



Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.

Memorandum:

To: Sandra Newman, Lower Mount Bethel Township Planning Commission
Lower Mount Bethel Township Scenic Byway Advisory Committee
From: Jim Klein
Date: 20 June 2011
Subject: Draft Corridor Management Plan
Response to Comments and Proposed Changes

The Lower Mount Bethel Township Delaware River Valley Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Draft Plan) was completed in late March of 2011, distributed to advisory committee members and then posted on the project web site approximately thirty days in advance of the April 25 Lower Mount Bethel Township Planning Commission meeting. Notice of the meeting and a link to the draft plan were provided on the Lower Mount Bethel Township (Township) web site and in the Township newsletter that was distributed to all residents of the Township. A hard copy of the plan was placed in the Township offices and notice of its availability included on the Township web site.

The following documents the comments received and the proposed modifications to the Draft Plan in response to those comments. Nearly all the comments received indicated that the plan had too much emphasis on tourism. In response, the following changes are recommended to shift the emphasis of the plan away from “tourism” and more towards how the Byway can help the Township achieve its primary goals of maintaining rural character.

Additional comments addressed the idea of considering a roundabout at the Route 611/SR 1004 intersection (page 73). A revision is also proposed below emphasizing this as an option for future consideration.

Replace the text on page 3, under “Purpose of the Plan”

The purpose of the Byway management plan is to help Lower Mount Bethel Township to *conserve and preserve* the rich natural and cultural resources found throughout the corridor. *The Byway can play an important role in helping to maintain the character defining features of the Township. Of particular importance is the role that Byway funding programs can play in leveraging the Township’s agricultural land preservation activities and watershed management activities. In addition, the approval of the plan will provide PennDOT with a clear statement about the Township’s desire to protect and maintain its rural character giving designers the reference point they need to apply more flexibility in the engineering design process for bridges, safety projects, and for meeting pedestrian needs in the Township.*

What the CMP will do for the Township

The plan recognizes that the Township, through its ongoing agriculture land preservation and watershed management activities, has established itself as a distinctive rural landscape within the growing Lehigh Valley region. The plan addresses three important ways that the Byway can help the Township achieve its goals of maintaining its rural character over time.

First, chapter two of the plan identifies the specific natural and cultural resources found along the Byway and their relationship to the Township’s rural character. Linking these resources to

the Byway make them eligible for funding programs available through the National Scenic Byway Program as well as providing additional rationale for other related program. Goals 2 and 3, starting on page 47 provide specific recommendations for how to utilize the Byway to help preserve and maintain the Byway and Township's rural character.

Second, the plan recognizes that the route of the Byway is a significant element of the Township's rural character. Goal four of the plan, and its related strategies described on pages 59-84, identifies specific recommendations for how to maintain the character defining features of the roadway itself. Designation as a Pennsylvania Byway provides the rationale necessary for PennDOT to utilize "Context Sensitive Solutions" to address existing and future highway related modifications in a manner that will help the Township to maintain its rural character.

Third, the plan acknowledges that the Byway does not exist in isolation. Route 611 is already designated as the "Delaware River Scenic Drive" and is identified as such on Pennsylvania's Highway Map. Goal 1 and its related strategies on pages 42-47 provides recommendations for how to gain designation as a National Scenic Byway, should the Township and its neighbors seek to gain that recognition as a means of increasing its leverage to achieve goals. Such designation makes the Byway more competitive for funding and increases the ability of the Township to work collaboratively on conservation, preservation and roadway related implementation measures.

Throughout the planning process the Advisory Committee expressed an interest in utilizing the Byway to help educate the community about its rich natural and cultural heritage. One of the original purposes of the byway planning effort was to also consider opportunities for promoting heritage- and nature-based tourism and expanding the Township's economic base. In order for the Township to benefit from heritage, agricultural and nature-based tourism opportunities, it would have to work collaboratively as part of a regionally managed Byway. Goal 5 and its related strategies described on pages 84-106 identify what would need to be done if the Township decides at some future date to take advantage of these opportunities.

What the Plan will not do

Throughout the planning process, concerns have been raised about the implications of the Plan's implementation on property rights, agricultural operations, and on personal privacy.

The Township's existing Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinances in the Township coupled with ongoing efforts for agricultural land preservation and watershed management are some of the best in the County and the region. No changes to these plans and ordinances are needed to achieve the community benefits that are outlined above. No changes to the rights of property owners will result from the implementation of this plan. All of these programs are voluntary.

Anyone who buys property either now, or in the future (including if the byway is designated as a National Scenic Byway at some point in the future), can continue to use that property in any way current zoning allows. The Plan will not place any restrictions on private property owners along the Byway, with the exception of off-premise signage (billboards) that current zoning prohibits.

The plan will not result in any taking of private property from unwilling participants. Only those property owners that are interested in selling agricultural land conservation easements will be considered for such programs as they apply.

Should the Township wish to pursue the plans recommendations regarding heritage, nature-

based or agriculturally-based tourism, it will not promote trespassing on private property, but will instead focus on community education and interpretation of the Township's natural and cultural resources.

