



River of Stories

Corridor Management Plan for the
Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

December 2024





Acknowledgements

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This plan was prepared by Kristi Fernholz, UMRDC staff, utilizing information from the
2018 River of Stories CMP Update
2001 RiverStories Plan prepared by Whiteman and Taintor.



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Federal Corridor Management Plan Requirements

We have designed this Corridor Management Plan to both meet the requirements of the National Scenic Byways Program and to meet our own needs locally for easy use and interpretation of the plan. The following is a summary of the required 14 elements of a Corridor Management Plan and where one will find that information within our plan.

1. **Corridor Map** - Chapter 1
A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location of intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the corridor.
2. **Intrinsic Quality Assessment** – Chapter 2, Appendix
An assessment of the byway’s intrinsic qualities and their context (the area surrounding them). The end product is typically a catalogue of the byway’s scenic, historic, natural, archeological, cultural, and recreational qualities.
3. **Intrinsic Quality Management Strategy** – Chapter 2, 7, Appendix
A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of the byway’s intrinsic qualities. Ask what you want the byway corridor to look like in 10-15 years and develop goals and strategies to help you get there.
4. **Responsibility Schedule** – Chapter 6, 7
A list of agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan. Be sure to include a description of each individual’s responsibilities and a schedule of when and how you will review their progress.
5. **Development Plan** - Chapter 6, 7
A strategy for how existing development along the corridor might be enhanced and how to accommodate new development while preserving the byway’s intrinsic qualities.
6. **Public Participation Plan** – Chapter 6, 7
A plan for on-going public participation.
7. **General Review of Road (Safety) Narrative** - Chapter 5
A general review of the road’s safety record to locate hazards and poor design and identify possible corrections. Identify ways to balance safety with context-sensitive highway design practices that accommodate safety needs while preserving the road’s character.
8. **Commercial Traffic Plan** - Chapter 5
A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians.
9. **Visitor Experience Plan** - Chapter 3, 4, 7
A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize anomalous intrusions on the visitor’s experience of the byway.
10. **Outdoor Advertising Control Compliance** – Chapter 5
Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising. Your CMP should also address the continuous designation of the road to ensure that billboard companies will not be able to find a loophole in your byway designation that would allow them to erect billboards along the corridor.
11. **Sign Plan** - Chapter 5
A plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not get in the way of scenery, but still be sufficient to help tourists find their way.

12. **Marketing Narrative** – Chapter 3

Plans for how to market and publicize the byway.

13. **Highway Design & Maintenance Standards** – Chapter 5

Any proposals for modifying the roadway, including an evaluation of design standards and how proposed changes may affect the byway's intrinsic qualities.

14. **Interpretation Plan** - Chapter 4, Chapter 7, Interpretative Plan

A description of what you plan to do to explain and interpret your byway's significant resources to visitors.

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess at least one of the six intrinsic qualities and be regionally significant. These roads are often the "roads less traveled."

The National Scenic Byways Program, established by Congress in 1991 and administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), was created to preserve and protect the nation's scenic byways and, at the same time, promote tourism and economic development.

What are America's Byways®?



America's Byways® is the umbrella term we use for marketing the collection of 150 distinct and diverse roads designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. America's Byways include the National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads.

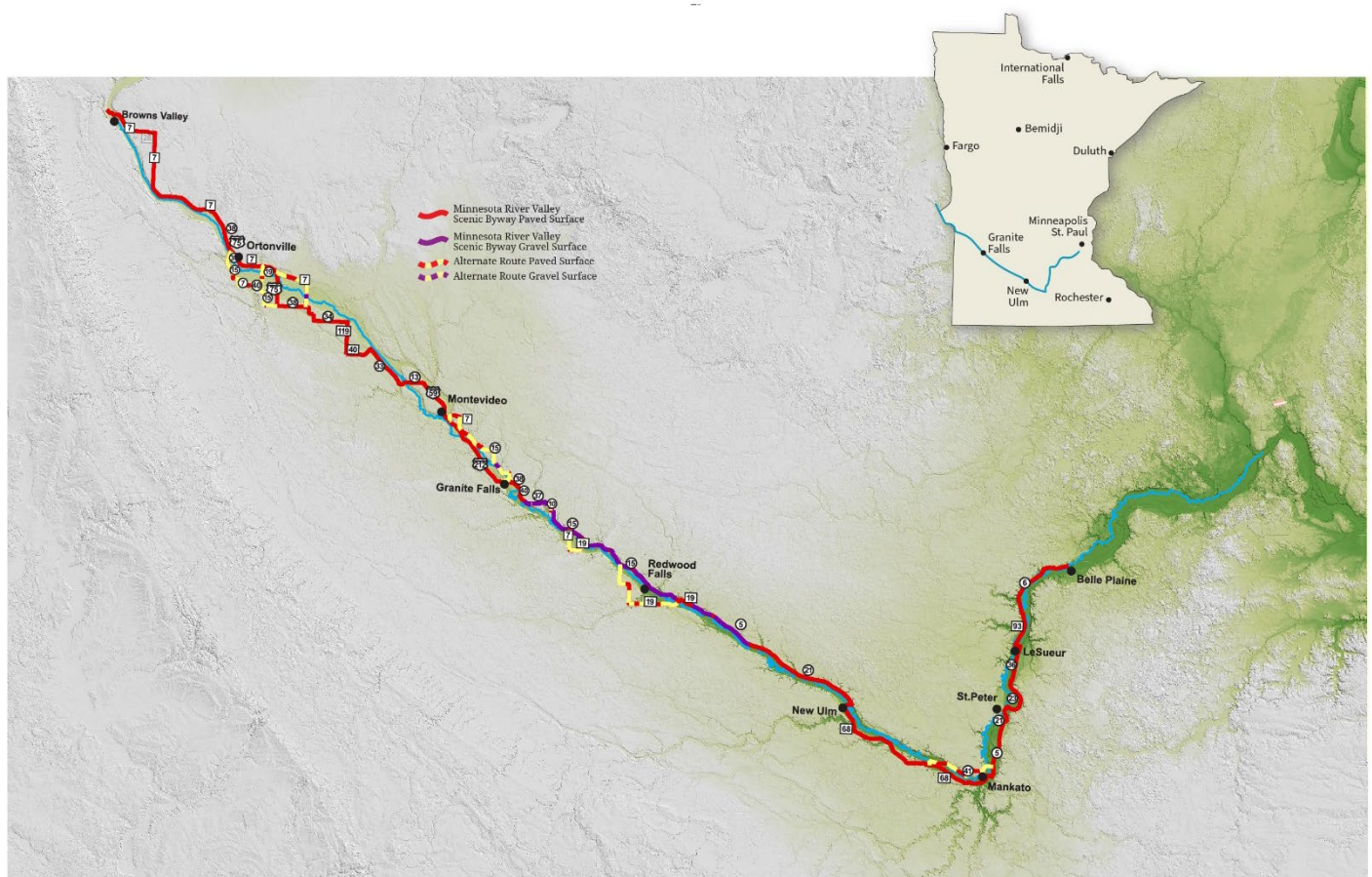
Our definition of "scenic" reaches beyond breathtaking vistas. All of America's Byways® are "scenic", representing the depth and breadth of scenery in America--natural and man-made panoramas; electrifying neon landscapes; ancient and modern history coming alive; native arts and culture; and scenes of friends, families and strangers sharing their stories.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Corridor Map

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway runs from Browns Valley to Belle Plaine along the Minnesota River as it flows along its 335-mile course from the headwaters near the Minnesota/South Dakota state line to the edge of the metro area in Belle Plaine. The identified Byway Corridor **encompasses 10 miles on each side of the river**.

The 300-mile Byway follow many roads and goes through 15 counties and two tribes. The Byway route, including the alternate route, travels through 25 cities (3 of those are unincorporated) and another 43 cities are located within the 10-mile on both sides of the Byway Corridor.



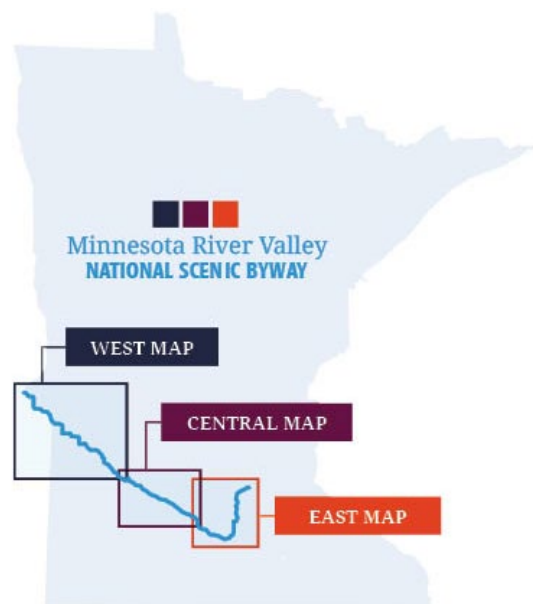
Byway Orientation Maps

The Byway's scale and number of different roads makes navigation challenging. Orientation map maps were created in 2022 by mapformation which outline the route, alternate routes, paved vs gravel roads, discovery sites, historic Dakota villages known from the late 1980's and Dakota place names where possible.

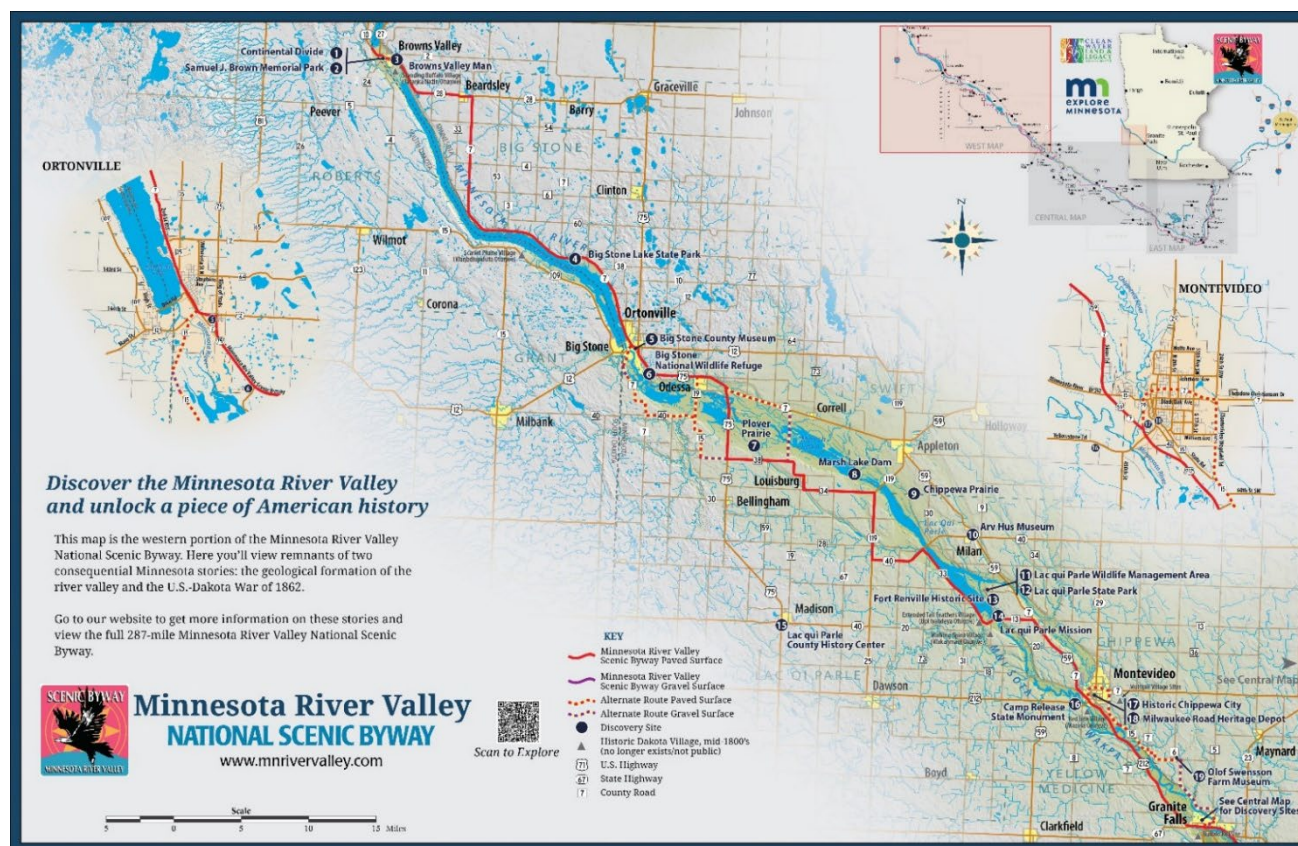
West Map

The West Map include the cities of:

- Browns Valley
- Beardsley
- Ortonville
- Odessa
- Louisburg
- Watson
- Montevideo
- Granite Falls



There are 19 discovery sites in this section of the Byway.



Central Map

The Central Map includes the cities and tribal communities of:

- Granite Falls
- Upper Sioux Community
- Redwood Falls
- Lower Sioux Community
- Morton
- New Ulm

There are 34 discovery sites in this section of the Byway.

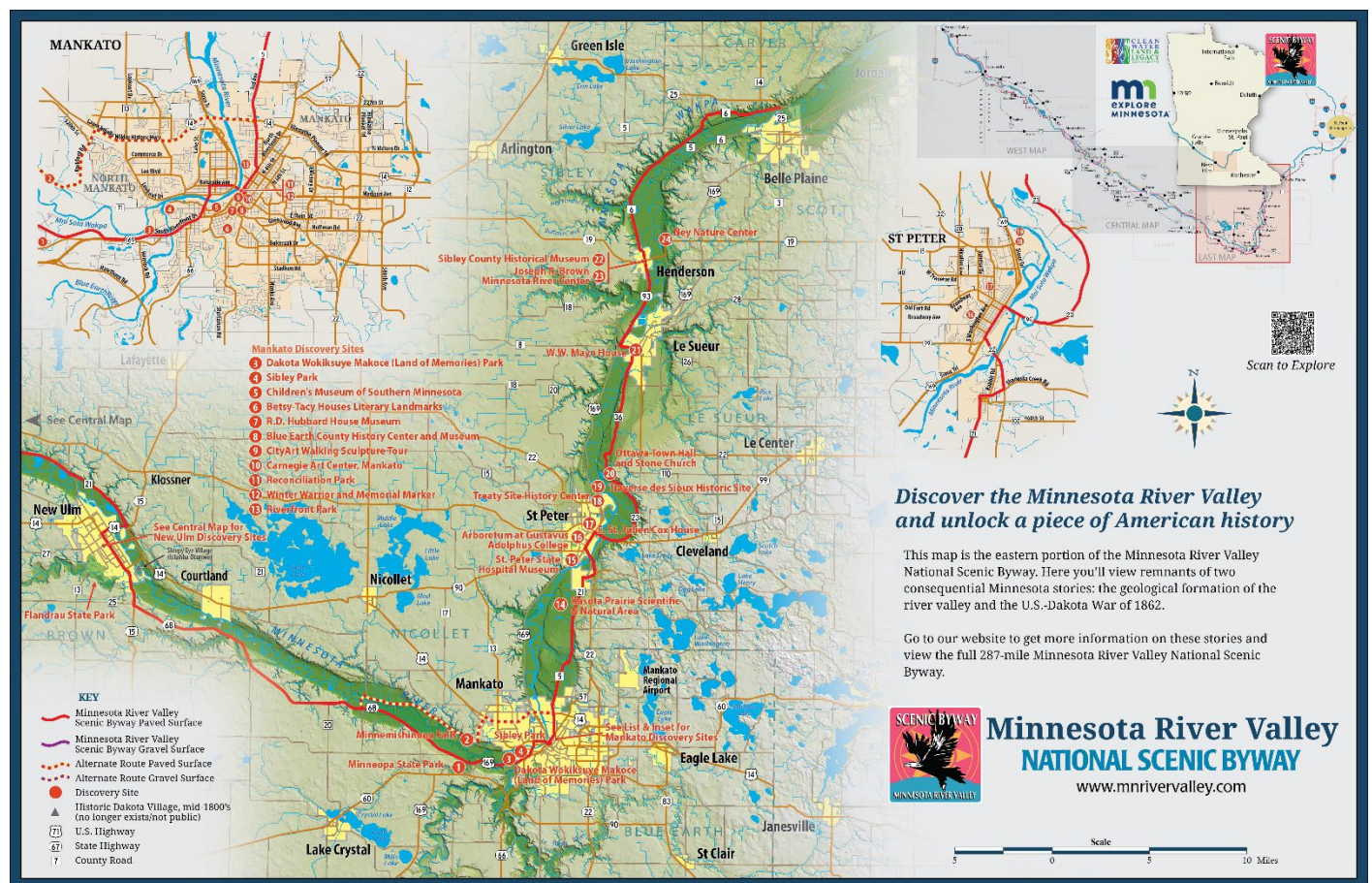


East Map

The East Map includes the cities (some unincorporated) of

- New Ulm
- Cambria (*unincorporated*)
- Judson (*unincorporated*)
- Mankato
- Kasota
- St. Peter
- Ottawa (*unincorporated*)
- Le Sueur
- Henderson
- Belle Plaine

There are 24 Discovery Sites in this section of the Byway.



Byway Designation

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway was designated in 1995 and extended in 1996 to form the current 300-mile route by the Minnesota Scenic Byway Commission (an interagency committee between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Office of Tourism, and the Minnesota Historical Society).

In 2002, the Minnesota River Valley was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2002 by Congress and the Federal Highway Administration.

Technical Assistance

The Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) has coordinated the Byway since the beginning, providing technical assistance to the Byway and the Byway Alliance. It has also facilitated planning projects that helped to develop the Byway.

Definition of a CMP

This Corridor Management Plan (CMP) is a blueprint to guide the organizing, marketing and interpretive development of the corridor. It defines the most important steps needed to protect the character and resources along the Byway.

It is hoped that this plan will not only bring thousands of out-of-state visitors to the Minnesota River Valley, but also make residents of Minnesota more aware of this special part of the state.

This plan also assists with the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway's **mission**:

To cooperatively enhance the Minnesota River Valley as a travel destination and raise awareness of its nationally important stories to provide economic benefits and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the Byway.

The CMP recognizes that there are budget and capacity constraints that affect how much of the work plan can be accomplished. To continue to work towards the mission of the Byway, the plan suggests the formation of unique partnerships and collaborations to overcome these constraints. These necessary partnerships will help create a sustainable organization to the Byway which will ultimately bring more resources to help preserve, maintain and enhance our 300-mile Byway Corridor for tourism development.

Previous Corridor Management Plans

2001

"RiverStories", the first Corridor Management Plan (CMP) created in 2001, was the product of two planning efforts. The first effort focused on the central portion of the Byway; that planning work occurred during 1998 and 1999. The

second planning process extended from early 2000 to early 2001 and concentrated on the western and eastern end of the Byway. Those two efforts were woven into this comprehensive CMP.

During the 1998-1999 planning work, there were two byway groups involved. The first was a Scenic Byway Partnership Group which focused on the preparation of the Phase 1 plan. The Byway Alliance served in a broader advisory role during that effort. After the first phase of planning, the Alliance and Partnership merged to be the one Byway Alliance organization which guided the preparation of the Phase 2 plan.

NOTE: In 2013 categorical Federal transportation grants for scenic byways were eliminated by Congress, although the program and route designations remain in place.

2015

The Byway Alliance created a Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Investment Addendum identifying potential projects along the Byway, and a list of funding sources.

2018

The Byway Alliance updated the 2002 CMP plan in 2018 and developed a separate Interpretive Plan and Marketing Plan. This updated CMP was developed under the guidance of the Alliance through numerous meetings. In addition, email updates were sent out to byway stakeholders.

NOTE: 2023, the byway route changed in Granite Falls when Hwy 9 was discontinued as a through-road. At that time, the “287-mile Byway” changed to a “300-mile Byway”.

2024

The Byway Alliance updated the 2018 CMP in 2024, simplifying much of the document creating this current plan that is ADA accessible.

Chapter 2: Intrinsic Qualities Assessment

Intrinsic Qualities

The National Scenic Byway Program defines intrinsic qualities as “features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of the area.” The intrinsic qualities are the resources along a byway that provide inherent significance and value to the traveler. Demonstrating significance in any one category is a minimum requirement for National Scenic Byway designation. The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway possesses characteristics representing all the six intrinsic qualities that have regional significance.

The six **intrinsic qualities** for which byways may be designated include:

- Historic
- Natural
- Cultural
- Recreational
- Scenic
- Archeological

The Byway has two intrinsic qualities with **national significance** which are the reason the Byway received designation as a national scenic byway. There are also many stories in these categories that have regional significance as well.

- Historical Theme: A Place to Call Home
- Natural Theme: River’s Legacy

Cultural, recreational and scenic intrinsic qualities are of very high quality but do not carry the national significance. Archeological qualities are abundant in the Minnesota River Valley but are undeveloped and thus largely not accessible to the public.

Historic Qualities

National and Regional significance

The Minnesota River Valley played a crucial role in the conflicts that erupted between Euro-American settlers and the Dakota people as they struggled to call this land “home.” The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 was a significant event for the region and for our nation— a tragic chapter that foreshadowed wars to come, and permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.

The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 is of **national significance** as it was the deadliest armed Native American war against the colonization of North America.

There are also many regional stories to tell about the Dakota homeland and European settlement of the West as it relates to both the native people and the immigrants seeking to either keep or win a place on this land.

Evidence of early man, estimated to be living in this region as far back as 9,000 years ago, were discovered in the Minnesota River Valley near Browns Valley. The Dakota, Ojibwe and Ho Chunk once shared the land by hunting, fishing and gathering food.

The Minnesota River Valley played an important role in Manifest Destiny as they offered a path for hundreds of thousands of individuals and families moving from east to west across the country. Eventually Germans, Norwegians and Swedish settled in the area in their quests to create a new agricultural-based society in this territory.

