

Byway Interpretive Plan

Organizing Places and Stories



What is Interpretation?

The National Association for Interpretation defines interpretation as “a mission based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interest of the audience and the meaning inherent in the resources.”

An Interpretive Plan

A good interpretive plan organizes byway places and stories into a planning structure consisting of themes and storylines. Recommendations of appropriate interpretive media to communicate your byway stories and messages should be included.

Why Interpretive Planning?

Linda Hecker of the US Forest Service gives some reasons for Interpretive Planning:

- ◆ An Interpretive Plan takes ideas, resources and people and organizes them
- ◆ It creates a common vision
- ◆ It establishes unifying goals, objectives and messages
- ◆ It prioritizes projects and funding
- ◆ It allows a byway to brand itself.

Outline of the Interpretive Plan

First, conduct a byway resource inventory.

Second, identify your significant intrinsic qualities and stories along the route corridor.

Next, identify the overarching themes and stories related to the byway’s resources. Follow with the sub-themes within each theme.

Finally, identify the media that is most appropriate.

Themes and Stories then Media

After you identify the themes and stories of your byway, then propose the specific media that is most appropriate to communicate your byway narrative. The recommendation of interpretive tools (maps, guides, brochures, signs, applications, etc) should be included in a comprehensive interpretive plan.

What Makes a Message Interpretive

To be an interpretive message, it must meet Tilden’s principles to:

- ◆ **Provoke** the attention, curiosity and interest of the visitor/audience
- ◆ **Relate** to the everyday lives of the visitors
- ◆ **Reveal** the main point of the message in imaginative and creative ways.
- ◆ **Address the Whole** – illustrate the main interpretive theme of the byway
- ◆ **Strive for Message Unity** – in design, use of graphics, colors, fonts, etc.

Quality of the Interpretive Story

The quality of your byway’s story is critical for success. The creativity and quality of the interpretive story or program will reflect the rich significance and experience the byway has to offer.

The interpretive plan and story should be:

- ◆ Inextricably linked to the byway
- ◆ Regionally/nationally relevant and interesting
- ◆ Communicated effectively.

REFERENCES

Hecker, Linda; Ziemann, Lois; Hazlett, Cheryl. Scenic Byway Interpretive Planning. US Forest Service Center for Design and Interpretation. June 29, 2016. http://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5181413.pdf

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John Ververka says that without interpretation, a byway is just another ‘pretty road.’