Iowa Byways
Interpretive Master Planning
Summary Report

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Submitted to:

Iowa DOT: Iowa Byways Program

800 Lincoln Way
Ames, Iowa 50010

Prepared by:

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Introduction

Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, developed interpretive master plans for ten Iowa Scenic Byways under a contractual agreement with Golden Hills RC&D. This summary describes the planning process for the development of these plans and documents the primary interpretive media recommended for each byway. Design standards are proposed to guide professional and volunteer staff as they develop interpretive media.

The planning team began its investigation of each byway as tourists, using existing guides, tear-sheets, and websites. Following this in-depth introduction to the byway, the team conducted a byway visioning meeting followed by interviews of key stakeholders, staff, and volunteers at primary attractions. Insights gathered through this process guided the development of media and wayfinding recommendations provided in each plan.

Scope of Work

In January 2012, Golden Hills RC&D, based in Oakland, Iowa, was awarded a Transportation Enhancement Grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete interpretive master plans for ten Iowa byways. Additional funds were awarded for the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway plan and the Western Skies Scenic Byway plan through the Iowa West Foundation.

A request for proposals was issued in early 2013, seeking interest from firms to provide professional services to develop long-range interpretive master plans for Iowa's byways. Four firms were interviewed in August 2013. In February 2014, a professional services agreement for the ten interpretive master plans was entered into between Golden Hills RC&D and Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters agreed to develop one interpretive master plan for each of the following scenic and historic Iowa Byways: Delaware Crossing, Driftless Area, Glacial Trail, Grant Wood, Historic Hills, Iowa Valley, Lincoln Highway, Loess Hills, River Bluffs, and Western Skies.

The work was divided into three phases:

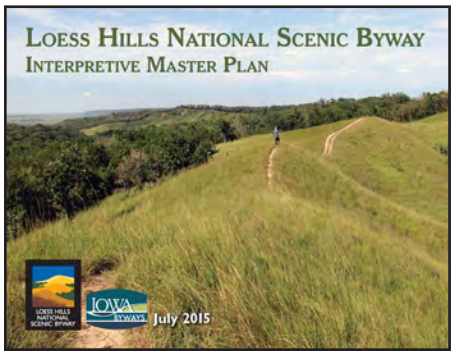
- **Phase 1:** Loess Hills and Western Skies, delivered in 2015
- **Phase 2:** Driftless Area, River Bluffs, Grant Wood, Delaware Crossing, and Iowa Valley, delivered in 2016 and 2017
- **Phase 3:** Historic Hills, Glacial Trail, and Lincoln Highway, delivered in 2017 and 2018

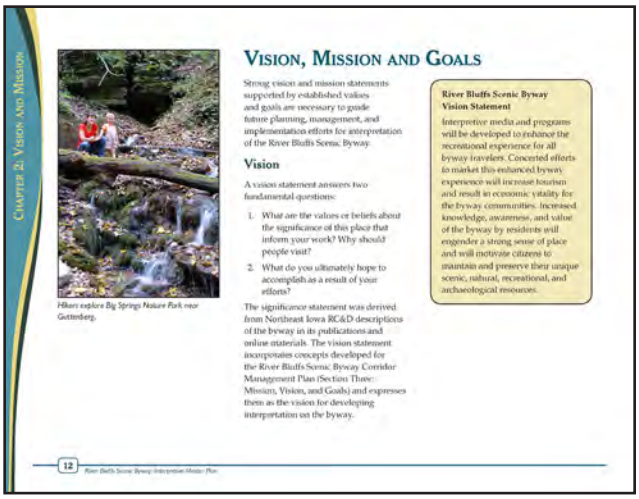
Each interpretive master plan includes the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The byway and its natural and cultural significance are described that led to its designation as an Iowa Scenic Byway. A discussion of Iowa's scenic byway program from its inception in 1993 to the more recent efforts of the Iowa Byways Sustainability Project provides historical context for the plan. A narrative and graphic representation of the planning process provides a rationale for the organization of the plan.

Byway Interpretive Master Plan Covers




CHAPTER 2: VISION AND MISSION

VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

Strong vision and mission statements supported by established values and goals are necessary to guide future planning, management, and implementation efforts for interpretation of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

Vision

A vision statement answers two fundamental questions:

1. What are the values or beliefs about the significance of this place that inform your work? Why should people visit?
2. What do you ultimately hope to accomplish as a result of your efforts?

The significance statement was derived from Northeast Iowa RC&D descriptions of the byway in its publications and online materials. The vision statement incorporates concepts developed for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Section Three: Mission, Vision, and Goals) and expresses them as the vision for developing interpretation on the byway.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway Vision Statement

Interpretive media and programs will be developed to enhance the recreational experience for all byway travelers. Concerted efforts to market this enhanced byway experience will increase tourism and result in economic vitality for the byway communities. Increased knowledge, awareness, and value of the byway by residents will engender a strong sense of place and will motivate citizens to maintain and preserve their unique scenic, natural, recreational, and archaeological resources.

Hikers explore Big Springs Nature Park near Guttenberg.

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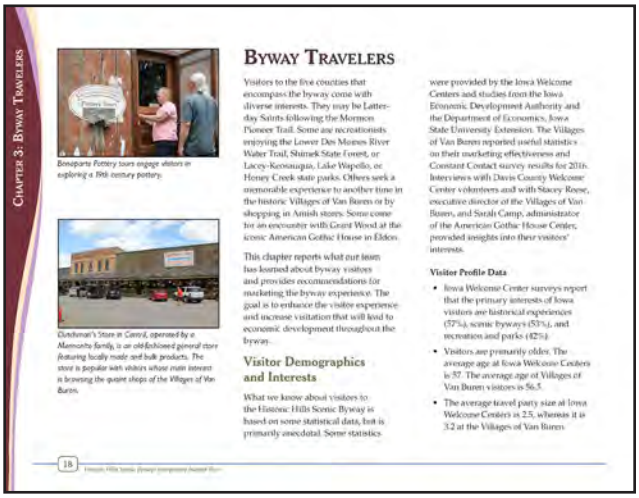
Chapter 2: Vision and Goals

Work on each plan began with a visioning meeting with byway staff and stakeholders. The input from these meetings supplemented with vision descriptions in byway newsletters and corridor management plans provided the basis for vision, mission, and goal statements. These statements will guide the future planning, management, and implementation efforts for interpretation on the byways.


CHAPTER 3: BYWAY TRAVELERS

BYWAY TRAVELERS

Visitors to the five counties that encompass the byway come with diverse interests. They may be Latter-day Saints following the Mormon Pioneer Trail. Some are recreationists enjoying the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail, Shimek State Forest, or Lacey-Keosauqua, Lake Wapello, or Henry Creek state parks. Others seek a memorable experience to another time in the historic Villages of Van Buren or by shopping in Amish stores. Some come for an encounter with Grant Wood at the iconic American Gothic House in Eldon.

This chapter reports what our team has learned about byway visitors and provides recommendations for marketing the byway experience. The goal is to enhance the visitor experience and increase visitation that will lead to economic development throughout the byway.

Visitor Demographics and Interests

What we know about visitors to the Historic Hills Scenic Byway is based on some statistical data, but is primarily anecdotal. Some statistics were provided by the Iowa Welcome Centers and studies from the Iowa Economic Development Authority and the Department of Economics, Iowa State University Extension. The Villages of Van Buren reported useful statistics on their marketing effectiveness and Constant Contact survey results for 2016. Interviews with Davis County Welcome Center volunteers and with Stacey Reese, executive director of the Villages of Van Buren, and Sarah Camp, administrator of the American Gothic House Center, provided insights into their visitors' interests.

Visitor Profile Data

- Iowa Welcome Center surveys report that the primary interests of Iowa visitors are historical experiences (57%), scenic byways (53%), and recreation and parks (42%).
- Visitors are primarily older. The average age at Iowa Welcome Centers is 57. The average age of Villages of Van Buren visitors is 56.5.
- The average travel party size at Iowa Welcome Centers is 2.5, whereas it is 3.2 at the Villages of Van Buren.

Bonaparte Pottery tours engage visitors in exploring a 19th century pottery.

Dutchman's Store in Central, operated by a Mennonite family, is an old-fashioned general store featuring locally made and bulk products. The store is popular with visitors whose main interest is browsing the quaint shops of the Villages of Van Buren.

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Chapter 3: Byway Travelers

The fundamental question, "Who is the byway traveler and what are they seeking?" is addressed in several ways: This question was posed during the visioning meetings, and follow-up interviews were conducted with visitor center and primary attraction staff members. Data gathered at Iowa welcome centers and byway tourist centers and by Travel Iowa provided numerical data to support the anecdotal information.

Chapter 4: Interpretive Resources

An inventory documents the natural and cultural attractions along or near the byway, with a description and photo of each resource. The resources are categorized based on the six intrinsic qualities identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation Scenic Byways Program: scenic & natural, historic & archaeological, cultural, and recreational. The attractions are delineated by byway region and placed on a regional map.

Chapter 5: Themes and Messages

The interpretive themes and messages connect the tangible resources with their intangible meanings. Themes unify all of the stories of the byway and guide the development of media into a cohesive visitor experience. See pages 6–7 for a listing of all byway primary themes.

Chapter 6: Interpretive Media

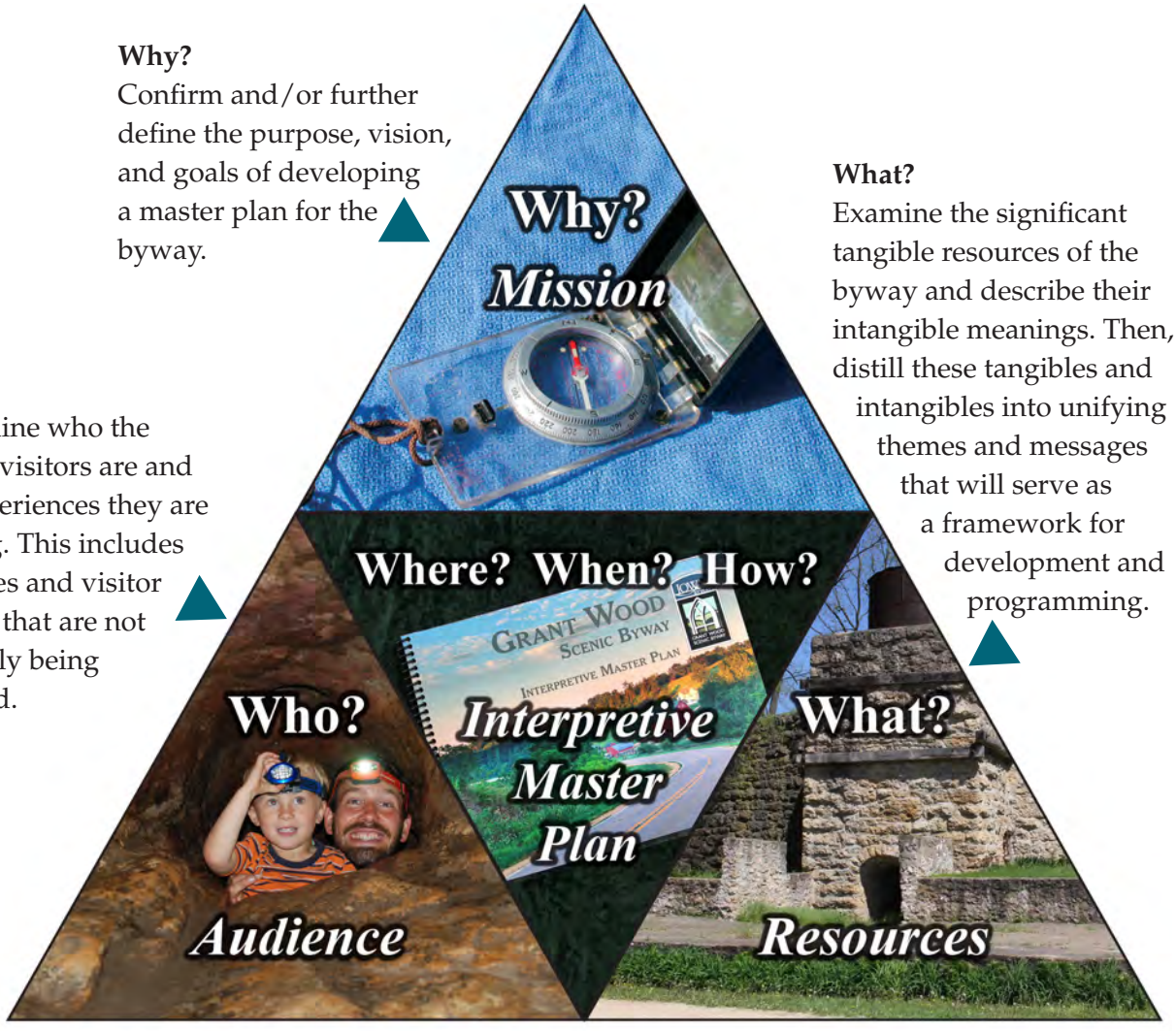
These are the tools used to communicate messages to byway visitors. They guide visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. Proposed design standards unify the design of all interpretive media, including experience hubs, wayside exhibits, publications, and digital media. Recommendations for specific media include fully developed examples from each media category. See pages 8–54 for a summary of media recommended for Iowa's byways.

The Planning Process

Interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. We adhere to the philosophy that interpretive planning is a process of consensus development—of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why interpretation is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions, which can be illustrated by the Planning Triangle:

Why?
Confirm and/or further define the purpose, vision, and goals of developing a master plan for the byway.

Who?
Determine who the byway visitors are and the experiences they are seeking. This includes activities and visitor groups that are not currently being targeted.



What?
Examine the significant tangible resources of the byway and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages that will serve as a framework for development and programming.

Where? When? How?
Based on the why, who, and what, develop a plan for interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor-resource connections within the parameters of the mission and vision of the byway.

Themes and Messages

Chapter 5 of each Iowa Byway interpretive master plan lists themes and messages that are specific to the byway. Interpretive themes represent the major concepts, ideas, and messages that visitors will experience as they travel the byway. They create a framework for planning meaningful interactions between visitors and resources. Once these important concepts are identified, the most appropriate sites, resources, and stories are selected to illustrate them.

A theme statement, which is ideally stated in one succinct sentence, should contain **universal concepts**. Universal concepts are intangible meanings that are significant to everyone, such as life, death, family, parenthood, jealousy, loyalty, forgiveness—all of the emotions, challenges, and values that make us human.

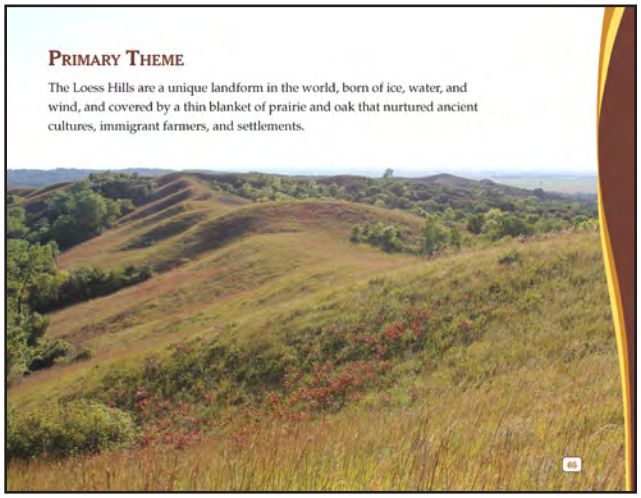
Effective interpretive themes should connect tangible resources (objects or facts) to the interests of visitors. Interpretation is most successful when visitors can relate the themes and messages on a byway to something relevant in their own lives. A good theme will stir emotions and thoughts in a visitor, helping to create memorable experiences. Provocation is more significant than factual information. Inspiring people to relate the information to their own lives is a measure of success.

Organization of Themes and Messages

- The **primary theme** is the big idea of the byway. All interpretation along the corridor should relate to this overall theme
- **Subthemes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas.
- **Messages** break down the subthemes further into very specific stories that can be told through interpretive media and programs.

Primary Themes

Primary themes represent the main ideas that should be shared about each Iowa byway through interpretation. They represent what makes each byway unique. All media and programs along the byway should strive to reinforce this theme for visitors. The following is a list of primary themes developed for each byway. The byway-specific master plans break these down into more workable subthemes and messages.



Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway

"Delaware County embodies Iowa's celebrated identity as a place where pioneer immigrants built strong communities based on shared religious values, commitment to education, and allegiance to their new country."

Driftless Area Scenic Byway

"The scenic limestone bluffs and valleys of northeast Iowa, untouched by recent glaciers, are laced with caves, cool springs, and streams that support diverse plant communities and human lifestyles shaped by the landscape."

Glacial Trail Scenic Byway

"Carved by glaciers, the prairie and oak savanna covered bluffs along the Little Sioux River have sustained native cultures and Euro-American settlers and are home to natural, historic, and archaeological treasures that offer an "old Iowa" experience."

Grant Wood Scenic Byway

"Art and landscape overlap on the Grant Wood Scenic Byway, an 80-mile route that winds through scenery traversing three rivers that course past limestone bluffs, caves, wooded hillsides, and historic towns—a landscape that inspired artists such as Grant Wood and which continues to enchant artists and visitors."

Historic Hills Scenic Byway

"The Black Hawk Purchase of 1833 opened a flood of settlement that surged up the Des Moines River and spread across the forest and prairie landscape of southeastern Iowa, where communities preserve their historic character and natural beauty."

Iowa Valley Scenic Byway

"The rich natural resources of the Iowa River Valley between Montour and the Amana Colonies have brought together Meskwaki Native Americans, communal Amana Germans, Czech farmers, and other immigrants into a diverse cultural patchwork."

Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway

"The development of the Lincoln Highway demonstrated the national desire to unite the country from coast-to-coast with an all-season road, giving Americans the freedom to travel independently and creating an automobile culture that significantly reshaped the landscape and the economy."

Loess Hills National Scenic Byway

"The Loess Hills are a unique landform in the world, born of ice, water, and wind, and covered by a thin blanket of prairie and oak that nurtured ancient cultures, immigrant farmers, and settlements."

River Bluffs Scenic Byway

"The Mississippi, Turkey, and Volga rivers and their tributaries carved deep valleys in the driftless landscape of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway, shaping the region's history and lifestyles, and creating a scenic topography where residents can enjoy outdoor recreation and charming villages."

Western Skies Scenic Byway

"The Western Skies Scenic Byway winds through a rural landscape of rolling hills and broad skies where European immigrants created a distinct sense of place as they shaped farming practices that have evolved into modern-day agriculture."

Wayfinding

It is essential that travelers are able to negotiate a byway route and find the significant attractions. Without effective wayfinding, visitors can't access interpretive messages and may become frustrated with their experience.

While the Iowa byway routes are well marked with unified signs, finding significant byway attractions and resources can be challenging to first-time and serendipitous travelers. The following recommendations can help improve the wayfinding experience:

- **Official Byway Attraction Signs**: Work with the Iowa Department of Transportation to develop a system of "byway attraction signs" that guide travelers to primary byway resources, such as historic sites, experience hubs, wayside exhibits, information centers, and scenic overlooks. The signs can be developed with a slightly modified version of the established DOT "Destination/Guide Signs" standards. The addition of the Iowa Byways logo marks it as an official state byway sign and provides visual unity with byway route identification signs and media.
- **Off-Byway Direction Signs:** Work with municipalities and government entities to develop off-byway directional signs to primary interpretive locations.
- **Experience Hubs:** Place easily recognizable experience hubs in prominent locations along the corridor to serve as focal points that draw the attention of travelers and provide orientation to local interpretive resources and media.
- **Online Media:** Include directional information and interactive maps in all online media such as websites, mobile tour websites, and apps.

Official Byway Attraction Sign: Concept Design

- **Travel Guide:** Develop an interpretive travel guide that includes detailed maps and directional information regarding byway attractions.

Interpretive Media

Heritage interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. Media are non-personal forms of interpretation that connect visitors to the resources and stories of the byway. These include signs, exhibits, publications, audiovisual tours, overlooks, artwork, and other forms.

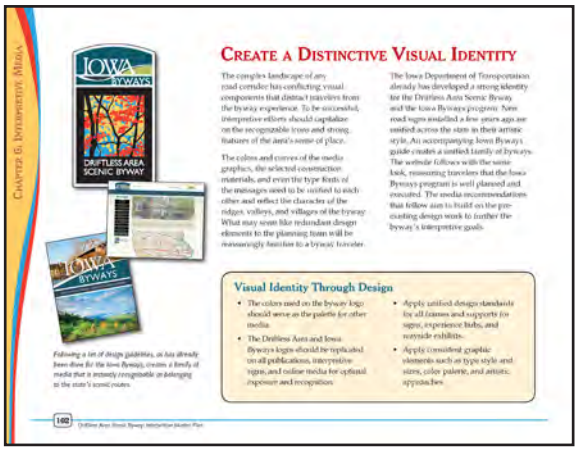
When interpretive media are well planned, they can open windows of understanding and revelation in visitors who are seeking connections and meanings of their own as they explore the byway and its resources. It is a rewarding experience for visitors to discover for themselves new and exciting places and to feel like they have grown emotionally and intellectually in the process.

