

Mobility, Byway Management, Transit Governance, and Economic Opportunity in Northern Maine

2021

Report prepared for:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Northern Maine Development Commission
- Aroostook Regional Transportation System

Prepared by the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF)

Contents

Introduction	3
National Scenic Byways.....	3
Who: Byways Organizations	5
How and What: Byways Processes and Activities.....	8
Potential Outcomes of Byways Designation	9
Byways Resources to Guide Next Steps.....	20
Transit Governance to Support Effectiveness and Innovation	22
Review of Resources Relevant to Transit Agency Governance.....	24
Appendix 1: Demographic Data	31
Appendix 2. Byways Resources.....	32
Appendix 3: Resources for Boards	33

The NADO Research Foundation would like to extend sincere thanks to the Northern Maine Development Commission and its staff, including Bob Clark, Jay Kamm, and Jon Gulliver, for their information, assistance, guidance, and connections to stakeholders. Many individuals consented to participate in interviews or meetings to relay their information and impressions about mobility and the economy. These contacts are not listed individually here, but their responses are aggregated in this report. Their time and information were much appreciated for the value they lent to an understanding of how location affects travel and the economy.

Work on this project was conducted by the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF) under a contract from the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant Program. Any opinions, findings and conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funding agency. Any mention of a specific company, product, or service in this report does not constitute or imply an endorsement by the research team. USDA is an equal opportunity provider.

Introduction

Aroostook County, Maine, has a rural character with villages, towns, small cities, and open space with many natural and scenic amenities. The county had an estimated population in 2018 of 68,269, down from 71,870 in 2010. The COVID-19 pandemic, with early impacts in large cities and new opportunities for remote work, has led to an increased interest in rural living in some areas. Anecdotally, this includes households that are new to Aroostook County and some who left in younger adulthood and have returned home. Additional information on population and demographics is included in an appendix.

Similar to many rural regions, there are long travel distances between communities, between residences and some job sites, and between residences and essential shopping and services. This leads to both mobility and economic challenges, alongside community and economic development opportunities. In northern Maine, the recent designation of two byways, timber and other natural resources and amenities, and downtown revitalization efforts are some of the area economic opportunities.

Recruiting and retaining a workforce to fill available jobs and emerging positions and ensuring reliable transportation options for lower income and other transportation disadvantaged residents are among some of the area's challenges. Having a longstanding transit agency in the region is a significant asset, although dispersed populations and long distances cause operational and budgetary challenges. This report also includes information on transit agency governance to assist the region with planning for the future.

National Scenic Byways

In February 2021, the U.S. Department of Transportation designated new byways for the first time in several years, since funding for the federal program was discontinued in 2012. The new set of byways included two in northern Maine.

Because of the long gap between byway designations at the national level (although states have maintained their own byway programs), research and resource development on byways has not been conducted very extensively over the past decade. In addition, funding was no longer available for America's Byways Resource Center, an entity that had long served to conduct byway-specific technical assistance and develop tools for byways organizations, and the center closed.

As a result, much of the byways research that exists was conducted prior to 2012; this report summarizes information related to byways generally and those in rural areas.

As regions move forward with implementing byways that have been designated, the guide *Making the Grassroots Grow* advises taking on nine types of activities, listed on the left below.¹ These activities can be clustered into three organizing questions, on the right, which can serve as a roadmap of steps that byways stakeholders in northern Maine can take:

Determine organizational characteristics (organizational type and membership)	}	<i>Who is involved as a byways partner?</i>
Outline roles and responsibilities of members		
Seek partners (public, government, other organizations and agencies)		
Clarify processes for communication, meetings, making decisions, and conflict resolution	}	<i>How do the byways partners operate? (internal processes and policies)</i>
Establish record keeping systems (minutes, grants/contracts, mail list, finances)		
Identify specific leadership roles and plan for leadership transitions		
Plan local dedication and recognition events	}	<i>What do the byways partners do? (external programming related to byways travel, protection or enhancement of intrinsic characteristics, and community and economic impact)</i>
Identify funding sources		
Utilize resources, technical assistance, and training from state and federal partners		

Information summarized below is focused mainly on the first question of *who* tends to be involved in byways efforts, rather than the other two organizing questions.

How the partners operate will depend in part on what type of organizational structure is chosen (state and federal law around nonprofit organizations or governmental entities, for instance). Individuals and organizations will likely draw on their prior experiences of participating with other multijurisdictional and multi-sector groups to shape how decisions are made about byways organizations and operations (structures and group dynamics that have worked well or needed modification for other area boards or partnerships).

Similarly, *what* activities the partners decide to engage in will be very context-specific to northern Maine. Shared initiatives will depend on the mission, vision, strategies in existing corridor management plans (CMPs), the intrinsic qualities of each route, and the priority goals and outcomes that partners generally agree on.

¹ Anne Tellett, Kevin Skwira-Brown, Cheryl Newman (2003), "Preface," *Making the Grassroots Grow: Building and Maintaining Effective Byway Organizations*, America's Byways Resource Center, <https://nsbfoundation.com/byway-resource-library/leadership-training/>

In addition to these questions, potential local and regional impacts of byway designation are explored below with case information from other byways located in rural areas that have federal or state designation.

Who: Byways Organizations

Similar to other regional efforts, byways organizations all should identify an existing lead organization or form a new one and also identify the roles for the lead organization.

Byways should have some form of governance including a board of directors representing a diverse group of parties that are committed to the work of the organization. Similar to other types of boards, the byways board members should be positioned to make decisions about the strategic direction of these routes and management of the byways organizations.

Depending on the capacity and interest of area stakeholders, byways also can establish advisory committees that assist with setting priorities and are active at implementing strategies, but they have less of a direct role in decision-making than the governing board.

Lead Organizations

Byways organizations typically have a lead organization that provides fiscal, administrative, and professional services. In 2001, America’s Byways Resource Center conducted a survey of byways organizations.² With 81 respondents, the lead entity for byways organizations were reported according to the table below, with nonprofit as the highest response, chambers of commerce and tourism-related entities, federal entities such as the Forest Service and other land management agencies, and planning or governmental entities made up most of the responses. Only one organization indicated that they were led by an ad hoc citizen’s group, but with only volunteers to support a byway organization, these less formal groups may be underrepresented.

Lead organization	% Of responses
Nonprofit	23
USDA Forest Service	16
Chamber of Commerce or Convention and Visitors Bureau	13
Regional Planning Organization	9
Department of Transportation	9
Regional Tourism Agency	8
City or County	8
National Park Service or Bureau of Land Management	6
Tribal Government	2
University	2
State Tourism or Parks and Rec	2
Economic Development Agency	1
Ad Hoc Citizens Group	1

² Anne Tellett, Kevin Skwira-Brown, Cheryl Newman (2003), “Preface,” *Making the Grassroots Grow: Building and Maintaining Effective Byway Organizations*, America’s Byways Resource Center, <https://nsbfoundation.com/byway-resource-library/leadership-training/>

The selection of a lead organization will depend on what types of entities exist within the region, and also which entities are viewed as having characteristics that meet local needs, such as effective leadership, administrative capacity, or being a neutral third-party (particularly where there may be conflicting local perspectives or priorities). Roles may change over time. A byways organization may become more formal and better able to sustain itself independently after a few or many years, even if it started with significant backing from a government agency or a regional development organization that has provided fiscal and administrative support.

Based on a review of byway organization websites, organizational documents, conversations with practitioners, and published literature, the roles of lead organizations vary. Depending on the roles and responsibilities decided upon locally, the fiscal and administrative agent may provide mainly back-office support, particularly if there is a byways staff member who can coordinate volunteers, organize meetings, and track group actions and individual actions toward shared strategies. Without funding for a byways organization manager, there could also be a group of volunteers with the capacity to take on programmatic roles and commits to convening the governing board on a regular basis, while the fiscal agent focuses on a limited role.

