

**White Mountain Trail
National Scenic Byway
Corridor Management Plan**

Prepared by
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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Background

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) dramatically changed the way the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) conducted its business of providing transportation infrastructure to the country. ISTEA has begun to move the FHWA out of the Interstate Age and into an era of balanced investment in transportation, which reflects the social, environmental, and energy goals of the nation. A fundamental change is the way decisions and investments are made. These changes have been implemented through expanded planning and public participation, placing transportation improvements in the hands of local citizens through a real grass roots effort.

ISTEA also provides the funds for special program activities that enhance the typical framework of the transportation network. The National Scenic Byways Program is one such special program. In 1997, North Country Council applied for and was awarded funds from the FHWA to establish the White Mountain Trail as a National Scenic Byway.

The White Mountains Trail encompasses two US Highways, two State Highways, and one Interstate Parkway. It traverses ten Towns and two unincorporated places in the northern third of the State of New Hampshire. The byway covers 123 miles and it is a part of the North Country Regional Scenic Byway, which consists of 5 distinct and unique loops plus 8 spurs within the loops.

Since 1997, North Country Council has worked with the North Country Byways Council to address the planning, design, and implementation of improvements to the scenic byway. Projects range from corridor maintenance, safety improvements, and intermodal use to recreation enhancement, historical preservation, and the development of tourist amenities servicing the corridor.

B. Findings

- The Highway and Safety Analysis found several roads in the North Country that have bridges which are structurally deficient and roads that may have unacceptably low rider comfort indexes and are lacking that “smooth” ride many travelers have come to expect. These problems appear to be, or can be, addressed by the State Ten Year Plan.
- Congestion issues relative to safety are being worked on primarily at the local level. Major safety improvements to intersections, sharp curves, short sight distance, etc. are beyond the local resources and need to be looked at on the state level. As tourism increases on the byway and special events are developed, traffic plans will have to be updated and adjusted accordingly.
- Many recreational cyclists visit the North Country and enjoy the biking it offers. Many improvements are needed to the network to encourage biking as a transportation mode in our remote area and to promote family biking. Shoulders need to be widened and

- paved for a shared bike system and the most congested areas should look for off-road bikeways.
- A review of the land use strategies each community utilizes showed there is a great range of protection methods employed. Not one community has a byway overlay zone. To date, development pressure has been minor; but as the area continues to grow, communities need to make sure their regulations can pass muster when development increases. The North Country offers a unique quality of life for its citizens and tourists. Uncontrolled development has the potential to destroy this. Therefore, as the regional planning commission, North Country Council will continue to work with local communities on the development and refinement of their protection and management strategies for the benefit of scenic byways and the region as a whole.
 - Promotion of the region is needed to develop the number one business in the North Country, tourism. Promotion of the scenic byway loops has begun with the development of “Northern Journeys”; a 16-page guide highlighted the “natural splendor, cultural richness, historical charm, and stimulating recreation of the region”. It is designed as a motorist’s guide to the scenic byways in northern NH. Signs designating the routes as State Scenic Byways will soon be in place to help with promotion of the loops. As tourism grows, the need for more support services will also continue to grow. Present deficiencies have been identified (lack of restrooms, interpretive centers, and kiosks) and need to be addressed through the byways implementation program.

C. Results

The project results include the following:

- Creation of the North Country Byways Council (1/15/03)
- Identification of an additional scenic byway eligible and competitive for national byways designation.
- “Northern Journeys”, a Motorist’s Guide to the North Country Regional Scenic Byway.
- A Highway and Safety Analysis including existing conditions for road, bike, and safety with recommendations for future improvements.
- A Land Use Analysis with a summary of each community’s land use policies and recommendations for protection strategies.
- A Promotion and Marketing Plan to promote the byways.
- An Action Plan to prioritize the recommendations.

When combined, these products will become the corridor management plan for the North Country Regional Scenic Byway.

Equally important, although somewhat less tangible results include:

- A North Country tourism niche that differentiates us from all other regions of New England and the United States. This niche is based on our cultural and natural attributes and is all-inclusive.
- A program that unifies the various subregions and the North Country as a whole.
- Economic development, transportation, land use, environmental quality and cultural preservation are addressed in an integrated comprehensive approach.

D. Next Steps

The next steps should include developing the framework for the organization and long-term management of the byways. Dialogue with local communities on the importance of land use regulation for the protection of the communities' attributes must continue. Partnerships need to be developed to foster economic development and growth in the tourism industry. The byway council must also promote appreciation of the region and operate as the pivot point for successful management of the byway.

All of these tasks are interrelated and need to be worked on simultaneously to develop the North Country Regional Scenic Byway as a high quality experience for today's traveler as well as tomorrow's residents and travelers.

II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS

A. General Review of Road (Safety) Narrative

The White Mountains Trail encompasses two US Highways, two State Highways, and one Interstate Parkway. It traverses ten Towns and two unincorporated places in the northern third of the State of New Hampshire. The byway covers 123 miles and it is a part of the North Country Regional Scenic Byway, which consists of 5 distinct and unique loops plus 8 spurs within the loops. A technical evaluation of the transportation components throughout the byway was conducted to assess the overall safety and riding pleasure of the road as well as the potential for bike routes along the byway. The entire length of the byway is a paved two-lane roadway with climbing lanes in some of the steeper sections.

The length of the byway was determined by the desire to create an extension of the Kancamagus National Scenic Byway while at the same time to create a loop for tourists to travel. The Bear Notch segment was added to the loop to give the tourists an option of remaining on an undeveloped byway, versus experiencing the cultural phenomenon of Conway. For management purposes, the width of the byway was set at one-half mile on either side of the route; in many cases views extend beyond that distance.

The results of the analyses indicate that there are several bridges that are structurally deficient and in need of replacement. Of the 72 bridges on the byway route, 3 are structurally deficient and on the state “red list”.

The pavement index for rider comfort (the most important for the average tourist and driver) ranges from very good on newly paved roads to 2.53 on roads that have been neglected. (The scale ranges from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best condition and 1 being impassable.) The percentage of roads with unacceptable low rider comfort indexes (below 2.60) is 5.8%. Depending on traffic volumes, roads with less than 2.6 are possible candidates for resurfacing or reconstruction. These roads include 4.55 miles of US 302 in Conway and 1.45 miles of US 302 in Bethlehem.