Interpretive media connects visitors to tangible resources and intangible meanings (Green Circle Trail kiosk, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design)

Unified Media Design Standards

The colors and design elements of a byway's media graphics, the materials and construction of the supports, and even the typeface selected for interpretive inscriptions should reflect the personality of the byway and create a pleasing uniformity that reassures travelers. Unified design across all Iowa byways brands each piece of interpretive media as part of the state's byway experience.

To provide a well-organized and cohesive travel experience, all media should be graphically unified. The repeated use of colors, typeface, logos, and design elements will group media into recognizable visual families on each byway. Consider the following recommendations when designing media.



Color Palette

A consistent family of colors helps organize media and makes words easier to read and understand. Color can also evoke feelings and set moods and attitudes.

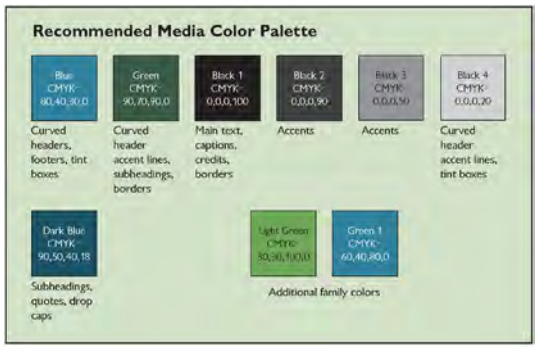
In 2010, the Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Media and Marketing developed logos and color palettes for all existing scenic byways and for a comprehensive Iowa Byways brand. Descriptions, policies, and regulations are addressed in the "Iowa Byways Brand Guidelines" document for each byway. The brand is ultimately the byway's public identity, which is intended to create awareness of the program and its benefits and to encourage and enhance the traveler experience.

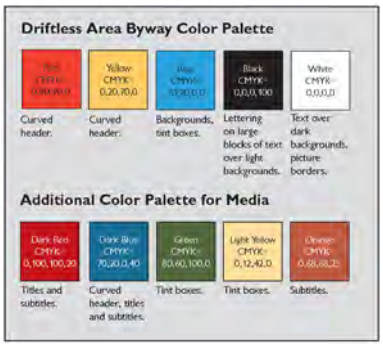
The interpretive media color palette developed for each byway is built from the individual logos. A family of varying shades based on the main logo colors provides flexibility and contrast for effective design. The color scheme should be repeated in the design of all media forms.

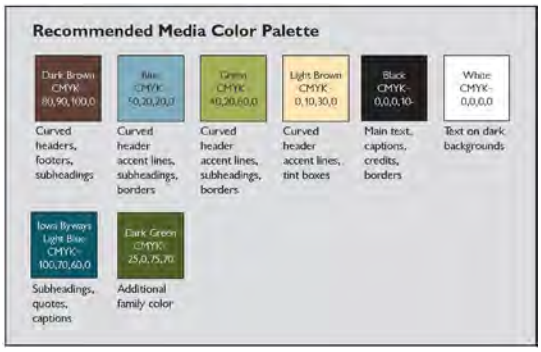
Visual Identity Through Design

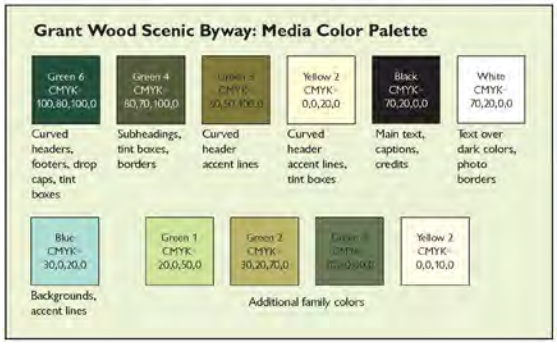
- The colors that were selected for the byway logo should serve as the palette for other media.
- The byway logo should be replicated on all signs, publications, and online media for optimal exposure and recognition.
- Employ unified design standards for all signs, wayside exhibits, and interpretive hub supports and frames.
- Utilize consistent design elements for all media, such as font size and style, color palettes, and other artistic details.

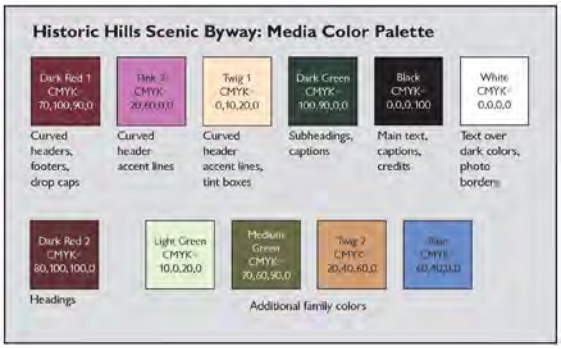
Byway Recommended Color Palettes

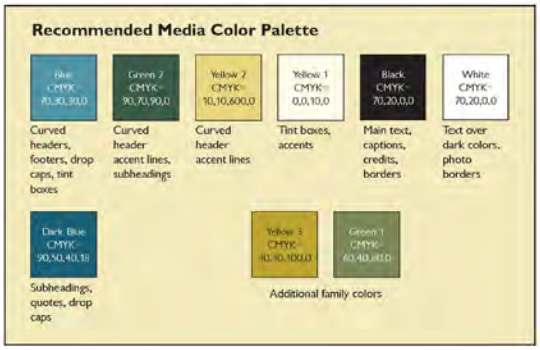


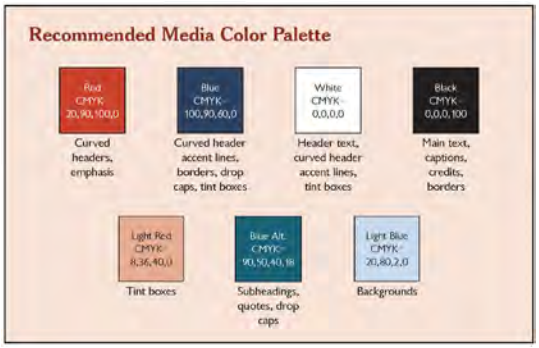


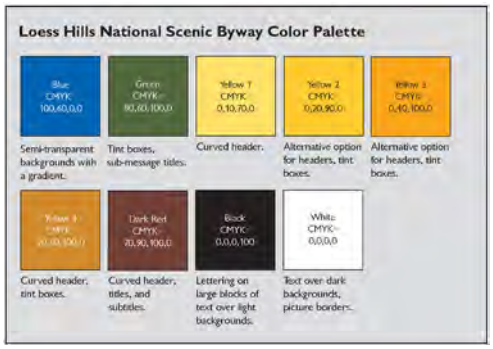


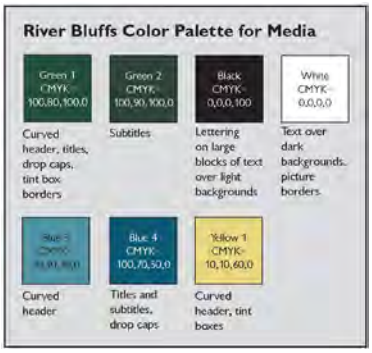












Typography

The selection of typefaces and sizes creates a personality and determines the readability of the text on interpretive media. Each typeface expresses personality and sets a tone that reflects the organization or the message that is being interpreted.

Combinations of various styles can add an interesting hierarchy to the media design and help create specific personalities for each message. Fonts can appear lighthearted and fun, informal, businesslike, old-fashioned, rustic, or legalistic. Stylized fonts attract attention for titles and short headings but can be burdensome to read in longer texts.

Cheltenham BT Bold is the recommended font for main titles and headings on most byway media, evoking the timeless nature of the byway and creating consistency between media. On the Iowa Byways logo, the typeface for "IOWA" is a derivative of Cheltenham BT set in all caps. The original typeface was manipulated to blend with the abstract graphic representations of hills and valleys.

BrushTip Travis is an informal script font that provides contrast to the more formal fonts. It serves a similar purpose as the script font used alongside the curving line in the Iowa Byways official guide booklet. These types of fonts welcome viewers and invite them to explore interpretive media. BrushTip Travis is recommended for some titles and headings, such as on wayside exhibits, for subheadings, and to emulate handwriting. It can add an informal handwritten style to photographs or quotes.

Garrison Sans is recommended for the main text on byway media. Simple, familiar fonts work best for longer text that requires more reading. Garrison Sans is used in the Iowa Byways publication, and it is also similar to Gill Sans, which is the font used on the byway logos. It is a sans-serif font (no decorations on the end of strokes) that is easy to read. It also works well for photo captions and credits.

A **hierarchy of type sizes** is also important to emphasize the relative significance of various messages. Typically, a main title is the largest size, followed by subheadings, main text, captions, and credits. These varying sizes help create a logical visual sequence for readers to follow.

Recommended Typography

CHELTENHAM BT

Main titles and headings

BrushTip Travis

Headings and subheadings, handwriting (quotes, photos)

Garrison Sans

Main text

Garrison Sans Italic

Photo captions

Garrison Sans Italic

Photo credits

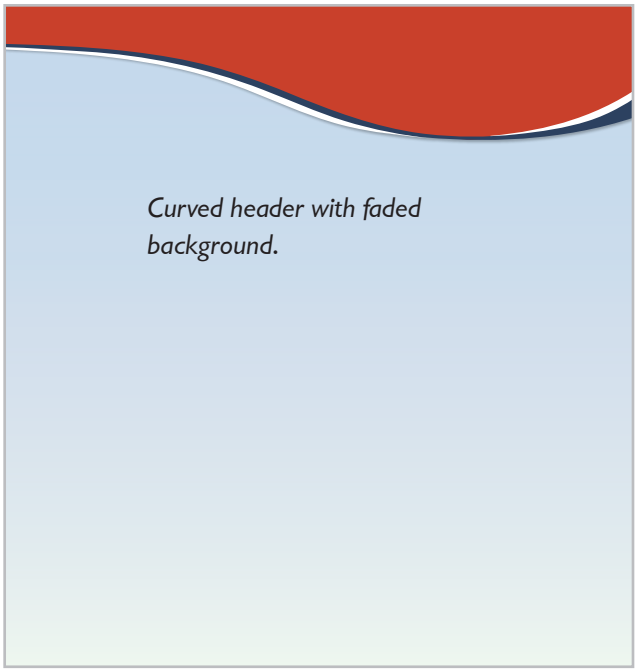
Repeating Graphic Elements

Another important factor that contributes to a unified design style is the use of repeating graphic elements. These artistic details, in combination with the color and typography schemes, develop a unique identity for the byway.

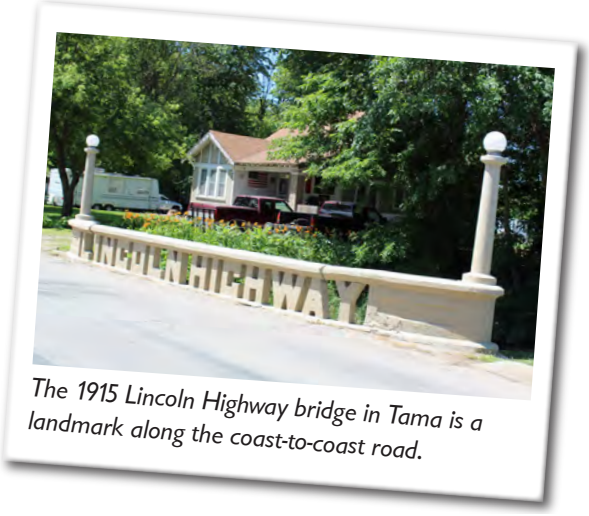
The statewide Iowa Byways logo and each byway's unique logo are essential graphic elements that should be included on all byway media, from interpretive signs and publications to digital websites and apps. They provide a unified brand for the Iowa Byways program.

Other repeated graphic elements on future interpretive media will reinforce the already existing design identity. These include:

- Curving header bars with interwoven strands from the byway's unique color palette. The curve is reminiscent of the wave pattern in the Iowa Byways logo.
- Faded light blue backgrounds with a gradient on interpretive media.
- White, snapshot-style borders for photos, tilted slightly, and set apart with drop shadows.
- Large focal point images and faded background graphics to draw attention.
- Byway website addresses and QR codes that link to the Iowa Byways website.



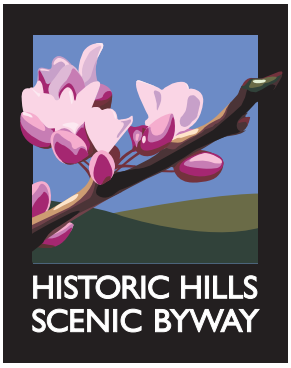
Curved header with faded background.



The 1915 Lincoln Highway bridge in Tama is a landmark along the coast-to-coast road.

Snapshot photo effect with white feathered borders, caption, tilt, and shadow

Repeating Graphic Elements for Byway Media



The Iowa Byways logo and individual byway logos are essential graphic elements to include on all media

Interpretive Experience Hubs

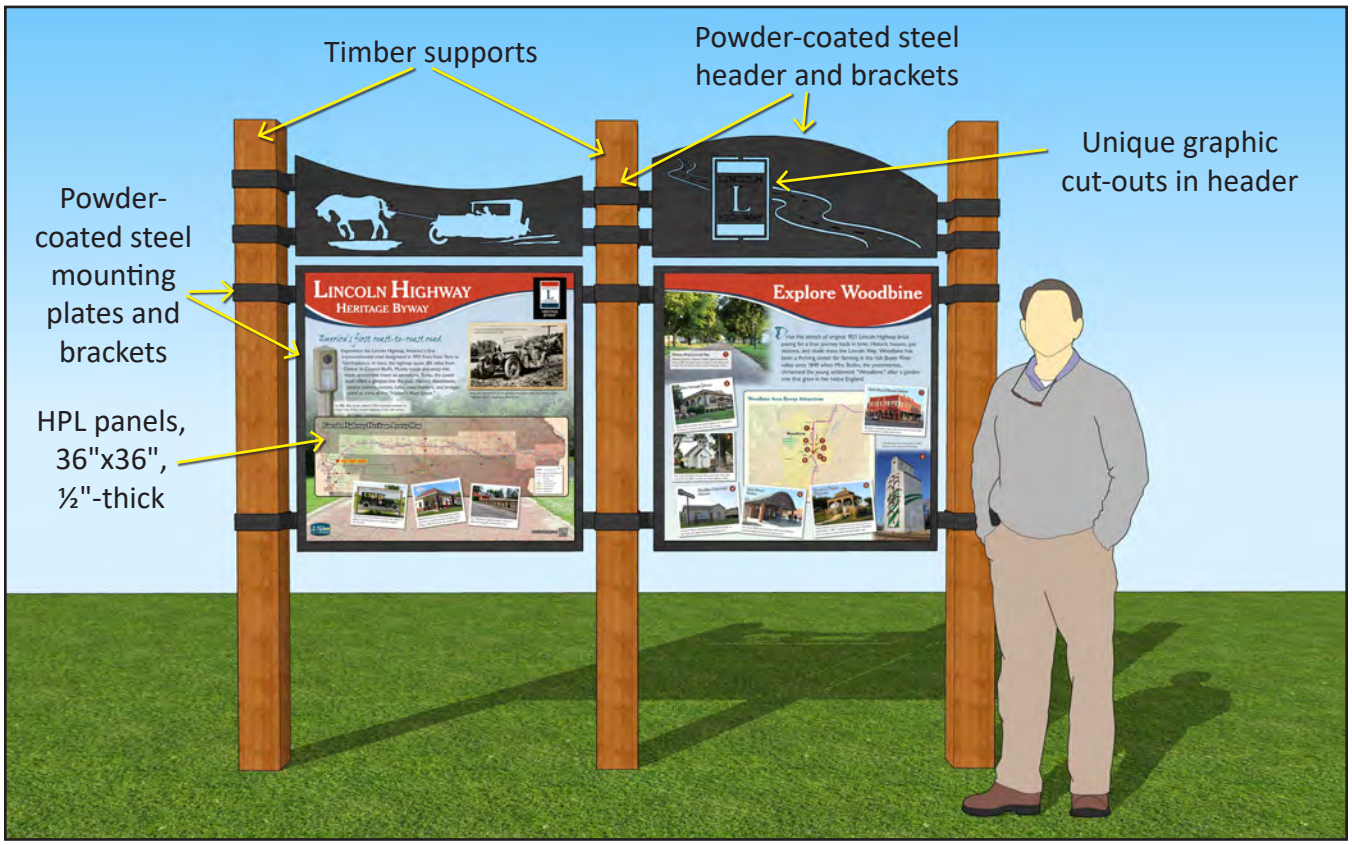
Experience hubs are prominent thematic kiosks that orient byway travelers to significant regional attractions and stories. To be effective, they must be placed where motorists will see them and in public locations where travelers expect to find them. Unlike staffed welcome centers, they are available at any hour of the day throughout all seasons and weather.

When placed at entry sites to a byway or at locations where visitors already gather, experience hubs can introduce impromptu travelers and even local residents to the attractions on the route. A well-designed experience hub attracts attention and makes readers aware of the potential adventures that can be experienced.

Experience Hub Design

Sign and kiosk structures present an opportunity to visually organize interpretive media into an artistic repetition that can be easily identified by travelers. A consistent, recognizable design reinforces the byway identity.

The Iowa byways experience hub designs incorporate timbers and powder-coated metal that complement cultural resources while blending appropriately with natural areas. The strong combination of wood and metal appears organic, while being vandal-resistant and low-maintenance.



Each experience hub structure should:

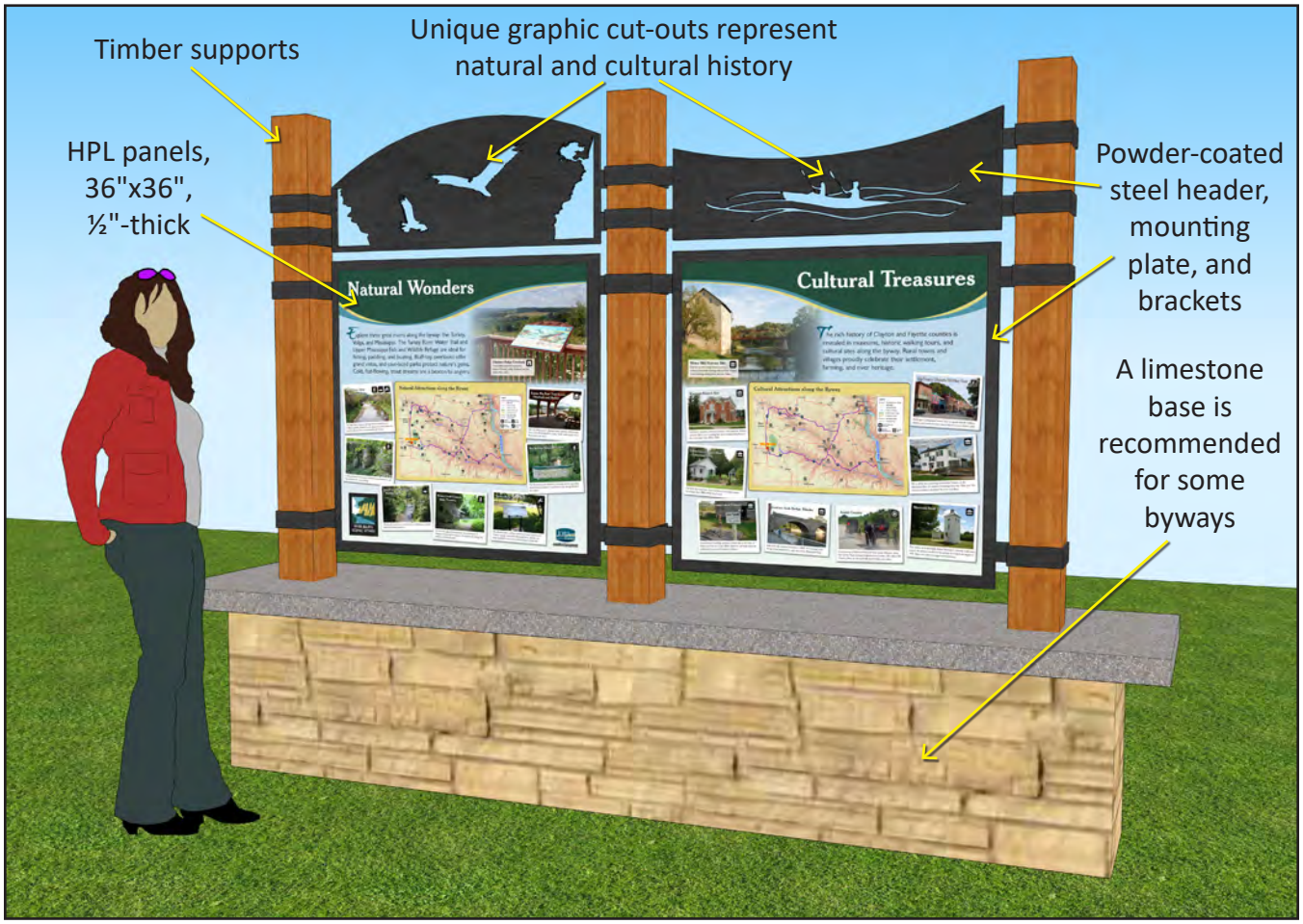
- Be highly visible to travelers, but not overpower existing entry signs.
- Appear rustic and durable in rural sites, but be formal enough to fit into urban settings.
- Appear elegant, but be economically produced.
- Be easily replaced, modified, or repaired.