In contrast, some byways fiscal and administrative agents are also actively engaged in organizing the byways board and/or advisory committee meetings and provide their own staff time toward completing byways activities. This may include providing some of the necessary labor for fundraising (particularly grant application and administration), offering technical expertise such as completing and updating corridor plans and other action plans, or supporting the startup and growth of area byway-oriented businesses. Examples of regional development organizations serving as byways fiscal and administrative agents or support providers include East Central Regional Development Commission in Minnesota, North Country Council in New Hampshire, Southern New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, and the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region in Michigan (mentioned below). These organizations provide a variety of support for byways organizations and regional byways councils in regions with multiple state and/or federally designated byways.

Byways Organization Governing Boards

There is no single size or composition of byways governing boards. They tend to be made up of a group of public and private stakeholders in the geographic area where the byway is designated. The individuals and entities have a vested interest in the success of the byway and usually can contribute some sort of resources to shared efforts. Resources may not be financial, but could include expertise, time, space, or connections to the public and other stakeholders.

Similar to other types of boards, the board of a byways organization should be in a position to make decisions about administration and the strategic direction of byways efforts. Board members should take leadership roles in projects that enhance the route and its amenities and marketing. Byways board members should be prepared to participate in funding through direct financial support (such as membership or sponsorship), in-kind support, or seeking potential donors and grants.

Key Questions for Northern Maine about Organizing Partners

Byways efforts can be organized similarly to rural wealth creation value chains that are focused on recreation and tourism, with demand, transactional, support partners, and a coordinator. Byways stakeholders may benefit by holding a meeting and mapping out potential partners who might lead, participate in, or support a byways effort. Definitions below adapted from materials at www.WealthWorks.org. An additional partner coordination worksheet is included in an appendix.

Coordinator: Serves as a convener of demand, transactional, and support partners and creates connections by facilitating communication among value chain partners and with outside investors or others. Holds the group's shared vision and values, tracks progress, and is an innovator.

- A coordinator (or a byways organization leader) should have relationships with partners in this sector and be a trusted party. Look at who has a reason to be involved in byways, tourism, marketing, and placemaking.
- Is there anyone, an organization, an agency, or an area business who is already fulfilling some or all of these roles? Would it be a natural fit to for them also take on leadership of a byways entity? Would it require significant extra resources, or could byways and the bicycle route provide some focus areas for work that is already ongoing?

Demand partners: Individuals, businesses, or institutions who want the products, services, and experiences offered in a region's economic sector. They may want actual, tangible things, or they may want the attributes of a project (beauty, environmental friendliness, local business support). Some important demand partners are *demand aggregators*, who bring together multiple individual consumers. Identify general categories of demand rather than specific potential consumers.

- Who represents demand for scenic byways and for a bicycle route? Are there multiple types of demand for each route? Do the routes have different types of demand, specific to the activities and amenities available?
- Is demand different for local residents using the byways compared to visitors? Could visitors become residents, who develop economic demand for *place*?
- What demand already exists, and what might need to be cultivated?
- Who might be a demand aggregator? Who has a pulse on how residents and tourists would like to use a byway and its amenities?

Transactional partners: Represent the business functions that need to be performed in order for the value chain to function, and for products, services, and experiences to be delivered to demand partners. For some economic sectors, this includes members of a supply chain in which economic value is added as commodities are processed. For other sectors, it includes sets of partners that may rely on each other to deliver products or services together. For example, businesses that serve tourists rely on lodging and restaurants to meet visitors' needs.

- Who are the transactional partners that connect to demand partners identified above? Are there key connectors or leaders who would make sense to participate in a leadership role in a byways organization? Are there others who might be willing to be members and contribute toward certain efforts?
- What does scaling up look like for byways and bikeways? How do you plan for scale from the beginning?

Support partners: Represent agencies that build skills, provide resources, and remove barriers or set regulatory parameters. This may include governmental and nonprofit partners, although social enterprises and others may also serve in support partner roles. Investors are also key support partners, including granting agencies, partners that provide financing, and participants in crowdfunding.

- What types of support do scenic byways and a new bicycle route need to contribute to local use and successful tourism? What supports already exist, and what could be developed?
- Who has invested time, money, and other resources into the successful applications for byway and bicycle route designation? Who might be an investor in businesses that serve byway and bicycle route users? Who might be a future investor in infrastructure or placemaking efforts that are in line with byway goals?

Note: Some entities may perform multiple functions in a value chain and, as a result, be mapped into multiple places.

For future consideration: Would there be one byways and bike route council, or would Northern Maine stakeholders prefer to set up separate entities? If transactional and support partners have similar goals, and if there is one coordinator or a set of coordinators who are engaged on the byways and bicycle route, forming a single byway and bikeway council might make sense to stakeholders. This would minimize separate planning and public engagement efforts and allow individuals and organizations involved in tourism and outdoor recreation to have fewer separate meetings.

Inclusion check: Throughout the process of establishing the byways organizations, think through who benefits from byways existing in the region? Who has access to them? How can lower income residents in Aroostook County access the byway amenities or take advantage of economic opportunities that the routes present? How can they have a say in the governance or advisory groups for byways organizations?

How and What: Byways Processes and Activities

As byways organizations form, they decide upon an organizational structure, adopt bylaws or other organizational documents, and activities that support their intrinsic qualities and the goals of their initial corridor management plan.

In addition to considering the steps outlined on page 4 above, from the guide *Making the Grassroots Grow*, new byways organizations may benefit from reading through *A Self-Assessment Guide for Byways*, developed by America's Byways Resource Center and distributed by the National Scenic Byway Foundation. The *Self-Assessment Guide for Byways* is organized into six chapters on different topics.

The initial self-assessment section presents several statements about the organization, mission, existing documentation, recruitment processes, resources, and more. These could be used to add detail to a to-do list for establishing new byways organizations by asking questions such as: Who is (would be or could be) responsible for completing each element? What is the group of stakeholders ready for right now? How can the core stakeholders structure a byways entity for sustainability from the very beginning (such as diverse representation, establishing some level of funding to support administration and operations that is not dependent on grants)? Thinking through these issues, even if there is not yet a clear answer

for a newly designated byway, can help byways stakeholders to focus on some priorities for *how* they want to operate.

For example, the self-assessment question (below) from the first chapter addresses mission, vision, and planning. Byways typically have corridor management plans (CMP) for designation.

I. Mission and Plan (Our organization has a mission, vision, and a Corridor Management Plan, CMP, to make it all happen.)				
1	2	3	4	5
My byway has a general idea of what we want to accomplish.	My byway has a CMP that we refer to occasionally.	My byway has a mission, vision, and a CMP.	My byway integrates our mission and vision into decision making.	My byway prepares action plans that flow from our integrated vision, mission and CMPs.

On the lower end of the scale: Beyond the existing CMPs for northern Maine, are there a vision and a mission for each newly designated route already? If so, who developed them? If not, who would be interested in taking responsibility for that as the new organizations develop so that the mission and vision are connected with the CMP?

Could the new byways organizations plan to score a 3 from the outset, as they are established? Could early decision-making set up a process to reference the mission, vision, and CMP in each decision so that the organizations establish a score of 4 as the standard way of doing business?

On the higher end of the scale: Stakeholders for brand new routes are unlikely to have additional action plans that flow from a CMP, but this may be something to work on after getting the organizations established. There may be some action areas that stakeholders want to address in the short term (fundraising strategy, wayfinding and signage, or enhanced marketing), and others that are longer term (developing new tourism amenities and sites). What is the stakeholder group ready to accomplish now? Where is the region's energy?

The remaining sections of the *Self-Assessment Guide for Byways* address **fundraising, outreach, identity and marketing, visitor experience, and documenting impact**. Once a byways organization is set up, these remaining chapters may help partners to develop a sense of *what* types of activities they would like to complete to implement the vision and goals from their plans.