In 1851 the United States signed the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux along the banks of the Minnesota at St. Peter. With this and the Treaty of Mendota, the U.S. government obtained almost 24 million acres of Dakota lands. Thousands more immigrants began pouring into the region, and the Minnesota River became the highway for western settlement as it carried passengers and goods to the growing towns and cities of the west.

Life along the river began to change drastically after these events for both the Dakota and the Euro-American settlers. A reservation was established for the Dakota people, running 10 miles wide along the river from Browns Valley to near New Ulm -- an area that matches a good portion of the Byway Corridor. The system operated for almost a decade, but there were often delays by government officials in making treaty payments and delivering food. Resistance to the U.S. government's-imposed culture (e.g., schooling systems and agriculture) generated a desire among many of the younger Dakota to defy the government. This, among other factors, resulted in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862, a six-week war that forever changed the Minnesota River Valley.

Historic sites

Some of the important historical sites include:

- Samuel J. Brown Memorial Park
- Fort Renville Historic Site
- Lac qui Parle Mission
- Camp Release State Monument
- Wood Lake Monument and Battlefield
- Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Rest
- Renville County Parks: Vicksburg
- Schwandt Memorial
- Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
- Renville County Historical Museum
- Morton Monuments
- Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site
- Fort Ridgely State Park & Historic Site
- Sleepy Eye Depot Museum
- Harkin Store
- Milford Monument
- Brown County History Museum
- Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce (Land of Memories) Park
- Blue Earth County History Center and Museum
- Reconciliation Park
- Winter Warrior and Memorial Marker
- Treaty Site History Center
- Traverse des Sioux Historic Site

Natural Qualities

National and Regional significance

The Minnesota River Valley has some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. This region was carved from dramatic and massive floodwaters that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz scouring a jagged path across Minnesota and uncovering ancient bedrock outcrops.

The geologic forces that shaped the river, the ancient rock outcroppings and many of the resulting ecosystems are of national significance.

The Minnesota River Valley was formed 13,700 years ago because of a catastrophic flood of glacial meltwater from glacial lake Agassiz. Most of the Minnesota River Valley was excavated in a couple weeks' time but flooding continued off and on for centuries. The huge torrent of water scoured and scraped the landscape of Southern Minnesota creating the valley we know as the Minnesota River Valley today. Glacial River Warren washed away glacial sediments down to ancient bedrock in many places along the valley. Some of this bedrock is among the oldest in the world. This gave us the Morton Gneiss, which is the oldest known exposed bedrock in the United States and is among the oldest bedrock in the world.

Natural Sites

The ancient rock outcroppings can be seen all along the river in Granite Falls, Ramsey Park Cañ ſa yapi, Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site's scenic overlook, and many of the State Parks.

Large tracts of quality prairie can also be found along the river in places like Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge and Plover, Chippewa and Kasota Prairies.

Some important natural sites include:

- Continental Divide
- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Plover Prairie
- Marsh Lake Dam
- Chippewa Prairie
- Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Yellow Medicine County Museum
- Renville County Parks: Skalbekken
- Wood Lake Monument and Battlefield
- Ramsey Park, Cañ ſa yapi
- Renville County Parks: Beaver Falls
- Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
- Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site
- Fort Ridgely State Park & Historic Site
- Riverside Environmental Learning Center
- Flandrau State Park
- Minneopa State Park
- Minnemishinona Falls
- Sibley Park
- Riverfront Park
- Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area
- Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College
- Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center
- Ney Nature Center

Cultural Qualities

Regional significance

The Minnesota River Valley and its Byway offer exceptional opportunities to explore cultural intrinsic qualities.

First, there is much history to be told of the Minnesota River Valley and of the people who have lived here. Beginning with prehistoric cultures and moving to the present offers one consistent theme: people who live in this valley have largely supported themselves from the land. This is not an urbanized landscape or a failed rural economy. The current modes of living from the land are highly developed and quite healthy in the Minnesota River Valley.

Second, the Byway Corridor's ten-mile boundary coincides with the lands initially negotiated as belonging to the Dakota by the U.S. government and then subsequently largely taken away by the government. Quality interpretation will allow visitors to gain a better sense of what it would be like to live within the Minnesota River Valley prior to and

then after Euro-American settlement. Learning upon the very land that these two cultures each call home provides a connection to place that should be powerful for the visitor.

Third, as tribal communities in the Minnesota River Valley have continued to note, the U.S. – Dakota War was one event, and the main fighting occurred for six weeks. Although important and defining to historic outcomes, **the event itself does not define the Dakota people nor their entire history.** There were decades of peace between the European settlers and the Dakota people. The Dakota people had a way of life before European settlers. Dakota people still live here in the valley and should not be described only in the past tense.

Finally, there are stories to be told of the European descendants that moved to the Minnesota River Valley in the 1800's and whose resulting culture characterizes the area today. The Minnesota River Valley has a many local stories to tell of the growth and development of the American system of agriculture and rural small river towns.

Cultural Sites

Here are some of the important cultural sites. Many of these are also historical sites.

- Samuel J. Brown Memorial Park
- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Big Stone County Museum
- Arv Hus Museum
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Lac qui Parle Mission
- Lac qui Parle County History Center
- Historic Chippewa City
- Milwaukee Road Heritage Depot
- Olof Swensson Farm Museum
- Granite Falls Footbridge
- Andrew J. Volstead House Museum
- Yellow Medicine County Museum
- Fagen Fighters World War II Museum
- Minnesota's Machinery Museum
- Sacred Heart Area Museum
- Redwood County Historical Museum
- Renville County Historical Museum
- Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site
- Gilfillan Farm Estate
- Fort Ridgely State Park & Historic Site
- Sleepy Eye Depot Museum
- Harkin Store
- Hermann Monument
- Wanda Gág House Interpretive Center and Museum
- Glockenspiel
- Kiesling House
- Riverside Environmental Learning Center
- Brown County History Museum
- John Lind House
- Minnesota Music Hall of Fame
- August Schell Brewery Museum
- Flandrau State Park
- Minneopa State Park
- Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota
- Betsy-Tacy Houses Literary Landmarks
- R.D. Hubbard House Museum
- Blue Earth County History Center and Museum
- CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour
- Carnegie Art Center, Mankato
- St. Peter State Hospital Museum
- Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College
- E. St. Julien Cox House
- Treaty Site History Center
- Ottawa Town Hall and Stone Church
- W.W. Mayo House
- Sibley County Historical Museum
- Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center
- Ney Nature Center

Recreational Resources

Regional significance

The recreational resources along the Byway are of regional significance. The Corridor is home to five state parks, one national wildlife refuge, and several of the largest and most diverse wildlife management areas in Minnesota. Several regional and county parks offer high quality amenities.

Parks offer picnic shelters, camping, interpretation, trails and boat access. Birdwatching and wildlife watching are popular activities. Places like the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge and Marsh Lake host unique birding opportunities for waterfowl species and colonies of white pelicans. Hunting and fishing opportunities are abundant along the Byway. Winter activities include cross country skilling, snowmobiling, ice skating, sledding and ice fishing.

Recreational sites

Here are some of the important recreational sites:

- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Marsh Lake Dam
- Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Renville County Parks: Skalbekken
- Renville County Parks: Vicksburg
- Renville County Parks: Beaver Falls
- Fort Ridgely State Park & Historic Site
- Riverside Environmental Learning Center
- Flandrau State Park
- Minneopa State Park
- Ney Nature Center

Scenic Qualities

Regional significance

The landscape along the Minnesota River Valley is beautiful and characteristic of the prairie. It contains some of the largest undisturbed prairie grasslands areas in Minnesota and is part of the National Northern Tallgrass Prairie Historic Preservation Area. The Byway's winding route always brings the traveler back to the river's banks, but not before enjoying small detours through prairie and river towns, in and out of prairie woodlands and wetlands and across long unbroken fields of some of the finest farmland in America.

The western edge of the Byway travels through prairie with wide vistas of the river. The Byway offers drives along Big Stone and Lac qui Parle Lakes, with views of the lake and dramatic prairie landscapes.

The portion from Granite Falls to New Ulm is highly scenic. This section of the Minnesota River flows through an area of granite outcrops. The stretch of the Minnesota River between the Lac qui Parle Dam to Franklin MN is a Minnesota Wild and Scenic River

The colorful hardwoods in the eastern section create a breathtaking drive during the changing of the seasons. The drive from Belle Plaine to Kasota offers a memorable experience traveling through historic towns and villages that were established because of the Minnesota River.

Scenic Sites

Many scenic views can be seen driving along the Byway, but here are a few notable sites:

- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Plover Prairie
- Marsh Lake Dam
- Chippewa Prairie
- Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Fort Renville Historic Site
- Lac qui Parle Mission
- Renville County Parks: Skalbekken
- Renville County Parks: Vicksburg
- Ramsey Park, Cañ ſa yapi
- Renville County Parks: Beaver Falls
- Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
- Flandrau State Park
- Minneopa State Park
- Minnemishinona Falls
- Sibley Park
- Riverfront Park
- Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area

There are nine Scientific and Natural Areas along the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway.

- Kasota Prairie SNA
- Gneiss Outcrop SNA
- Blue Devil Valley SNA
- Bonanza Prairie SNA (adjacent to Big Stone State Park)
- Swedes Forest SNA
- Cedar Rock SNA
- Morton Outcrops SNA
- Cedar Mountain SNA
- Chamberlain Woods SNA

Archeological Qualities

Regional significance

Archeological qualities are abundant but are undeveloped and therefore not accessible to the public.

Archeological Sites

The Browns Valley Man is the only site currently accessible to the public. The Browns Valley Man is 10,000-year-old skeleton found and represents a significant archeological find and topic for interpretation.

Intrinsic Resources Management Strategy

A goal of the Corridor Management Plan is to provide the proper balance between protecting the Byway's natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources for future generations while promoting economic development opportunities for the betterment of local government and local businesses. It is important to keep connected with resource partners to keep the intrinsic values of the Byway a part of their decision making.

Resource Management Partners

Local Historic Districts

The locally zoned historic districts include:

- Ortonville
- New Ulm
- Mankato
- St. Peter
- Ottawa
- Henderson

Municipal and County Zoning

Most communities and counties have some form of zoning and land use regulations. As byway projects proceed, cooperation with these regulatory agencies will be critical.

Chapter 3: Marketing

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway's main purpose is to link together the Minnesota River as a tourism destination to create economic development for the region. Marketing the Byway can be challenging because of its scale. The Byway follows many roads and goes through multiple cities.

Our Product

Our byway is a 300-mile corridor along the Minnesota River. We have identified over 75 discovery sites that we want visitors to know about when they visit. There are 20 towns and two tribal nations directly on the byway route. The Byway Corridor is defined as ten miles on both sides of the Minnesota River from Browns Valley to Belle Plaine. There are an additional 40 towns in the Byway Corridor.

Brand

"Visit the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway to discover the River of Stories. This unique valley formed by ancient glaciers is where you can learn about the important U.S.-Dakota War of 1862."

Taglines

The current tagline is: [Discover the river of stories.](#)

Style Guide

Logo, Font and Colors

The logo was created by the Minnesota Department of Transportation in 2000. The fonts currently used are Droid Serif and Popple-Laudatio Bold.



