

Palms to Pines Scenic Byway Workshop IV Series Byway Positioning and Messaging

Attendees

Between the three workshop locations, 10 members of the community joined representatives of Supervisor Benoit's office, the San Bernardino National Forest, the BLM Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument, Caltrans, Forest Service Recreation Solutions. Dr. Emilyn Sheffield, professor with California State University, Chico facilitated the meetings and led the discussion.

Agenda

Meeting objectives included:

- Review information from first three workshops
- Seek input on how to present the scenic byway to stakeholders and visitors
- Discuss the byway artwork aspect of the project
- Share the schedule for completing the CMP and other project components

Meeting Notes

Throughout the workshops, it has been evident that community members care passionately about this place. People have been forthcoming with implementable items to increase safety without changing the character of the road and its corridor.

However, it is also evident that marketing simply to increase the route's visibility or to attract additional visitors is not a desired activity for the entire route. The goal of this workshop series is to identify the tools available to convey a consistent visitor message to serve both the communities who chose to recede (Pinyon and Garner Valley) and those communities that are interested in attracting visitors (Idyllwild and Palm Desert).

Vision

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires that each Corridor Management Plan (CMP) include "a strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of the byway's intrinsic qualities." A statement describing how community members envision the byway corridor in 10 to 15 years provides the stakeholders a starting point for developing those strategies. It is not a positioning statement or marketing bumper sticker but an internal stakeholder description of what communities want to achieve.

The vision statement describes the future participants hope to see. If folks can agree on a common vision, they may agree on an end goal.

A draft vision statement was presented to the community participants as follows:

The Palms to Pines Scenic Byway connects people to a precious island oasis and respite from urban life. Visitors and residents actively work to preserve this special place.

Although most found the intent to be okay, many felt the phrasing needs refining. Participants provided the following feedback:

- It sounds unidirectional; all about coming "up the hill." It should also address the folks driving down to the lower elevations of the byway. It is an adventure to descend the route too. The descent is especially desirable in winter when residents and visitors can escape to warmth.
- The term "island oasis" doesn't evoke this environment; brings to mind ocean areas like Tahiti. Using the term island to describe the mountains as a "sky island" is more of a biological term not used by the general public.
- There is not enough of the "palm-ness" of the byway corridor.
- Need to insert the safety element.
- Some liked the "respite from urban life" portion; it captures feeling of being separate from the surrounding urban-ness.
- "Unique transition" was suggested.

- Need to address the desert aspects? May need to look to the Monument’s descriptions so we don’t restrict the vision to just the higher elevations of the route. Some public may not understand that the palms are located at the lower elevations with pines at the higher elevations.
- Desert palms to mountain pines was suggested.
- Some suggested: “Visitors and residents actively preserve this special place,” although there was some discussion regarding the use of the word preserve with alternates like conserve, protect and sustain mentioned. There was some concern regarding differing missions of the BLM and FS. Timory will check the language in the Monument legislation.
- The phrase “enhance the experience” was suggested which would align with FHWA goals. It would tie the agency efforts at conservation with a better visitor experience.
- Don’t like term “precious.”
- It’s a precious mountain oasis, not an island.
- Move residents before visitors

Positioning

The CMP must also include a discussion of “plans for how to market and publicize the byway.” Based on community input through the workshop series, we’ll take a different approach for the Palms to Pines CMP. Although Idyllwild has been a destination for generations and the Monument has been a destination for a decade, the communities between have not been destinations and have no desire to become destinations for scenic drivers. The CMP will therefore focus on methods and tools to deliver community messages regarding safely driving the route, respecting the area, and getting scenic drivers and visitors through communities to the destinations (e.g., Idyllwild, desert gateway communities) or areas (e.g., Monument Visitor Center) that are better able to provide desired visitor services.

Emilyn presented a handout describing potential points of agreement among community members and possible ideas for scenic byway communication, positioning and implementation. The first column describes perceived points of agreement and the second column describes the resulting implications. The third column is the workshop participant dialogue regarding the if/then statements.

Table 1. If/Then Statements for Palms to Pines Scenic Byway (tf= therefore)

Points of Agreement	tf	Implications for Communications, Positioning & Implementation	Workshop Conclusions
Palms to Pines Scenic Byway traverses special places	tf	Core message is to care for it	There are only 3 highways in US where you have this full transition across life zones; the corridor is not only special but unique. The core message all the time is come to care for this place the way we care for the place.
Caring people have preserved and protected this area for generations	tf	Core message is to help preserve the area on and adjacent to the scenic byway	People have cared for generations – the Tribes, ranching families, families with cabins. A point of community consensus is “help us preserve this and pass it on.” There are not very many places across the US that have this number of generations tied to one place. Some participants expressed frustration with the word conservation. They feel it’s lost its meaning of wise use and been usurped with a “keep out preservation” intent.