Potential Outcomes of Byways Designation

Economic Impacts

Proving impacts both in terms of economic effects and visitor numbers is difficult. Visitors use lodging, but also other types of services not easily extracted from local residents' purchases, such as gas, retail,

and food.³ Byways can capitalize on the road trip market, particularly as economies recover from a disruption. Visitors within driving distance as well as area residents enjoy visiting byways and taking advantage of their amenities.⁴

The Federal Highway Administration reviewed several economic impact and similar studies related to byways in 2013. The studies indicated positive economic impacts as a result of traveler spending. Two University of Minnesota studies looked at the impacts of different byways in 2009 and 2010. Over ten years, one Minnesota byway generated \$631,000 of direct and indirect spending, while a second byway resulted in \$477,000 over a nine-year period.⁵ A 2011 study by Rutgers University of the entire Historic Route 66 byway estimated the total economic impact of Route 66-related activity to be \$132 million annually. The review also notes that it is difficult to analyze economic impacts from byway visitation in comparison to spending that would have occurred without designation of the byway.⁶

The Byways Economic Impact Tool was developed by America's Byways Resource Center initially in 2010. The Microsoft Excel-based tool uses regional economic multipliers, one-time investments, and visitation data provided by byway stakeholders to estimate direct and indirect impacts on spending and employment. It uses a "but-for" test to prompt users to think through whether an impact could reasonably be tied to the presence of a byway or not.⁷

The tool itself does not work in newer versions of Microsoft Excel without modification, however the tool files are available from the NADO Research Foundation for practitioners that have the proficiency to update it for their own use. Case studies remain available that relate how five byways around the U.S. used the tool and what economic impacts they estimated.

The Cherokee Hills Scenic Byway (located in four counties in Oklahoma) analysis used inputs such as visitor profile estimates from the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. These profiles estimate the number of visitors who visit for the day or conduct overnight trips. The department also estimates visitor spending on entertainment, restaurant and grocery purchases, transportation-related expenses, lodging, and retail. The agency estimates \$48.08 in total spending per person, per trip.⁸ Based on visitation to state parks along the byway, the estimated byway visitor count in 2010 was .5 million individuals. Area investment that occurred as a result of byway designation was estimated at \$35 million in 2010. Using these input data and economic multipliers, the analysis resulted in the estimates:

³ Maree Forbes (2021). The Economic Impact of Scenic Byways and Scenic Roads, National Scenic Byway Foundation, https://mrpcmembers.com/mississippi/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AAR_MeetingThe-Economic-Impact-of-Scenic-Byways-and-Road-Final-white-paper.pdf

⁴ Forbes (2021)

⁵ Jensen, Gary (2013). "America's Byways Pay Off in Authentic Experiences, But How About Dollars?" *Public Roads*, Vol. 76 No. 4, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/13janfeb/05.cfm>

⁶ Jensen (2013)

⁷ Jensen (2013)

⁸ HDR (2012). Economic Impact Tool: Sensitivity Analysis – Cherokee Hills National Scenic Byway Case Study, America's Byways Resource Center

Overall Economic Impacts by Type of Impact	Direct Impacts	Indirect Impacts	Total Impacts
Employment (No. of Jobs)	660	265	924
Earnings (\$000)	\$22,036.7	\$8,172.4	\$30,209.1
<i>Economic Output (\$000)</i>			
Visitor Spending	\$25,870.0	\$9,283.4	\$35,153.4
Annual Operating Expenses	-	-	-
Capital Investments to Date	\$35,147.0	\$14,972.6	\$50,119.6

Table source: HDR (2012). Economic Impact Tool: Sensitivity Analysis – Cherokee Hills National Scenic Byway Case Study, America’s Byways Resource Center

Similar analyses were conducted on four other byways, including the Blue Ridge Parkway (VA, NC), Journey through Hallowed Ground (PA, MD, VA), Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway (OR, CA), and Woodward Avenue All-American Road (MI).⁹ In addition, the Colorado Department of Transportation also used the tool to analyze the impact of its byways across the entire state.¹⁰

These and other impact analyses resulted in estimates ranging from \$41,140 per mile per year (Florida’s state scenic byways) through over \$3 million per mile per year (Journey Through Hallowed Ground). The higher figures were found in places with long byway routes that are in easy access of metropolitan areas and have many attractions and amenities.¹¹ Removing the high outliers, an analysis of average impact using multiple studies with similar methodologies had the following result: “[W]ell promoted Byways that feature heritage and cultural locations along the roadway giving visitors plenty of place to visit and spend money, complemented with destination distinctive accommodations and local cuisine, can feasibly generate between \$250,000 and \$450,000 per mile, per year in visitor spending.”¹²

Marketing to Increase Impact

Byways researchers propose steps to capitalize on marketing. Identify potential market segments, and attempt to focus marketing on those with greater spending habits. The Beartooth Highway in Montana found “Knowledge Seeker” tourists (who visit interpretive sites) to spend 35 percent more than “Passive Viewers” (who watch wildlife and photograph nature). Spending for other types of tourists were in between those categories.¹³

Developing itineraries for varying lengths of visits (such as day trips, overnight stays, or multi-day trips) along the byway routes can help both visitors and residents know what types of attractions exist, how long they might spend there, and where to access travel services such as gas stations or lodging. Sample itineraries can be marketed on byway websites for visitors to use in trip planning. They can also be a basis for packaging deals that might combine attractions, lodging, and meals from multiple businesses in an area of the byway.¹⁴

⁹ HDR (2012). Economic Impact Tool Sensitivity Analysis Case Studies, America’s Byways Resource Center

¹⁰ Colorado DOT (2016). Colorado Byways Economic Data Analysis: Final Report, <https://www.codot.gov/travel/colorado-byways/assets/impact-analysis-report-nov-11-2016>

¹¹ Forbes (2021)

¹² Forbes (2021)

¹³ Forbes (2021)

¹⁴ Forbes (2021)

Rural Byways and Traffic Impacts

For this research effort, several previously designated byways were analyzed to choose potential areas for analysis. The byways chosen for additional analysis were designated in 2005 and 2009, the prior two rounds before new designations occurred in 2021. Byways were selected in locations where the entire route is in nonmetropolitan areas, with community sizes roughly similar to communities in Aroostook County, Maine. Each of the byways proved to be similar, with traffic counts that fluctuated after designation but did not indicate an increase due to tourism. Instead, changes in traffic levels probably related more to macroeconomic changes such as the Great Recession and the rate of population change in each region.

