

# Millen-Jenkins County Scenic Byway



Corridor Management Plan



# Millen-Jenkins County Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

Prepared by the Jenkins County Scenic Byway Committee

With Technical Assistance from the CSRA Regional Development Center

November 2005

## **Disclaimer**

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**Vision**

*To promote the scenic, historic and recreational resources of Jenkins County and provide for their preservation and enhancement*

**1.0 Introduction**



Jenkins County has long been regarded as one of Georgia’s best-kept secrets. With scenic vistas, historic areas, a popular state park, and the Ogeechee River, the county is rich in tourism opportunities.

In 2002, The Millen-Jenkins County Chamber of Commerce and Millen Better Hometown began working on Scenic Byway designation for Cotton Avenue, portions of State Routes 23 and 17, and a number of county roadways just

north of Millen. The Chamber and Better Hometown believe that Georgia Scenic Byway designation will assist in attracting tourism and enhancing important scenic and historic qualities that make Millen and Jenkins County unique.

With support from the Jenkins County Board of Commissioners and Millen City Council, and after a public meeting to gauge citizen interest, a successful application was submitted to the Georgia Department of Transportation for permission to proceed with the designation process.

Many communities with scenic byways have already benefited from designation. Designation has allowed more local management of byway routes and placed byways on state maps and in travel

**Jenkins County Profile**

- 2000 Population: 8,575
- Total labor force: 4,258
- Land Area: 349.8 sq. mi
- County Seat: Millen
- Federal Highways: US 25 (N-S)
- State Highways: 17 (E-W), 21 (E-W), 23 (N-S), 67 (N-S), 121 (N-S)
- Lowest average daily minimum temperature: 45.7 degrees (January)
- Highest average daily minimum temperature: 80.3 degrees (July)
- Average monthly precipitation 3.5 inches
- Recreation Areas: Magnolia Springs State Park

magazines, which attract travelers who would otherwise use alternate routes. Furthermore, local jurisdictions with byway status have accessed additional state, federal, and private funding sources for programs and projects.

The overall goals for the byway are to:

- Provide a quality experience for travelers to enjoy the scenic splendor and rich history of Jenkins County.
- Provide new economic development opportunities.
- Promote local awareness and appreciation of scenic, historic and cultural qualities.

## 1.1 About the GDOT Scenic Byways Program

Georgia Scenic Byways is a community-driven effort, which seeks to preserve Georgia's legacy of remarkably diverse scenic heritage woven together by an extensive system of roads and highways in a way that enhances economic development.



A Georgia Scenic Byway is defined as any designated highway, street, road, or route, which features certain intrinsic qualities that should be protected or enhanced. It is these qualities, be they scenic, historic, natural, archeological, cultural, or recreational that give byways their character and appeal. Currently, seven corridors have

achieved Georgia Scenic Byways status as designated by GDOT.

With the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) in 1991, the National Scenic Byways Program was created at the federal level. The program grew so popular that by the mid-1990, states developed their own programs. With the availability of federal funds and state oversight, many highway corridors are being rediscovered and tapped for tourism.

To obtain designation, a local sponsor must complete a multi-stage process of identifying a route, submitting an application, developing a Corridor Management Plan (CMP), and receiving approval by the State Transportation Board. The application defines the route, acknowledges local support of the byway, and assesses the intrinsic qualities and potential issues of the route.

The Scenic Byway planning process functions within a framework that seeks to balance increasing tourism and enhancing quality of life. In order for tourism to be compatible with the county's rural character, there are specific questions that need to be addressed, including:

- How can tourism help Jenkins County diversify its economic base while maintaining residents' valued rural lifestyle?

- How can places of significant cultural and historic importance be preserved while allowing public access to those sites?
- How can visitors be alerted to the availability of hospitality and other services along the Byway?
- How can tourists be attracted to the Byway and ensure that they have a quality experience once they get there?

## 1.2 The Corridor Management Plan

The Corridor Management Plan (CMP) provides a comprehensive long-term vision of the byway and an understanding of the byway's importance to the surrounding areas. The CMP includes a description of the planning process and goals for the byway. Further, it lays out management strategies to promote economic development along the corridor while balancing preservation of valuable resources. A byway management plan is an essential platform in forming partnerships, seeking funding, and gaining consensus for economic development activities.

It should be noted that the CMP is not a regulatory document and has no legal standing. Local authorities are solely responsible for implementing changes within their jurisdictions. The CMP is intended to be a flexible tool, subject to reviews and updates. Three important principles guide the development of this CMP:

- The byway plan is designed for voluntary implementation on the part of local jurisdictions.
- The byway plan will be controlled by local jurisdictions.
- Private property rights and privacy will be preserved as part of any implementation options.

## 1.3 The Planning Process

### 1.3.1 Approval and Fieldwork

In March 2002, the Millen-Jenkins County Chamber of Commerce met several times to discuss the opportunity of seeking scenic byway designation. The CSRA Regional Development Center (CSRA RDC) was contacted to review a proposed route for byway eligibility. GDOT representatives visited and reviewed the route later that year and have approval for Jenkins County to submit an application.

Application approval permitted the Chamber of Commerce to move forward with working meetings, public consultation, and the development of the CMP.

Field work was conducted with the assistance of CSRA Regional Development Center staff throughout 2004, and included byway photographs and research on various aspects of the CMP.

## 1.3.2 Public Involvement

The byway designation process is intended to be a citizen-driven, participatory process with the aim of creating a community-based plan that builds consensus from varied interests, including residents, property owners and business interests. The various individuals who participated in plan development ensure that the CMP incorporates a cross-section of opinions and reflects feasible, practical solutions.