Areas of traffic concern and accident data was reviewed from local police departments and from the Route 16 Corridor study conducted by North Country Council (NCC, 1997). As anticipated, many of the populated downtown areas have traffic delays and congestions. The areas with capacity problems include North Conway and Conway along Route 16 and Lincoln along Route 112. Some intersections of concern include the Route 16 and 302 intersections in Conway and Bartlett. In places like Conway, traffic should ideally flow at 30 to 35 mph, the speed for which the road was designed with delays of no more than a single traffic light cycle at major intersections.

It was also noted that there are extremely steep grades on Route 302 through Crawford North. These steep grades pose more problems to the tractor trailer vehicles and the bicyclists than to the average motorists. All steep grades are adequately signed, providing the traveling public with a safe route and some of the most scenic vistas available.

In general, some inherently unsafe features may include: poor road geometry (combined curves and grades and sharp curves); short stopping and passing sight distance, limited signing and wooden guardrail without steel backing; fixed environmental features such as earth embankments, trees and rock outcrops; and areas where the route doubles as a major truck route and a scenic byway.

General safety actions that could be taken to avert accidents include:

- Reduce the speed differentials between recreational and other traffic through signs and warning messages;
- Erect advance warning signs announcing lane width changes;
- Provide adequate clear zones outside the traveled roadway in which errant vehicles could recover;
- Install adequate curbs, guardrail, and place barriers where clear zones cannot be provided;
- Provide parking turnouts at major viewing areas and short passing bays on long grades where continuous lanes are infeasible;
- Remove, where possible, dangerous fixed objects too near the roadway, such as large boulders and abandoned structures;
- Provide parallel but separated hiking and biking trails;
- Install escape ramps for large vehicles on long, steep downhills;

- Improve sight distance on horizontal and vertical curves;
- Rehabilitate and replace bridges inadequate for larger recreational vehicles; and
- Provide adequate access for emergency vehicles.

Safety and service improvements for the White Mountains Trail are the responsibility of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT). The NHDOT prioritizes its improvements with input from communities through the Regional Planning Commissions and subsequently develops the State Ten Year Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). The three bridges on the byway that are structurally deficient were scheduled for replacement in 2000 and 2005 as part of the STIP.

Other projects on the STIP have included; a North-South road and congestion relief on Routes 302 and 16 in Conway, construction of a multi-use path in Conway, and trails and sidewalks in Lincoln. Projects in the planning phases include an effort to construct a bypass for the Conway area. Lincoln is conducting a traffic study and is also looking at an alternative route through its downtown. Specific recommendations from these planning phases could greatly improve the serviceability and safety of the routes. As tourism increases on the byway and special events are developed, traffic plans will have to be updated and adjusted accordingly.

B. Highway Design and Maintenance Standards

NHDOT continuously monitors accident rates and the safety of all state roads. Other investigations may be performed as a result of observations by maintenance personnel, police agencies and individual citizens. All improvements will be constructed in compliance with NHDOT design and construction standards and are expected to have minimal impact upon the resources and intrinsic qualities of the White Mountains Trail; as a matter of fact, it is anticipated that the improvements will enhance the serviceability of the Trail. NHDOT will continue to follow guidelines of the AASHOTO (the “green book”) design standards and all addenda.

The North Country Byways Council will coordinate with NHDOT to ensure maintenance practices, rehabilitation, and new construction through the corridor will reinforce the character of the corridor. Some areas that they may coordinate include assuring that any new construction or reconstruction allow for adequate shoulder for bike and pedestrian use. A goal of the Byways Council is to make the byway loops safer for bicycle travel. In order to help make roadways safe for cyclists, the North Country Byways Council recommends that all roadways with narrow shoulders be upgraded to have a minimum of four feet wide paved shoulders.

Secondly, in areas of high traffic volumes such as downtown areas or busy intersection, bike path “bypasses” should be developed in order to minimize cyclist’s use of these areas. Whether it be newly constructed paths or using abandoned rail lines, this alternative would allow cyclists a safer option of travel and the ability to enjoy safe continuous biking along the loops of the byway. With minor improvements, many more routes could be made available to the average cyclists. Improvement to any of the bridges is recommended to include at least one sidewalk to service pedestrian and bicycling activity. Also, to enhance bridge aesthetics,

consider bridge railings that are visually pleasing for any new construction or bridge improvement along the corridor. A number of rails have been developed for this purpose.

The design standards will also include USFS standards as well as the recommendations of the Route 16 Design Manual (NCC, 1997) completed as part of the overall Rt. 16. Corridor Management Study.

Recognizing that the Scenic Byway experience is shaped through the quality of the driving experience, the Byways Council will work to ensure that the qualities of the roadway that currently make the route attractive and pleasant to drive will be maintained and enhanced. In addition, the traffic generated by special events or peak travel days will need to be dealt with in an efficient manner. The Byways Council will work towards developing a manual to deal with these special traffic generators. Also, they will continue to monitor adequate signage and warning devices to the motorists in all areas where pedestrian traffic is encouraged. They Byways Council will also work towards developing a design criteria to enhance the byways scenic qualities and improve its safety.

III. INTRINSIC QUALITIES

A. Intrinsic Quality Assessment

The White Mountain Region of New Hampshire has long been known for its natural splendor, cultural richness, historical charm and stimulating recreation. The White Mountains Trail is important for its varying topography, for the mountain and river views it offers, for the variety of vegetation areas from ledge to wetland and woodlands, and the 18th and 19th century buildings and structures along it. Further, it is in large part uninterrupted by commercial signs, standardized buildings, clear cut lots, over-scaled structures, or any of the many other ways in which rural corridors are scenically spoiled. In essence, much of the corridor is an excellent example of the typical New England rural area unspoiled by over development.

