

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

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

MEETING DATE: November 16, 2011

TIME: 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Maurice River Township Municipal Building, Leesburg, NJ

SUMMARY

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 of 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 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 Cape May and Salem counties the next day.
- 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 Byways 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; bicycles, for example may need to use an alternate route in some places
- 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?

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:

- Beautiful sunsets
- Shorebirds/birding/bird migration
- “Finding” lodging
- Bay coasting – away from traffic on Route 55
- Too much trash (on beaches and at crabbing spots); too many “leave-behinds” from hunters, farmers and other users
- Peaceful
- Wish industry was still around (it’s a little empty)
- Beautiful country but not much shopping or restaurants
- “After a 3-hour drive, we finally got to Cape May...”
- No bathrooms or a bed and breakfasts
- Few places to camp in Cumberland and Salem counties; wish there was a water trail

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

- East Point Lighthouse
- Bayshore Discovery Project
- Beautiful sunsets
- Sand mining locations/beautiful ponds/“blue holes”
- Lake Audrey

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

- Railroads/rails-to-trails/history
- Solid beach/a better place to take out kayaks/canoes
- More access to water (Thompson’s Beach – no parking)
- A place for animal/wildlife events (animal rescue operations)
- More places to camp; there may be some people who wish to kayak/canoe and camp along the rivers, but right now there is no place to do that.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

- It would be helpful to have examples to help us understand what is actually included in the byway corridor? ***Sarah Couchman explained the limits of the byway and some of its spurs and the natural, scenic, historical resources that make up the Bayshore Heritage Byway.***
- Is the route defined at this point? ***Jim Klein stated that the route was designated by NJDOT in 2009. He also stated that Lower Township is proposing an amendment to the route so we are going to need to look at that. Jim also mentioned that participants can find an official map on the New Jersey DOT website and that public meetings were held in 2008 and 2009 so that the public and municipal leaders could help define the byway.***

- Some roads and potholes are unattractive. Have local governments said they will upgrade these facilities along the byway? **Jim Klein stated that we will be working with them through the CMP process. There is limited funding available now for those sorts of improvements, however, hopefully after the CMP is done more funding could be obtained to make necessary roadway improvements. Jim cautioned that some funding programs do not support standard highway maintenance**
- Right now, we have trash on beaches, at crabbing spots, and along the roadways. We also have people who still bury their trash in their backyards. How can we let people know that this behavior is not o.k.? How can we get them to change? **Jim Klein responded by saying that there are ways of educating people to hopefully elicit behavior change. Jim mentioned that on some of his other byway projects working with school-age children and other members of the community has raised awareness regarding the “specialness” of the byway corridors. Jody Carrara mentioned that the Cumberland County Improvement Authority is responsible for trash receptacles and suggested that perhaps we work with them to organize community clean-up days; she will pass along contact information for someone at the Cumberland County Improvement Authority to Jim and Sarah.**
- Going beyond the roads and the view, should we include events like Bay Days? **Jim Klein stated that linking calendars and events would be an excellent marketing activity and could definitely be a recommendation included in the CMP. Workshop participants added that there are a large number of events that could attract people to the byway including “3rd Fridays” in Millville and “2nd Fridays” at the Bayshore Discovery Project. Cheryl Fox of Al & Sam’s Canoe & Kyak said that her calendar has just as many community events as it does business events and that connecting all of the calendars will be very important to making people aware of the byway.**
- I am worried about the type of visitors that will be attracted to the byway. **Sarah Couchman stated that based on the types of natural, scenic and historical resources found along the Bayshore, that the nature-based and heritage-based visitor is often childless couples or active older adults and that they are interested in preservation and conservation and will be respectful of the Bayshore and its communities.**
- Will the CMP guidance document be mandatory? **Jim Klein said that no, the CMP will not be mandatory (the only requirement is that no new billboards be allowed). Rather, it will provide examples of preservation and conservation strategies that communities may want to follow if they want to do more preservation and conservation along the byway. Sarah Couchman added that the recommendations included in the CMP will be “context-sensitive” meaning they will be “in keeping” or within the same character of the communities along the byway.**
- Cheryl Fox runs an ecotourism business. How have you gotten businesses involved in the past? **Jim Klein stated that it will be integral to tie business activities into the byway. He went on to say that the Project Team understands that people cannot attend every meeting, but hopefully through the planning process people will begin to understand what the byway can do for their business. Kristen Ahlfeld added that local and regional chambers of commerce were contacted to be part of the CMP process; however, she also mentioned that if there were more local business owners that should be added to the project distribution**

list, participants should email their names and contact information to Jim Klein. She also mentioned that even if the business owners cannot come to the meetings, they would still be receiving project information.

- Will this team advise the municipalities on land use planning and permitting? **Joe Bucovetsky stated that he does not know what the land use recommendations are yet, but the CMP very well could include specific land use policy recommendations that could be adopted by communities if they desired. He said that he will need to review current land use practices and policies before those recommendations can be made.**
- I feel like people come to the byway, drive for three hours on their way to Cape May. Lodging and food are important issues. **Jim Klein said that there are ways to encourage business creation. The Project Team will look at/research funding sources or grants or loans that may be available for business start-up. Sarah Couchman added that we had a similar discussion with the CMC and that it is a “chicken and egg” situation – why would someone start a business without a good tourist base, but why would tourists come to the byway without a lot of businesses.**

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 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.