It is the view of byway sponsors that an effective CMP is shaped by local values. To that end, an extensive public consultation process was initiated. Various attempts were made to gather public input and support for the byway. Property owners along the byway were sent written invitations to attend public meetings, individual meetings with property owners were held, and byway sponsors personally addressed local civic groups and government agencies. These included:

- October 1, 2002, Millen City Hall (Millen City Council meeting)
- October 2, 2002, Millen Rotary Club (Millen Rotary Club monthly meeting)
- October 29, 2002, Jenkins County Courthouse (Jenkins County Board of Commissioners Meeting)
- April 7, 2003, Optimist Club (Optimist Club monthly meeting)

The first public meeting was held on March 11, 2003 to introduce the byway and to receive public input on the direction of the plan. The presentation focused on introducing the Georgia Scenic Byways program and resources along the byway.

Included in the presentation were:

- A review of the project's purpose.
- A discussion of resources along the byway.
- A discussion of vision statement and potential goals and strategies for the CMP.

Specifically, attendees were asked:

- What qualities make the Scenic Byway special?
- How do you envision the Scenic Byway in 20 years?
- What do you want the Scenic Byway to do for Millen and Jenkins County?

A second public meeting was held on January 10, 2006. Following a brief review of the byway's purpose and



resources, attendees were asked to provide input into vision and goals of the byway and specific projects recommended in the earlier public meeting and by the byway sponsors.

Opportunities for comments, concerns, and recommendations on specific byway management issues were also available and the results were incorporated in the CMP.

A copy of the CMP was made available in public locations and announced in the local newspaper for public review and comment. Since the project's start, the byway committee met with elected officials representing the City of Millen, Jenkins County Board of Commissioners, and state officials to keep them informed and demonstrate community support for the project.

### 1.3.3 Advisory Committee

An advisory committee, consisting of a diverse group of residents, was formed to guide and draft the CMP. The advisory committee was responsible for:

- Compiling and assessing intrinsic qualities along the byway.
- Identifying other points of interest.
- Developing strategies for enhancing or preserving intrinsic qualities.
- Identifying projects.
- Developing the Corridor Management Plan.

Committee meetings were held during 2003-2005 to complete various sections of the plan.



### 1.4 How to Use the CMP

The CMP is intended to serve as a reference point for potential users. A number of companion planning documents should be used in conjunction with the CMP. These include:

- Millen-Jenkins County Comprehensive Plan
- Millen Downtown Design Team Reports
- Millen Design Charrette
- Historic Downtown Millen Pedestrian Plan
- CSRA Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
- Local laws and ordinances



### 1.5 Information Collected

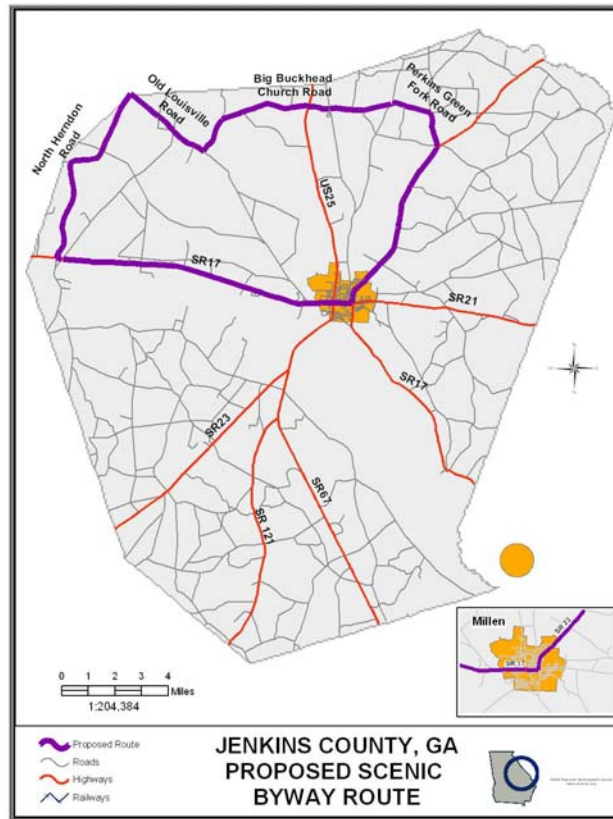
The Jenkins County Scenic Byway Committee relied heavily on technical assistance provided by the CSRA RDC. The RDC reviewed the county’s comprehensive plan for land use issues, references to the byway route, and tourism and historic resources. This information assisted in compiling an inventory of resources along the byway.

Maps were produced using data from the RDC. Road conditions were surveyed by the RDC and supplemented by GDOT traffic counts.

### 1.6 CMP Organization

The CMP report is organized in three sections. The first section introduces the CMP project and outlines the report’s organization. In addition, it identifies the purpose and goals of the byway are identified. The second section inventories intrinsic qualities along the byway route. The third section provides needs assessment, including preservation and development strategies.

The CMP recommendations are the foundation for future action by a variety of public and private entities along the byway route. The intent is to guide local governments in the implementation of appropriate policies.



### 1.7 Proposed Route

The route begins along Cotton Avenue in Millen’s Historic District and heads north along State Route 23. From there, it passes west along a network of county roadways before leading to State Route 17 and back to Millen.

The route is rich in history. It is believed that the Southern Algonquin or the Shawnee were the first tribes to inhabit the area. Prior to the arrival of the English in 1733, the Uchee, one of the tribes of the Creek Nation, occupied the territory that would become Jenkins County. This territory was part of the first tract of land ceded to General James Edward Oglethorpe by treaty with the Creeks in 1733. By 1750, the Uchee had left

the area, and white settlement began.

Many of the roads were paved in the 1990s when the population began spreading.

## **1.8 Financial and Legal Responsibility**

U.S. 25 and State Highways 17, 23 and 121 are under the jurisdiction of the GDOT. However, GDOT assumes no financial or legal responsibility as a result of these roads being designated a Scenic Byway. Further, GDOT assumes no responsibility for any additional maintenance or special design requirements.

