Cripple Creek gold camps and Florence. By 1894, the road was replaced by the Florence and Cripple Creek (F&CC) Railroad (the Gold Belt Line). At one time, this was the busiest narrow gauge railroad in the west. Twelve stations were established along the F&CC grade to keep track of the numerous trains hauling coal and supplies upgrade and gold ore downgrade. The F&CC also offered deluxe Pullman car services to travelers. Although the F&CC paid for itself in one year, several floods, competition from other railroads, and declining gold production forced its closure in 1912. Today, the Phantom Canyon Road follows the grade of the F&CC Railroad.

Shelf Road - Cañon City built the Shelf Road in 1892 hoping to share in the prosperity of the Cripple Creek Mining District by becoming an important supply center. Shelf Road was the first stagecoach road to connect the Cripple Creek Mining District to communities to the south. A toll was collected for traveling the route. Named for the narrow shelf of rock over which the road traverses for 5 miles, the road offers the traveler of today impressive scenery and an exhilarating trip.

High Park Road - The mountain grasslands along the High Park Road have been used for cattle grazing for over a century. Several historic ranches, some that continue to operate today, are located along this segment of the Gold Belt Byway.

RANCHING AND RURAL LIFE

Some of the earliest settlers in the area were ranchers. Cattle grazed the expansive mountain grasslands. They were either driven hundreds of miles to stockyards or shipped to market by rail. Many historic ranches located along the Byway still operate today. Hornbek Homestead, a restored 1870s homestead listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is located along the Byway within the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Ranching and small town life continues as a trademark of the area.

MINING

The Cripple Creek Gold Rush (CCGR) greatly influenced the human history of the region. The CCGR produced more gold than the combined total of the California and Alaska gold rushes. The CCGR shaped the lives of many people, including distinguished political and business leaders. These powerful people influenced events far beyond the Cripple Creek Mining District.

Cripple Creek - Cripple Creek was the financial and social center of one of the wealthiest gold mining districts in the world. At the turn of the century, Cripple Creek was the fourth largest city in Colorado.

Victor - Home to most of the district miners, Victor supplied the muscle of the mining district. Victor, the "City of Mines," also had some of the richest mines in the district. Today, the Victor Downtown Historic District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

NATIVE AMERICANS

For over 10,000 years, Native Americans have used the area of the Gold Belt Byway. The Utes, Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Sioux, and occasionally, the Pawnees and Jicarilla Apaches may have used the area. The Byway follows the historic trails of the Tabeguache Ute Native Americans. These were originally buffalo migratory trails that were later utilized by the Utes when they acquired horses in the early 1600's.

NATURAL HISTORY

Paleontology - The Gold Belt Byway links Garden Park Dinosaur Fossil Area, Indian Springs Trace Fossil Beds, and Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. These internationally significant areas illuminate the history of life in this region as far back as 460 million years.

* Garden Park Fossil Area - The Garden Park Fossil Area is internationally significant for its impressive specimens of some of the best known dinosaurs. The best examples of *Stegosaurus stenops*, *Haplacanthosaurus delsi*, *Camarasaurus supremus*, *Ceratosaurus nasicornis*, *Diplodocus longus*, and *Allosaurus fragilis* were found in Garden Park. In 1877, E. D. Cope and O. C. Marsh, renowned paleontologists and longtime rivals, initiated an intense period of excavation at separate quarries in Garden Park. This period was known as the "Great Dinosaur Race" or the "Bone Wars".

* Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument - Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument is internationally renowned for the variety, abundance, and detailed preservation of plant and insect fossils and petrified wood. The fossil beds provide a tantalizing glimpse into the evolution of life and the climate of this region 35 million years ago.

* Indian Springs Trace Fossil Area - Indian Springs Trace Fossil Area contains a unique assemblage of trace fossils, body fossils, and sedimentary structures. The 460 million year old tracks, trails, and burrows of arthropods, such as horseshoe crab and trilobite provide scientists with important insights into the evolution of living things. It has been designated as a Colorado Natural Area and a National Natural Landmark.

Geology - Geologic events and processes such as uplifting, faulting, violent volcanic activity, deposition, and erosion have shaped the dramatic scenery and influenced the human history of the Gold Belt Byway.

* ***Cripple Creek Caldera*** - Violent volcanic activity which ended about 6 million years ago shaped the landscape and history of the Cripple Creek Mining District. The ore deposits in the mining district are at the edge of one volcanic caldera. Veins of silver-colored gold telluride ore were discovered.

* ***Twin Mountain Geologic Area*** - A highly visible escarpment located immediately north of Cañon City, Twin Mountain illustrates a rich variety of colorful, folded, and faulted strata. Easily accessible, Twin Mountain is a favorite stop for college and university geology classes.

Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area - Deep canyons and towering granite walls characterize the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area, which has been recommended for wilderness designation by the Bureau of Land Management. The area provides outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation, including hiking, backpacking, fishing, wildlife viewing, and hunting.

Ecosystems - From the arid grasslands surrounding Florence and Cañon City to the spruce and fir forests near Cripple Creek, the Gold Belt Byway offers the opportunity to observe dramatic changes in the environment and diverse vegetation and wildlife.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

The recreational benefits to visitors and the local residents are numerous. The main activities along the tour include: scenic driving, watching wildlife, bicycling, hiking, rock climbing, hunting, cultural and natural history study, camping, horseback riding, backpacking, fishing, target shooting, photography, and picnicking.