The plan is strictly voluntary. It lays out optional tools and techniques that can be utilized to benefit the community and the residents that live along the travel route.

Page 5, Delete Red Text

Page 6, revise Goal 5 to say:

Use the Byway as a tool to achieve positive community-based economic and environmental benefits from the region's ongoing Heritage, Agricultural and Nature-based tourism activities: Identify appropriate opportunities to increase rural economic development activities by coordinating storytelling, interpretation and education associated with the region's agricultural and Delaware River heritage with opportunities for nature-based recreation and related "farm to table" tours and tastings.

Globally throughout Chapter 2 – *change the word "visitor" to "traveler"*
Pages 15, 16, 18, 22, 24, 25, 27

Change Chapter 3 title and purpose as follows:

CHAPTER 3: TRAVELING THE BYWAY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the existing Byway conditions and its *potential, if desired by the Township*, readiness for visitors.

Leave the word "visitor throughout in this chapter as it pertains to meeting the fourteen requirements of a Corridor Management Plan (a specific item within the scope of work and contract between L/KLA and Lower Mount Bethel Township).

Page 41, paragraph 2, change text as follows

The ability of the community and region to gain recognition as a significant rural landscape worthy of recognition and to benefit from the region's heritage, agricultural, and nature-based economic opportunities is dependent upon how well the local, state and to some extent, federal agencies responsible for its stewardship can manage the Byway over time to preserve and conserve its qualities and communicate the values of those qualities to the region within which it resides.

Page 41, last full paragraph change to read

The plan also outlines a set of strategies to expand the range of *interpretive opportunities associated with* points of interest to better tell the story of the Delaware River – its natural and cultural heritage, its early industry, and its communities.

Page 46, top of the page change to read

Once the Delaware River Scenic Drive has been designated as a State Scenic Byway, then seek support and participation in the grant application noted below:

- v. Seek funding for and extend the corridor management plan as needed to meet the requirements for designation as a National Scenic Byway and, if desired, to develop marketing and other materials to increase the readiness of the Byway for visitors (page 46).

Strategy 1.2 Visitor Readiness and National Scenic Byway Nomination

If National Scenic Byway designation is desired, enhance the visitor readiness of the Byway in anticipation of seeking National Scenic Byway Designation – from Easton to Delaware Water Gap

In order for a byway to be designated as a National Scenic Byway its leaders have to be able to demonstrate that they and the route are ready for that designation. The following elements are often utilized as initial steps *in demonstrating visitor readiness*.

- A designated point of contact for visitor information (such as Discover Lehigh Valley)
- A dedicated and *user*-friendly web site that links the Byway to information about *visitor* services and *visitor* information in the Byway’s region
- A tear-off map or brochure that provides basic and permanent information such as points of interest that help to tell the Byway’s story with links to more time sensitive *visitor* information (events, visitor services, current hours of operation for attractions)

Implementation Steps:

- i. Develop *user*-friendly byway website with direct link from Discover Lehigh Valley, FHWA’s www.byways.org, and State of Pennsylvania tourism web site
- ii. Enhance *visitor* readiness of Byway facilities by coordinating ~~marketing and~~ interpretation in advance of the nomination period (see economic strategies, “Strategy 5.11 Presentation of the Delaware River story” on page 97)
- iii. Prepare nomination forms for next nomination period (last designation period was in 2008-2009 and prior to that in 2005. The next nomination period is dependent upon the reauthorization of the program through the Transportation Bill currently under consideration by Congress)

Top of Page 48, change text to read

opportunities, and long-settled farms. Forests and riparian areas especially provide high-quality wildlife habitat and experiences of wildlife integral to the experience of the *traveler* – resident, heritage *enthusiast* and nature-based recreational user alike. The township’s farms, forests, streams, and scenery need careful attention. The addition of interpretive and recreational improvements to existing recreational sites will add to *the* opportunities to enjoy and learn from the magnificent Delaware River.

Page 54 change the following text to read

3.1 Educate the community about historic resources and Township history

In Lower Mount Bethel Township, historic preservation has some catching up to do in comparison to the highly sophisticated practices of farmland preservation here. Accordingly, an overall strategy of cultivating and reinforcing private property owners’ stewardship through voluntary recognition, investment in the public domain, and public education is recommended. The public education actions suggested here would have the additional benefit of strategically supporting heritage *enthusiasts if planned for the widest range of audiences as well as the*

primary audience of local residents. Some potential actions along these lines for consideration include

Page 59, under “Rationale” change text to read

Rationale

Designation as a scenic byway implies that a particular route has statewide and potentially regional or national significance associated with its scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational or archeological qualities. Traveling along the Byway route is the primary way in which visitors and residents alike experience and are first introduced to these significant qualities. By managing the quality of that travel experience, the first impression will go a long way towards *gaining recognition and a reputation as a community that stewards its resources and cares about its future*.

