Scenic Byways and Tourism
15 Scenic Byways and Regional Tourism

Franklin County’s rural landscape, varied topography, and rich history combine to make the region especially beautiful and scenic. As an indicator of its picturesque resources, five of the seven scenic byways in Western Massachusetts are located in Franklin County. Four of the county’s five scenic byways are state designated and one is a nationally designated byway. The state designated scenic byways are: the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (Route 2), the Route 112 Scenic Byway, the Route 116 Scenic Byway, and the Route 122 Scenic Byway. The Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway (Routes 63 and 47) is a nationally designated scenic byway. The map at the end of the chapter shows the locations of the scenic byways in Franklin County.

View along the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway in Sunderland

Because of the high number of scenic byways within Franklin County, a significant amount of FRCOG’s transportation and land use activities involve planning for its scenic byways. These activities range from the creation of corridor management plans, land protection, to tourist facility development. Corridor management plans have now been completed for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway (1998), the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway (western section in 2002 and eastern section in 2009), and the Route 112 Scenic Byway (2009). In addition, the FRCOG is currently in the process of completing a corridor management plan for Route 122 and funding has been secured to complete a corridor management plan for the Route 116 Scenic Byway.

Scenic Byways Program

Much of the funding for scenic byway planning activities comes from the National Scenic Byway Program. The National Scenic Byway Program recognizes roads having outstanding scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and archaeological qualities. The program provides grants and technical assistance for projects related to:

- Planning, design, or development of a State or Indian tribe scenic byway program;
- Development and implementation of a corridor management plan to maintain the scenic, historical, recreational, cultural, natural, and archaeological characteristics of a byway corridor while providing for accommodation of increased tourism and development of related amenities;
- Safety improvements to a State scenic byway, Indian tribe scenic byway, National Scenic Byway, or All-American Road to the extent that the improvements are necessary to accommodate increased traffic and changes in the types of vehicles using the highway as a result of the designation as a State scenic byway, Indian tribe scenic byway, National Scenic Byway, or All-American Road;
- Construction along a scenic byway of a facility for pedestrians and bicyclists, rest area, turn out, highway shoulder improvement, overlook, or interpretive facility;
- An improvement to a scenic byway that will enhance access to an area for the purpose of recreation, including water-related recreation;
- Protection of scenic, historical, recreational, cultural, natural, and archaeological resources in an area adjacent to a scenic byway; and
- Development and implementation of a scenic byway marketing program.
To be eligible for funding under the national program, a byway must be officially designated as a scenic byway by the State and a corridor management plan must be completed which identifies the future goals and vision for the byway. The corridor management plan is developed through an extensive public participation process that includes the formation of a byway committee composed of residents, town officials, business owners, historical commissions and recreational users from the byway area. The goal is to identify mechanisms to protect the scenic value of the byway while promoting the byway’s tourism potential.

**Existing Scenic Byways in Franklin County**

The following section describes each of Franklin County’s scenic byways. The section also details associated projects that have been completed or are upcoming for each of the byways.

**Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway**

In Franklin County, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway travels along Route 63 in the Towns of Northfield, Erving, and Montague and Route 47 in Montague and Sunderland. The byway travels through the heart of the Connecticut River Valley, a landscape of distinct natural beauty with classic New England farm village patterns. Along the byway corridor, there are many sites and resources that highlight the rich history of the area dating back to the 1600s and the early inhabitation by Native Americans and Colonial settlers. The history and farming heritage that shaped the corridor is still evident today. The byway also functions as several towns’ and villages’ main street as it travels through the region. The Connecticut River Valley’s rich history is reflected in the many surviving architectural resources that can be seen along the way.