Some of the personal benefits include:

- Opportunity to spend time with family and friends and the chance to get closer.
- Enjoying the scenic beauty and getting closer to nature.
- Learning more about the natural environment, the history and culture of the area, and the topography of the area.
- Introspection, thinking about yourself, your personal values, who you are, and your spirituality.
- Escaping personal or social pressures by getting away from the usual demands of life and by slowing down mentally.
- Escaping crowds by getting away so that you can be alone - solitude.
- A sense of excitement (risk) and thrill by driving an adventurous mountain road.

VISITOR USE AND DEMAND

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Three survey reports supply valuable information that defines visitor characteristics and preferences to assist with planning for the Gold Belt Byway. This section focuses on these three survey reports and a survey of the attitudes of the Gold Belt Byway Steering Committee.

The Outdoor Recreation Economy Report – The Outdoor Industry Association issued the national Outdoor Recreation Economy Report (2017) which identified the outdoor recreation economy as generating an annual \$886 billion in consumer spending nationally. In Colorado, the outdoor recreation economy sustains 229,000 jobs and generates \$28 billion in consumer spending. Seventy-one percent of Coloradoans indicated they participate in outdoor recreation each year. The Byway’s local communities are well situated to tap into the booming tourism and outdoor recreation economies which help sustain Colorado.

The Longwoods Report – The Longwoods Report (2016) based on surveys of Colorado visitors, provides important information about tourism within the entire state. In the report, touring vacations defined as overnight vacations by car, bus or train through the areas of scenic beauty, cultural or general interest, were identified as Colorado’s most important travel product. Touring vacationers seek a variety of cultural and recreational experiences including: casino, outdoor activities, visiting National and State parks, and visiting landmarks or historic sites. In the last few years day trips are up and are 54% of the overnight visitors. In 2016, 3,900,000 day visitors were reported.

Colorado Scenic Byways Market Niche Study – In summer of 2007, the Colorado Center for Community Development partnered with the Colorado Department of Transportation to undertake a study of tourist travelers on Colorado’s 10 nationally designated America Byway, including the Gold Belt Byway. Along the Gold Belt Byway, survey participants were about equally divided by gender. More participants, 57%, were 50 years or younger. The average travel party contained 3 people and 38% of respondents were traveling with children under 18. Colorado travelers were most common (38.1%) along the Byway with Texas travelers the second most common (12.2%). The top reasons for traveling the Byway were 1) sightseeing (75%), 2) visiting friends and relatives (29%), 3) recreation (14%), 4) shopping (13%), 5) business (9%), and 6) other (18%).

The Gold Belt Byway, with its scenic beauty, old west flavor, abundant historic sites, and access to regional tourism attractions provides all of the major characteristics that appeal to outdoor recreationists, the touring vacationer, and others. The Byway is located conveniently in central Colorado, and would be an ideal fit for those visiting the area and looking for an adventure.

CHAPTER 3: GOLD BELT BYWAY VISION

BYWAY VISION

We feel that a healthy natural environment is necessary and that the open space and rural lands must be preserved, while recognizing the historic and the economic importance of maintaining traditional business and industries.

We want to promote tourism that contributes to our local economies and does not intrude upon our privacy. We want to celebrate and share with others the diverse cultural history and traditional lifestyles of our people and places.

We want to maintain healthy habitat for the animals that help make Colorado unique. We also want to instill an appreciation for the diverse natural history and significant paleontology and geology that make this byway special.

We have a strong desire to preserve the rural and small town lifestyles. We must carefully plan and assist in the guidance of future growth and development so that they are compatible with our community needs and values.

BYWAY GOALS

1. **Beautification** Provide a clear and attractive appearance along the Byway for residents and visitors.
2. **Education** Increase awareness, understanding, stewardship, and appreciation for the rich natural and cultural history, traditional lifestyles, paleontology and land uses that have endured.
3. **Cultural Resources** Maintain the significant historical and cultural characteristics along the Byway and in each community.
4. **Signing** Signs will represent a clear, professional, attractive, and consistent message along the Byway.
5. **Marketing** Ensure that the Byway's vision and goals are met by marketing the various Byway opportunities, attractions, and communities so that we match visitor preferences and expectations with the actual product.
6. **Economic Health** Develop healthy and diverse economies by enhancing existing businesses and tourism related activities and expanding needed services appropriate to each community.
7. **Safety** Strive to provide a safe place for people to live and visit.
8. **Open Space** Maintain the landscapes surrounding our communities as rural ranchland and open space.
9. **Natural Resources** Ensure that the natural environment is healthy and able to flourish.
10. **Qualities of Life** Sustain the important qualities unique to each Byway segment and community as identified on pages 33-39 of this document (Important Characteristics)

BYWAY NICHE

What is a niche? Niche in this document refers to the Byway's relationship to other byways in the state of Colorado and the United States. Niche also refers to the Gold Belt Byway's special or unique qualities and products.

GOLD BELT BYWAY'S NICHE

The Gold Belt Byway offers an adventurous, backcountry driving experience. The Gold Belt Byway is one of three byways in the state of Colorado that consist of gravel, backcountry roads. The Gold Belt Byway winds through rugged, narrow canyons and traverses expansive mountain grasslands.

