



Dalton Highway State Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP)

Meeting Summary: Advisory Team Meeting #1

Thursday, February 12, 2009, 9:00am to 1:00pm
BLM Offices, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks AK 99709

Attendees: Don Pendergrast—National Park Service, Gates of the Arctic NP&P
Roger Delaney—Bureau of Land Management
Roger Kaye—USFWS, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
Burke Barrick—Alaska State Troopers
Arch Thompson—National Park Service
Bill Rodasky—NMS/Arctic Caribou Inn
Charity Gadapee—Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau
Meadow Bailey—AK Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Mike Hertlein—Private property owner

Via Teleconference:

Eugene Ervine—Bureau of Land Management
Ben Greene—North Slope Borough, Planning Department
Paul Hugo—Naqragmiut Tribal EPA Planner, Anaktuvuk Pass
Heidi Schoppenhorst—Community of Wiseman/Boreal Lodge

Facilitator: Kathlene Rowell –ADNR

Meeting Outline

1. INTRODUCTION

- Round-table introductions
- Introduction/Review of CPP
- Purpose of the Advisory Team/Requirements
- Project Timeline

2. OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

3. VISIONING SESSION

- What is special about the Dalton Highway?
- Envision the byway in 10-15 years—what do you hope to see? How would you like to be able to describe a visitor's experience?
- How can we achieve this vision for the future?

Introduction Overview

After brief introductions, the facilitator presented an overview of what a corridor partnership plan is and what to expect from its planning process. The following items were discussed:

1. *What is a Corridor Partnership Plan?*

- Identifies intrinsic qualities
- Makes recommendations, *not* policies
- Is an advisory document, *not* a regulatory document
- Is an expression of local desires

2. Definition

- “A comprehensive CPP is critical for identifying the intrinsic qualities of your scenic byway and guiding the management of resources to protect and enhance those qualities. This plan should be the primary tool to help you and your partners reach your goals. CPPs also help communicate your vision to the community, potential partners, and others concerned with the experience that the byway provides.”
- From *Scenic Byways: A guide for roadside improvements*—USDA Forest Service

3. Advantages of Corridor Partnership Plans

- Strengthening of community & agency partnerships
- Broad awareness of issues & needs
- Funding opportunities
- Recognition of byway resources/businesses
- Voluntary, national recognition

This was the first meeting of the Dalton Highway Scenic Byway *Advisory Team*. The Advisory Team is comprised of volunteers who will be responsible for the following:

- To be a collective voice for byway interests
- To review drafts of the plan and submit comments/suggestions
- To help provide background information when applicable
- To attend all Advisory Team meetings and public meetings when able
- To oversee and implement the plan upon its completion

The following 2009 *project timeline* was introduced:

- *February 12th*: AT meeting #1
- *April*: First DRAFT of plan complete – distribute to AT and public for review
- *April/May*: AT meeting #2 (discuss first draft)
- *July*: Second DRAFT complete – available for public review
- *August*: Public meetings – Round 2
- *October*: Advisory Team meeting #3 - teleconference
- *December*: Publish and distribute FINAL PLAN

Overview of Public Comments Received

Not much time was spent in this discussion. Public safety, facilities maintenance and management, and increased traffic/visitation continue to be the main concerns. Please see the notes under “Visioning Session” for a complete list of topics discussed during this meeting.

Challenges with Teleconferencing

Unfortunately we had a couple problems with our teleconference connections. The individual who planned to operate the telephone bridge was unable to do so due to an emergency. A new bridge had to be established from Anchorage instead of Fairbanks. Therefore, those who attempted to call at 9:00am were unable to connect. At 10:00am the alternate bridge was ready and we called participants to connect them. These four participants missed the introductory information presented above, but were given the opportunity to participate in the visioning session.

The second issue was that teleconference participants were having a difficult time hearing the discussion. Three teleconference participants shared their comments and exited. One participant stayed on the line for the duration of the meeting.

In subsequent meetings we will do our best to have teleconferencing as an option; however, it is difficult to guarantee that this service will be available and optimal.

Visioning Session

The main objective of the meeting was for participants to share their thoughts on the following questions:

- What is special about the Dalton Highway?
- Envision the byway in 10-15 years—what do you hope to see? How would you like to be able to describe a visitor's experience?

What is special about the Dalton Highway?

- Wild character—non-commercial; limited number of distracting visual intrusions
- Nodes—restrict commercial development to nodes
 - o Yukon Crossing
 - o Coldfoot
 - o Chandalar Shelf (DOT camp included)
 - o Happy Valley
(Deadhorse)
- Strong cultural ties
- Inspiring example of multi-use development
- The Trans-Alaska Pipeline parallels the byway
- This is the only U.S. road leading to/through the arctic
- Attributes provide a unique journey unmatched by any other roadway in the nation
- Traverses a continuum of natural environments, from boreal forest to the coastal plain
- Has interesting and dramatic scenic features
- Wildlife
- Important wilderness areas, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
- Offers unique access to arctic ecosystems for study, visitation, etc.
- Resources found along the Dalton Highway are especially fragile due to the climate; this includes wildlife, fish, plants, and the landscape, which do not rebound quickly after impacts
- The highway wasn't built to connect towns, people, etc. as other roads are; the highway was built to service oil exportation
- This road exposes otherwise secluded residents & the resources they depend on for survival to potential degradation and/or depletion

How do you envision the byway in 10-15 years?

- Will be a place to see wildlife near the highway and fish in the streams
- Will be an undeveloped drive with views of wildlife
- Will be a place where visitors can experience an area as unchanged as possible
- Will be a place where visitors are educated but not catered to
- Will be a drive where travelers can feel a sense of adventure
- Will have a byway community that supports the proper maintenance of byway facilities
- Will have an improved trash removal system and promote a strong leave-no-trace ethic
- Will be safe
- Will stretch to the Arctic Ocean
- Will have limited trail development
- Will have limited visual intrusions from private property owners
- Will not impact Native allotments and subsistence activities
- Will protect caribou migration

- Will be a place where hunters are educated about regulations, property boundaries
- Will have limited signage for safety and wayfinding; unnecessary signage will be eliminated (including scenic byway signs, or limit these signs to development nodes)
- Will have a pristine viewshed
- Will have a working CPP that benefits communities and cultural education
- Will have an emergency medical service plan
- Will have improved cell coverage/communication
- Will be supported by a community that values strong stewardship and safety
- Will de-emphasize the commercial aspects of the Scenic Byway organization
- Will have a sustainable number of visitors that does not strain public safety infrastructure
- Will have an adequate number of rest stops and restrooms
- Will supplement static interpretation with audio tours
- Will have interpretation that enhances a visitor's experience without harming and detracting from the natural environment
- Byway travelers understand the road was built for industry, not transportation
- Byways travelers understand that this vast expanse of wilderness is inhabited by people living a subsistence lifestyle
- Byway group will have a better understanding of who is driving the byway and why