The Franklin County section of the byway (Northfield, Erving, Montague, and Sunderland) was officially designated as a state scenic byway by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2000, and the Hampshire County section of the byway (Route 47 in Hadley and South Hadley) was designated in 2003. In 2009, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway was also designated as a National Scenic Byway. This is the first byway in Massachusetts to be designated as a National Scenic Byway and remains the only nationally designated scenic byway in the Commonwealth (all of the other byways are state designated scenic byways). This national designation represents an additional level of recognition and technical support from the National Scenic Byway Program. Nationally designated byways are included in scenic byway maps, brochures, and a website published and hosted by the National Scenic Byway Program. The New Hampshire and Vermont section of the Connecticut River Byway was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2005.

**Completed Projects**

**Corridor Management Plan**

A corridor management plan was completed for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway in November 1998. The *Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Corridor Management Plan* adopted recommendations and priorities for promoting economic opportunities while protecting the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the byway. Since the completion of the corridor management plan and the official designation of the route as a scenic byway, the FRCOG has worked to implement the recommendations of the *Connecticut River Scenic Farm Corridor Management Plan*. To date, a number of recommended projects and programs have received funding and are in varying stages of implementation.

**Sunderland Scenic Turnout Area Improvements**

During 2009, improvements were completed at the scenic turnout area located on Route 47 in Sunderland. The FRCOG worked with the Town of Sunderland, Stantec Inc. and Urban Forestry Solutions to design improvements to the existing turnout area to the south of Falls Road. This project was a recommendation of the *Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Corridor Management Plan* (1998). A paved turnout area already existed in this location that was part of the old road, but was in need of repair. The work included the resurfacing of the paved area of the turnout, improvements to the
entrance/exit to enhance visibility, the installation of signs specifying when the turnout area is open, installation of a picnic table, and the construction of a kiosk containing information on the town, the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway, and the surrounding landscape. The project also included selective tree pruning in order to open up the views of the Connecticut River and Mount Sugarloaf from the scenic overlook area. The construction of the improvements was completed in the Fall of 2009.

On-going Projects

Land Protection Project

The Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Land Protection Project commenced with the execution of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MassDOT, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR), the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Franklin Land Trust, and the FRCOG. The MOU was a critical step in the implementation process and has paved the way for future land protection projects using scenic byway funding. The MOU details the specific steps of the land protection acquisition process and defines the roles of the agencies partnering in the project.

To date, one land protection transaction has been completed and another is in the process of being completed along the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway. For the project that has been completed, the Massachusetts DAR and the Town of Sunderland partnered to permanently protect 109 acres of prime agricultural land on the byway. The land protection project that is in the process of being completed will permanently protect 18 acres of prime agricultural and scenic land on the byway in Northfield and also has frontage directly on the Connecticut River.

An additional $520,000 in funding was sought and awarded through the fiscal year 2009 National Scenic Byway Program for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway Land Protection Project to complete another high priority land protection transaction. Work is underway to complete this important land protection transaction.

Website Development, Logo Design, Directional Signs and Western Massachusetts Scenic Byways Promotional Campaign

In 2004, funding was approved to develop a logo, directional signs, and a website for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway. Since the time of that award, a number of other marketing-related projects for other state designated scenic byways have also been approved. In an effort to best utilize the money for these similar projects and create a unified marketing approach for all of the byways of Western Massachusetts, the projects have been consolidated into a larger marketing project referred to as the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign. Consequently, the work that was to be completed as part of this project has been included in this broader Western Massachusetts Scenic Byways Promotional Campaign scope that will encompass all of these related projects. The Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign is a collaborative effort of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC), FRCOG, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and includes developing: marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven of the byways in Western Massachusetts. The project is scheduled to begin in 2011.
Future Projects

Tri-state Bicycle Route Mapping Project
The FRCOG and the PVPC are interested in jointly developing and printing a bicycle facility map and other tourist-oriented bicycling information for the tri-state area (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont) of the Connecticut River Scenic Byway. The project also includes the development of bicycling route itineraries available in printed format and on-line. The itineraries will provide byway travelers bicycling excursions of varying lengths and levels of difficulty. This task will highlight the many bicycling resources in the greater byway area located in Franklin and Hampshire Counties in Massachusetts and the wealth of off-road and shared roadway bicycling facilities. The project will also be coordinated with the Windham Regional Commission (Vermont), and the Southwest Regional Planning Commission (New Hampshire) in order to provide coordinated information for the byway across state borders.

