

BOLD COAST SCENIC BYWAY

Washington County, Maine

“The Journey IS the Destination”

CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

2015-2021



Prepared by: Washington County Council of Governments, April 2015



To all the individuals, businesses, and organizations who contributed their time, energy, knowledge, services, passion, and commitment to completing this Corridor Management Plan, which guides us toward development of a brighter, bolder experience of this place, our home -

Thank you!

The Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan generated public input from all corners of the region (See Appendix 1 for a list of contributing voices). The Bold Coast people are strong in voice and diverse in perspective, and their words are wise. Individuals expressed opinions, voiced concerns, provided support, offered countless ideas, and, together, created a community vision for the Bold Coast region.

The Corridor Management Plan seeks to incorporate this broad range of experiences of the region into a forward-moving economic tool by laying a foundation for authentic, interactive, and memorable experiences for all.

<http://boldcoastbyway.com/>

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With Funds from the Maine Department of Transportation

And the Federal Highway Administration



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The **Bold Coast Scenic Byway** is a 125-mile driving route that invites visitors to explore the culture, history, wildlife, and rugged, unspoiled beauty of coastal “Downeast” Maine. It gives travelers personal access to a way of life historically bound to the wild and scenic coastal environment. Active fishing villages, working-forests, family farms, and prolific blueberry barrens reflect this relationship as people continue to harvest the seasonal bounty of land and sea, much as their ancestors have done for centuries.

The Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan is the culmination of 4 years of impassioned community planning efforts. Over 50 citizens from the Bold Coast region contributed directly to this effort, with another 300 providing additional review and feedback. Washington County Council of Governments (WCCOG) provided dedicated staff to guide the process, and funding was provided by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT), The Maine Department of Community and Economic Development and the Federal Highway Administration.



Bold Coast - Cutler, Washington County

The Plan contains comprehensive analysis of local and regional assets, provides a list of goals and objectives to guide the planning effort, and outlines a six-year action plan to guide the implementation of these goals.

Sections B and C, outline the purpose and anticipated outcomes of the project including the following **Vision for the Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor**:

Activities that encourage visitors to explore the region more deeply will extend economic benefits along the entire Byway corridor. When a high quality of experience, opportunity, and infrastructure is provided throughout the region, length of overnight visitation will increase, allowing for greater regional exploration and thereby boosting economic benefits within more communities.

Shoulder seasons will lengthen as visitor opportunities increase. Existing business will flourish while new businesses will be encouraged. More communities will benefit from tourism revenues, reinvest money in their businesses, events, and infrastructure.

Our downtowns will be healthy and walkable, and will contain museums, galleries, gift shops, unique local eateries and lodging, guided and self-guided tours, historic districts, interpretive sites, recreational opportunities, and scenic vistas.

A well-established network of self-guided trails, interpretive centers, historical societies, museums, arts and culture centers, and libraries will provide a wealth of information and a complete experience of the history, culture, and people of the region.

Communities will regularly host festivals throughout the year that draw thousands of people from around the world to celebrate the people, food, music, dance, history, cultural traditions, and arts of the Bold Coast Region.

Throughout the region, visitors can participate in year round recreation opportunities from world-class organized events to solo recreation opportunities. Hiking, biking, paddling, and ATV trails wind through mossy forests and along coastal cliffs. Many public access points exist for wilderness camping; prime hunting, fishing, and foraging grounds; and wildlife viewing areas. Winter recreation helps maintain the tourism economy throughout the year, as Byway region communities provide food, lodging, and personal services for snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, dogsledders, and snowshoe enthusiasts. Visitors can experience the rejuvenating power of pristine nature any time of the year, whether they prefer to be lulled to sleep by ocean waves or a crackling campfire, or entranced by the rhythm of casting a fly, or of softly falling snow.

Increased awareness of the Bold Coast Scenic Byway elevates the profile of the entire region as a unique, complete, international vacation destination, encouraging visitors to stay longer, explore deeper, and return often.

Along the Byway, from end to end and at every waypoint in between, visitors are provided with an honest, “authentic” experience of the land and its people. Opportunities exist to meet the people who make their living by harvesting the bounty of the land, to hear their stories, and to explore first hand the places and events that shape them. These experiences are provided in a personal, unhurried manner, allowing the visitor to unwind and to immerse themselves into the quiet and simple way of life, allowing them to bring a piece of it home with them—and stimulating a desire to return again for more.