## **1.9 Federal Requirements Regarding Outdoor Advertising**

New billboard construction is prohibited along designated scenic byways that are interstate, National Highway System, or federal-aid primary highways. Existing billboards may remain and continue to be maintained along designated scenic byways. On-premise signs are unaffected by scenic byway designation.

## 2.0 Introduction



Intrinsic qualities define a scenic byway. Stakeholders developed a list of intrinsic qualities that were selected because they represented Jenkins County's unique qualities. The strength of this list is that it was generated by people who live and work along the Scenic Byway. The determining factors in terms of what to include were based on the following guiding principles:

- Areas of interest must possess one or more intrinsic qualities.
- Destinations must have something of interest to see or do once the traveler gets there.
- Destinations must appeal to multiple audiences.

## 2.1 Scenic Qualities

Scenic qualities are found throughout the rural parts of the byway route. Along SR 23 and Perkins Green Fork Road, the scenic character of the byway is evident by the pastoral beauty of woodlands, pasture lands and historic farmhouses around every curve. Visitors are particularly attracted to a natural outcropping of hanging rocks located on Hanging Rocks Plantation along SR 23. A ledge of rock along a hillside that rises some 20 to 25 feet above the earth makes a picturesque scene, overlooking a beautiful pond. Underneath, the rock is clay that has eroded over a period of time, leaving the rock extended into space.



Habersham Church Road intersects with Perkins Green Fork Road at Green Fork Church. This area offers the traveler varied and distinctive views. Most of the landscape is either forest or pastureland, offering aesthetically pleasing qualities that contribute to the road's rural character. The

rural corridor is framed with pristine woods and natural creeks.

Just west, along Big Buckhead Church, Old Louisville and North Herndon Roads, is evidence of the rich farm activity that has shaped the region. Historic farm sites, mills, historic homes, quaint churches and communities can all be seen as the route winds through areas that have had very little commercial activity to disturb the scenic qualities of the region. The narrow roadways travel through tunnels of trees along some stretches and through wide-open farmland along others.

## 2.2 Historic Qualities

### 2.2.1 Millen Historic District

Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Millen’s Historic district extends over portions of six blocks along Cotton Avenue, stretching north over sections of North Gray Street and North Daniel Street. Like many smaller Georgia towns, its compact and linear nature is defined by the railroad line running in an east-west direction along Cotton Avenue.

The character of Cotton Avenue is typical of a small railroad town commercial area. Railroad components are still very much in evidence: two railroad depots, tracks, a concrete water tower and constant train traffic. The name “Cotton

Avenue” preserves the importance of agriculture to the early economy.

Most of the historic buildings were constructed between 1880 and 1930 as commercial one and two-story buildings. Of special interest are the 1929 water tower built by the railroad on the corner of Cotton Avenue and Hendrix Street and the Jenkins County Courthouse built in 1910 in the Classical Revival style along Winthrope Avenue.



The City of Millen was originally called Seventy-Nine or Old 79 because of its distance from Savannah. In 1851, the Waynesboro and Augusta Railroad was extended to meet the line laid through Millen in 1839 by the Central Railroad and Banking Company, making Millen an important junction and major trade post on one of the earliest railroad systems in the United States. Much of the city’s heritage evolved from the railroad, and Millen is still an important railroad junction in Georgia.

Two major depots located along Cotton Avenue indicate the significance of rail transportation in Millen. Both built in the early 1900's, one is currently in use by Norfolk Southern and the other houses the Millen-Jenkins County Museum and Chamber of Commerce. The museum includes local histories, Native American artifacts, tools, and cotton mill equipment.

Railroad activity continues to be important in Millen. The terminal serves as a switch station where trains are made up. As many as fifteen trains pass through Millen daily and train watching is one of Millen's main tourist draws.

Though a small rural county with a population under 9,000, Jenkins County has approximately 60 churches. The establishment of these churches reflects the development of population centers and the importance religion has had and continues to have in the county. Many of the more historically important churches are located along the proposed Scenic Byway route. Two of the oldest are located in Millen, a few blocks from the byway. Millen Baptist Church, the largest church in the county, located on Gray Street, was built in the 1904. Millen Methodist, also along Gray Street, was built in the 1880's.

### 2.2.2 *Rural Sections*

It is believed that the Southern Algonquin or the Shawnee were the first tribes to inhabit the area along this stretch of route by virtue of the numerous artifacts and signs found by

historians. Prior to the arrival of the English in 1733, the Uchee or Yuchi, one of the tribes of the Creek Nation, occupied the territory and was part of the first tract of land ceded to General James Oglethorpe by treaty with the Creeks in 1733.

The byway route passes historic landscapes in small and scattered communities. The first of these communities is Green Fork which derives its name from Green Fork Baptist Church, the focal point of the community. Although a more recent structure is in place, the church was organized on this same hill on December 17, 1848. The cemetery is large and a delight to genealogists. Many of the grave markers date to pre-civil war days.

Two miles down Habersham Church Road is Habersham United Methodist Church. The original history of the church dates to the eighteenth century or early nineteenth century. The early church was on a different site, known as Olive Branch Church, and located a few miles east of the present site. The present building was dedicated in 1953. The old cemetery at Habersham is a treasure trove for the genealogist.

Habersham, a once thriving community, was connected to the town of Perkins by a railroad built in the late 1870's. From the Habersham area, timber was hauled by the Perkins Lumber Company to the Perkins Mills and from there was shipped to the Perkins Manufacturing Company in Augusta. The community was once the home of a lumber company, commissary, school, and democratic club. Congressman Rufus E. Lester who served in Congress from the 1<sup>st</sup> District



for nine terms from 1889 to 1906, and was mayor of the city of Savannah from 1883 to 1889, was from this area.

Four miles west from Green Fork along Perkins Green Fork Road is Perkins, a historic village of 150 people, which still maintains a Victorian flavor with the old general store built in 1893 still in operation. Nearby, an old depot still stands at the corner of Magnolia Church Road and Perkins Green Ford Road. One block down at the corner of Bargeron Grove Road and John Thorn Road is a 1900 dairy barn with tile constructed silos, as well as an old milk house and another large storage building.