Supports

The two-sided structures are supported by three 6″-by-6″, 8′-high timber posts. On some byways, a limestone base is recommended to tie in with the landscape and existing structures. Decorative brackets connect the posts to 42″-by-42″, 3/8″-thick metal plates for mounting the interpretive panels. Powder-coated steel is recommended for the kiosks over weathering steel, since weathering steel could cause rust to drip on the signs.

Curved Metal Headers

Curved 3/8″-thick powder-coated steel headers attached to the top of the structure add grace and flow to the hub. Thematic graphic cut-outs in the headers representing the natural and cultural history of the byway create an attractive sculptural component.



Delaware Crossing
Scenic Byway
Explore Hopkinton

Driftless Area
Scenic Byway
Natural Wonders

Glacial Trail
Scenic Byway
Natural Wonders

Grant Wood
Scenic Byway
Explore Maquoketa

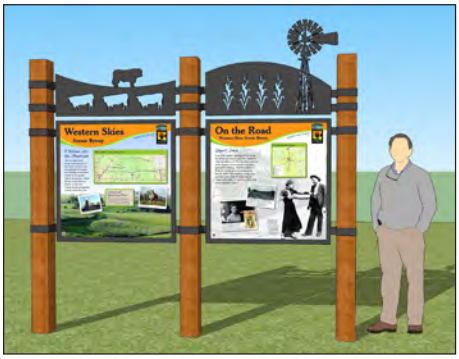
Historic Hills
Scenic Byway
Western Region

Iowa Valley
Scenic Byway
Explore Chelsea

Lincoln Highway
Heritage Byway
Explore Woodbine

Loess Hills
National Scenic Byway
Natural Wonders
Grand Marsh Area

River Bluffs
Scenic Byway
Explore Fayette


Western Skies
Scenic Byway
On the Road

Experience Hub Panel Designs

Each experience hub would display four interpretive signs (two on the front and two on the back) designed to highlight the byway's resources and attractions. The following are design recommendations:

- Panels must be large enough to command attention, even from a busy roadway. The designs in this plan are sized at 36"-by-36".
- Construct out of ½"-thick high-pressure laminate, an affordable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-resolution images and is resistant to damage and vandalism. A 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating is standard.
- Installed on the metal mounting plates attached to the timbers.
- Follow unified design standards which include:
  - Replication of colors, font styles, curved headers, and other graphic elements
  - The specific byway logo and the Iowa Byways logo displayed prominently
  - Website address and QR code on the introductory panel to connect visitors to online content
  - Strong message hierarchy using focal point images and different sized text

Unified curved header (colors unique to byway)

Unified font styles and sizes (all byways)

Snapshot-style images of byway

Iowa Byways logos (all byways)

Byway logo

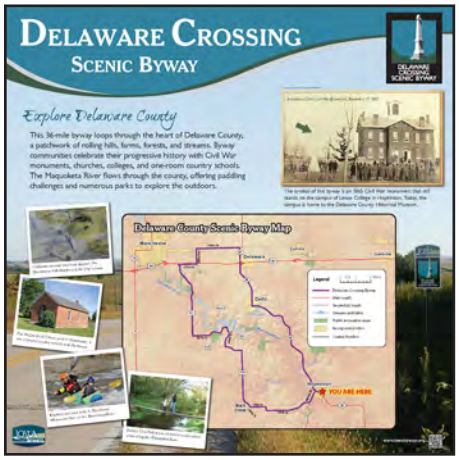
Focal point image

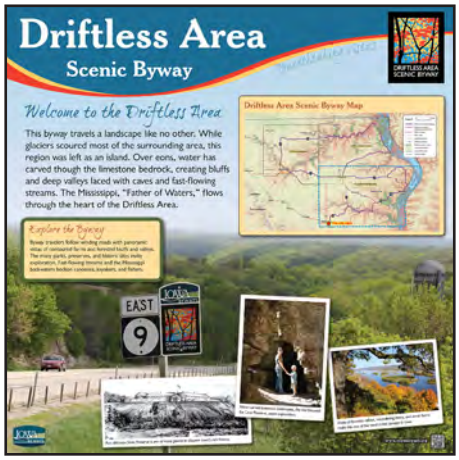
Byway map with "You are here"

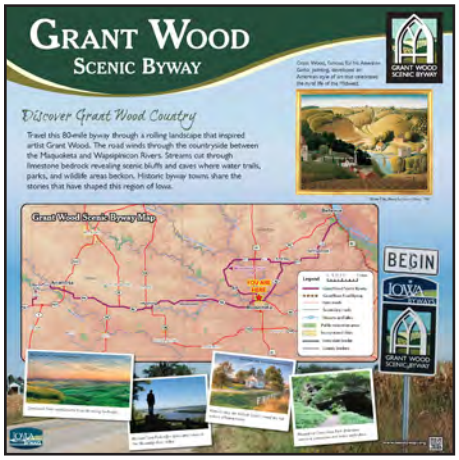
Background image of byway

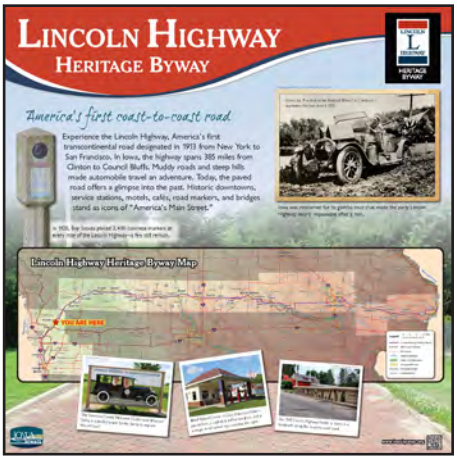
Iowa Byways website and QR codes (all byways)

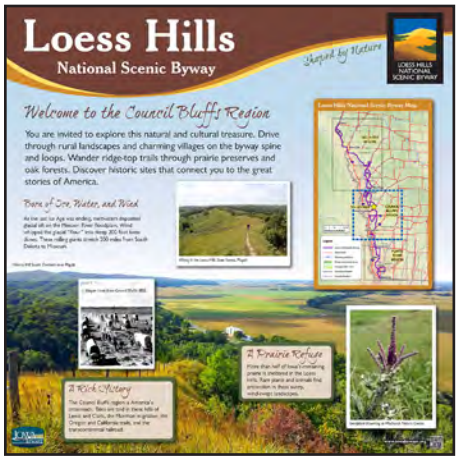
Byway Experience Hubs: Introductory Panel Concept Designs











On the back side, Full Byway Experience Hubs interpret cultural and natural resources along the entire byway route (Delaware Crossing)

On the back side, Regional Byway Experience Hubs describe natural and cultural resources found in a specific region along the byway (Loess Hills: Council Bluffs Region)

Experience Hub Content

Two types of experience hubs are recommended for the Iowa byways, based on the length of the byway and the location of the structure.

Full Byway Experience Hub

A full byway experience hub interprets the resources along the entire byway route. Sign panels typically include:

1. **Byway Overview:** Introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique—includes a map of the byway, photos, and brief text.
2. **Community/Regional Attractions:** Interprets the community or region where the hub is located—includes a map of the community, nearby resources, and photos
3. **Cultural Treasures:** Interprets the historic and cultural resource of the entire byway, with a map and photos
4. **Natural Wonders:** Describes the natural and recreational attractions of the entire byway, with a map and photos

Regional Byway Experience Hub

For longer byways where resources are more spread out, a regional byway experience hub divides the resources into regions by proximity. The hubs interpret those specific regions, focusing on attractions that are closer together. The panels typically include:

1. **Byway Overview:** Introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique.
2. **Community/Regional Attractions:** Interprets the community where the hub is located. If not in a community, this may interpret the region as a whole.
3. **Cultural Treasures:** Interprets the historic and cultural resource of that specific region.
4. **Natural Wonders:** Describes the natural and recreational attractions in that specific region.

Most experience hubs feature a Byway Overview panel and a Community/Regional Attractions panel on the front side (Grant Wood)

Two-Panel Kiosks

Two-panel kiosks are recommended for secondary orientation sites on some Iowa byways. Constructed as a "half" version of an experience hub, they provide an attractive and economical means for displaying a more limited amount of information. The structures are more visually conspicuous than wayside exhibits. They are appropriate at sites where attracting attention is important, such as orienting travelers to a natural area or community.

Like experience hubs, the kiosks are constructed with wooden timbers, powder-coated steel headers with thematic cut-out figures, and 36"-by-36" high-pressure laminate panels installed onto steel mounting plates. Limestone bases would be appropriate in selected landscapes and sites. They typically feature a Byway Overview panel on one side, and a community, site, or related resources panel on the other.

These designs are recommended as alternatives to the Site Orientation Signs that were included in plans for the Loess Hills and Driftless Area scenic byways, as they better match the unified design elements of the experience hubs and wayside exhibits.

Natural attractions kiosk, Grant Wood

Community kiosk, River Bluffs

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits are interpretive panels placed along roads and trails that assist visitors in understanding the stories associated with resources and landscapes on the byway. Photos, illustrations, and concise messages attract and hold a visitor's attention as they discover the significance of a site.

They are an effective way to communicate with visitors because they are always on the job regardless of weather or season. When properly placed near resources, they can quickly answer questions that visitors have about the resources. They are a direct and non-intrusive method to connect people with significant stories along the byway.

Wayside exhibits should tell site-specific stories that bring a resource to "life" and place it into context, connecting it to universal concepts that are relevant to everyone. The best wayside exhibits present messages that are visual, concise, active, and multisensory. See the "Creating an Effective Message" tint box below for best practices when designing signs.

Current technologies offer numerous possibilities for enhancing interpretive panels. They can be cut into innovative shapes. Push-button audio devices with digital recordings can tell captivating stories using firsthand accounts and sound effects. Tactile elements, such as models and textures, can be added to provide a touch experience. QR (quick response) codes can be incorporated for quick access to websites and multimedia content.

An Iowa Valley Scenic Byway wayside exhibit funded through the Conservation Innovation Grant program

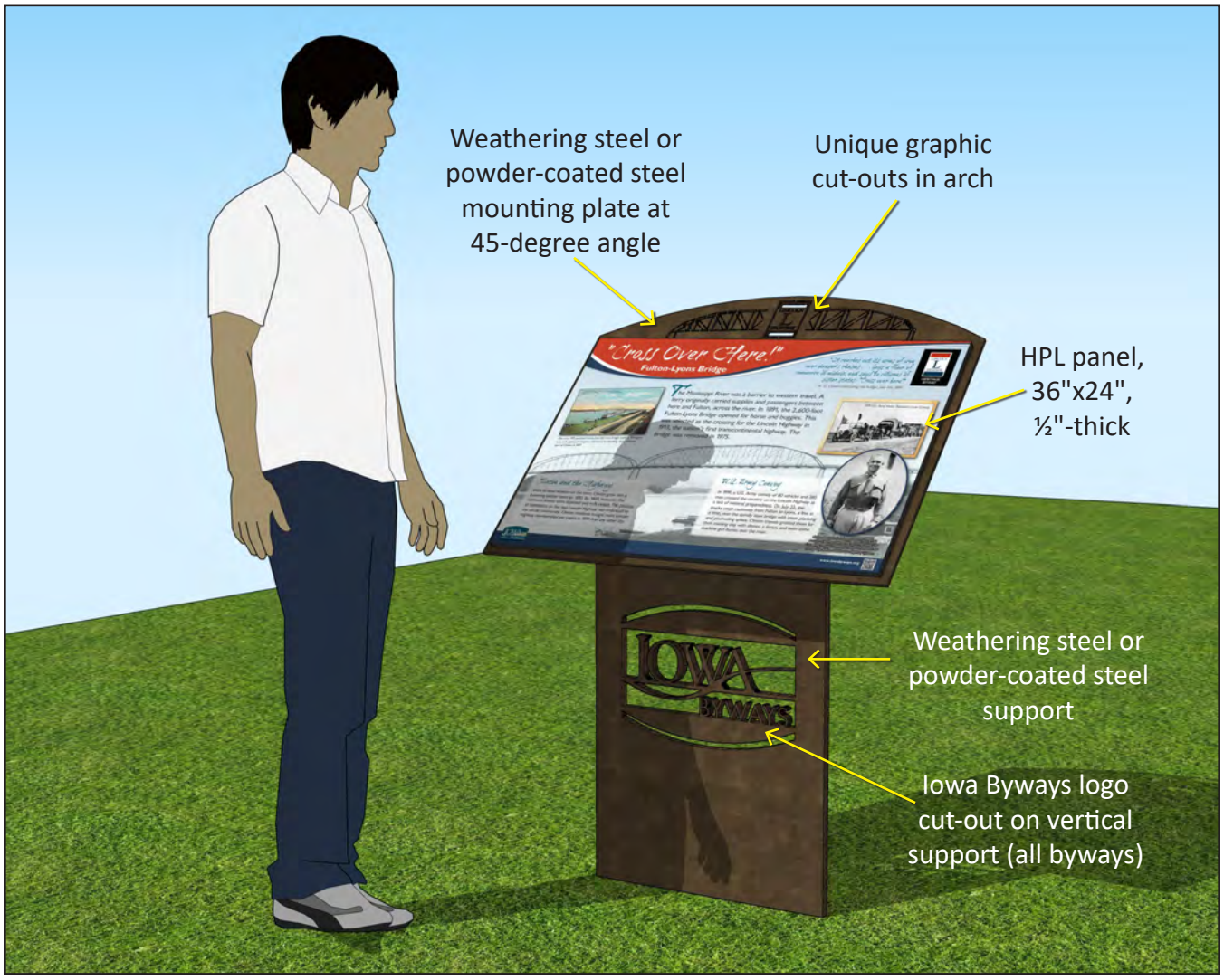
Creating an Effective Message

1. Communicate visually with photos and graphics.
2. Most visitors will look at an interpretive panel for only a few seconds. Apply the 3-30-3 Rule, a hierarchy that provides 3-second, 30-second, and 3-minute message levels.
3. Use simple words, concise sentences, and short paragraphs.
4. Describe with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adverbs and adjectives.
5. Relate to the reader with familiar terms, personal pronouns, metaphors, and quotes.
6. Provide multisensory involvement with tactile and audio devices.

Wayside Exhibit Support Design

The exhibit supports should match the same style as the experience hubs so they are readily identified as part of the byway's family of signs. This includes:

- Vertical base constructed of 3/8"-thick steel. Mount plate constructed with 1/4"-thick steel and installed at a 45-degree angle. Weathering steel rusts with a natural look that blends into the landscape over time. In some areas where rusting is less desirable, a black powder coat can be applied.
- Cut-out of the Iowa Byways logo on the vertical base to unify with existing wayside exhibits.
- Variable cut-out graphics on the top arch based on the theme of the sign.



Bay Settlement Boys
IOWA
BYWAYS

The Ancient Cemetery
Fish Farm Mounds
IOWA
BYWAYS

Defending the Frontier
IOWA
BYWAYS

Stone City Art Colony
IOWA
BYWAYS

Lost Villages
IOWA
BYWAYS

Lotus Connections
IOWA
BYWAYS

Thunder in the Hills
IOWA
BYWAYS

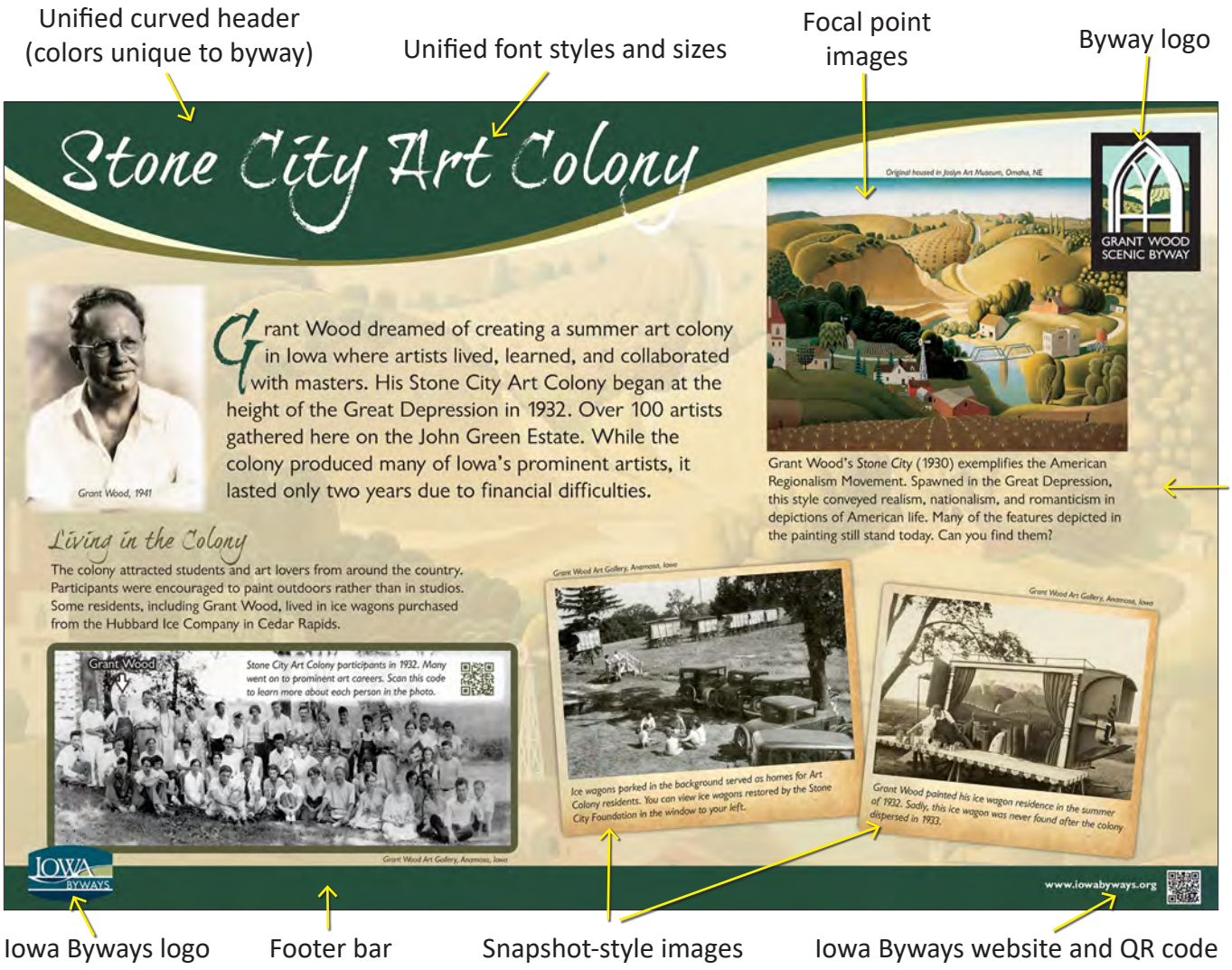
Shin Bone Valley
IOWA
BYWAYS

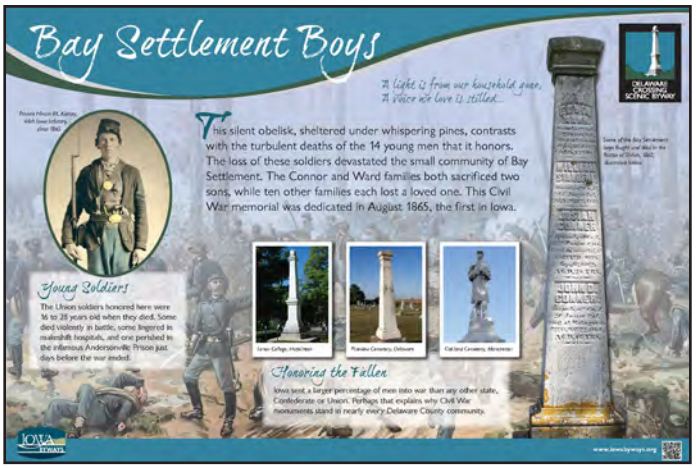
Birds and Bulls
IOWA
BYWAYS

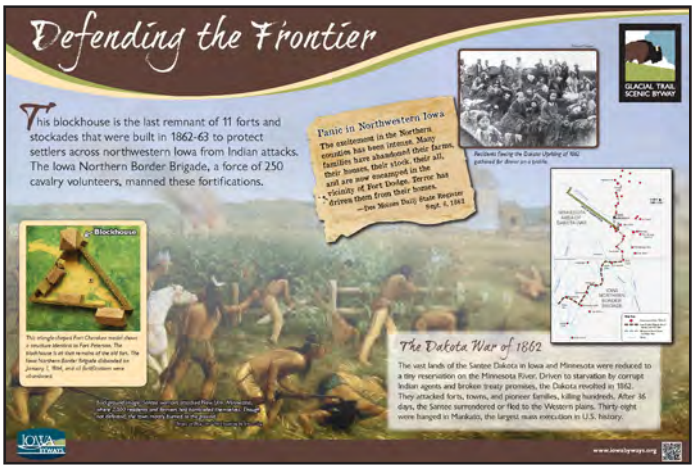
Wayside Exhibit Panel Designs

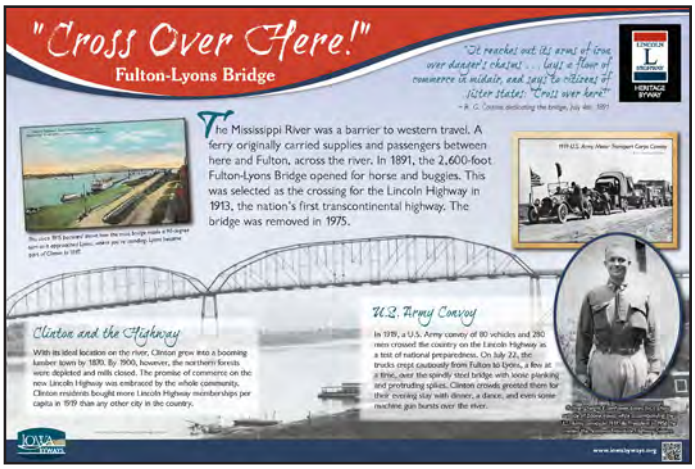
Exhibit panels should also replicate features of the experience hubs. This includes:

- Replication of colors, font styles, and graphic elements.
- Iowa Byways logo and individual byway's logo prominently displayed.
- Website address and QR code to connect visitors to online content.
- Constructed of ½"-thick high-pressure laminate (HPL) material, a durable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-quality images and text. They are resistant to graffiti and scratches, and come with a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating. The panel is attached to the angled steel mount plate with bolts through the back.
- Large enough to be noticeable and easily read, but not too large that they detract from the landscape. A recommended size of 24"-by-36" replicates panels already installed along the byway.