Ervingside Streetscape Improvements
The Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway passes through the Town of Erving along Route 63. A one-mile section of this route has been awarded funding to complete the design and construction of sidewalk and streetscape improvements. The project is intended to improve pedestrian access and safety. The project area includes the Erving section of Millers Falls and the adjacent residential neighborhood known as Ervingside. Comprehensive plans for sidewalk and streetscape elements will be developed as part of the project. The improvements will link the previously completed Millers Falls Streetscape improvements with residential neighborhoods, the Erving Library, Veterans Memorial Park, the Erving Elementary School, and the business that are located along Route 63 in Erving. The improvements to be considered for inclusion in the project are pedestrian level lighting, landscaping elements, signs, benches, trash cans, other street furniture and fencing.

Update of the Corridor Management Plan
The Corridor Management Plan for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway was completed in 1998. This plan is now more than twelve years old and many of the recommendations that were identified in the plan have been completed. Additionally, the descriptive information that is contained in the report in many cases is outdated. It would be advantageous to complete an update of this plan to update the descriptions of the resources, re-examine the goals and objectives, and review the recommended projects.

Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway
The Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway is one of the earliest scenic byways in New England – receiving its designation in 1953. The byway travels on Route 2 through Berkshire, Franklin, and Worcester counties. In Franklin County, the byway travels through the Towns of Charlemont, Buckland, Shelburne, Greenfield, Gill, Erving, and Orange. The western section of the byway (Williamstown to Greenfield) follows the east-west route first used by Native Americans between the Hudson River and the Connecticut River Valleys. The route continued to be used for travel by colonists and eventually was upgraded to support subsequent forms of transportation. The western section of the byway was the first state road to be designated and constructed as a scenic tourist route, opening amid much fanfare in 1914.

The eastern section (Greenfield to Athol) also first developed as a foot path of the Native Americans. The Europeans from the Connecticut River Valley
later used this trail to settle the northern interior of Massachusetts and for commerce by horse and cart. Later, entrepreneurs from the cities in eastern New England built the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike along much of the original pathway. During this development, the road was changed and improved to accommodate new modes of transportation and infrastructure.

**Eastern Section of the Mohawk Trail (in Erving)**

**Completed Projects**

**Corridor Management Plans**

Corridor management plans were completed for the western section of the byway (Williamstown to Greenfield) in 2002 and the eastern section (Greenfield to Athol) in 2009. The two corridor management plans include inventories of the historic, cultural, and natural resources; scenic landscape assessments; inventories of the heritage and recreational attractions; evaluations of the existing land use regulations and resource protection measures for the towns along the byway; and lists of recommended future actions that are intended to balance future growth with the preservation of the byway’s resources.

The study area for the corridor management plans included the byway and a half mile buffer area along each side of the road. In Franklin County, the corridor management plan for the western section included Route 2 in Charlemont, Buckland Shelburne and Greenfield as well as the section of Route 2A that travels through Shelburne Falls. The corridor management plan for the eastern section of the Mohawk Trail included Route 2 within the Towns of Greenfield, Gill, and Erving and Route 2A through downtown Greenfield, Orange, and Athol. The plan also included the Towns of Montague and Wendell because the half-mile study area falls within these towns even though the byway itself is located outside of the town borders. The total length of the western section of the byway in Franklin County is 22 miles and the eastern section of the Byway is 29 miles. In both cases, the plan development process included an active public participation process in which the FRCOG worked closely with a Byway Committee comprised of municipal officials, landowners, business owners, and interested citizens. To date, funding has been secured to complete a number of projects on the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway that were recommended in the corridor management plans.

**Mohawk Trail Facility Improvement Project**

The Mohawk Trail Facility Improvement Project was completed during 2010. As part of this project historic signs were purchased and installed, vista pruning was completed, and two informational kiosks were designed and installed. Work was also completed in collaboration with the Town of Charlemont to determine a location for kayak/canoe river access locations. This analysis was completed and the town decided not to move forward with implementation at this time (funding for the implementation was not included in this project scope and funding).