As visitors drive the Gold Belt Byway and experience the dramatic changes in scenery, vegetation, and wildlife, they observe the diversity and richness of the southern Rocky Mountain region.

Visitors travel along historic railroad and stagecoach routes that connected the Cripple Creek Mining District to the communities, allowing visitors to imagine what life was like in the 1890's.

The Gold Belt Byway also offers an opportunity to explore rural and diverse communities. Florence, Cañon City, Cripple Creek, Victor, and Florissant are all located along the Byway. They are interconnected communities, but each has a unique character and contribution to the history of the region. Visitors will be able to enjoy shopping, restaurants, and activities in these historic towns that reflect the culture of each community.

The Gold Belt Byway also links several significant tourist attractions -- Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, the City of Cripple Creek, the Cripple Creek Mining District, and the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River -- and is accessible from several Front Range cities.

BYWAY FEATURES & IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS

This Section defines the characteristics and qualities of each Byway segment and from each community that make is unique and worthy of protection.

WESTERN ROUTES

Cañon City to Hwy 9

Highway 50 **Maintain the scenic views and exciting tourist opportunities of this gateway to the Rocky Mountains.**

For westbound travelers, this is the first ascent into the mountains of Colorado. The views along Eightmile Hill of the Sangre de Cristo mountains are breathtaking. The character of the open meadows should be maintained.

High Park Road

High Park Road **Maintain the scenic views, open space and rural ranching culture.**

This route passes many historic ranches and scenic, open views. There are spectacular unobstructed views of Pikes Peak, Dome Rock, and Sheep Rock and high mountain parks. Large ranches and range lands cover the landscape. We want the road to be maintained as a paved and safe route. This is the only paved road from Cañon City to Cripple Creek and Victor.

This scenic and rural ranching area provides a place for people to take a leisurely drive through high mountain parks, to enjoy the scenic views, to escape the stress of everyday life, to be able to experience relaxation and peacefulness, and to see and experience the rural ranching culture

Florissant to Cripple Creek

Teller County 1 **Maintain the open space, scenic views, and historic flavor along this route.**
Important qualities include the peaceful, open rural landscapes, and clean air and water.

Florissant Fossil Beds NM **Preserve and interpret the significance of the fossil resources, history, and the natural ecosystems.**

This National Monument is a place where people can spend time with family and friends, learn about fossil resources, history and natural ecosystems on-site, get away from the everyday routine, relax and enjoy a peaceful setting, and feel safe and comfortable.

CENTRAL ROUTES

Upper Shelf Road

Upper Shelf Road **Maintain the rough, rugged, backcountry, mountainous qualities of this area.** This area is for the adventuresome familiar with Colorado's unpredictable, ever-changing climate. We want to maintain this section of Shelf Road as a rugged, 4-wheel drive. Minimal amenities and developments will be provided in this area. Only undeveloped, dispersed recreational use, such as rock climbing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking will occur. This rugged backcountry area provides a place for people to feel a sense of adventure and discovery, to challenge themselves in a rough backcountry area, to see a scenic part of Colorado before much human impact, and the opportunity to see and learn about wildlife, mining, geology, and ranching.

Lower Shelf Road

Lower Shelf Road **Maintain the scenic views and rural lifestyles along this route.** These qualities include the area's quiet, peaceful, and relaxed pace, its clean air and water, and its character as a safe, rural environment. These qualities are critical to Byway area residents who live and recreate here.

Garden Park Fossil Area **Preserve the natural resources and recreational opportunities.** This segment of Lower Shelf is known primarily for the internationally important paleontological discoveries made there, and for its continuing importance as a paleontological research and education center. Area residents find the area ideal for many recreational activities, including off-roading, hiking, camping, biking, and target shooting. Garden Park's proximity to Cañon City and other urban areas, and its easy accessibility have made it a perennial favorite of area recreationists. It is important to maintain the area's ability to support these activities and maintain the integrity of the environment at the same time.

Red Canyon Park **Maintain the scenic, natural landscapes as a peaceful mountain park.** This Cañon City Park is unique because of its spectacular, red rock formations and breathtaking scenic views. Red Canyon Park, despite its seeming remoteness, is within miles of Cañon City, and is easily accessed via this section of the Lower Shelf Road. Area residents enjoy picnicking, camping, hiking, climbing, and scenic viewing. They enjoy being close to nature, spending time with family and friends, and relaxing in this quiet, clean and peaceful environment.

Shelf Road Recreation Area **Maintain the natural landscapes and recreation opportunities.** Juniper and pinyon covered plateaus give way to sheer limestone cliffs, over 100 feet high in places, which curve and wind throughout the area. The cliffs offer some of the finest beginner to advanced sport climbing anywhere.

The close proximity to the front range urban centers of Colorado and range of difficulty, the area offers excellent opportunities for those new to rock climbing while challenging even the most experienced climbers. Here they can enjoy the sense of community shared by those who share an interest in rock climbing, a sense of adventure and closeness to nature. The adjacent communities can enjoy an improved quality of life and economic benefits associated with outdoor recreation.

**Oil Well
Flats**

Maintain the natural landscapes and recreation opportunities.

Named for the first oil well west of the Mississippi River, this single-track trail system winds through open meadows and pinyon/juniper forests while offering commanding views of the Arkansas River Valley and the Sangre De Christo Mountains.