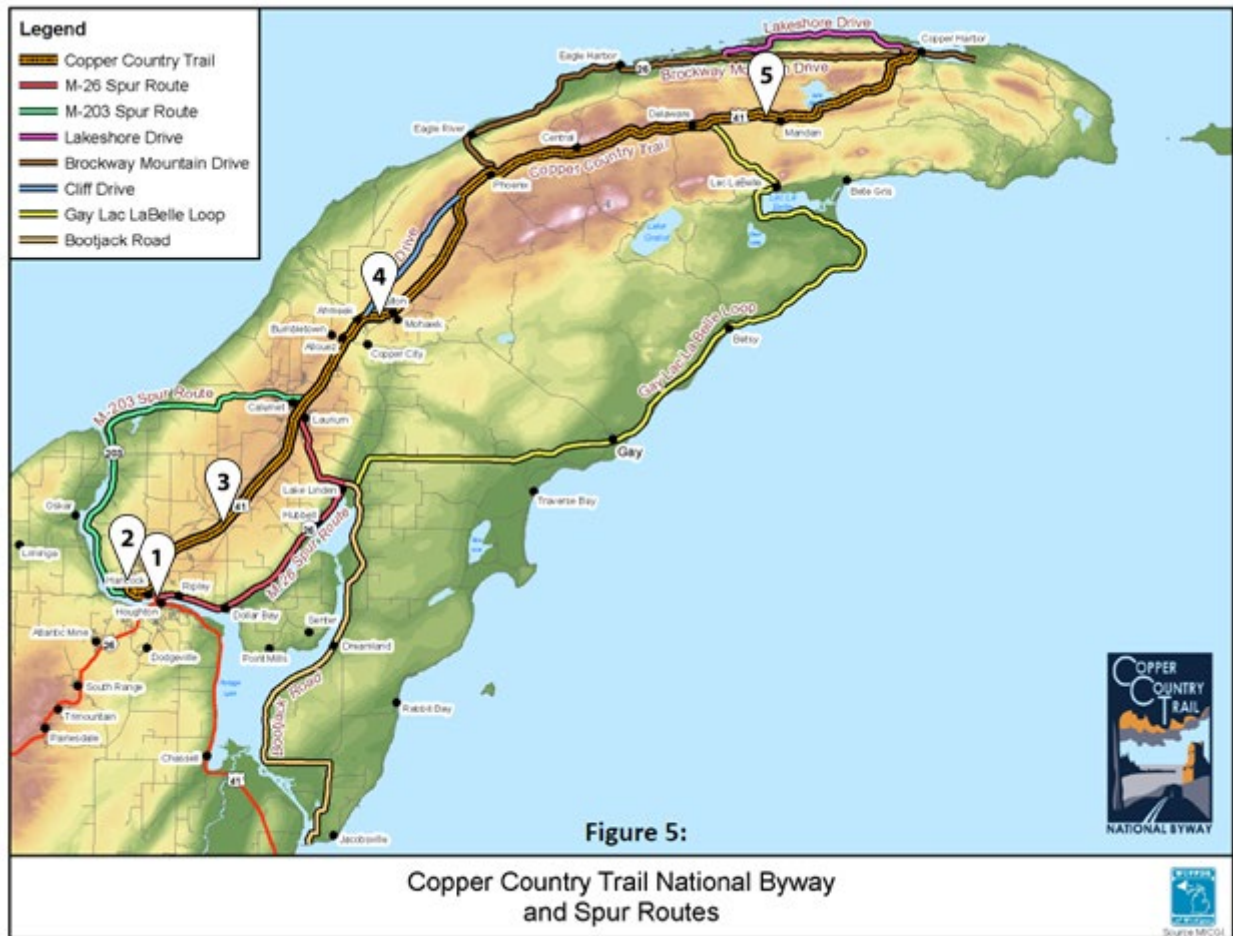
Copper Country Trail National Byway (MI)

The Copper Country Trail National Byway is a 47-mile route from Hancock (2010 population 4,600) to Copper Harbor (2010 population 100) in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The byway route was designated along U.S. 41 in 2005 for its intrinsic values identified as historic and recreational. The route’s landmarks feature connections to the area’s history of copper mining, and visitors can access Isle Royale National Park via ferry service from Copper Harbor.

The byway organization includes governing board representation from the two counties, township association, chamber of commerce, historical society, land trust, the Keweenaw National Historical Park Advisory Commission, and the area regional development organization, which is the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR). Additional advisors include the area national park, state department of transportation, and state department of natural resources. WUPPDR provides staff support to the byway organization, including maintaining the organization’s website and corridor plan.

Michigan DOT collects traffic data at several points along the byway route. This includes:

<i>Location</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005 (Byway designation)</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2020</i>
<i>1. Hancock, adjacent to bridge over Portage Lake</i>	22,100	21,700	21,500	24,000	22,900	19,511
<i>2. Hancock, near curve in U.S. 41</i>	5,500	5,500	5,700	6,800	6,600	6,765
<i>3. Franklin Twp</i>	<i>no data</i>	6,800	6,500	5,800	6,600	6,025
<i>4. NE of Ahmeek</i>	<i>no data</i>	2,800	2,700	3,100	3,100	2,674
<i>5. Central to Copper Harbor</i>	<i>no data</i>	1,200	1,100	1,300	1,200	1,026



Numbered points show approximate locations of traffic counts. Map courtesy Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region. Place icon by kloeg architecture from the Noun Project.

Along the byway, traffic levels fluctuated over the years that were analyzed, but traffic alone did not indicate a significant increase in byway visitation in the years after the Copper Country Trail was designated. Other data such as visitation or spending information from sites along the byway might indicate that there was an increase in trips to byway sites, but the overall traffic trends likely reflect population change (largely showing regional loss).

Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway (WA)

The Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway was designated in 2005. It is a 150-mile route from Othello, WA (population 8,549) in Adams County at the southern end, up to Omak, WA (population 6,715) in Okanogan County at the northern end of the route. The corridor runs past the Grand Coulee Dam and through a geologically unique region that led to the identification of the region's natural intrinsic value. Other sites of interest include the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, a national wildlife refuge, three state parks, and communities with museums, dining, and other traveler services.

The byways organization is established as a 501c3 nonprofit called the Coulee Corridor Consortium. The consortium's bylaws are included as an appendix to this report. The members of the organization include representatives of area governments (the Colville Confederated Tribes and nine non-tribal additional communities in four counties), businesses, and private citizens. Members must pay dues in

order to vote, but in-kind dues are permitted when the value of the in-kind donation is equal or greater value than the dues payment.¹⁵ In 2020, the dues rates were:

- \$25.00 Individual Membership Fee
- \$40.00 Family Membership Fee
- \$75.00 Business, Non-Profit, or Other Membership Fee
- \$15 Senior Citizen
- \$5 Ages 6-18 or student¹⁶

The organization publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Byway Beat*, which details efforts of members, partners, and other area volunteers working toward implementing the Corridor Management Plan. *Byway Beat* has described a long process of planning, developing, and implementing informational kiosks in five locations along the corridor, along with a series of wayfinding signs. The newsletter also describes access to area amenities such as museums and special events including the annual Othello Sandhill Crane Festival that occurs during the birds’ migration each spring.¹⁷

The designated corridor and spur routes connect communities and sites along several state and U.S. routes. Washington State DOT traffic data from several locations along the corridor are available on the agency’s website, and a selection from south to north are here:

Location	2004	2005 (Byway designation)	2006	2008	2010	2020
<i>Othello, after milepost 28.86</i>	4800	4800	5000	5400	5400	6600
<i>SR 17 at Baseline Rd (Moses Lake)</i>	8400	8400	8800	9200	9600	10000
<i>SR 17 & Soap Lake City Park</i>	2200	2500	2200	2400	2600	2400
<i>US 2 & N 2nd St (Coulee City)</i>	2300	2300	2300	2300	2400	1900
<i>SR 155 & SR 174 (Grand Coulee)</i>	5500	5000	5300	4800	5700	4900
<i>SR 155, E side of Omak</i>	4700	4600	4600	4300	4100	3500

Many of the traffic count sites saw stable numbers over time, although others saw some gradual increases or decreases. The Coulee Corridor Coalition does not publish visitation data or spending data for sites along the corridor.

¹⁵ Coulee Corridor Consortium (2011). Bylaws of the Coulee Corridor Consortium, <https://couleecorridor.com/application/files/6315/7586/0711/CouleeCorridorConsortiumBYLAWS2011.pdf>.

¹⁶ Coulee Corridor Consortium (2020). *Byway Beat*, Volume 7, Issue 1, https://couleecorridor.com/application/files/5015/8111/0033/Byway_Beat_2020_2-1.pdf.

¹⁷ Coulee Corridor Consortium (2014 – 2020), *Byway Beat* Archive, at <https://couleecorridor.com/index.php/organization/forms>



Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway North Section, courtesy FHWA



Coulee Corridor Scenic Byway Southern Section, courtesy FHWA

*Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway
(MN)*

Minnesota’s 57-mile Gunflint Trail is located in Cook County, in the Arrowhead Region on the north side of Lake Superior, adjacent to the southern border of Ontario, Canada. The trail, which was designated in 2009, begins at Grand Marais and extends north and west through the Superior National Forest. It

includes access to lakes within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, with opportunities for fishing, hiking, cross country skiing, and other recreation beyond paddle sports.¹⁸ The area is designated as a Globally Important Birding Area by the American Birding Conservancy.¹⁹ Although the area is known for summer lake access, Visit Cook County Minnesota develops marketing seasonally that highlights activities for visitors along the Gunflint Trail, the North Shore Scenic Drive (an All-American Road that connects to the Gunflint Trail), and other places to visit and coordinates tourism packages with area businesses.²⁰ This can smooth out visitation peaks into year-round interest and encourage repeat visits from both locals and tourists.