Scenic and Natural qualities abound in the North Country of New Hampshire. The glaciers carved notches and built mountains throughout the region. The White Mountains Trail travels around Mount Washington. Mount Washington is the tallest mountain in the northeast with the world's worst weather. The Crawford and Franconia notches are full of natural wonders such as waterfalls and many exposed granite rocks. The landforms continue to change and be shaped by weather phenomena. The White Mountains National Forest is in close proximity to the entire trail. The forest offers a wide variety of recreational activities including numerous hiking trails, picnic areas, swimming and boating activities and camping. Even the history of the region is tourist related. The Grand Hotel Era and the age of railroads kept tourists coming to the North Country at the turn of the century. The Mount Washington Hotel is one of three hotels that survived and is still in operation today.

Several historic buildings are still in existence today that tell the story of the first settlers of the North Country. The culture of the North Country is also based on the plentiful forest which developed a prosperous timber industry; many relics of the industry remain today. With all of

the natural beauty, scenic vistas can be seen at nearly every turn of the road to give the visitor the ability to view the Presidential Mountain Range from all angles. All of these qualities are of regional, some national, significance and are unique to the region.

The White Mountains Trail therefore possesses all of the intrinsic qualities and is well known for its outstanding scenic, natural, recreational, historical and cultural areas. A list of the most significant qualities is attached in the appendix.

B. Intrinsic Quality Management Strategy

- In May of 2003, the North Country Byways Council updated its intrinsic quality management strategy goals to reflect accomplishments and new funding challenges.
 - ***To protect and enhance the scenic, cultural, and natural resources of the North Country.*** The protection and enhancement of the resources is essential to maintain the character of the region. Techniques discussed in the land use analysis can be utilized to best accomplish this goal through education, sustainable activities, and good stewardship.
 - ***To pursue stable growth of the tourism industry as an important segment of diversified economic development in the region.*** Partnerships and development of economic potential will balance the protection strategies and provide for stable growth in tourism.
 - ***To promote appreciation for the unique regional flavor of the North Country and the individual byway loops.*** Promoting appreciation of the region dovetails with protection and growth through marketing of the loops, interpretive center, and kiosks. As people understand the uniqueness of the North Country, they will want to know more and also desire to protect it.
 - ***To support the scenic byway corridors as a high quality experience for tourists and local residents.*** Promoting intermodal transportation, partnering with NHDOT to create operation and maintenance standards and developing service facilities will improve the experience and increase the economic well-being of the region.
 - ***To pursue funding to support the mission, goals, and objectives of the North Country Byways Council.*** Funding is critical to sustaining byways' intrinsic qualities and implementation of projects to that end.

These goals will be accomplished through some of the following objectives:

- Highlight sustainable activities and good stewardship which illustrate a harmonious interaction between byway residents and the natural environment.
 - Develop design standards and adopt regulations as necessary to protect the intrinsic qualities and the rural character. Develop design guidelines for use by local communities or individuals to address architecture, landscaping, building

- material, color, siting, massing and height, onsite signage, billboards, parking, and lighting.
- Cooperate with organizations involved in complimentary activities: recreation, historic, economic, and educational to increase awareness of the Scenic Byway to protect the intrinsic qualities of the Byway.
- Act as a stewardship resource center for byway landowners.
 - Create a scenic resources registry to recognize significant scenic qualities and encourage conservation.
 - Provide information and referrals to land trusts about scenic easements and tax incentives for donations to conservations organizations.
- Encourage and assist towns to implement land use recommendations contain in Section II of this document.
- Encourage and assist appropriate organizations to implement the historic and cultural enhancement recommendations contain in the appendix of this document.
- Continue to pursue Nation Scenic Byways status for the new proposed additional White Mountains Loop.
- Work toward All American designation for Franconia Notch.
- Partner with NHDOT and local communities to create byway maintenance and operation standards and to protect intrinsic qualities of the Byway.
 - Develop standards for vegetation management, roadside grading, clearing and treatment of pavement and shoulders along the Byway.
 - Partner with local communities for rest area facilities and maintenance.
- Utilize technical assistance from places such as FHWA National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse.
- Improve the Byway experience.
 - Develop tour itineraries
 - Enhancement of signage system
 - Encourage use and development of new communications technology
 - Develop/continue beautification program.
 - Partner with others to improve facilities.
- Promote intermodal transportation opportunities.
- Encourage and assist appropriate organizations to implement the Scenic Enhancement recommendations contained in the appendix.
- Encourage and assist appropriate organizations to implement the Recreation Enhancement recommendations contained in the appendix.

White Mountain Nation Forest Role

The majority of the Byway is located within the White Mountain National Forest. Management is a part of the White Mountain National Forest Land Management Plan of 1986. The Forest Plan provides forest goals, standards, and guidelines. These guidelines were developed with public input to ensure protection and enhancement of the forest resources. Any project level planning within the White Mountain National Forest is the result of an interdisciplinary process that involves the following resource specialists; Wildlife Biologists, Engineers, Recreation Planners, Hydrologists, Soil Science, Landscape Architects and Foresters. Each project within the forest receives an environmental analysis, planning and

design coordination, and public participation. Outdoor commercial advertising is banned within the forest and the development plan includes the development of trails and roads and perhaps a future administration building, but no commercial development.

State Parks Role

Another major portion of the byway is located within two state parks; Franconia Notch State Park and Crawford Notch State Park. The New Hampshire Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the management and enhancement of the parks and have park plans for each. The remainder of the byway is located in one of the following four established communities; Conway, Bartlett, Carroll, and Lincoln. Only 5% of the byway is located outside of an area currently protected as National Forest Land or State Parks.

Local Land Use Regulations

A review of the land use strategies each community utilizes showed there is a great range of protection methods employed. Not one community has a byway overlay zone. To date, development pressure has been minor, but as the areas continues to grow, communities need to make sure their regulations can pass muster when development increases. The North County offers a unique quality of life for its citizens and tourists. Uncontrolled development has the potential to destroy this. Therefore, as the regional planning commission, North Country Council will continue to work with local communities on the development and refinement of their protection and management strategies for the benefit of scenic byways and the region as a whole.