The close proximity to the front range urban centers of Colorado combined with a mild climate and excellent trails make this a destination trail system for mountain bicyclists, particularly in the winter months when other areas are muddy or snowed in. Here users can connect with nature, get mental and physical health benefits and the community can enjoy an improved quality of life and economic benefits.

EASTERN ROUTES

Cripple Creek to Victor

Hwy 67 **Maintain a connection to our mining heritage.**
This winding, high elevation highway offers glimpses of numerous mountains, historic mines, and present day mining.

Phantom Canyon

Phantom Canyon **Preserve the natural, scenic and historic characteristics of the canyon.**
This road is one of the most scenic and historic drives in Colorado. The route increases in elevation from 5500 to 9500 feet and offers the chance to see a wide range of plants and wildlife in their natural setting. We want to ensure that these diverse ecosystems are healthy and allowed to flourish. We want to have the road maintained as a gravel road that follows the route of the F&CC Railroad. The unique bridges offer a visual link to the areas historic past and should be preserved. The road condition and narrow bridges encourage people to slow down and view the scenery.
This beautiful area provides a place for people to reconnect with nature, a chance to get away from the everyday routine, a drive that is exciting and stimulating, to reaffirm a spiritual connection, and the opportunity to leave the developed world and to re-establish our link with the natural world.

Florence to Phantom Canyon

Florence to Phantom Canyon **Maintain the scenic and historic open spaces and encourage well-planned, clustered, commercial and industrial areas.**
This route, which retraces the path of the historic Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, offers open, unobstructed views of the Wet Mountains. The quiet, peaceful, rural lifestyles along this road are what make this area special

Florence to Cañon City

Highway 115 **Maintain the rural, small town characteristics of this area**
We want to maintain a winding secondary highway that parallels the railroad and the Arkansas River. The scenic views of small farms, prisons, coal mines, and beautiful natural bluff formations make this drive a peaceful and relaxing trip.

COMMUNITY FEATURES

- Cañon City** **Preserve the historic integrity of downtown Cañon City, the 19th and 20th century architecture and other historic and cultural features.**
The residents also feel strongly about the quality of life in Cañon City. Cañon City has identified quality of life as an important goal of the community. Quality of life means: clean and beautiful downtown area, a safe place to be, well-planned businesses and services, friendly people, quality goods and services, and appreciating the culture and features of a small, rural, town.
- Colorado Springs** **Preserve the historic connections between Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek/Victor.**
Colorado Springs is historically connected to Cripple Creek and Victor. The routes of the Midland Railroad and the Gold Camp Road are some of the important connections that should not be lost.
Colorado Springs is the major hub where much of the traffic to the Byway originates and serves as the "base camp" for the Gold Belt Byway and other attractions in the Pikes Peak region.
- Cripple Creek** **Preserve the historic turn-of-the century character of downtown Cripple Creek.**
Preserve the historic structures, streets, and other features. Also preserve the historic flavor or character of Cripple Creek - a bustling city of influence, historic types of transportation, melodramas, and the sights and sounds of Cripple Creek in the 1890's. Maintain a small town atmosphere with a strong sense of community. Encourage planned growth that strives to preserve the historic character and small town atmosphere of Cripple Creek. Serve as a destination community and provide a variety of overnight accommodations, restaurants, recreational opportunities, historic educational tours and programs, art and literature, and limited stakes gaming. Enhance and broaden the types of cultural opportunities that are reflective of the period 1895 to 1905.
- Florence** **Maintain our small town atmosphere and preserve the historic integrity of downtown Florence.**
The community vision is: Strive for a healthy, caring community, focusing on the past, having an eye on the future, while maintaining our small town atmosphere. Florence is a gateway community on the southern end of the Byway.
- Florissant** **Preserve the historic integrity of the community.**
Preserve the history of the Midland Railroad and the Hundley Stagecoach. The community wants to increase Byway visitation through town, capture expenditures from the Byway visitors, and attract new business and service providers. They would like to have a better connection with the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. They would like to restore the downtown area with dark-sky compliant, historic street lights, bring to life the history of this community, beautify the community, and provide recreational and educational opportunities in town.

Victor

Maintain the historic mining-town character and small mountain town atmosphere of downtown Victor.

The town is focusing on re-creating the historic downtown of Victor to the early 1900s. Visitors would experience what it was like to live in Victor during the gold mining days of the early 1900s.

The small mountain town atmosphere is also very important to residents. Important qualities include: peaceful, quiet, slow pace, friendly people, and clean air and water. This community would like to expand the resident population - with a limit of 1200. Planned growth and long-range planning is critical to ensure that these important qualities are not lost.

ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many issues face the Gold Belt Byway region today. Whether national, regional, or local, identifying specific concerns can help overcome these issues before problems can arise. The key to successful management of an area is to resolve issues, look for opportunities to improve, and plan for the future. Note: Many of the issues and opportunities included in this section come from the original Plan.

ISSUES

1. Unplanned Growth

Increasing visitation and increasing migration to the region and state have caused the people of the Gold Belt Byway region to look carefully at growth. Elements such as rural lifestyles and historic downtown areas are very important culturally to the local people. Growth must be carefully planned in order to preserve our communities and cultures.

2. Government Control vs Local Control

More and more residents across the country are voicing a concern about big government. People want less government control and more control at the local level.

