

## **Historic Byways Criteria**

**KANSAS SCENIC BYWAYS COMMITTEE**

### **Kansas Scenic Byways Program Background**

*Adopted May 8, 2008*

Leisurely driving along scenic roadways is a recreation enjoyed by much of the U.S. population nationwide. Early efforts to promote scenic highways in Kansas involved sporadic local sponsorship of various road segments, then designating and signing those routes through legislative or local governmental action. However, there were no uniform criteria or long-term management of these routes.

In 1962, the federal government created a Recreation Advisory Council to provide scenic driving opportunities to the public. The Council recommended that a national program of scenic roads and parkways be developed. In response to this recommendation, the Kansas Highway Commission conducted a study entitled “Scenic Roads and Parkways Study in Kansas” in which 28 routes were identified for possible scenic byway designation. An update to that report, “National Scenic Highway Study in Kansas,” was completed in 1974 by the Kansas Highway Commission to comply with the 1973 Federal Highway Act.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, little formal work was done on a scenic byways program in Kansas. In 1989, a Kansas Scenic Byways Task Force and Advisory Committee was developed, represented by various State agencies, industry leaders and local Chambers of Commerce. Kansas State University, in cooperation with the transportation departments in Missouri, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, conducted a regional research study which resulted in the development of models for inventorying and evaluating scenic byways, selecting uniform criteria for designation, and developing strategies for economic development, marketing and protection.

The National Scenic Byways Program was created by the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) to identify and develop scenic byways that offer outstanding scenic, historic, natural, cultural, recreational, or archaeological values to the traveling public throughout the U.S. The National Scenic Byways Program is intended to spark local “grassroots” activity in the identification, nomination, and long-term maintenance of the scenic quality of the routes throughout the country.

Under the National Scenic Byways Program and ISTEA, KDOT initiated the Kansas Scenic Byways Program (KSBP) using a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant in 1992. The study resulted in the development of guidelines for the program and the creation of the Kansas Scenic Byway Advisory Committee (KSBAC now KSBC) consisting of representatives from the following state agencies: KDOT, Kansas Department of Commerce (Travel and Tourism Division), Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Kansas State Historical Society. The initial focus of the KSBP was designating scenic byways with long-range plans to also designate backways and roads with scenic places once byways were fully established.

The National Scenic Byways Program considers six intrinsic qualities when it designates National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads. Those intrinsic qualities are: scenic, natural, historic, cultural, recreational and archeological. While all six intrinsic qualities are of importance to Kansas byways as well, the KSBP primarily has focused on the scenic intrinsic qualities of its byways. It did this to offset the mistaken image Kansas has of being “flat and boring.” It was important to the members of the KSBC that Kansas Scenic Byways should be truly scenic so no visitor could say, “Kansas thinks that is scenic?”

The KSBP Clearinghouse was established in 1995 to administer the Program and to provide technical assistance to local byway communities. Bucher, Willis & Ratliff Corporation (BWR) was hired to manage the Program and Clearinghouse. Staff members also present conferences and seminars, publish newsletters and byway brochures, produce manuals and guides, maintain a website and undertake other scenic byway projects, as appropriate.

At the present time, there are nine designated Kansas Scenic Byways with several more in process. They are:

Flint Hills Scenic Byway: K-177 from Council Grove to Cassoday, designated June 14, 1995, approximately 47 miles

Frontier Military Scenic Byway: K-5, I-435, U.S. 69 and U.S. 69A from Leavenworth to the Kansas-Oklahoma border, designated June 15, 1990, approximately 170 miles

Glacial Hills Scenic Byway: K-7 from Leavenworth north to the Kansas-Nebraska border, designated December 17, 2002, approximately 63 miles

Gypsum Hills Scenic Byway: U.S. 160 from Medicine Lodge to Coldwater, designated September 21, 1999, approximately 42 miles

Native Stone Scenic Byway: K-4 and K-99 from I-70 in Wabaunsee County to Glick Road in Shawnee County, September 30, 2005, approximately 48 miles

Prairie Trail Scenic Byway: K-86, Smoky Valley Road, old Highway 81, K-4 and K-141 from Canton in McPherson County north and west through Roxbury, Lindsborg, and Marquette, designated October 26, 2007, approximately 56 miles

Post Rock Scenic Byway: K-232 from Wilson to Lucas, designated August 10, 1998, approximately 18 miles

Smoky Valley Scenic Byway: K-147, K-4 and U.S. 283 from Ogallah to WaKeeney, designated July 30, 2003, approximately 60 miles

Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway: K-4, K-156 and numerous county roads around the Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Barton, Reno and Stafford Counties, approximately 76 miles.

On September 22, 2005, the Flint Hills Scenic Byway and the Wetlands and Wildlife Scenic Byway were designated as National Scenic Byways by the National Scenic Byway Program of the US Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration. In addition, two byway projects on the Flint Hills National Scenic Byway have won national awards from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the National Scenic Byways Program.

