

Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways Strategic Plan Meeting

August 2, 2015

USFS Regional HQ

740 Simms St., Godlend,

Ferrnow Conference Room

10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Meeting Notes

In attendance:

Lenore Bates, CDOT

Chris Sporl, USFS

Charlotte Bumgarner, Gold Belt Byway, National Scenic Byways Foundation

Shannon Gifford, CDOT Transportation Commission

Jack Plachi, Bureau of Land Management

Roger Wilson, West Elk Loop

Bob Mutaw, History Colorado

Shay Ives, DOLA

Debra Perkins-Smith, CDOT, DTD

Georgi Contiguglia, Commission At-Large Member

Gary Thorson, Colorado Dept of Natural Resources, Parks

Margaret Hunt, Colorado Creative Initiative

Greg Yankee, Colorado Conservation

Elizabeth Watson

- Introductions
- Chris Sporl – Welcomed the group to USFS; one of 9 region offices – Rocky Mountain Region; response to emergency in building instructions; turn in visitor badges at end of meeting; provided each person with USFS pin

Agenda, and hypothesis statement

Notebook:

- Agenda
- Hypothesis discussion guide
- Overview of last meeting and interview discussions
- July 15th meeting notes – transcription of Elizabeth's notes
- Surveys of stakeholders
 - 26 byway orgs; 16 responses (notes from 14 in notebook)
 - Gary Mason – answered Name of Byway – he put his name there
 - 9 Byways represented

- Some questions – 2 stakeholders ?s – strengths of byways and where commission should emphasize their work
- Still need to send out a couple more surveys for local byways. Need to narrow down the # of questions. Elizabeth and Lenore will work on this.
- Today – path forward
 - Don't have time to do full blown strategic plan
 - Using Hypothesis statement
 - Program has historically been grant program and not strategic development program
 - How do you stay alive at the local level? How to sustain the local program, not just about the grants but about the program.
 - Could we map where all the grants have gone in Colorado (all groups) since 1991 and see if they have been along the byways? Where have the investments gone? How do we protect these investments?
 - Economic development is key
- 6 goal areas in notebook will be used to develop plan

SWOT

Strengths:

- # of Byways
- Beautiful state
- Excellent leadership
- Champions on the ground
- Stimulated cooperation along the byways – public and private organizations
- Public has encouraged tourism – bringing people to the state
- Byways are valued by the people of Colorado (Charlotte doesn't think people in local Byway values their byway) Some people don't know when they are on a byway. Tourists know/appreciate the byways
- Economic driver
- Taught people history
- Colorado – historic data is important (as IDed by Elizabeth's conversations)
- Diversity – many intrinsic values within each of the byways
- Many CO byways are of national significance (some didn't want national recognition (e.g., Peak to Peak (history rather than tourist)). If we had call for national recognition we would have a number who would qualify.
- Several cross state lines – Utah, Nebraska, New Mexico
- Most roads are well maintained.
 - CDOT would like to see wider shoulders for bikes (if we had more \$).

- West Elk Loop road was recently paved with “newer method” (according to Roger) but there was an issue that part of shoulder was reduced in size because the method didn’t allow for the width for bike.
 - CO is 2X national average in bicycle commuters. Deb referred to CDOT online Bike/Byways map.
 - State trails plan under CPN (?)
 - Bike the Byways online map
 - High value for low investment
 - Colorado has strength that it has lot of Federal and state land base
 - Connected network
 - 20 creative districts in state are along byways
 - 18 Mainstreets – most are linked to byways
 - Only program in Colorado that links communities geographically
 - CDOT has TPRs that work geographically and fund
 - DOLA has regions
- USDA grant – Healthy Highways grant was awarded; NCRS grants for land grants often along byways

Weaknesses:

- Some locals don’t know values (tourists value us more!)
- Don’t have much out on the plains
 - Rural landscape reviews (NE) follow Nebraska organizational plan put others (South Park) follow a different rural landscape plan
 - Plains perceived as boring but they aren’t
 - Importance of grasslands – (Margaret referred to conference from last week)
 - Trees as wind breaks – importance
- No more dedicated funding source (\$800 pound gorilla in the room)
- Need somebody to heard the cats – Administration
- The story of the value in the public view – we are probably short on that
 - Economic study has been done
 - Public TV documentary / public TV needs to do more – incorporate into school systems.
 - Curricula developed for the byways. Lenore – 12-14 years ago, Rocky Mtn PBS was done
- Need more public awareness. Value that they bring
 - Need more recognition of the investment of Byways
- We don’t have good outcome measures. What are we trying to prove? Are we doing road counts?
 - CDOT – previous federal authorization – funding available. Current, MAP-21, not funding available.