<p>The historic character should be maintained</p>	<p>tf</p>	<p>Enhance safety without changing character of the road</p>	<p>The curbing near the Monument and the curves of road are important features of the route. The route was engineered specifically as an experiment, with modern canting, but follows old Indian trail. Some community participants strongly favor maintaining the route as is but residents that commute to the lower elevation cities for work support judicious realignment in some places or cutting back the rock face from the road edges to improve site distance in strategic locations. However, support seems unanimous for additional and better-marked turnouts, additional turning or passing lanes, guardrails, rumbles strips and additional mountain driving condition information at route termini to improve route safety. Residents would like to see traffic speeds reduced and features to prevent the route from becoming a commuter shortcut. All participants were unanimously opposed to creating a wider four-lane corridor. One participant wrote he would like the year 2030 driving experience “to provide a vivid contrast to the high speed ribbons of concrete all over the nation.”</p>
<p>En route can be dangerous for novices and scenic drivers ~ <i>Discussion changed to:</i> En route can be dangerous for novices, scenic drivers, and high-speed junkies – creating dangerous driving conditions for resident drivers</p>	<p>tf</p>	<p>Concentrate interpretation at destinations (not en route); Increase awareness at lower elevations about hazards of route; Lake Fulmor and the Monument are two prime points to communicate</p>	<p>Driving skills for non-residents is lacking, but even residents get too comfortable. Most of the storytelling needs to be concentrated at the monument, in Idyllwild, the county parks (Nature Center, Hurkey Park, etc.), the FS Ranger and fire stations and res sites like Lake Fulmor. The rest of the story is best told by alternate means. Shift relatively more of the story to downloadable pod casts, maybe at campgrounds. Keep the interpretation at places where you don't interrupt the driving of the route; keep turnouts open. One participant pointed out that the Hemet Lake interpretation sign is along SR 74 without any parking for traffic to pull off safely and read the information. The sign is just posted on a fence parallel to the route.</p>
<p>Scenic drivers are often scared, drive too slow or pull-out in wrong areas, or stop in the road to take pictures</p>	<p>tf</p>	<p>Improve pull-out opportunities where possible and provide more signage about “right” pullouts to use</p>	<p>Point of consensus among participants. This area is geographically adjacent to fast-paced urban area where drivers want to get to their destinations and are not interested in what's in between. The weekend commuter traffic between the desert and San Diego is a good example of these drivers. Clearly sign appropriate pull-outs, prepare drivers for upcoming pull-outs better. Describe mountain driving conditions and how to use pull-outs early in route ascent.</p>

<p>Scenic drivers often end up in the wrong places (e.g. trespass or areas w/limited services)</p>	<p><i>tf</i></p>	<p>Increase signage/info to get people to right places</p>	<p>In light of growth, need to determine how you begin to help them care. How do you tell them the story when they don't want to stop and listen? Idyllwild and the Monument want to be destinations. Need to develop a signing/interpretation strategy that encourages visitors to bypass the Pinyon and Garner Valley communities and head straight to their destinations. General feeling from Garner Valley participants is that if national scenic byway designation encourages more traffic that it's undesirable. Some worry that if the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway was posted on the web it would lead to increased traffic on the road. They feel anything that keeps the area off the radar is a good thing. (Note: although Palms to Pines does not have a national designation, as a state and national forest scenic byway it is posted with America's Byways on http://www.byways.org/explore/byways/2326/.) However, the more likely scenario here is that forecasted population increases in Riverside County will affect traffic levels much more dramatically than national scenic byway designation. Regardless of designation, the CMP can be a useful tool to help plan for visitor management along the route. Scenic byway drivers are a like-minded recreation population to attract to your area. The deliberate byway driver is more receptive to preservation and conservation messages than the average commuter. Since it's not possible to eliminate visitation, a proactive effort to manage and direct the increasing traffic may help preserve the current character of the area.</p>
<p>Scenic drivers need services</p>	<p><i>tf</i></p>	<p>Provide more info about where to go to "go." (E.g. next fuel X miles, next restroom X miles, next visitor services)</p>	<p>This is an important difference between residents and non-residents. If you want them to be self-sufficient, they need direction to available services; e.g. next gasoline, bathrooms, etc. are xx miles away.</p>
<p>Idyllwild and Coachella Valley communities are established destinations for visitors and second-home owners/retirees</p>	<p><i>tf</i></p>	<p>No real reason these long-established patterns will not continue</p>	<p>Work to move visitors from lower elevations to Idyllwild and/or back seamlessly. Important to remember burden of accidents and recovery falls on the local fire station. Develop a message that may teach some drivers travel the route in a different way.</p>
<p>Continued growth is projected for southern California and Inland Empire counties</p>	<p><i>tf</i></p>	<p>More people will be living closer to the communities along the Palms to Pines corridor</p>	<p>Project growth for southern California in the next decade is 6 million additional residents. Most cities and County Supervisors are pushing for that for increased growth/income. Unfortunately, the communities along the byway cannot stay completely off the radar.</p>