Minnesota DOT works with its counties to collect traffic data. MnDOT data for sites along the Gunflint Trail include, from southern terminus (and most populous area) to northern terminus:²¹

<i>Location</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009 (Byway designation)</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>CSAH 12, N of TH 161 (Grand Marais)</i>	1431	1457	1350	1307	1450	1603
<i>CSAH 12, S of CSAH 8</i>	2468	2512	2300	2226	2600	2554
<i>CSAH 12, NE OF CSAH8</i>	1332	1355	1300	1259	1450	1352
<i>CSAH 12, E of CSAH 21</i>	769	783	710	688	850	882
<i>CSAH 12, 1 MI E of CR 92</i>	495	504	460	445	530	591
<i>CSAH 12, SW OF CR 83 (Sag Lake Trail)</i>	133	136	170	166	195	195



Visit Cook County maintains a directory of lodging, outfitters, and other businesses along the Gunflint Trail and other areas of the county.

¹⁸ Explore Minnesota (nd). “Gunflint Trail National Scenic Byway,” <https://www.exploreminnesota.com/profile/gunflint-trail-national-scenic-byway/2341>.

¹⁹ Visit Cook County Minnesota (nd). “Scenic Drives in Cook County,” <https://www.visitcookcounty.com/adventures/scenic-drives/>.

²⁰ Visit Cook County Minnesota (nd). “Hot Deals in Cook County,” <https://www.visitcookcounty.com/hot-deals/>.

²¹ MnDOT. Historic Annual Average Daily Traffic, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/data-products.html>

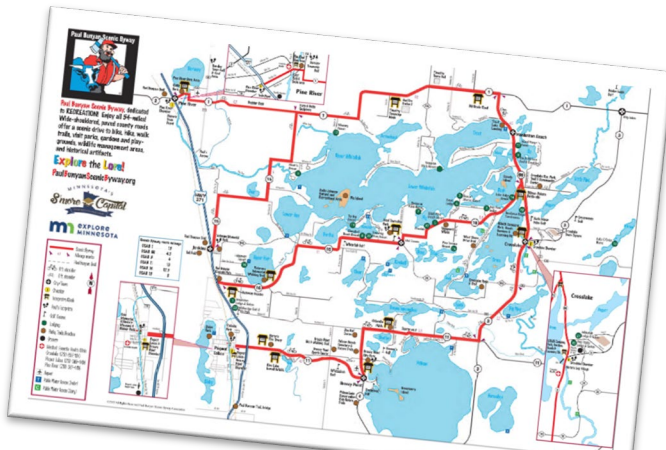
Each traffic data site above had a small increase in traffic in the year in which the national byway was designated. However, the traffic counts remained fairly stable over time, with an increase of up to 150 vehicles ten years after byway designation (the most recent year of data available).



Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway, courtesy FHWA

Paul Bunyan Trail (MN)

The Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway makes a 54-mile loop along County State Aid Highway 16, primarily in Minnesota's Crow Wing County. It passes through 14 local jurisdictions in the Brainerd Lakes area of northern Minnesota. Concern over bicyclist safety was the catalyst for beginning to develop the route as a byway in 1995. Supporters applied for designation first under Minnesota's state byway program, which was new at the time, to try to bolster support for paved shoulders that could accommodate cyclists. State byway designation occurred in 1998, and CSAH 16's shoulder paving project was complete by August 2002.²² The route was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2005.



Map developed by Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association

The byway is now managed by the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association, a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Members of the association include area individuals, as well as businesses in tourism and recreation (lodging, restaurants, and others), other area businesses (including services such as banking and insurance). Five local government entities contribute funding. Other partners include area chambers of commerce, Explore Minnesota Tourism, Minnesota Scenic Byways, and the St. Paul District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The association developed a website, newsletter, map showing area sites and amenities, and works on signage and kiosks.²³

Analysis using IMPLAN in 2009 found that the 10-year period from 2000 – 2009 had resulted in a total of \$417,013 in direct effects of the investments made to preserve the byway's intrinsic qualities, as well as \$214,101 in indirect effects. The total estimated impact over the period was \$631,114.²⁴

A questionnaire completed by 337 byway area residents and visitors revealed that eight of 10 area residents were aware of the byway. They reported knowing about the byway due to word of mouth, signage, newspaper, or maps. Only five out of 10 visitors to the region were aware of the byway, and 37 percent of respondents' travel plans were affected by the byway. Only one in ten respondents traveled to the region specifically to travel the byway, and only two percent stayed longer in the region to experience the byway.²⁵

MnDOT county road traffic data collection showed varying traffic levels at locations around the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway.²⁶

²² Tuck, Brigid (2009). *The Economic Impact of Investments in the Intrinsic Qualities of the Paul Bunyan and Lake Country Scenic Byways*, University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality

²³ Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway Association (nd). <http://paulbunyan scenicbyway.org/>

²⁴ Tuck, Brigid (2009).

²⁵ Rachel S. Liechty, Ingrid E. Schneider, and Brigid Tuck (2010). *Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway: Awareness, impact on quality of life & economy*, <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/168112/paul%20bunyan%20scenic%20byway.pdf?sequence=1>

²⁶ MnDOT. *Historic Annual Average Daily Traffic*, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/traffic/data/data-products.html>

<i>Location</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005 (Byway designation)</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2019</i>
<i>CSAH 1, E of CSAH 15</i>	1559	1350	1324	1260	1236	1150
<i>CSAH 15, N of Cemetery Rd, Jenkins</i>	914	860	844	1007	989	980
<i>CSAH 16, E of CR145</i>	2721	2400	2354	2369	2324	2600
<i>CSAH 66, N of CSAH3, Crosslake</i>	5100	5300	5199	6149	6033	5900
<i>CSAH 11, W of CSAH4, Breezy Point</i>	3231	4850	4758	4586	4499	5100
<i>CSAH 11 (Main St), E of Government Dr, Pequot Lakes</i>	5100	8000	8000	8200	7700*	5900

* = 2010 data not available; estimate from 2011 |

Although traffic increased significantly in Breezy Point and Pequot Lakes, this pattern is not due solely to the designation of the route as a National Scenic Byway. Rather, it is likely an indication of population change. The population of Breezy Point, MN, more than doubled from 979 in Census 2000 to 2,346 in 2010, and stayed fairly stable at 2,574 for Census 2020. Similarly, Pequot Lakes grew from 923 individuals in 2000 to 2,162 in 2010 and 2,395 in 2020.²⁷ New resident surveys conducted elsewhere in Minnesota indicate that residents tended to move to that region for reasons primarily related to quality of life (as opposed to economic opportunity or other reasons).²⁸ It is possible that new residents of Breezy Point and Pequot Lakes moved for some of the same reasons. Other research has found a correlation between high amenity rural areas and population growth.²⁹ If that trend holds true for communities in the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway region, then town character and the intrinsic characteristics of the byway might have played a role in drawing the new residents, although the designation of the byway on its own is unlikely to have had an impact.

²⁷ Decennial Census (2000, 2010, 2020), U.S. Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov>

²⁸ Winchester, Ben (2010). Regional Recruitment: Strategies to Attract and Retain Newcomers, <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/204340/Ben%20Winchester%20regional%20recruitment%20report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²⁹ Johnson, Kenneth (2012). Rural Demographic Change in the New Century: Slower Growth, Increased Diversity, Carsey Institute Issue Brief 44, <https://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1158&context=carsey>



Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway, courtesy FHWA

Byways Resources to Guide Next Steps

The [National Scenic Byway Foundation](https://nsbfoundation.com/training-events-advocacy/byway-leader-training/) periodically offers Byway Leader Training Course for entities leading byways organizations, either in person or virtually. Topics covered in the course include maintaining intrinsic qualities, wayshowing, maintaining and using corridor management plans, visitor experience and interpretation, byway partnerships, conservation, and funding. Learn more at <https://nsbfoundation.com/training-events-advocacy/byway-leader-training/>.