Settlement in this area predated the Revolutionary War. The post office there has been in operation for about 130 years. The community became known as Perkins Junction in 1867 when a railroad was built by the Perkins Lumber Company

into Screven County. Remnants of this railroad are still seen through the countryside.

At the end of Magnolia Church Road was Perkins Junction Church, built in 1868 and mainly used as a Sunday school. At that time Big Buckhead Church served as the primary house of worship for the people of Perkins. In 1883 Magnolia Church was organized and built on this site. The Gothic Revival building burned in 1911 and the present building was constructed at that time.

Two miles south of Perkins on U.S. Highway 25 is Magnolia Springs State Park, home to the National Register of Historic Places- listed Camp Lawton, which was constructed as a massive prisoner of war camp occupying 40 acres and designed to hold 40,000 prisoners. The Camp was built in September, 1864 to relieve congestion at Camp Sumter in Andersonville and to remove the possibility of Sherman's army freeing prisoners there. Constructed by a force of 300 prisoners and 500 slaves, the Camp was a log stockade with guard towers on the walls, and a ditch dug within the walls for a deadline. On high ground surrounding the prison, three earthen forts were excavated and armed with cannon to prevent escape and guard from attacks. Magnolia Springs was chosen for the site because of the fresh water supply from a natural spring, abundance of timber to construct the stockade and close proximity to the Central of Georgia Railroad. If the Camp were threatened, prisoners could be loaded on trains and moved north to Augusta or south to Savannah. The first prisoners began arriving in October, 1864. By November of that year, 10,299 were held. In the



late months of 1864, the camp was abandoned in advance of Sherman’s March to the Sea and prisoners were sent to other camps, including temporary ones in Blackshear and Thomasville. The earthworks, two large timbers recovered from the stream, and historical markers both inside and outside the park tell the story of the Camp. The Fort Lawton Historic Trail begins at the Camp Lawton Interpretive Kiosk across from the park office.

Three miles of scenic woodlands and creeks lead to Carswell Grove Baptist Church and Cemetery and Big Buckhead Church and Cemetery, two regionally significant historic properties. Carswell Grove Baptist Church and Cemetery, organized in 1867 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, grew out of Big Buckhead Baptist Church approximately two hundred yards away. The church was organized by African Americans after the Civil War in 1867. In 1919 the church was destroyed by fire. The rebuilt church is a unique example of Late Gothic Revival architecture and, since the Civil War, has been an important place for the African American community in Burke and Jenkins Counties.

Big Buckhead Church is the third oldest Baptist church in Georgia. It was organized in 1774 before the American Revolution by Matthew Moore, a Baptist minister, whose loyalist sympathies led him to leave with the British. The present Greek Revival structure was completed and dedicated in 1855. This is the fourth church to stand on or near this same site.

Numerous important events have occurred at Buckhead Church. Here the Hephzibah Baptist Association was organized in 1794. The Georgia Baptist Convention met there in 1831 for its annual session and adopted a resolution to establish a classical and theological school known today as Mercer University. Bishop Frances Asbury, first American Bishop of the Methodist Church, preached at Buckhead on January 23, 1793. The area around Big Buckhead Church is part of the designated Georgia Civil War Heritage Trail.



Big Buckhead Church was also the scene of fierce cavalry action resulting in a Confederate victory during Sherman’s March to the Sea. General Kilpatrick crossed a nearby bridge, burned it, and defended the other side. General Wheeler moved farther up the creek to cross and pushed the Federals back toward Louisville, where General Kilpatrick came under the protection of the Left Wing.

The establishment of these churches reflects the development of population centers and the importance religion has had and continues to have in Jenkins County.

Fair Haven Church, dating from the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is located along North Herndon Road. The present building was erected in 1846 and is the third building to house the Fair Haven congregation. When Sherman made his infamous “March to the Sea,” the only thing that interested his soldiers was a drop leaf table which they took



with them. They later changed their minds and left it at the home of a nearby tenant.

### 2.3 Cultural Qualities

There are number of annual festivals that provide visitors to Jenkins County a unique cultural experience. These include:

- ‘Fair on the Square’ (First Saturday in October): Held on the Court House square in downtown Millen. Features crafts, food, games, rides, and entertainment.
- ‘Harvest of Fun’ (October 31) Held on Cotton Avenue in downtown Millen. Community supported festival providing free games and candy for children provided by local businesses, civic groups, churches and individuals. Also includes a Halloween costume contest.
- ‘Christmas in Millen’ (First Friday in December) Held on Cotton Avenue in downtown Millen. Features parade and Santa Claus for children, entertainment, and concerts by the high school band and choral groups.
- ‘Arts and Crafts Festival’ (April): Held at Magnolia Springs State Park. Major regional arts & crafts festival.
- ‘Children’s Fishing Rodeo’ (June): Held at Magnolia Springs State Park. Fun for the whole family with children learning fishing techniques.
- ‘8K Patriotic Celebration’ (July) Features patriotic music by local performers, food, and fire works show.

## 2.4 Recreational Qualities

Along the heart of the byway lies one of Georgia’s most beautiful state parks. Magnolia Springs State Park is known for its crystal clear springs that flow at an estimated nine million gallons of water per day and the beautiful boardwalk which spans the cool water along the natural spring interpretive boardwalk. During warmer months, visitors may watch for alligators, turtles and other wildlife near the springs. The 1,070-acre park attracts over 100,000 visitors annually and includes playgrounds, swimming pool, a lake, picnic shelters, campsites, cottages, and meeting rooms. The park also features a number of hiking/biking trails. The main trail begins across from Picnic Shelter 8 and runs approximately five miles. It passes a sink hole section, heavily wooded areas and comes to the observation deck behind the lake. The trail then follows the edge of the lake and ends near the campground. Private boats are permitted and boat/canoes rentals are available.

