

# Public Relations and Publicity for your Byway



Public relations is a vital part of the byway experience. It may start with individual volunteers wearing a byway tee shirt. Personal contacts stimulate interest in the byway and the byway programs and projects. Byway organization members should practice their byway “elevator speech” often and anticipate follow up questions with information about recent activities that have grown out of our corridor management plan. A more formal program will reinforce the message conveyed by individual staff and volunteers.

## Media

Press releases will contain a newsworthy, attention grabbing headline; a first paragraph with the Who? What? Where? When? and Why in the first paragraph. One essentially has 3 seconds to grab someone’s attention. The ‘How?’ can follow with more detail. Include a quote or testimonial by a local tourism professional, by a local leader, by an enthusiastic byway visitor, or even the byway leader. And wrap up with a paragraph with general information about how to get more information about the byway and the featured event. \*see appendix II

When using press releases, follow up with a call to the reporter or editor to bring his/her attention to the press release and its contents. Keep your media contacts up to date. \*see appendix III.

## Stories

Stories that attract media attention include:  
Human interest stories of people benefiting from the byway experience  
Local byway projects  
New staff members or key volunteers and why they do what they do  
Local natural or human history bits of information that has significance to the byway story  
Youth highway or trail cleanup program or stewardship effort  
Outstanding volunteers (both byway and partnership related)  
The interaction of people with visitors from other regions and other cultures

## Photographs

Wherever possible, press releases should be accompanied by a photograph that shows action, tells the byway story or shows people enjoying the byway. Attach a high contrast image as a JPG file to an electronically distributed press release with a

suggested caption identifying any people in the photo from left to right. When providing a hard copy release the photograph(s) should be in black and white with descriptive information taped to the back or printed on an adhesive label. Good results occur with quality photographs in local weekly papers. Larger daily papers seem to prefer sending a staff photographer into the field.

## Media Kit

On occasion one may invite media to a byway event. At such an event a media kit would be appropriate to provide more background information than the press release and additional information related to the event. The kit is in a folder (preferably a fancy byway folder) that contains the following:

- A fact sheet about the byway (the colorful byway brochure is excellent)
- A fact sheet or press release about the project or event
- A fact sheet or last year’s annual report about the byway’s achievements
- Biographies and photos of people involved
- An event agenda
- Copies of relevant photographs.

## Brochure

The byway brochure should be an attractive presentation about the byway and its programs. Members of our speaker’s bureau find a byway brochure useful if a prospective volunteer, visitor, or family member shows interest after a typical introductory discussion with the “elevator speech” about the byway, its programs and contact information.

## Website and Social Media

The contents of the byway’s web site should be read periodically. This is done with an eye for updating features, news, byway itineraries and stories, maps, special events, photographs, and travel information. The byway leader and staff is responsible for keeping things fresh on the web, facebook and other social media.

## Inserts for Newsletter(s)

As a member of the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and Chamber of Commerce, byway leaders can place fliers or information sheets in their monthly newsletter. As a not-for-profit organization, the byway can place a flier, brochure, or advertisement for a special event in these print media outlets.

## Speakers Bureau

The byway makes available guest speakers to visit Rotary Clubs, other community organizations, and neighborhood associations. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to join this effort by contacting the publicity committee chair or a byway committee member.

## Crisis Communication

Should some unforeseen controversy brew uncontrolled or unfavorable publicity occur involving the byway often the best approach is to lay low until the situation "blows over". Be responsive to any press inquiries but stick to the facts. Do NOT insert your feelings or personal opinions. The media is looking to sell a story: be careful not to add fuel to the fire. In the background try to determine the source of the crisis, make personal contacts to gather information and exchange ideas to ultimately defuse the crisis.

### Appendix I

#### Identify the Byway's Publicity Committee

Name, Chair, Contact Information  
List other committee members & contact information

### Appendix II

#### A Press Release Template

[The byway logo centered on page or, better yet, use letterhead]

#### For Immediate Release

[City] [State] [Release Date]: Press Release then begins after the colon. Start with a brief paragraph that includes the who, what, when, where, why.

Then add a paragraph of detail.

Add a quote from a VIP such as the head of your organization and/or a local official about the impacts of the event, project or whatever the press release is about.

Enclose a photograph, preferably an action picture rather than a bunch of heads. Many publications may not use a supplied photograph, because they want to use staff photographers. But this is changing especially with local publications.

### Appendix III

#### Current Byway's Media Contacts

OUTLET	CONTACT	PHONE	EMAIL
National Scenic Byway Foundation	Sharon Strouse Executive Director	330.231.3468	sharon.strouse@ nsbfoundation.com
Regional Daily Newspaper(s)			
Community Weekly Papers			
Local Municipal Calendars			
Radio local call-in programs			
TV and Cable news outlets			
Civic or Volunteer Organizations			
Local Destination Marketing Organization(s) or Chambers			