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Monitoring and Evaluation

Introduction

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway has been in existence since 1995 and was extended to its current length of 287 miles in 1996. The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance has taken the leadership role in convening the partners along the Byway and promoting the Byway's tourism resources at the local, state and national levels.

The Alliance is made up of communities and representatives from local, state and federal agencies and organizations that are invested in the success of the Byway and its contributions to meeting their local goals. The Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission has also provided a leadership role in providing technical assistance and leadership in managing many of the Byway's fiscal and planning efforts on behalf of the Alliance. Their extensive experience in planning and fiscal management will be helpful in the overall evaluation and monitoring of byway initiatives implemented on behalf of the Alliance and the Byway.

The Alliance will implement a monitoring and evaluation program as part of its ongoing management efforts. This continuous review will consist of the following:



Staying in the saddle requires periodically checking the cinch. The same is true of keeping the byway effort moving forward. Monitoring is essential.



Impact Assessment

Efforts will be made to work closely with the local, state and federal agencies that manage resources along the Byway to measure the impacts along the Byway. This will include:

- monitoring traffic changes, safety incidents, and usage,
- conducting research to determine economic impact of the Byway, and
- surveying visitors to identify user profiles, visitor satisfactions with attractions and services, and unmet needs

Annual Byway Status

The Alliance will provide an annual assessment on the progress of the Corridor Management Plan implementation and problems or issues that may be occurring along the Byway. This assessment will be presented at the annual byway conference.

Ongoing Meetings of Alliance

There are regularly scheduled ongoing meetings for members of the Alliance and interested public. At ongoing meetings (usually monthly), agenda items include the ongoing efforts for managing the Byway throughout the year. At one of these meetings a report will be provided on the issues, and other issues important to the Byway's management and growth. The public will be invited to discuss any issues or concerns.

In addition, the byway will sponsor a periodic byway conference to assess progress, recognize achievements and generally enthuse Valley residents.

Tourism Organizational and Marketing Review

Every three years, the tourism organizations along the Byway will be asked to reconsider the Byway's marketing issues and the challenges and opportunities they face in marketing their tourism resources along the route.

Visitor Survey

A Visitor Survey will be designed and distributed to evaluate the evaluate the following:

- Profile of Byway visitor;
- Evaluate the type of needs visitors have and Byway's ability to meet those needs;



- Identification of activities visitors are currently involved in along Byway; and
- Evaluate the level of satisfaction visitors have with their visit to tourism sites and attractions along the Byway.

Distribution will be done at visitor centers, chamber offices, state historic sites, interpretive sites, museums, festival and events and participating businesses and will be conducted at different times of the year.

Comment Booklets

Visitor centers and museums should have guest registrations in which visitors can comment about their experiences with the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway. These registrations will be useful, though statistically unreliable, techniques to identify visitor profiles, successes and areas for improvement that may need to be addressed.