The Bo Ginn Aquarium is located across the stream from the main park area. A foot-bridge offers easy access to picnickers and other park visitors. It features a variety of fish (catfish, bass, sunfish) and reptiles (turtles, alligators), some native to the freshwater



streams, lakes, and swamps of Georgia. Fishing rodeos are available for youth groups. Aquarium tours and interpretive programs are also available.

The Big Dukes Pond Heritage Preserve (BDPHP) is located along Old Louisville Road. It is a Carolina Bay wetland found along the Atlantic Coastal Plain that has an oval shape and a raised sand rim along the south and east margins. Duke’s Pond provides habitat for one of Georgia’s largest breeding colonies of wood stork, a federally listed rare species. It also provides a habitat for the rare black-crowned night-heron and yellow-crowned night-heron, as well as the state-protected spotted turtle. Rare or uncommon plant species can also be found on the site. BDPHP covers about 1,200 acres. It was declared a Heritage Preserve by Governor Sonny Purdue in January 2004, ensuring that the property will be conserved for wildlife habitat management, scientific research, environmental education, historic preservation, hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. An informational kiosk at the site provides additional information.

Just south of Millen is the Ogeechee River. For those who enjoy the outdoors, it can be a never-ending source of

pleasure. It begins as two small streams between Siloam and Union Point in Eastern Greene County. The river then flows 245 miles through east Central Georgia until it empties into the Atlantic Ocean north of Ossabaw Island. The Ogeechee is one of Georgia's few remaining free flowing streams. This blackwater river remains in its natural, primitive state. It is popular with canoeists exploring the river and its swamps; with fishermen seeking the red breast, suckers, shad, rock crappie, bass, shellcracker and catfish; with ministers baptizing believers; and with children enjoying natural swimming holes. The swamps and bottomland hardwoods adjoining the river provide food, water, and shelter to a rich variety of birds and wildlife and trees and other vegetation, including rare plants. Water snakes and alligators are quite common. The river runs parallel to SR 17 as it heads back to Millen.





#### 4.0 Land Use and Development



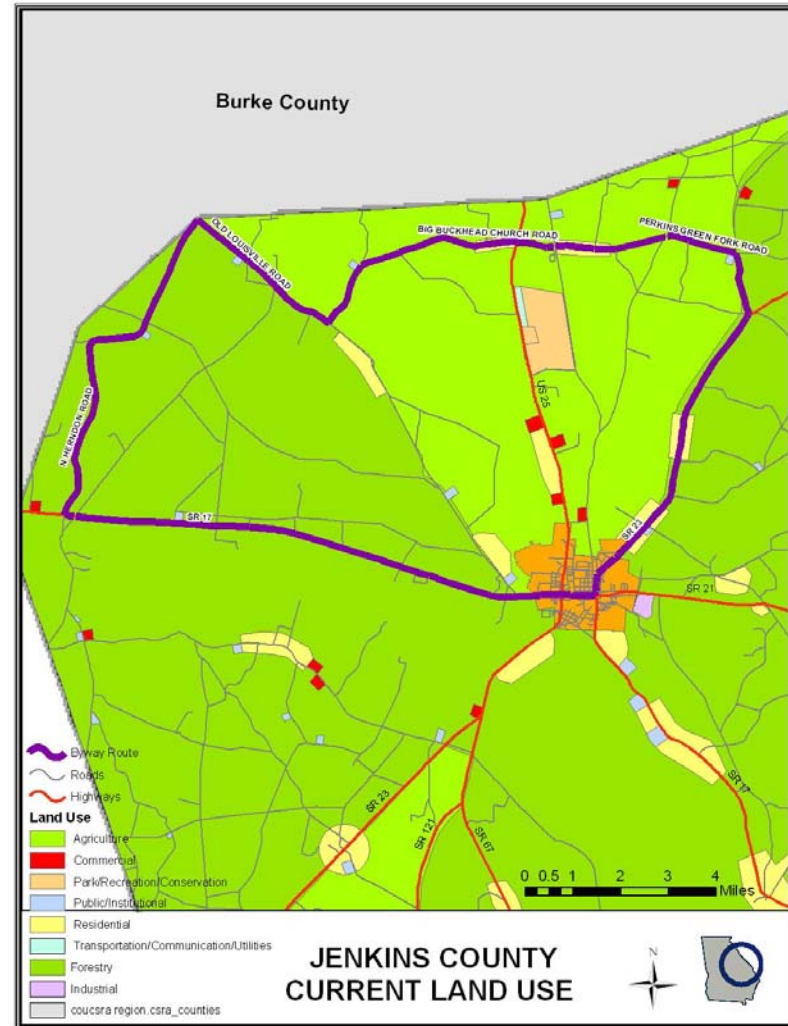
#### Goal

- Encourage land use patterns that enhance the intrinsic qualities of the byway route.

Land use along the byway route in unincorporated Jenkins County is primarily agricultural and forestry. Within the City of Millen, land use is mixed residential and commercial.

There is currently no zoning ordinance in the unincorporated area. The County does have a mobile home ordinance in place regulating the age and condition of mobile homes. The City of Millen has an adopted zoning ordinance which identifies various residential, commercial, and industrial use

districts. The area along the byway is zoned residential and commercial.



In the absence of formal land use regulations, the Scenic Byway Committee will have to protect and preserve view corridors through an extensive public education campaign. Misplaced or insensitive structures can jeopardize the entire corridor experience.

The lack of zoning in the unincorporated area was not identified as an issue during the public consultation phase. The byway route is located along some of the most rural parts of Jenkins County, where development potential is very limited. The County is not experiencing growth and hence is not under any land use pressures. The Millen-Jenkins County Comprehensive Plan (2004) does not identify any growth areas along the byway route. Furthermore, tracts along the byway are owned primarily by a small number of large land owners and timber companies, making spot development highly unlikely. Lastly, Jenkins County does not provide water and sewer infrastructure, which severely limits the introduction of intense land uses.