- PMS PROCESS BLUE C
- PMS 021C ORANGE
- PMS PROCESS MAGENTA C
- PMS PROCESS BLACK
- WHITE

Fonts:

Minnesota River Valley
NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

Current Marketing

Currently, visitors can find and follow the Byway in the following ways:

Website

www.mnrivervalley.com

The current website was created in 2014.

Byway signage

Byway signs and directional signage are currently located all along the Byway to help the byway visitor. Updates and improvements on the signage is important and outlined in the Signage Guidelines, a separate document.

Maps

The Byway has three orientation maps and an interactive map on the website.

Visitors Guide

The Byway Visitors Guides are typically reprinted every two to three years.

Facebook page

The Byway started a Facebook page with help from a volunteer in 2012. This volunteer shares multiple posts many times a day.

Various other collateral materials, advertisements and editorial

The Byway has done several collateral items such as byway calendars, geocaching, temporary tattoos, pins, DVD, banners, brochures and rack cards. The Byway has also advertised and received editorial coverage in many publications such as Minnesota Trails and Midwest Living.

- Maps
- Itineraries
- Calendar
- Yard signs
- Rack cards
- T-shirts, bags, various items
- Give-aways: pins, stickers

Explore Minnesota Tourism

Website, partnerships, grants, coop marketing and resources.

Discovery sites

Byway yard signs and window stickers have been placed at all discovery sites.

Additional Media options

Media options to consider currently include:

- Press Release
- Public Relations
- Radio
- Television
- Newspapers and Print
- Social Media
- Newsletters, eNewsletters
- Email Blasts
- Video
- Programs and events
- Collateral materials
- Byway media marketing

Byway Marketing Partnerships

The Byway functions as a partnership for those who market along the Minnesota River. The following are lists of existing and potential partnerships.

Chamber and CVBs

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters
Big Stone Lake Area Chamber of Commerce
Appleton Area Chamber of Commerce
Montevideo Chamber of Commerce and CVB
Granite Falls Chamber of Commerce
New Ulm Chamber and Visitors Bureau
Redwood Area Chamber and Tourism
Renville County HRA EDA
Visit Mankato
Le Sueur Chamber and Tourism
St. Peter Tourism and Visitors Bureau

Casinos

Prairie's Edge Casino
Jackpot Junction

State Agencies

Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota Historic Society has 26 historic sites, seven of which are in the Minnesota River Valley.

- Lac qui Parle Mission
- Birch Coulee Battlefield
- Lower Sioux Agency
- Fort Ridgely
- Harkin Store
- Traverse des Sioux
- W.W. Mayo House

Office of Tourism (MOT) / Explore Minnesota Tourism (EMT)

Southern MN Tourism Association (SMTA)

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The DNR offers maps, information and a dynamic website for marketing the byway.

The DNR has Minnesota River Canoe Route Guides (4 sections) that provides information about canoeing the Minnesota River.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources manages many of our natural sites including State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) and Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA).

There are five state parks along the Byway Corridor:

- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Flandrau State Park
- Fort Ridgely State Park and History Center
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Minneopa State Park

There are nine Scientific and Natural Areas along the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway.

The Nature Conservancy

There are three Nature Conservancy preserves:

- Plover Prairie
- The Chippewa Prairie
- Ottawa Bluffs

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The following are National Wildlife Refuges that connect with the Byway:

- Big Stone Wildlife Refuge
- Minnesota Valley Refuge

Private businesses/organizations/events

There are many private businesses and non-profits that could partner with the Byway:

- Wahoo Adventures, Kerri Kolstad
- Wild River Academy (urban rivers), Natalie Warren
- Wilderness Inquiry
- Appleton Arts and Culture
- Milan Village Arts School
- Watson Hunting Camp
- Kerfoot Canopy Tour
- Lonely Planet
- Dakota Wicohan
- Morgan Creek Winery
- Big Stone Apple Ranch
- Holmberg Orchard
- Ramsey Park Zoo
- Mount Kato Ski Area and mountain biking

Chapter 4: Interpretation

In 2013 – 2014, the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance completed an Interpretive Plan with Bluestem Consulting, Nancy O’Brian Wagner. The Byway’s themes and messaging were updated.

The National Story

The Byway Alliance has spent a considerable amount of time determining what sets our byway apart, and what the experience is that you cannot find anywhere else. We identified two main themes that set the Byway and this river valley apart from any other.

- A River’s Legacy: The Geology of the Minnesota River Valley
- A Place to Call Home: The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The Local Story

When you arrive to learn about these national stories, you will find a local flavor here that is unique to this place. Wineries, prairie, agriculture, adventure, bed and breakfasts, museums all work to make this river valley a fun place to visit. These sites will be promoted differently than our two main themes. These notable local sites will be marketed as Discovery Sites.

Themes and Messaging

The following text will be used on the website, in the visitors guide and in general marketing materials.

Overall Theme

Discover the Minnesota River Valley and unlock a piece of American history.

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway traverses the ancient remnants of what was once one of the largest rivers to ever exist. Along the way, it uncovers stories from the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 that left hundreds dead and exiled a nation. Today travelers wind their way through vibrant small towns, Dakota communities, historic sites and scenic overlooks.

Historical Theme: A Place to Call Home

The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The Minnesota River Valley played a crucial role in the conflicts that erupted between Euro-American settlers and the Dakota people as they struggled to call this land “home.” The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 was a significant event for the region and for our nation— a tragic chapter that foreshadowed wars to come, and permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.

More detail:

In 1862, the Minnesota River Valley region erupted in war when a contingent of Dakota *akicita* (warriors), frustrated by broken treaty promises, encroachment onto reservation lands and corruption that left them starving, attacked traders and government employees and a warehouse full of food at the Lower Sioux Agency. More were killed on all sides in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 than Minnesota lost in combat deaths during the Civil War. As a result of the war, Governor Ramsey called for all Dakota people to be exterminated or driven from the state.

Thousands fled the state and those that did not were separated into two groups. Women, children and mostly older men were imprisoned at Fort Snelling before being removed from the state in May 1863. The akičita that were not executed at Mankato were imprisoned at Davenport Iowa. In March 1866 the surviving prisoners were released to join their families in exile.

Decades later small groups of Dakota eventually started to return to their homelands in the late 1800s and lived in small communities near where the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies had been. Nearly 50 years later these small groups were organized into what is now the Upper and Lower Sioux Dakota Communities.

Natural Theme: A River's Legacy

The Formation of the Minnesota River Valley

The Minnesota River Valley has a national story to tell about some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. This region was carved from dramatic and massive floodwaters that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz scouring a jagged path across Minnesota and uncovering ancient bedrock outcrops.

More detail:

The Minnesota River travels through rich wetlands, prairies, granite outcroppings, wooded hills, farm fields, villages and small cities. Over millennia, the river valley's people, plants, and animals have interacted in a complex and unique ecosystem. Throughout the valley, evidence of the interactions between these species can be seen. Today, the valley's natural features offer a fascinating number of interpretive opportunities.

Destination, Discovery and Historic Towns

The Byway includes several existing visitor attractions, historic sites, and touring opportunities. These sites and attractions have been evaluated by the Byway Alliance and interpretive consultant according to their readiness for visitors and their relationships to the themes of the Byway.

Each site was reviewed using the following criteria:

- Relationship to one or more of the Byway themes:
 - U.S. – Dakota War of 1862
 - Natural History
- National or state significance (National Register listing or state recognition)
- Level of interpretation:
 - Full service (guided tours by trained staff or volunteers)
 - Limited service (tours available at certain times, self-guided materials)
 - Self-guided (no staff, tour with brochure or audio)
- Hours and accessibility (open during all seasons)
- Level of visitor services: restrooms, information available on the area, etc.

From this assessment process, "Destination Sites" and "Discovery Sites" were identified. These are currently denoted on the Byway Website. The visitors guide and maps call all sited "Discovery Sites".

Destination Sites

Destination Sites are the visitor's guideposts when they travel through the Minnesota River Valley. These sites should be a public place where visitors could expect visitor information, staffing, and public restrooms especially in the summer season and shoulder seasons. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its national or statewide significance. The site should be related to our two major interpretive themes for the Byway.

Historic Towns

For historic cities, towns, and villages to be included as a Historic Town Destination, they have a relationship to one or both themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History). They also include at least one site that offers personal interpretation (guided tours, staff, programs, events) or high-quality non-personal interpretation (self-guided tours, exhibits, signs).

Discovery Sites

Discovery Sites should be a public place where visitors could expect limited visitor information. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its statewide or local significance. The site may be related to our major themes for the Byway but not necessarily.

Sites not included

Sites that are not included on our list do not offer any interpretation, or their connections to the themes are weak.

Visitor Centers

The Byway has identified the Destination sites to serve as visitors centers:

- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Historic Chippewa City
- Renville County Historical Museum
- Lower Sioux Agency
- Fort Ridgely State Park
- Flandrau State Park
- Brown County Historical Museum
- Minneopa State Park
- Blue Earth County Heritage Center
- Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota
- Treaty Site History Center
- Ney Nature Center
- Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society and Minnesota River Center

In addition, the following communities have visitor information centers that provide materials and staff to help byway travelers:

- Ortonville
- Montevideo

- Granite Falls
- Redwood Falls
- New Ulm
- Mankato
- St. Peter
- Le Sueur

Existing Interpretation

Minnesota Historical Society

The Minnesota Historical Society manages seven historical sites along the Byway.

- Lac qui Parle Mission
- Lower Sioux Agency
- Birch Coulee Battlefield
- Fort Ridgely
- Harkin Store
- W.W. Mayo House
- Traverse des Sioux

It also owns additional sites such as the Wood Lake Monument and provides services in a variety of ways. MNHS has different signs and plaques along the Byway.

Oral History Tour through the Minnesota Historical Society

MNHS created an Oral History tour of the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 <http://www.usdakotawar.org/initiatives/oral-history-project>

Local Historical Societies and museums

Our local champions of history are historical societies, who come together to create a legacy in our local museums.

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Website

The website includes interpretive information as well as a platform for additional information.

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Visitors Guide

The Visitors guide has information on the themes and stories along the Byway.

Interpretive Panels created by the Byway

The Byway has gone through two series of panel creation. The first was completed in 2009 and included 15 panels that worked to increase information available about the River's Legacy and the valley formation, agriculture, and Struggles for a Home. The second was completed in 2012 and included 10 panels that focused on the history of the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

Interpretive Panels are a way to get information onto the location without the need for technology or other resources. The Byway has created Interpretive Panel Guidelines to help create future panels.

Orientation Maps

The Byway created three maps that cover the entire byway in 2023. Dakota placenames are used, and historic Dakota village sites are included on these maps.

Multi-lingual Resources

Creating materials in multiple languages and with different cultures are important as we strive to tell stories about the people who live here, and to people who want to learn more.

Creating interpretation in the Dakota language is an important consideration that does two things. First, it adds to revitalization of the Dakota language, and second, by adding a Native language, it adds a “sense of place” to documents about the Minnesota River Valley. The Byway Orientation Maps created in 2023 use Dakota placenames and showcase Historic Dakota Villages to give viewers a sense of place that goes before white settlements.

