

Florida Scenic Highways Program Handbook

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this handbook is to establish the criteria and procedures governing the designation of public roads by the Florida Department of Transportation (Department) as Scenic Highways, and to strengthen the scenic highways program within the State of Florida in accordance with Section 335.093, Florida Statutes. This scenic highways program shall be known as the Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) and shall be comprised of state designated scenic highways. A Florida Scenic Highway may be nominated at the federal level as a nationally designated scenic byway (e.g., National Scenic Byway or All-American Road). Public roads designated by the Department as Scenic Highways are so designated to preserve, maintain, protect, and enhance Florida's intrinsic qualities. Intrinsic qualities include cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational, natural, and scenic resources, to be experienced and enjoyed by all citizens and visitors. Scenic Highways provide vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access, where feasible, and encourage tourism. Enhancements to Scenic Highways improve the quality of life of Florida communities and promote economic opportunity.

II. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Common terms used in this program are as follows:

Annual Work Plan – A document that specifies the projects, activities, and/or programs a byway organization will undertake for the upcoming calendar year, along with a timeframe for completion, responsible party, and funding source (if applicable).

Byway - A public road or highway designated as a “scenic highway” by the Secretary. These roadways have been designated for their unique cultural, historic, archeological, recreational, natural, or scenic intrinsic qualities.

Byway Inventory - A survey of the intrinsic qualities and resources within the byway corridor. It should contain a series of photographs and descriptions of the resources that contribute to the byway's intrinsic qualities, and maps that illustrate the location of these sites and views. The inventory should focus on the intrinsic qualities known to exist along the byway, and focus on recording and describing the resources and features that relate to those qualities and support the byway's story.

Byway Management Plan – A multi-year plan to be completed by all byway organizations in Florida that describes actions to be taken by the byway organization which will result in benefits to the Scenic Highway community, a high-quality visitor experience, and compliance with FSHP requirements.

Byway Organization - A group of individuals and organization representatives committed to implementing the plans of a designated Scenic Highway and meeting the requirements of the FSHP.

Byway Story – The intentional, coordinated message that the byway conveys to visitors about the resources and qualities that it promotes. This message may be interpreted through written materials, signs, information kiosks, guides, videos and other media. The byway story is conveyed through the direct experiences that the visitor encounters along the trip, and refers to the inherently interesting and valuable tale that roadways can tell about the history, culture and environment of the surrounding landscape and communities.

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Department - Florida Department of Transportation.

District - One of the seven Florida Department of Transportation Districts within the State and Turnpike Operations.

District Scenic Highway Coordinator/s (DSHC) - A person who has been appointed by the District Secretary to implement the Florida Scenic Highways Program within the District.

Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) - Establishes and implements the process and criteria to have a public road designated as a Florida Scenic Highway. Participation in the FSHP is entirely voluntary and grassroots in nature.

Implementation Phase - The second phase of the designation process. Following designation, a Byway Organization implements the actions agreed upon by the community, and meets the annual requirements of the FSHP.

National Scenic Byway - A scenic highway which is recognized by the federal government as satisfying the criteria for the National Scenic Byways Program.

State Scenic Highway Coordinator (Coordinator) – Person appointed by the Secretary to implement the Florida Scenic Highways Program statewide. The Coordinator will be assisted by all of the District Scenic Highway Coordinators in this role.

Secretary - The Secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation.

Stakeholders - Individuals, businesses, organizations, agencies, and government entities who support the designation of a scenic highway, who value the byway enough to commit resources, who may benefit from the success of the byway, and who have contacts and can influence others in the community.

State Highway System - As defined in Section 334.03(24), Florida Statutes.

Year-One Work Plan – A document required in Step 2 of the Eligibility Phase that specifies the projects, activities, and/or programs a byway organization will undertake in the first year after designation, along with timeframes for completion, responsible parties, and funding sources (if applicable).

III. LIMITATIONS

Notwithstanding any act of Congress or any federal rule or regulation to the contrary, nothing contained in these Requirements and no official action taken pursuant to the FSHP by federal, state, or local governments shall be deemed the establishment of a public park, recreation area, wildlife or waterfowl refuge, or any historic site of national, state, or local significance. The primary purpose of the State Highway System and public roads, and all associated rights-of-way, is transportation. The designation itself does not constitute any of the aforementioned land uses protected under 49 U.S.C. 303.

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IV. NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

Public roads designated as Florida Scenic Highways may, upon recommendation by the Scenic Highways Advisory Committee, be nominated by the Secretary for designation and inclusion in the National Scenic Byways Program as a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road.

V. SCENIC HIGHWAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SHAC)

A. Members of the SHAC representing Florida agencies and organizations shall be authorized by the Secretary. Membership is comprised of the following state agency representatives in addition to others appointed by the Coordinator:

- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of State
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Visit Florida

The State Scenic Highway Coordinator will serve as Committee chair and provide staff support. The Committee shall meet as needed, but not less than once a year.