**The new information kiosk and picnic tables at the Shunpike Rest Area in Charlemont**
On-going Projects

Land Protection Project
The Mohawk Trail Land Protection Project also commenced with the execution of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between MassDOT, DAR, DCR, the Franklin Land Trust, and the FRCOG as detailed previously. Two land protection transactions have been completed to date, which have protected approximately 130 acres along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway in Charlemont. An additional $936,000 in funding was sought and awarded through the Fiscal Year 2009 National Scenic Byway Program for the Mohawk Trail Land Protection Project to complete four additional high priority land protection transactions. Work is underway to complete the transactions.

Mohawk Trail and Western Massachusetts Byways Promotional Campaign
In 2003, funding was approved to complete a marketing plan for the western section of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway. Since the time of that award, all of the byway marketing projects have been consolidated into the larger marketing project referred to as the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign. Consequently, the work that was to be completed as part of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Marketing Project has been included in a broader Western Massachusetts Scenic Byways Promotional Campaign scope that will encompass all of these related projects. As stated previously, the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign is a collaborative effort of the BRPC, CMRPC, FRCOG, and PVPC and includes developing marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all seven of the byways in Western Massachusetts. The project is scheduled to get underway in early 2011.

Improvements at the Upper Pioneer Valley Visitors Center in Greenfield
Fiscal Year 2004 funding was approved for improvements at the Upper Pioneer Valley Visitors Center in Greenfield. This project funds the design and construction of traveler amenities at the Visitor Center that is located on Miner Street in Greenfield (near the rotary at the Interstate 91 interchange). The project will design and construct a pavilion or canopy to provide shade over the picnic area outside of the existing Visitor’s Center to allow more comfortable use of this area during the summer. In addition, the design and construction of a children’s interactive interpretive display/play area that incorporates an educational component on the Mohawk Trail is included. This project has been funded, but the proposed scope has not moved forward yet.

Future Projects

Tourism Resources in Downtown Orange
Future funding will be sought to complete three key tasks to support and create byway tourism resources in downtown Orange located on the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway. The first task includes the completion of a Tourism Action Plan which will select a location for a byway waypoint information center in downtown Orange. This project also proposes to construct a parking area located at a central downtown site (next to the Putnam Hall building). The parking area will serve byway travelers and will include the installation of a kiosk which will provide information on the byway area resources. In addition, the development of a focused map for Orange and Athol (the neighboring byway town) will provide information on the attractions and services available in the area.

Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway Land Protection Project
Additional funding will also be sought for three high priority land protection purchases along the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway.

Route 112 Scenic Byway
The Route 112 Scenic Byway was officially designated as a scenic byway by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2004. The Route 112 Scenic Byway travels through the Towns of Colrain, Buckland, Shelburne, and Ashfield in Franklin County and the Towns of Goshen, Cummingston, Worthington, and Huntington in Hampshire County. It travels through historic town centers, working farms, scenic rivers, and majestic forests with beautiful mountains providing a backdrop. The corridor is rich in natural, cultural, and historic resources. In addition, the
byway intersects with the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway to the north and the Jacob’s Ladder Trail to the south – two other state designated scenic byways.

**Completed Projects**

**Corridor Management Plan**
A corridor management plan for the Route 112 Scenic Byway was completed in 2009. The study area for the project includes a one half mile buffer strip along each side of the byway road. The total mileage for the corridor is approximately 51 miles. The purpose of the plan is to recognize, interpret, preserve, and promote the unique scenic, cultural, archeological, natural, and recreational resources of this route.