Chapter 5: The Corridor

The Byway passes through thirteen counties, using portions of U.S. highways, state highways, county state aid highways (CSAH), county roads and township roads. The designated route also has several “Alternative Routes”, and approximately 50 miles are graveled surfaces. The gravel surface routes usually run near or parallel to the paved route but offer access to some unique or distinctive characteristic along the river. Most often, the Byway winds along paved surfaces through farmland and river towns.

Most roadways can accommodate motorcoach traffic during spring and summer, having a 10-ton limit during these times. Safety concerns are issues such as shoulder widths, high traffic counts, roadway conditions around bridges and trestles, gravel safety and bike safety.

Highway Safety Topics

County Highway Safety reports

The County Highway Safety reports should show the most current updated safety needs along the Byway.

Commercial and Farm Traffic

The Byway runs through agricultural areas where farm machinery is used at various times of the year.

Group Tour Buses

Much of the Byway is accessible for tour buses. There are a limited number of bridges and road segments that are not suitable due to seasonal or tonnage limitations. There are many towns and lodging facilities along the Byway that already cater to the group market and therefore the Byway is well positioned to take even greater advantage of this market.

Maintain the Character of Rural Roads

The gravel routes provide an unusual experience for most travelers. The question of whether gravel roads should be paved must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances along each section of the Byway. The needs of residents and commercial traffic will largely determine this issue. With that said, it should also be stated that maintaining the gravel road experience where possible is an important objective for the byway to maintain this aspect of the byway’s character and keep road speeds low.

Bridges

Bridges are also important rural road features of the Byway. Any improvements should seek to enhance pedestrian/bike crossings as well as vehicle movement.

Bicycling and Multi-Use Trails

Bicycling infrastructure is an important investment for residents and visitors. Many of the communities are working on off-road trails that might eventually be linked together to form a continuous network of trails from one end of the valley to the other. This is a critical project to provide more ways for visitors to explore the back roads and countryside of the Byway in a more intimate fashion.

Stretches of roadways have been widened specifically to better accommodate bicycle traffic. There are many miles of adjacent county and township roads that have little traffic and would make tremendous bicycling loop routes. For a

roadway to have a suitable bike lane, there needs to be a four-foot paved shoulder. A separate bike trail is ideal for safety.

Multi-use trail facilities should be developed along rural roads, including gravel, in a manner that protects the character of the road while providing for safe trail use. Consider recommendations from the Minnesota River State Trail Plan.

Gravel Pits and Extraction Activities

There are two locations along the Byway. The first is near Ortonville where there is pressure to increase aggregate quarry projects. The second area is from Henderson to Mankato where there is the increased amount of gravel and sand extraction occurring within the river valley.

The Minnesota River Valley has rich deposits of these materials and property owners should be able to extract these resources if the sites meet environmental and zoning requirements. The issues of relevance to the Byway are those of visibility, truck traffic, reclamation and interpretation. Screening should be encouraged if an extraction area will significantly impact a scenic area. Where relevant, guidelines for managing truck traffic, pedestrians and cyclists should be developed during the permitting process. All extraction projects should have enforceable reclamation plans.

Finally, in some cases, a site may lend itself to geological interpretation. In such cases, pullout areas should be set aside, visual access guidelines developed, and traffic safety plans prepared. In all cases, the overall objective should be ensuring safe co-existence for commercial operations and byway visitors, as well as taking advantage of opportunities to safely interpret interesting commercial activities for the visitor.

Signage Management

Off-premise Signs and Outdoor Advertising

In compliance with ISTE, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU & MAP-21 billboard requirements, no billboards have been erected along Federal Aid Primary roads on the nominated route since its partial designations in 1995 and extension of designation in 1996. Billboards are more frequent along the eastern end of the Byway. There are several community gateways that have an abundance of billboard signs, all of which are in the commercially zoned districts.

The Byway will comply with the National Scenic Byway Program's billboard requirements. Communities will be encouraged to explore appropriate off-site signage regulations depending on their circumstances. Commercial and industrial zoning along the route exists in Ortonville, Montevideo, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, New Ulm, Mankato, St. Peter, and Le Sueur and as such, modifications may need to be made in the formal byway designation to allow for appropriate signage.

Byway signage and wayfinding

The Byway has created an attractive, easily recognizable logo with its bright pink background and distinctive flying eagle.

The Byway follows many different roads along the 300 miles leading into many small towns and communities. Route signage competes with other route, attraction, town and business signage. Other signage issues include consistency, location, and frequency of signs for the route as well as attractions along the route. Efforts should be made to ensure that byway signs are installed in a more comprehensive manner, with replacement plans. Both advance warning signs with arrows and then “reassurance signs” are needed at each intersection to reassure the traveler that they are continuing along the appropriate route.

The Byway completed a signage guidelines plan in 2006. The Byway should work with road authorities to update their current byway signs and keep the directional signs working to help visitors along the Byway. An updated signage plan is needed to assess additional signs.

Pedestrian safety along the Byway

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway carries a mix of motorists, pedestrians, and bicycles, with the percentage of leisure travelers dependent on the location within the state. As with many other roads that carry motorists on leisure travel, the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway shares needs and opportunities for improvements in the following areas:

- Route marking, proper placement of traffic control devices, and other way showing components to allow for ease of wayfinding for travelers
- Provisions for pedestrian access and crossing of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway, particularly near local attractions.
- Traffic calming procedures and improvements
- Safe pull-offs and parking areas for motorists to observe roadside attractions and discovery sites.
- Consider provisions for bicycle traffic (shared lane or separate path) along the entire length of the Byway Corridor, particularly areas identified in the Minnesota River State Trail Master Plan.

Chapter 6: Byway Organizational Plan

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance

A critical element to ensure successful long-term support for the Byway is the presence of a strong community-based group that cares about the mission of the Byway. This group should include local citizens, elected officials, organizations and agencies interested in and concerned about the attributes of the Minnesota River Valley.

For this byway, that organization is the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance.

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance remains the only organization working to promote the Minnesota River Valley on a regional scale. It is a partnership that formed through the grassroots efforts of people and agencies working along the Minnesota River.

The Byway Alliance is made up of approximately 10 - 25 core members from tribal entities, counties, cities, chambers of commerce, residents, businesses, tourism organizations, and historic and preservation groups from throughout the Minnesota River Valley as well as representatives from various state agencies and organizations. The Byway Alliance meets monthly to discuss the Byway, specifically marketing and interpretation. The meetings are open to anyone interested. The Byway Alliance is not a board of directors. Anyone who attends meetings can offer input and vote on decision making.

The **Mission** of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway is:

To cooperatively enhance the Minnesota River Valley as a travel destination and raise awareness of its nationally important stories to provide economic benefits and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the Byway.

“Ultimately our Scenic Byway is not about water quality issues - it’s a tourism destination. We care about clean water, but that is not our focus. Using the Minnesota River Valley as the linking device to create a tourism destination is what we’re about.” -Terry Sveine, long time Byway Alliance member

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance seeks to:

- Cooperatively preserve and promote the rich heritage, natural beauty, and vibrant communities of the Minnesota River Valley
- Inspire travelers to discover unforgettable experiences along the Byway
- Share nationally important stories
- Increase partnerships along the Minnesota River
- Increase economic vitality for the region.
- Link together the Minnesota River to promote as a tourism destination
- Attract more visitors to the Minnesota River Valley.
- Ensure that current visitors to the Minnesota River Valley enjoy a high-quality experience.
- Educate residents and visitors about the recreation, scenic, historical, cultural and archaeological characteristics of the river valley.
- Develop and distribute Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway marketing materials.

- Secure funding for Byway projects.

In doing so, the Byway Alliance:

- Represents the interests of the people of the Minnesota River Valley who live, work and recreate along the river, provide the leadership necessary to ensure that the region retains its high quality of life and offers opportunities for ongoing involvement resulting in an increased level of community pride.
- Works to provide visitors seeking to enjoy the resources of the Byway with a safe, convenient and memorable experience. An important part of this effort is packaging the many and varied resources of this lengthy byway with high quality information.
- Works to promote economic development while enhancing, protecting and preserving the intrinsic qualities of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway.

Public Participation Plan

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance has worked hard to develop an open public participation strategy since its inception in 1997. There are multiple ways for the public to participate in the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance. The following will serve as the public participation plan to keep the public aware of what the Alliance is working on.

- 1) The Byway Alliance holds monthly meetings. Most of the meetings are virtually, with an occasional in-person meeting.
- 2) All Byway Alliance meetings are open to the public. The Alliance is not a board of directors. Anyone who attends meetings can offer input and vote.
- 3) The Byway Alliance keeps a mailing list and email list to send periodic updates, including the Annual Report.
 - a. The mailing list includes all tribal entities, counties, cities, chambers, tourism organizations, and historic preservation groups from Byway Corridor, as well as representatives from various state agencies, organizations, residents and businesses.
- 4) A Byway Awareness Campaign will reach out to the public through giveaways, brochures, and online information. These efforts will depend on funding.
- 5) Below is a survey that can be used annually or as needed. These questions will help the Byway keep up to date on issues, resources marketing and partnerships.

Sample Survey: To Stakeholders along the Byway

1. What is your favorite part of being a part of the Byway? What can the Byway do to keep you involved?
2. What is your Vision for Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway? What do you hope for the future?
3. What is one thing you'd like to see the Byway Alliance do in the next year?
4. What marketing ideas do you have for the Byway?
5. What issues should we know about from your area/city/county/region?
6. What partnerships should we know about?

7. What are you willing to do to help develop partnerships, and the capacity to attract people to the Minnesota River Valley?
8. How often do you think the Byway Alliance should meet?
 - a. Monthly
 - b. Quarterly
 - c. Annually
9. How often would you like to hear from the Byway Alliance?
 - a. Monthly
 - b. Quarterly
 - c. Annually
10. Your name (optional)
The area you represent:

Sample Survey: Byway Investment Priorities

This survey was used for the Byway Investment Priorities Addendum 2015 and could be used for future updates.

