

Skill Builders: Creating A Statement Of Purpose

In all likelihood, people are involved with your byway effort because they care about the route's special qualities, and want to promote and protect these qualities. The first step in considering scenic byway designation is to articulate the reasons for beginning this process in the first place. As you work with your byway group, spend some important time on this exercise.

Pass out papers and pencils. Ask your group to consider these three questions and jot down their ideas, impressions and opinions.

1. What makes your route special? What unique resources does it have? Why do you value the route? What makes the route different from other roadways in the community? In your State? In the surrounding States? In the nation? In the world?
2. How do you envision your scenic byway fifteen years from now? Is the road the same as it is now? Do you see positive changes, such as improvements in the positive elements of the road and rehabilitation of the elements that need work? Do you see negative changes? How has the route been affected by influences from outside your community?
3. What are you hoping to achieve through designation? Is this an opportunity for promoting tourism or economic development? Is it an opportunity to protect resources or limit development? Are you interested in seeing more active management of this resource? What level of designation do you hope to achieve?

Ask your group to share their answers. Write them down on flipchart paper and post them in the room for everyone to read.

When everybody has shared their answers, see if you can come up with a consensus on a single statement of purpose that all can agree with. This might take awhile, but it's good to determine if you're moving in the same direction now rather than later.

An example of a statement of purpose might read like this:

State Route 392 between Mayberry and Mount Pilot is especially valuable to our community as a recreation route for bikes, hiking and autos. It is of historical as well as scenic value in that it has many existing buildings and other features associated with the tulip trade that was so important to this region in the 19th century. With increasing development in the area, we wish to ensure that the valuable features along Route 392 will be preserved for future generations. We also hope that we can draw tourists who will appreciate the qualities of the route to increase the economic vitality of our community without destroying its charm.

Once you've all agreed on a statement of purpose, write it down and make copies for everyone. It helps you preserve the essence of your inspiration and commitment.

Remember, when undertaking any projects like this there are likely to be setbacks, frustrations, and, at times, a need for compromise. Address these problems with patience and whatever other resources you have. Keep your statement of purpose handy. When in doubt, pull it out to remind yourself and your group of the valuable task you have undertaken and why.