Highway 74 is a well-traveled commuter route	<i>tf</i>	Traffic and congestion are likely to increase and “style” conflicts are also likely to rise	Resident mountain commuters are efficient drivers. However growing weekend resort commuters between San Diego and the desert are much slower. The early morning sunrise travelling down to the desert or the setting sun commuting back to San Diego on Sunday nights can be blinding. Need strategies to help drivers be more successful when they travel here.
Some areas along the route prefer to “recede” from view/visitors	<i>tf</i>	Core message is there are private communities along the route with no visitor services; “Visitor services are available X miles/minutes ahead”	Pinyon communities and Garner Valley residents would prefer if folks never turned off SR 74 between Idyllwild and the Monument.
The Monument has an education mission as well as a preservation mission	<i>tf</i>	Opportunities exist to engage visitors at the Monument visitor center	The infrastructure exists to carry a bigger message and to draw visitors that are relatively in line with community values. The Forest Service has a stake as well. Idyllwild is now visitor dependent. Their choices are how to draw and manage that visitation. The Palm Desert communities are also in the business of drawing visitors. Other byway communities are in the business of how to survive in between. The question is how to recede and direct people along the way to the destinations. You have the assets to survive the changing world and population growth. You are going to need all your tools.
Special events can be designed to draw (and displace) selected visitors	<i>tf</i>	Use events and guided activities to attract visitors with values that are aligned with communities	National scenic byway designation itself doesn’t bring anything to the game. It does not come with marketing, brochures or bells and whistles. If a byway organization was formed and chose to advertise the route, they may have a brochure that also featured the major seasonal events. There may be an opportunity to provide education for byway driving novices and connecting people to the place within the marketing for existing events. Use these opportunities to seek ways to engage, direct, and help visitors be better mountain drivers.
Recreation infrastructure can be designed to draw (or displace) different user groups	<i>tf</i>	Locate recreation infrastructure thoughtfully	The consensus is there is adequate existing infrastructure; don’t add more.
A strong visual identity will attract people	<i>tf</i>	Select byway icon concepts and applications with care	Create a collection that draws visitors where you want them to visit. Highlight locations near the Monument and Idyllwild but don’t include Garner Valley imagery.

Other comments included:

Improve wayfinding at the gateways to the byway. Provide interpretation to describe what to expect about the opportunities for learning the stories along the corridor, where services are located and considerations for safe, courteous mountain driving.

Encourage visitors to get off the road on the public lands to enjoy the outdoor recreation opportunities.

Include a broad message regarding personal responsibility to know boundaries (to respect private lands), drive responsibly, recreate safely and be aware of fire safety.

Another method for preserving the character and viewshed of the corridor is to follow the Friends of the Desert Mountains example - acquire land parcels for conservation and to prevent commercial development.

Artwork

About a decade ago, a visual identity system was developed for Northern California's national forest scenic byways. The system was developed to elevate the visibility of the state's scenic routes, let travelers know there were roads "out there" (e.g., off the major interstates or U.S. highways), that travelers would have a safe experience (e.g., paved roads, adequate visitor services) and to inform potential visitors that there were ten different and unique routes to experience.

Based on the appeal of the identity system, we have included at least one complementary mark (e.g., logo) in every subsequent scenic byway CMP project. The project funding for Palms to Pines includes developing one master illustration for the route as a whole that fits with the state's identity system and an additional six icons specific to the intrinsic features along the Palms to Pines route.

Other byways have chosen to highlight concepts such as wildlife, the Pacific Crest Trail, film heritage, the environment, etc. The eleven icons developed for the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway can be viewed at <http://scenic4.org/logos.html>.

Potential illustrations for the Palms to Pines route include:

- Lake Hemet (recreation theme)
- Changing ecological zones along route
- Eagles over Lake Hemet
- Peninsular Sheep
- The national monument (although we'll have to integrate with its existing visual identity)
- Hurkey Creek Campground
- Seven level hill – possibly a night driving scene
- Hiking through the forest or desert
- Pacific Crest Trail
- Desert to forest life zones
- View from Indian Vista
- Idyllwild's cultural attractions (festivals, film, arts)
- View of Santa Rosa and San Jacinto from Coachella Valley
- Rock formations you can see in Idyllwild as you come in town

The illustrators will take the list of concepts developed at the community meetings, review source materials we provide for reference (photographs with permissions or in the public domain), and develop three drafts, called "roughs," to illustrate each selected concept. A small advisory group from the community participants will be formed to preview the roughs and vote on the preferred illustrations. The artist will then refine the draft to a final byway icon.

