



Memorandum:

To: Religious Freedom Tour Byway Advisory Committee
CC: Byway Management Team and Consultant team
From: Jim Klein
Date: 20 August 2007
Subject: Draft Corridor Definition

Corridor Definition:

The Religious Freedom Byway shall include:

- The road itself – includes the travel route and associated right-of-way
- The view from the road – see corridor width discussion noted below for criteria
- Places to visit along the way (that are related to the byway theme) – including any site open to the public that requires no more than 2 turns off the byway
- Resources associated with the corridor – including any parks, greenways, public lands, historic districts, recreational trails, water trails, and wildlife sanctuaries that intersect with the byway.

Corridor Width Discussion

For the purposes of defining a byway corridor, several site visits have led us toward the conclusion that the open farmland views and views toward the Potomac River shore should be the most important criteria for creating a logical corridor boundary.

There are four different conditions along the byway that influence the byway corridor's width:

- **Closed-canopy forest sections** narrowly define the byway on both sides, especially in the Nanjemoy area. However, if these forests were to be removed it would greatly change the experience of driving along these parts of the Byway.
- **Built up areas** are currently found in only a few places along the byway, mostly at intersections and strips along Route 234 and Route 5, the main spine of the Byway, and approaching and in Leonardtown, the largest incorporated town along the Byway. However, even these few areas provide a stark contrast to the rest of the Byway, and point out how important it is to plan development even in relatively rural areas, lest the rural and charming character be spoiled. One only needs to drive on Three Notch Road that runs just north and parallel to much of the Byway to see the drastic difference in driving experience that widespread sprawling commercial development can create.
- **Expansive river and bay views** are found in several places along the byway, extending in some places for many miles out across the water and beyond into Virginia. These special views, noted on the corridor definition maps should be recognized as part of the corridor width definition so that future large scale projects such as bridges, power plants, wind farms, or large scale electrical transmission lines will need to consider these views in their future planning and regulatory approvals.
- **Pastoral views** of barns, farmhouses, tree lined roads and hearty crop fields are found throughout the byway interspersed by woodlands and wetlands. The history of these farms is integral to the culture of this part of Southern Maryland and their preservation is vital to the beauty and pleasant experience of driving the Byway.

The view from the byway, due to the generally very flat topography, is limited for the most part by the presence of the tracts of forest from which the old farmlands were carved with some open views out to the water and beyond. We recommend defining the width of the corridor into two distinct categories with different management practices using the following:

Immediate Roadside

The primary issues in this area include roadside character and roadside appearance, tree preservation, agricultural land preservation, agricultural use (right-to-farm), access management, on- and off-premise signs, wayfinding, context sensitive roadside design/solutions, etc. The immediate roadside includes:

- Existing road surface and right-of-way
- All parcels of land with immediate frontage and access along the byway route
- All parcels of open farmland adjacent to the byway (regardless of whether the parcel has frontage)

Views from the Byway

The primary issues in this portion of the corridor include preserving the rural character of the overall landscape, minimizing intrusions to the view (such as cell towers, power plants, utility lines, etc.), agricultural land preservation, growth management and open space conservation. It should be noted that the IRS requires proof that any tax benefit associated with a conservation easement have a conservation purpose and that the byway corridor plan will need to establish that public purpose so that individual property owners wishing to donate a conservation easement for tax benefits will have proof of public purpose. This portion of the byway corridor shall include:

- Any lands or waters that can be seen from the byway
- Any land or waters that can be seen from an historic site that is directly related to the theme of the byway as defined above (places to visit along the byway)

Given the conditions along the byway, it may not be possible to draw a specific boundary or width for the corridor. Instead, we recommend using these specific corridor criteria to account for the dynamic nature of use of land along the byway. For example, if a property owner wants to donate a conservation easement, they will simply need to document that the land in question is visible from the byway route.