3. Loss of Scenic Areas

The Gold Belt Byway has many scenic areas and open spaces that are highly valued and make the Byway a special place. Most communities desire economic growth that strengthens the existing economies. However, a careful balance is needed to ensure that these special scenic areas remain for future generations. Adequate long-term planning is needed to ensure that these values are not lost.

4. Road Use Issues

A variety of factors, ranging from population growth, increased backcountry driving, gaming in Cripple Creek, increased commuters traveling to work in other communities, and the designation of the Gold Belt Byway, have led to increased traffic in areas where traffic volume has historically been much lower. This increase in traffic has resulted in an increase in dust, vandalism, traffic accidents, and other problems. These roads and attractions should be marketed through signs, brochures, and the media so that traffic is dispersed to the appropriate roads to ensure that the quality of life for residents and experience of visitors is not impaired.

5. Mix of Land Ownership

The Gold Belt Byway is a mix of private property: BLM, State Lands, communities and a National Monument. This mixed land ownership makes management of the area a challenge. Trespass and other negative impacts to private property are possible. An awareness and respect for the land and for the people who live there need to be developed.

6. Services

The increased visitation to the Byway region has resulted in a greater demand for services. These services include law enforcement, sanitation, transportation, search and rescue, fire protection, interpretation and education. There is a need to develop a less confusing and better coordinated system for utilizing existing services. A clear definition outlining the responsibility of each agency is needed.

7. Signing

With so many agencies and partners involved in the Byway, there could easily be confusion with many different types, colors, and sizes of signs. A coordinated sign strategy is needed.

8. Marketing

Previously, some marketing efforts were intended to simply increase the number of visitors. This concept could be very negative for the Gold Belt Byway. Target Marketing - matching what visitors want with what they get - is a better method for success. However a coordinated approach from all marketing providers is needed in order to be successful.

9. Can a Regional Plan be Successfully Implemented?

Can the local people successfully ensure that their vision and goals are carried out over the next 25 years? Clearly, diligence and perseverance will be required in implementing the Byway plan over the long term.

10. Funding

Much of the work identified by the Association requires funding to accomplish. Traditional funding sources are drying up, have more competition for projects, and require more outside match. This all makes completing much needed projects along the Byway more complicated, time consuming, and logistically trickier.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Resolve Issues

Increase Funding Base By working together, we can accomplish more and deal more effectively with the issues identified above. Many funding opportunities exist for organizations that have long-range plans and clearly defined vision and goals.

2. Strengthen Local Community Economies

Tourism is a major industry in Colorado. The communities along the Byway benefit from Byway-related tourism. The communities also benefit by rebuilding and restoring their downtown areas in ways that feature their historic significance and links to the Byway. There are many opportunities for small businesses in each community. This Byway plan helps to identify small businesses and services needed to help accomplish the vision and goals for the Byway.

3. Cultural and Natural Resource Preservation

There are many historic and natural resources important to the people of this region. Now that the people of the region have identified the resources important to them, the agencies and others can work together toward fulfillment of common goals.

4. Clean-up and Beautification

One of the great opportunities for the Byway is the opportunity to work together on clean-up projects and provide incentives for beautification. Imagine roadways free of litter, carefully landscaped with native plantings.

5. More Local Involvement

Rather than traditional government management (in which each agency managed its areas independently) we will ensure that the agencies work together to achieve a common vision for this region.

6. Focus on Education

The Byway can focus education on the rich natural and cultural history, traditional lifestyles, and land uses that have endured. We can't expect our schools to do it alone. We must be involved in teaching our children and visitors the importance of caring for and respecting the environment and the people who live in the area. We must promote an understanding and respect for our traditional lifestyles such as ranching and mining.

7. Increased Collaboration and Communication

There is a great opportunity to bring together a cross-section of citizens who can address new issues and concerns. Such a collaboration that involves local citizens and the various agencies, can have a very strong voice in the state, as well as the nation, for funding support and other benefits.

8. Well-Planned Recreational Developments

Through this collaborative planning effort more appropriate recreational developments can be planned and developed, such as support for the Arkansas Riverwalk, sanitation facilities for Phantom Canyon, and improvements for Red Canyon Park.

9. Coordinated Marketing

There is a clear need to coordinate our marketing efforts. This can accomplish two things:

- a) We could provide consistent and accurate messages about what products we have to offer. All too often, we mislead or provide conflicting information or market an area that shouldn't be marketed.
- b) We could save money by developing advertisements that reach our target audience more effectively and at lower cost.

10. Funding

While funding can be a huge hurdle, lack of funding can lead to innovative and unique solutions. Often, the need for funding may bring more stakeholders to the table who may have a different perspective or a novel idea that can solve some of these issues.

CHAPTER 4: BYWAY ASSOCIATION

In 1998, after the Byway Planning Group developed a collective vision for the Byway, they determined that a new organization would be required to implement the vision. The Gold Belt Byway Association was formed in 1999 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization to accomplish this goal.

The make-up of the Board of Directors of the Association that was designed to represent and advocate for such a large and diverse region was an important consideration. The Byway Planning Group felt it was important to have a varied stakeholder group represented on the Association. To address this, an 18 person board, with specific representative requirements was designed.