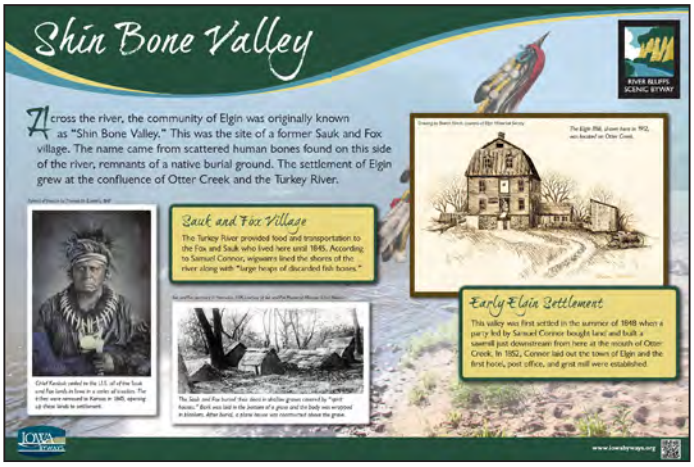






Byway Wayside Exhibit Panels: Concept Designs

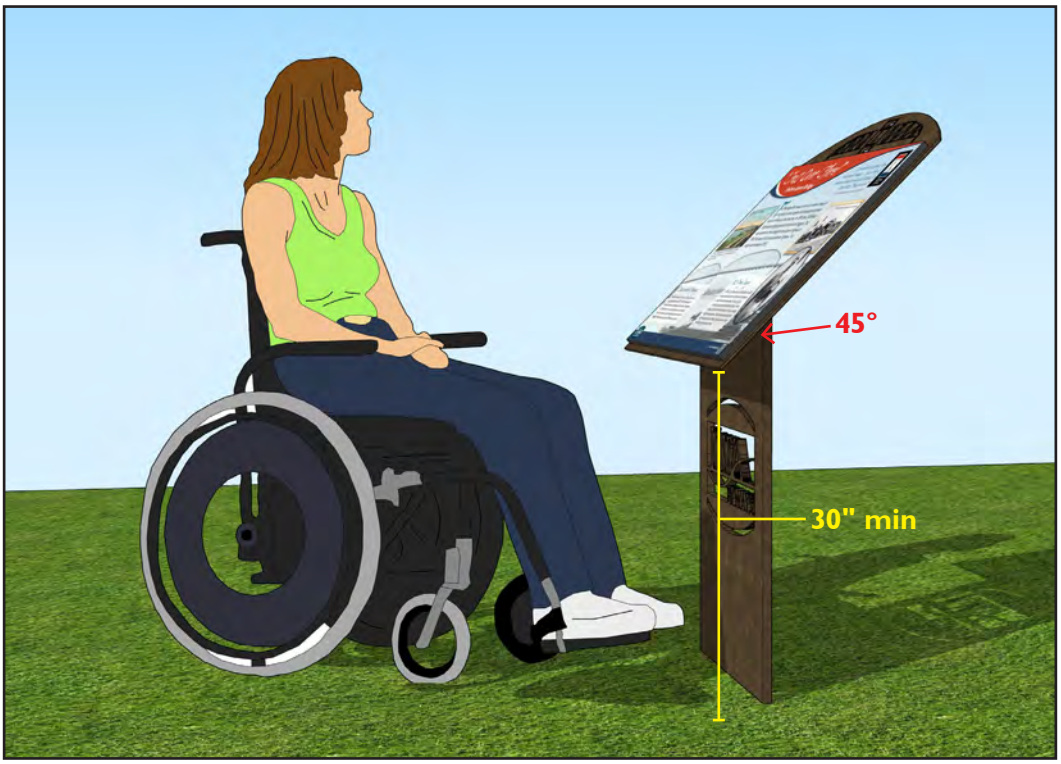
(more on next page)



Wayside Exhibit Installation

Wayside exhibit panels should be installed at a 45-degree angle to the vertical, which offers the best view to a standing or sitting person. They should be placed high enough above the ground, a minimum of 30 inches at the lowest edge, to allow a person in a wheelchair to get close.

A concrete base is suggested where appropriate to facilitate the installation of the exhibit (can be installed directly to the base surface), maximize accessibility (for people with mobility disabilities), and provide easier maintenance over time (snow removal, vegetation management).



Multisensory Components

Adding multisensory components to a wayside exhibit increases its attractiveness, makes it accessible to a wider audience and provides another way for visitors to experience the message. **Push-button audio units** are relatively inexpensive additions that can enhance interpretation. Authentic narration supported by sounds and music humanize a message better than written words ever could. **Tactile components**, such as textures or sculptures, encourage hands-on discovery.

Secondary Wayside Exhibits

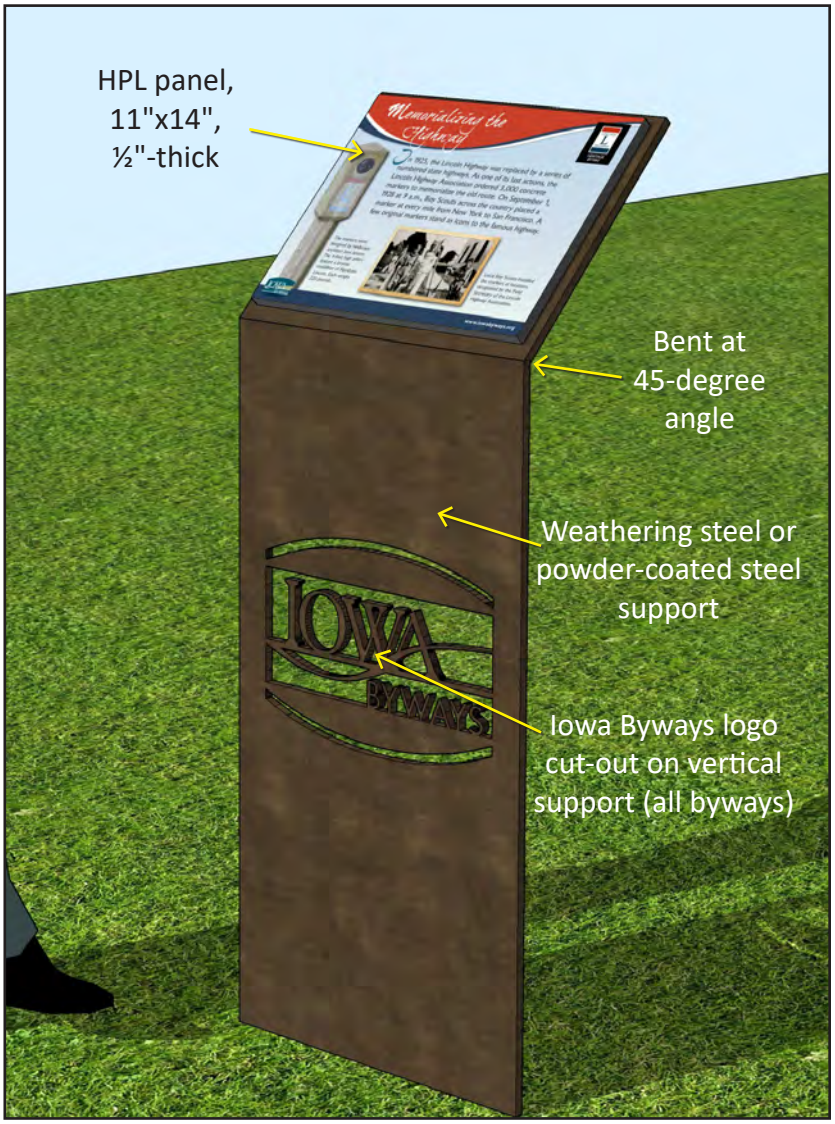
Secondary wayside exhibits are smaller versions of interpretive panels that can complement the larger primary exhibits. With a smaller design, the signs can only tell a single brief message with one or two images. They may be appropriate, for example, along paths or trails where specific resources are being identified. They might also be used at sites where a larger sign would be inappropriate.

Since larger panels are better at attracting attention and provide more design flexibility, it is recommended that primary wayside exhibits be used wherever possible.

Support and Panel Design

The exhibits should be constructed out of the same material and in a similar design as the primary wayside exhibits.

- Supports are constructed out of 3/8″-thick steel that is 15″ wide. Instead of having a mount plate, the base itself is bent at a 45-degree angle about 30″ from the ground for the panel mounting. The Iowa Byways logo cut-out is included in the base.
- Panels are made out of ½″-thick high-pressure laminate. They are designed at 11″-by-14″ in size.



Welcome/Visitor Center Exhibits

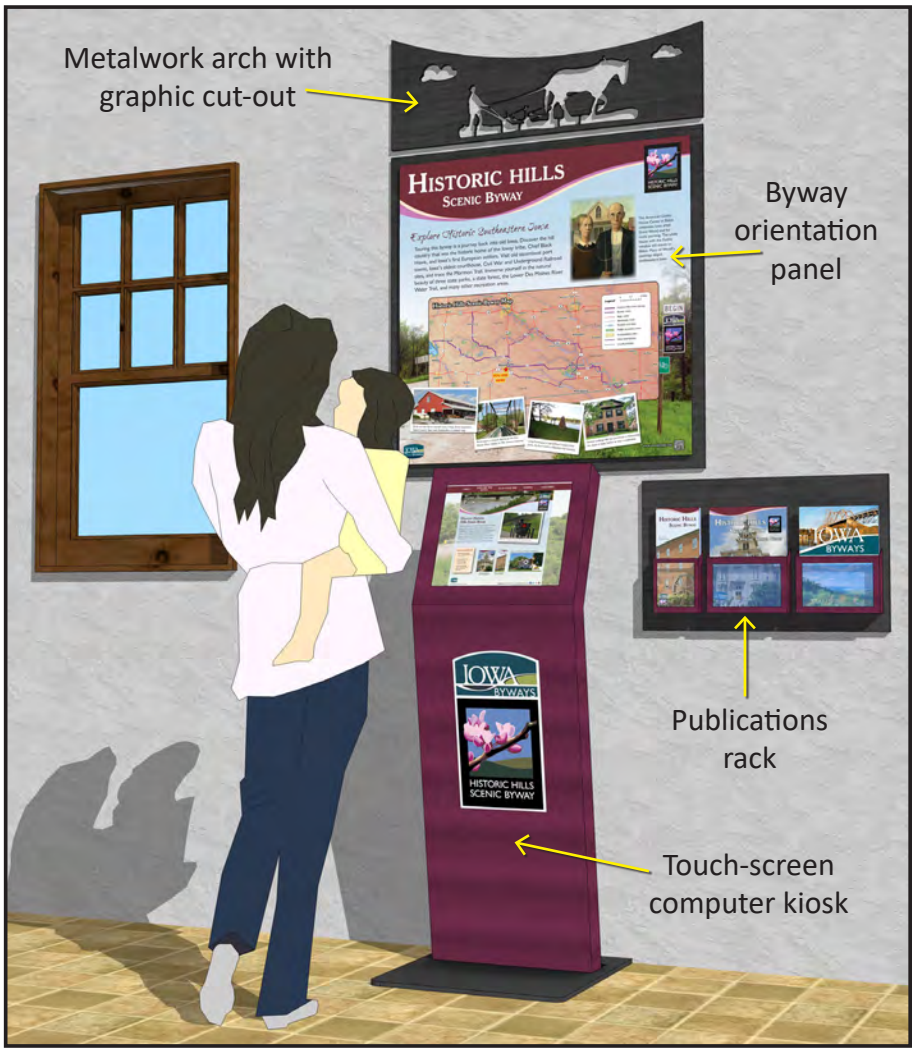
Visitor information centers are important sites to display and share byway information. In addition to brochures and booklets, a touch-screen computer and associated exhibit can catch the attention of travelers and help them plan trips to byway attractions.

On byways with welcome/visitor centers, the purpose of this indoor exhibit is to make visitors aware of the byway and its attractions, while facilitating impromptu planning. The exhibit also introduces the "byway brand" through its logo and characteristic fonts and colors.

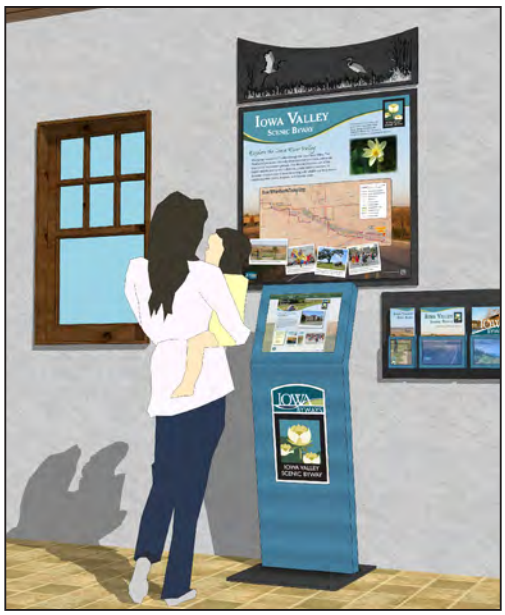
Design Recommendations

The exhibit will be designed small enough to fit inside welcome centers where space is limited, yet large enough to attract attention.

- The exhibit is topped with sculptural metalwork similar to the experience hub kiosks.
- A large map of the byway placed below the color header introduces the byway and its main attractions. The map panel will provide a short summary of the byway and show a "you are here" symbol. Iconic photos of landscapes and attractions encourage further discovery.
- A rack installed next to the map holds byway brochures and travel guide booklets.
- A durable easy-to-use touch-screen computer kiosk provides digital information about the byway. For a unique perspective, the byway route can be placed over an air photo, and users can press arrows to fly over the landscape and discover more about each attraction as it appears.



Visitor Center Exhibit: Concept Designs



General Byway Brochures

Many travelers prefer to use publications to navigate the byway and discover attractions. They are not limited by spotty cell phone coverage or low batteries. They have take-home value and serve as keepsakes of an adventure. They are often shared with others and have a longer life than digital media that pass fleetingly over a screen.

Brochures are a cost-effective marketing tool because they reach casual travelers who are unaware of the byway. A basic byway brochure should stimulate people to access more in-depth information online or at welcome centers. It should be bold and concise with a simple, clean design that highlights significant attractions and other byway media.

Design Recommendations:

- **Size and folds:** an 11"-by-17" leaflet brochure with 6 panels per side (12 total) is an effective layout for introducing a byway and its resources. A different size was recommended for Iowa Valley (see below).
- **Design elements:** Colors, font styles, and graphic styles should be unified with other byway media.
- **Front Cover:** Needs to be designed to be noticed in a rack with other brochures. An obvious byway title should be visible above the rack holder. A dramatic focal-point photograph that represents the byway encourages readers to open the brochure. The byway logo unifies with other media.
- **Back Cover**: The back cover is an ideal place to include a map of Iowa showing the location of the byway and major roads. Directions and contact information are also important elements.
- **First Reveal:** When the brochure is first opened, another dramatic image draws the eye to a concise and active description of the byway experience.
- **Second Reveal (3 panels):** As the brochure is opened, three adjacent panels will highlight different regions of the byway, or different categories of resources (such as natural, historical, and cultural). A description of the significant byway attractions, complemented by engaging photos, will pique the visitor's interest.
- **Full Reveal Inside (6 panels):** The inside of the brochure features a map with the entire byway route clearly marked. Major roads, communities, scenic byways, and other landmarks are identified. The map could also include a list of primary attractions with corresponding location numbers, similar to the tear-sheet byway maps.

In order to accommodate four regions, it was recommended that the Iowa Valley Scenic Byway brochure be a 14"-by-17" leaflet brochure with 8 panels per side (16 total)

Front Cover

Byway name at top

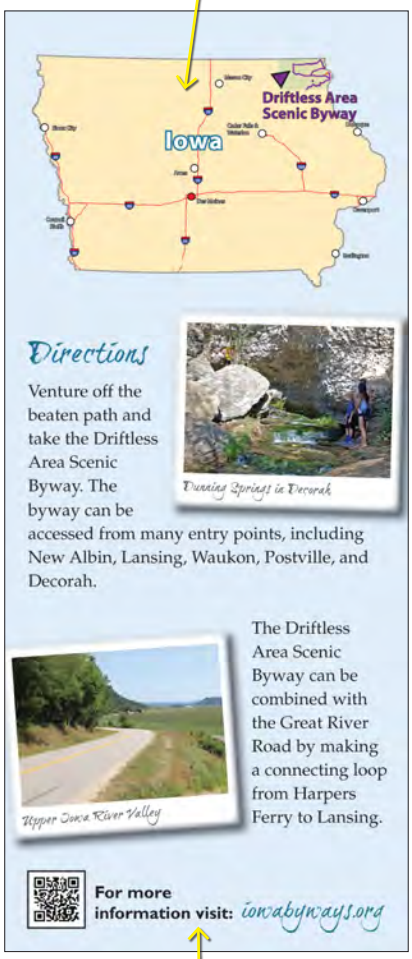
Unified curved header

Focal point image

Complete byway logo and website

Back Cover

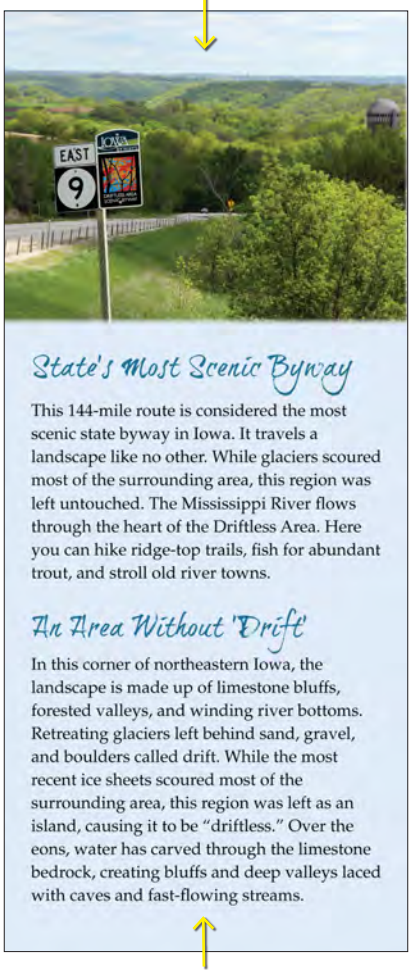
State locater map and access directions



Contact information

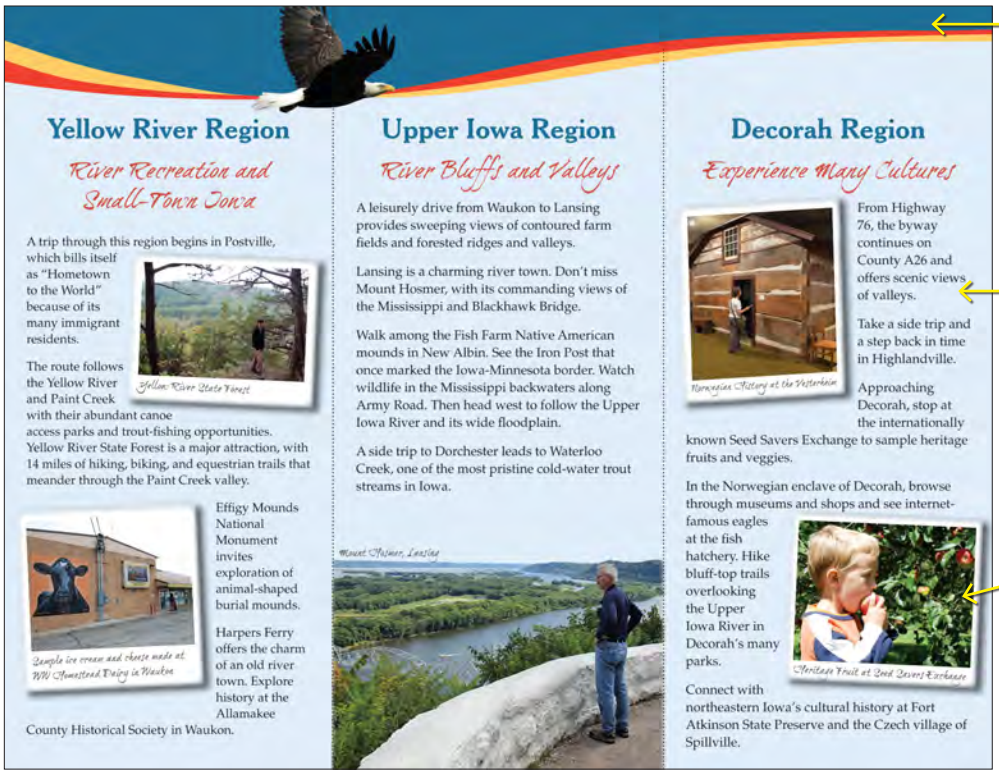
First Reveal

Focal point image



Interpretive introduction to byway

Second Reveal



Yellow River Region

River Recreation and Small-Town Iowa

A trip through this region begins in Postville, which bills itself as "Hometown to the World" because of its many immigrant residents.

