

**BAYSHORE HERITAGE BYWAY CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN
PUBLIC WORKSHOP SERIES #1
CAPE MAY COUNTY**

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: November 17, 2011

TIME: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Cape May Courthouse, NJ

SUMMARY

Lillian Armstrong of Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and its Tributaries began the workshop by welcoming all of the participants. She stated that since the Bayshore Heritage Byway was designated as a state scenic byway in 2009, it is now time to create a plan that spells out the future of the byway. Lillian also mentioned that this is a critical time for the public to provide input and feedback on the plan to help shape the future of the byway and its resources.

Overview of the Project

Jim Klein, the Project Manager of the Lardner/Klein (L/KLA) Project Team, gave a brief overview of the workshop agenda, the byway corridor management planning process, and provided some recent examples of scenic byway plans or heritage plans that L/KLA had completed. He mentioned that the purpose of today's workshop would be to continue where the 2009 nomination/designation process left off and that the first steps would be to define the corridor and to start formulating the vision and goals of the CMP and the overall vision for the byway.

He mentioned that the project team was working with a Corridor Management Committee (CMC), many of whom had been involved with the byway's nomination and subsequent designation. He said that together, the CMC and the residents and businesses from each byway community need to determine what they would like the Bayshore Heritage Byway to become over time, and how the communities will be able to use nature- and heritage-based tourism, and to what scale. Jim stated that the group needed to start thinking about:

- Preservation and conservation strategies along the route, over time.
- Visitor experience and enjoyment.
- The travel route – is it ready for visitors?
- How many visitors are appropriate to the Bayshore region?
- How can we help visitors find all of the unique places along the Bayshore?

He stated that New Jersey has had a Scenic Byway program since the 1990's and that New Jersey Department of Transportation is currently developing a consistent signage program.

Jim also stated that by achieving a national designation (National Scenic Byway or All American Road), the region may get more recognition for the route (almost like the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval”). With a national designation, the byway may be eligible to receive additional funding from the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) for enhancements and improvements to the byway route.

Jim explained that the CMP will dictate how the communities want heritage- and nature-based tourism to occur. It will allow the communities along the byway to scale marketing activities to yield the desired experiences. The end result should be a document that spells out specific management for the byway that incorporates “sustainable tourism” – economic opportunities that are consistent with the existing quality of life along the byway.

Jim provided the following examples of scenic byway corridor management plans that his firm has worked on, each highlighting different aspects of the planning process:

- Millstone Valley Scenic Byway – one of two nationally designated byways in New Jersey featuring the region’s history.
- Brandywine Valley Scenic Byway – CMP identified conservation priorities and landscape enhancement plans; successfully collaborated with Delaware Greenways to nominate for national designation.
- Maryland National Historic Road – one segment of six-state All-American Road; CMP led to \$1.6 million in first two years for interpretive installations, design guidelines, marketing programs and facility enhancements.
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground – three-state byway from Monticello to Gettysburg; CMP identified management priorities and an action plan for implementation – partnerships and commitments from three state DOTs, numerous local governments and other organizations were critical to implementation.

Jim also introduced the members of the Project Team:

- L/KLA – Jim also introduced Sarah Couchman, who will be helping with all aspects of the CMP.
- Fitzgerald & Halliday (FHI) – Kristen Ahlfeld, who was present at the workshop, gave an overview of FHI. FHI will be assisting with stakeholder and public outreach processes, as well as assisting with the bicycle and pedestrian facility-related tasks. They will be looking at issues and opportunities for bikes and pedestrians along the byway and helping to develop recommendations to increased/safer access as well as linkages to key natural and scenic resources along the byway.
- John Milner Associates (JMA) – although they were not present at this workshop, Jim explained that JMA would be taking a closer look at the cultural and historical and archaeological resources along the byway.
- McCormick Taylor – was represented by Joe Bucovetsky at the workshop. Joe explained that McCormick Taylor would be evaluating transportation and land use along the byway and making sure that land use and transportation policies supported each other, were context-sensitive, and provided safe access to/from byway resources for all modes of travel (multi-modalism).

