

Customized Organizational Structures:

Finding the Perfect Fit

Selecting an organization model is a lot like hunting for the perfect pair of shoes. For shoes, the secret is finding the ones that match your size, your style and your situation. While tennis shoes might be your neighbor's choice, you may feel more comfortable in cowboy boots.

The same is true of organizations. There is no “one-size-fits-all.” The perfect organizational model is the one that fits your byway's unique needs and goals. Choose the structure that is most comfortable for you.

Byway organizations have different beginnings. In 1990, a concerned group of citizens marched from Snoqualmie Pass to the Seattle waterfront to publicize the need to save forests and open spaces nearby. From that group of concerned activists, the nonprofit Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust was formed. Now a coalition of 68 people, the trust's representatives include major landowners and managers along Interstate 90, foresters, business representatives, recreation groups, environmentalists and government agencies. In the first decade of the trust's existence, over 80,000 acres of forest and park land have been placed into public ownership. Volunteers have planted trees, built trails and removed eroding logging roads along this 100-mile National Scenic Byway.



This guide introduced five basic types of organizational structures, from informal citizen groups to formal nonprofit corporations and joint powers boards—although there are many other ways to collaborate.

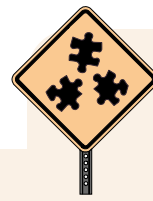
Groups Tailor Their Structures

Several different types of organizational structures have evolved to meet the needs of many different byway organizations. There are as many ways of organizing groups as there are groups themselves. In the following pages, you'll find additional case studies that illustrate new ways that grassroots organizations work together. Byway groups are finding creative solutions to meet their organizational needs. For example:

- Created by state legislation, the Creole Nature Trail (Louisiana) was established as a state agency, similar to a water or soil conservation district.
- Multi-state organizations have emerged to coordinate efforts and share resources on byways that run hundreds and thousands of miles, crossing state lines and boundaries.
- In southern Utah, rural communities are using technology to create a “virtual tourism community network.”
- In Ohio, fourteen byways have formed a collaborative organization focused on supporting and serving the needs of the byways within the state.

As your group grows and changes, so should your thinking about the group's structure. When your size and needs change, it may be time to try on something new. This applies to shoes and it applies to organizations. Groups do not need to be attached to one structure forever. A group may start as an informal citizens group and eventually form a nonprofit corporation. A byway that is led by a government agency may add a nonprofit friends group. A nonprofit organization may become a partner in an interagency agreement. There's an endless set of good options and arrangements.

Successful byway organizations find organizational structures that work. They find the perfect fit. ★



CASE STUDY: Creole Nature Trail

Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District (Louisiana): Created by Legislation, Fueled by Pride

After a visit, you can easily understand why the Creole Nature Trail is affectionately dubbed “Louisiana’s Outback” and “America’s Last Great Wilderness.” The more than 180-mile-long byway winds along bayous, marshes and the shore of the Gulf of Mexico. An overwhelming sense of water, wildlife and raw nature permeates the scenery.



People who live in this part of the country are intimately connected to the water. Shrimp boats, oil tankers, offshore oil platforms and freighters traveling up the Intracoastal Canal are common sights. Recreational fishermen are often seen on the waterways along the route. Life by the Gulf of Mexico also presents tremendous challenges, such as hurricanes. In fact, segments of the byway are official hurricane evacuation routes.

When the Louisiana legislature created the Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District, it laid the foundation for a local byway organization that does an outstanding job. The group shares the region with the world, promoting colorful stories, beautiful natural surroundings and a rich Cajun and Creole culture reflected in the region’s food, music, dancing and place names. Birds are everywhere along the Trail. Birders flock here to see roseate spoonbills, spring warblers, Vermilion flycatchers, geese, ducks, pelicans and millions of songbirds migrating along the Central and Mississippi Flyways.

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The Formal Organization Begins

When legislation created the Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District in 1995, the state of Louisiana actually formalized an organization that had been promoting the byway for more than twenty years. Early on, local government bodies, tourist commissions, business organizations and interested citizens recognized they could stimulate economic development and tourism by working together to create and advance the Creole Nature Trail.

Designated in 2002 as one of only 21 All-American Roads in the country, the trail was among the first 14 routes to receive a National Scenic Byway designation in September 1996. It remains the only nationally designated route in Louisiana.

The state legislation established a nine-member board of commissioners and outlined its powers, duties and functions. As the byway's governing board, the Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District consists of appointed leaders from Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes (counties).