GOLD BELT BYWAY BOARD

Appointed Voting Directors (6):

1. Teller County Representative
2. Fremont County Representative
3. Cañon City Representative (one of the 4 original Byway Communities)
4. Cripple Creek Representative (one of the 4 original Byway Communities)
5. Florence Representative (one of the 4 original Byway Communities)
6. Victor Representative (one of the 4 original Byway Communities)

Elected Voting Directors (12):

1. Education Representative
2. Land Conservation Representative
3. Ranching Representative
4. Mining Representative
5. Business or Industry Representative
6. Florissant Area Representative
7. Tourism Representative from Teller County Byway Communities
8. Tourism Representative from Fremont County Byway Communities
9. Historic Preservation Representative

10. Landowner Representative
11. At-large Representative
12. At-large Representative

Appointed Non-voting Ex-Officio Directors (5):

1. Colorado Department of Transportation Representative
2. Bureau of Land Management Representative
3. National Park Service Representative
4. Upper Arkansas Area Council of Governments Representative
5. Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments Representative

ASSOCIATION MISSION STATEMENT

The Gold Belt Tour Byway Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is dedicated to preserving the rural lifestyle, natural environment, and rich cultural and historic heritage along the Byway. The association is a cooperative collaboration of individuals, businesses, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations. Through education and outreach the association shares the Byway with the world!

The Association believes that a healthy natural environment and the preservation of open space and rural lands will ensure the Gold Belt Byway's continued success. We want to leave intact the broad, open plains, rugged mountains, and clear mountain streams that surround the eight communities along the Gold Belt Byway. We want to promote tourism that contributes to our local economies and does not intrude upon our privacy. We want to celebrate and share with others the diverse cultural history and traditional lifestyles of our people and places. We want to maintain healthy habitat for the animals that help make Colorado unique. We also want to instill an appreciation for the diverse natural history and significant paleontology and geology that make this Byway special.

We have a strong desire to preserve the rural and small town lifestyles. We must carefully plan and guide future growth and development so that they are compatible with our community values. Specifically, the Association will strive to accomplish the following to ensure a healthy and sustainable Byway:

- Maintain a healthy natural environment.
- Maintain the open space, scenic beauty, and rural lands that surround the eight Byway communities.
- Preserve the cultural heritage of our rural and small town lifestyles.
- Sustain a good quality of life and healthy economy for residents.

- Share the cultural and natural history and traditional lifestyles with others.

See Appendix A for the Gold Belt Tour Byway Association bylaws

CHAPTER 5: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Accomplishing the vision and goals found in this Plan can only be realized through an active partnership effort. The Gold Belt Byway Association will take the lead on implementing the CMP with assistance from the organizations detailed below. Other organizations may be approached to assist with implementation when necessary, as determined by the Association.

GOLD BELT BYWAY ASSOCIATION

This is the primary organization that will coordinate and make recommendations for the Gold Belt Byway efforts. The Association will coordinate with the managing agencies, volunteer groups, and other organizations and individuals mentioned throughout this document. The Association will ensure that all local citizen concerns and affected interests are represented.

Purpose of the Gold Belt Byway Association:

- Serve as an oversight organization, to ensure that this planning document is utilized.
- Provide essential coordination, management, and funding responsibilities for items that are not currently being accomplished by the 10 managing agencies.

Association Responsibilities:

1. **Oversee the Plan.** Review the CMP on an annual basis to ensure alignment with the stated goals. Coordinate to ensure that the managing agencies are utilizing the Cooperative Agreement to the best of their abilities.
2. **Administer the Gold Belt Byway's budget.** Initiate, coordinate, and administer private and public funds, i.e. grants, sales revenues, membership fees, donations, fund raisers, etc.

3. **Gold Belt Byway Advocate.** Make recommendations on any Byway related issues or opportunities. Prepare and distribute the Gold Belt newsletter. Ensure effective communication from the Association continues.
4. **Coordinate Projects and Functions.** There are some needed programs and functions that are not currently being accomplished by any agency or citizen groups. Some examples include: coordinated marketing, Byway education, cultural preservation, adopt-a-road programs, volunteer coordination, training, etc. Coordinate all projects with landowners and affected parties to ensure all necessary communication, coordination and approvals are done.
5. **Administration of the Association and the Byway.** Host regular coordination meetings, preparation of plan updates and annual reports, financial administration, etc.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

1. Managing Agencies

Through a formal Cooperative Agreement, ten managing agencies/municipalities have committed to jointly manage the Gold Belt Byway. The Cooperative Agreement describes each agency's specific responsibilities (See Appendix B). The ten agencies/municipalities include:

City of Florence	Teller County
Florissant	Bureau of Land Management - Royal Gorge Resource Area
City of Cripple Creek	Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument
City of Victor	
City of Cañon City	Colorado Department of Transportation - Region 2
Fremont County	

NOTE: Each agency has very different legal requirements and must be able to evaluate each action item according to its procedures, i.e. environmental analysis, city council approvals, etc. The Cooperative Agreement must be flexible enough to allow agencies to fully participate as partners in this effort.

2. Volunteer Support

Numerous volunteer groups and individuals currently assist agencies and civic organizations in ways that directly support the goals and vision of this plan. With the continued support and dedication of these volunteer groups and individuals, a great deal of this plan can be accomplished and the Byway vision will become a reality.