A checklist divided into ten categories was used in this review:

1. **Commercial Performance Standards:** Identified design guidelines consistent with rural character;
2. **Environmental Performance Standards:** For commercial and multi-unit residential developments;
3. **Environmental Regulations:** For the protection of natural resources, such as wetlands or steep slopes;
4. **Lot Area, Dimensional, and Setback Requirements:** These regulate development density and the placement of structures on building lots;
5. **Accessory Uses and Structures:** These regulate the size and materials used for signs, the placement of satellite dishes, and the size and location of storage sheds;
6. **Multi-Lot Residential Developments:** Cluster, phased growth, and other provisions for the preservation of open space, scenic views, and agricultural forest land;
7. **Scenic and Historic Preservation:** Scenic road and shade tree bylaws which protect stone walls etc. in the public right of way;

- 8. Economic Development Provisions:** Regulations fostering home occupations, cottage industries, and commercial recreation which contribute to local economic development, including tourism;
- 9. Farm Land and Forest Preservation:** Towns may adopt land use regulations which limit or percent development of prime farm and forest resources, while also preserving rural character. These include mandatory clustering and other innovative rural zoning techniques.
- 10. Enforcement:** Adequate provisions for non-criminal penalties for violation of town ordinances.

As a result, the following recommendations were developed for the management and protection strategies related to land use which will enhance the visitors' experience along North Country Scenic Byways, preserve the North Country's rural atmosphere for its residents, and foster sustainable economic development in the region. North Country Council can provide a variety of model ordinances for towns.

- The creation of a variety of natural resources and byway overlay districts is recommended. Crucial to the implementation of these recommended ordinances is the availability of detailed and accurate resource maps for identifying the boundaries of these overlay districts. This presents a variety of challenges: some of the data is available in digital format, some is available from paper maps, and some has yet to be mapped at all. The expense of providing each town with overlay maps will always be a limiting factor in the implementation of these recommendations. Finally, many of these recommendations will need to be implemented through a zoning ordinance or site plan review. Communities which do not have this level of land use regulations in place will want to reconsider the advantages of a regulatory approach to land use planning.
- All of the communities with subdivision and/or zoning regulations appear to have provided adequately for non-criminal enforcement of the regulations, including fines, injunctions and bonding for improvements. However, good communication between the various bodies involved in administering and enforcing land use regulations is essential. Occasional joint meetings and education sessions are the best approach to ensuring cooperation between planning boards, zoning boards, and selectmen.
- Careful attention should be paid to conserving the scenic qualities of the most highly ranked categories, but more flexibility may be given to the sections of the road with more modest rankings. The intrinsic quality inventory consisted of a comprehensive road inventory of all features of local importance falling into one of the intrinsic quality categories. The data points were collected from a variety of community organizations, supplemented by NCC staff. All the points were located utilizing a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit and subsequently downloaded into the Geographical Information System (GIS) in order to produce accurate computerized mapping. Over 400 points of interest have been located within a ½ mile of the byway route. The purpose of the inventory was to identify the qualities

and features which make the White Mountains Trail special and unique. The importance of the features is variable, some view are more scenic than others. The inventory can also be utilized to distinguish between the relative importance of the features so decisions can then be made about the sections of the road which are more or less deserving of conservation and where improvements might best be directed based on the e level of importance.

D. Intrinsic Quality Interpretation Plan

A tourist guide, “Northern Journeys” has been prepared to highlight the “natural splendor, cultural richness, historical charm and stimulating recreation” of the region. The White Mountains Trail is one of the five loops highlighted in the travel guide. (All five loops are a part of the State Scenic Byways System.) According to the authors of the publication, “Much of the North Country can be enjoyed through a windshield, and this book is meant to deepen that enjoyment. Beyond describing key features of the landscape, each tour probes local cultures. But we offer mere nuggets. The lode is at museums, libraries, book stores, information booths, and interpretive centers. Our expectation is that you will park, put aside this book, and mine these resources. Carry a good atlas and peruse other guide books. Our hope is that, as your understanding deepens, you will enjoy these byways anew on your every visit.” Additional interpretation material developed will echo this theme to deepen the visitor’s appreciation of the region and show many travelers that there are more than amusements parks and ski areas in the North Country.

Existing interpretive sites include the Conway Visitor Center, the Saco Ranger Station, the Lincoln Visitor Center, Crawford Notch Visitor Center, and currently produces 1.6 million copies of a map and brochure of regional highlights, 650,000 copies of a travel guide for the region, and 400,000 copies of pad maps for motels, etc. In addition, many local chambers have their own publications for the Franconia Notch and Crawford Notch Parks and the White Mountains National Forest also has numerous trail guides and information about the forest. White Mountain Attractions will highlight the National Scenic Byway on all of their products and will be the center/coordinator for promotion and marketing of the byway.

The existing scenic vista sites were assessed as part of the data collection. The following summarizes improvements necessary to provide for better interpretation. Four (4) scenic vistas off Route 112 in the towns of Lincoln and Livermore should have new kiosks placed at their sites. It would be beneficial to tourists as they take in the views at these areas to know what they were looking at, such as names of various mountains. The kiosks presently in place have been carved into and written on to the point where they are very unattractive. Another recommendation is to continually maintain the present views by careful pruning of trees and other vegetation. The scenic vista in Carroll off Route 302 which showcases the Mount Washington Hotel and Mount Washington should have a kiosk that shows the names of the mountains in the Presidential Range that are visible and tells of the history of the area. The North Country Byways Planning Council proposes new interpretive sites and kiosks along the Trail at these locations and others.

In addition, there is the potential to develop thematic or specialty tours, brochures, and children's programs. Internet access through the New Hampshire Office of Travel and Tourism and the North Country Council website are planned. Visitor centers are currently located at the gateways to the White Mountain area.

One of the goals of the Byways Planning Council is: **To promote appreciation for the unique regional flavor of the North Country and the individual Byway loops.**

This will be accomplished through the following:

- Market the Byway as five loops, each unique within the region (the White Mountains Trail is one of the loops).
 - Develop a Tourism Development Plan for each loop and implement the plan with a locally driven planning process.
 - Work with municipalities to develop support for the corridor management plan and its benefits.
 - Continue revisions to the tourist guide.
 - Develop a planning guide for communities along the Byway.
 - Encourage more development and planning of links and hubs as destinations into themselves.
 - Develop a grass roots program for community representation through residents and chambers of commerce.
- Construct an interpretive center and kiosks which will promote the identity of the North Country as a region and create a “sense of place” for each loop.
 - Sponsor festivals and special events to generate interest and awareness.
 - Develop interpretive educational programs and materials based on historic and cultural information, natural systems, and outstanding scenery.

