

# IOWA BYWAYS PROGRAM GUIDANCE



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# 1 PROGRAM PURPOSE

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The purpose of the Iowa Byways program is to designate and support qualifying Iowa roads as byways on the basis of scenic byway, heritage byway, or a combination of scenic and heritage byway qualities. These designations are intended to preserve the state's scenic, natural, and historic resources; to support economic development through travel and tourism; to highlight distinctive experiences; and to maintain the integrity of the Iowa Byways program. This effort is carried out through volunteer work and cooperation between interested citizens, organizations, local governments, and the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT).

The National Scenic Byway Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Established in Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the program was reauthorized and expanded significantly in 1998 under TEA-21 and again under SAFETEA-LU in 2005, the program is a grassroots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States.

Iowa DOT was directed by the Iowa Legislature to identify, protect, and enhance Iowa's scenic and historic roadways in 1988 upon enactment of Iowa Code Chapter 306D. The Legislature appropriated funding from the Road Use Tax Fund in 1990 and Iowa participated in a four-state study along with Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska to develop procedures for evaluating scenic byways. In 1992, the Legislature issued a directive to identify four pilot scenic byway routes and Iowa DOT solicited nominations for scenic byway routes. Iowa DOT designated four byways and established the Iowa Byways program in 1993.

Under the Iowa Byways program, proposed routes are designated through an application process. Iowa DOT inventories the proposed routes and consults with program stakeholders before evaluating those routes for designation and then provides identifying signs for the designated routes. Routes designated as an Iowa Byway are part of Iowa's scenic byway program and are therefore subject to the prohibition set forth in 23 United States Code Section 131(s).

This is not a funding program. Iowa DOT designates a route as an Iowa Byway on the basis of scenic and historic qualities using established criteria. Applicants are then responsible for funding tourism and promotional plans.

- The program framework includes the following:
- Nomination, evaluation, and designation of routes
- Provision of signs for designated routes
- Support of managing byway organization efforts to protect and enhance the byway's intrinsic resources

# 2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

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A route eligible for designation as an Iowa Byway must meet the definition of either a heritage byway or a scenic byway. A route may also be eligible for designation if segments of the route meet a combination of either a heritage byway or a scenic byway along its entire length. Primary roads, secondary roads and

city streets are eligible for designation as Iowa Byways. A route eligible for designation as an Iowa Byway should be continuous and at least 20 miles in length.

### 3 APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

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Iowa DOT may periodically announce a solicitation of applications for designation as demand and interest arises. Application to designate a route as an Iowa Byway or to propose an extension or loop to an existing route must be received by the stated application deadline included in the solicitation and must be accompanied by a formal resolution from the governing body of each city and county through which the proposed route passes endorsing the application for Iowa Byway designation and agreeing to the responsibilities of having jurisdiction over a portion of a designated route.

Applications require some discussion of the planned administration and governance of the proposed Iowa Byway as well as how the byway will be marketed to visitors. Field inventories, evaluation, and rating of proposed routes will precede the designation of any new routes. Information, instructions and application forms may be obtained from the Iowa DOT. Please contact the Iowa Byways program manager, Emily Whaley at [emily.whaley@iowadot.us](mailto:emily.whaley@iowadot.us).

### 4 APPLICATION REVIEW

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Iowa DOT will review the applications and consult with stakeholders to gather information on the existence and quality of scenic, archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, and recreational resources along a proposed route; the proposed route's contribution to a diversity of experiences along designated routes; and the overall impact of the proposed route on the program's integrity.

A field inventory will be conducted of the proposed route which will address the following:

**Scenic value.** Types and qualities of views along the proposed route contributing to the scenic quality of the route shall be identified as well as views that distract from or negatively affect the scenic quality of the route. The field inventory will provide an assessment of the visual character of the proposed route along its length.

**Cultural and historic resources.** Known cultural and historic resources will be identified along the length of the proposed route. Such resources may include archaeological, architectural, historical or other cultural sites of national or state significance and may also include interesting or unique local cultures or architecture that may appeal to visitors.

**Natural resources.** Resources including but not limited to agricultural lands, forests, river basins, and other distinctive landforms will be identified.

**Recreational resources.** Public lands and facilities providing opportunities for organized sport, outdoor recreation, or other recreation will be identified.

**Transportation.** An assessment will be made of existing and future traffic conditions, planned improvements to the proposed route, and any safety concerns whether existing or anticipated. If the route is being considered for heritage byway designation, historic elements specific to transportation will be identified.

The field inventory data for each proposed route will be compiled and an overall quality rating for each proposed route will be calculated.

The department may deny an application from proceeding to the initial review and evaluation phase for a number of reasons, including:

- Resources along the proposed byway are deemed to be of insignificant value.
- Proposed byway designation would be inconsistent with the future transportation plans.
- Documented, credible opposition to the proposed designation is received.
- Other criteria as determined by the local scenic byway board/stakeholders.

## 5 DESIGNATION

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Iowa DOT will prepare a written report documenting the findings of the field inventory and considering the sustainability of the proposed route based on the information provided in the application regarding planned governance and marketing plans as well as how the proposed route will complement the existing Iowa Byways. If the report justifies designation, Iowa DOT will designate the route an Iowa Byway.

## 6 SIGNING

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Upon the designation of Iowa Byways, the department will proceed with the initial design and installation of signage identifying new Iowa Byways. Individual Iowa Byways brand guidelines are required. Local sponsors will be requested to sign a Jurisdiction Agreement between with Iowa DOT. The Jurisdiction Agreement outlines the terms of agreement for the installation and maintenance of the signs.

The installation of signs must comply with the department's *Traffic & Safety Manual* that includes details on installation requirements aligned with the *Manual Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD). The initial installation of signs identifying an Iowa Byway including the accompanying posts and hardware necessary for installation shall be paid for and furnished by Iowa DOT. Each roadway jurisdiction is responsible for the inventory and maintenance of signs provided by Iowa DOT following the initial installation. Replacement signs will be provided for those that are damaged or missing and Iowa DOT will be responsible for reinstallation on primary roads. The roadway jurisdiction will be responsible for reinstallation on secondary roads and city streets.

## 7 REEVALUATION

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At the discretion of the Iowa Byways program, the department may inventory and evaluate designated Iowa Byways or portions of byways to determine their continued eligibility for the program. The department reserves the right to remove a route or portion of a route from the program if the route no longer meets the designating criteria or if the route signage has not been maintained. The department may modify an existing route if an alternative route would better benefit the traveling public in cases of poor road conditions, closures or changes in available amenities.

At the discretion of Iowa DOT, a byway may be reevaluated to determine the continued eligibility of a byway for the program. Iowa DOT may inventory and evaluate the designated byway or portions of a route to determine if the route no longer meets the designating criteria or if the route signage has not been maintained and may modify an existing route if an alternative route would better benefit the

traveling public in cases of poor road conditions, closures, or changes in available amenities. Situations that may warrant a re-evaluation include:

- The intrinsic resources originally identified along the corridor have been degraded
- The minimum criteria for designation are no longer applicable
- The byway organization deteriorates and/or there is no cohesive group of citizens or local government to implement the CMP
- The land-uses along the corridor change the overall character of the byway

Other reasons as may be deemed appropriate.

## **8 PROMOTIONAL AND TOURISM EFFORTS**

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Iowa DOT is not responsible for economic development, promotional, or other tourism efforts for Iowa Byways.