#### 4.0.1 Billboards

The County does not have of billboard regulations. Due to low traffic along State Routes 17 and 23, there is little demand for advertising. Should the County adopt zoning or sign ordinances in the future, provisions protecting the byway route should be incorporated.



#### 4.0.2 New Development

Residents generally agree that development should occur along the byway. However, they also want to see development objectives contribute to the byway's enhancement. The Scenic Byway Committee should therefore encourage more clustered and context sensitive designed development.

Where a potential development may impact the byway, Millen and Jenkins County should review the project jointly.

#### 4.0.3 Improvements to Unsightly Areas

No areas of concentrated blight along the byway route were identified. Entrance gateways, however, are in need of adequate signage, landscaping and other beautification.



## 4.1 Transportation

### Goal

- Ensure safety for movement along the byway.

#### 4.1.1 Existing Roadway Conditions

The length of the byway route is approximately 30 miles. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) ranges from less than 500 along the county roadways (Perkins Green Fork Road, Big Buckhead Church Road, Old Louisville Road and North Herndon Road) to 900 along SR 23 and 2,100 along SR 17. A review of GDOT traffic counts since 2002 indicates no substantial change in AADT. The highest recorded daily traffic count in the vicinity of the byway route is along SR21 in Millen (5,000+ AADT) although byway travelers do not use the traffic-intensive portion of this roadway.

A visual survey conducted by the CSRA RDC to examine the condition of the byway roadways did not yield any quality issues.

All byway roadways are operating at well below capacity and provide a Level of Service of A, the least congested rating. According to the GDOT district office in Tennille, there are no major safety issues along the byway route and no conflicts among different roadway users (i.e. vehicles and trucks). None of the byway roadways are major truck traffic corridors. The byway committee used low traffic as a

criterion in selecting the byway route. A scenic byway encourages visitors to search for the historic or scenic points of interest along the byway and is incompatible with heavy traffic.



According to the FY2005-FY2008 State Transportation Improvement Plan, the only major GDOT project in proximity to the byway is the widening of U.S. 25. This project is not expected to alter traffic or road conditions along byway routes.

Formal accident records for city and county roadways are maintained by Millen and Jenkins County. Accident records for State Highways are maintained by the Georgia State Patrol. Based on discussions with these agencies, there are no location-specific problems where high numbers of accidents occur.

Sufficient parking capacity exists to accommodate an increase in traffic. Parking facilities along the byway in

Millen are currently underutilized. In the rural area, points of interest along the byway include parking facilities due to their active use. Future maintenance of existing parking should be a priority. Given the number of scenic vistas along the byway, permitting travelers to take a moment and enjoy the scenery is key to the byway's success.

Much of the byway is within a beautiful area with scenic vistas and low vehicular traffic, rendering the byway route desirable for recreational cyclists. SR 17 is identified as State Bicycle Route 85 on the Georgia Bicycle Route Network. SR 17 is also listed as a regional bicycle route in the CSRA Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan.

#### 4.1.2 Support Facilities

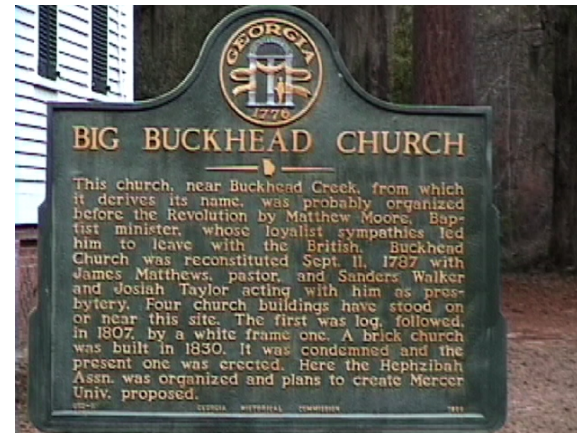
The Historic Chamber of Commerce Depot in Millen offers visitors information on tourism activities and public restroom facilities. Public restroom facilities are also available at throughout Millen, in areas such as the Jenkins County Library, Millen City Hall and the Jenkins County Courthouse.

There is currently a lack of facilities along the rural areas of the byway route. Since travelers are expected to drive or bicycle a 30-mile route, public restrooms need to be made available at key locations. These include: Duke's Pond and Carswell Grove Baptist Church, Big Buckhead Church and Fairhaven Church. Restrooms should be similar to those found at welcome centers and include landscaping features.

#### 4.1.3 Interpretive Signage

The common theme linking the scenic byway is its scenery, history and recreation. From original inhabitants, the Civil War, through its rail and agricultural past, the byway presents a compelling story.

Interpretive signage is intended to educate travelers, to improve their understanding and appreciation of the resources and to enhance their travel experiences.



There are several sources of interpretive information about the Byway's landscapes that provide visitors background to help them understand what they are seeing. The most complete is the Museum in Millen, which contains extensive exhibits on many aspects of county life and history. In addition, DNR has placed several historic markers that present information about the area's history.

The Byway Committee researched locations for interpretive signage highlighting historic church and Civil War themes. The following locations were listed as in need of interpretive signage:

- Millen Depot
- Perkins Community
- Duke’s Pond
- Carswell Grove Baptist Church
- Big Buckhead Church
- Fairhaven Church

Descriptive information should be conveyed with both text and graphics such as sketches and photographs.

Magnolia Springs State Park already contains interpretive markers, tracing the history of Camp Lawton. Proposed interpretive signage should tie in to existing signage at Magnolia Springs to ensure a consistent story of Jenkins County is told. Since history is the primary theme of the byway, historic markers will list sites in a manner that will tell a story of the area’s heritage and culture, as well educating visitors about the ways to help preserve the byway.

