

**Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic
Byway Planning Project Final Report**



November 2014

by Bob Bollenbeck, ECRDC Transportation Planner

Final Report for Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway Planning Project

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TAP Funds and Purpose of Planning Process

The Transportation Alternatives Program was established by the MAP -21 Federal Transportation Bill. It combines three previous programs into one. These programs were the Transportation Enhancements Program, Scenic Byways Program, and Safe Routes to Schools Program. In Minnesota, Scenic Byways Coalitions are eligible to receive these funds for projects to improve scenic routes.

TAP funds are distributed through the ATP process, so each MN/DOT District has dedicated funds for TAP projects. In the spring of 2014, there was a Scenic Byways Workshop held to discuss the Scenic Byways program and opportunity for the TAP funds. It was subsequently decided to contract with Regional Development Commissions to assist local scenic byway coalitions in planning for potential projects eligible for this new funding category.

The East Central Regional Development Commission service area includes two Scenic Byways: Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway in Pine County and a major portion of the St. Croix Scenic Byway in Chisago and Pine Counties. Planning began in 2014 in relation to these byways.

Scenic Byway Description

The Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway is located on TH 23 in Pine County. It starts at the I-35/Banning State Park exit and continues east on TH 23 to Duluth. This byway is 50 miles in length and goes through the communities of Askov, Kerrick, Bruno, Duquette, and Bruno. There are also a number of townships along the route. There are also a number of points of interest as well as local parks along this Byway. The large Evergreen trees are one of the scenic features along with the Kettle River, other streams, and spectacular vistas at a few locations. The roadway itself has been reconstructed and is in very good driving condition, making it a pleasant drive east.



Task Force Development & Planning Process

Bob Bollenbeck, ECRDC Transportation Planner, identified possible scenic byways task force members. One of the key players was Jan Ashmore, who coordinated the TH 23 Task Force in the 1990's and organized the designation process for the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway. Meeting with Jan, a number of players were identified and a mailing list developed including representatives from local units of government, MN/DOT, townships, former task force members, business leaders and local citizens.

The planning process included conducting local meetings to get input on possible projects, discussion of TAP program purpose and intent, and information on the byway such as the assets. Three meetings were planned.



*Pine County Historical Museum
Askov, Minnesota*

Summary of Meetings

The first was held on July 17, 2014 at the Pine County Historical Museum in Askov. About a dozen persons were in attendance. The TAP planning process and program parameters were discussed with emphasis on developing potential projects for TAP funding consideration. Examples of possible TAP projects were presented. Meeting materials are included in this report.

It was decided to hold the second meeting in Duquette on August 28. Andy Gunderson, owner of the Duquette General Store, agreed to serve as Chair of the Committee. The second meeting was focused on identifying the Scenic Byway assets. Five categories of byway assets were discussed. Scenic, Archeological, Historical, Cultural, and recreational were identified and discussed. Mr. Tim Campbell, Minnesota Office of Tourism assisted the group in identifying the assets. A list of assets was compiled and made available. Materials from this meeting are included in this report.

The third meeting for the task force was held October 9 at Duquette City Hall. While there were only six persons participating, there was significant discussion and direction identified. Significant discussion included signage at each end and on the Byway as well as more visibility on Interstate I-35, possible projects in the Gary/New Duluth area, emphasis on “veterans”. There was general agreement that the next steps for the Scenic Byway was to develop a viable structure to guide the byway development. Meeting materials are included in this report.

It is important to note that mailings were sent prior to each meeting and press releases developed. In addition, ads in the local papers in Askov and Moose Lake (Shopper) were placed to attract the general public to this planning process.

Task Force Participants

A large mailing list of possible participants was developed and meeting announcements sent prior to each meeting. A core group of participants participated regularly and provided input. The mailing list is included in this report.



Kettle River

Action Plan to Move Forward

The Task Force discussed how to move forward. There was an overwhelming concern for organizational structure. This structure was seen as critical to moving any potential project forward as well as general impetus for Scenic Byway tourism. A number of projects were suggested during the planning process and were highlighted. Some of the projects were:

Clearing brush for better vista of the Evergreen trees, interpretive signage and displays highlighting local veterans, identification of historical sites in communities, mapping of points of interest, and potential trails.

