



## **Georgia Scenic Byway Program Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is a Scenic Byway?**

A Georgia Scenic Byway is defined as any designated highway, street, road, or route which significantly features certain intrinsic qualities that should be protected or enhanced. Intrinsic qualities are the resources present along a byway that define its character, interest, and appeal. There are six types of intrinsic qualities: scenic, historic, natural, cultural, archeological, and recreational. Intrinsic qualities should be within the viewshed of the byway and must relate or contribute to the distinctive character of the region.

### **What is a Corridor Management Plan?**

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a guide for the future promotion, preservation, and enhancement of a scenic byway. The plan is a result of local governments, community organizations, and byway residents working together to establish goals and objectives that hope to achieve through designation. These goals may include the promotion of tourism, protection of historic and natural resources, or preservation of scenic views.

The CMP is not a document of new laws, regulations, or ordinances, but instead is composed of existing land use plans plus recommendations, by property owners and stakeholders, used to assist in protecting and promoting the byway.

### **Who will implement and manage the corridor management plan?**

The objectives of the CMP will be carried out by the local governments and the members of the Corridor Management Plan Committee.

### **What are the community benefits of a Scenic Byway?**

A community's benefits depend on the objectives established in the Corridor Management Plan. For example, if a local government uses the designation to promote tourism in the area, then residents may see an increase in economic development and a decrease in taxes due to the generation of new tourism revenue. Or, if a community decides to emphasize the protection of scenic and natural areas, land use ordinances could be created to preserve the rural character of a byway and limit development intrusion. Scenic Byway designation is a unique tool, in that it can be used to achieve a wide variety of your community's goals.

## **How may Byway projects be funded?**

There are several possible funding sources, including Federal and State government programs and private foundations.

Under MAP-21, the amount of projects along designated byways that are eligible for federal funding has been dramatically reduced. A new program called "Transportation Alternatives" has been created, grouping previous discretionary grant funded projects (i.e. Safe Routes to School, Recreational Trails, Scenic Byways, Transportation Enhancements, etc.) together in a competitive process driven by the states. Money can still be spent on safety projects, scenic overlooks, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities along designated byways.

The Georgia Departments of Natural Resources and Community Affairs also offer funding programs that could be used for byway-related projects.

## **What will the Byway cost the sponsor and/or local government?**

It depends. The most obvious cost is time, which includes working on the application, holding public meetings, and developing the Corridor Management Plan (if they choose to do so themselves). As far as money is concerned, the local government may need to provide a match for a grant to develop the CMP or to implement a project once designated. They may also wish to contract out some elements of the designation, implementation, and maintenance processes. The extent of money and time needed is difficult to determine since governments can take a more or less active part in developing, maintaining, and promoting a byway.

## **Is there any more maintenance required by local governments with a Byway? Will a Scenic Byway route have improvements made to the roadway?**

After designation, GDOT Maintenance staff will work with local jurisdictions to develop a maintenance plan and schedule for the byway. The local governments, if they desire, can choose to go beyond the routine GDOT maintenance and develop their own plan of litter control, mowing, landscaping, etc. It is expected that the local government will maintain any county or city streets along the byway. In fact, if local roads are to be included in a byway, the governing jurisdiction must submit a resolution of support with the application. Also, local governments must approve the CMP, which should describe how the local government would maintain and operate the byway. Byway sponsors can also work with GDOT's Wildflower and Adopt-A-Highway Programs to help enhance the appearance of designated roadways. In addition, Byways may be allowed revisions from standard construction and maintenance practices which would promote Context Sensitive Designs.

## **What kinds of property restrictions are required? Does the local government have to adopt zoning?**

The only property restriction is the prohibition of new billboards along routes designated as Federal Aid Primary, National Highway System, or Interstate. This essentially covers all state routes. Currently existing billboards may remain.

The CMP is not a zoning plan but should reference any current land use or community plans that would impact the byway corridor. If it is the community's goal to implement and/or enforce zoning or land use ordinances, then that should be detailed in the CMP. Ideally the community would develop some type of control measure along the byway to further the goals of enhancement, promotion, and preservation.

### **How will living on the Scenic Byway affect my property?**

Most likely, the byway will have no effect on an individual's property. GDOT has only one land use restriction, the prohibition of the construction of new billboards, which accompanies Scenic Byway designation. This rule applies to Interstate, National Highway System, or Federal-Aid Primary routes. Any other effects would come out of the Corridor Management Plan, which citizens and residents help to develop. Since byways are often viewed as valuable community resources, it is possible that living on a Scenic Byway will create a greater sense of pride for your land and may increase your property values.

### **Does designation as a Scenic Byway mean that GDOT will exercise Eminent Domain?**

NO. Designation as a Scenic Byway does not facilitate GDOT's ability to "take" your property, nor does it increase the likelihood of such an action.

### **Does designation as a Scenic Byway impact my ability to secure additional curb cuts/access points?**

NO. GDOT's driveway permitting process is not altered by the route's Scenic Byway designation. However, byway designation is based on the route's intrinsic qualities and the protection of those qualities through local land use plans and zoning.

### **What happens if an easement, property, or access to property is needed for a scenic vista or for Byway Amenities?**

If an easement, property, or access to property is needed for a scenic vista or other byway project (such as the construction of physical amenities including turnouts and parking areas, etc.) and federal-aid funds are used to purchase the access/property, the sponsor must follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, more commonly known as the 'Uniform Act'. This law requires that certain procedures be followed in securing needed easements/access/property in order to ensure that affected property owners are treated fairly and equitably.