*4.1.4 Directional Signage*

Directional guidance is needed to help direct visitors to a number of sites along the byway. While signs at some sites, such as Magnolia Springs State Park, are clear, in other cases they are not. Guidance signs should be placed at all

intersections along the byway and include the historic sites listed in the previous section.

Byway portal signs are needed at the entrances to the scenic byway along Cotton Avenue and the intersection of US 25 and SR 17 to present an overall map of the byway showing the location of key sites.



*4.1.5 Roadway Maintenance*

SR 17, 21 and 23 are State Highways under the jurisdiction of GDOT.

Maintenance along the remaining segments of the byway is provided by Jenkins County and Millen. Jenkins County is responsible for approving and allocating an annual budget for the county’s overall maintenance needs, which includes

portions of the byway. Most of the maintenance activity along the byway involves pothole patching and repaving.

Byway committee members stressed the need to maintain the byway route liter-free. The committee should examine implementing an ‘Adopt-a-Byway Program’. Modeled after the Adopt-a-Highway program, Adopt-a-Byway would encourage local adoption of important byway sites. The program expands local awareness of the byway and its historic assets as well as creates a stronger sense of local ownership for these sites and reduces maintenance costs.

#### *4.1.6 Accessibility*

Activities along the byway should cater to every level of physical ability. All local and state land management agencies are mandated by law to provide recreational activities for a wide range of user abilities.

A survey of the byway route indicates that that most areas are accessible. In some areas, however, the Byway passes through back country that may not be well suited to visitors who are physically challenged. This is particularly evident in areas with unpaved parking facilities. Effort is needed to ensure access projects permit people with disabilities to enjoy the byway. Target areas should include major attractions along the byway.

A current Transportation Enhancement streetscape project in Millen is remedying access issues in the historic district. At

the completion of the streetscape, visitors with disabilities will have complete access to all shops along Cotton Avenue.

## **4.2 Tourism, Economic Development and Marketing**

### **Goals**

- Increase the number of visitors along the byway.
- Promote economic development and tourism management.

Jenkins County remains one of Georgia’s best-kept secrets. The County is not known outside the state or even in it’s own region and the corridor has little visibility as a tourist destination. A coordinated and focused effort between partners with a stake in the corridor can increase the effectiveness of marketing efforts.

The strength of the byway lies in strong and creative development of tourism assets to further economic development consistent with the rural integrity of the route. It is also important to establish an atmosphere that is attractive to tourism related-businesses along the byway.

As noted on the intrinsic qualities section, Jenkins County contains an abundance of tourism assets and potential assets in heritage and recreational tourism. Development of historic tourism assets helps enhance and promote preservation efforts. Buildings and sites that are of interest to visitors and that generate income are more likely to be preserved than

sites that lay empty. Attention focused on historic sites will stimulate a desire to preserve the past.

Tourism is economic development. It brings money into a community directly through the dollars spent by the visitors and by the jobs created. Visitors need restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, and campsites to enjoy the traveling experience. The byway must be seen as an economic engine and supported as such.

Jenkins County has developed printed guides of historic areas that treat visitors to a glimpse into county's past. The guides move visitors through the earliest days of the communities up through the turn of the last century. The scenic byway route should be incorporated in all future promotional materials

#### 4.2.1 Marketing

The byway benefits from being near US 25, the location of Magnolia Springs State Park and a popular route to Augusta, Savannah and Statesboro. The growth of regional population will increase awareness of Jenkins County throughout the region. Likewise, the number of people likely to visit Georgia will continue to increase. This puts the scenic byway in a position to take advantage of projected growth in the state tourism industry.

Several tourist markets were identified by the committee. These include residents along the byway, visitors to the area, and heritage tourists. With proper and coordinated marketing,

all tourist markets can be reached. Future programs need to be tailored-made to these different segments.

Close coordination with local community groups is critical to developing an effective byway marketing program. The Jenkins County Scenic Byway Committee will work closely and coordinate with the Jenkins County Chamber of Commerce and Millen Better Hometown to develop strategies aimed at all tourist segments. In particular, the Committee will provide local organizations and businesses with information and resources about the byway to be incorporated in their promotional materials. These will include distributing byway brochures to local businesses around town. The Committee will also partner with various outdoor activities groups, including cycling clubs, hiking clubs, motorcycle clubs, etc., to promote events along the byway.



The committee will also work with GECD on a variety of projects aimed to promote the byway to out-of state tourists,



including developing a special scenic byway segment on “Georgia On My Mind” publications and travel videos.



Other marketing activities will include contacting media outlets to promote the byway. The Committee will create press releases for local newspapers and radio stations, develop a regular newspaper series on the resources and opportunities available along the byway, and generate familiarization tours for journalists and travel writers to highlight the byway. Examples include Turner South’s *Southern Living* television series, which offers small communities exposure on a regional level and The American Automobile Association’s *Travel Magazine*.

Magnolia Springs State Park attracts approximately 100,000 visitors annually. The Byway Committee should examine joint-marketing efforts with Magnolia Springs.

### 4.3 Preservation and Enhancement Strategies

#### 4.3.1 Scenic Qualities

- Promote cluster development in proximity to Millen to discourage sprawling housing developments.
- Encourage and promote best management timber practices to maintain an appropriate buffer along the byway.
- Work with GDOT to coordinate highway maintenance with scenic byway goals and needs.
- Use landscaping to buffer less scenic areas along the byway route.

#### 4.3.2 Historic Qualities

- Assist local historic groups with preservation efforts.
- Utilize improvement facade grants and restoration programs for historic structures along the byway.
- Enhance Millen entrances.
- Educate owners of historic properties through workshops on potential tax incentives.
- Restore important historic buildings and sites located within the historic district of Millen.
- Place appropriate markers and signage highlighting historic areas.

#### 4.3.3 Recreational Qualities



- Promote and develop bicycling trails along the byway.
- Coordinate the development of new county and city recreational facilities with the byway.