Membership consists of:

- Two representatives appointed by the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury
- Three representatives appointed by the Cameron Parish Police Jury
- One representative appointed by the Cameron Parish Tourism Commission
- One representative appointed by the Department of Transportation
- One representative appointed by the Calcasieu legislative delegation
- One representative appointed by the Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau

In addition to the formal board of commissioners, a broad network of individuals, organizations and federal agencies supports the work of the Creole Nature Trail. For example, two National Wildlife Refuges and one State Wildlife Refuge and Game Preserve exist along the byway. These key stakeholders have contributed land and labor for byway pullouts and interpretive projects. The Cameron Parish Preservation Alliance is an asset to the trail. A current project involves restoration of the Sabine Pass Lighthouse, a historic landmark on a western byway spur.

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The unique legislation established the District as a state agency, similar to a water or soil conservation district. This gives the District certain rights, powers and privileges. It also means the organization can act as its own fiscal agent. The District also has the ability to tax; however, the board doubts there would be sufficient public support to get this on a ballot. The District is also legally responsible for its actions and decisions.

District commissioners serve four-year terms. The nine commissioners vote to elect a board chairman and vice-chairman. The District works on a wide range of issues to implement its corridor management plan, including public participation, intrinsic quality management, marketing, highway design and maintenance standards, interpretation, fundraising, visitor services and partnerships. Sub-committees allow members to participate in their areas of expertise.

Empowered Leadership

The Creole Nature Trail Scenic District, because of state legislation, can:

- (1) Enter into written contracts and agreements
- (2) Hire employees
- (3) Sue and be sued (though neither has happened to-date)
- (4) Receive contributions, donations, grants and money from public and private sources

The legislation requires that meetings are announced with reasonable notice, and that a quorum (a majority of the board) must be present for any business to be transacted. District meetings are held quarterly, but the executive committee meets monthly or bimonthly. Commissioners are not compensated for their time and service, but they can be reimbursed for expenses they incur in carrying out District duties.

It's a formal structure that provides organizational stability and continuity. For example, if a commissioner resigns, there is a defined process to appoint a successor. The state legislation laid out a framework that ensures an ongoing byway organization.

Funding and Financing

Like most byway organizations, the Creole Nature Trail Scenic Byway District must find funding and resources to accomplish its goals. The District does not receive state funding, but it has successfully secured a number of grants. The match for the grants was provided by the parish police juries (county commissions) and the Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau (SWLACVB).

The SWLACVB is a longtime supporter of the trail. Because this group views the District's mission as compatible with its own, the SWLACVB has provided significant financial and administrative contributions. The SWLACVB Executive Director is an active byway proponent, and her staff members frequently assist with byway projects.

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CASE STUDY: Creole Nature Trail

One SWLACVB staff member devotes more than half of her time to help the District.

Financial sustainability is an important issue. The District is in the final stages of creating a “Friends Group” (a nonprofit organization), whose primary function will be fundraising. The Friends Group will be able to accept tax-deductible donations from individuals and industries, such as the large petrochemical companies along the byway. Money raised will be used as matching funds for grants and other corridor projects. The District will retain all management authority for the Creole Nature Trail.

Although the State of Louisiana created the Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District, there are elements that legislation cannot mandate. They include the enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication of those folks involved with the byway. The local byway organization does an outstanding job sharing the region’s best: colorful stories, beautiful natural surroundings, and a rich Cajun and Creole culture that is reflected in the region’s food, music, dancing and place names.

Certainly, community pride and southern hospitality now fuel the legally developed organizational structure. ★



A distinctive landmark on the western spur of the Creole Nature Trail is the 85-foot tall Sabine Pass Lighthouse, which guided vessels for over 95 years (1857-1952). Over the years, ownership of the lighthouse passed from hand to hand. Today it is privately owned. Hurricanes, tides, vandals and neglect have taken their toll on the historic property, but thanks to a newly formed group, the Cameron Preservation Alliance, restoration efforts are underway. The current owners have agreed to give the Alliance a long-term lease on the lighthouse property so that it can be properly restored. Monte Hurley (center), Chairman of the Creole Nature Trail National Scenic Byway District, stands with the driving force behind the preservation efforts—sisters Hilda Crane (left) and Carolyn Thibodeaux (right).

Multi-State Organizations:

Finding Ways to Work Together

By their very nature, byways present significant organizational challenges. These lengthy corridors seem to ignore neatly laid out political and jurisdictional boundaries like property lines, city limits, county lines, state borders and federal land zones. Groups that don't normally work together may find themselves sitting around a conference table to discuss a byway project.