The route follows the Yellow River and Paint Creek with their abundant canoe access parks and trout-fishing opportunities. Yellow River State Forest is a major attraction, with 14 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails that meander through the Paint Creek valley.

Effigy Mounds National Monument invites exploration of animal-shaped burial mounds.

Harpers Ferry offers the charm of an old river town. Explore history at the Allamakee County Historical Society in Waukon.

Upper Iowa Region

River Bluffs and Valleys

A leisurely drive from Waukon to Lansing provides sweeping views of contoured farm fields and forested ridges and valleys.

Lansing is a charming river town. Don't miss Mount Hosmer, with its commanding views of the Mississippi and Blackhawk Bridge.

Walk among the Fish Farm Native American mounds in New Albin. See the Iron Post that once marked the Iowa-Minnesota border. Watch wildlife in the Mississippi backwaters along Army Road. Then head west to follow the Upper Iowa River and its wide floodplain.

A side trip to Dorchester leads to Waterloo Creek, one of the most pristine cold-water trout streams in Iowa.

Decorah Region

Experience Many Cultures

From Highway 76, the byway continues on County A26 and offers scenic views of valleys.

Take a side trip and a step back in time in Highlandville.

Approaching Decorah, stop at the internationally known Seed Savers Exchange to sample heritage fruits and veggies.

In the Norwegian enclave of Decorah, browse through museums and shops and see internet-famous eagles at the fish hatchery. Hike bluff-top trails overlooking the Upper Iowa River in Decorah's many parks.

Connect with northeastern Iowa's cultural history at Fort Atkinson State Preserve and the Czech village of Spillville.

Unified curved header

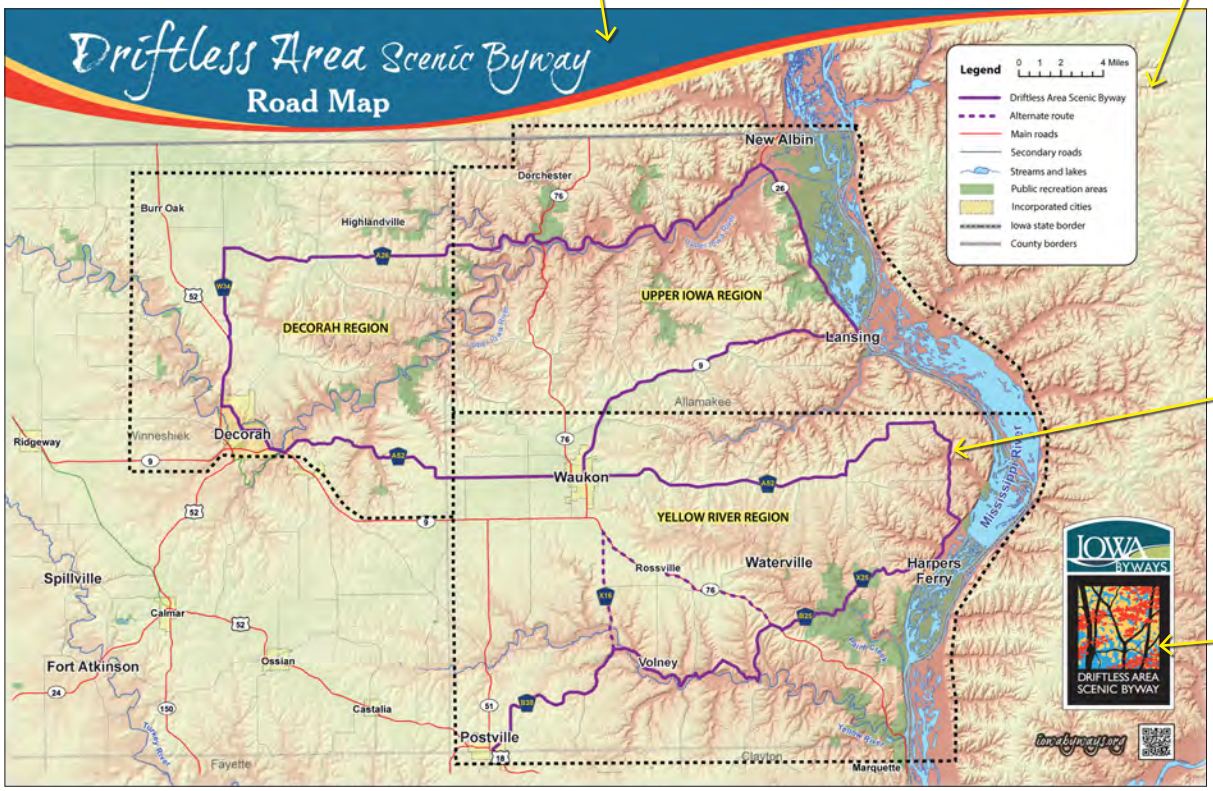
Different regions interpreted

Snapshot-style photos

Full Reveal

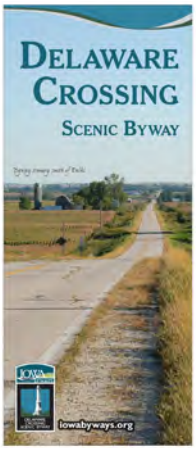
Unified curved header

List of primary byway attractions with location numbers *(not shown)*

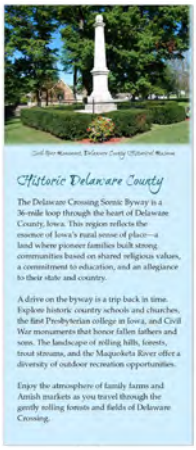


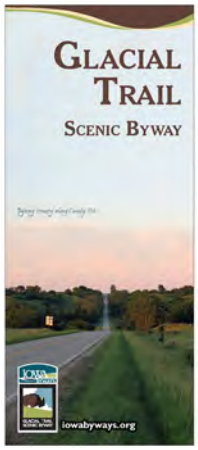
Full byway map

Byway logo and contact info

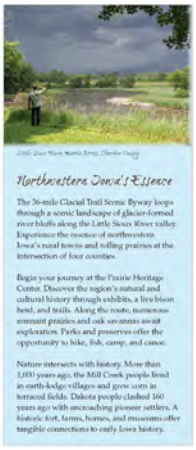

Delaware Crossing
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org

Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway
Iowa
Directions
The Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway is located about 40 miles west of Dubuque in the heart of Delaware County. The north part of the loop can be accessed from U.S. Highway 20 in Delaware or Manchester. The south end can be accessed from Highway 38 in Hopkinton.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

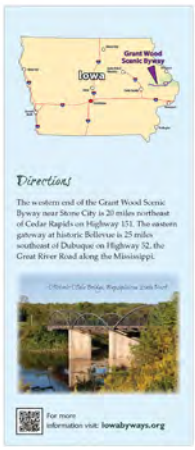

Historic Delaware County
The Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway is a 36-mile loop through the heart of Delaware County, Iowa. This region reflects the essence of Iowa's rural sense of place—a land where pioneer families built strong communities based on shared religious values, a commitment to education, and an allegiance to their state and country.
A drive on the byway is a trip back in time. Explore historic country schools and churches, the first Presbyterian college in Iowa, and Civil War monuments that honor fallen fathers and sons. The landscape of rolling hills, forests, trout streams, and the Maquoketa River offer a diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities.
Enjoy the atmosphere of family farms and Amish markets as you travel through the gently rolling forests and fields of Delaware Crossing.


Glacial Trail
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org

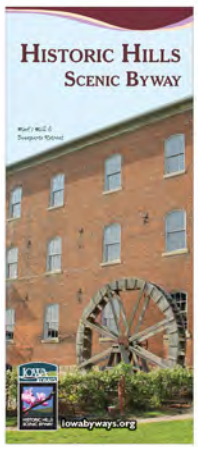
Glacial Trail Scenic Byway
Iowa
Directions
Glacial Trail Scenic Byway is located 1 hour south of the Iowa Lakes and 1.5 hours northeast of Sioux City. It loops around the four-corner junction of O'Brien, Clay, Buena Vista, and Cherokee counties. The loop can be accessed from state Highway 10.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org


Northwestern Iowa's Essence
The 36-mile Glacial Trail Scenic Byway loops through a scenic landscape of glacier-formed river bluffs along the Little Sioux River valley. Experience the essence of northwestern Iowa's rural towns and rolling prairies at the intersection of four counties.
Begin your journey at the Prairie Heritage Center. Discover the region's natural and cultural history through exhibits, a live bison herd, and trails. Along the route, numerous remnant prairies and oak savannas await exploration. Parks and preserves offer the opportunity to hike, fish, camp, and canoe.
Nature intersects with history. More than 1,000 years ago, the Mill Creek people lived in earth-lodge villages and grew corn in terraced fields. Dakota people clashed 160 years ago with encroaching pioneer settlers. A historic fort, farms, homes, and museums offer tangible connections to early Iowa history.

Grant Wood
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org


Grant Wood Scenic Byway
Iowa
Directions
The western end of the Grant Wood Scenic Byway near Stone City is 20 miles northeast of Cedar Rapids on Highway 151. The eastern gateway at historic Bellevue is 25 miles southeast of Dubuque on Highway 52, the Great River Road along the Mississippi.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

Artistic Inspiration
Discover the land that inspired Grant Wood to paint romantic images of his native Iowa. Enjoy the drive through colorful mosaics of fields, pastures, and woodlots that blanket rolling hills. On the byway, you will pass charming farm towns and one-room schools. Experience Grant Wood's boyhood when you visit his rural school, and walk the site of the Stone City Art Colony that he co-founded.
The byway undulates 80 miles through farmland in Jones and Jackson counties. You can explore the caverns at Maquoketa Caves State Park and learn how karst geology shapes the region's character. You will cross rivers with names like Maquoketa and Wapsipinicon en route to the Mississippi River port town of Bellevue.


Historic Hills
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org

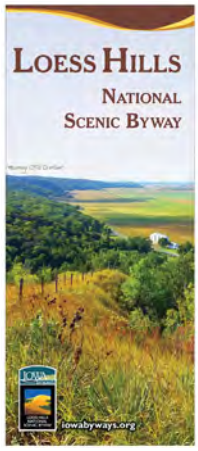
Iowa
Historic Hills Scenic Byway
Directions
The western gateway to the Historic Hills Scenic Byway is at Honey Creek Resort State Park on Rathbun Lake. The eastern portal is on Highway 2 at Donnellson. A spur enters from Highway 34 north of Blakesburg.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

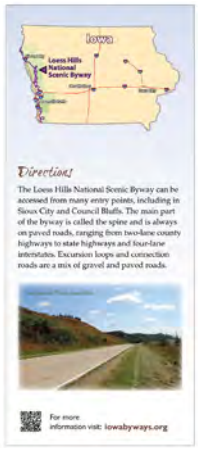
Historic Southeastern Iowa
Touring the byway is a journey back into old Iowa. Discover the hill country, historic home of the Ioway Indians, Sauk Chief Black Hawk, and the first European settlers in Iowa. Visit old steamboat port towns, Iowa's oldest courthouse, Underground Railroad and Civil War sites, and trace the Mormon National Historic Trail. Enjoy the natural beauty of three state parks, a state forest, the Lower Des Moines River Water Trail, and many county parks and recreation areas.
Bisected by the Des Moines River, the byway traverses five counties along the Missouri border. This is Amish and Mennonite farm country. Byway travelers often share the road with buggies. Shop for Amish and Mennonite-made products at country stores and craft shops.

Lincoln
Highway
Heritage Byway
iowabyways.org

Iowa
Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway
Directions
The Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway spans the state of Iowa from Clinton to Council Bluffs, largely following U.S. Highway 30. It crosses through Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown, and Ames. Information centers are located in Mount Vernon, Jefferson, and Missouri Valley to help you plan your trip.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

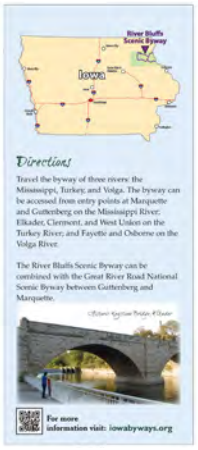
LINCOLN HIGHWAY INTERPRETIVE CENTER
Explore America's First Coast-to-Coast Road
The Lincoln Highway was America's first transcontinental improved road, designated in 1913 from New York to San Francisco. Travel was difficult on the early dirt roads in Iowa. They were rutted when dry and became "gumbo" mud when wet. As part of the Good Roads Movement, early automobile pioneers dreamed of creating a smooth, paved road across the country.
In Iowa, the Lincoln Highway spans 385 miles from Clinton on the Mississippi River to Council Bluffs on the Missouri. The Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway follows this old route past icons of "America's Main Street." Drive back in time to discover historic downtowns, service stations, motels, cafés, road markers, brick paving, and bridges.


Loess Hills
National
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org


Iowa
Loess Hills National Scenic Byway
Directions
The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway can be accessed from many entry points, including in Sioux City and Council Bluffs. The main part of the byway is called the spine and is always on paved roads, ranging from two-lane county highways to state highways and four-lane interstates. Excursion loops and connection roads are a mix of gravel and paved roads.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

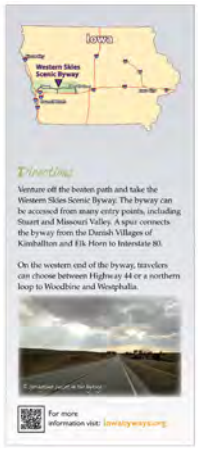
Discover the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway
The Loess Hills National Scenic Byway is a 220-mile route spanning nearly the entire western border of Iowa, with an additional 185 miles of optional excursion loops. Enjoy majestic views of loess-covered ridges and broad expanses of the Missouri River Valley.
Born of Ice, Water, and Wind
As the last Ice Age was ending, meltwaters deposited glacial silt on the Missouri River floodplain. Wind whipped the glacial "flour" into steep, 200-foot loess dunes. These rolling giants stretch 200 miles from South Dakota to Missouri.
A Prairie Refuge
More than half of Iowa's remaining prairie is sheltered in the Loess Hills. Rare plants and animals find protection in these sunny, wind-swept landscapes.

River Bluffs
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org


River Bluffs Scenic Byway
Iowa
Directions
Travel the byway of three rivers: the Mississippi, Turkey, and Volga. The byway can be accessed from entry points at Marquette and Guttenberg on the Mississippi River; Elkader, Clermont, and West Union on the Turkey River; and Fayette and Osborne on the Volga River.
The River Bluffs Scenic Byway can be combined with the Great River Road National Scenic Byway between Guttenberg and Marquette.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

Majestic Bluffs and River Town Charm
The 109-mile River Bluffs Scenic Byway plays hide-and-seek with three rivers passing through 13 towns.
Historic Mississippi River towns with towering bluffs as a backdrop face the river and a vast fish and wildlife refuge. McGregor's boasts Pikes Peak State Park and its spectacular view of the river valley.
Farm towns dot the Turkey and Volga Rivers. Many historic sites, such as Montauk in Clermont, Motor Mill near Elkader, or the Froelich Village and Tractor Museum, showcase this rich history. Parks, preserves, trout streams, and the Turkey River Water Trail captivate outdoor enthusiasts. These cave-laced, forest-cloaked bluff-lands are a paradise for nature lovers.

Western
Skies
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org


Iowa
Western Skies Scenic Byway
Directions
Venture off the beaten path and take the Western Skies Scenic Byway. The byway can be accessed from many entry points, including Stuart and Missouri Valley. A spur connects the byway from the Danish Villages of Kimballton and Elk Horn to Interstate 80.
On the western end of the byway, travelers can choose between Highway 44 or a northern loop to Woodbine and Westphalia.
For more information visit: iowabyways.org

Take the Road Less Traveled
This scenic "Ridge Road" showcases Iowa's agricultural and immigrant heritage. The route travels 142 miles between Stuart and Missouri Valley, paralleling Interstate 80. The byway swoops and climbs past farms and through rural towns settled by Germans and Danes. True to the byway's name, the sky is as much of a feature as the land, with passing clouds and glowing sunsets adding to the dramatic views.
Experience the Heartland
Windmills harvest the prevailing westerly winds that blow through this rolling countryside. Some are remnants of old farmsteads. One venerable mill symbolizes a village's connection to Denmark, while huge wind generators celebrate Iowa's future. Church steeples mark ethnic settlements along the route. Vineyards and wineries are interspersed among the cornfields. Several bicycle trails intersect the byway and canoe landings are abundant in the well-developed system of creeks and rivers.

Byway Interpretive Travel Guides

While the existing *Official Travel Guide to Iowa's Byways* is well-designed and easy to use, its purpose is being a general guide to all of the state's byways. An interpretive travel guide developed specifically for each byway would add greater depth to a traveler's understanding of the byway and enhance wayfinding.

1. Organize the guide by region and community: Byway visitors may have limited time, with perhaps only a few hours or a day to explore the route. Organizing the byway guide by regions and major communities will allow visitors to quickly determine where to spend their time.

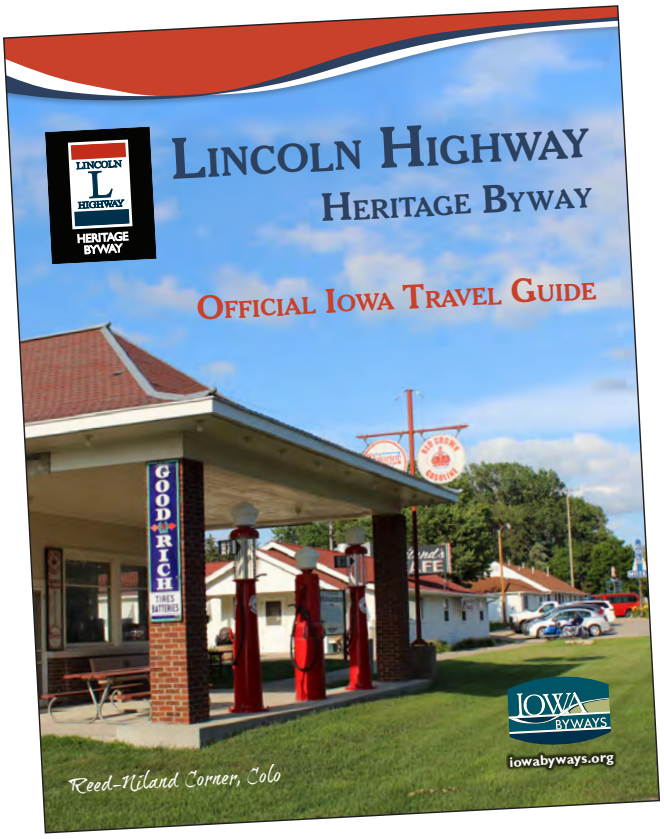
2. Theme the attractions within the region: Visitors often have specific interests. Byway attractions within each region can be identified with simple icons that represent the intrinsic qualities: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational. Themed itineraries that address visitor interests would provide focus to their trip-planning.

3. Include detailed maps of attractions within the region: Each region and major community should have a map that shows the detailed location of the resources. This would require adding specific roads that lead to each attraction.

4. Design the guide to be consistent with Iowa Byways design standards: The design should use the logos, fonts, and colors consistent with those described in this plan and with other interpretive media.