The following are the types of projects you may have to enhance the Byway experience:

1. **Construction projects** along the byway or in the byway corridor, esp. those that would improve the byway visitor experience or increase the number of byway travelers. This could include construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas, and increased parking in designated areas.
2. **Trails projects** including pathways or trails along the byways or to connect to town amenities from the byway, cross-country ski trails, OHV trail development and maintenance, conversion of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
3. **Bicycle and Pedestrian infrastructure projects**, including signals.
4. **Safety improvement projects**. Examples include wider shoulders, ruble strips/stripes, chevrons, intersection lighting, and traffic calming techniques
5. **Americans with Disabilities Act** of 1990 transportation projects
6. **Vegetation management projects** (invasive species control, erosion control, etc.) or projects that reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality.
7. Acquisition, development, improvement, and restoration of **park and trail facilities** of regional or statewide significance projects.
8. **Interpretation** projects
9. **Public art** projects
10. **Marketing** projects
11. Other projects

For each project identify:

1. Project name and Description.
2. Project location.
3. Who is the project manager?
4. What stage is this project at?
 - a. Only a concept

- b. Planning stage
 - c. Design stage
 - d. Construction stage
5. Rank the project in importance. (High Priority or Low Priority).
 6. Approximate cost (if known)

Organizational Principles

These are principles that guide the organizational approach of the Byway Alliance:

1. No new regional organizations are envisioned. Instead, the Byway will move forward through the coordinative role of the Byway Alliance and through the flexible and dynamic partnering of the area's many organizations and entities on an as-needed basis. Varying projects and varying needs will determine partnerships. Through it all, the Byway Alliance will provide a consistent forum for communication and cooperation.
2. Partnerships are critical to the success of the byway, and new partnerships are continually encouraged as the Byway Alliance moves forward. The Alliance has a strong history of convening important stakeholders to keep this project locally driven and the Alliance will continue to play that role.
3. Communities will define the priorities for their immediate areas along the byway. The Minnesota River Valley Byway is long and while the Alliance is devoted to guiding the overall shape of the byway, it will be up to communities and counties along the route to pursue the specific actions to be taken in their vicinities.
4. Marketing will be carried out by in collaborative efforts with city and regional CVB/Chamber organizations, along the byway and with Explore Minnesota Tourism.
5. Funding can and will be sought by a variety of different partners but in a coordinated fashion. This will be coordinated through the Byway Alliance.
6. Relationships will continue with the four agencies of the Minnesota State Scenic Byway Commission:
 1. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
 2. Minnesota Historical Society
 3. Minnesota Department of Transportation
 4. Minnesota Office of Tourism

Partnerships

Partnerships are important to the Byway Alliance. There are multiple ways to collaborate as partnerships within the Byway, and it will depend on the project, geography and funding resources available.

Minnesota Byways Commission

The four agencies that make up the Minnesota Byway Commission also play a role in helping people find and follow the Byway:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Wayfinding, highway safety, infrastructure.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Marketing, interpretation, wayfinding.

The Minnesota Historical Society.

Interpretation, wayfinding, marketing

The Minnesota Office of Tourism

Marketing, biking, mapping, wayfinding

General Partnerships

Federal Partners

US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

- Big Stone Wildlife Refuge
- Minnesota Valley Refuge
- National Park Service / Minnesota National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA)

National Scenic Byways Program (non-profit)

Federal Highway Administration

Regional Groups

Regional Development Commissions:

- Upper Minnesota Regional Development Commission
- Mid Minnesota Development Commission
- Southwest Regional Development Commission
- Region Nine Development Commission

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters

Regional Arts Councils

- Southwest Minnesota Arts Council
- Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council

Dakota Wicohan

Minnesota Valley History Learning Center.

New Ulm Sport Fisherman

CURE, Montevideo

Coalition for a Clean Minnesota River (CCMR), New Ulm

Friends of the Minnesota Valley

Save The Kasota Prairie

Friends of Minneopa State Park

Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail

Mankato Paddling and Outing Group

Casinos

Statewide Groups

The Nature Conservancy

Minnesota Waters

Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board

Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa

Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society

Pheasants Forever Chapter

Ducks Unlimited

Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
Statewide MRT and Bicycle Advocacy Groups
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
Park and Trails Council of Minnesota
Adventure Cycling Association/USBRS
League of American Bicyclists

Resources

Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota State University at Mankato
University of Minnesota at Morris Center for Small Towns
University of Minnesota Cooperative Extension
Gustavus Adolphus

Local groups

Chambers, Convention and Visitors Bureaus and other Tourism Entities
City and County Government
Tribes
Arts Councils
Art galleries and Art schools
Libraries
Museums and Historical Societies

- *Browns Valley Historical Society*
- *Big Stone County Historical Museum*
- *Le Sueur County Historical Society*
- *Nicollet County Historical Society*
- *Chippewa County Historical Society*
- *Lac qui Parle County Historical Society*
- *Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society*
- *Blue Earth County Historical Society*
- *Preserve Ottawa*

Local Historic Districts

The locally zoned historic districts include:

- Ortonville
- New Ulm
- Mankato
- St. Peter
- Ottawa
- Henderson

A History of Accomplishment

The Byway has many accomplishments since 1996. See the Appendix a comprehensive list of projects and byway achievements.

Chapter 7: Implementation Plan

This section includes the Vision, Strategies and Actions to implement the CMP, and to guide the annual work plan.

Vision of the Byway

The vision describes a clear mental picture of what the Byway wants to achieve and become. Much has already been achieved, and this vision keep path before the Byway clear and defined.

Our vision is that....

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway is a nationally recognized destination, celebrated for its rich history, stunning landscapes, and vibrant communities. Visitors embark on unforgettable journeys, explore historic sites, enjoy outdoor adventures, and experience the warm hospitality of our region.

Visitors travel the 300 miles, exploring Minnesota River Valley with its compelling stories and beautiful landscapes, and take in the charm of small towns and hospitality of residents along the Byway. Visitors follow well-signed roadways, enjoy informative stops at visitor centers in each community, and enjoy a variety of interpretive sites. Marketing efforts promote the Byway's outstanding historical and cultural resources, including the dramatic events of the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The region's outstanding recreational and natural resources provide a variety of opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors. Bicycling, canoeing and bird-watching enthusiasts begin to make the Byway an annual destination as more and more sites, trails and events are developed to host these groups. The Minnesota River Trail is completed, providing trail access all along the Minnesota River.

Through strategic development and promotion, the Byway is a premier destination for travelers seeking authentic experiences and a deeper connection to the heart of Minnesota, leading to increased tourism, strengthened local economies, and greater awareness of the region.

Strategies and actions

Marketing

The main purpose of the Byway is to link together the Minnesota River as a tourism destination to create economic development for the region. The overall goal of marketing is to increase the number of visitors to the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway, and therefore increase visitor expenditures for tourism businesses along the Byway route.

Strategies

Make it easier to travel to and along the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.

Make it easier to know the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.

Actions

Create and place advertisements

- Identify target markets: hunters, birders, agri-tourists, art buffs, cyclists, paddlers, bikers, golfers, beer geeks, wine snobs, gamblers, history buffs, rockhounds and nature lovers
- Promote local artists, folk art, local food and ethnic cultures of the region
- Develop editorial and ads including print, radio, tv, and social media
- Create a Byway Logo Use plan and encourage byway partners to use the Byway Logo in their advertising

Develop Byway materials

- Develop byway giveaways such as clings, yard signs and stickers for discovery sites
- Develop a byway-only brochure rack for the visitors guide
- Create and distribute high quality byway orientation maps
- Update Visitors Guide regularly
- Distribute Guides through chambers, museums, discovery sides, Mall of America
- Develop byway collateral materials such as kids pack, calendar, poster, t-shirts, notecards, postcards playing cards, reusable bags, water bottles, wildflower seeds, stickers, geocaching etc. Find ways to distribute/sell.

Keep an online presence

- Update the Byway website
 - Develop a "make your own itinerary" on website
 - Work with EMT website
 - Keep photos updated on website
- Create a byway app
- Utilize the Byway Facebook and other social media
- Utilize promotional video and consider creating new material

Interpretation

The Minnesota River has an impressive set of stories that have played an important role in the history of the state and in the colonization of the Western U.S., but this story is not easily available for visitors. Many Minnesota residents with an interest in state history would enjoy traveling the Minnesota River Valley if the stories were more accessible.

Strategy

Develop interpretation that increase our residents and visitors understanding of local history and culture.

Actions

Utilize the Discovery Sites and Stories of the Byway

- Develop a method for adding and reviewing Byway discovery sites

Add multilingual language to interpretation and marketing materials.

- Add the Dakota language to the Visitors Guide and website.
- Utilize the byway orientation maps that cover the entire Byway (created in 2023). Dakota placenames are used, and historic Dakota village sites are included on these maps.

- Create materials in different languages.

Develop the U.S. –Dakota War of 1862 and Natural History themes for the Byway visitor.

- Work with the Dakota communities to develop the U.S. –Dakota War of 1862 story in a sensitive way.
- Work with natural history experts to come up with the overall story in the formation of the valley and old rock.
- Work to have interpretation of one of these two main themes at each of our destination sites.

Develop Interpretation along the Byway

- Develop a Byway Activity Booklet or Guidebook focused on specific topics
- Design a Kiosk that could serve as a byway landmark with wayfinding and interpretation
- Design additional interpretive panels on various topics such as the geology of the Minnesota River and the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862
- Create tours for byway visitors

Work with museums, tribes and historic locations

- Develop byway themed interpretation to add to the overall byway story at a variety of locations such as:
 - Historic Chippewa City, Montevideo
 - Renville County Historical Museum, Morton
 - Regional River History Center & Info Center, New Ulm
 - Treaty Site History Center and Nicollet County Museum, St. Peter
 - Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society and Minnesota River Center, Henderson
 - Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site

The Corridor

The Byway passes through thirteen counties, using portions of U.S. highways, state highways, county state aid highways (CSAH), county roads and township roads. The designated route also has several “Alternative Routes”. The 300-mile Byway showcase the beauty of the Minnesota River, so it is important that visitors can easily and safely enjoy the route.

Strategy

Make driving the byway a pleasant and safe experience with robust amenities along the way.

Actions

Signage Updates

- Review and update byway directional signage
 - Work with MnDOT planners, county engineers, county highway departments and city officials
 - Replace and install byway signs in a comprehensive manner, with a replacement plan
 - Drive the byway to note that signs are correct and sufficient to easily navigate the byway route.
 - Add advance warning signs with arrows and then “reassurance signs”
- Erect Points-of-Interest/Discovery Site signs with multilingual place names.
 - Byway Yard signs

- Permanent metal signs
- Utilize online platform (QR code etc.) to give people more information

Develop infrastructure and improvements to enhance the Byway experience

- Develop gateway sites and full-service destination sites.
 - Consider how the anchor sites can become byway information centers.
- Improve the recreational facilities and amenities of the Minnesota River Valley.
- Increase bike and pedestrian trails
- Develop a New Visitor Center along the Byway
- Support additional lodging, food, shopping options along the Byway, especially those that are distinctive.
- Work with residents, business owners and organizations to encourage them to provide services and experiences to byway visitors.
- Support the improvement of the environmental health of the Minnesota River

Consider Safety along the Byway Route

- Work with MnDOT planners, transportation departments and county highway engineers on safety and sign managers.

Develop the Byway Route

- Maintain the Character of Rural Roads, including the gravel roads
- Maintain the Alternate routes that add to the byway overall experience

Byway Organizational Plan

The Byway Alliance is vital to the Byway. It is a partnership that implements this CMP and works towards the Byway's Mission "To cooperatively enhance the Minnesota River Valley as a travel destination and raise awareness of its nationally important stories to provide economic benefits and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the Byway".