The more specific objectives of this plan are to: identify and develop strategies to preserve the unique resources along the byway; expand economic opportunities related to agricultural, heritage, and recreational tourism; plan for a byway roadside educational program promoting the history of the land along the Route 112 corridor; develop a land protection program for scenic and historic landscapes; and develop a recreational program which identifies and establishes linkages to the Mohawk Trail and Jacob’s Ladder Trail Scenic Byways, hiking trails, state forests, river access points and other cultural and recreational features along the byway. The Route 112 Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan was a cooperative project of the eight byway communities, the FRCOG, the PVPC, and MassDOT. Development of the plan was guided by two advisory committees, one in each region (Hampshire and Franklin Counties) of the byway, and incorporated an extensive public participation process.

**On-going Projects**

**Western Massachusetts Scenic Byways Promotional Campaign**
The Route 112 Scenic Byway is included in the scope of the Western Massachusetts Scenic Byway Promotional Campaign. As part of that project, a coordinated promotional campaign will be developed for all seven of the byways in Western Massachusetts. This work will include the development of marketing tools, logos, way-finding signs, and websites for all of the byways. The project is scheduled to begin in 2011.

**Future Projects**

**Land Protection Project**
Funding was sought and obtained for two high priority land protection purchases along the Route 112 Scenic Byway through the Fiscal Year 2010 National Scenic Byway discretionary grant round.

**Route 116 Scenic Byway**
In 2008, the Massachusetts Legislature designated Route 116 in the Towns of Deerfield, Conway, Ashfield, Plainfield, Savoy, and Adams as a scenic byway. The byway travels 38.8 miles from the Deerfield/Sunderland town line (at the Connecticut River and near the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway) to downtown Adams at the intersection of Route 116 and Route 8. In Deerfield, the byway route follows the historic route of Route 116 (the current Route 116 bypass was constructed in the 1960s) onto Sugarloaf Street through historic South Deerfield Center onto Elm Street and north onto Routes 5/10/116. The corridor is rich in natural, scenic, cultural and historic resources. The byway rejoins Route 116 to the west of South Deerfield Center and travels west to historic Conway Center which is characterized by historic architecture and a small town atmosphere. The byway also travels past the Burkeville Covered Bridge which is on the National Register of Historic Places and has recently
been restored. Route 116 continues west through historic Ashfield center, where it intersects with Route 112, which is also a designated scenic byway.

Completed Projects
No projects have been completed along this newly designated byway to date.

On-going Projects

Corridor Management Plan
Funding was sought and awarded through the Fiscal Year 2009 National Scenic Byway Program to complete a corridor management plan for Route 116. It is anticipated that this project will begin in 2011. The development of the corridor management plan will be a multi-regional collaborative effort including the BRPC, FRCOG, and the PVPC. The scenic byway route travels through Franklin County (Deerfield, Conway and Ashfield), Hampshire County (Plainfield), and Berkshire County (Savoy and Adams). Completing a corridor management plan will qualify the scenic byway to apply for additional funding for eligible projects along the byway.

Route 122 Scenic Byway

In 2005, the Massachusetts Legislature designated Route 122 in the Towns of Paxton, Rutland, Oakham, Barre, Petersham, Orange, and New Salem as a scenic byway.

The byway travels from the Paxton/Worcester town line to downtown Orange. Paxton, Rutland, Oakham, Barre, and Petersham are in Worcester County, and New Salem and Orange are in Franklin County. In downtown Orange, the byway terminates at the intersection of Route 122 and Route 2A which is part of the eastern section of the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway. In Franklin County, the byway travels along the northern end of the Quabbin Reservoir, an area of great natural beauty. The route also travels into downtown Orange which is characterized by its late 19th Century architecture and industrial heritage. The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) has completed a corridor management plan for the Worcester County section of the trail.

Completed Projects
Funding was obtained through a Fiscal Year 2007 National Scenic Byway grant application to complete a corridor management plan.

