

CHAPTER 1

Introduction



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This Corridor Management Plan was completed for the section of the Route 122 Scenic Byway in Franklin County that travels from the intersection of Routes 2A and 122 in downtown Orange southeast through New Salem. The Byway runs through the part of New Salem that is north of the Quabbin Reservoir. East of New Salem, the Route 122 Scenic Byway continues into Worcester County through the towns of Petersham, Barre, Oakham, Rutland and Paxton.

The entire Byway (located in both Franklin and Worcester Counties) was designated a Scenic Byway by the Massachusetts Legislature on June 23, 2005. A Corridor Management Plan for the Worcester County section was completed by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (Petersham to the city limits of Worcester). The entire Byway in north central Massachusetts is roughly 40 miles (7.5 miles in Franklin County and 32.5 miles in Worcester County).

Study Background and Purpose

The Route 122 Byway area is rich in historic, cultural, natural, and scenic resources. Downtown Orange is a small town with many historic structures built during the industrial revolution (mills, dams, mansions, and factory housing). In contrast, the Byway route beyond downtown Orange is rural with an abundance of natural, scenic and environmental resources. Near the Quabbin Reservoir the vast landscape is wild with forested mountains and hills, remarkable freshwater wetlands and ponds, and an array of wildlife, natural areas, and unspoiled lands.

Throughout the planning process, the Route 122 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee and Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) worked to develop a plan that will recognize, interpret, preserve and promote the unique scenic, natural, recreation, historic, cultural and archeological resources

in the Route 122 study area. The FRCOG received funding to complete the Corridor Management Plan through the Federal Scenic Byway Program. The more specific purposes of this project were to:

- Identify and develop strategies to preserve the unique scenic, natural and cultural resources along the Byway;
- Expand economic opportunities related to heritage and recreational tourism along the Byway;
- Develop a land protection program for scenic and historic landscapes along the Byway;
- Develop a recreational program that identifies and establishes linkages to hiking trails, state forests, river and water access points, and other cultural and recreational features along the byway;
- Actively involve the public in the shaping the Corridor Management Plan through the assistance of a regional advisory committees and a participatory planning process.

The FRCOG's role in the development of the Corridor Management Plan for the Franklin County section of the Route 122 Scenic Byway was to gather pertinent information about Route 122 by working with local residents, officials, and other interested stakeholders. The FRCOG worked closely with the Route 122 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee throughout the process. The plan reflects the common goals of the communities along the Byway. It details the information gathered, conclusions that were reached, and recommendations that were identified during the process.

Corridor Description

The Franklin County section of the Route 122 Scenic Byway corridor runs through the communities of Orange and New Salem, totaling 7.5 miles. The study area encompasses a mile wide corridor (1/2 mile on each side of the Byway). The northwestern terminus of the study area is the intersection of Route 2A and Route 122 in downtown Orange.

Downtown Orange is pedestrian-friendly with a historic streetscape, sidewalks and parks. In the town center there are significant historic two-and-three story buildings including Putnam Hall, historic storefronts and mill buildings; they reflect the scale and character of a town from the industrial revolution. The Byway begins in the Orange Center Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and travels southeast on South Main Street (Route 122) across the Millers River.

To the south of downtown Orange, the Byway passes through a residential neighborhood with historic 19th Century houses and large street trees. The residential neighborhood

transitions to one that has 20th Century structures and automobile-oriented commercial establishments. The Byway then travels by the Orange Cemetery, a MassDOT facility, woodlands, wetlands, and under Route 2. Near the intersection of Routes 122 and 202 there is a large working dairy farm, a few smaller farms, a number of commercial structures and residences.

Routes 122 and 202 are the same roadway until the Byway turns east and travels just north of the Quabbin Reservoir. The merged roads are lined by a number of historic farmsteads and some 20th Century homes. Once on the section of Route 122 near the Quabbin Reservoir, the surrounding landscape and character is completely different. The corridor is within a sparsely developed wooded area with spectacular long-distance and panoramic scenic views across the Quabbin. This section is the most scenic segment of the Byway. Much of the Byway is through wild lands with regular pull-off areas from which the views can be enjoyed.

The word "Quabbin" is a Nipmuck Indian word that roughly translates to "the place or the meeting of many waters". The Nipmucks inhabited the Swift River Valley and referred to this area as the Quabbin. In 1749, the area was incorporated as the Quabbin Parish. When it was originally planned, the reservoir was known as the Swift River Reservoir, but was renamed Quabbin Reservoir in 1932 by the Metropolitan District Water Supply Commission.

Public Participation Process

A successful scenic byway program depends on the commitment, enthusiasm and support of community members and municipal officials. A Corridor Management Plan is intended to reflect the vision for the Byway and the surrounding area that the communities along the Byway worked to develop together.

The FRCOG worked closely with the Route 122 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee, which was comprised of municipal officials, landowners, business owners and interested citizens, to develop the Corridor Management Plan and prioritize recommendations for implementation. The Byway Advisory Committee met quarterly throughout the two-year period in which the

plan was crafted. The draft chapters were reviewed by the Advisory Committee throughout their development. In addition, the final draft chapters were posted for public review on the FRCOG's website. The complete draft report was presented at a public review meeting on . A 30-day public-comment period was held from May 27, 2011 through June 27, 2011, which was advertised in the *Greenfield Recorder* and *Athol Daily News*.

The FRCOG greatly appreciates the hard work, advice and guidance that the Byway Advisory Committee provided throughout the development of this Plan. The dedication that the committee members have shown to this project throughout the process is truly invigorating.



Byway Vision Statement and Goals

A Corridor Management Plan is a tool that provides an inventory and assessment of important resources and articulates specific strategies and actions designed to achieve identified and measurable results. In order to get to specific actions it is important that the common direction of the Byway be stated. This is done through the use of a Vision Statement and goals.

The Route 122 Scenic Byway in Orange and New Salem in Massachusetts was recognized as a scenic resource by the Massachusetts State Legislature in June 2005. It is part of the greater scenic byway that travels from the center of Orange to the municipal borders of Paxton and Worcester in Worcester County. The corridor is rich in historic, heritage, natural, cultural, architectural, and recreational resources. The Route 122 Scenic Byway links to the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (Route 2 and 2A).

Our vision is to expand tourism, recreational, and economic opportunities along the Byway while educating people about the Byway and preserving its unique scenic qualities, natural resources, historic structures/places, industrial and other heritage resources and community character.¹

Goals

- Enhance and develop information resources available for sites located in the greater Byway area such as an information center, directional sign system and other promotional materials (including maps and/or websites).
- Support, maintain and enhance the quality of outdoor recreational experiences (such as hiking, picnicking, kayaking or canoeing) available to Byway users.
- Promote a low impact approach to tourism based on natural, recreational, historic and cultural resources that minimizes traffic congestion.
- Maintain, protect, and enhance the historic resources, villages and districts within the project area.
- Preserve and enhance the character of the corridor by acquiring land from willing property owners and protecting important viewsheds and natural resources.
- Promote educational opportunities for students and the general public related to Byway resources.
- Support projects to improve the safety of the Byway for motorists, pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles as appropriate to the roadway conditions, such as scenic pull-off areas.
- Increase universal accessibility to recreation areas and associated facilities.
- Promote and enhance roadway safety while taking into consideration the rural qualities of the Byway.

1. Many of the recommendations of the Scenic Resources Chapter overlap with those found in other chapters of the Corridor Management Plan. This is intentional since scenic, historic and natural resources are community assets that serve economic, recreational, educational and inspirational purposes.