Strategy

Keep the Byway Alliance strong and vibrant with a cross section of interests, agencies, and organizations all along the Minnesota River

Actions

Increase Byway awareness and interest

- Work to make the Byway known to residents, businesses and elected officials through outreach efforts
 - Continue membership drive with an annual report
 - Conduct a survey to reach residents and stakeholders
 - Empower Byway Alliance members to share information about the Byway
 - Deliver Byway materials to members, discovery sites and stakeholders

Utilize the Byway Alliance as a catalyst for coordination along the Minnesota River

- Coordinate the Byway Alliance to meet regularly
- Create a Work Plan annually
- Participate in conferences, tours and seminars on topics of interest
- Complete an annual report to evaluate the success of the work completed

Update and Maintain the Corridor Management Plan (CMP)

- Update the CMP every 2-5 years
- Update the Interpretive Plan
- Review Mission Statement

Plan for the financial sustainability of the Byway Alliance

- Find ways to fund projects of the Byway, including staff time
- Find funding for coordination (UMVRDC Staff time)
- Research grants
 - MNHS grants
 - MNDOT grants
 - EMT grants
- Continue with membership drive to keep relationship with partners
- Work with local partners to step forward manage or fund projects on behalf of the Byway Alliance
- Utilize sales from the Visitors Guide to raise funds for Byway Coordination

Develop partners for marketing efforts and projects

- Develop partnerships with state agencies including DNR, MNHS, EMT MNDOT
- Develop partnerships with the Upper and Lower Sioux Communities
- Development partnerships with local chambers, historical societies and Byway Alliance members

Work Plan

The Byway Alliance should use the strategies and actions of this CMP to guide the annual work plan. The Alliance will implement the work plan by prioritizing projects and identifying funding resources.

Priority Projects and Programs

The following are current priority areas for the Byway:

1. Enhance Discovery Sites along the Byway that are related to one or more of the two themes and currently ready for visitors to increase visitation to the Byway Corridor.
2. Increase access and enhance visitor experience to discovery sites along the Byway Corridor.
3. Work cooperatively on marketing and interpretation.

Funding Opportunities

There are many funding opportunities for the Byway. Individual communities may also pursue grants for local projects.

Look in the Appendix for past funding sources and applications.

Funding Partners and resources

Legacy grants and opportunities:

- Libraries

- Minnesota Historical Society
- Minnesota Department of Resources
- Arts Councils

Explore Minnesota Grant

Minnesota Department of Transportation: Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Grants.gov: A variety of grants are available at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/home.html>

National Park Service: See <http://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm>.

Potential Scenic Byway Funding Sources

Funding Source	Responsible Entity	Infrastructure	Non-Infrastructure
MnDOT Scenic Byway Solicitation	MnDOT	X	X - CMP Update
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	ATPs / MnDOT	X	
Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	U of M		X
Community Development Funding	DEED	X	
Greater Minnesota Public Infrastructure Program	DEED	X	
Explore Minnesota Grant Program	Explore MN		X
Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program	DNR	X	
Outdoor Recreation Grant Program	DNR	X	
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Rail-Crossings	MnDOT	X	
General transportation programming	MnDOT; Counties; Cities	X	
State Health Improvement Program (SHIP)	MDH	X	X
County Fair Arts Access and Cultural Heritage Grants	MDA		X
Recreational Trails Program	DNR	X	
Local Trail Connections Program	DNR		
Regional Trail Grant Program	DNR	X	
Other DNR Grants	DNR	X	
Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants	MHS		X
RDC Transportation Planning Grants	MnDOT / RDCs		X
Private Foundation Grant Opportunities	Varies		
Byway Membership Fees	Byway groups		X
Advertising Revenue	Byway groups		X
Regional Arts Councils			X
Hazard Mitigation Assistance	FEMA	X	
Federal Land Access Program (FLAP)	FHWA	X	
Minnesota Design Team	AIA Minnesota		X
SHPO Grants	MHS		X

Appendix 1: A History of Accomplishments

The Byway Alliance has been active since 1997 on behalf of the public, residents, businesses and stakeholders who call the Byway Corridor their home, workplace and playground.

The first FHWA “seed” grant was in 1998. Those seed grants helped shape the byways in Minnesota and throughout the nation. The River Stories Corridor Management Plan was completed in 2001. The following list is an attempt to catalog the Byway Alliance’s many accomplishments:

Between 1996 and 2001:

- Conduct monthly (sometimes more often) meetings of the Byway Alliance.
- Established a database for notification of partners on activities.
- Achieved Minnesota nonprofit status.
- Prepared application for National Scenic Byway designation and received designation in 2002.
- Provided speaker for first Minnesota Scenic Byways conference
- Nominated for FHWA Environmental Excellence Award by MNDOT
- Hired consultants to complete the Corridor Management Plan
- Attended state and national conferences

Marketing accomplishments

- Creation of three Byway Brochures, one for each segment.
- Hosted two seminars on marketing.
- Worked to add Byway to Minnesota Office of Tourism’s website.
- Created central calendar of community events along entire length of Byway.
- Secured rights to logo.
- Created and sold denim-logo shirts to raise funds.
- Developed displays and represented the Byway at Tourism and Trade Shows.
- Released byway-focused media announcement for National Tourism Week
- Created marketing poster with brochure rack for distribution of byway brochures.
- Hired consultants to develop promotional video and web site, new brochure and preliminary kiosk designs.
- Created Points-Of-Interest database and developed photo inventory of resources along length of Byway

- 1996 The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway was fully designated in 1996 by Minnesota State Scenic Byway Commission.
- 1996 Grand Opening celebrate the linking of the three segments
- 1997 The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance was formally organized as a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (according to Minnesota Statute Chapter 317A) in February 1997
- 1998 Developed byway bylaws, revised in 2003
- 1998 Developed large map brochure, reprinted in 2002 and 2004
- 1998 Develop a Byway Information Kiosks and Welcome Signs paper and designs
- 1998 Developed promotional videos
- 1998 Cosponsored Run, Ride and Row along Byway
- 2000 Byway VHS 6-minute video by Dahlquist
- 2001 Published in National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Stories Across America: Opportunities for Rural Tourism”
- 2001 Won a Travel Marketing Award at the Minnesota Governor’s Conference on Tourism

- 2001 Developed website (Voyageur Web), phase 2 in 2003, updated in 2006
- 2002 National Scenic Byway Designation
- 2002 Addition of Alternate Route between Judson and Mankato
- 2002 Fall Explorer ad
- 2002 Hosted 2002 State Scenic Byway Conference in Mankato

- 2003 – 2015: compiled a Byway calendar with annual events.
This calendar featured photographs from the Byway along with a calendar of events and were given away to all CVB and members along the Byway.

- 2003 – present: Membership solicitation each year

- 2003 Grand Opening/Celebration of National Designation (See Americas Byway's by Trains, Planes, and Automobiles, Fairfax MN). Minnesota River Rumble (motorcycle) tour.
- 2003 MN Travel Guide Ad
- 2003 Fall Explorer ad, Spring Explorer ad
- 2004 Created Byway Bookmarks
- 2006 Southern Minnesota Byway s- postcard, multi-byway, direct mail
- 2006 Mn Trails ad
- 2007 MN Trails ad
- 2007 MN Moments ad
- 2007 Field Trips MN ad
- 2005 – present: Various articles in MN Trails Magazine, Southern MN guide, Field Trips MN,
- 2005- present: Distribution of Visitors Guides, including Mall of America
- 2005 Visitors guide.
- 2005 FAM tours: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,
- 2005 Byway bookmarks
- 2007 Created monthly facts and sent out as press releases
- 2007 Worked on cabin community kiosks designs with MnDOT Environmental Services (not created)
- 2007 Advertised in Field Trips, MN
- 2007 Editorial in AAA Mag, Explore Southern Minnesota, Minnesota Golfer, and Explorer newspaper.
- 2008 Completion of 15 interpretive panels.
- 2008 Advertised in Minnesota Moments and Field Trips Minnesota.
- 2008 Byway DVD with photos
- 2008 Created Byway pins
- 2008 Hosted the MN State Byway Conference in Montevideo
- 2008 Explored pursuing a National Heritage Area
- 2008 Byway pins
- 2008 Created a direct mail piece with Prairie Waters, sent to 11,000 households
- 2009 New Visitors guide.
- 2009 Interpretive Panel dedication ceremony at Gilfillan Farm
- 2009 Byway temp tattoos created
- 2009 Byway banners made
- 2009 Brochure and business cards created for TRAM
- 2009 Updated the 6-minute video and added to website
- 2010 Star Tribune Email Blast
- 2010 Byway Road signs replace by state grant

- 2010 Created plan and map of all U.S. Dakota sites along the Byway and marked if they have current interpretation. Updated in 2012
- 2011 Created 10 U.S –Dakota interpretive panels
- 2012 Geocaching the Byway: Who's who in 1862 (project through 2014) with the six state parks.
- 2012 Started Facebook page managed by volunteer
- 2012 Flyer for Interpretive panels created
- 2012 Assisted with the U.S.– Dakota War Bike Ride event
- 2012 Started a Byway long Garage Sale that ran the first weekend in May in 2012, 2013, 2014 & 2015
- 2013 MN Trails ad
- 2013 New Visitors Guide
- 2013 Minnesota Historical Society – U.S.- Dakota War of 1862 Oral history tour along our byway.
- 2014 Mn Trails ad
- 2014 Completed new Interpretive Plan (Bluestem Heritage)
- 2014 New Byway Website (Vivid Web Inc.)
- 2016 New Visitors Guide
- 2016 Created one 60 sec video and six 30 sec videos
- 2016 Created new window clings
- 2017 Promoted videos on our website
- 2017 Developed partnerships that allowed us to create Dakota content for the website and Visitors Guide
- 2018 New Updated Visitors Guide
- 2018 Completed the new Corridor Management Plan and Marketing Plan
- 2018 Byway Conference
- 2019 Byway Partnership Grant
- 2019 Video ad campaign - PBS
- 2019 National Public Radio advertising – MN, SD and IA
- 2019 Monuments and Markers Project between MNDOT and Lower Sioux Indian Community
- 2019 Itinerary created with DNR intern focused on what families with Latino heritage would enjoy
- 2020 Partnership Grant to develop 3 itineraries and develop local Heritage Tourism
- 2021 MN State Guide Ad
- 2021-2022: Distribute guide at EMT rack at airport
- 2021 Created New Byway Stickers
- 2021 Discovery site packets distributed by intern
- 2021 Center section Byway Orientation Map completed
- 2022 Radio Ads
- 2022 Television Ads- Pioneer Public TV and KSMQ Public TV.
- 2022 New Visitors Guide
- 2023 Granite Falls Route change
- 2023 Byway website map update
- 2023 Completed Byway Yard signs for all discovery sites
- 2023 Completed Rack Card for Byway Maps
- 2023 All three sections Byway Orientation Map completed
- 2023 Three Itineraries completed and used in the Byway Visitors Guide
- 2024 Discovery site packets distributed by intern
- 2024 New Corridor Management Plan

Training and conferences:

Attended State Byway conference every year held: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019

MN Byway Statewide Strategic Planning (Kristi Fernholz)

Attended the Water Trails Summit: 2014 (Kristi Fernholz)

Attended National Byway Conference - 2002 in Stevens Point, WI, Terri Dinesen, 2007 in Baltimore, Dawn, Terri and Beth Anderson, 2009 in Colorado, Jenifer Fadness, 2011 in Minneapolis, Kristi Fernholz,

Feb 2010: Coping with cutbacks, National Byway Workshop (Kristi Fernholz)

October 2011: Marketing boot camp for Byways by Alyssa Adam (Kristi Fernholz)

Fall 2019: Byway Leadership Training (Kristi Fernholz)

Interpretation:

Creation of 10 panels 2005 – 2008

Creation of US – Dakota War Planning Document: 2009

Creation of 10 panel re the US – Dakota War: 2010 – 2011

Creation of itineraries and new content for Visitors Guide: 2022

Appendix 2: A History of Accomplishments - Funding

Funding:

Applied and secured eight (8) consecutive Federal Scenic Byway grants (FHWA):

1998: Brochure, Promotional Video, Web Site, Kiosk designs

1999: Corridor Management Plan

2000: Signage replacement plan, sign inventory with GPS, digital mapping, capacity

2003: Seed grant #1: develop content for interp panels, Interpretive Sign Panel Guidelines, cost share byway directional signs, phase 2 of website, develop multi-byway postcard, develop Byway Guide, America's Byway Conference.