Some routes are hundreds, and even thousands, of miles long. For example, Route 66, The Mother Road, started in Chicago and ran 2,448 miles across eight states before terminating at a pier in Santa Monica, California. Today, the New Mexico segment of Route 66 is a nationally designated scenic byway.

Helping visitors find their way is an important byway issue. These logo signs point the way along three multi-state routes.



On these “long haul” routes, it requires extra effort to coordinate activities across state lines. Committee members may be spread out over a three-, six- or ten-state area. Byway representatives must often travel long distances to attend a meeting.

Consequently, face-to-face communication is limited. Still, funding and fiscal management must be agreed on. It takes creative solutions to overcome the logistical challenges.

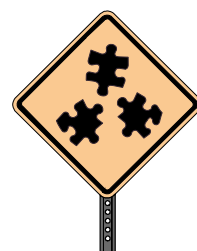
It also takes a great deal of creativity, flexibility and commitment to overcome interpersonal challenges. People must be able to set aside local interests and loyalties to work on large-scale multi-state initiatives. It’s important to have a broad-based regional mindset.

Despite the obstacles, there are significant benefits. Multi-state organizations are finding ways to share information, maximize resources and create a more seamless travel experience for byway visitors.

EXAMPLE **1.** **The Historic National Road Alliance Covers Six States**

In 1806, President Thomas Jefferson signed legislation to build the nation’s first interstate highway linking the eastern seaboard with the western frontier. Known as the National Road, the highway traversed six states. The Road carried people, mail and goods, speeding development and communication across the country. People flooded the highway, bringing their customs, languages, building styles, religions and farming practices. Today, National Road communities reflect the cultural diversity of those who chose to make their homes along this historic transportation corridor. Mile-markers, tollhouses, historic inns, stone bridges and segments of bricked road remain tangible vestiges of the past.

The Historic National Road Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization, works to preserve, protect and interpret the National Road heritage. The organization is incorporated through the State of Indiana, and the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana (Eastern Regional Office) provides a home address for the group.

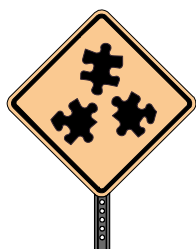


The Alliance Board of Directors is comprised of 18 members, with three representatives from each of the Historic National Road states: Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. The Alliance meets quarterly and holds a biennial conference. Individual states have developed their own management plans and management entities, which vary from state to state in structure and function.

Glenn Harper, (former) president of the Historic National Road Alliance (Ohio Historic Preservation office), explained, “One of the things that’s unique about this organization is that we recognize up front that each state is doing its own thing and is heavily involved in all kinds of activities related to the Historic National Road in their own states. The important thing about the Alliance is that we can come together and we can talk about our common interests, our common goals and objectives. We can share experiences and knowledge about activities in each of those states.”

In 2002, the six-state Historic National Road was designated as an All-American Road. Currently, the Historic National Road Alliance is working to (1) create a single identifying route marking sign/logo for all six states, and (2) coordinate interpretive efforts to tell a unified story of this historic road.

The Historic National Road Alliance works together to create a seamless travel experience across a six-state corridor.