Stakeholder/Public Outreach

Kristen Ahlfeld (FHI) gave a brief overview of the stakeholder and public outreach processes. Kristen mentioned that as residents of the byway, it will be important for as many people to participate in the planning process as possible so that everyone has an opportunity to shape the future of the byway within their community. She explained that the CMC was going to serve as an advisory committee that will guide the project and provide input to the project team at key milestones. She mentioned that starting in January, the CMC was going to begin meeting monthly; these meetings are open to the public so everyone is encouraged to attend and participate. Several different types of outreach techniques will be used:

- Public workshops – Kristen mentioned that the workshops are the first in a series of three, and that the Project Team will be holding similar meetings in Cumberland and Salem counties.
- Interactive project website – She stated that the website is “live” and that it will be updated to include the most recent project information. She reminded everyone that the web address was on the back side of their agendas and to check it often for future meeting dates and documents.
- Comment boxes at all meetings – Kristen stated that there will be a comment box at all of the meetings and that attendees are encouraged to leave additional feedback, questions, or input in the box. She pointed out that there was a comment form on the back side of the agenda.
- Online meetings – for those individuals who would like to participate but have a conflict on a specific meeting day, the Project Team may make online meetings available. Kristen mentioned that the Project Team strongly encouraged people to attend the meetings in person and that the logistics of the online meetings were still being worked out at this time.

Kristen stressed the importance of participating in the meetings and requested that the participants pass along contact information for additional people who were not in attendance today. She pointed out that Jim Klein’s contact information was on the back side of the workshop agenda and that attendees could email or call Jim if they had additional questions, comments, or contact information for those people who may be interested in the project but not in attendance today.

Byway Corridor Management Planning Process

Sarah Couchman (L/KLA) presented an overview of the steps that would be conducted to complete the corridor management plan for the Bayshore Heritage Byway.

1. Inventory and Assessment – required by the New Jersey Scenic Byway program. A visual inventory of the byway was conducted in September. The byway was divided into character areas so that the byway qualities could be assessed more comprehensively. All character areas were given a high or low rating, which helps to better define which areas should be targeted for enhancements or protection/preservation strategies.
2. Protection and preservation strategies. Will be covered at the next CMC meeting on January 19, 2012.
3. Enhancement strategies.

4. Interpreting the byway route – what stories/history makes the places along the byway unique?
5. Devise safety and transportation strategies – how can we accommodate all modes of transportation safely along the byway?
6. Develop heritage and nature-based tourism – we will need to determine the appropriate level of visitation for the byway.
7. Establish an action plan – this will be a “live” document that will include strategies/recommendations, implementing partners or agencies, and potential funding sources or strategies.

Defining the Corridor

Sarah continued her presentation by stating that the byway is not “just the road”. When we talk about the byway, we are also including the view from the road, the places along the road that are related to the byway theme, as well as the presence of regional resources. She then began to identify key issues associated with defining the byway:

- The complexity of the route (we may need to think about ways to assist travelers with route navigation);
- The byway may not be able to accommodate all modes of transportation because of the current road conditions; alternative parallel routes may be needed for bicycle use for example in some areas
- NPS Coastal Heritage Trail – we will need to determine the status of this facility. Because the funding for this facility expired on September 30th, and because there is so much overlap between the byway and the Coastal Heritage Trail, we may need to be prepared to develop strategies to partner with some of the sites along this facility;
- Coordination with other touring routes – we need to think about ways to cut down on the confusion associated with overlapping routes
- Level of tourism – what is the appropriate level for communities and infrastructure?

Discussion on the Definition of the Corridor

Mayor Michael Beck (Lower Township) was given an opportunity to address the Project Team and Cindy Bloom-Cronin (NJDOT) with regard to amending the current byway route through Lower Township. As currently designated, the byway does not go through Lower Township. The following summarizes the special discussion on amending the current byway route:

- Mayor Beck stated that, “we need this road and this road needs us”. He said he had no knowledge of the Lower Township resolution passed in 2009 essentially approving the byway on its current route. He stated that the route currently bypasses Lower Township and that Lower Township has so much to offer the region, state, and the rest of the world:
 - Fishing Creek School (original one-room schoolhouse);
 - Scenic vistas so beautiful they are photographed by National Geographic