Section D describes the stories and people of the region. These are our intrinsic qualities, “features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area”, as defined by the National Scenic Byways Program. Although Scenic and Natural qualities provide the initial draw to the region, it is the Cultural and Historic qualities (which are inherently tied to natural/scenic aspects) that make the Bold Coast region unique among other coastal regions of the northeastern United States. This Plan therefore emphasizes this long-standing connection between the wild and scenic coastal landscape and the resource-based way of life of the people who call the Bold Coast region home.

Section E provides a more detailed description of the assets that exemplify our intrinsic qualities along the Byway route and in the surrounding region; they are considerable! The chapter and the marketing approach described in subsequent chapters, invites the visitor to experience the Bold Coast Byway – and Beyond. The Scenic Byway becomes the means through which the entire region is promoted. There are numerous photographs depicting things to see and do in the region and references to organizations, festivals, trails, towns, farms, museums and more that are linked to web sites within the text.



Postcard promoting the region and providing link to visitor survey

Section F lays out the marketing and development goals, objectives and strategies for the Byway region, and specific objectives to be achieved toward accomplishment of these goals. These goals are grounded in resource stewardship, the visitor experience, regional promotion, sustainability and multi-modal transportation include the following:

1. Protect Byway Resources
2. Create New and Improve Existing Visitor Opportunities
3. Promote the Byway and its Communities
4. Develop Sustainable Byway Organization
5. Increase Transportation Safety and Multi-modal Opportunities

Sections G and H assess transportation systems and land use and development patterns within the Byway region, including municipal comprehensive plans, as well as several transportation studies from the last 10 years. The analysis of current conditions reveals that in many places, roadway surface conditions along the byway route are fair for vehicles and poor for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Priority Policy Recommendations derived from this analysis are provided here:

For Scheduled Roadway Improvements

- Some of the repairs scheduled within the current biennial budget cycle are located within areas that have been or could be identified as important places to locate vehicle turnouts or turning or passing lanes, as noted in several of the transportation studies listed above.
- Prior to final design or commencement of construction, the MDOT should work with local communities and the byway committee to determine whether passing and turning lanes and vehicle turnouts should be located within these areas. Additionally, new paving and new construction projects should always strive to include paved

shoulders for bicycle and pedestrians. MDOT should work with communities and the Byway committee to determine any opportunities for inclusion of paved shoulders in these planned projects.

- When implementing safety and mobility recommendations for turning lanes, passing lanes, scenic turnouts, and other mobility, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be taken into consideration and incorporated whenever possible.

For Way Finding – Road Signs and Maps

- Explore opportunities better coordinate and co-locate placement of directional signs along the byway. Please see Chapter O: The Six-Year Action Plan and Priority Capital Improvements Plan for a detailed list of proposed way-finding sites.
- Partner with Bold Coast communities on general design and location standards for on- and off-site signage.

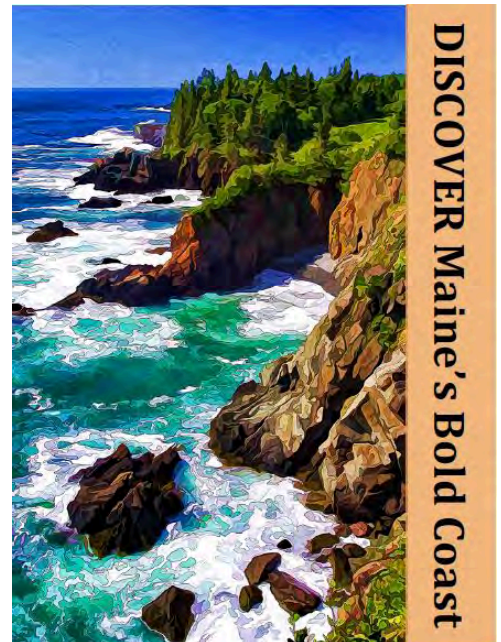
Section H also provides a detailed table for addition of, or improvements to, scenic turnouts and interpretive sites.