In addition to other guides and research mentioned, a guide completed for the Colorado Department of Transportation in the mid-2000s, *Managing in the Fast Lane: Mileposts for Scenic Byway Boards*, is intended for established organizations but may be useful for stakeholders in northern Maine to use as they establish new byways organizations.³⁰

This guide includes sections on self-assessment for the organization, resources, and funding; identifying a shared vision and multiple options for implementing the vision; strategic actions; and several tools and templates for interactive activities, sample board recruitment materials, an ADA accessibility checklist and more.

For each section following the self-assessments, the guide presents multiple activities. Each activity has information related to advance preparation for the activity, as well as a guide for implementing the activity with a group of people.

³⁰ Merry Yamamoto, John Whiteman, Craig Kennedy, et al. (nd) *Managing in the Fast Lane: Mileposts for Scenic Byway Boards*, Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program, Colorado Department of Transportation, <https://www.codot.gov/travel/colorado-byways/training-resources>.

BYWAY Q&A

Penny Simonsen serves as the transportation planner for the East Central Regional Development Commission in Minnesota and is a board member of the National Scenic Byway Foundation.

Q: How are the byways in your region governed, and what are the RDO's supporting roles?

A: Within our five-county area in East Central Minnesota, we have three state-designated byways. Two of them are led by citizen councils that operate under the auspices of the ECRDC as an advisory committee. Any funding secured on their behalf passes through ECRDC. Our staff administers the council and offers some time toward keeping an organizational structure through our MnDOT transportation workplan. Both of these byways are working toward full 501c3 status with our assistance. The third byway in our region has a similar alliance with an existing 501c3 representing a National Heritage Area.

Q: Who participates in the byways organizations?

A: Within the citizen councils, representation comes from 1) local/regional staff from the four state agencies (MnDOT, Explore MN, Minnesota Historical Society, and MnDNR); 2) county engineers and parks staff; 3) city staff; 4) bike/ped/trails representatives; 5) Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Center, or Tourism staff and members; 6) local champions; 7) travel-related businesses; 8) local archeologists; 9) local historians. We try to fill the councils with a mix of people that gravitate or support the byways' six intrinsic qualities—with each byway council looking somewhat different depending on which of the six intrinsic qualities their byway focus on.

Q: What is the state role in supporting rural byways?

A: MnDOT designates a full-time Scenic Byway State Coordinator to work with the 22 byways. MnDOT also offers limited funding for byway work from time to time. Not all states have made this commitment, and we are fortunate to have this MnDOT investment.

Q: How can byways organizations and supporters receive information?

A: I am currently a board member for the National Scenic Byway Foundation (<https://nsbfoundation.com>), a 501c3 that has operated as a valuable resource. Their staff and volunteers do an excellent job of providing training and technical assistance to scenic byway groups and leaders, including a Byway Leadership Training that may be offered in-person or remotely.

Q: What impacts has the region seen since the byways became state-designated?

A: There have been studies that support a link between scenic byways and more *slow* travel, rather than an overall increase in traffic. For ours, byways have acted as the “glue” to connect communities along the designated route. Support for tourism and road or trail improvements can rise above local politics. Who doesn't like a well-maintained road and a pretty view that offers nice stops in the form of places to eat, things to do, or lodging for the night? It is a great intersection between transportation, community development, and economic development.

Transit Governance to Support Effectiveness and Innovation

Northern Maine is served by the Aroostook Regional Transportation System, Inc. (ARTS), which provides demand response public transportation and contracted services to all the communities in Aroostook County, as well as Danforth in Washington County and Patten in Penobscot County. ARTS was established in 1979 as a 501c3 nonprofit. Stakeholder outreach indicated an interest in governance.

Nationally, there were 1,263 agencies that operated rural public transit reported to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in the 2019 National Transit Database (the most recent year available).³¹ Of these, just under half, or 607 were private nonprofit entities. Other types of agencies include Some nonprofits whose data is included in the NTD include organizations that specialize in providing transportation, while others were general human service agencies that utilize a range of funding sources to provide area residents with a variety of different programs, including transportation.³² The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) reports that the majority of transit agency boards of directors are appointed by a local or state elected official or a public decision-making entity such as a city or county council. APTA's research over time has seen broader inclusion of a variety of professions and perspectives represented in transit agency boards, including representatives of local government, area businesses and organizations, and riders.³³ Little national-level research is available on the composition of nonprofit transit boards specifically. A scan of agency websites revealed very few rural transit board rosters that included board members' affiliations. A few agencies that did identify board of directors both by name and organization included a mix of local government entities, businesses, higher education, medical facilities, area nonprofits, and citizen representatives.

ARTS is governed by a board of directors with ten members representing area stakeholder organizations and the general public. As a nonprofit, ARTS is subject to state laws governing such entities, including the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act.³⁴ A summary of the portions of the statute that relate to governance is included in a separate section below, along with a review of some of the relevant existing literature about transit agency boards of directors. The key takeaways for nonprofit transit agencies considering governance are discussed here.

Key Takeaways

Most national publications on transit governing boards strongly emphasize the damage that real or even perceived conflicts of interest can cause to transit agencies. The possible risks from conflict-of-interest transactions might range from public distrust to legal trouble or significant financial ramifications.

In rural areas, many community leaders are asked to play multiple roles. This can make it difficult for individuals to avoid all potential conflicts if they are engaged as employees, owners, or governing board members for multiple organizations working on issues in which they have personal interests or

³¹ Mattson, Jeremy and Dilip Mistry (2021). *Rural Transit Fact Book*, 2021. North Dakota State University, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, <https://www.ugpti.org/resources/reports/downloads/surtcom21-07.pdf>

³² Federal Transit Administration, *National Transit Database*, "2019 Annual Database Agency Information," <https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd/ntd-data>

³³ American Public Transportation Association (2018). *2018 Transit Board Member Handbook*, <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2018-APTA-Transit-Board-Member-Handbook.pdf>

³⁴ Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act, Title 13-B, Maine Revised Statutes, §101 and following, <https://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/13-B/title13-Bch7sec0.html>

professional experiences. This might be one reason why statute does not prevent nonprofits from having board members who could have an interest in its transactions.

However, Maine legislators set several parameters in the law to protect the interests of the nonprofits:

- **Fewer than half** of a nonprofit's board of directors can be financially interested persons.
- Directors are **required to make decisions that are in the best interest of the corporation**, rather than in other entities' interests.
- If a conflict-of-interest transaction comes before the board, the board may approve it only if the **material facts of the transaction and the director's interest are known** to the board *and* if the **transaction is fair and equitable** to the corporation.
- There is a process outlined in statute for the **Attorney General to void conflict-of-interest transactions** under certain circumstances.

For ARTS and other rural nonprofit organizations and rural transit agencies, legal counsel should be consulted to ensure that board composition is in line with the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act and any other relevant laws and regulations. Assistance may also be available from the Maine Association of Nonprofits, which maintains a list of resources related to bylaws and boards of directors.³⁵

Leadership might consider taking additional actions to optimize board effectiveness, such as:

- Ensure that board members thoroughly complete conflict of interest statements annually, and review the form to see if it needs updating to identify any other potential conflicts.
- Complete a board assessment to identify strategies to maintain areas of effective board performance and identify growth areas for the board.
- Develop a schedule to update board self-assessments to ensure high performance of the board of directors.
- If the ARTS bylaws have not been reviewed recently, thoroughly examine the bylaws to ensure that the bylaws are being followed, and that the bylaws that are in place are still consistent with relevant laws and current community needs.
- Consider whether it may be appropriate to amend the bylaws to add more seats to the board of directors; this could create an opportunity to enlarge the variety of interests and expertise represented on the board.
- Ensure that contracting and financial decisions are made in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, as well as with the ARTS procurement policy, and update policies as needed.
- If there are any conflict-of-interest transactions or the appearance of potential conflicts, ensure that the ARTS board members follow state law and provide full transparency to the entire board of directors about interests in the transaction and that the decisions are fair to ARTS.
- Update or develop a code of ethics for board members.
- Have a board discussion about what it means to make decisions that are in the best interest of ARTS, and whether there are metrics or criteria that indicate "best interest" to the board and management of ARTS and are consistent with the organization's mission.