The first task agreed upon was the establishment of a Veterans Evergreen Scenic Byway structure such as an ongoing committee to guide future development and activities of the Byway. It was agreed to meet again to start the discussions about moving forward.

The second task was to have prominent identifiable Scenic Byway Signs at the beginning and end of the route. Attractive signs would likely encourage more people to drive the route. There was much discussion about signage for the route on Interstate I-35. Details about this signage were briefly discussed. It was agreed this action item could be undertaken at the same time the Byways structure is being developed.

Conclusions/Final Comments

In previous planning activities, the driving force for local involvement was the improvement of the TH 23 roadway. Mn/DOT did indeed improve the road so it is now a good, smooth road surface. Since the road improvement happened, generating interest in this planning process was difficult. But this process resulted in increased awareness of the TAP program and funding.



*Veterans Memorial Marker
Bruno, Minnesota*

There is no existing coalition to spearhead TAP projects for the Scenic Byway. In order to propose projects and receive funds, an organization must be organized.

Further Considerations for the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway:

- A. Since there is neither a viable Corridor Management Plan nor a cohesive byway group to guide byway decisions, the ECRDC could pursue development of a Corridor Management Plan (CMP). This would require a significant investment of time and other resources. We estimate developing a CMP to be in the range of **300 hours (approx. \$30,000)**. This also assumes the development of a viable scenic byway corridor organization/structure to administer the various work components.
- B. Another option might be to de-designate the corridor unless a structure can be developed.
- C. As a result of the above situation, we do not anticipate a plan update at this time.

Appendices

Veterans Memorial Scenic Byway Initial Meeting

1. Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions
2. Purpose of Meeting
3. Planning process
4. What is Scenic Byways planning? Why are we here?
5. What is the planning area? Corridor limits
6. What data do we need?
7. What are the outcomes expected? Type of projects
8. Who else should be involved?
9. What projects are being planned for the Corridor
10. History of

What is a scenic byway?

Why is it important to do this planning?

Who should be involved?

Meeting schedule

July 1, 2014

Hello Highway 23 Stakeholder:

I am writing to invite you to participate in a local project to determine the future of Highway 23 in Pine County. We are working with MN/DOT to do some planning for the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway (Highway 23) in Pine County. The scenic byway corridor runs from I-35 to Duluth. The purpose of this planning is to identify a list of projects which would be eligible for Transportation Alternatives Program funding. Your input as a stakeholder along this corridor is vital to move this project forward.

Our first meeting will be held at the Pine Historical Museum in Askov on Thursday, July 17 at 6:00 PM. I expect this meeting will last about an hour to an hour and a half. We will provide light refreshments such as coffee and cookies.

We are pleased to be working with TH 23 Task Force Coordinator Jan Ashmore on this project. One of the first items for discussion will be Highway 23 upcoming improvements as well as history of work of the task force. Bryan Anderson, MN/DOT District 1 Planning Director will be on hand to discuss work scheduled for the Highway Corridor. We will also discuss this Scenic Byways project and get your input as to how to proceed.

Summary of the July 17, 2014 Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway Meeting

The meeting was called to order by Bob Bollenbeck, ECRDC Transportation Planner. He welcomed all and thanked everyone for coming. Everyone introduced themselves. There were about 10 persons present. The agenda was reviewed. One member brought an "old" designation poster for this Byway.

Jan Ashmore, Highway 23 Task Force Coordinator, gave a brief history of the work of the task force. The task force was active for several years in the mid 1990's. She talked about the first meetings which focused on highway improvement. The town hall meeting in Duquette generated a large amount of interest. Planning with MN/DOT and others proved to be successful. This planning led the task force to develop the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway proposal and subsequent designation for Highway 23 from I-35 to Duluth.

Bryan Anderson, MN/DOT District 1 Planning Director gave an overview of upcoming construction work on Highway 23. Over the next 3 years a significant amount of money will be spent on west Duluth improvements. He described the project and costs. He indicated that the District will not have enough funds to even keep up with road preservation. Of course, there will be some funds available in categories such as Safe Routes to Schools.

Bob Bollenbeck then gave a summary of Scenic Byways elements and purpose of this planning process. He indicated that we will be developing a list of projects eligible for Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) funding. He summarized the intent and purpose of TAP funding and provided examples of potential projects. Bob then asked how we should proceed and who else should be involved.