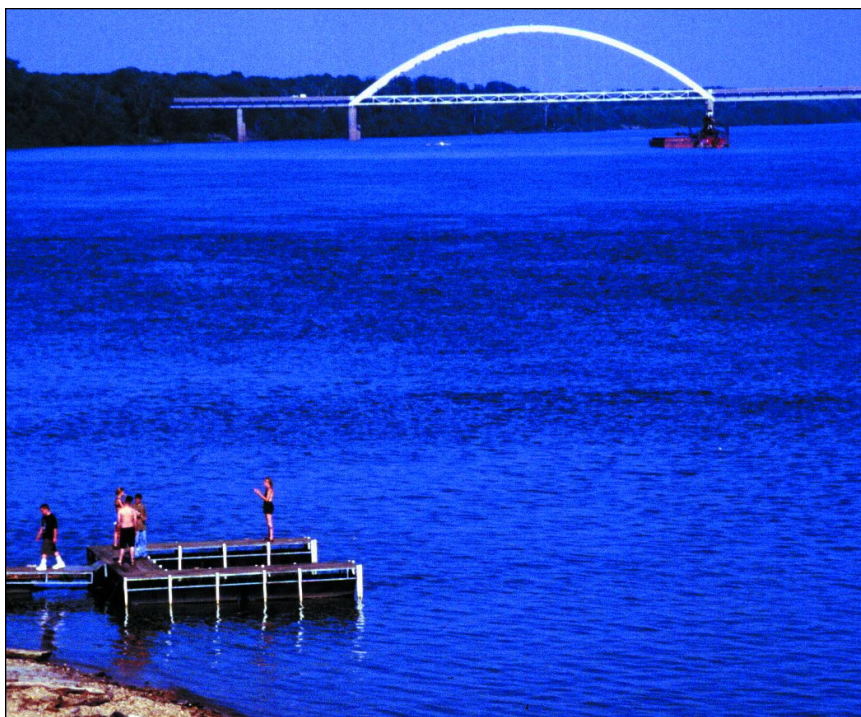


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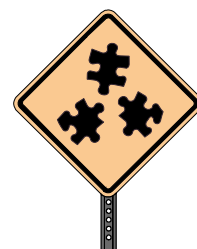
Ohio River Scenic Byway Touches Three States

The Ohio River Scenic Byway at times hugs the river, then twists and turns its way past cypress swamps and scenic overlooks, archaeological sites and stately mansions. It's an area rich in history. Prehistoric people built towns here. Settlers used it as a primary way west. The steamboat made it the center of transportation and the industrial revolution. Before the Civil War, the River was an important boundary between slave and free-states, and the Underground Railroad was active to help African-Americans find safe passage to the North. In this century, the Ohio River transports the region's coal and provides extensive outdoor recreational activities.

In a unique partnership, three byway organizations from three different states joined together to provide information and resources to help visitors enjoy this 942-mile route. Early on, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois recognized the potential benefits of cooperating on specific projects.



Byway representatives coordinate marketing, interpretation, and signage along the three-state Ohio River Scenic Byway.



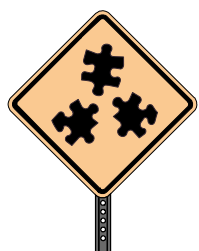
Long-Distance Success

Working on a byway committee that is geographically dispersed is a challenge. It's not easy, but you can develop relationships and accomplish goals when your group is spread over long distances. How can you communicate, coordinate efforts and succeed?

1. Compile a complete committee roster with names and contact information. Keep it current.
2. Set clear, realistic goals. Focus on one or two key goals for the year.
3. Write down your goals and work plans. Provide copies to all committee members.
4. Communicate. Take time to schedule phone appointments with other committee members. Don't leave communication to chance.
5. Hold regular committee conference calls. Schedule them in advance and provide a meeting agenda before the call.
6. After a conference call, send follow-up messages and meeting notes.
7. Use e-mail, fax and voice mail, but don't rely on them for all communications. Keep in touch by phone.
8. Send regular updates to other committee members, including progress reports.
9. Realize that work coordinated over long distances takes more time. Plan for this when you set deadlines.
10. When possible, meet in a central location or rotate meeting locations.
11. If you can't meet in-person, explore videoconference options. Some local universities or units of government may have equipment available.
12. Use technology to your advantage. Consider on-line collaboration tools, such as a discussion forum.
13. Put faces with names. Have a group photo taken and give people a copy for their desks or bulletin boards.
14. Talk about how your committee is functioning. Discuss ways to improve communication and coordination.
15. Share success. Find ways to celebrate and publicize the group's accomplishments.

The Ohio River Scenic Byway has broken new ground. It's the first multi-state effort to develop uniform marketing and interpretive plans, as well as uniform signage. The states worked together to submit grant applications for three multi-state projects. When funding was awarded, multi-state committees were formed and each state signed up to take the lead on a project. One state is taking the lead on signage, another on marketing, and another on interpretation.

Although it's an informal arrangement, it's working. And there are clear benefits for both the individual byway organizations and the travelers.



EXAMPLE 3. Mississippi River Parkway Commission Traverses Ten States

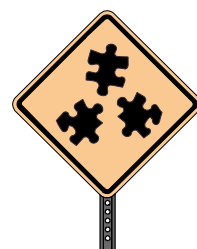
From head to toe, it stretches 2,552 miles. The Mississippi River winds its way from Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana, crisscrossing ten states. Paralleling this historic river is the Great River Road, one of the oldest, longest and most unique scenic drives in North America.

