Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

Study Background and Purpose

The Corridor Management Plan was completed for the Route 116 Scenic Byway: Deerfield, Conway, and Ashfield in Franklin County; Plainfield in Hampshire County; and Savoy, Cheshire, and Adams in Berkshire County. The Byway travels through historic farming villages, along scenic back roads, through rural town centers, and thick forested lands along the route from Deerfield in the Connecticut River Valley to Adams in the Berkshire Hills. It is a unique travel route that provides a scenic east-west course through Western Massachusetts.

The entire Byway (Franklin, Hampshire and Berkshire counties) was designated a Scenic Byway by the Massachusetts Legislature on August 4, 2008. The development of the Corridor Management Plan was a collaborative effort of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (the regional planning agency for Franklin County), the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (the regional planning agency for Hampshire County), and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (the regional planning agency for Berkshire County). In addition to closely examining the resources in the towns that are located directly on the Byway, the Corridor Management Plan includes the towns that neighbor the Byway within a half mile on either side including Sunderland, Whately, and Windsor.

Funding was received to complete the Corridor Management Plan through the Federal Scenic Byway Program. The more specific purposes of this project were to:

- Identify and develop strategies to preserve the unique scenic, natural and cultural resources along the Byway;
- Expand economic opportunities related to heritage and recreational tourism along the Byway;
- Plan for a byway roadside educational program promoting the history of the Route 116 Scenic Byway;
- Develop a land protection program for scenic and historic landscapes along the Byway;
- Develop a recreational program that identifies and establishes linkages to hiking trails, state forests, river and water access points, and other cultural and recreational features along the Byway; and

The project was also intended to actively involve the public in the shaping of a Corridor Management Plan for the Byway through regional advisory committees and a participatory planning process.
Corridor Description

The total length of the Byway is 38.74 miles with the mileage for each town as follows: Deerfield (4.99 miles), Conway (6.38 miles), Ashfield (9.98 miles), Plainfield (6.9 miles), Savoy (6.25 miles), Cheshire (2.5 miles), and Adams (1.74 miles). The eastern terminus is at the Deerfield and Sunderland town border, which is located on the Deerfield-Sunderland Bridge over the Connecticut River. The western terminus of the Byway is located at the intersection of Routes 116 and 8A in downtown Adams.

The Byway passes through South Deerfield center, which is a commercial and community center for the town with a historic streetscape, sidewalks and historic structures. The byway route travels west into the hills of Conway and through the rural town center on its Main Street. From the town center the road passes through forested areas that abut the Byway. There are farming and agricultural lands as the road enters the town of Ashfield, once again passing through the heart of this rural community on its Main Street. As it extends through Ashfield there are several locations where the Byway passes through smaller farming villages often located at the intersections of roadways.

As the byway extends through Plainfield, it passes the town center and through a landscape composed of agricultural fields and forests. In this stretch, the Byway also passes Plainfield Pond and the 7,882-acre Kenneth Dubuque State Forest.

The Berkshire County section of the Byway travels through the densely forested highland of Savoy before descending into the rolling hills and open views of Cheshire. The view of Mount Greylock, Massachusetts’ highest peak becomes increasingly formidable. The terminus of the Byway in Adams is notable for historic mill buildings, the Ashuwillticook Trail and the Hoosic River itself.

The Planning Process

Throughout the planning process, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) worked with the Route 116 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee. The regional planning agencies and the Advisory Committee worked to recognize, interpret, preserve and promote the unique scenic, natural, recreational, historical, cultural, and archeological resources in the Route 116 study area.

FRCOG, PVPC and BRPC’s role in the development of the Corridor Management Plan was to gather pertinent information about Route 116 by working with local residents, officials, and other interested stakeholders. The FRCOG worked closely with the Route 116 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee throughout the process. The plan reflects the common goals of the communities along the Byway. It details the information gathered, conclusions that were reached, and recommendations that were identified during the process.
**Public Participation Process**

A successful scenic byway program depends on the commitment, enthusiasm and support of community members and municipal officials. A Corridor Management Plan is intended to reflect the vision for the Byway and the surrounding area that the communities along the Byway worked to develop together.

The Route 116 Scenic Byway Advisory Committee was comprised of municipal officials, landowners, business owners and interested citizens. The role of the committee was to develop the Corridor Management Plan and prioritize recommendations for implementation. The Byway Advisory Committee met quarterly throughout the two-year period in which the plan was crafted. The draft chapters were reviewed by the Advisory Committee throughout their development. In addition, the final draft chapters were posted for public review on the FRCOG, BRPC, and PVPC’s websites. The complete draft report was presented at two public review forums held on June 18, 2013, and June 25, 2013. A 30-day public-comment period held from June 26 to July 26, 2013, was advertised in the Greenfield Recorder, the Daily Hampshire Gazette, and the North Adams Transcript.

FRCOG, PVPC, and BRPC greatly appreciate the hard work, advice, and guidance that the Byway Advisory Committee provided throughout the development of this Plan. The dedication that the committee has shown to this project reflects the deep caring that each member has for his/her community.

**Byway Vision Statement and Goals**

A Corridor Management Plan is a tool that provides an inventory and assessment of important resources and articulates specific strategies and actions designed to achieve identified and measurable results. In order to get to specific actions it is important that the common direction of the Byway be stated. This is done through the use of a vision statement and goals.

**Vision Statement**

*The Route 116 Scenic Byway was recognized as a scenic resource by the Massachusetts State Legislature on August 4, 2008. The Route 116 Scenic Byway travels through the towns of Deerfield, Conway, Ashfield, Plainfield, Savoy, Cheshire, and Adams. The*
The corridor is rich in history and heritage, and natural, cultural, architectural, and recreational resources.

The vision for the Route 116 Scenic Byway and the Corridor Management Plan is to preserve and protect the scenic qualities, natural resources, historic structures/places, cultural resources and community character while educating people about the tourism, recreational, and economic opportunities along the Byway.

Broad Goals for the Plan

- **Promote and enhance roadway safety while taking into consideration the rural qualities of the Byway.**

- **Preserve and enhance the character of the corridor by purchasing conservation restrictions, agricultural preservation restrictions, or fee interest from willing property owners to permanently protect important viewsheds and natural resources.**

- **Maintain, protect, and enhance the historical resources, villages and districts within the project area.**

- **Promote a low impact approach to tourism that highlights the natural, recreational, historical and cultural resources but minimizes potential negative impacts to these resources (traffic congestion).**

- **Enhance and develop information and educational resources available to tourists for sites located in the greater Byway area.**

- **Support, maintain and enhance the quality of outdoor recreational experiences (such as hiking, picnicking, kayaking or canoeing) available to Byway users.**

- **Increase universal access to recreation areas and associated facilities.**

- **Promote educational opportunities for students and the general public related to Byway resources.**
• Support projects to improve the safety of the Byway for motorists, pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles as appropriate to the roadway conditions such as scenic pull-off areas.
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.

Route 116 Scenic Byway
Corridor Management Plan (Berkshire County Region)

Corridor          Major Road          Stream, River          Water

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Town Boundary    Road
Route 116 Scenic Byway
Corridor Management Plan (Franklin County Region)