- Former Ponder Lodge Golf Course – public property within the American Flyway, has become a premier birding area
- Military history/tourism – Vietnam War Museum, Naval Air Station Wildwood
- Susan DeLanzo, Mayor of Middle Township, stated that Middle Township has been very aggressive in preserving land and natural resources. She supports Mayor Beck to amend the byway route down Bayshore Road. She also mentioned that she has been working very closely with Green Acres to find additional funding sources for protection of land and resources. Currently, Middle Township is repaving the access road to Cook's Beach for use as a rest area and for birding. In the future, she mentioned that this area could possibly be used as a comfort station for byway visitors.
- Mike Humes from Sunset Beach stated that his family has owned and operated the Sunset Beach Gift Shop and mini golf for the last 39 years. He stated that Sunset Beach is the most-visited beach on the Delaware Bay and that Sunset Boulevard is the most heavily-traveled route by bicycle, therefore it should be included on the byway.
- Steve Sheftz presented a history of Town Bank. He said that Lower Township has a recognition problem and that it needs to change. He stated that Lower Township has the largest seasonal and year-round population than any other town in Cape May County. He also mentioned that Town Bank is considered the birthplace of South Jersey and has history dating back to 1635.
- Cindy Bloom-Cronin (NJDOT) stated that changing the route of the existing byway requires submitting a modified byway application. She stated that the application is available on the NJDOT website and that it will need to include mapping showing the new route, information on the intrinsic qualities located along the new route, discussion of current zoning, route features (pictures), and a discussion of the good and bad points along the route. Resolutions of support from the municipalities involved in the change will be needed. Once completed it will need to be reviewed and approved by the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition since they are the sponsor of this byway. Upon approval by the Coalition, it can then be submitted to NJDOT. Cindy also mentioned that several public meetings had been held in Cape May County in 2008 and 2009, and as a result of those meetings, the current route was approved. She stated that meeting participants/residents at that time felt the route along Bayshore Road might conflict with the many residential properties there and that the current route was more direct.
- Lillian Armstrong added that NJDOT and the South Jersey Bayshore Coalition had to get sign-off from every municipality that touches the byway and that Lower Township did sign-off on the current route.
- Cindy stated that she would assist Lower Township with the application; she mentioned that the modified application needs to be completed as soon as possible so that the Project Team can complete the CMP for the correct route.

Byway Vision and Goals

Each of the workshop participants was given an index card. They were asked to pretend to be byway visitors and write a postcard describing their experience on the byway to a friend or loved one at home. Participants were told that their experiences could be positive or negative and that these responses would help to shape the goals of the CMP and the overall vision for the byway.

The following summarizes the results of that exercise:

- Fewer people, great views, fishing, lots to do
- Town Bank – first county seat of Cape May
- Lots of history in Lower Township
- A.J. Meerwald, Monarch butterflies, Cape May diamonds
- Cape May-Lewes Ferry, Fishing Creek School, Cold Spring Village, Aviation Museum, Ponder Lodge
- Birding, historic sites
- Could have used a restaurant with farm-fresh food/seafood
- No restrooms
- Wish we could have found somewhere to buy a picnic lunch
- Cold Spring Village and Cold Spring Village Presbyterian Church (1723), grange house restaurant, lobster houses
- Flag-lowering at Sunset Beach
- Wish more money was spent bringing more attention to the Bayshore
- Coxe Creek – Dr. Coxe
- Vietnam War Museum, Wildwood Aviation Museum, end the day at Sunset Beach at flag-lowering

The participants were then asked to discuss the “must see” features of the byway:

- Sunsets
- 4th of July fireworks
- Douglas Park/Ferry

Still thinking about their “visits” to the byway, the workshop participants were then asked what would have made their visit to the byway better:

- Better signage
- Tours and itineraries

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- If this is the Bayshore Heritage Byway, then why are we diverting from the bay?
- There is so much history down here that people don’t know about. Fishing Creek was once a river – during the war of 1812, British sailed up and down the river. Also Sunset Beach was a steamboat stop.
- What about the vineyards? Could we do a wine tour?

ADDITIONAL NOTES

- The next CMC meeting will be held on January 19, 2012 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.; location TBD. Check the website for more information.
- Workshop attendees will forward names and email addresses of additional byway businesses or stakeholders to Jim Klein and Cheryl Reardon.

- The Project Team will update the website with workshop materials and information, as well as upcoming meeting dates and times.