- Should it continue? Where should it be housed? CDOT is a partner but maybe not the hosting it. What should it be?
- CDOT paying for economic impact study and this planning process. Planning funds being used for these.
- No annual reports. No way to collate the information that we have compiled. No benchmarking information.
 - Start of Byways programs was grant focused. They reported on their program but not their project.
 - Phase II economic study currently being done by consultant DHR. 2009-2014 being looked at. Looking at Colorado data.
- MAP-21 and TAP are very limited funds for Byways
- Not leveraging partnerships with other
- States not considered holistically – variation among regions
 - Communities are bought into river because it took so many people to protect it
 - Entitlement is way to strong (Greg Yankee)
 - Land conversation doesn't necessarily build local commitment
 - Often only a large landowner is needed - lack of inter-dependence
- Need to find replacement \$1M/year

Opportunities:

- Agri-Toursim
- Grasslands
- CPW's Trail Plan
- Bicycle access
- Colorado The Beautiful Initiative – from the Governor's office. Mapping trails is first effort
- New Outdoor Industry Office – Office of Economic Development to advance outdoor recreation opportunities.
 - Create a new stewardship
 - Alternative ways to find funding, through industry
 - Luiz Benitez
- Healthier Colorado – another Governor's initiative
 - CDPHE
 - Healthiest State in the Nation emphasis
 - Connection with Byways – helping them get outdoors
- GoCO – Inspire initiative
 - Just did new strategic plan and Inspire is one of their goals
 - Connect,
- CPW has just also done strategic plan (approved in January 2016)
- BLM – new plan handed out last meeting

- USDA – region is the most visited region in the country
 - See new Leadership Intent for Outdoor Recreation – Rocky Mountain Region
 - Leadership Commitment (signatures)
- Linking state and federal agencies and programs
- Look at other programs that have funding (e.g, GoCO and History Colorado) and see if Scenic Byways can have access. Clearinghouse for grants. Historic preservation, for example.
 - Byways program is not gone just the funding source.
 - The \$ is in general funds and competing with transportation funds. Can each of the groups dedicate certain \$ amount toward Byways?
 - Can we work with Colorado budget to get dedicated \$ or to leverage other grants?
 - CDOT budgeting priorities – maintaining the existing system and safety. All the “curves” of funding are going downhill. Very, very little money going to expansion. No matter what they do the money is only getting worse. Federal and state gas tax is going down. Byway Commission’s goals are different from other CDOT activities.
- Budget fairness (Caps were put on projects by Commission so all byways could get a part of the funding. Commission never thought large grants should be awarded. Toward end of funding the Commission started looking at larger grants. Seed grants were considered).

Discussion – Section one in notebook

Commission Mission

Role of the Commission

Vision

Value Proposition (what you will deliver to your customers)

- 1st paragraph refers to Visitor – add “residents”
- 2nd paragraph refers to Rural
- Giving you the 3 reasons you are doing this
- After economic investment study will help to redefine 1st section
- Rural Colorado is outlet for population growth.
- Byways is part of that strategy to grow rural growth. DOLA is topography dept with projections – most growth will be in front range.
- Quality of life, access to recreation – add to (2). Encourage them to Scenic Byways rather than I-70. Recreational opportunities is not on front range but it is draw for those moving to front range.
- Gaming funds go to historical preservation. Opportunities with byways
- Lottery and GoCO go to ?
- Add “recreational access for everyone” or “access to recreational opportunities” on top of page 2.

- MainStreets can't be developed without economic strength / healthy economy. What about Scenic Byways
- What is state legislation say? This is opportunity to re-invent ourselves. We don't have a federal requirement now. We have an Executive Order and Resolution.
 - Management plan
 - Coordinate the funds
 - Evaluate, recommend, designate byways
 - Fair representation across the state
- Colorado was first state with Scenic Byway resolution; (1989) National (1991)
- Need to differentiate between Commission versus the Byways individually
 - Commission – we can do things more efficiently then each individual byway, e.g., trainings. Resources and vision and purposefulness. Economic scale. Leverage.

Achieve the following results:

- See Elizabeth's notes. See will rewrite these and send them back out.
- Improve local conditions to help develop features and assets
- Serve as a bridge of assets (tangible and intangible) and resources within their Byway
- Enabling all state agencies and partners/organizations to develop Byways assets
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Goals, Strategies, Actions

See goals for each section on page 2 and 3

Strategic Critical Path – need to do this to then drive goals for individual sections

Phase 1 (page 4) – this is year one, submit in November to submit to Governor by April (?). JBC meets out of session in the summer. We are behind the curve for FY17.