3. Local Landowners

Many private landowners live along or near the Byway. The Association will look for ways that will benefit local landowners while helping to meet the Byway goals and vision. Examples include clean-ups, increased law enforcement, and support for traditional land uses, such as ranching.

4. Local Business, Industry, Schools, Interest Groups, and Non-managing Government Entities

Many tourism, recreational, and educational businesses and organizations have goals that align with the Byway's CMP. The Association will look for ways to form new partnerships and will support groups who have similar goals.

CHAPTER 6: BYWAY ASSOCIATION SUSTAINABILITY

FUNDING STRATEGY

Description

Funding for the Gold Belt Byway has traditionally come from grants and the assistance of partner agencies. Grants have been obtained from several sources including FHWA Byway program, CDOT Enhancement, Colorado State Historical Fund, and private foundations. Of these, the most significant was the \$1.7 million provided through the National Scenic Byway Program between 1993 and 2012. However, since the federal grant program was discontinued in 2012, the Association has had to search for other funding sources in order to fulfil its mission. In addition to seeking new funding resources, the Association is committed to re-initiating and re-funding the National Scenic Byway Program. Funding options to evaluate are listed below.

Funding Resources

1. Work to re-establish the National Scenic Byway Program and the funding for this national program.
2. Grants
3. Partner assistance
4. Member dues
5. Revenue generating programs, new and existing
 - a. Existing programs include sales of books and DVDs, mission-driven revenue generating programs such as the 5K run, business and membership contributions/sponsorships, etc.
 - b. New potential programs include a voluntary sales percentage donations from retailers in the region, etc.

6. Increase the amount of resource leveraging. This could be through programs such as Conservation Easements, in-kind donations, etc.

Governance Strategy

The Association acknowledges that strong governance and management of the Association is critical for plan implementation and for the long-term sustainability of the Byway and the Association. Goals for strengthening the Association's governance strategy include:

- Ensure Board and staff have clear roles and responsibilities
- Ensure Board members are actively engaged in the Association and attend meetings and events
- Board audit: to identify if there are gaps in the current board structure and make-up and to ensure the board is running as effectively and efficiently as possible
- Provide a supportive work environment for board and staff
- Association policy and other governance documents, Association guidance such as the Corridor Management Plan, and other processes will be reviewed and updated by staff and board on a regular basis

Stakeholders and Partnerships

The Gold Belt Byway recognizes that partnerships play a crucial role in the implementation of this plan and for other important activities along the Byway. The partnerships that are in place now have a proven track-record of impressive accomplishments including the work on the Garden Park School, protecting scenic properties up and down the Byway with local land trusts, and Economic and Marketing planning with other local byways. Strengthening new partnerships and deepening our relationship with existing partners will continue to ensure meaningful projects can be accomplished. Attracting new partners can be accomplished through many different avenues, including, but not limited to:

1. Increase awareness of the Byway:
 - a. Share accomplishments more effectively to get more people interested in and aware of the Association
 - b. Build relationships with other partners such as local retail and recreational groups
 - c. Use events more effectively to increase exposure. Determine which outreach opportunities are the most effective for the Association to attend. Where do we get the "biggest bang for the buck"?
 - d. Determine if there are opportunities for more social media engagement

2. Seek out new stakeholders and partners who may be a good fit for the Association
3. Identification and cultivation of new board members before openings arise

CHAPTER 7: GOLD BELT BYWAY GOALS

What are Goals, Objectives and Actions?

Goal	Define, what we want to achieve.
Objective	This is our roadmap, how we will achieve our goals.
Action	Specifically state what we plan to do.

A word regarding private property as it relates to this plan.

This plan identifies numerous special historic features and recreational areas, some of them are located on private property. Any work on or conservation of private lands, or partnerships with private landowners are on a completely voluntary basis. **NO development on private property will occur without prior, expressed desire and approval of the landowner.**

BYWAY GOALS

1. **Beautification** – To provide a clean and attractive appearance along the Byway for current and future residents and visitors.

Objectives:

- The road and ditches along the Byway will be free of trash and litter by ensuring at least 20 percent of the Byway is cleaned annually

Actions:

- Promote safe cleaning along the Byway routes
- Check on County & State adopt-a-road programs, and encourage adoption of sections along the Byway not adopted

2. **Educational Outreach** – Increase the awareness, understanding, stewardship, and appreciation for the rich natural and cultural history, traditional lifestyles, paleontology, and land uses that have endured.

Objectives:

- Promote understanding and respect for traditional lifestyles, (i.e. ranching, mining)
- Encourage Byway travelers to observe and recognize evidence of historic land uses
- Promote a greater understanding of past and present human endeavors, traditions, and values and how these have shaped the landscapes and communities along the Byway

Actions:

- Coordinate and consolidate a variety of publications, including brochures, a newsletter, and small newspapers, to provide interpretation of the Byway history
- Involve Byway residents in developing interpretive media (e.g. publications, signs, etc.)
- Support existing environmental education programs
- Coordinate information about the Gold Belt Byway with all local visitor centers
- Regularly train all information providers so they can clearly and uniformly explain the types of experiences and opportunities offered along the Gold Belt Byway

3. **Byways Signing** – Signs will present a clear, professional, attractive, and consistent message

along the Byway.