Additional action items for the interpretation and management of intrinsic qualities along the White Mountains Trail are in the appendix.

Visitors to the region include New England residents, visitors from the entire United States, and international travelers. Tour buses, recreational vehicles, and passenger cars are the primary modes of transportation to this region. There are also several small airports not suitable for large commercial flights.

IV. VISITORS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

A. Visitor Experience Plan

The plan is to minimize the intrusion of future development and changes on the visitor experience. The necessary services can be found at development centers or growth areas as targeted in North Country Council's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). This plan targets commercial and/or retail centers for growth while maintaining the rural character of the remaining communities. In addition, local planning ordinances that have been adopted and are enforced can enhance the scenic byway while minimizing intrusions and

protecting the unique qualities of the region. One of NCC's objectives as the regional planning commission is to work with communities on the development of appropriate ordinances. As discussed in the Intrinsic Quality Management Strategy section, 95% of the corridor is protected from development because it is within the White Mountains National Forest or within a state park. The remaining land is located in communities that have tourist related economies and realize the importance of protecting the natural environment through appropriate planning. These communities will continue to work towards developing additional land use recommendations that protect the resources of their town.

Currently, services, pull-offs, and turn-outs are scattered along the byway. A tourist traveling in an unfamiliar area needs to be reassured that he or she will find the necessary services at regular intervals along the route traveled. Services such as restaurants, lodging, gas, phones, and restrooms can generally be found in the regional growth centers or the downtowns of the more populated areas. In areas that are geographically isolated by mountain ranges and notches, there are no hard and fast rules on the required distance between facilities.

Major towns along the White Mountains Trail, Conway, Lincoln, Carroll, and Bartlett, provide support services (i.e. food, lodging gas, information, and public restroom availability). In these towns, tourists will find an adequate number of places for eating, lodging, information, and fuel.

The one service that seems to be inadequate or nonexistent in some areas is the availability of public restroom facilities. Lincoln provides a building operated by White Mountain Attractions that provides information for the surrounding area on attractions, upcoming events, etc., and where public restroom facilities are available. Tourists can find public restroom facilities at the NH State Visitor Centers/Rest Areas and Ranger Stations that lie outside of these towns. The Town of Conway has a NH State Visitor Center that lies just outside of its downtown region. As beneficial as these facilities are to passing motorists/tourists, they do not address the needs of those people that are visiting the towns themselves, people that are coming to walk the Main Streets, look at monuments, window shop, etc. The Town of Conway presently has both a Chamber of Commerce office and an information booth in its town. In addition, public restrooms are provided next to the Eastern Slope Inn in downtown North Conway.

Future improvements may include development of new bike routes and the enhancement of existing routes as the area is a primary recreation destination.

The aesthetic quality of existing commercial developments can be enhanced through education and community awareness, landscape development, parking lot relocation, sign management, and building façade improvements.

B. Development Plan

The majority of the White Mountains Trail is located within the White Mountains National Forest. Outdoor commercial advertising is banned within the forest and the development plan

includes the development of trails, roads, and perhaps a future administration building, but no commercial development.

Another major portion of the Byway is located within two state parks, Franconia Notch State Park and Crawford Notch State Park. The NH Division of Parks and Recreation is responsible for the management and enhancement of the parks and has park plans for each. No commercial development is planned. Enhancement and expansion of existing tourist facilities are the only areas of planned improvements.

The remainder of the byway is located in one of the following four communities; Conway, Bartlett, Carroll, and Lincoln. Only 5% of the Byway is located outside of an area currently protected as National Forest Land or State Parks. Conway is one community that has significant commercial development and the town just recently finished an update to its master plan. A major theme throughout the master plan is protecting the character of the community. Bartlett, the town just north of Conway has, as its number one objective of its master plan, to protect and preserve the environment. Carroll is the community just North of Crawford Notch State Park and as such, realizes that the pride and individuality of the town rests almost entirely on the visual quality and the natural landscape of the area. The master plan also states the desire to maintain the rural character and protect the natural beauty. Lincoln is the community that lies just south of Franconia Notch State Park and is currently working with North Country Council on updating its master plan. The town realizes that the natural resources are what make Lincoln special and that it is important to maintain the existing resources and encourage preservation, especially with tourism based economy.

North Country Council and the North Country Scenic Byway Council will continue to work with communities on regulations. A list of potential protection methods is included in the Intrinsic Quality Management section. Guidelines will be further refined for how development should be managed and how interpretation of intrinsic qualities should be pursued.

C. Commerce Plan

Commercial traffic is not expected to increase due to marketing of the byway. Tourist oriented traffic is expected to increase. The majority of the roads is not at capacity and can support a moderate traffic increase. A bypass is being planned for Conway to handle the traffic congestion in that area. Lincoln is in the preliminary stages of developing alternatives for a Main Street that is becoming congested.

All of the byway roads serve truck traffic. With a forest related economy, many of the trucks carry logs and pulp. US Route 302 is a primary truck route for east/west traffic. I93 and Franconia Notch is a major north/south truck route. NH Route 112 and US 3 are primarily traveled by tourists. Passenger vehicles dominate all roads. Climbing lanes have been constructed in steeper areas to allow safe passing of slow moving vehicles.

Access to all of the state highways is controlled by NHDOT through the driveway permit process to ensure vehicle safety. The many vistas and pull-offs in the notch and along the

Kancamagus provide safe areas to stop. Many informal pull-offs along the route need to be improved to increase safety.

Another goal of the Byways Planning Council is **“To pursue the stable growth of the tourism industry as an important segment of diversified economic development in the region”**.

This can be accomplished by the following:

- Work to develop the economic potential of the North Country Scenic Byway.
 - Continue to provide evidence of the widespread economic return on dollars invested in the project.
- Partner with related organizations for tourism development.
 - Work with regional economic development officials to recruit compatible businesses to locate in the region.

