



Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.

Memorandum:

To: Religious Freedom Tour Byway Management Plan Advisory Committee
From: Jim Klein
Date: 13 August 2007
Subject: Draft Corridor Definition, Vision and Goals

Draft Purpose Statement for Planning Effort:

The purpose of the corridor management planning and future implementation effort is:

- develop and enhance the route to attract visitors
- increase heritage tourism
- preserve/conservate/maintain rural qualities and the quality of life

The plan will serve as the basis for applying for designation as an "All-American Road" or "National Scenic Byway" as part of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program. General consensus from the advisory committee and citizens at the public meeting was to pursue designation as an "All-American Road" with the primary intrinsic quality being historic and the second intrinsic quality being some combination of natural (Nanjemoy area), scenic, and recreational. The route can clearly be shown to be a destination unto itself (also one of its difficult issues in attracting visitors). Although historical qualities are present and are likely to be considered nationally significant, demonstrating a second intrinsic quality of national significance may be difficult, especially if FHWA's nomination form continues to require you to list only one or two intrinsic qualities for the entire route, rather than multiple qualities for different sections of the route.

Draft Byway Vision – from comment cards and for discussion at AC Meeting #2

Whether traveling by land or sea – the Religious Freedom Byway offers insights into the people, issues and unfolding stories of the birthplace and struggle for religious freedom in America, a struggle that can be seen in the more than 400 years of visible history of all cultures and ways of life in southern Maryland.

More than just a glimpse of history, the byway links together the many significant historic buildings, landscapes and waters of Southern Maryland to create a wonderful and broad-reaching story of struggle for religious freedom. More than just places, the byway also links together local lectures, panels, debates, festivals, and exhibits to both celebrate and explore the development and continuing tensions of religion, race and class.

Spectacular scenery along the Potomac River – rural areas interspersed with farms, small towns, and extensive wetlands – help to form a remarkable backdrop for helping both visitors and residents alike to appreciate the region's remarkable historic, scenic, and natural qualities.

The byway works like an outdoor museum, making it easy to follow, fun to experience, but challenging to the minds of both visitors and residents of all ages. Landscaped waysides with informative panels tell a coherent story from one stop to the next. Restaurants, inns, country stores and farmer's markets along with opportunities to paddle, bicycle and walk for fun complement the byway experience, helping to accommodate a slower paced discovery of our heritage.

Preliminary List of Goals and Strategies for Discussion

The following were identified on written comment cards from Advisory Committee #1 and discussed at the public meeting as “things that need to be done to make the byway a success”. This forms the initial “table of contents” for the plan, to be fleshed out at the next six advisory committee meetings.

PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION (for discussion at AC Meetings #2 and #3)

Goal: Preserve, conserve, and or maintain the intrinsic qualities of the byway corridor.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Establish priorities for conserving the setting of important historic sites related to the byway’s themes (for example the views surrounding the Port Tobacco, St. Thomas Manor, religious freedom monument, historic churches, Civil War monument, etc.)
- Designate Pt. Tobacco Historic Area – “restrict” or “guide” development
- Protection of the scenic qualities of the trail through land conservation, zoning and proper subdivision design.
- Easement to take control of viewscape.
- Managed development in adjacent communities.
- Development in towns – multi-use, preservation of each town’s character, etc.
- Slow growth. Stop removing tree cover on roadways.
- Guidelines to manage development along the corridor.
- Idea from Rural Legacy – “Byway Legacy”.
- Develop protection of rural areas to protect natural resources

HERITAGE TOURISM/MARKETING (for discussion at AC Meetings #4 and #5 – also to include results of initial assessment visit with National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program)

Goal: Establish the byway, as a primary touring route in the Southern Maryland Heritage Area and as a destination unto itself to educate the public about the struggles for religious freedom and tolerance.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Create a strong story that links the history; and also featuring active recreation.
- A collection of interpretive and marketing items that include:
 - detailed map guide
 - waysides
 - audio guide (downloadable)
 - interactive website
 - tour guides
- In addition to signage, should utilize audio recordings to direct and educate visitors – could be audio tapes people sign out at particular location or digital downloads for iPods [MP3 players].
- Audio displays at sites should feature voices of people associated with particular site.
- Should take advantage of resources and opportunities offered by existing historical societies and local organizations.
- Should include educational and recreational programs for children in the community.

- Continue to educate beyond the physical boundaries of corridor – let people know how they can continue to learn, conduct research, etc. once they leave the byway.
- Should try to appeal to people who have left the area – welcome them back and maybe they'll want to come home.
- Establish a byway website – need way to get information out there and facilitate connections between different groups.

INTERPRETATION (for discussion at AC Meetings #4 and #5 – also to include results of initial assessment visit with National Trust for Historic Preservation Heritage Tourism Program)