Objectives:

- Managing partners will accept responsibility for public signs within their jurisdiction by coordinating Byway signing
- All public Byway signing will be easy to follow, easily recognizable, and will not detract from the character of the area

Actions:

- Coordinate, implement, and maintain a public informational sign plan
- Coordinate all signage efforts with jurisdictional partners
- Inventory and inspect all Byway signage regularly

4. **Marketing** – Ensure that the Byway's vision and goals are met by marketing the various Byway opportunities, attractions, and communities so that we match visitor preferences and expectations with the actual product.

Objectives:

- Match visitor preferences and expectations with the actual product

Actions:

- Ensure that various marketing materials, public relations media, interpretive media, and service and information providers will include: type of experience offered (refer to Important Characteristics described in Chapter 3), user ethics, time and distance of routes, access points, availability of visitor services and facilities, road conditions, traffic volume, and recreational opportunities
- Offer training regularly to information providers so they can clearly and uniformly explain the types of experiences and opportunities the Gold Belt Byway offers

5. **Safety** – Strive to provide a safe place for people to live and visit.

Objectives:

- Encourage law enforcement authorities to develop Byway enforcement, fire protection, and search and rescue plans

Actions:

- Encourage law enforcement agencies to increase their patrols of the lower Shelf, Phantom Canyon, and High Park Roads
- Support wildfire protection with mediation plans

- 6. Open Space** – Encourage the conservation and preservation of open landscapes surrounding our communities, including rural ranchlands, public lands, wildlife habitat, scenic views, historic and modern day mining technology, and other applicable businesses and industries.

Objectives:

- Work with local planning departments (Counties, Cities, Towns, etc) to support the unique scenic and rural qualities of the Byway
- Encourage and support land trusts whose work is consistent with the open space goals of the Byway
- Provide incentives to landowners along the Byway to help them sustain the rural ranching and mining lifestyles

Actions:

- Work with existing land trusts to encourage private land protection where appropriate
- Encourage the application of the Visual Resource Management, visual category stipulations on BLM lands
- Continue to implement the Landscape Preservation Plan developed in 2007 and updated in 2013. Update when necessary
- Work with land trusts and various preservationist groups to inform land owners of conservation easements and other options
- Work with public works agencies, state and U.S. highways, utilities, ditch companies, railroads, and other agencies or concerns, to secure shared use of easements and corridors
- Encourage BLM to acquire or exchange for lands adjacent to the Byway.
- Participate in local planning processes to ensure that the protection of open space and rural ranchlands are a priority along the Byway.
- Continue to obtain funds for preserving open space and rural ranchlands along the Byway.
- Work towards re-funding the National Scenic Byway Program

- 7. Natural and Cultural Resources** – Protect the scenic and historic qualities of the Gold Belt

Byway so that the next generation of Byway visitors can experience the spectacular natural and cultural landscapes that earned the Byway its national designation.

Objectives:

- Support viable efforts to preserve cultural history along the Byway
- Support land trusts whose work is consistent with the open space preservation goals
- Support community efforts to protect historic sites along the Byway (specifically National Historic Register listed or eligible sites)

Actions:

- Provide incentives to landowners along the Byway to help them protect land, water and historic resources and sustain the rural ranching and mining lifestyle
- Encourage elected officials and planning departments to adopt the Gold Belt Tour Heritage Preservation Plan priorities in municipal and county master plans
- Participate in local master planning processes to encourage additions related to the Gold Belt Tour Heritage Preservation Plan
- Collaborate with the BLM, NPS, and other public land management agencies to provide access to, protect, and interpret the natural and cultural history along the Byway corridor, ensuring a rich Byway experience for public lands visitors
- Partner with traditional, private industry sectors, such as mining and ranching, to protect and interpret natural and cultural history on private lands where appropriate
- Cooperate with organizations dedicated to ecosystem health – specifically, those working to protect threatened or endangered species and reclaim damaged riparian areas and improve water quality along the Arkansas River, Four Mile Creek, and Eight Mile Creek corridors

- 8. Byway Plan** – Ensure the Association is always working towards securing the financial resources and financial stability to fulfill the Byway’s vision and goals and to ensure the Association is stable, sustainable, and working in the most efficient way feasible.

Objectives:

- Acquire sufficient funds to sustain staffing to perform day-to-day duties enabling the Association to achieve the stated goals and visions.
- Secure commitment from the partners to support the projects and goals that are important to the region.
- Complete projects that enhance the Byway’s goals

Actions:

- Create a Business Plan describing a pathway to sustainability. This plan shall be reviewed and updated every 5 years, or more frequently as needed
- Meet with partners regularly to update them regarding needs and to coordinate assistance from the partner agencies
- Continue with education efforts for the public, both individuals and groups, in order to secure additional financial support
- Work towards re-funding the National Scenic Byway Program

9. Byway Plan Evaluation – Provide mechanisms that enable evaluation of the health and accomplishments of the Association.

Actions:

- A newsletter will be prepared by the Association highlighting accomplishments on a regular basis
- The Board of Directors will discuss priorities in relation to the goals and objectives in this plan when applicable at scheduled Board meetings
- An annual report will be prepared that lists the projects and/or accomplishments completed during the previous year. The report will be reviewed by the Board of Directors who will compare accomplishments to the goals set by the guiding documents for the Association. The Board may set new priorities after reviewing annual accomplishments.



Photo provided by Palmer Land Trust