³⁵ Maine Association of Nonprofits (n.d.), "Nonprofit Bylaws," *The Answer Center: Resources for Nonprofits*, <https://www.nonprofitmaine.org/answer/sample-bylaws/>

Review of Resources Relevant to Transit Agency Governance

Legislation

The Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act includes the following sections:

- [Chapter 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS](#) §101 - §111
- [Chapter 2: CORPORATE PURPOSES AND POWERS](#) §201 - §203
- [Chapter 3: CORPORATE NAME; REGISTERED OFFICE AND AGENT; SERVICE OF PROCESS](#) §301 - §308-A
- [Chapter 4: ORGANIZATION OF NONPROFIT CORPORATIONS](#) §401 - §407
- [Chapter 6: BYLAWS AND VOTING](#) §601 - §606
- [Chapter 7: DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS](#) §701 - §721
- [Chapter 8: AMENDMENT OF ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION](#) §801 - §805
- [Chapter 9: MERGERS AND CONSOLIDATION](#) §901 - §907
- [Chapter 10: SALE AND OTHER DISPOSITIONS OF CORPORATE ASSETS](#) §1001
- [Chapter 11: DISSOLUTION](#) §1101 - §1118
- [Chapter 12: FOREIGN CORPORATIONS](#) §1201 - §1217
- [Chapter 13: ANNUAL REPORTS; POWERS OF SECRETARY OF STATE; EXCUSE; MISCELLANEOUS](#) §1301 - §1307
- [Chapter 14: FEES](#) §1401 - §1406

Statutory language lays out conditions under which a nonprofit may be incorporated, a requirement that a nonprofit have bylaws that include provisions for holding meetings, voting, taking action without holding a meeting, and more. The Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act requires that a nonprofit have a board of directors with at least three members, who do not need to be Maine residents. Other qualifications for board members may be in the bylaws, and bylaws can be amended over time with changes to the numbers, classes, and terms of office of directors.

Board vacancies should be filled according to the articles of incorporation, bylaws, or by a vote of the majority of remaining directors. Entire boards or individual directors may be removed by a vote of 2/3 of the members of the nonprofit (or another amount as specified in the articles of incorporation), for nonprofits that have members. In addition, the Superior Court may remove a director if it is in the best interest of the corporation and a director “engaged in fraudulent or dishonest conduct or gross abuse of authority or discretion with respect to the corporation,” a statutory prohibition on having more than 49% of a board made up of financially interested persons, or a director has violated one of their statutory standards and duties.

The petition for removal may be brought by 2/3 of the remaining directors, 2/3 of the voting members (for nonprofits with members), or by the Attorney General for public benefit corporations.

[Section 717](#) sets out General Standards for Directors: “A director shall discharge the director's duties: A) In good faith; B) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances; and C) In a manner the director reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the corporation.”

Members of the board of directors are entitled to reliable information and reports, including financial data. Further, the statute describes director performance and compliance: “A director is not liable for the performance of the duties of the director's office if the director acted in compliance with this section and, if a conflict-of-interest transaction is involved, the transaction was fair to the corporation or was approved pursuant to [section 718](#).” A director is not considered a trustee.

Although organizations may have additional conflict of interest requirements described in their articles of incorporation, bylaws, or resolutions, [Section 717](#) of the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act also describes conflicts of interest that a director or officer may have: “A conflict-of-interest transaction is a transaction in which a director or officer of a corporation has a direct or indirect financial interest. For the purposes of this section, a director or officer has an indirect interest in a transaction if:

- A. Another entity in which the director or officer has a material interest or in which the director or officer is a general partner is a party to the transaction; or
- B. Another entity of which the director or officer is a director, officer or trustee is a party to the transaction.”

A conflict-of-interest transaction is not voidable if it was fair at the time and was approved. However, if the Attorney General believes it was not fair and not properly approved, the Attorney General can take legal action to void the transaction.

The board of directors may authorize an apparent conflict of interest if the material facts of the transaction and the director's interest are known to the board and if it is fair and equitable to the corporation. A transaction may be approved by the Attorney General or by the Superior Court if the board of a public interest corporation requests. If the board is unable to decide about a transaction, one or more directors or officers may request approval of the Attorney General or the court. The transaction may be approved only if it is fair and equitable to the corporation. “The party asserting fairness of any such transaction has the burden of establishing fairness.”

Public Transportation Board Assessments, Handbooks, and Guides

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2004. *Public Transportation Board Effectiveness: A Self-Assessment Handbook*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
<https://doi.org/10.17226/13765>, <https://pubsindex.trb.org/view/2004/M/749180>

This handbook was developed to assist a variety of types of transit organization boards to gauge areas where they could work together for more effectiveness. Board effectiveness can be affected by several outside factors, such as the enabling statute of the organization and attributes of the board and its members. However, boards can have the most effect on their own actions toward achieving intended results. The handbook identifies many reasons why a board might wish to complete a self-assessment. A few of these reasons include:

- Outlining areas of strength and further development.
- Orienting or training newer board members about the effectiveness of the board.
- Identifying knowledge or policymaking expertise gaps when a vacancy occurs or is anticipated (such as due to a retirement).
- Distinguishing between board performance issues and concerns of individual members.

- Providing information for peer exchange with other transit agency boards.

Boards of directors may choose to begin assessments when there are changes within the board membership, changes within the transit agency environment, changes outside the agency that may affect board oversight, or simply completed periodically as a learning tool. The assessment tool allows for individual members to submit their levels of agreement on various assessment statements, which can spur discussion among board members. The process can be managed by individuals inside or outside the agency, depending on the level of resources involved and the level of confidentiality needed; compiling anonymous results into an analysis report rather than examining individual responses in a board meeting can keep the process focused on trends rather than specific individual pieces of feedback that may concern the agency. Upon completion, the process can lead to a discussion of goal setting to guide future strategies.

The board self-assessment guide features three different levels of assessment depending on the level of analysis and amount of time that the board has available on assessment and planning. These assessment variations range from 13 measures to 31, and some include additional goal-setting exercises in addition to the self-assessment questions. Available metrics address board processes, strategic planning, fiduciary and legal responsibilities, diversity and equity programs, CEO relationships, and public advocacy.

The assessment statements include items such as:

- “The board provides effective monitoring, evaluation, and oversight of the agency’s fiscal concerns, including an understanding of the funding mechanisms.”
- “The board supports a code of conduct and ethical practices; each board member is committed to ethical practices and guards against conflicts of interest.”
- “The board has processes for making effective decisions regarding new business proposals, and for reviewing existing practices.”

Board members indicate their agreement or disagreement with those statements.

Although the assessments are designed to be completed in whole, boards could choose to discuss their ideas about certain topical themes that are the most timely rather than go through all of the metric topics at once.

American Public Transportation Association. *Transit Board Member Handbook*. 2018.

<https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/2018-APTA-Transit-Board-Member-Handbook.pdf>

According to research conducted by APTA, 60 percent of transit agency boards are appointed by either a local or state elected official or a legislative body (such as a city or county council). Boards are increasing in diversity of the demographic characteristics of individual members as well as employment backgrounds and professions, sometimes including community and rider perspectives as well as relevant professions. Major responsibilities include: policymaking, system innovation and strategic guidance, performance oversight and legal and fiduciary responsibilities, customer and citizen representation, strengthening board member knowledge and skills, and working with the agency CEO.

Orientation for new and continuing board of directors members should address transit facilities and services, the board's role in the agency, safety and risks, organizational budget and funding, policies and procedures, current plans, board structures such as committees, how to access board packets and other information, and other relevant information.