This project's funding also includes the development of some kind of application of the artwork in the form of a map, poster or brochure. Other byway communities have chosen a map or brochure to be used for marketing purposes to draw additional visitation. Since the communities along the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway aren't as interested in marketing the route, we may consider the development of a stewardship pamphlet or brochure to be used for additional education purposes at the Monument and in Idyllwild. This may be in the form of some type of "passport" that is designed to share communities desired messaging and/or educate visitors about how to safely drive mountain roads and how to find the services visitors need.

Next steps

Completing the CMP will generally follow these steps over the next six months:

1. Using the information gathered from the community meetings, Timory, Louanne and Emilyn will use the summer to write the CMP narrative.
2. The land management agencies and Tribe will review in September to check for regulatory authority consistency.
3. The fifth and final workshop is tentatively scheduled for October to provide community participants a walk-through of the draft CMP.
4. Community members will have approximately six weeks to review and provide comments and suggested edits on the draft CMP.
Note: One portion of the CMP describes funding opportunities. Although Recreation Solutions will find many of the national grant opportunities, if you are aware of any local philanthropic opportunities such as local service organizations, family foundations, etc. please let us know and we'll include them in the list of resources.
5. Draft artwork illustrations will be available for review sometime in the fall or early spring.
6. The CMP will be finalized and distributed by December 2011 or January 2012.
7. An existing or newly formed community group potentially pursues grant funding for implementation items and/or oversees the development and submission of a nomination package for national scenic byway designation.

The CMP will provide a base description of conditions, traffic counts and your collective intent for the desired future condition of the byway corridor.

There are strong individual desires across the byway communities to preserve the roadway and community character. Developing the CMP is hopefully just the first step you will take in working together collectively to meet the identified goals. Communities must decide if there is value in working together and if seeking a byway designation will help achieve these goals.

Regardless of the decision to pursue additional funding and/or the national scenic byway designation, the development of the CMP reflects sustained community involvement with strong Federal land management agency backing. It provides an excellent starting point for successful applications seeking implementation or traffic enhancement funding. You can document a compelling case for why funding would be a good investment here.

Attachment: Example of safe driving message from Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway (<http://scenic4.org/route.html>)

The Driving Experience

Compared to the high-speed trans-Sierra routes such as Highways 50 and 80, driving the Ebbetts Pass is a truly unique and unparalleled experience. At both ends of the byway (between Arnold and Lake Alpine to the west and between Markleeville and Silver Creek to the east), the road is a modern, full-width, two-lane State Highway that is maintained for year-round travel, with a double yellow center line, shoulders and passing lanes. Visitors travel through seemingly endless miles of pristine scenery, interjected only occasionally by welcoming communities. However, in the middle portion between Lake Alpine and Silver Creek, the road and the travel experience changes dramatically, becoming a narrow two-lane road with no center line and no shoulders as it slowly winds its way up and over the Sierra crest.

This part of the byway contains some steep, narrow and curvy portions with a few precipitous drop-offs. The route is recommended for cars and motorcycles, but is not accessible to tractor-trailers, buses or large recreational vehicles (RV's).

The high-country segment of Highway 4 between Lake Alpine and Silver Creek is generally open from June to mid-November. During snowy months the U. S. Forest Service keeps portions of this section groomed for winter recreation activities such as snowmobiling, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. Close to Ebbetts Pass is the Tioga Road / Big Oak Flat Road National Scenic Byway, providing a unique opportunity to create a

one-of-a-kind “trans-Sierra loop” connecting the burgeoning Central Valley, Bay Area and beyond through Yosemite National Park following the eastern Sierra’s Highway 395 to the wonders of Ebbetts Pass.

Driving Tips

You are invited to become a steward of this pristine environment. As you travel please keep the following safety and etiquette tips in mind:

- Keep your eyes on the road at all times.
- Do not pull off the road or park except at designated pullouts.
- Do not attempt to pass other vehicles except in designated passing lanes.
- No services (gas, food, and lodging) are available between Lake Alpine and Markleeville.
- Your cell phones will likely not have service over much of the pass.
- Pay attention to weather reports and carry chains, blankets, warm clothes, water and snacks in case of a winter snowstorm, which can happen as early as September and as late as June.
- Please respect the road, the wildlife, the wilderness, and the people sharing the Ebbetts Pass experience with you.
- Tread lightly and pack out everything you pack in.

Figure 3. Driving experience and safety tips from the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway Association.