In the travel guide, each region and major community can be developed in the following format:

- An introduction to the region or city that expresses its unique character
- Highlight visitor centers, experience hub kiosks, wayside exhibits, audiovisual tours, and other interpretive media
- Two or more pages (as many as needed) for maps and descriptions of that region's resources
- Concise, lively descriptions of each attraction, with websites and/or phone numbers where visitors can find more information
- Icons that identify each resource's theme or intrinsic quality—core byway experiences should be highlighted
- Strong, focal point photos of key attractions and informal snapshot-style photos of other resources



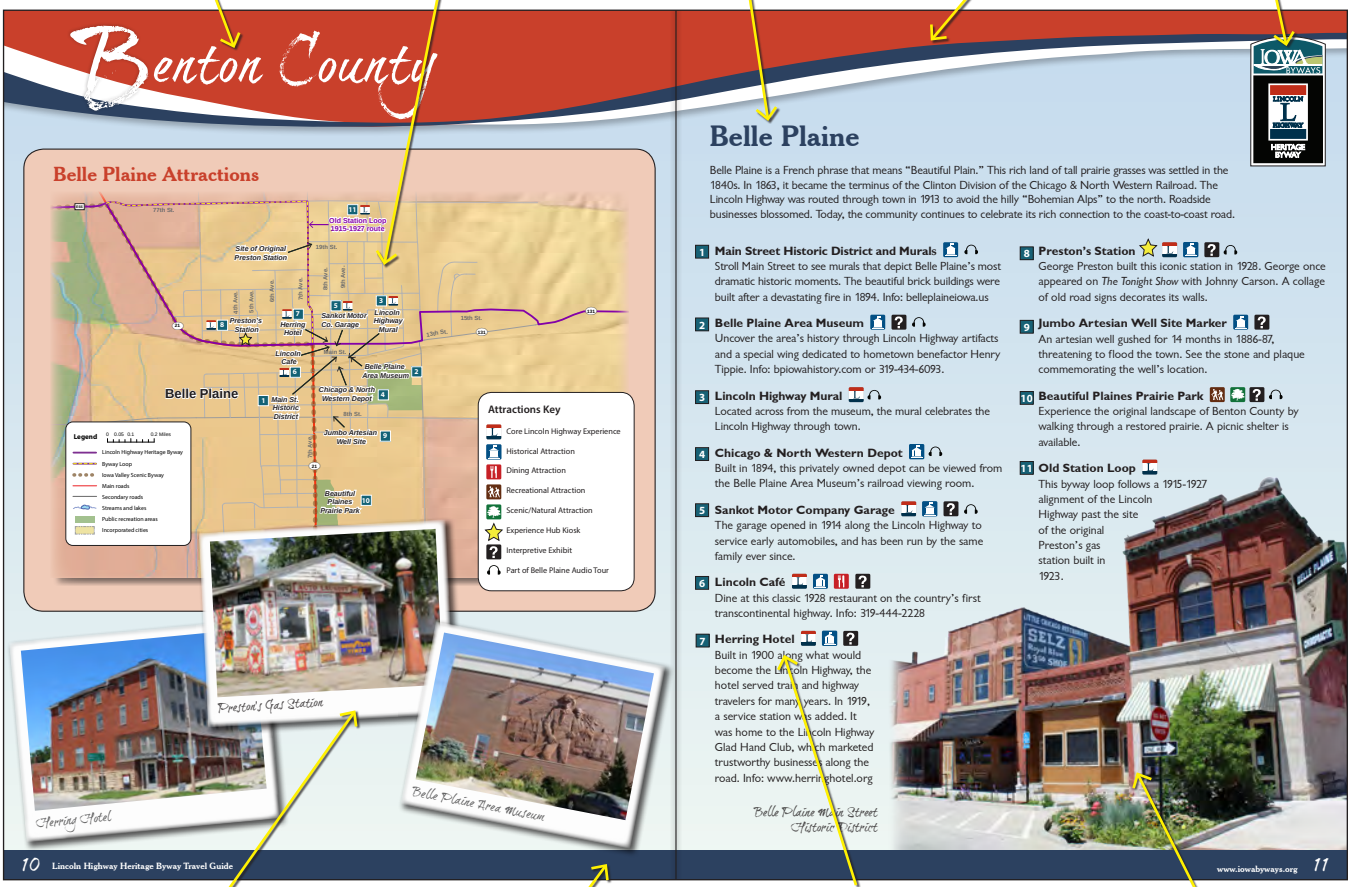
Region or Attraction Category (Natural Wonders, Historical Treasures)

Detailed map with exact location of resources

Specific community or region with interpretive description

Unified curved header

Complete byway logo

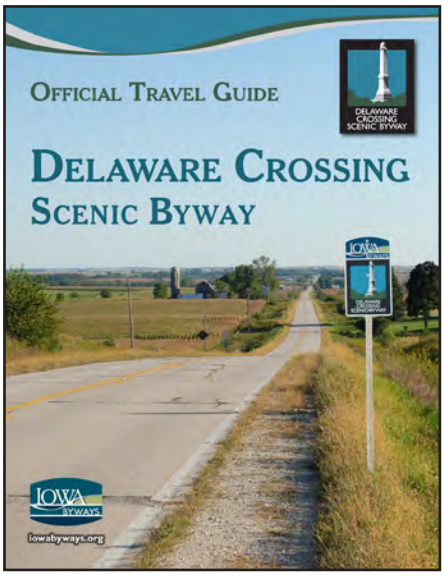


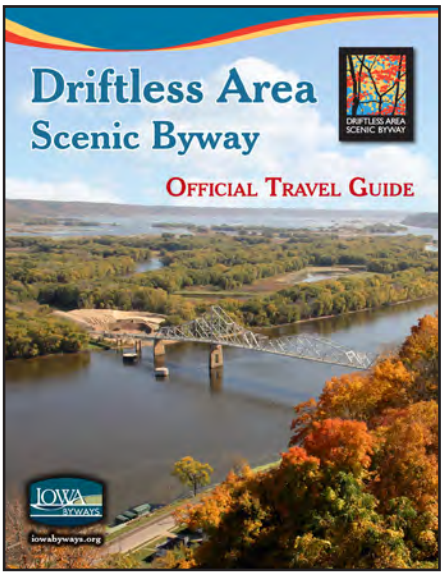
Snapshot-style photos of significant resources

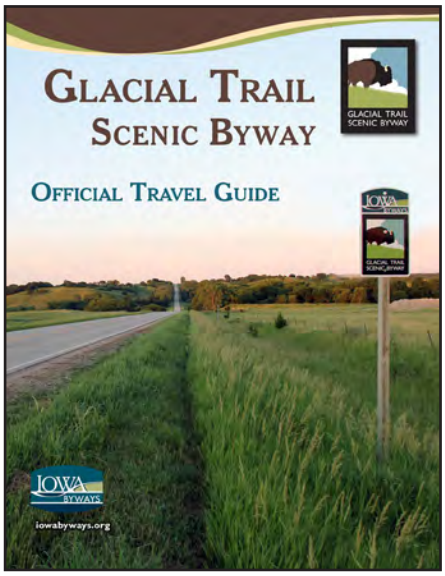
Footer bar

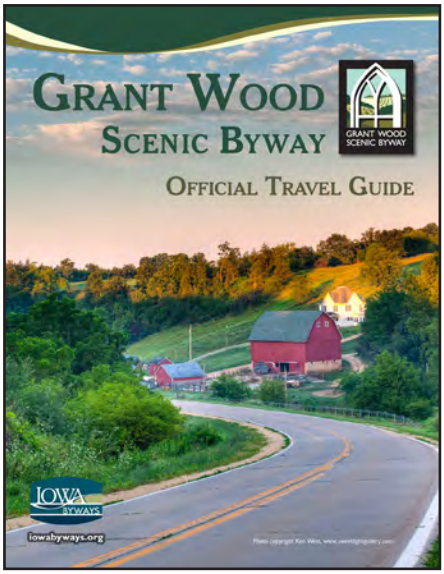
Resources with map location number, interpretive description, contact information, and thematic interest icons

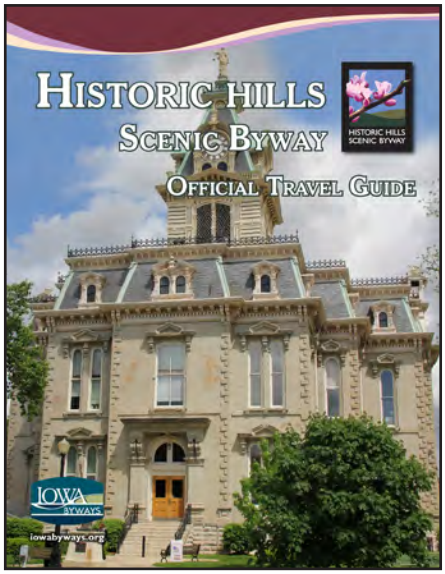
Focal point image

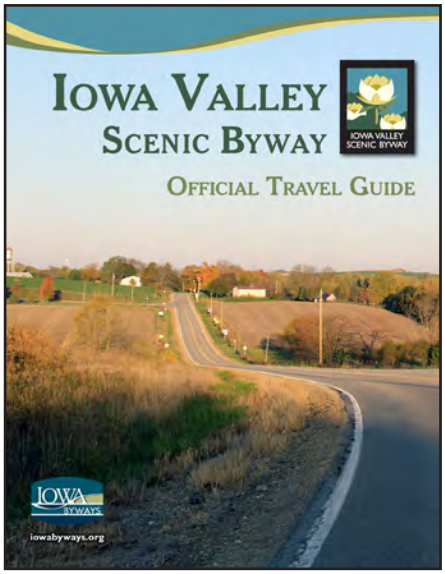

Official Travel Guide
Delaware Crossing
Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org

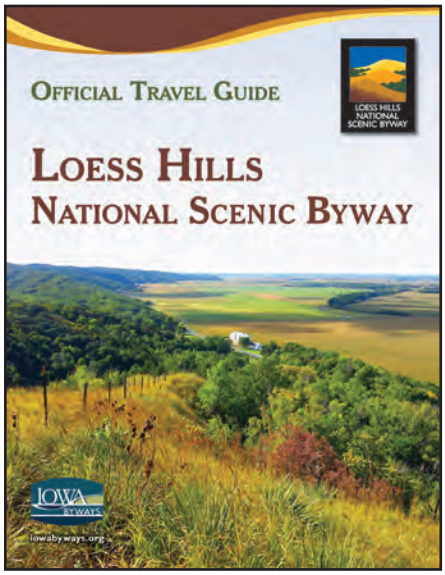

Driftless Area
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org

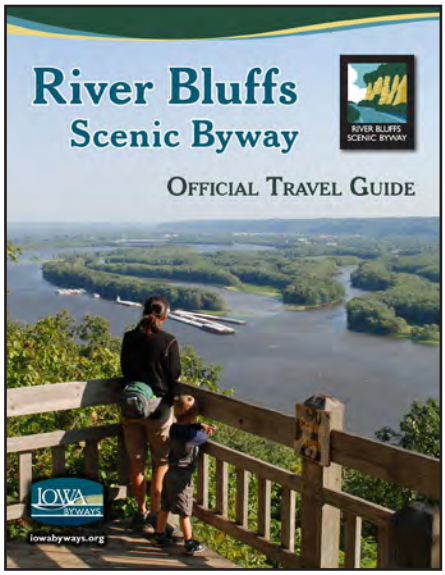

Glacial Trail
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org

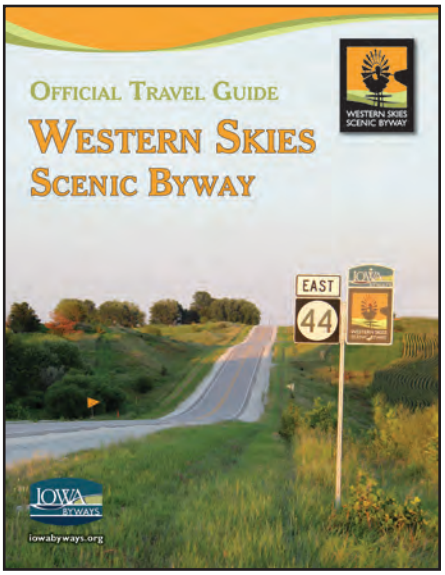

Grant Wood
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org

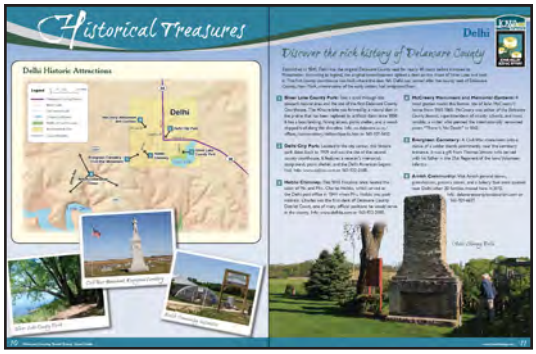

Historic Hills
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org

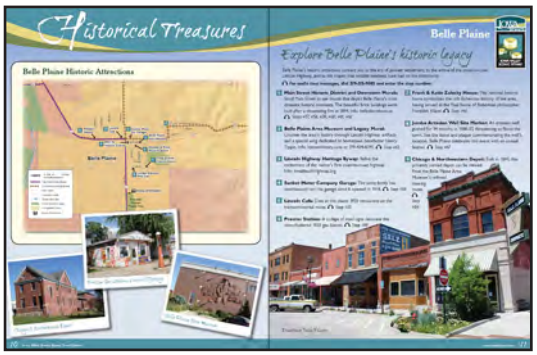

Iowa Valley
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org

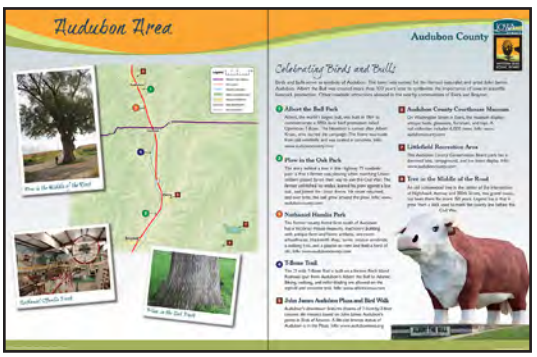

Official Travel Guide
Loess Hills
National Scenic Byway
iowabyways.org


River Bluffs
Scenic Byway
Official Travel Guide
iowabyways.org


Official Travel Guide
Western Skies
Scenic Byway
EAST
44
iowabyways.org







Interpretive Travel Guide: Inside Pages Concept Designs

Unified Byway Websites

Iowa byways have an online presence through the statewide byways website (iowabyways.org), which redirects to a Travel Iowa web page focused on the state's scenic byways (www.traveliowa.com/getinspired/the-scenic-route/12/). While the byway web pages have a clean modern design with some good information, there are some limitations:

- They do not share the unified design standards established for the byways program that would give it a sense of identity (no byway logo or colors).
- Many of the byway attractions are not included in the Travel Iowa database.
- It does not provide links to byway-specific social media sites, such as Facebook.
- It does not provide byway-specific travel options, such as thematic itineraries.

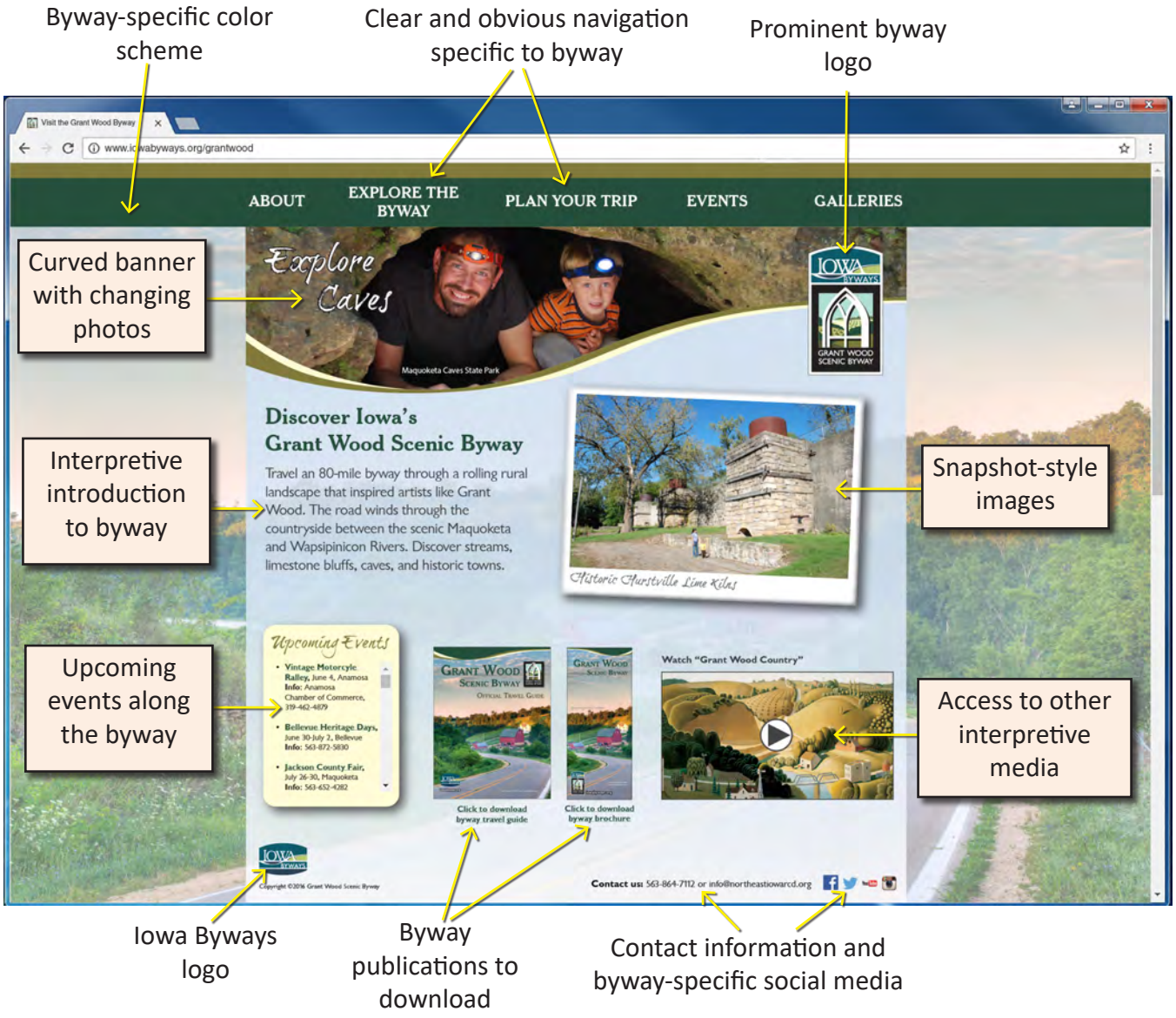
The Iowa Byways website design should be updated to encourage discovery and reflect the unified design standards recommended in this plan. This would include:

- Unified font styles, colors, and graphic elements (like the curved header) that reinforce the visual identity of all byway media.
- Dramatic and engaging photographs of byway scenery and attractions.
- Banner images on the home page that change every few seconds to showcase the variety of byway resources during the seasons.
- Links to byway-specific social media options on each page to encourage sharing and interaction.
- Contact information on every page so visitors can ask questions.
- Other byway media, such as on-site experience hubs, wayside exhibits, audio tour sites, and brochures, to encourage further investigation.
- Responsive layout and design for viewing on smartphones and other mobile devices.

Website Navigation Recommendations

The **website navigation** should be specific to the byway and include links to pages that are most important to visitors planning their trip. Main navigation links could include:

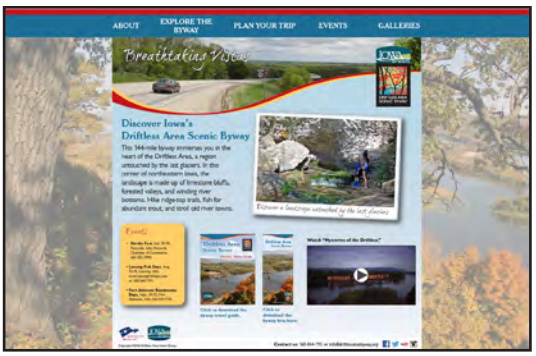
- **About**
  - **Overview of Byway**
  - **Byway History**
  - **Byway Advisory Board**
  - **Contact Information**
- **Explore the Byway**
  - **Interactive Map**
  - **Regions and Communities:** Include interpretation for each region and community
  - **Core Attractions:** Include interpretation for each attraction; allow users to add them to a custom itinerary
  - **Historic Attractions**
  - **Cultural Attractions**
  - **Natural and Recreational Attractions**
- **Plan Your Trip**
  - **Interactive Map:** Different icons show the location of attractions along the byway—when a user clicks on an icon,

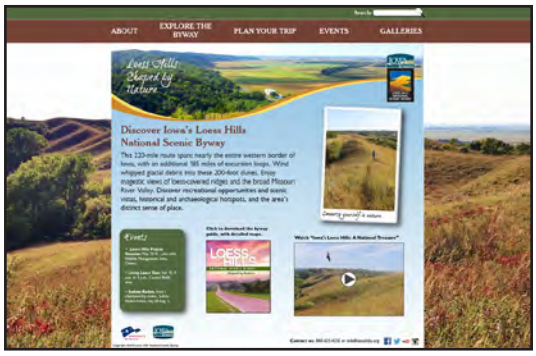


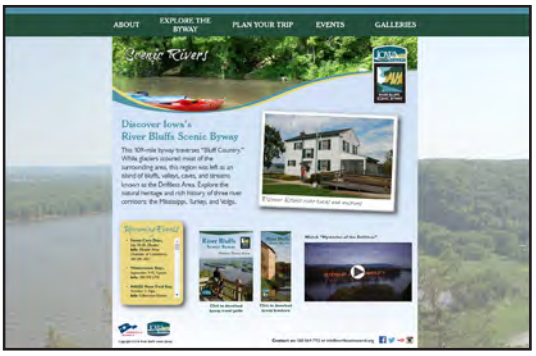
they see a concise description and photo of the attraction, with a link to a more detailed description—these can be added to a custom itinerary

- **User Itinerary:** Based on selections from map or attractions
- **Suggested Itineraries:** Based on length of time and interests
- **Publications:** Include downloadable brochures, booklets, and maps

- **Events**
  - **Calendar of Events:** Can be updated by byway communities
  - **Blog/News:** Keep this updated to show that the byway is actively supported
- **Gallery**
  - Links to various photo albums and videos showcasing the byway's communities and attractions by category







Byway Website Concept Designs

Mobile Website Concept Designs

Audiovisual Tours

Byway travelers are increasingly using mobile devices. Harnessing the power of smartphones and tablets, audiovisual tours combine sound, images, video, text, and interactive components to create rich interpretive experiences. They are ideally suited to byways, providing directions to nearby attractions and offering interpretation during long drives.