There was much discussion on who else might be involved. The business community should be more involved was a general consensus. It was stated that we'll likely need to bring the project to local businesses. Others mentioned include Veterans groups. Daughters of American Revolution (DAR), DNR and Banning State Park. Contact names were offered.

Sam Griffith stated he had contacts for Tribal Historical Preservation for Mille Lacs and Fond du Lac.

He also suggested there was much work done with the St Croix Initiative, which has an inventory of assets helpful to this planning activity.

Bryan Anderson said he was meeting with someone who might be able to help with some strategic planning relative to identifying cultural, historic, and archeological assets of the area.

The next meeting was identified for August 28 in Duquette at 6:30.

-drafted by Bob Bollenbeck, ECRDC

Veterans Memorial Scenic Byway

July 17 meeting - 7PM-8:30 PM

1. Call to order, welcome, introductions -
2. Purpose of Meeting
3. What is a scenic byway
4. Why is planning important now for this byway?
5. Identify Corridor
6. History of TH 23 Task Force – Jan A.
7. Mn/DOT projects planned for TH23 – Bryan A
8. What are assets of this Byway? (all)
9. Who else should be at the table?
10. When to meet next?
11. adjourn

Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway
August 28, 2014 meeting notes

Agenda

Pleased to introduce Andy Gunderson who has agreed to provide leadership to this process.

Thanks for making arrangements for tonight's meeting Andy.

Purpose of Meeting – This meeting is an important step in the process to identify potential projects for TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) funds for this scenic byway

Review Last meeting (handout)

Held one meeting last month to go over the process:

We discussed the process and elements of the scenic byway

We discussed the need to identify byway assets that are:

Historical, Cultural, Scenic, Recreational, and Archeological

Goal: is to come up with projects that would make the byway more attractive by connecting to the assets

I am pleased to introduce Tim Campbell, MN Tourism office, who will help lead through the process to identify the byways assets.

Date: September 25, 2014

To: Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway Stakeholders
And Interested Persons

From: Bob Bollenbeck, ECRDC

Re: **Next Meeting**
Thursday, October 9, 2014
Duquette City Hall
6:30 PM

Hello. Please consider this notice for our next Hwy 23 Scenic Byways meeting. It will take place at the time and location above. We had a very productive discussion at our last meeting concerning byway assets. Based on our discussion, we will now move forward with identifying projects to propose for Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding. We will likely need to set some priority of projects for the byway. I'll bring our notes from the last meeting.

Thank you in advance for your help and participation in this process. Your help in inviting others to this meeting is appreciated. Feel free to contact me should you have a question. I look forward to seeing you Thursday, October 9 in Duquette. Thanks again & have a nice day!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11, 2014

Contact: Bob Bollenbeck
(320) 679-4065 ext 24

Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byways Meeting Oct 9

The next meeting for the Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byways planning project is scheduled for **Thursday, October 9 at 6:30 PM at Duquette City Hall** on Highway 23.

This meeting will focus on identifying potential projects that would qualify for Transportation Alternatives (TAP) funding through MN/DOT. Projects ideas could include interpretive signage, possible trails, overlooks/viewing areas development, pedestrian facilities, and others.

Everyone is welcome to participate in this meeting. Persons with questions may contact Bob Bollenbeck, East Central Regional Development Commission, at 320-679-4065. Thank you.

Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway

Agenda for October 9 Task Force Meeting

1. Planning Project Status
2. Review Eligibility for TAP pjts (handout)
3. Identify possible projects
 - North End projects
 - South End projects
4. Brainstorm Projects
5. Prioritize Projects
6. How to proceed/should we meet again?
7. Other
8. Adjourn

Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway Meeting Notes for October 9, 2014

Present: Bryan Anderson, Lisa Perlick, Linda Schaumburg, Kelley Hawkins, Sam Griffith, Bob Bollenbeck

1. **Project Status** – Bob Bollenbeck gave a brief report on the status of the project. He reported that we have identified assets of the Byway and now the task is to identify potential projects for TAP funds as well as others.
2. **TAP Eligibility** – Bob Bollenbeck distributed information from a recent TAP workshop concerning project eligibility and funding qualifications. This information was briefly reviewed and discussed.
3. **Byway Project Identification/Brainstorming**- Bob stated that it would benefit to have noteworthy bookends for the Byway in order to attract travelers to the route. There was much discussion about developing prominent signage at each end of the Byway. Sam also noted the importance of letting folks know that, along the way, they are ON the Byway with points of interest and such. It was agreed that signage on the Interstate would be beneficial. A list of other possible project suggestions was distributed and discussed briefly.

