

The Robert Frost / Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway



Introduction

The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway connects the towns of Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester, Auburn and Derry, and is designed to celebrate and interpret the historic Boston-Haverhill-Concord Stage Coach route that followed what is today Route 121; as well as the New England landscape featured in much of Robert Frost's work, including the settings of some of his most famous poems. The Byway will highlight the numerous historic sites, scenic views, outdoor recreational opportunities, and other attractions that the region has to offer - raising awareness among local residents and promoting visitation for economic development.



What is a Scenic Byway?

A Scenic Byway is a road recognized by the State of New Hampshire and the U.S. Department of Transportation for its scenic, historic, recreational, natural, cultural and/or archeological qualities. The National Scenic Byways program was established by Congress in 1991 to preserve and protect the nation's scenic but often less-traveled roads and promote tourism and economic development. In New Hampshire the program is administered by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

There are three levels of Scenic Byway designation. The most distinguished designation is that of *All-American Roads*. These routes are scenic enough to be tourist destinations unto themselves. Examples of All American Roads include Historic Route 66 across the southwest, or Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park. There are 31 All American Roads nationwide. The second category is *National Scenic Byways*, of which there are 98 nationally, including three in New Hampshire: the Kancamagus Highway, the White Mountains Scenic Trail, and the Connecticut River Byway. The final category is *State Scenic Byways*, designated at the State level as having exemplary qualities that make them attractive visitor destinations. There are 14 such byways in New Hampshire, including six in southeastern part of the state.

Are there Regulatory Implications to Designating a Scenic Byway?

It is important to differentiate *Scenic Byways* from *Scenic Roads* defined by State law under RSA 231:158. Designation of a Scenic Road carries with it regulatory implications for abutting property owners. The one regulatory aspect of Scenic Byway designation is control of billboards or other off-premises advertising, though this is already regulated under separate state law, and existing advertising of this sort where it exists would be grandfathered. The Scenic Byway program is not intended to be a regulatory program, but rather is focused on engaging communities to collaborate on tourism development, and planning for the enhancement and management of those qualities that help make byways attractive visitor destinations.

What are the benefits to Corridor Communities?

First and foremost, to be identified as a State Scenic & Cultural Byway is an honor for the communities through which the Byway passes, as the designation speaks to the beauty and value of the scenic vistas, heritage, natural areas and recreational opportunities along the route. Second, having a byway in your community is valuable for local tourism and economic development - America's Byways, the national Scenic Byway Program, maintains an online visitors' guide to Byway routes and standout places to visit in each State. Collaborative work among several communities to designate a Byway corridor can carry over into collaborative work to protect the remarkable resources along a byway. Finally, designation as a State Scenic & Cultural Byway and completion of a Corridor Management Plan qualify communities along a byway to apply for federal grant funding for projects to improve safety, protect resources or otherwise enhance the visitor experience along the byway.



Where is the proposed Robert Frost/Old Stage Coach Byway?

The proposed Robert Frost/Old Stage Coach Byway would be two independently designated but connecting Scenic Byway routes in western Rockingham County forming a loop of approximately 45 miles. The proposed Old Stage Coach Byway segment would follow NH Route 121, traversing 22 miles through the village centers of Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester and Auburn, and ending at Massabesic Lake. From here the Robert Frost Byway segment would proceed southerly along the NH Route 28 Bypass through the Massabesic Lake recreation area, connecting via Auburn Road, Old Derry Road, English Range Road, and Chester Road to arrive in Downtown Derry. The route then continues south of Derry village reconnecting to NH route 121 in Hampstead via Rockingham Road, Island Pond Road, and North Shore Road.

What's special about these routes?

The proposed Robert Frost/Old Stage Coach Byway exemplifies and celebrates the history of the original Boston-Haverhill-Concord Stage Coach Route through southern New Hampshire, and the rural New England landscape written about by Poet Laureate Robert Frost. The proposed routes traverse traditional New England villages with historic homes and civic buildings; farmsteads, apple orchards, tree-canopied rural roads and scenic conservation lands; and recreation areas including Massabesic Lake with its canoeing, kayaking and fishing opportunities, as well as connections to rail trails and hiking paths. The route includes eight properties on the National Register of Historic Places, including Robert Frost Farm Historic Site, where Frost lived from 1906 to 1911 while teaching at Pinkerton Academy. Some of Frost's most well-known poems are set nearby in and around Derry. Countless additional properties dating to the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries are of more local historic significance and characterize rural New Hampshire for the Byway visitor.



What is a Byway Corridor Management Plan?

A Scenic Byways Corridor Management Plan describes the significance of the Intrinsic Qualities (scenic, historic, natural, cultural and/or recreational resources) along the Byway that merit designation, and includes an inventory of those buildings, sites and cultural events. A Corridor Management Plan identifies strategies for the preservation, enhancement and promotion of those historic buildings, scenic views and cultural events that define the area; as well as strategies for enhancing tourism opportunities along the corridor; and improving safety for all users of the Byway.

A volunteer Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byways Council is working with the Rockingham Planning Commission and Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission on development of the Corridor Management Plan. The Council is nearing completion of the resource inventory component of the Plan, and is now gathering community input on strategies to protect, enhance and promote the Byway

How can I get involved or get more information?

Each of the five communities has appointed two representatives to the Byway Council. Additional volunteers are welcome to serve as alternates, and to otherwise help in shaping priorities for the Byway effort through the development of the Corridor Management Plan. For more information please contact Scott Bogle at the Rockingham Planning Commission at 778-0885 or sbogle@rpc-nh.org; or Adam Hlasny at the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission at 669-4664 or ahlasny@snhpc.org.