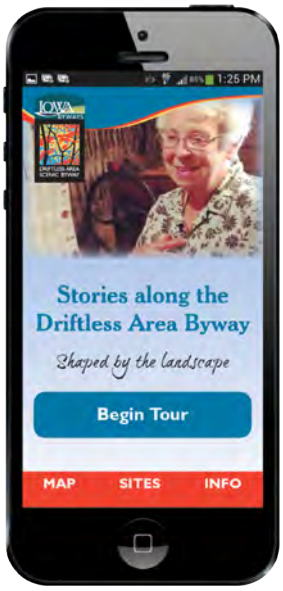
Recommendations for Audiovisual Tours

- **Set a clear theme for the tour:** This helps in collecting and organizing stories and interviews.
- **Edit the messages down to their essence:** Choose messages that highlight universal concepts, those powerful meanings that we can all relate to such as love, family, tragedy, survival, etc. These are the most compelling stories for visitors.
- **Keep the messages short:** Listeners are distracted by sun, wind, traffic, hunger, or their own travel companions. Short, intriguing stories will hold a visitor's attention for more stops.
- **Record oral histories and interviews**: Authentic voices of people connected to the byway themes add credibility and interest to mobile tours.
- **Incorporate music and sounds that contribute to the ambiance:** Background music and sounds can create an emotional atmosphere that reinforces the authenticity.
- **Create a narrative storyline:** Narrators are able to tell a story in a succinct way and to connect various oral interviews and histories in seamless ways. Alternating between several narrators, like a man's and a woman's voice, reduces monotony and keeps the listener's attention.

Sharing the Audiovisual Tour

A tour can be presented using many different methods. A combination will reach the broadest audience base.

- **Cell Phone Tour:** A relatively inexpensive option, travelers call into a central phone number, dial in a tour number, and listen to a message. Dynamic, quality audio messages that include concise narration, sound effects, and music should be prioritized.
- **Mobile Tour Website:** To maximize the audience base, a mobile tour website can be created for a relatively inexpensive cost. Web pages specific to each attraction can link to online audio messages (from the cell phone tour), images, and videos. For on-site travelers, a QR code can be added to special tour signs or existing media. As long as they have good cellular service, a user scans a QR code with their mobile device to stream online content or access a web page.
- **Mobile Tour App:** While more expensive to create and maintain, a native tour app allows a great deal of flexibility for presenting an interactive audiovisual tour. Once downloaded, travelers can use the app at any time, providing constant access even in areas with weak cellular service. The user interface can be developed to make full use of a mobile device's features, such as easy swipe controls, maps linked to GPS locations, and automatic video and audio playing.



Audiovisual Tour Concept Designs

Byway Artwork

Art arouses our senses and appeals to our emotions in ways that words cannot. Thoughts and feelings can be conveyed to many ages and learning levels without the filter of language. Themes of the byway can be reinforced and embellished by creative artwork.

Sculptures

Since sculptures occupy space in much the same way as humans occupy space, we interact with them in a different way than with two-dimensional art. Sculptures are tactile—one can touch them and feel their various textures and forms. Looking at sculptures is a dynamic activity—the works change as the viewer moves around them or through different seasons and times of day.

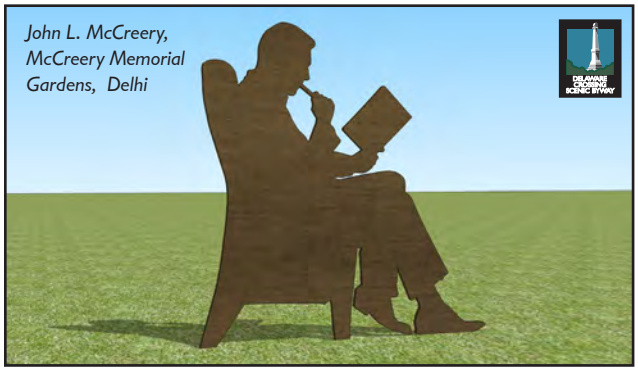
Sculptural pieces can be realistic or abstract concepts that express a community's sense of place. They can even be utilitarian, such as a viewing platform, bicycle rack, or drinking fountain.

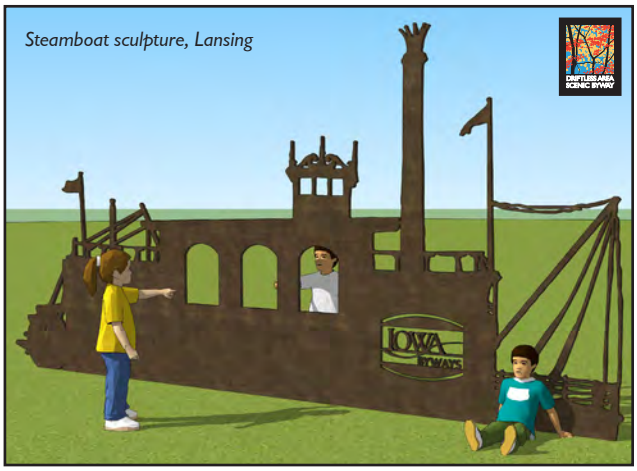
Life-size human silhouettes made of weathering steel are unique sculptural elements that help personalize a landscape, attract the attention of motorists, and interpret the thematic stories of a byway.

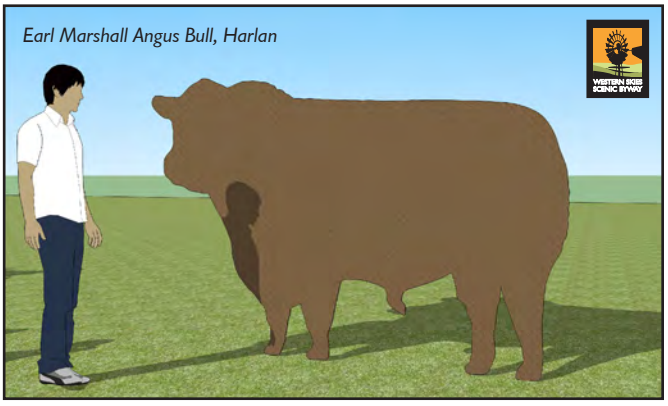
Gas station attendant, Deep Rock Station, Jefferson

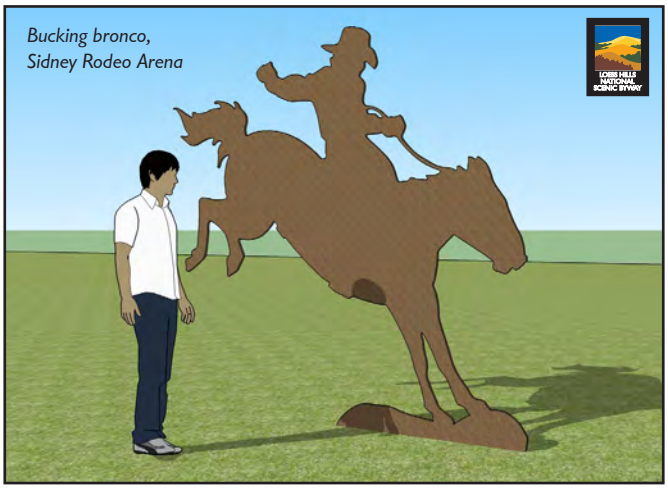
Flour mill worker, Motor Mill Historic Site, Elkader

Byway Silhouette Sculptures: Concept Designs









Murals

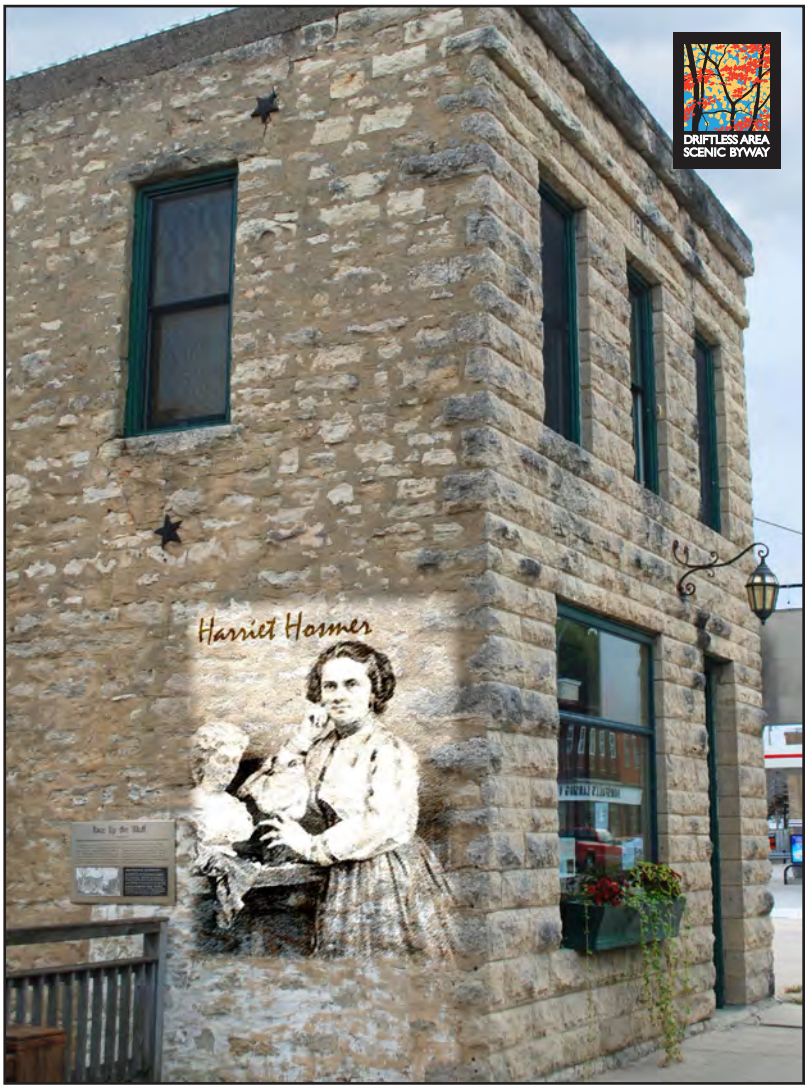
Murals are media presented on a roadside scale that can be appreciated by travelers even while driving. Effective paintings can capture a visitor's attention, present ideas, and create moods. Murals can make the past come alive or give a visitor insight into a community's personality.

Existing Lincoln Highway mural in Belle Plaine, Iowa

Murals are a good method for focusing attention on events that most people may not be able to experience personally. Historic events such as a steam locomotive pulling into a station, the bustling activities at harvest time, or a prairie in bloom can be dramatically represented on a mural.

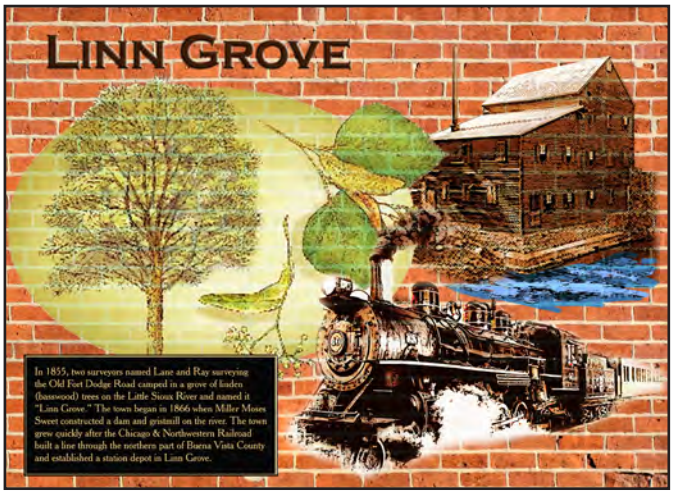
Many byway communities have buildings with rough, windowless walls that were exposed when an adjacent building was razed. These blank surfaces are the perfect canvas to create artistic expressions of the community's sense of place and pride.

The Walldogs, an organization that began in Iowa, specializes in creating murals. A community can host a Walldog Festival, where artists converge and paint murals reflecting the town's history.



Harriet Hosmer mural concept design, Lansing, Iowa

Byway Murals: Concept Designs

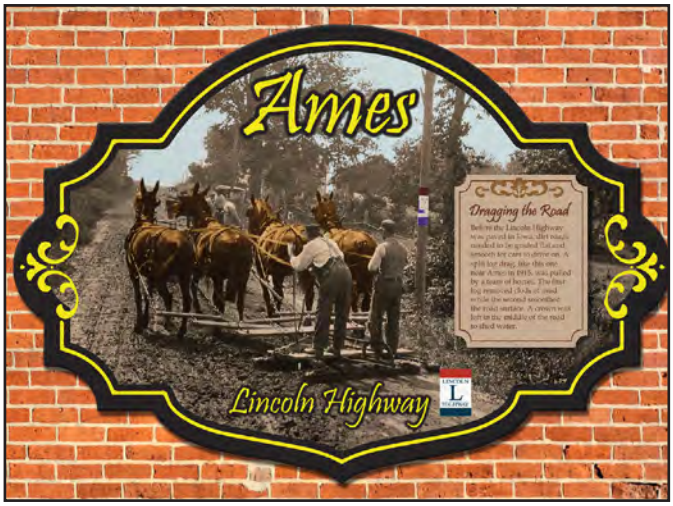


Linn Grove, Iowa

Wyoming, Iowa

Bonaparte, Iowa

Chelsea, Iowa



Ames, Iowa

Elkader, Iowa

Iowa Byways Junior Explorer Program

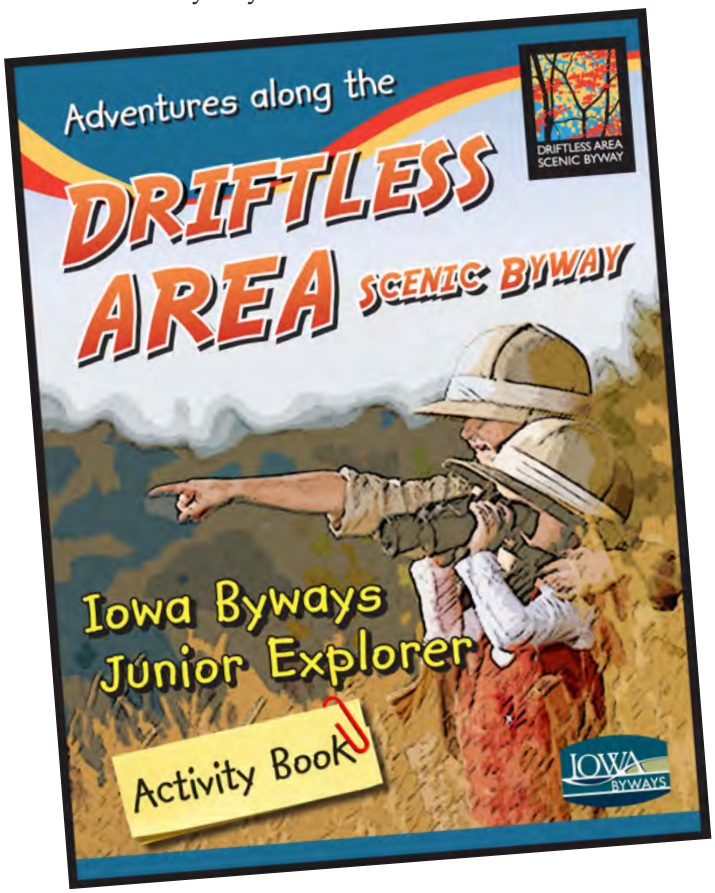
Families and multi-generational groups are a significant potential audience for Iowa Byways. Activities that encourage adults and children to engage in meaningful experiences together can create lifelong memories. Similar to the Junior Ranger programs found in many parks, an Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program would be an activity-based experience with the purpose of encouraging families to explore the state's scenic byways.

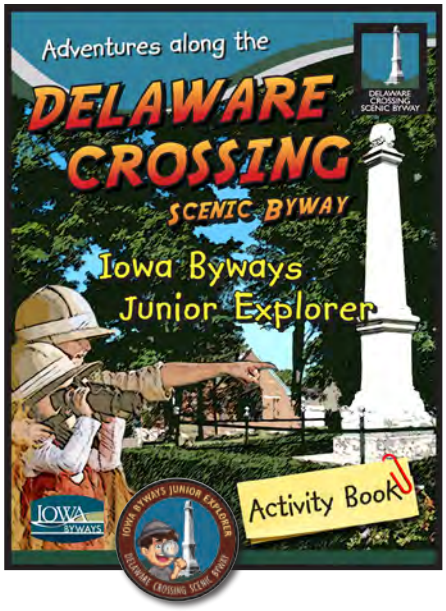
Each byway would develop a kid-friendly activity guide that reveals the stories and resources along its route. The activities would be completed while traveling the byway. The guides would be made available at key staffed locations along the byway, such as information centers and major attractions.

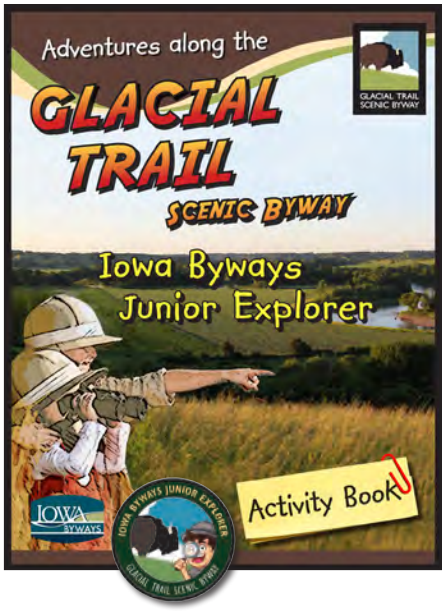
When children—with the help of parents or guardians—complete a certain number of activities, they return to a designated information center, where a representative would look over the activities and talk to the children about what they learned. The children would then take an oath, promising to continue exploring the state's scenic byways, respect and protect the resources, and share their experience with others. The children would receive a unique patch (or other reward) declaring them an official Iowa Byways Junior Explorer for that byway.