On-going Projects

Corridor Management Plan
The FRCOG is currently completing a corridor management plan for the Franklin County section of the byway in New Salem and Orange. The study area includes Route 122 in Orange and New Salem and a half mile buffer on each side of the road from its intersection with Route 2A (the Mohawk Trail.
Scenic Byway (in downtown Orange through New Salem and north of the Quabbin Reservoir. The project area ends at the town border of New Salem and Petersham. The corridor management plan will be completed June 30, 2011. The plan is intended to help guide future byway-related activities and projects. The work will include: the completion of inventories of the historic, cultural, and natural resources; a scenic landscape inventory and assessment; an identification of heritage and recreational tourism-related attractions and support services; and an evaluation of the land use regulations and resource protection measures that are in place. An implementation strategy will be developed to identify and prioritize potential projects and/or improvements for which funding may be sought through the Scenic Byway Program in the future. By completing a corridor management plan, this section of the byway will be eligible to apply for project funding through the National Scenic Byway Program.

Future Projects
There are no future projects planned until the corridor management planning process and the associated public participation has been completed.

Transportation Related Regional Tourism
Regional tourism is an important consideration when discussing transportation and travel in Franklin County. The region is rich in scenic, natural, cultural, and historic features that are appealing to travelers. Tourism also plays an increasingly important role in the region’s economy. The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) estimated that in 2009 domestic travelers in Franklin County spent over $47 million (source: MOTT’s Economic Impact of Travel on Massachusetts Counties, CY2009). Consequently, visitors to the area are an important part of the local economy and important to the economic viability of the region.

The following section provides some details of the numerous tourism-related features in the region. These resources are important to consider as part of comprehensive transportation planning activities.

Scenic Byway Related Tourism
There are scenic, natural, recreational, historic, and cultural resources along the byways that appeal to a wide range of interests. Byway travelers experience a diverse landscape that includes the classic mill towns of New England, rolling hills, rural farmland, mountains, river valleys, and spectacular vistas. Franklin County is rich in natural resources and the byways pass through the most scenic areas. The byways travel to a variety of outdoor activities ranging from hiking, picnicking, kayaking, canoeing, fishing, to skiing. The architecture and historic resources along the byways are also diverse and each has a unique history that is representative of different points in our history. In addition, there are many artisans who currently live and work in the area, and provide opportunities to experience their crafts. The byways of Franklin County provide a region-wide network for travelers to explore these diverse and rich resources.

To assist the traveling public, it is important that information and services are available to them. Information including publications, brochures, maps, websites, and telephone numbers are crucial to encouraging tourism along the scenic byways. The corridor management plans for the scenic byways contain an inventory of the cultural, historical, natural, scenic, recreational, and commercial resources within each byway area. Projects are currently underway to enhance information resources available to byway travelers. Additionally, the corridor management plans identify recommended future projects to encourage visitors to the area.

Bicycle Tourism
During 2009, the FRCOG updated the Franklin County regional bikeway plan. As part of this update, the topic of bicycle-related tourism was discussed. The significance of bicycle tourism and the number of people who travel to Franklin County to bicycle was emphasized during the public input sessions for this update. Consequently, bicycle-related tourism was included in the 2009 Franklin County Bikeway Plan Update and is part of the long term bicycle network plan for the region. Touring by bicycle was considered as new routes were
planned. The *Franklin County Bikeway Plan Update* included the following two goals related to bicycle tourism: 1) encourage bicycling as a regional tourism activity and complete measures which will identify Franklin County as a great place to come and bicycle, and 2) identify bicycle routes that could encourage tourism throughout Franklin County. During the public outreach sessions for the *Bikeway Plan Update*, it was noted that there already is a significant amount of tourism to the region that is related to bicycling activities due to the rural roads, low traffic volumes, beautiful scenery, and the opportunities to ride on roads that are challenging if one chooses to do so. In its June 2010 edition, the New England-focused *Yankee Magazine* promoted the Canalside Trail, part of the Franklin County Bikeway, as the best urban bike path in Massachusetts. The county has several long-term established popular bicycling events, such as the Deerfield Dirt Road Randonee, that help attract tourists to the area. This particular event has been occurring since the 1990’s and directly benefits the Franklin County Land Trust, with many indirect benefits to vendors and the local towns.