2005: Seed grant #2: Training, Staff coordination and Marketing

2005: Interpretive Panels design and fabrication

2007: Seed grant #3: Training, Staff coordination and Marketing

2008: Seed grant #4: Training and Staff coordination

Applied but not funded:

- 2003 Byway-long Art Crawl
- 2008 Marketing grant
- 2009 Capacity building grant
- 2009 Marketing grant

Applied for LCMR dollars for comprehensive kiosk development project. (not secured)

Solicited funds from local government entities and organizations to support byway projects

2009: MN Historical Society Legacy Funds - U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 Planning Document \$7000

2010: MN Historical Society Legacy Funds - U.S. – Dakota War of 1862 Panels \$37,565

2012: MN Historical Society Legacy Funds Interpretive Consultant \$7000

2015: Heritage Partnership Grant (Not funded)

2014: MnDOT RDC Planning Grant for Investment Priorities Addendum

2015- 16: MN Historical Society contract to promote the Mobile History Tour

2016: MN Historical Society Legacy Heritage Partnership Grant through the city of Appleton funded to hire Dakota consultants to update language on the website

2019: MN Historical Society Legacy Funds – Central Orientation Map

2020: MN Historical Society Legacy Heritage Partnership Grant through the city of Appleton to develop 3 itineraries and develop local Heritage Tourism

2022: MN Historical Society Legacy Funds – West and East Orientation Map, updated Central

2022: New Visitors Guide – did sales internally

2024: MnDOT Planning Grant for New Corridor Management Plan

EMT grants: numerous

Private Foundations

Membership

UMVRDC matching dollars for FHWA grants staff time

Appendix 3: Discovery Sites

Updated list 2024

- 1 Continental Divide
- 2 Samuel J. Brown Memorial Park
- 3 Browns Valley Man
- 4 Big Stone Lake State Park
- 5 Big Stone County Museum
- 6 Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- 7 Plover Prairie
- 8 Marsh Lake Dam
- 9 Chippewa Prairie
- 10 Arv Hus Museum
- 11 Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area
- 12 Lac qui Parle State Park
- 13 Fort Renville Historic Site
- 14 Lac qui Parle Mission
- 15 Lac qui Parle County History Center
- 16 Camp Release State Monument
- 17 Historic Chippewa City
- 18 Milwaukee Road Heritage Depot
- 19 Olof Swensson Farm Museum
- 20 Granite Falls Footbridge
- 21 Andrew J. Volstead House Museum
- 22 Yellow Medicine County Museum
- 23 Fagen Fighters World War II Museum
- 24 Minnesota's Machinery Museum
- 25 Sacred Heart Area Museum
- 26 Renville County Parks: Skalbekken
- 27 Wood Lake Monument and Battlefield
- 28 Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Rest
- 29 Renville County Parks: Vicksburg
- 30 Schwandt Memorial
- 31 Redwood County Historical Museum
- 32 Ramsey Park, Canj ša yapi
- 33 Renville County Parks: Beaver Falls
- 34 Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
- 35 Renville County Historical Museum
- 36 Morton Monuments
- 37 Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site
- 38 Gilfillan Farm Estate
- 39 Fort Ridgely State Park & Historic Site
- 40 Sleepy Eye Depot Museum
- 41 Harkin Store
- 42 Milford Monument
- 43 Hermann Monument
- 44 Wanda Gág House Interpretive Center and Museum
- 45 Glockenspiel

- 46 Kiesling House
- 47 Riverside Environmental Learning Center
- 48 Brown County History Museum
- 49 John Lind House
- 50 Minnesota Music Hall of Fame
- 51 August Schell Brewery Museum
- 52 Flandrau State Park
- 53 Minneopa State Park
- 54 Minnemishinona Falls
- 55 Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce (Land of Memories) Park
- 56 Sibley Park
- 57 Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota
- 58 Betsy-Tacy Houses Literary Landmarks
- 59 R.D. Hubbard House Museum
- 60 Blue Earth County History Center and Museum
- 61 CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour
- 62 Carnegie Art Center, Mankato
- 63 Reconciliation Park
- 64 Winter Warrior and Memorial Marker
- 65 Riverfront Park
- 66 Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area
- 67 St. Peter State Hospital Museum
- 68 Arboretum at Gustavus Adolphus College
- 69 E. St. Julien Cox House
- 70 Treaty Site History Center
- 71 Traverse des Sioux Historic Site
- 72 Ottawa Town Hall and Stone Church
- 73 W.W. Mayo House
- 74 Sibley County Historical Museum
- 75 Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center
- 76 Ney Nature Center

We have also identified the following as historic towns and tribes:

- 77 Ortonville Historic Buildings
- 78 Montevideo Historic Buildings
- 79 Granite Falls Downtown District and River
- 80 Upper Sioux Community and Prairie's Edge Casino and Hotel
- 81 Redwood Falls Historic Buildings
- 82 Lower Sioux Community and Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel
- 83 New Ulm Historic District
- 84 Mankato Historic Districts
- 85 St. Peter Historic District
- 86 Henderson Historic District
- 87 Belle Plaine Historic Buildings

Appendix 4: Investment Projects in the Byway Corridor

Project Name	Project description	Location	Project Manager	Entity	Local or byway-wide project	Stage	Approximate cost (if known) of project(s) listed above.
Byway Alliance Planning	Coordination and planning activities of the byway	N/A	Kristi Fernholz	UMVRDC	Byway-wide	Funds needed	\$20,000 annually
Byway Marketing	Ads, collateral pieces and other marketing strategies as identified in marketing plan	N/A	Kristi Fernholz	UMVRDC	Byway-wide	Funds needed	
Byway Interpretative Plan Implementation	Kiosk, guidebooks, website and other activities as identified in interpretive plan	N/A	Kristi Fernholz	UMVRDC	Byway-wide	Funds needed	
Byway Discovery Sites permanent signs/markers	4x4 metal signs for each discovery site with digital method to get more information	N/A	Kristi Fernholz	UMVRDC	Byway-wide	Funds needed	
Minnesota River Valley State Trail	Entire trail. Can be done in sections	N/A			Byway-wide	Planning	
Water trail access	As any bridge is replaced or construction is done, water access should be considered as part of the project	N/A			Byway-wide	Planning	
Appleton Area Marketing	Tourism Marketing on multiple platforms + billboard art mural. Cross collaboration regionally with other chamber entities to assist in reach.	Appleton Area Chamber	Michelle M Molden Ascherman	chamber	Local	Funds needed	\$4,000 - \$6,000
Phase 3 Trails	We have phase 3 of the trail designed, but do not have funds available to complete at this time	City of Olivia	Elizabeth Torkelson		Local	Funds needed	\$1,200,000

Micro surfacing of CSAH 21 -	We are in the planning and design phase of a pavement preservation project on CSAH 21 from the west County Line to the TH 14/15 interchange. This project will be a micro surfacing of the existing pavement to increase smoothness, ride quality, and seal cracks and is planned to happen in 2025.	Nicollet County	Seth Greenwood		Local	Construction	\$2,100,000+
Vegetation Management- Vegetation Removal	My highway maintenance department has been performing vegetation removal in the road ROW along CSAH 21 from the west Nicollet County line to TH 14/15 interchange. This work has been occurring over the last several years and will continue in the future. Vegetation removal in the ROW is to increase visibility and safety along the corridor.	Nicollet County	Seth Greenwood		Local	Ongoing	
Kern Bridge	Kern Bridge Project - connecting Sibley and Land of Memories parks with trails and pedestrian connections.	City of Mankato	Mark Konz	city on byway	Local	Construction	All projects are multi-million-dollar projects.
Veteran's Memorial Bridge	Veteran's Memorial Bridge - The bridge will be re-deck with aesthetic enhancements.	City of Mankato	Mark Konz	city on byway	Local	Construction	
Riverfront Drive	Various segments of Riverfront Drive will be re-constructed over the next 10 years.	City of Mankato	Mark Konz	city on byway	Local	Construction	
3rd Avenue (Blue Earth County)	3rd Avenue/County Road 5 will likely be reconstructed between Riverfront Drive and Highway 14. (Blue Earth County)	City of Green Isle	Amy Soeffker		Local	Construction	
CSAH 6	Sibley County is reconstructing CSAH 6 from Henderson to CSAH 5 with a 10-foot bike path and intersection lighting.	Sibley County Public Works	Tim Becker	county engineer	Local	Design and Construction	\$20 million
Henderson Trail Head	City of Henderson is constructing a trail head for the new trail along the scenic byway in 2025.	Sibley County Public Works	Tim Becker	county engineer	Local	Construction	

Wacipi Improvements	We want to build an announcer's stand at the powwow arbor at Land of Memories Park in Mankato. We are also trying to make our Wacipi more friendly to handicap people.	MMA Mahkato Wacipi	Daniel Zielske	organization	Local	Design Stage. Funds needed	Arbor Announcer's stand about \$70,000 to \$100,000.
Land of Memories Park	Signage for the two playgrounds at Land of Memories Park. We are currently working with the City of Mankato to upgrade one playground at Land of Memories and build another new one at the south end of the park that will include signage for teaching how the Dakota of the area use to live.	MMA Mahkato Wacipi	Daniel Zielske	organization	Local	Design Stage. Funds needed	Signage for new playgrounds about \$15,000.
Last Statue	We are also involved in trying to complete the last statue to be installed at Reconciliation Park in downtown Mankato.	MMA Mahkato Wacipi	Daniel Zielske	organization	Local	Concept	Final Statue at hanging sight unknown.
Trails	Ney Nature Center is within the area, and we are always looking at the possibility of expanding, improving trails, and cross-country ski trails within the park.	Le Sueur County Parks Department	Tyler Luethje		Local	Planning Stage	N/A
Trail from Wegdahl to Granite Falls	Chippewa County is in the design phase for a pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Hwy 7 and CSAH 15 to link the County Wegdahl Trail to the Montevideo City Ashmore Trail. Chippewa County is also in the design phase for reconstruction of the Milan Trail from the City of Milan to the Milan Beach Resort.	Chippewa County	Michelle May	Auditor-Treasurer	Local	Funds needed	Local cost to the County is about \$350,000
Historical Tour	The project would be a historical tour along the Byways. The tour guides would provide history on sites along the route through a visual photo presentation on the bus as well as visits to sites. We would need funds to obtain bus service and tour guides, and to cover cost of refreshments and fees charged at sites.	Sacred Heart Area Historical Society	Sonja Thune	business	Local	Planning Stage	