D. Sign Plan

The North Country Byways Council has decided that the proposed State Scenic Byways Signage System is adequate for the North Country Regional Scenic Byway. The State has developed a scenic byway logo that has been installed on the State Scenic Byways. Identifying each loop with a second or even third logo to show which loop the traveler is on would probably become confusing to the visitor. It may even destroy the rural character we are trying to preserve. The important thing is for the tourist to know that he/she is on a Scenic Byway in New Hampshire. This will be accomplished utilizing the state logo. The logo will also be utilized on all printed material associated with the scenic byway program.

Types of signs along the byway included advance warning signs for turn offs and visitor services, directory signs and general byway marker and activity specific signs.

E. Outdoor Advertising Compliance

NHDOT has adopted Tra 601 and 602 Control of Outdoor Advertising, Business Directional Sign, as of April 26, 1996. These regulations set minimum standards for roadway signs. The White Mountains National Forest and the New Hampshire State Parks do not allow commercial signs in their areas. The four communities outside of the protected lands have regulations that limit on site signage for commercial developments.

In compliance with all existing local, state, and federal regulations governing outdoor advertising billboards, no new billboards will be allowed along the White Mountains Trail. All outdoor advertising devices currently on the byway were grandfathered at that time. The majority of the route, 95%, is rural, where there is less of a demand for advertising.

V. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

A. Marketing Narrative

Currently, there are 12 million visitors to the White Mountains Region of New Hampshire. Tourism is the number one industry in northern New Hampshire and is responsible for 31.4% of the employment in the White Mountains Region. In 1990, tourists contributed \$3.3 billion to the State's economy. Visitors to the region are from in state, from all over the United States as well as international travelers.

There are many programs in existence to promote the North Country of New Hampshire. The visitor may obtain information at the state operated visitor centers, the State Travel and Tourism office has a toll free information line, there is regular media coverage of the ongoing scenic byways program, the byway will be posted with logo signs in the near future, and "Northern Journeys" a guide book to the byways will be updated and available in the summer of 2003.

It is impossible to put everything about the region into the "Northern Journeys" a sixteen page guide. This guide builds upon the work completed by local communities. The guide "hands the tourists off" to the local Chamber of Commerce, Information Booth, local walking tour, etc. The guide itself contains information on the unique sites discovered during the data collection phase of the project. The travel guide is the first promotional literature compiled from the North Country Regional Scenic Byway. The plan is to update and publish guides in the future. Other marketing material and special interest guides will be developed as appropriate. Promotion of the region is needed to develop the number one business in the North Country – tourism. Promotion of the scenic byway loops has begun with the development of "Northern Journeys". Signs designating the routes as state scenic byways are in place to help with promotion of the loops. As tourism grows, the need for more support services will also continue to grow. Present deficiencies have been identified (lack of restrooms, interpretive centers and kiosks) and need to be addressed through the byways implementation program.

White Mountain Attractions currently markets the region very effectively and is based in Lincoln along the White Mountains Trail White Mountain Attractions' executive direction will be the coordinator for promoting and marketing the scenic byway. The scenic byway promotion will be incorporated into their very successful marketing plan.

VI. PEOPLE'S INVOLVMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY

A. Public Participation Plan

In early April 1996, North Country Council (NCC) sent letters to approximately 25 citizens throughout the region with diverse backgrounds. The group included people from each areas of our region who represent politics, historians, the tourism industry, conservationists, local government, and concerned citizens. This group formed the basis of the North Country Regional Scenic Byways Planning Council (known as the North Country Byways Council since 1/03).

The Planning Council met in April and May of 1996 to review the Scenic Byways program, to determine what data collection standards would be followed and which routes would be

included for data collection. Also during this time, several local newspapers ran stories on the Scenic Byways Program, inviting those who wanted to be involved to contact NCC.

The Planning Council decided that, rather than set up new subregional groups to collect local information, we would utilize existing organizations. In late June of 1996, NCC mailed a description of the scenic byways program and inventory forms to a variety of local groups for their input on the intrinsic qualities along the byways. The packet was mailed to Boards of Selectmen, Conservation Commissions, Historical Societies and Chambers of Commerce. We also offered to meet with any organization that wanted more information.

During the summer months of 1996, NCC also met with representatives from Maine Department of Transportation and the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) to coordinate our efforts. The AMC is working on a multi state program to promote and protect the upper Androscoggin Valley. They had two interns collecting data in the communities. This data was incorporated into the information collected by NCC. It was determined that the Maine DOT and the State of New Hampshire had some connecting routes and could continue byways into the neighboring states. In September, the Planning Council was brought back together to review the data collected to date.

During September and October, a public services/facilities inventory worksheet was sent to all Planning Council members and Boards of Selectmen. This data was needed to assess the adequacy of tourist services. The Planning Council was convened again in November to review and make recommendations for the final data list and mapping.

The December meeting of the Planning Council began discussion on the development of a tourist guide; what should be included and how it should look. It was also agreed to submit an application to the FHWA for designation of the White Mountains Loop as a National Scenic Byway. In future years, additional loops may be submitted for National designation. The draft Highway and Safety Analysis and the Land Use Analysis Report were reviewed and discussed.

The January 1997 meeting was dedicated to reducing the 400 data points collected to a more workable number -- Truly unique and special points were pulled out of the list. Data points included covered bridges, state historic markers, picnic areas, information and rest areas, natural areas such as waterfalls, scenic vistas offering mountain views for example, trailheads and miscellaneous points of local or regional significance. February continued discussion of the Tourist Guide relative to data points to be included and naming of the loops and the Tourist Guide.

March, April and May were spent collecting additional data from communities along the byway. Letters were sent to the Board of Selectmen asking for input on construction projects that could enhance and improve the byway experience in their community, initiating an implementation effort. In August the Planning Council met to review and prioritize the construction projects submitted by each community. The group prioritized the projects and developed the action plan.

In October 1997 was utilized to review the draft Corridor Management Plan and discuss the

continuation and management of the North Country Regional Scenic Byway. Critical to the success of the Council will be the involvement and support of the many entities responsible for managing the resources along the byway and providing the necessary visitor services. North Country Council is in the process of seeking outside funding sources to continue the administrative role of keeping the Byways Council together until long term management can be developed. In addition, there was an acknowledgement that NCC's existing long standing Transportation and Economic Development Committees would be important vehicles to keep the byway process alive and growing.