The following recommendations related to bicycle tourism were included in the *Bikeway Plan Update*:

- Provide information and resources to encourage tourism opportunities related to bicycling throughout the county.
  - Create promotional materials for the Visitors Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to use in their promotional campaigns.
  - Encourage the Visitors Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) organizations to include information on bicycling in Franklin County in their tourism materials.
  - Create advertisements to be used in bicycling magazines and websites promoting bicycling in Franklin County.

Tourism by bicycle was also included in the *2008 Massachusetts Bicycle Transportation Plan*. One of the goals of this statewide plan is to “develop bicycle tourist publications through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT).” This goal was also considered during the development of the *2009 Franklin County Bikeway Plan Update*, and will be included as future bicycle facility planning is completed.

The FRCOG has already created some bicycling informational resources in the form of bicycling maps of the county. The maps highlight the Franklin County Bikeway routes (both off-road bike paths and shared roadway sections), the services along the way, and other information that may be helpful to cyclists. The maps classify each route as novice, intermediate, or advanced in order to help prospective bicyclists to determine the most suitable route to ride given their ability and physical fitness level. The maps also include information on the services that are available along the routes, and other information that may be helpful to cyclists, such as locations to get water and elevation changes along the various routes.

**Promotion of Regional Tourism**

In general, Franklin County has many resources that make it a wonderful place to explore. The natural and cultural resources in the region provide many benefits to residents and visitors to the region. Currently, local business people and economic development practitioners are focusing efforts on particular niches of the tourism industry, such as agri-tourism, eco-tourism, heritage tourism, and cultural tourism related to artists and craftspersons. Offerings such as farm stands, maple sugar houses serving pancakes, and other forms of interactive experiences are growing in the agricultural industry of Franklin County. Many farms have increased the number of customers and their profit margins while diversifying their revenues by offering farm-related products and activities that would appeal to tourists. Eco-tourism activities include outdoor recreation such as rafting and skiing. There are also education-related opportunities, like guided nature hikes that are available in the region. There are many heritage and cultural tourism assets including established attractions, such as Historic Deerfield, as well as particular events, such as “Cider Days.”
Business activities that rely on natural and historical resources help to preserve these assets and the region’s rural character.

A recent analysis of economic data demonstrated that there is a higher proportion of artists in Franklin County, relative to other areas of the state – creating a thriving “creative economy.” Concentrations of photographers, potters, glassblowers and woodworkers have been identified in the region. Franklin County is fortunate in that there are also assets specific in the region that support this portion of the economy, including entities that provide training in the arts, such as the Hallmark Institute of Photography, and conduct activities and services to help grow the market, such as RiverCulture and North Quabbin Woods.

**Recommendations for Scenic Byways and Tourism**

**Scenic Byway Related**

- Continue work to **permanently protect scenic and agricultural lands** along the scenic byways by purchasing conservation restrictions and/or agricultural preservation restrictions from willing landowners.

- Complete an update of the corridor management plan for the **Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway**.

- Continue work to develop initiatives to **market the byways of Western Massachusetts** as a travel destination.

- Work with the other planning regions and state planning offices in New Hampshire and Vermont to develop a **tri-state bicycle route map** for the Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway.

- **Implement the recommendations** of the corridor management plans for each of the scenic byways.

**Tourism Related**

- Develop **marketing and informational resources** to promote Franklin County as a travel destination.

- Provide information and resources to encourage **tourism opportunities related to bicycling** throughout the county.

- Create **promotional materials** for the Visitors Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) to use in their promotional campaigns.

- Encourage the Visitors Centers, Chambers of Commerce, and the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) organizations to include **information on bicycling** in Franklin County in their tourism materials.

- Create **advertisements to be used in bicycling magazines and websites** promoting bicycling in Franklin County.
Franklin County
State Designated Scenic Byways

Mohawk Trail

Connecticut River Scenic Farm Byway

Sources: Map produced by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department. GIS data sources include MassDOT, MassGIS and FRCOG. Depicted boundaries are approximate and are intended for planning purposes only, not to be used for survey.

Franklin County, Massachusetts