Bryan Anderson stressed the importance of building an organization that can move things forward for the Byway. In fact, he noted it would be difficult to have projects funded without a viable organizational structure. This led to much discussion about organizing as the first task. Ideas were suggested such as working with the colleges to have a class take on development of the Byway organization as a project.

Bryan also stated that Mn/DOT District 1 may have some planning funds provided a work plan would yield positive results for organization development. Discussion followed.

4. **Next Steps**- Next steps were discussed. Most discussion centered on developing a structure to put the Byway in a position to move forward with project development and program promotion.
5. **Other** - Bob stated he would draft some notes on the meeting and send out to the group.

SCENIC BYWAY ASSESTS

Scenic

- Not the freeway
- Banning State Park
- Nemadji Hills
- Jay Cook State Park
- Norway Pines
- Kettle River bridge
- Rutabaga Falls
- Kettle River
- Veterans overlook
- Fon Du Lac
- St. Louis River
- Mt. DuLac
- Glacial features
- Wildlife
- Trains
- Fall colors
- Geological features

Recreational

- Canoeing, kayaking
- Biking
- Hiking
- Camping
- Snowmobiles
- ATV trails
- B&B
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Bird watching
- Fall colors
- Picnicking
- Autumn Winds Tour
- Geocaching
- Horseback riding
- Cross country/downhill skiing
- Snowshoeing
- Dirt biking
- Off road vehicles

- Whitewater
- St. Louis River
- Boy Scout landing
- Rock climbing
- Blueberry picking
- Organic farm

Cultural

- Danish community- Lena's Store
- Logging
- Native American
- Railroad
- Pine County History Center & Event Center
- Pine County History Center Mural
- Rutabaga Days
- Askov is home to Gov. Hjmer Anderson
- Daughters of the American Revolution /Forest
- Steam engines
- Duquette General Store

Historical

- Logging
- Mining-stone
- Railroad
- Casting sand mine
- 1977 National Christmas Tree (Nemadji Forest)
- Famous logging families
- Ralph Plaistad-North Pole on snowmobile
- Bruno-1st dedication of the highway
- Banning State Park
- Holyoke Train Trestle
- Part of the Highway 23 goes through Wisconsin

Archeological

- NA

Suggestions of possible TAP projects for Veterans Scenic Byway

1. Clear Brush along byway for better vista of Evergreen Trees
2. Trail between Banning State Park and Askov
3. Interpretive Signs/displays highlighting local veterans from area
(each town along the byway could have a stopping point)
4. Prominent Signage at beginning & end of Byway Route
5. I.D. Historical sites in communities (ie Lena's store)
6. Signage on Interstate for Byway
7. Mapping of points of interest along route along with rest areas
8. Improve Veterans memorial display at north end of route
9. Trail between the park and veterans display on north end