### **Kansas Scenic Byways Program Background**

On several occasions during the Program's existence, routes have applied for Kansas byway designation that did not meet scenic criteria but did have significant historic qualities. In addition, representatives from historic trails and roadways have approached the Program about expanding the byway designation to include historic byways. The KSBC requested that research of historic byway designations be conducted in 2007.

Procedures and policies related to historic byway designations in other states were researched. As is true of scenic designations, each state having historic designations has its unique focuses and qualities. In addition, the criteria from the National Register of Historic Places and elements of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Roads Program were researched. Kansas State Historical Society procedures were also researched.

Numerous issues were taken into account in developing historic designation criteria. First and foremost, it is the aim of both the historic and scenic byway designations to identify the applicable resources along the proposed route, and through local grassroots commitment, preserve, enhance and promote those resources along the route for the enjoyment of visitors as well as the economic well-being of the byway communities. In many ways, every road in Kansas has historic qualities, but for designation as a Kansas historic byway, it is important that the route have national, regional (multi-state) or state historic significance. It is important that the historic intrinsic qualities of the proposed historic byway be evident and of high quality. Just as with the scenic byway criteria, it is important that detractions from the visitor experience be minimized. In addition, it is important that the historic designation criteria and processes are compatible with the scenic designation criteria and processes.

## **Historic Byway Criteria**

An historic byway must have resources that are significant historically, be numerous, be visible, and have a setting or character that is complementary to the resources.

Historic resources contributing to the historic byway designation include: the road itself, historic residential and commercial architecture, stone fences, historic events, birthplaces of significant people, proximity to historic places, etc. The road's historic contribution may be in such fields as transportation, engineering, commerce, architecture, culture, agriculture, exploration, settlement, Native American experiences, ethnic migration, etc.

A route proposed for historic byway designation shall have the following characteristics:

1. national, regional (multi-state) or state historic significance;
2. historic intactness, including buildings from applicable historic period(s) on or eligible for the State or National Registers of Historic Places, with a minimum of intrusive development and distractions;
3. historic sense of place through its visual relationship between the landscape, buildings and structures, that unifies and defines the area;
4. preserved historic features including the original roadway/trail alignment, vegetation patterns, paving system, bridges, culverts, etc.
5. be paved;
6. capable of carrying tour buses and recreational vehicles
7. be of sufficient length to provide an enjoyable experience to the traveler—not too short so it isn't worth getting off "the beaten path" and not too long to be overwhelming.

## **Requirements for Designated Historic Byways**

No land use management requirements are mandated by state historic byway designation. However, the corridor management plan must describe how the local byway group (through local existing land use regulations, voluntary efforts, etc.) intends to preserve the historic and scenic resources that the designation recognizes so that visitors both now and in the future may enjoy those resources. Existing roadway authorities will have the same financial and management responsibilities for the route itself that they had prior to designation. Designated routes must comply with federal outdoor advertising (billboard) regulations: No new off-premise commercial billboards may be erected on designated byways that are part of the Interstate System or the former Federal-aid Primary System except as noted in the regulations (Title 23 USC).

## **Historic Route Nomination Process**

Similarly to the scenic byway designation process, the procedure for nominating a route for designation as a Kansas historic byway includes the following steps:

local group nominates route by completing an application form with a map;

local group receives initial go-ahead from KSBC to proceed with a mile-by-mile historic route evaluation process;

KSBP also conducts a mile-by-mile historic route evaluation for comparison and evaluation;

KSBC analyzes the evaluations and then requests a corridor management plan be (CMP) completed by the local group;

the CMP process shall include public meetings to inform the communities along the route of the intention of the byway group;

local group provides draft CMP to the KSBP for review;

local group revises CMP as necessary;

local group presents the revised CMP to local governing bodies for resolutions of support;

local group presents the revised CMP and resolutions of support to the KSBC;

KSBC accepts the CMP and resolutions and recommends the historic byway designation to the Kansas Secretary of Transportation;  
KDOT provides a legal description of the route including any segmentation;  
Secretary of Transportation makes official historic byway designation;  
Local group implements the CMP.

The KSBC recommends to nominating groups that extraordinarily long proposed historic byways be nominated in contiguous segments with initial focus on the more nationally or regionally significant segments and/or those segments with more numerous and intact historic intrinsic qualities.

The CMP shall demonstrate the local group's commitment to preserve, enhance and promote the historic byway and its intrinsic qualities and to provide safe travel for the byway visitors. If the historic byway has areas that are unattractive to visitors and/or do not support the intrinsic qualities of the byway, the CMP should include plans to improve and/or interpret the areas in question so the visitor experiences include a greater understanding and appreciation of the byway and its history.

Once the Secretary of Transportation designates the route as a Kansas historic byway, KDOT and its KSBP will provide route markers, brochures, page on website, state map display, and other amenities as funding is available and as appropriate.

Communities interested in designation requirements should contact the Clearinghouse at 1-800-684-6966. More information about the byways may be obtained at [ksbyways.org](http://ksbyways.org).