APTA advises that all boards develop a code of ethics or conduct policy, and that all board members become well-versed in the ethical standards. With public scrutiny on public transit agencies—who often use a combination of public funds from local, state, and federal sources—board members should avoid not only actual conflicts of interest but also the appearance of conflicts of interest. If a potential conflict of interest arises, the affected board member should avoid participating in discussion of the topic and leave the meeting if requested by the board.

Boards may develop committees to address particular areas such as planning and development; internal and external relations; and operations and finance.

APTA's guide also describes board assessment processes, CEO recruitment and performance, and orientation material for board members on major provisions of current surface transportation law and federal funding streams and financing programs for urban and rural transit. Innovative revenue options such as parking fees, project value capture such as joint development or impact fees, and user fees such as tolling. Responsibilities for federally funded service such as compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are also described, as are the roles of transit in planning and advocacy for mobility options, conducting mobility management, and efforts toward sustainability and system safety.

National RTAP. *Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Board Members: What Every Board Member Should Know*. 2007. <http://nationalrtap.org/Resource-Library/Advanced-Search/?fid=81>

This National RTAP Technical Brief, *Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Board Members: What Every Board Member Should Know*, provides a list of what new board members need to know about the organization they govern. This one-page handout is included as an appendix to this report.

National RTAP. *Boards that Perform*. 2008. <http://nationalrtap.org/Resource-Library/Advanced-Search/?fid=93>

This National RTAP Training Module examines ten key roles and responsibilities for board members and provides guidance for holding effective board meetings, developing committee and advisory group structures, and dividing responsibilities between board members and staff.

This training module identifies major transit board member roles, adapted from the general nonprofit resource *Boards that Perform* by BoardSource:

- Determine organizational mission—beyond the mission statement that many organizations develop, the board sets the direction for how the mission guides decision-making and how it is reflected in public- and client-facing interactions.
- Select the executive director or CEO—identify the skills that the agency needs and work to recruit and hire an individual who provides those skills.

- Support the CEO and review their performance—"The board should create an environment in which the executive director can succeed," with support for the CEO's execution of the organizational mission and clear criteria and methods for assessing performance. The board should advise the CEO based on members' expertise and support the CEO in decisions that are consistent with board policies and organizational standards. The board should expect that the CEO will serve as a professional advisor to the board and present recommendations on problems considered by the board or appropriate policies. The CEO will also develop a budget and communicate with the board about budget problems. The CEO will recruit and manage staff and inform the board about program activities.
- Ensure effective organizational planning—beyond required planning documents to satisfy funders, boards should assess financial, capital, and human resources; changes in communities and customer needs that affect transportation services; and the agency's priorities.
- Ensure adequate resources—board members review and approve the agency's annual budget "for the maximum good of their customers and community," and board members must be aware of conflicts of interest among their members. Having a financial interest in a transit agency's financial decisions may not be disqualifying for serving on a board. However, board members must be upfront about those conflicts, and conflicts of interest may cause board members to recuse themselves from certain votes or to provide more information about how the vote would affect themselves personally or their own organization. Boards should also review the agency's annual audit.
- Manage resources effectively—board members should ensure that facilities and services are acceptable for community standards, that workplace safety policies and other policies are developed and followed, and that the human capital of the management and operations staff is appropriate to meet the agency's mission.
- Monitor performance—agencies report standardized information to the National Transit Database, such as ridership, cost per revenue mile, cost per revenue hour, cost per trip, and more. These operational performance measures are some of the data that boards may review to identify potential problems or challenges to providing service in that region, compared with the available resources and community needs.
- Enhance the organization's public image—board members should use their network of contacts to advocate on behalf of the agency with decision-makers and potential funders, communicate about transit, and participate in fundraising to support mobility services.
- Serve as a court of appeal where appropriate—boards should have policies to arbitrate where necessary between management and staff, make decisions about procurement disputes, or take action where there are performance issues such as accident rates or customer service problems.
- Assess its own leadership performance—boards should periodically conduct self-assessments to ensure they are working optimally and supporting the CEO in the overall direction of the organization rather than day-to-day management decisions. Board members should know and differentiate their roles in a governance capacity from other advisory entities and ad hoc or standing committees that offer guidance without enacting agency policy. Members should review their board meeting packets in advance of the meeting to be prepared for discussion and decisions.

The guide also emphasizes that “The board should adopt a code of ethics that describes what is, and what is not appropriate. This sets clear expectations for all and helps ensure that the best interests of the organization are upheld.” The guide continues: “While there can be legal consequences for viola/ng conflict of interest statutes, even perceived conflicts of interest can be damaging to the credibility of the organization and the board, and demoralizing for staff.”

Input Beyond Boards: Advisory Committees

Transit agencies may benefit from receiving advisory information from clients and community members. This may be achieved through citizen advisory committees. These entities feature participation by specialists, individuals who are specialists in their own individual and household mobility needs, as well as those who may work in human services, other client-facing positions, or other mobility advocacy entities that interact regularly with transit riders or transportation disadvantaged households. These advisory groups can provide detailed information to the board and make recommendations for board decisions. Two publications describe how these advisory entities can be structured specifically for transit agencies.

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2010. *Effective Use of Citizen Advisory Committees for Transit Planning Operations*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14388>.

TRB’s Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Synthesis 85: *Effective Use of Citizen Advisory Committees for Transit Planning and Operations* provides examples and guidelines of how transit agencies are using citizen advisory committees and how they can be used to their full potential.

Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA). *Effective Transportation Advisory Committees: Creating a Group that Reflects all Community Voices*. 2012. <https://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/NADTC-Effective-Transportation-Advisory-Committees.pdf>

Easter Seals Project ACTION (ESPA)'s guidebook advises transit agencies who are looking to implement an advisory committee on how to do so, as well as describing best practices for increasing effectiveness of existing advisory committees. Elements included are Purpose, Structure and Membership, Making Meetings Accessible, Orientation, Running a Meeting and Community Involvement.

<https://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/NADTC-Effective-Transportation-Advisory-Committees.pdf>

Transit Management Resource

National RTAP (2020). *Transit Manager’s Toolkit*, <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Administration/Mission-and-Leadership>

This comprehensive document reviews administrative, operations and planning, and compliance-related topics in detail to assist general managers, executive directors, or CEOs of rural transit agencies with

information to ensure their operations run smoothly. The toolkit is available as a PDF or a website version with many links to additional information through Federal Regulations and Circulars and other resources. This includes resources on working with boards, as well as communicating the organizational mission (and board direction) to staff.

Appendix 1: Demographic Data

Aroostook County, Maine Total Population, Gender, and Race and Ethnicity	Population Number (Percent)
2010 Decennial Census Total Population	71,870
2018 Estimated Total Population*	68,269
Gender	
Male*	33,745 (49.4%)
Female*	34,524 (50.6%)
Race and ethnicity	
White*	65,912 (96.5%)
Black or African American*	959 (1.4%)
Asian*	459 (0.7%)
American Indian and Alaska Native*	1,842 (2.7%)
Hispanic or Latino*	801 (1.2%)
Some other race*	209 (0.3%)
Two or more races*	1,063 (1.6%)
Disability Status	
Population with Disabilities*	17,101 (25.9%)

*ACS 2018 5-Year Estimate

Aroostook County, Maine Migration, Ethnicity, and Language	Population Number (Percent)
Foreign born*	3,006 (4.4%)
Mexican origin*	219 (0.3%)
Other Hispanic or Latino origin*	582 (0.9%)
Total households*	29,931
Limited English-speaking households*	750 (2.5%)

*ACS 2018 5-Year Estimate

Appendix 2. Byways Resources

This section includes a coordination checklist and the bylaws of the Coulee Corridor Consortium in Washington State as a sample.

Appendix 3: Resources for Boards

This appendix includes a resource that may be beneficial to review either in the context of establishing a governing board for a new byways organization or examining transit agency governance and whether it position the agency for optimum effectiveness. The following document is:

National RTAP (2007). Roles & Responsibilities of Transit Board Members: What Every Board Member Should Know