Mailing list for Pine/TH23 Scenic Byways

1. Becky Lourey, Nemadji Research Co., 7564 Birch St Box 100, Bruno 55712
2. Marc LeBrun, 405 Airport Rd NE, Pine City 55063
3. Bryan Anderson, Mn/DOT District 1, 1123 Mesabi Ave, Duluth 55811
4. Mary Nelson, 35256 State Highway 18, Finlayson
5. Jerry Volk, Box 245, Sandstone 55072
6. Neil Beise, Nickerson Twp, 92109 State Highway 23 Nickerson
7. Ovid Jenson Partridge Twp, 39230 Partridge Dr., Askov 55704
8. Christine Storebo, Bruno Clerk, 48009 wild Haven Rd, Bruno 55712
9. Davis Ryerson, Bruno Twp, 71805 Fleming Rd, Bruno 55712
10. Mark Sagvold, Kerrick Twp, 91229 Range Line Rd, Kerrick 55736
11. Caysee Beise, Nickerson Twp, 94360 Delong Rd, Nickerson, 55749
12. David Minke, Pine County Administrator, 635 Northridge Dr NW, Pine City 55063
13. Ann Stitt, Partridge Twp Clerk, 67947 Sunrise Rod, Bruno 55712
14. Wayne Stadin, Kerrick Mayor, PO Box 37, Kerrick 55756
15. Terry Johnsen, Askov Mayor, 6336 HC Anderson Alle, Askov 55704
16. Jeanett Swenson, City of Brunom PO Box 66, Bruno 55712
17. Connie Ecklund, City of Askov, PO Box 245, Askov 55704
18. Jessica Youngberg, Kerrick Twp, 25221 Co Rd 41, Kerrick 56756
19. Sam Griffith, City of Sandstone, 119 4th St, PO Box 641 Sandstone 55072
20. Bob Voss, ECRDC, 100 S Park, Mora 55051
21. Jan Ashmore
22. Don Blechinger, Box 86, Bruno 55712
23. Xavier Villarrael, PO Box 262, Finlayson 55735
24. Deb Standin, PO Box 47, Kerrick 55765
25. Curt Rossow, PO Box 82 Willow River 55795
26. Matt Ludwig, PO Box 454 Sandstone 55072
27. Arla Budd, Pine Historical Museum, PO Box 123, 6333 HC Andersen Alle, Askov 55704

Potential Scenic Byway Funding Sources

Funding Source	Responsible Entity	Infrastructure	Non-Infrastructure	Notes
Scenic Byway Solicitation	MnDOT	X		Final solicitation occurring in CY 2015
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	ATPs / MnDOT	X		http://www.dot.state.mn.us/map-21/tap.html
Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	U of M		X	http://www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/
Community Development Funding	DEED	X		http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/community-funding/
Greater Minnesota Public Infrastructure Program	DEED	X		http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/business-funding/infrastructure-grants.jsp
Explore Minnesota Grant Program	Explore MN		X	http://www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/ways-to-get-involved/grants/
Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program	DNR	X		http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt_legacy.html
Outdoor Recreation Grant Program	DNR	X		http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Rail-Crossings	MnDOT	X		
General transportation programming	MnDOT; Counties; Cities	X		Share Byway needs with responsible roadway entities; some may be able to be accommodated through standard transportation programming processes.
Minnesota Geospatial Information Office	MnGeo		X	Not a funding source but may be used as an information resource http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/
Minnesota State Demographic Center	Admin Minnesota		X	Not a funding source but may be used as an information resource http://mn.gov/admin/demography/
State Health Improvement Program (SHIP)	MDH	X	X	http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/
County Fair Arts Access and Cultural Heritage Grants	MDA		X	http://www.mda.state.mn.us/en/grants/grants/countyfair.aspx
Recreational Trails Program	DNR	X		http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_federal.html
Local Trail Connections Program	DNR			http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_local.html

Regional Trail Grant Program	DNR	X		http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_regional.html
Other DNR Grants	DNR	X		Depending on the project, other DNR grants may be appropriate http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html
Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants	MHS		X	http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants
RDC Transportation Planning Grants	MnDOT / RDCs		X	
Private Foundation Grant Opportunities	Varies			http://www.lmc.org/page/1/private-grant-sources.jsp
Chambers of Commerce	Varies		X	Local chambers may have funding available to assist with byway activities related to economic development
Byway Membership Fees	Byway groups		X	Consider charging a byway membership fee to accomplish small projects and/or provide match to other grant opportunities
Advertising Revenue	Byway groups		X	Sell advertising in byway publications to cover costs
Regional Arts Councils			X	http://www.arts.state.mn.us/racs/
Hazard Mitigation Assistance	FEMA	X		https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance
Federal Land Access Program (FLAP)	FHWA	X		http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/
Minnesota Design Team	AIA Minnesota		X	http://www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/committees/minnesota-design-team/
SHPO Grants	MHS		X	http://www.mnhs.org/shpo/grants/



*Commemoration Ceremony
October 4th 1998*

VETERANS EVERGREEN MEMORIAL SCENIC DRIVE

*Join us at 1:30 P.M.
at the Jackie Berger Park in Duquette on
Highway 23.*

The festival will include:

- *An armory vehicle parade*
- *Music*
- *Air Guard fly-over*
- *Flag ceremony
and much more.*

**Mark
Your
Calendars**