Sections I and J describe existing planning, management, and protection techniques and promotional plans and initiatives within the byway region. The Maine Scenic Byways Program focuses on community-based support and resource protection while seeking to promote regional economic benefits that may result from designation.

Over the past decade, many partnerships in Washington and Hancock Counties have focused on cultural and nature-based tourism and regional economic prosperity. Their efforts range across Economic Development, Ecological Conservation, Cultural Preservation, Local Coordination, and Education.

The Bold Coast Scenic Byway has the potential to provide the literal and figurative link among all of these studies, promotional initiatives, and physical assets. The byway is at once the vehicle and the passport that conveys, directs, and invites the visitor to enjoy the culture, natural bounty, and scenic beauty of the Bold Coast region.

Section K describes existing regional and statewide tourism trends and opportunities and provides priority-marketing recommendations based on how these trends relate to the intrinsic qualities and assets of the Bold Coast region. Conclusions from a survey of visitors in 2013 and a survey of businesses in 2014 are provided that yield several marketing and promotional lessons for Byway businesses. These include being open for business, expanding shoulder seasons, advertising effectiveness, types of services and products and desirable regional qualities.



Postcard promoting the region and providing link to visitor survey

Priority Policy Recommendations derived from this analysis are provided here:

For Marketing

- Among the list of the most desired qualities in the region, preservation and enhancement of working waterfronts will benefit our commercial fisheries, the business owners who depend on fisheries, and the visitors who want to experience this rare and valuable way of life. Maintaining a positive relationship between fisheries and tourism is critical to the success of our entire region.

For Lowering Barriers to Visitation:

- Communicate the year-round, all-weather activities, services, and events that exist, and help visitors consider appropriate weather- and seasonal-related preparations.
- Maintain honesty about the types of experiences to be had, and focus marketing efforts on helping visitors turn any challenges they may face into newfound opportunities.
- Marketing strategies could focus not only on the simple, quiet, and accessible experiences that visitors would have once they arrive, but also on creating a simple, stress-free trip planning experience.
- Work with businesses to offer carefully selected packaging options, strong advertising networks, comprehensive yet clear information sources such as websites and brochures, and well-trained service providers.
- Wireless and cellular access should be enhanced and promoted.

Section L provides the **Bold Coast Scenic Byway Marketing Plan**. Many communities along the Byway already contain museums, arts and crafts galleries, gift shops, guided tours, restaurants, lodging, historic districts, self-guided walks, interpretive sites, recreational opportunities, and scenic vistas that offer opportunities to enjoy the local ways of life. Many communities host events and festivals that celebrate them. A key role of the Byway is to create a unified, accessible experience from these existing assets, and to identify missing opportunities and assist with their creation. The Byway achieves this by providing interpretive information that weaves together the regional story; by providing a cohesive, accessible network of places and activities; and by providing the basic infrastructure for a safe, efficient, and enjoyable journey.

The Bold Coast region has tremendous growth potential. It has a unique, vibrant, and authentic experience for the visitor and an extensive support network to assist with promotion. The challenges are in getting the word out, promoting traveler-ready assets while improving others, and supporting a collaborative network of independent actions.

Brand Promise, Position and Personality are defined, core messages are established and the following **Marketing Message** created:

...Along the Byway, from end to end and at every waypoint in between, visitors are provided with an honest, “authentic” experience of the land and its people. Opportunities exist to meet the people who make their living by harvesting the bounty of the land, to hear their stories, and to explore first hand the places and events that shape

them. These experiences are provided in a personal, unhurried manner, allowing the visitor to unwind and to immerse themselves into the quiet and simple way of life, allowing them to bring a piece of it home with them—and stimulating a desire to return again for more.

Of several taglines, the Corridor Advisory Group settled on **The Journey IS the Destination**. It is now in use on the website (<http://boldcoastbyway.com>), the map of the region, and other promotional literature.

