

North Country Scenic Byways Council
Meeting Minutes
September 22nd, 2009

Attendees: Chris Thayer (AMC), Jayne O'Connor (WMAA), Betsey Harding (Jackson), Dick Hamilton (Littleton), and Eileen Alexander (AANH).
Guests: Dean Eastman (NH DOT)
Staff: Mary Deppe (NCC)

Welcomes & Introductions

The meeting began at 2:00 pm at the NCC offices in Bethlehem. Everyone around the table introduced themselves.

Scenic Byways Program Updates

Dean Eastman explained that NH DOT is waiting for the federal government to what projects will be funded from the 2009 Scenic Byways grant round. He said that it is likely that NH DOT will find out by the end of the year. He also explained that the federal government and NH DOT are working to get the Scenic Program in line with other federal programs like TE and CMAQ, all of which are based on 80%-20% reimbursement.

Dean Eastman discussed the John Stark Byway and explained that is new in southern NH as of 2007. He also explained that New Hampshire will be working with Vermont and Maine in the future on a northern New England Scenic Byways group. He explained that NH DOT would like to see the Connecticut River Scenic Byways Council and the North Country Scenic Byways Council work together more.

Mr. Eastman explained that NH DOT has funded from FHWA to develop a New Hampshire Scenic Byways website that is will be run by an outside vendor, but in line with the DOT site.

Mr. Eastman explained that NH DOT is currently working with the AG's office on the rules regarding the NH Scenic Byways Committee. A set of rules will be written and distributed to the committee.

Mr. Eastman explained that currently, with Scenic Byways grant application process, the State Committee ranks projects and then sends the ranking to the feds. Once approved, NH DOT enters a Municipal Agreement with the grantees. He said that in the future, NH DOT will be requesting letters of intent for projects submitting applications. It is a difficult situation though since NH DOT does not know what the funding amounts are. In the last round, there was \$43.5 million in funding nation-wide and applications were submitted for twice that amount. He also explained that applicants must enter a municipally managed contract and hire construction managers to make sure that FHWA requirements are met. He explained that all Scenic Byways projects need to be stamped by an architect or engineer.

Mr. Eastman explained that the Scenic Byways program will probably be around in the future, but that no one is sure at this point in time. He also explained that in the past, New Hampshire has received about \$500,000, and that we can probably expect the same level of funding this year.

Mary Deppe asked if NH DOT could host grant workshops to help applicants understand the program changes. Dean Eastman said that is possible. He also explained that applicants can use in-kind match, but there needs to be very strong documentation and it needs to be approved by NH DOT ahead of time.

He also stated that there is a rule where no one can charge more than \$50/hour for in-kind services. He also explained that the Scenic Byways program does not allow for additional costs, so if your project goes up in cost, the scope must be reduced or the project managers must find an additional source of funding.

Dean explained that when projects are funded and contractors are being hired, the grantees must take the lowest qualified bid. He clarified that that I must be the lowest bid that meets the qualifications for your project.

Mr. Eastman explained the North Country Scenic Byways Council needs to determine which byways are going to be included in this group. He went on to explain that each byway should have an overseeing committee that would do outreach to byways communities. The byways council should be responsible for coordination regarding events, fundraising, etc.

There was some discussion from the group about why signs are allowed in some areas of the byways and not in others.

There was discussion about whether or not this committee should rank regional projects and, if so, should there be some type of general scoring criteria that can be used to do so. The group had a discussion about a grant process that would include:

- 1.) A meeting about the grant round, rules, eligibility, etc.
- 2.) A letter of intent that describes that projects and would be submitted to NHDOT and the byways councils.
- 3.) The North Country Scenic Byways Council would meet and support projects with a letter send to DOT.

Chris Thayer suggested that the process above (or something like it) be laid out and written up.

Dean Eastman stated that there would be a conference call with the NH Scenic Byways Committee on December 1st, that the grant round would be likely be announced October 15th, and that letters of intent would likely be due on November 15th. Dean said he will forward all letters of intent to Mary Deppe at NCC, and she will send them to the rest of the council.

Jayne O'Connor explained that she attended the National Scenic Byways Conference in Denver and that Gary Jensen of the Byways office offered the following for how they allocate the grant money:

- 1.) Determine eligibility of applicant and project.
- 2.) Projects located on National Byways Projects will get preference over ones on State Byways.
- 3.) The Feds will look at the State priority lists and give priority to projects which demonstrate the greatest strategic benefit.
- 4.) The Feds want to fund high cost projects with long term benefits.
- 5.) Clear and concise applications are applauded.
- 6.) The Feds try to spread the funding, but there are no quotas.

Other Issues

Dean Eastman said that he would provide the North Country Scenic Byways Council with the state statute regarding the New Hampshire Scenic Byways Committee and the committee membership list.

Based on discussions around the table, Mary Deppe developed the following action items list:

- 1.) Develop NH Scenic Byways grant timeline (*Dean Eastman and Mary Deppe*)
- 2.) Develop general scoring criteria for North Country Scenic Byways Council (*Mary Deppe*)
- 3.) Send grant announcement to Communities (town managers, planning boards, select boards) and Chambers of Commerce, etc., located along the Kancamagus/White Mountain Trail (*Mary Deppe*)
- 4.) Forward the letters of intent to the rest of the committee (*Mary Deppe and Dean Eastman*)
- 5.) Rank the letters of intent on November 18th (*North Country Scenic Byways Council*)
- 6.) Update the bylaws/guidelines (*Mary Deppe and North Country Scenic Byways Council*)
- 7.) Post the most recent Corridor Management Plan on the NCC website (*Mary Deppe*)
- 8.) Begin updating Corridor Management Plan (*Mary Deppe and North Country Scenic Byways Council*)
- 9.) Develop a steering committee list and e-mail list (*Mary Deppe and North Country Scenic Byways Council*)
- 10.) Email the USFS Byways Report that mentions the Kanc as a partnership success story to the rest of the committee (*Mary Deppe*)

Dean Eastman suggested looking at the steps for Corridor Management Plan development on the BywaysOnline.org website.

Jayne O'Connor handed out some maps and promotional materials from White Mountains Attractions.

Next Meeting

The group decided that the next meeting would be on Wednesday, November 18th, from 12:30-2:30 at the NCC offices to review and rank the projects for which letters of intent are submitted.

Minutes Submitted by:

Mary Deppe

10/2/09