Formed in 1938, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission (MRPC) is a multi-state organization that works collectively to preserve, promote and enhance resources of the Mississippi River Valley and to develop the highways and amenities of the Great River Road. The National MPRC acts as an umbrella organization that ties together all ten of the Mississippi River states: Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee and Wisconsin.

Each state has its own separate commission established by state statute or Governor's Executive Order. Membership consists of state legislators, state and local officials, and general members appointed by the governor or state agency directors of the individual state.



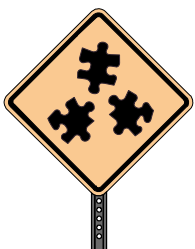
The Mississippi River Parkway Commission helps to synchronize efforts along the ten-state Great River Road.

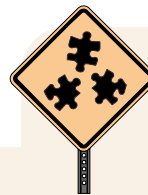


The National MRPC Board of Directors includes the chairs of the individual commissions. The National MRPC Chair is known as “The Pilot” and is elected by the general membership each year.

The general membership of the National MRPC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, gathers twice each year at the annual and mid-winter meetings. In between, six Technical Committees keep working: Transportation, Promotion, Historical/ Archeological/Cultural, Environmental/Recreation, Economic and Community Development, and Agriculture. Participation in these committees is open to both MRPC members and non-member advisors.

It’s a mature multi-state organization with a long list of accomplishments. The MRPC has successfully coordinated efforts on federal, state and local levels to leverage dollars for highway improvements, recreation trails, bikeways, scenic overlooks and historic preservation. The MRPC also promotes both domestic and international marketing, and facilitates efforts to enhance economic development and resource awareness. ★





CASE STUDY: Utah Highways 191 & 163

Utah Highways 191 and 163: Creating a Community of Communities

Precarious population and employment levels threaten small rural communities throughout the country. Many of these communities look to tourism as part of economic development plans. However, communities located in the same geographical area often compete for tourist dollars. According to Utah State University professors David L. Rogers and Stephen W. Clyde, the solution probably lies in inter-community collaboration when the tourism efforts focus on a region as well as specific towns or attractions.

The professors are studying community cooperation along Utah Highways 191 and 163 from Moab in the north to Monument Valley in the south. They established economic data as benchmarks for two of the counties. Between 1997 and 1998, Grand County saw a slight increase in wages, payrolls and per capita

income. However, San Juan County's wages, payrolls and per capita income has been stable or declining during the past few years. Another indicator of economic growth, new dwelling units, shows a decline in both counties.

The Utah State University research, "Developing Virtual Tourism Community Networks," assesses ways of creating a "sense of community" among these economically challenged communities. The study also explores the impact of marketing an entire byway as a single destination point. The professors believe that when communities work together, the overall tourism efforts increase the benefits for all the communities as well as each individual place.



In southeast Utah, communities are looking for ways to collaborate, rather than compete, for tourist dollars. They have developed a "community of communities" to reach out to tourists through a cohesive regional approach, instead of as segmented cities and towns. Mountain bikers flock to the Slickrock Bike Trail, just east of Moab. This premier trail brings riders through rugged redrock terrain. A short practice loop will whet your appetite for the main course—experts only.

(Photo: Angel Crane)

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Two Approaches

Developing a “community of communities” incorporates two approaches:

1. Develop a tourism association.
2. Use electronic information applications to create a “virtual community” that parallels and complements the association.

The professors suggest that the tourism association, founded with a grassroots perspective, can meld the various communities into one marketable community package. Appealing to tourists through a cohesive regional presentation rather than a segmented approach holds promise for individual cities and towns in the area.

The researchers have also begun to adapt electronic information applications currently available via the federally funded National Scenic Byways Program (<http://www.byways.org>). They also are reviewing other formats under development.

Probable Benefits, Potential Challenges

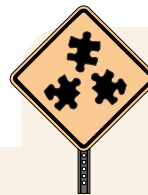
Like other teams or cooperative organizations, byway communities working collaboratively can realize greater results than what one individual or one group could achieve. Collaboration allows communities to reduce their individual tourism costs, from purchasing supplies to implementing marketing tactics. Collaborating communities can also increase their effectiveness in lobbying for state and federal funds, further enhancing the economic dividends of their efforts.