#### 4.4 Implementation

##### Goal

- Implement the Corridor Management Plan.

##### 4.4.1 Scenic Byway Committee

The Byway Committee, composed of members of the Jenkins County Chamber of Commerce, Millen Better Hometown and volunteer residents, is charged with implementing the CMP.

The Byway Committee will serve to establish byway goals and strategies, and serve as coordinator with local, state and federal bodies.

Specific responsibilities of the Committee will include:

1. Implementing the CMP.
2. Maintaining public involvement
3. Serving as clearinghouse and public education provider for all corridor related initiatives.

4. Advising local governments on corridor issues.
5. Administering grants and assisting local governments in administering state and federal grants.
6. Working with other bodies to include appropriate scenic byway presence.
7. Monitoring the byway corridor for development changes and improvement projects.
8. Submitting reports as requested to the Georgia Scenic Byway Coordinator.

##### 4.4.2 Other Agencies and Stakeholders

Local Jurisdictions: As the largest local governing entity along the byway, Jenkins County has the broadest responsibility for management of land uses adjacent to the byway. The application of existing policies consistent the goals and strategies of the byway plan should be supported.

As the primary service center for byway travelers, the City of Millen has the ability to define and create conditions conducive to lengthier byway stays. It is expected that Millen will focus on the necessary beautification and enhancement projects needed to attract travelers.

State Agencies: Portions of the byway along state highways are administered and managed by GDOT. As such, any improvements to the roadway such as widening, construction of turn lanes, roadway re-alignment, and speed limits is beyond local government control. GDOT will provide technical assistance on matters such as road construction

standards, safety, parking facilities, and alternative transportation modes.

DCA provides comprehensive planning, technical and research assistance to local governments. DCA, along with the University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design, have supported projects in Jenkins County, and may be asked to assist in future planning efforts.

Regional Agencies: The CSRA Regional Development Center assisted the Committee with planning support. It is expected that the Byway Committee will continue to draw upon the resources and technical expertise of the RDC to implement the CMP.

Local Businesses: Local businesses are important to the implementation of the byway plan in providing needed traveler services such as motels, restaurants, and shops. Businesses can support byway efforts by coordinating future plans with the Byway Committee.

Local businesses also include larger companies that operate along the byway such as logging companies and Georgia Power. Major businesses will be expected to advise the Byway Committee of significant changes that may affect the byway's intrinsic qualities.

#### 4.4.3 Funding

The Georgia Scenic Byways Funding Guidebook contains information on dozens of state, federal and private funding sources. The two that are the most applicable for the Millen-Jenkins County Scenic Byway are National Scenic Byway and Transportation Enhancement funds.

*National Scenic Byways* funds are intended to support projects to improve the quality of visitors' experience along scenic byways, attracting more visitors or enticing them to stay longer. Proposed project funding under this grant program includes up to 80% of some tourism facilities, pull off and shoulder improvements, recreational area access enhancements, easements, and marketing.

*Transportation Enhancements* funds support transportation-related activities that are designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of the Nation's intermodal transportation system. Eligible activities under this program include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, acquisitions of scenic and historic easements and sites, tourist and welcome centers, landscaping and beautification, historic preservation, control and removal of outdoor advertising, and archeological planning and research.

Ranges of private funding sources are also available for scenic byway-related construction, facilities, and educational programs. While smaller in sum than federal and state funds, private funds do not usually require matching funds and can

serve as the local match for a National Scenic Byways or Transportation Enhancement grant.

#### 4.4.4 Community Support

Throughout the extensive public consultation process, the Byway Committee has endeavored to maintain a community-driven planning process. The Byway Committee will continue to expand this process by implementing an ongoing community participation program and promoting partnerships between community organizations, businesses, and local governments, as well as coordinating with various media outlets.

#### 4.4.5 Byway Evaluation

The implementation of the Millen-Jenkins County Scenic Byway project requires a long-range commitment. As such, the Byway Committee will periodically evaluate the byway to determine whether the goals and strategies have been successful. The Byway Committee intends to survey local residents and visitors to determine satisfaction levels with planning, services and attractions.

#### 4.4.6 Property Rights

The Byway Committee and area residents expressed the desire that that designation of the byway must occur only

with the protection of property rights. Any implementation options identified in this plan should be considered only following a review to determine the potential effects to property rights.



### 4.5 Work Program

Central to the byway implementation plan is the work program to be carried out. The following table includes specific project and planning tasks the Byway Committee intends to implement.

**CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
<u>Enhancements</u>				
Scenic Byway signs	(2006-2007)	GDOT	N/A	GDOT
Byway website	(2006-2007)	Scenic Byway Committee	\$3,000	Scenic Byway Committee
Gateway signs	(2006-2008)	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	Transportation Enhancements / County
Interpretive signs	(2006-2010)	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	Transportation Enhancements/ DNR/Local/Private
Streetscape enhancements – Cotton and Winthrop Ave.	(2006-2015)	City of Millen	N/A	Transportation Enhancements / Millen
Millen Theatre restoration	(2006-2010)	Scenic Byway Committee	\$1,500,000	Federal/Local/Private
Train viewing platform	(2006-2008)	Scenic Byway Committee	\$50,000	State/Local/Private
Restrooms	(2006-2010)	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	Transportation Enhancements/ Local/Private
Pave parking lots near major points of interest	(2006-2015)	Jenkins County/Private	N/A	Local/Private
<u>Planning &amp; Coordination</u>				
Incorporate scenic byway provision in future planning and regulatory documents	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A
Work with State Bicycle Coordinator during Bicycle Route Network updates	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A
Incorporate scenic byway in all new county tourism materials	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A
Coordinate tourism strategies with local and state agencies	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A
Pursue all applicable funding opportunities	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A
Maintain, evaluate and amend CMP as needed	Ongoing	Scenic Byway Committee	N/A	N/A