The following entities are responsible for the development, recruitment, organization, implementation and maintenance of a strong scenic byways program:

- The North Country Byways Council
- New Hampshire Office of State Planning
- NH Office of Travel and Tourism
- White Mountain Attractions
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- White Mountain National Forest and
- NH Division of Parks and Recreation.

Public participation will be a year round effort. The intrinsic qualities will be reviewed annually by the entities responsible for maintaining the intrinsic qualities. Public outreach will continue to target community leaders, the general public, residents and business owners along the route. The Byways Council will continue to be the central organization and will continue to hold public meetings.

A. Responsibility Schedule

The North Country Regional Scenic Byway Planning Council has been established to manage and implement the byway program. The committee will function as a board of directors; settling policies, charging task forces with their responsibilities, structuring partnerships and cooperative agreements, soliciting support for the project and making organizational decisions. The Council will serve as a coordinator for all other agencies involved.

The National Forest and the NH Division of Parks and Recreation will be responsible the management of land and thereby the intrinsic qualities within the White Mountain National Forest, Franconia Notch and Crawford Notch. They will continue to promote the activities within the Forest and Parks.

The municipalities in conjunction with North Country Council will continue to provide protection of their valuable land resources.

White Mountain Attractions will take the lead role in promoting and marketing the byway with assistance from the NH Office of Travel and Tourism.

New Hampshire DOT and New Hampshire Office of State Planning will be responsible for continued maintenance of the road and Right of Way.

The North Country Byways Council will coordinate activities of the above listed organizations as well as handle the responsibility of providing a forum for public participation. A major part of the implementation process depends on a proactive effort to inform and educate citizens and the private sector on how to make improvements to enhance the efforts to preserve and protect the corridor. The effort is scheduled to continue from the corridor management plan development phase.

To create a permanent North Country Byways Council is another goal of the Planning Council. The following actions will help to achieve this goal:

- Organize the council
 - cooperate with complimentary organizations
 - give awards and recognition for excellence
 - seek non-profit status
- Hire professional staff to promote and improve the Byway experience
 - develop annual work plans
 - develop design and maintenance guidelines
 - develop signage guidelines
 - develop and distribute interpretive information to museums, visitor centers, and publications
 - increase awareness of the Scenic Byway through public relations efforts including brochures, newsletters, newspapers
 - develop byway business standards for trade and business associations that support the plan
- Seek funding sources to make the organization self-sustaining
 - Prepare and implement a byways business plan to include organization specific elements and generalized features
 - empower a board of directors to develop an endowment fund
 - expand and diversify public and private participation in revenue generating programs
 - develop reservations and tour packaging service
 - entrust a membership development and retention task force to develop a strong membership recruitment and retention campaign for individual and corporate partners
 - continue grantsmanship efforts
- Implement Promotion Action Items contained in Section II of this document.
- Implement the Management Action Items contained in Section II of this document

VII. OTHER CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Promotional Recommendations

- Develop a publicity campaign
- Public relations, develop brochures, newsletters & newspaper articles
- Public education and information about the byway
- Make interpretive information available at museums, visitor centers, magazines, books, interpretive programs based on introduction and orientations, historic and

- cultural information, natural systems and outstanding scenery
- Awards and recognition for excellence/ code of ethics for trade and business associations that support the plan
- Festivals and special events to generate interest and awareness
- Create a marketing plan for domestic and international campaign
- Advertise to increase awareness
- Develop niche marketing programs for themes, individual community images linked to overall byway and individual loops
- Promote the variety of year round opportunities to develop multi-season use
- Develop a system for coordination of events and festivals for more widespread promotion
- Create travel & hotel packages
- Launch a major domestic and international public relations campaign to generate corporate awareness and consumer travel interest
- Continue developing tourist guidebook and distribution
- Look at thematic guidebooks
- Encourage byway identification in advertising/marketing produced by other tourism entities

B. Support Services and Scenic Vistas

- Public restrooms should be constructed in Colebrook, Berlin, Gorham, Littleton, Conway, Plymouth and Lancaster at local Chamber of Commerce Buildings or Information Booths near the center of Town.
- The Haverhill/Woodsville area should develop a building to serve as an informational booth and to provide restrooms and phones.
- Existing kiosks (four) along Route 112 in Livermore and Lincoln have been vandalized and need to be replaced. View should be maintained with selective clearing.
- Scenic Vista on Route 2 in Jefferson should be enhanced with parking and information kiosk.
- Scenic Vista on Route 302 in Carroll showcasing the Mount Washington Hotel and Presidential range should be enhanced.
- Refurbish an existing historical building along the byway to house a scenic byway informational center for the North Country.
- Continue education of the public through variety of media.
- Continue to utilize and link existing organizations along the byway.

C. Management Recommendations

- Roadside management
- Guidelines to limit development in the foreground ~ Design Standards for signs
- Residential and commercial development should maintain the scale, materials and simplicity of design which characterizes the New England Village theme. Address architecture, landscaping, building material, color, siting, massing & height, onsite signage, billboards, parking & lighting
- Design guidelines advisory tool or required by local land use regulations

- Maintenance guidelines
 - maintenance & operation standards
 - vegetation management standards
 - roadside grading
 - clearing
 - treatment of pavement and shoulders

D. Scenic Enhancements Recommendations

- View and Vista Management
 - Selective clearing to open new views and maintain existing views.
 - Obtain easements for scenically or culturally important areas to preserve view and open spaces.
- Signage
 - Ban billboards and promote the removal of existing billboards.
 - Limit the number of byway-related signs to avoid confusion
 - Use construction materials appropriate to the rural theme.
 - Develop an on premise sign ordinance.
- New Development
 - Directed away from ridge lines of abutting hills.
 - Residential and commercial development should maintain the scale, materials and simplicity of design which characterizes the New England Village theme.
 - Develop vegetative buffers which enhance the scenic qualities.
 - Require building setback and height limits in keeping with rural atmosphere.
- Landscaping and screening to block and minimize existing objectionable areas.
- Turnouts
 - It is preferable to improve the existing turnouts and amenities than to construct new ones.
 - Turn outs along the route should be landscaped with native plants, the rural gravel road surfaces should be maintained but improved, and more formal borders should be established between the area designated for bicyclists and pedestrians and those for cars.