The marketing plan identifies programs that will attract visitors to the Byway and help create a cohesive experience of the Bold Coast region, and is organized into 4 sections:

1. Overarching marketing objectives.
2. Primary audience for marketing and promotion efforts.
3. Essential infrastructure and services improvements.
4. Actionable marketing projects development; networking and collaboration, cultural-heritage and recreations opportunities; direct marketing; and outreach events

Section M describes key organizational partnerships necessary to long term maintenance and development of the byway. Implementation of the Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan requires an ongoing commitment and partnership among agencies, organizations, businesses, and individuals at all levels. The roles of each are described along with a tabular description of how their activities will be sustained into the future.

Section N outlines a 6-year action plan to achieve marketing and development goals, provides specific steps toward those goals, and names specific implementation partners. Actual implementation of the 6-year action plan will depend on funding realities, but 2015 is intended as year 1. Each year, some projects may be completed, and new projects launched, again, as funding permits. Projects begun during this six-year period will not necessarily be completed by the year 2021; however, available funds and time will be utilized to complete projects to the greatest extent possible. Many projects are ongoing for the duration of Scenic Byway management and early efforts will support later ones.



Postcard promoting the region and providing link to visitor survey

All of the Action items identified in the Six-Year plan will be implemented with the oversight and coordination of the Bold Coast Regional Partnership, in close association with the organizations identified as Implementation Partners.

Section O describes future funding opportunities and Byway planning and administration structure. The Bold Coast Partnership (the Partnership) will be formed as a network of individuals representing businesses, non-profits, destination marketing organizations, and government agencies, and shall be united by an interest in strengthening tourism in the Bold Coast region. The Partnership will work together with member organizations and community stakeholders to implement the Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, in coordination with other local plans.

A Capital Improvements Plan details priority sites for development of scenic turnouts and interpretive signage, including what Byway stories will be told at those sites and which partners are best suited to help tell those stories. The Corridor Advisory Group identified 6 priority locations for development as scenic and interpretive sites for Byway travelers. Understanding that the communities within the Byway region operate independently of each other with their own degree of priority, funding, and passion, the Corridor Advisory Group chose 6 priority sites and an additional list of second-tier sites, as well as a list of sites within the Unorganized Territories (UT) of Edmunds and Trescott. This allows the CAG to focus on developing the top priority sites, and yet remain flexible to assist second-tier priority sites and UT sites if passion, opportunity, and funding find their way to those communities.

Planning to Implement – Implementing the Plan

Like many long range planning processes involving many stakeholders, the Bold Coast Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan was completed while some of its recommendations were already being implemented. The promotional web site for instance (<http://boldcoastbyway.com>) was created and launched in late 2014. The Bold Coast Byway Facebook page has grown steadily for 3 years providing exposure and promotion for festivals, businesses and Bold Coast products.

The Washington County Council of Governments obtained funds from Downeast & Acadia Regional Tourism (DART) in 2014 to print promotional brochures and 3 postcards (depicted above) that drive visitor traffic to the Bold Coast Scenic Byway website and a Washington County-specific visitor survey. These are ready for the 2015 season and will provide information that separates Washington County data from the DART region in which tourism statistics are aggregated with Bar Harbor. As Bar Harbor is the largest tourism market in the state, such aggregation severely limits the ability of the Bold Coast region to determine true trends.

In addition, applications for funding from two foundations were submitted in January of 2015 during the final editing of the Corridor Management Plan. Decisions are pending at time of final plan printing; if funded these grants will assist with multiple recommendations for interpretive and promotional activities along the Byway.

Appendix 1 contains a list of participants and public meetings, and also provides links to public meeting documents and media coverage.

Appendices 2 and 3 contain the results of visitor and business owner surveys about regional assets.

Appendix 4 contains twelve maps including a map contained in the promotional brochure, a draft map being prepared for display in public locations, three maps designed for permanent informational displays, and 7 maps highlighting the key gateway communities of the region.

Appendix 5 provides detailed information about the key resources of the region.

Appendix 6 provides detailed information for accessing these and many other resources.

This Corridor Management Plan is available for review online at boldcoastbyway.com (a public, promotional site intended to further the goals of the Plan), www.wccog.net (the WCCOG home page), and boldcoastplan.wordpress.com (a site originally created for communication between the Corridor Advisory Group members).

Throughout the online documents and websites, links are provided to the websites of key partners, supporting documents, and the websites of organizations described throughout the document. These links appear in the Corridor Management Plan as blue, underlined text.