Introducing modifications to the road and its associated roadside elements (such as alignment changes, intersection modifications, shoulder work, drainage, retaining walls, bridge modifications, lighting, or access provisions) will alter the experience of these significant intrinsic qualities and the first impressions of a *traveler*. Care can be taken to ensure that the safety goals of these types of modifications are met while still maintaining the character defining features of the route and the unique Byway communities through which it passes.

Page 83, third bullet point from the top of the page change to read

- By establishing the pathway system as a destination and associating it with the Township’s historic sites and natural systems, it will provide additional activities that can increase the length of *time spent by visitors and residents alike, thereby expanding* economic activity (Goal 5) including local businesses (food, gas/sundries, and potentially overnight stays)

Page 88, Strategy 5.3 change text to read

Strategy 5.3 Tie in Lower Mount Bethel Township to the overall Delaware River experience

By expanding the range of “human-powered” outdoor recreation experiences and *community facilities available to visitors*, the Township and its regional partners can extend the stay of both *residents and visitors alike* and increase the likelihood that they will stay overnight at a local Bed and Breakfast or buy a meal at a local restaurant. Some possibilities include

Page 89, Strategy 5.5, change text to read

Strategy 5.5 Establish (or expand upon the existing) Delaware River Tourism Ambassadors Program and Delaware River Site Certification Program

Establish a certified *Delaware River* ambassadors and site certification program that provides education to front-line hospitality providers on the natural and cultural history of the Delaware River, on river guide services, and to provide training related to enhancing *traveler* services and experiences at existing hotels, restaurants, and attractions (best accomplished for extended Byway).

Page 89, Delete strategy 5.6

Page 89, Change strategy 5.7 to read

Strategy 5.7 As part of the overall enhancement program for the Byway improve the overall appearance and impression of Martins Creek and Riverton and establish a more welcoming environment for *potential patrons* at the existing hospitality businesses.

Page 94, under “Objectives for Interpretation”, delete “visitor”

Page 96, bottom of page, item ii, under Implementation, delete “visitor”

Page 97, item iv, under implementation, delete “visitor”

Page 97, item vi, under implementation, change “visitor” to “audience” profile

In Chapter 5, page 100, replace the following text under Chapter 5

CHAPTER 5: SUSTAINING THE BYWAY

A well-managed byway is like a three-legged stool – its “legs” must be balanced to support the weight of anyone who chooses to sit on it or it may topple over. The “legs,” in the case of a byway, are its strategies for management – preservation and conservation strategies, transportation strategies, and *economic* strategies. If a byway’s intrinsic qualities are not maintained over time, the *rationale for investing in conservation and preservation* will be lost. If the experience of traveling that byway begins to detract from the overall quality of experience, then *recognition and investment in the preservation of those values will be harder to understand*. If *the values of the Byway are* not appropriately *communicated* to the intended audience, ~~visitor~~ expectations *will be unrealized, and investments will go elsewhere*.

In Chapter 5, page 103, replace the following text under Byway Management Activities

Byway Management Activities

The following is a list of Byway-related management tasks that will need to be accomplished through the MJWA.

- *Seek endorsements and recognition for the Byway as a significant rural landscape worthy of preservation, conservation and management actions that would help to maintain its rural character, including making application to the Federal Highway Administration for National Scenic Byway designation, if desired*
- Serve as the “Byway keeper” with the role of encouraging property owners, utility companies, highway departments, and others with management responsibility to consider the goals of the Byway and work to conserve and enhance the qualities of the Byway as part of their daily management and stewardship activities
- Seek to coordinate conservation and preservation actions among local and regional organizations and agencies to ensure that the Byway retains its qualities over time
- Pursue outside funding to implement the plan recommendations focusing on the high priority recommendations
- *As a means of managing the heritage, agricultural and nature-based tourism activities that will occur regardless of whether the Township seeks to take advantage of those activities,*

- work with other groups to coordinate events and activities taking place along the Byway
- *Identify the byway as significant rural landscape to those with* an interest in historic sites, bicycling, canoeing/kayaking, and nature study in consultation with the State and local offices of tourism
 - Serve as the primary point of contact for information about the Byway
 - Work with municipal and non-profit organizations to promote volunteer opportunities along the Byway, especially for maintenance and upkeep of the roadside areas within the public right-of-way, in cooperation with PennDOT

Page 104, first full paragraph, replace the following text

What timing would be convenient for each element of announcing and covering the activity, so that the byway is routinely in the public eye? For items like brochures and tours ~~that are produced for visitors~~, consider the local audience ~~as well~~. Alerting residents to the availability of these products reassures them that “things are happening” and may attract needed volunteers and sponsors. Providing a photo and caption to the media is a simple way to be noticed without the need to write lengthy news releases – take photos of members of the committee at work or posed in front of the results of a project (or as it starts).

Page 106, Item 8, change text to read

8. Based upon the master plan for interpretive development and visual/graphic identity, establish a *use*-friendly web page (preferably linked or part of Discover Lehigh Valley web site) including visitor information for the regional byway with regular updates and a listing of events