B. Duties of the SHAC include:

1. Review and evaluate scenic highway documents to identify new or expanded opportunities available through (or in cooperation with) the agencies and/or organizations represented on the SHAC. The purpose is to make the proposed scenic highway designations, management plans, and/or work plans more effective and mutually beneficial to the byway organization and SHAC agencies and organizations.
2. Review and evaluate scenic highway documents to identify, avoid or eliminate conflicts with existing programs.
3. Recommend to the Secretary, public roads appropriate for designation as scenic highways at the state and national level.
4. Periodically review all state and nationally designated scenic highways and make recommendations to the Secretary for their continuation as scenic highways.
5. Periodically review and, if necessary, recommend revision of scenic highway criteria for the eligibility and implementation of the Florida Scenic Highways Program.
6. Maintain a list of Florida Scenic Highways.
7. Coordinate with other Department offices and other state and federal agencies to help promote scenic highways and integrate programs.

VI. FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS ELIGIBILITY PHASE

Any person or group interested in pursuing a new designation or corridor extension must contact the appropriate District Scenic Highway Coordinator (DSHC) to initiate the Eligibility Phase.

The Eligibility Phase consists of the following three primary steps:

A. Step 1: Develop and submit a Letter of Intent

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1. Any person or group seeking designation as a Florida Scenic Highway or the extension of an existing corridor, must contact the District Scenic Highway Coordinator (DSHC) and provide a Letter of Intent stating the applicant's desire to pursue designation or extension.
2. The LOI shall contain, at minimum, the following components:
 - a. A map and detailed description of the precise route of the proposed scenic highway. The map should be of sufficient scale and quality to allow the DSHC to follow the route based on the description.
 - b. A compelling explanation as to why scenic highway designation is being considered for the route. This explanation should avoid broad generalizations such as "economic development" or "resource protection," and describe specific ways in which this program is a good fit for the communities along the route.
 - c. A detailed description of who will be involved in managing the designation process and what financial and human resources are available for the Implementation Phase. The letter must demonstrate that financial and human resources will be made available from diverse sources including, but not limited to, residents, the business community, local government(s), and local tourism agencies.
 - d. For corridor extensions, the applicant must also provide strong evidence of support for the extension from the existing corridor's Byway Organization.
3. The DSHC and SHAC will review the Letter of Intent. The applicant will be notified in writing within 30 days from receipt of the LOI if the proposed route can be considered for FSHP designation or if additional information is needed. Once complete information is received and the DSHC finds the proposed route eligible for consideration, the DSHC will coordinate with the applicant to form a Byway Organization of volunteers and hold a kick-off meeting.

B. Step 2: Develop and submit the **Byway Story, Byway Inventory**, and documentation of **Community Commitment**;

1. Byway Story

The purpose of developing the Byway Story is to articulate what is inherently interesting and valuable about the history, culture, and environment of the surrounding landscape and communities along the proposed route. The Byway Story should be submitted as a written narrative. The length of the narrative will vary due to many factors including:

- e. Length of the proposed corridor
- f. Concentration of resources that contribute to the byway's Intrinsic Qualities
- g. Number of themes and/or subthemes

2. Byway Inventory

The purpose of the Byway Inventory is to identify and demonstrate that there are resources present on the proposed corridor that meet at least one of the Following six intrinsic qualities: archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic.

The Byway Inventory should include the following at minimum:

- a. A catalog of resources arranged by Intrinsic Quality. The following information should be included for each resource identified:
 - i. Name/Description
 - ii. Intrinsic Quality(s) to which the resource contributes
 - iii. How the resource helps to tell the Byway Story
 - iv. How the resource is linked to other resources along the byway corridor

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- v. How the resource is linked to the roadway
- i. If the resource has been recognized by any regional or national program, or organization
- ii. Owner of the resource
- b. An assessment of each intrinsic quality to include its context within the surrounding areas, and an evaluation of which qualities are of local, regional or national significance. This should require at least one substantive paragraph for each intrinsic quality identified.
- h. A map with resource locations identified. It is helpful if the resources are coded by intrinsic quality.
- i. At least one high-resolution photo of each resource.

3. Documentation of Community Commitment

A letter of support (or statement that there is no objection) must be submitted from every local government entity with jurisdiction over the proposed route.

In addition, letters or other documentation of community commitment from a diverse group of stakeholders who are willing to commit time and resources to the byway or would benefit from the designation must be submitted.

The **Byway Story, Byway Inventory** and **Documentation of Community Commitment** must be submitted by the Byway Organization to the respective DSHC within 18 months of the kick-off meeting. The DSHC will distribute the documents to the Coordinator and other DSHC, who will then have 30 days from receipt to review the documents and forward written comments to the originating DSHC. Based on this review, one of the following will occur:

- 1) The DSHC will notify the Byway Organization that the documents are complete and will be submitted to the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee during the next scheduled meeting.
- 2) The DSHC from the originating District will compile and provide written comments to the Byway Organization and instruct the organization to resubmit the documents to the DSHC at least 45 days prior to the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee (SHAC) meeting at which the documents may be reviewed. This review process will be repeated until the DSHC and FSHP staff agree that the documents are complete.
- 3) The Byway Organization will be advised that the proposed designation should not continue for reasons identified in comments provided by the DSHC.

Thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which the documents will be reviewed, documents will be forwarded by the Coordinator to members of the SHAC for their review. SHAC members are expected to comment on all Byway Story, Byway Inventory and Community Commitment documents during specified SHAC meetings and make one of the following recommendations:

- 4) The Byway Organization should proceed to Eligibility Phase Step 3.
- 5) The documents need to be revised as directed in the SHAC comments. The SHAC will advise whether the revised documents 1) require additional revisions, or 2) are adequate as confirmed by review of the DSHC. Once the revisions have been accepted by the SHAC or DSHC, the Byway Organization can proceed to Eligibility Phase Step 3.

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If the documents are not complete within 12 months, the Byway Organization must start again at Step 1 of the Eligibility Phase, provide a new LOI and adhere to the program requirements in effect at the time of restart.

C. Step 3: Develop a **Byway Management Plan** and **Year-One Work Plan**

1. Byway Management Plan

A Byway Management Plan is a multi-year plan that describes actions to be taken by the Byway Organization and its stakeholders which will result in benefits to the scenic highway community and compliance with FSHP requirements. All byway stakeholders should be involved in developing plans to maintain the organization, protect and promote resources, and deliver a quality experience to visitors.

2. Year-One Work Plan

Developing an Annual Work Plan is a FSHP Implementation Phase requirement intended to help byway leaders commit to a realistic set of tasks and/or projects, and avoid over-commitment. For these same reasons, a Year-One Work Plan is required in the Eligibility Phase.

Year-One Work Plans specify:

- a. Projects, activities, and/or programs a Byway Organization will undertake the first year after designation
- b. A timeframe for completion of each task and/or project
- c. A lead or responsible party for each task, project, activity, and/or program
- d. The funding source (if applicable) for each project, activity, and/or program

When the **Byway Management Plan** and **Year-One Work Plan** are submitted by the Byway Organization to the DSHC, the DSHC will distribute the documents to the FSHP Coordinator and remaining DSHC. Written comments must be forwarded to the originating DSHC within 30 days of receipt of the documents. The DSHC from the originating District will compile and provide written comments to the Byway Organization with instructions to revise and resubmit the documents. The above Program review process will be repeated until the DSHC and FSHP staff agree that the documents meet all Step 3 Program requirements.

Final Step 3 documents must be submitted to the DSHC at least 45 days prior to the SHAC meeting at which the documents will be reviewed.

The BMP and Year-One Work Plan will be forwarded by the DSHC through the Coordinator to members of the SHAC at least thirty (30) days prior to the meeting at which the documents will be reviewed. SHAC members will review the BMP and Year-One Work Plan documents, prepare written comments, and offer oral comments during the specified SHAC meeting. The purpose of the SHAC review is to determine if the scenic highway documents identify new or expanded opportunities available through (or in cooperation with) SHAC member organizations that will make the proposed scenic highway management plan mutually beneficial to the byway organization and SHAC member organizations. The SHAC must also identify, avoid or eliminate any conflicts with existing SHAC member organization programs within the scenic highway documents.

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At the conclusion of the discussion during the SHAC meeting, the SHAC will:

- 1) Recommend to the Secretary designation of the proposed route as a Florida Scenic Highway.
- 2) Recommend designation of the proposed route as a Florida Scenic Highway contingent upon specific revisions to the Byway Management Plan and/or Year-One Work Plan as outlined in the SHAC comments. The SHAC comments will be made available to the Byway Organization no later than 30 days after the SHAC meeting, and will stipulate required revisions in addition to any recommended changes or actions. Revisions must be verified by the DSHC and Coordinator before there is a recommendation to the Secretary that the proposed route be designated as a Florida Scenic Highway.

When one of the above conditions has been met, the FSHP Coordinator will prepare a designation letter for the Secretary's signature.

If revisions to Step 3 documents requested by Program staff or the SHAC are not made within 12 months, the Byway Organization must start again at Step 1 of the Eligibility Phase and adhere to the program requirements in effect at the time of restart.

VII. FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Upon written notice of designation from the Secretary, the Byway Organization is responsible for:

- A. Implementing the Byway Management Plan and updating as necessary;
- B. Developing, implementing, and keeping current an Annual Work Plan;
- C. Providing a Byway Annual Report to the FSHP.

VIII. BYWAY ANNUAL REPORTS

Byway organizations shall develop and submit a Byway Annual Report to the State Scenic Highway Coordinator by February 1 of each year. The primary purpose of the report is to collect information about how the FSHP is benefitting Florida communities, and to identify training and technical assistance needs. Byway Organizations must submit an Annual Work Plan by November 15 of each year describing the work to be completed in the upcoming calendar year

IX. SIGNING REQUIREMENTS

Scenic Highway signs must meet the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), as incorporated in Rule 14-15.010, Fla. Admin. Code.

X. STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Section 335.093, Florida Statutes.