What can we do now to influence FY17 and/or FY18? Solve the real problem for sustainability. Who will be? Elizabeth recommends CDOT. Debra suggests shared leadership (Last CDOT ED thought outside). This all needs to come out of strategic plan.

Roger suggests that putting plan in front of CDOT for their thoughts about how it fits in their plan. Needs to rise to the Governor's Office (value and solution); they need to see this plan and develop Champions among legislators.

Housing of the Commission

What is the question? Serving local byway advancement or advancing the branding of the Byways?

- Culture heritage Tourism / Education
- Outdoor Recreation
- Community Economic vitality
- Stewardship

Quarter Management Plans – required by FHWA
Economic considerations were not required
Priorities were set up by Plan
Community Economic Vitality not included

Funding that is available:

MAP-21/TAP – some money for planning.

Is there a way to tweak the TAP program for better equity? Process easier. Could Byways have certain priorities?

Funding has hijacked our process today. Need mission, vision, and goals before asking for money.

How do we get it to the Governor's level of attention?

- How do we get it be recognized? Change the name? At the same time as keeping the historical perspective.
- What have we accomplished?

Commission and Statewide program – this is what we need to focus on. This is the Commission's strategic plan. All goes back to mission, vision, and goals.

- Colorado The Beautiful – focus on the trails. Can Byways fit within this initiative? Some programs don't live within a department and often have short life.

Colorado Creative Industries – Colorado Council of the Arts proceeded this

- Example of looking at alternative ways of doing things
- Wasn't able to receive funding for National Endowment of the Arts because they couldn't
- Office of Economic Development
- Grow jobs in arts
- Serve for-profit and non-profit sectors
- Creative districts – quality, not quantity.
- Budget back to \$4M/year
- Boettcher Foundation money given if state would match the funds
- Allows them to leverage other funding
- Affordable housing and work space
- History Colorado, DOLA, probably USDA, 2-3 Foundation
- Give grants to local organizations; use some federal funds
- Focus is on small, urban/rural area
- Funding – gaming funds, not general funds (fixed amount) Changed in 2015 from a percent amount
- Tourism, SBA, WMBE, Outdoor Recreation, Business Development, etc.
- Took many years to make this change. Original changes occurred in early 2000s.
- It is a TABOR exception

Byways for the 21st Century

You could be something more

What is the name? Should it change

Role of the Commission – does this represent the role correctly?

Don't have to answer this now?

Change "Forum" to "Convener"

Change "Advocate" rather than "Advocate"

"Brand Development" - Does this fit within the Executive Order?

Is Colorado Blueprint 2.0 currently represented by Byways? Need to look at this. The original Blueprint had Byways representation. Margaret brought this up. The communities are driving the blueprint for their regions. Need to see how to get Byways involved. Margaret will share the schedule with Lenore.

4 Goals by Section

- Byways System
 - Need to align better with the information above (in document)
 - What needs to be
 - Feature rich experience for the traveling public
 - Meets the needs of all the participating entities
 - 14 components of selecting new byway (FHWA's management plan)
 - All American Road and National Scenic Byway designation
 - Well maintained
 - Life-time experience for visitors
 - What is the role of all the agencies/organizations on the Commission and associated with byways? Why are they involved? What is the story for each agency?
 - Education-rich
 - Visitor friendly – signs, internet, safety, wayfinding, lodging, gas
 - Visitor level of service – expectations of visitor
 - Branded
 - Final bullet – protect and extend. Leave in
- **Commission Sustainability (operations and funding)**
 - Grow commitment of ALL agencies on the commission (state and federal)
 - Collaborate on system excellence
 - Staffing – important to look at this now. This is our best bet for reaching local level. Working one-on-one with the local byways – need help from other agencies on Commission. Do we need to require paid staff (no minimum hours) and budget? AmeriCorps-VISTA volunteers can often start this. Create the expectation and let it grow slowly. Only 3 byways currently have a dedicated staff person.