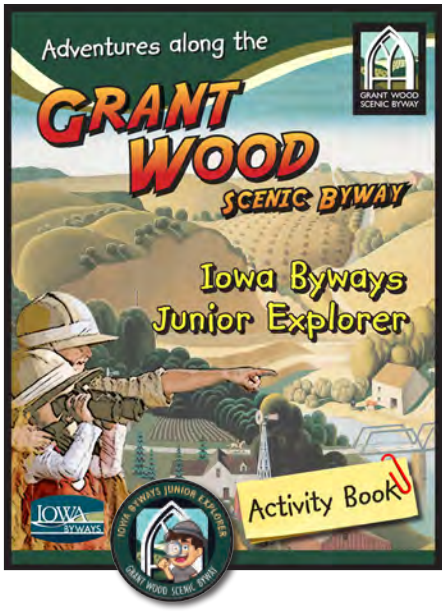
The guides would be filled with fun games, puzzles, and coloring pages that entice families to discover the byway. Some ideas include:

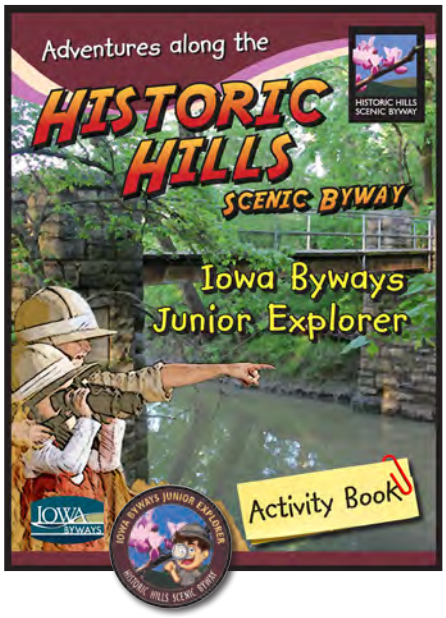
- A travel bingo game that encourages families to look for interesting features and road signs along the byway
- A scavenger hunt that encourages the family to get out of the car and explore a natural or historic site.
- Stories and artwork created by children who live along the byway that describe their daily experiences.
- Coloring pages depicting scenes along the byway.
- Crossword puzzle or word search with byway-specific terms.
- Dot-to-dot puzzles of resources
- Mazes that follow rivers, trails, roads, or other byway resources

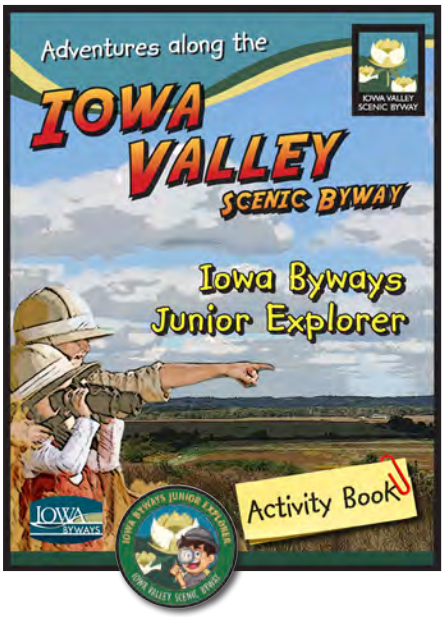


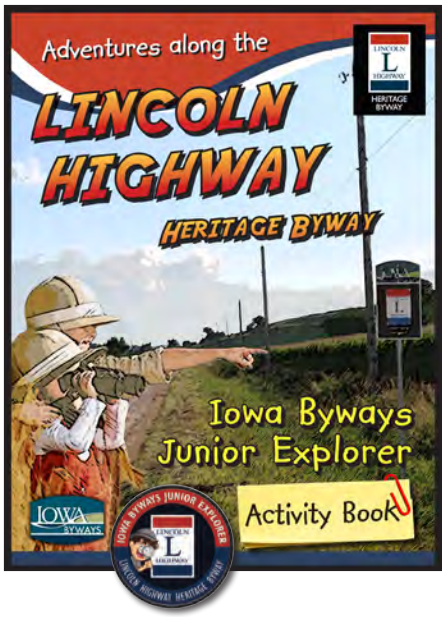

Adventures along the
DELAWARE CROSSING
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book

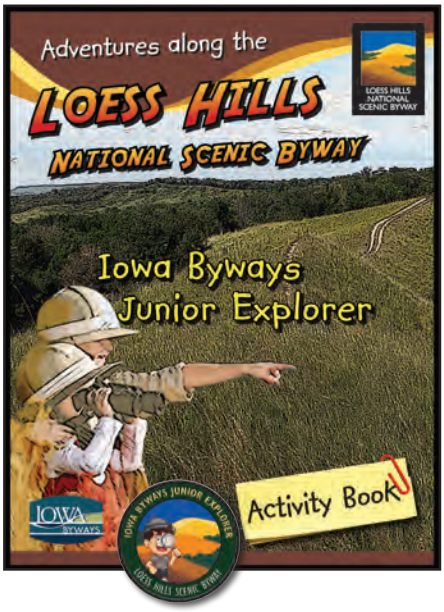

Adventures along the
GLACIAL TRAIL
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book

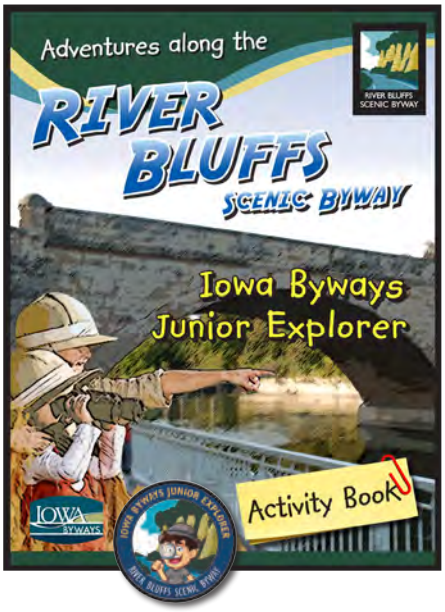

Adventures along the
GRANT WOOD
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book

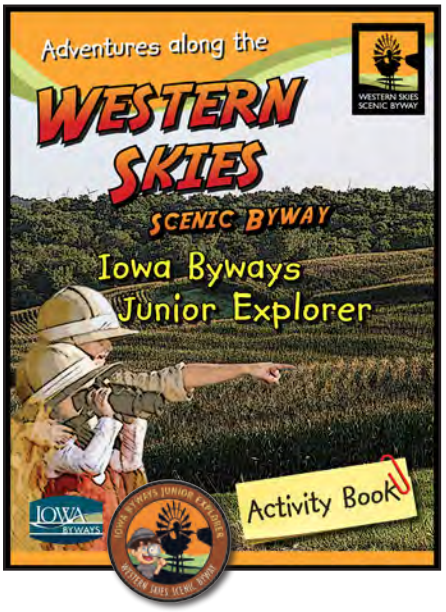

Adventures along the
HISTORIC HILLS
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book


Adventures along the
IOWA VALLEY
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book


Adventures along the
LINCOLN HIGHWAY
HERITAGE BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book


Adventures along the
LOESS HILLS
NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book


Adventures along the
RIVER BLUFFS
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book


Adventures along the
WESTERN SKIES
SCENIC BYWAY
Iowa Byways
Junior Explorer
Activity Book

Iowa Byways Passport Program

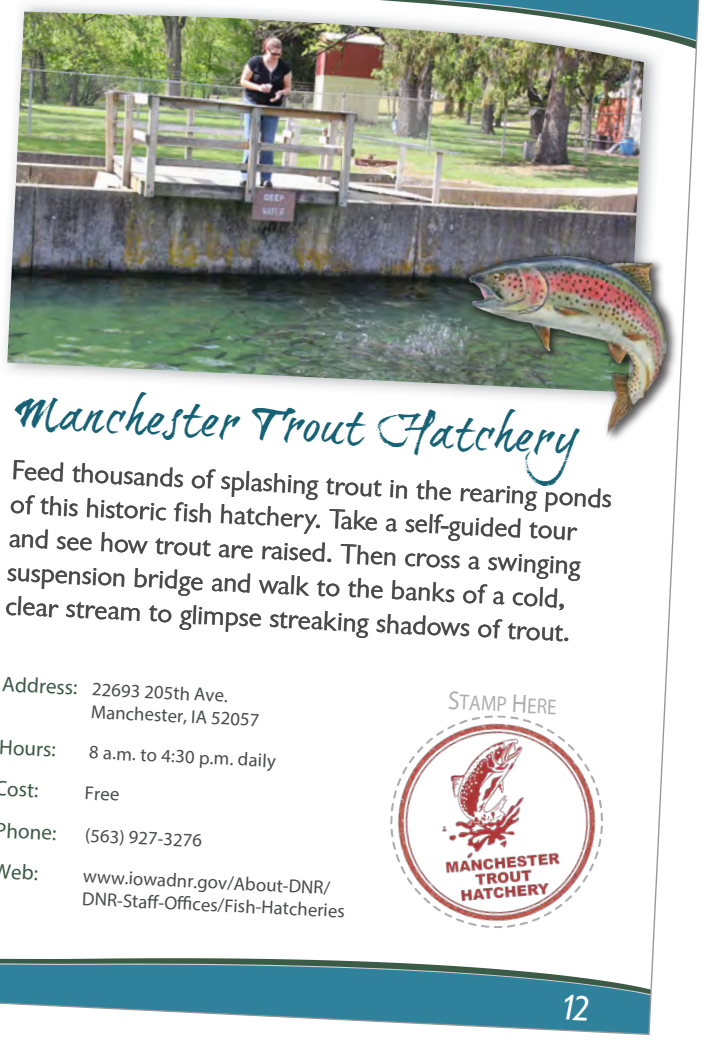
An Iowa Byways passport program encourages families and other traveler groups to explore resources along each byway. Adults and children alike are engaged in a scavenger hunt to fill up a passport booklet with unique stamps. The booklet has take-home value, as each stamp represents a memory from the trip.

Passport Stations

A unique stamp design developed for each attraction would reward travelers for their effort. Ideally, stamps would be located at attractions where staff or volunteers are available to watch over the stations and answer questions. However, self-service passport stations could also be developed for unstaffed areas or sites with limited hours. One durable option is to mount circle metal plaques with raised lines on outdoor panels. Travelers can put a booklet page or piece of paper over the plaque and use a crayon or pencil to make a unique rubbing.

Passport Booklets

A passport booklet can be developed for each byway that features the different passport station sites along the route. This serves as a unique interpretive opportunity. It would be written in concise, personal, family-friendly language that reveals the stories of byway attractions and resources. Each page would have a blank circular area for the stamp. The booklet should follow the same unified design standards as other media, although a more cost effective black-and-white version could be an option.



Seed Savers Exchange

A rainbow of flowers, honking geese, white cows, and seeds, seeds everywhere! Seed Savers Exchange is a place where people save and share special seeds to grow flowers and vegetables. Visit the Heritage Farm to see animals and gardens, walk trails, taste apples, and learn more at the Visitors Center.

Address: 3074 North Winn Rd
Decorah, IA 52101

Hours: Mar-Nov: 10am-5pm daily
Nov-Dec 20: 10am-5pm, Th-Sun
Dec 21-Feb 28: Closed

Admission: Free!

Phone: (563) 382-6104

Web: www.seedsavers.org

STAMP HERE

14

Prairie Heritage Center

Travel back to the pioneer days by clambering inside the settler's wagon. Watch live bison graze on the prairie. After you explore the indoor exhibits, take a hike on trails that meander through tallgrass prairie and oak savannas.

Address: 4931 Yellow Ave.
Peterson, IA 51047

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday-Friday
1 to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Cost: Free

Phone: 712-295-7200

Web: prairieheritagecenter.org

STAMP HERE

13

Hurstville Interpretive Center

This is a perfect family stop along the byway! Play in the natural playground, dash through a prairie maze, catch frogs and insects, and splash in the ponds. The nature center has restrooms and lots of kids-friendly exhibits to explore, including puzzles, a model train, and living bee hive.

Address: 18670 63rd Street
Maquoketa, IA 52060

Hours: Mon-Fri: 9am-4pm
Sat-Sun: Jan-Mar, Closed
Apr-Oct, Noon-5pm
Nov-Dec, Noon-4pm

Phone: (563) 652-3783

Web: www.mycountyparks.com/county/Jackson/Park/Hurstville-Interpretive-Center.aspx

STAMP HERE

12

Harvestville Farm

Get out of the car and have some fun in the large family play area of this fifth-generation working farm. In fall, pick your own pumpkin, find your way out of a corn maze, and take a ride on a horse-drawn wagon. When you get hungry, sample locally grown produce in the retail barn and eat at The Pitchfork Cafe.

Address: 1977 Highway 2
Donnellson, IA 52625

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday,
11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday
May through September
Weekends in spring and fall

Cost: Children, $5 in summer; $7 in fall.
Adults and children under 2, free

Phone: (319) 470-1558

Web: www.harvestvillefarm.com

STAMP HERE

14

Mini-Americana Barn Museum

Explore the incredible detail of miniature barns and rural towns at this kid-sized museum. Henry Moore, a retired farmer, built over 200 buildings that preserve the nostalgia of rural America, including an Amana village. It is the largest known collection of minature replicas built by one man.

Address: 413 P St.
South Amana, IA 52334

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily,
April through October

Cost: Adults, $3.50; Teens, $1.75
Children, $1.25; Under 5, free

Phone: (319) 622-3058

Web: www.bammuseum.com

STAMP HERE

12

Harrison County Historical Village & Welcome Center

Discover the Lincoln Highway story! Get a bird's-eye view of the road and the Boyer River Valley from an overlook. Walk on different road paving materials. Touch an actual 1928 Lincoln Highway marker. And play in a Lincoln Highway inspired playground.

Address: 2931 Monroe Ave.
Missouri Valley, IA 51555

Phone: (712) 642-2114

Welcome Center Hours:
9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday-Saturday
Noon - 5 p.m., Sunday

17

Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center

Discover the natural forces that created the Loess Hills through interactive exhibits. Use your imagination as you play in the Discover Forest Nature Playscape. Watch feeding time for the live raptors. Hike the trails through the woods and to prairie overlooks.

Address: 4500 Sioux River Road
Sioux City, IA 51109

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday
1 to 4:30 p.m. Sunday

Cost: Free

Phone: (712) 258-0838

Web: www.woodburyparks.org/dorothy-pecaut-nature-center/

STAMP HERE

12

Osborne Conservation Center

This is a perfect family stop along the byway! Play in the natural playground and butterfly garden, check out the nature center exhibits, visit wolves and bears in the Native Wildlife Exhibit, and explore trains and old buildings in historic Osborne. The Welcome Center has restrooms and a gift shop.

Address: 29862 Osborne Rd
Elkader, IA 52043

Hours: Mon-Sat: 8am-4pm
Sun: Noon-4 pm

Admission: Free!

Phone: (563) 245-1516

Web: www.claytoncountyconservation.org

STAMP HERE

12

Danish Windmill

Tour the only authentic operating Danish windmill in the United States. Built in 1848 in Denmark, the mill was used to grind grain into flour. It was relocated here in the 1970s. Climb the stairs into the 60-foot tower to see the blades circle around.

Address: 4038 Main St.
Elk Horn, IA 51531

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday
noon to 5p.m. Sunday

Cost: Free

Phone: (712) 764-7472

Web: www.danishwindmill.com

STAMP HERE

12

Media Cost Estimates

These cost estimates were developed in 2018 based on quotes from multiple companies. They include research, design, and fabrication/printing. The estimates are listed as broad ranges and should be used only for the purposes of planning and fundraising. Actual prices will vary considerably based on the specifics of each project.

Media Type	Rationale	Cost Estimate
Experience hubs	Highly visible way to orient travelers to regional attractions. Cost-effective where attractions are not routinely staffed.	4 HPL panels, metalwork with cutouts, timbers $10,000–$15,000 each $15,000–$20,000 with limestone base
Two-panel kiosks	Half-version of experience hub: introduces travelers to the byway, a community or specific resources.	2 HPL panels, metalwork with cutouts, timbers $5,000–$6,000 each
Wayside exhibits	Best way to communicate must-tell stories at significant sites along the byway where no other tools are available.	HPL panels, steel supports with cutouts Full-size (2'x3' panel): $3,000–$3,500 each Secondary size (11"x14" panel): $1,000–$1,500 each Audio units: $1,500–$2,000 each
Welcome/visitor center touch-screen computer kiosk exhibits	Valuable in alerting travelers to the byway's existence and for trip-planning; small size appropriate for existing centers.	Wall-mounted panel, metalwork, touchscreen computer, kiosk, programming: $15,000–$25,000
General byway brochure	Small publication that can be widely distributed to promote awareness of the byway.	$1,500–$2,000 per 10,000 copies (11"x17" size, full-color)
Interpretive travel guide booklet	A physical method for visitors to navigate the byway and discover its stories; not dependent on cellular service.	$11,000–$15,000 per 10,000 booklets (92 pages, 8.5"x11" size, full-color)
Unified byway websites	Essential planning tool that reaches a large audience; is easily updated.	$10,000–$25,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance.
Audiovisual tours	Ideal tools for incorporating sound and visuals to make stories come alive; convenient, easy to use, and encourage interaction.	$8,000–$50,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance ($200–$500/month)
Byway artwork	Highly visible way to focus attention on a significant story or event on a roadside scale.	Highly variable based on type and artist Steel silhouette statue: $1,500/each average Wall mural: $10–$35/sq. ft. average
Iowa Byways Junior Explorer booklets and patches	Keeps families engaged in the byway's interpretive themes and encourages discovery.	Booklets: $5,000–$8,000 per 10,000 (30 pages, 8.5"x11" size, full-color) Patch: $250–$300 per 300 pieces (3"-diameter)
Iowa Byways passport stations and booklets	Provides motivation to visit specific sites along the byway and has take-home value.	Metal Passport Plaques: $50–$75 each Panel (10"x7") and metal support: $500–$700 each Booklet: $5,000–$8,000 per 10,000 booklets (40 pages, 6"x6" size, full-color)

Next Steps

1. Develop official interpretive media design standards

The Iowa Byways program should work with a professional graphic design firm to develop an official set of design specifications for interpretive media. This ensures that media developed for each individual byway conforms to statewide standards, reinforcing the Iowa Byways branding. While general recommendations for unified colors, fonts, and design elements have been provided in this plan to serve as a foundation, a professional designer can create specific design guidelines and templates for each type of media (print and electronic) based on the needs of the byway program. Sample standards used to develop the concept wayside exhibit panels are included in the tint box to the right.

2. Determine interpretive media development and funding priorities

Iowa Byways should prioritize the recommended interpretive media developments, and determine which can be funded locally and which should be supported through the statewide program.

Each byway will have its own media development priorities based on funding opportunities, existing partnerships, and specific needs. Byway boards should use the plan as a basis to determine development priorities and plans of action. Each byway's plan is designed to serve as a fundraising tool with full-color concept renderings, concise descriptions, and development justification.

From a statewide perspective, the Iowa Byways program should develop interpretive media priorities for the byways as a whole, providing

Concept Wayside Exhibit: Unified Design Standards

The following specifications were used when designing concept wayside exhibit panels as part of the interpretive master planning project:

- Header: Curved header with byway-specific color palette; byway logo in upper-right
- Title (in header): BrushTip Travis, 160 pt., white
- Drop cap (main message): BrushTip Travis, 150 pt., byway-specific color
- Main message: Garrison Sans, 48 pt., black
- Sub-headings: BrushTip Travis, 52 pt., byway-specific color
- Secondary messages: Garrison Sans, 32 pt., black
- Image captions: Garrison Sans Italic, 24 pt., black
- Quotes: BrushTip Travis, 42 pt., byway-specific color
- Background: Light blue gradient with thematic image
- Footer bar: Byway-specific color palette; Iowa Byways logo in lower left; QR code and Iowa Byways website in lower right

support and funding to create a unified system. For example, the statewide program could provide base funding for the development and installation of one experience hub along each byway, with the idea that specific byways would find local funding to support additional hubs.

On October 11, 2017, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters presented a summary of the interpretive master planning project at the Iowa Byways Sustainability Team meeting in Ames, which included byway leaders from all of the state's byways. As part of the presentation, the team facilitated a media prioritization activity. Participants used stickers to rank the various interpretive media options based on what they felt the priorities were for their individual byways and for the statewide byway program as a whole. The results were organized into priority lists below based on the number of sticker votes. This can be used as a starting point for discussion.

Interpretive Media Priorities: October 11, 2017

Individual Byway Priorities

1. Experience Hubs (27 votes)
2. Wayside Exhibits (18 votes)
3. General Brochures (13 votes)
4. Scenic Overlooks/Development Sites (12 votes)
5. Audiovisual Tours (9 votes)
5. Byway Junior Explorer Program (9 votes)
6. Artwork: Sculptures (7 votes)
6. Welcome Center Exhibits (7 votes)
7. Travel Guides (6 votes)
7. Artwork: Murals (6 votes)
8. Passport Program (5 votes)
9. Thematic Play Areas (4 votes)
9. Other: Revenue (4 votes)
10. Unified Websites (3 votes)

Statewide Byway Priorities

1. Experience Hubs (23 votes)
2. Other: Photography (19 votes)
3. Travel Guides (17 votes)
3. Unified Websites (17 votes)
4. Wayside Exhibits (16 votes)
5. Byway Junior Explorer Program (8 votes)
6. Scenic Overlooks/Development Sites (7 votes)
6. General Brochures (7 votes)
7. Welcome Center Exhibits (6 votes)
8. Passport Program (3 votes)
9. Thematic Play Areas (2 votes)
9. Other: Revenue (2 votes)
10. Artwork: Murals (1 vote)
10. Artwork: Sculptures (1 vote)
10. Other: Design (1 vote)
11. Audiovisual Tours (0 votes)

3. Create a centralized process for coordinating and approving byway media designs

The Iowa Byways program should designate a central office with the responsibility of reviewing and approving byway media design prior to printing or fabrication. This would include any printed or digital media that uses the Iowa Byways branding.

Currently, a number of individual byways have started using the conceptual designs from the interpretive master plans to create wayside exhibits, publications, and other media. While this is definitely a step in the right direction, there is no current oversight of the designs to ensure consistency and uniformity. Each byway's design is a bit different than the others, which results in a patchwork of styles that reduces the impact of the byways brand.

A designated office at the state level would ensure consistency among interpretive media design. All media that an individual byway develops would need to be submitted to the office for review prior to fabrication or publishing. In order to represent the Iowa Byways program and be eligible for state funding, the established media design standards must be followed. After reviewing the designs, the office would either approve the media for publishing or provide a list of changes. Variations to standardized media designs would need approval from the central office.

Iowa Byways leaders should determine the best means of developing a centralized review process that would ensure consistency while being efficient and supportive. One option is housing this process within Iowa DOT, which coordinates the statewide byway program. Another option is selecting one of the RC&D councils that may have specialization in graphic design to coordinate.

4. Identify a list of approved vendors for interpretive media fabrication

To streamline the process of interpretive media fabrication and printing, the Iowa Byways program should identify approved vendors that byways can work with. The vendors would be selected based on the durability of materials and the cost. By choosing the same vendor for multiple projects, costs can often be reduced. This also limits the point of contact for any issues that arise in the future.

The following vendors were recommended and used for the byway CIG wayside exhibits:

Metal supports and frames

Barking Dog Exhibits, Ruth Risler
715-214-5862
www.bdexhibits.com

High-pressure laminate sign panels

iZone Imaging, Jennifer Muniz
888-464-9663
www.izoneimaging.com

5. Market and promote byway interpretive media

As interpretive media opportunities are developed, they should be marketed and promoted along each individual byway and statewide. These are significant elements of a byway experience, and can be used to generate a great deal of interest in the region. They also highlight partnerships between the state, RC&D councils, communities, organizations, businesses, and others. Successful interpretive projects are often a catalyst to garnering support and resources for future projects.