E. Historic and Cultural Enhancement Recommendations

- Utilize national, state and local registry programs.
- Develop historic and or cultural districts or overlay zones where a concentration of historic resources exists.
- Develop design guidelines or standards for these districts.

F. Natural Enhancements Recommendations

- Encourage resource management plans for vegetation and wildlife in local conservation areas or districts
- Consider the need for conservation ordinances to promote scenic roads, trees and stonewalls.

G. Recommendations for Recreational Enhancements

- Cooperate with local, regional and state planning processes for parks, recreation and open space, such as the White Mountains National Forest Ten Year planning process.

H. Land Use Recommendations

- Towns which do not have site plan review should consider adopting it as a way of reviewing the design and layout of commercial and multi-family developments. Such a review process gives the Planning Board authority to review parking proposals, setbacks, yards, landscaping, lighting, solid waste disposal and to minimize the negative impacts of such large-scale developments on the byway corridor.
- Adopt specific zoning standards for cottage industries which, especially when associated with forestry and agriculture, can contribute to the economic wellbeing of the town and the maintenance of the traditional natural-resource related economic base on a scale appropriate to the rural nature.
- Adopt a shared driveway provision, increase commercial frontage requirements or require interior streets as methods of limiting curb cuts and strip development on the byway.
- In towns which have cluster/open space development provisions, consider 1) making clustered development mandatory in certain districts, such as agricultural or conservation districts which allow residential development; 2) consider adding incentives in terms of density bonuses (awarding extra lots) for innovative open space (cluster) development; 3) consider other innovative rural land use techniques (models are available from North Country Council); 4) towns which do not have open space development provisions should consider the benefits of these.
- Consider the adoption of natural resource overlay districts to preserve undeveloped shoreline, steep slopes, wetlands, floodplains, important agricultural soils and large tracts of forestland. Limiting development in these areas to agriculture, forestry and outdoor recreation serves a multitude of purposes: ecological, financial (decreasing flood damage costs), and scenic.
- Examine and amend the town road standards. Recommended state standards may exceed the specifications needed to ensure safety at intersections and quality of construction on local or private roads. Over-built roads detract from rural atmosphere. Gravel roads, which maintain the rural atmosphere may be more appropriate than paved roads. Thoughtful landscaping at intersections may reduce the impact of a curb cut, while not interfering with sight lines.
- Sign ordinances should be amended or adopted to regulate the height, number, size and materials used for signs in the byway corridor. Portable signs with changeable type are especially unattractive and they can be prohibited. This could be part of a byway overlay district.
- Consider the advantages of creating a byway overlay district to preserve the character of the corridor.
- Consider the adoption of a floodplain/shoreline development ordinance or provision which limits development in the flood plain and within a 100' buffer on all surface

waters to agriculture, forestry and outdoor recreation. Such ordinances serve a multitude of purposes: ecological, financial (decreasing flood damage costs), and scenic.

- In areas with large undeveloped forested tracts where limited residential development may be appropriate, require large lot sizes and/or mandate open space (cluster) development.
- Consider the advantages of designating certain roads in the town as Scenic Roads so that shade trees and stone walls in the right of way are afforded some measure of protection from road improvements.
- Review enforcement provisions which establish non-criminal provisions for violations in the form of fines to see if these are adequate and consistently enforced.
- Adopt standards for the siting, construction and shared use of cellular communications towers. Consider the municipal acquisition of a suitable low-impact site for these towers and limit siting to this location.
- Towns without environmental performance standards for fumes, explosive materials, noise, smoke, vibration and hazardous materials storage should adopt them.
- Adopt a zoning provision regarding storage\accessory structures which limits their height and prohibits the placement of storage sheds and other accessory structures within setbacks or buffers.
- Understand that the FEMA ordinance regulates building in the flood plain but does not necessarily prohibit it. The Shoreline Protection Act adds further protection certain classes of water bodies and agricultural practices are exempt. Towns may want to enact their own more comprehensive shoreline protection measures.
- Towns should consider permitting campgrounds by special exception in appropriate districts and include adequate development standards.
- Towns should allow bed and breakfast establishments with appropriate standards in village districts.
- Towns may want to consider adopting a phased growth provision in their ordinances which would provide for the phasing in of large-scale residential development over a number of years so infrastructure needs may be adequately met.
- One approach to avoiding strip development is to require that large commercial developments with 600' (or another appropriate footage) of road frontage be required to provide interior streets for better traffic circulation and access.

APPENDIX A - INTRINSIC QUALITIES

The following is a list of the most significant intrinsic qualities along the White Mountains Trail.

- ❖ Carroll / Harts Location
 - Crawford Notch
 - Crawford House
 - Crawford Depot
 - Scenic Views
 - Trailheads
 - Picnic Areas
 - Scenic Cascades
 - The Notchland Inn
 - Scenic Vista of Mt. Washington and Mt. Washington Hotel
 - Zealand Recreation Area

- ❖ Bartlett
 - Bartlett Covered Bridge

- ❖ Conway
 - Scenic Vista of Mt. Washington
 - Abenaki Indian Camp
 - North Conway Village
 - Saco Valley Scenic Vista
 - Conway Village
 - Swift River Covered Bridge
 - Saco River covered Bridge
 - Saco Ranger Station

- ❖ Albany
 - Dugway Picnic Area
 - Albany Covered Bridge
 - Lower Falls and Picnic Area
 - Rocky Gorge
 - Russell-Colbath House / Passaconway Historic Site

- ❖ Livermore
 - Scenic views

- ❖ Waterville Valley
 - trailheads

- ❖ Lincoln
 - picnic areas

- ❖ Woodstock
 - NH State Visitor Center

- ❖ Lincoln-Franconia / Franconia Notch
 - scenic views
 - Old Man of the Mountain Site
 - Boise Rock
 - Trailheads
 - bike path
 - The Flume
 - The Basin
 - Echo Lake
 - Profile Lake
 - New England Ski Museum

- ❖ Franconia
 - Mt. Lafayette Scenic Vista

- ❖ Bethlehem
 - Mt. Cleveland Scenic Vista & Picnic Area
 - Beaver Brook Wayside Area