Each of these cities and towns possesses a local identity and pride that enhances the community’s unique character and charm. The same independence brings certain challenges. Who has control? Where are the boundaries? How do the groups share responsibilities? How do they reap the benefits individually? The professors hope their continued research will identify specific challenges and offer suggestions from both “grassroots association” and “virtual” perspectives. ★

Community Collaboration Potential Cost Reductions

Working together, communities can reduce their individual tourism costs, including:

- Purchasing
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Emergency and medical equipment



CASE STUDY: Ohio Byway Links

Ohio Byway Links: Connecting for Success

An organizational model unique among state scenic byway programs, Ohio Byway Links represents a collaboration of Ohio's fourteen current byways. The group focuses on supporting and serving the needs of the state's byways. It extends and enhances the work of Ohio's Department of Transportation.

Paul Staley, Ohio State Scenic Byway Coordinator, said, "Ohio's Scenic Byways is a grassroots-driven program that enables the traveling public to experience the many diverse historic, scenic, cultural, natural, recreational and archaeological assets the great state of Ohio has to offer. The pride communities exhibit and the many partnerships that have been created, especially Ohio Byway Links, have made a major impact on Ohio's Scenic Byways."



In 1999, Ohio Byway Links was a fledgling organization with a big goal of trying to help Ohio's byways and a tiny budget that was "collected by passing the hat." Today, the organization manages nearly \$500,000 in program dollars.

As a nonprofit educational 501(c)(3) foundation, the group has accepted tax-deductible donations from businesses, individuals and trust accounts. The group is working on statewide efforts to accept additional dollars to expand programming and enhancement efforts.

Instead of competing for funding sources, the byways take advantage of cooperative funding opportunities. For example, it would be counterproductive for five individual byway organizations in any one year to compete for a small pool of Ohio Arts Council funding. If the byways combine their project goals under the statewide Ohio Byway Links organization and initiate a five-byway collaborative application, each byway increases its potential for funding success.

Ohio Byways are highlighted in an interactive traveling display that has been exhibited at local fairs and festivals, the Ohio State Fair and the National Scenic Byways Conference.

Case Study continued on next page

Ohio Byway Links meets twice a year (spring and fall) along different byways across the state. Sharon Strouse, Ohio State University Extension and Amish Country Byway contact, ensures that there is an educational component in every meeting. In 2002, the focus was on interpretation. “Our Ohio byways have resources all along their corridors rich in interpretive opportunities,” said Strouse. “On the brink of Ohio’s Bicentennial, our organization has offered educational experiences and resources to byway members and organizations to improve our understanding of the importance of ‘interpreting your byway.’ It is our responsibility as byway managers to provide access to diverse activities offering education and skill development for a wide range of audience members.”



As Ohio Byway Links has taken on more and more projects, the group realized it was time to expand the leadership ranks from the current four (president, vice president, treasurer and secretary). The officer corps was increased with four regional representatives at the fall 2002 meeting held in Maumee. They will be responsible for Ohio Byways’ Communications, Public Relations and Education/Programs within their areas of the state.

Ken Baldwin, Heritage Corridors of Bath representative, is a founding member of Ohio Byway Links. Baldwin explained, “Before Ohio Byway Links, grassroots Ohio byway organizations were independent in their local communities. Everyone was doing good work, but lacked a forum to share and communicate with each other. One of the greatest benefits has been the opportunity to share our successes and failures. We’ve learned a lot and made some great friends along the way.”

Wonderful people are the lifeblood of the Ohio Byway Links, an advocacy network for the state’s 14 scenic byways.

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CASE STUDY: Ohio Byway Links

One of the organization's strengths has been its ability to build partnerships. Active partners include the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Travel and Tourism, Scenic Ohio, the Ohio Chapter of the Automobile Association of America (AAA), Model T Ford Club International, and Ohio State University Extension. The group has worked hard to nurture positive relationships with key agencies and leaders at all levels—local, regional, state, and national. The results are evident in an impressive list of accomplishments:

- Drafted a constitution and bylaws and obtained nonprofit 501(c)(3) status.
- Published an award-winning Ohio Byway Links map and brochure.
- Designed “A Sunday Drive Anyday” traveling interactive display for use by byways, libraries, museums and interested communities.
- Increased public awareness of the byway through media contacts with newspapers, magazines and radio.
- Printed a newsletter that is distributed to over 1,000 people and agencies.
- Participated in a landscape aesthetics project partnership with The Ohio Arts Council and Scenic Ohio.
- Created an Ohio Scenic Byway slide presentation and script for all 14 Ohio byways.
- Secured a scenic byways grant for a statewide marketing plan.

Ohio Byway Links has found a formula that works—a clear purpose, dedicated people, strong partners and a passion for the state's roads and special places. ★

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