- Give them a process to get themselves set up. Foundation grant to develop community action plan? How to lead change in their community.
- Need annual report from each byway
- What is the incentive for each byway? Money? Tourism marketing dollars?
- Indicator – only 8 of 26 byways filled out the planning survey
- National Byways Foundation trying to get non-profit as eligible for TAP funds
- What is incentive for byway to be independent 501c3 or connected to other organization? Can't maintain a high level byway system without addressing this.
- "Commission" is the state commission
- Funding and staffing
- Serve as a convener
- Include "private"
- Add "stakeholders" in building an excellent system
- Remove "CDOT" on 3rd bullet
- Roger will forward his redrafted statement to Elizabeth to include
- **Byways' Sustainability**
 - Find natural agency/org within a byway. ID a standard group. List of who might be interested. Power of a convener – role of Commission. Provide training – quarter management plans, board development, wayfinding.
 - Get byways to work together
 - ID and encourage strong local leadership
 - Assess the current status and the quality and sustainability of the byway (action that goes with bullet #1)
 - Define what a sustainable byway is
 - Getting city/town and/or county to work with Byway on grant funding such as through DOLA
- **Improvements to the Byway Experience**
 - Are these strategies?
 - This isn't a separate goal but activities; could be put under Byways Sustainability (or Byways System)
 - Capital projects being funded by USFS and BLM
 - We are getting to the point where we need to step back from building new and now we need to use money for manage, maintain, and operate. (Chris Spori)
 - Communities could do bond acts. Colorado (state) cannot do bonds. Are there other ways for city, town, and county to do them? Strategic plan needs to lay the groundwork for something like this.

Leader

Does it have to be under one agency?

It should be under one state agency?

Crosses many departments and agencies, one possibility is Office of Economic Development.

Tourism is being re-imagined right now. Currently cannot do programs. We need to get in their discussion.

CPW?

DOLA? They get money that is very specific and has limitations of how they can use it. All of DOLA's money has to go to city/town and county.

What will the person be doing (Lenore right now)? No longer a grant manager. System excellence with agency and staffing support.

Sustainability piece

Staffing "Vision":

- Staff the commission, support the commission
- Coordination and Training directly to Byways
- Outreach, Public relationships, promotions, marketing
- IDing sources of money, and coordinate to Byways - Budget, financial support
-

CDOT seems to have the best ties to needs of Byways. Is it still be the best place to be? FHWA would also have to agree. Other agencies need to contribute (?). Byways doesn't fit in to the CDOT mission clearly. They also have a money shortage.

Community-based Economic Development & Livability

- Bullet #1 is not role of Commission
- Bullet #2 is not needed – strike it
- Last bullet – economic development is 2ndary to the work of the byways. We are not recruiting businesses, etc. Instead of considering economic development – all things being equal, economic impact is a consideration for project. It is not the guiding principle. It is "one of".
- Consider scenic and historic – keep within our scope
- Governor is keyed into "economic development". We need not lose that.
- Elizabeth suggests that this whole section be eliminated.
- Some of these can be tied into actions. One needs to be around data.
- Excellent byway system
- Move bullet #3 and #4 into Byway Sustainability

Notes Toward a fully Realized Set of Goals, Strategies, and Actions

Added comments – Shay, DOLA working with Betsy (CDOT-Bike/Ped) and CDPHE on Walking in Colorado. Will try to pull in Byways

Demonstration project with byways on something along this line

Utah is going to form Friends of Byways to allow them, in part, to apply for funding. Colorado needs to look at opportunities like this in order to apply for funding. Develop a 501c3? Use a pass through? This is not a solution – need a home first.

Build a commitment to “Byways for the 21st Century”

Case statements will be developed

Need to find Champion in Governor’s office

Someone on the Commission needs to lead this

MOU between agencies? Conversation of developing it needs to be done to help define roles

Bullet #2 include technical assistance too

Committee of the Commission – bullet #6 on page 5

GOCO’s strategic plan – trails and access is big part. Also big in CPW plan. Gary can send the strategic plans

CPW has grants for non- motorized and motorized trail heads. Roger asked if these funds would be available to Byways projects. Need to look at all the ways that current grant opportunities might be of benefit to byway projects. BLM, CPW, historical, etc. Look at things that have overlapping interests. Need list of sources of funds for the byways.

Phase 2 – Innovation Byways

There has to be capacity among the byways to do this. Some will be ready but many not. What does the Commission need to do in the next year to get byways up to be ready for this.

Marketing plan needs to be developed

Develop action list (every year)

Develop a glossary of terms in strategic plan

Need to re-look at Byways Toolkit and develop a Toolkit 2.0

Colorado Preservation, Inc. looking for Places to Save – how do we connect with this

2nd year is more than the first but more work on helping local byways. They need to vocalize what they need.

Phase 3 – Investment Byways

Support individual byways with collaborative process such as with grants. “Stovepipe” – not the way to go.

Bond Act – connect with land conversation trusts. Similar to GOCO – not a state program.

Back to Role of Commission

Bubbles – come out of value proposition. Right now they don’t fit. Also, some have trouble with the words that are used in the bubbles. Need all verbs or nouns.

Value Propositions

Make sure to change (1) to “residents and travelers” rather than “visitors”