Goal: Link together the various heritage tourism sites to form a coherent travel experience, telling a story that captures the essence and national significance of the struggles for religious freedom and tolerance.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Should paint realistic picture – tell of the struggle, hardship and persecution of various groups.
- Need to tell full story – do not just begin religious history with arrival of European settlers, but also include Native American history.
- Can start today by collecting oral histories – shouldn't wait until project is complete because the senior population, which is a great source of stories today, may not be around tomorrow.
- A wonderful day in Port Tobacco – better than Williamsburg.
- Port Tobacco is a critical resource on the western end of the proposed byway. It was the long time capital of the County, an important seat of the Anglican Church in the county, and – as county seat- the scene of a number of controversies over rights of all sorts. This, potentially, is a major tourist destination.
- Interpretation that is timeless in its ability to educate and remind people that this freedom was hard fought and precious to keep.
- Monument Park Cultural Center – specifically (1) A tribute to the United States colored troops – Medal of Honor Winners who served in the Civil War – display all medal of honor winners from St. Mary's County – I think there were only 3 – the African American men were James Harris, William Barnes.
- Great opportunities to touch vistas on universal issues-freedom of expression at all entry points. Way finding signage, multiple kiosks and orientation exhibits at Visitor's Centers w/ film and audio tours that capture the emotion behind the story. Brochures, self guided and guided tours, audio tours, living history water trail tours on a historic boat - recreate the experience and tensions that led to the settlement of Maryland.
- Key site coordination and enhancement. In Charles County; Port Tobacco Historic District.
- Consistent on interpretive signs of the various historic churches.

BYWAY FACILITIES AND ENHANCEMENT (for discussion at AC Meeting #6)

Goal: Develop a list of enhancements and pursue funding for those enhancements needed to lengthen visitor stay and minimize existing intrusions that detract from the special qualities of the byway.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Trail to Chapel Point-steep hill – reopened by wonderful view of the river.
- Work with State parks to make Point Lookout better accessible after new rip-rap to prevent flooding.
- Roadside appeal for drivers. Must buffer all new development with forests.
- Significant reduction in unsightly modern intrusions.

ROADWAY SAFETY AND WAYFINDING (for discussion at AC Meeting #7)

Goal: Work cooperatively with SHA and each County Public Works Departments to make it easier and safer to follow the byway in a manner that respects the historic, scenic, natural and cultural context of the byway.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Need to develop wayfinding/signage that is unique to Religious Freedom Byway, not to be confused with other byways, park facility signs, etc.
- Significant reduction in traffic congestion and unsightly modern intrusions.
- Physical enhancements for easily getting into St. Mary's City.
- Clear directional signage with mileage indicators.
- Controlling traffic speed and making possible casual stops along the byway.
- Road design: 1 – Access/2 – Materials/ 3-Landscaping.
- Signing so people can easily follow route.
- Good signage that is regularly maintained and updated.

MANAGEMENT (for discussion at AC Meeting #8)

Goal: Establish a permanent management entity that will speak and act independently on behalf of the byway and serve to implement the plan's goals, objectives, and strategies, including early action projects and grant applications.

Ideas suggested at Advisory Committee and Public Meeting

- Cooperation of many different government and private groups with very different agendas.
- Cooperation among entities. Community endorsement.
- Establish a permanent management system
- Vision and mechanics to get the word out about what is here
- Need endorsement from County Commissioner and economic development department – should not come just from historic preservation and parks departments/agencies
- Can also encourage fundraising and growth opportunities for other groups and organizations along the byway
- Must preserve the privacy of privately-owned properties along the corridor – maintain separation between public and private sites

Potential Case Studies

These are sites we will use to demonstrate strategies to be discussed at the next six advisory committee meetings; and more importantly, that might be used for grant applications. We have committed to doing four of these case study illustrations.

Case studies are used for a number of purposes:

- to demonstrate how to guide development (could be an upcoming development submission that could use some additional thoughts)
- to demonstrate a potential enhancement, such as along the commercial corridor approaching Leonardtown
- to illustrate the application of context sensitive solutions to a potential highway safety measure that could be needed along the byway
- to illustrate a byway facility that might be needed, such as a high priority location for a wayside, visitor information kiosk, etc.
- to illustrate the look of potential wayfinding or other signing types of measures needed for the byway

The following suggestions have been made so far – note that some need to be narrowed down – consider these as a grant application and that the entire State of Maryland allocation for a year has been in the 1 million range or less, with most projects typically less than 100,000 (although several projects over the years have been higher than that. Projects should be designed to leverage future money from other sources.

General recommendations:

Consider projects that will convey the story of the national significance of the byway - a project that will enhance access either to information and/or location(s) that will bind the byway together.

Development of corridor-wide interpretive media...audio, video, paper, web-based and/or place-based...that enable a "there" there and get the byway in to the marketplace.

A byway facility such as a wayside pull-off with kiosk that interprets the religious freedom story at a key religious-related/early settlement location such as St Thomas Manor; Colton's Point in view of St. Clements Island; or near the Religious Freedom Memorial in view St. Mary's River at St. Mary's City/College and perhaps Point Lookout State Park. All of these locations have spectacular views that should be considered when designing the concept.

Good development and CSS guidelines example are very important

Specific Sites

Port Tobacco

This needs to be further narrowed down ... for example to address physical improvements for interpreting the site, to address preserving its historic context if development is imminent, etc.

Rte. 224 Nanjemoy loop

Need to further narrow this down to a site along the loop, or to address access such as at Purse State Park and vicinity, or to address potential changes to the roadside character that might be imminent related to a development for example.

Point Lookout Area:

There are historic churches, road issues, a high volume park and communities the byway runs through--also local industries (charter, watermen, marinas), and a big African American portion of our story.

Approach to Leonardtown on RT 5

(A portion of which SHA is slated to work on in the near future) and Leonardtown itself that presents the challenge of scattered resources of interest.

St. Thomas Manor

Has the view and the significance to make it a strong contender. The church parking lot in many ways functions this way today. In addition, the church property is surrounded by state-owned land that might make this site attractive as well