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Wayfinding, Interpretation and Byway Discovery Zones



This chapter will present a general summary of the wayfinding, interpretation, and signage found along the Nanticoke Heritage Byway (NHB) corridor. It will also define several wayfinding goals and objectives to assist in the development of a logical Wayfinding and Interpretation Assessment Plan (WIAP) and encourage enhanced wayfinding, interpretation and signage along the Byway corridor. This chapter will also focus on the development and definition of key Discovery Zones to be located along the Byway.

NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY CMP POINT #14

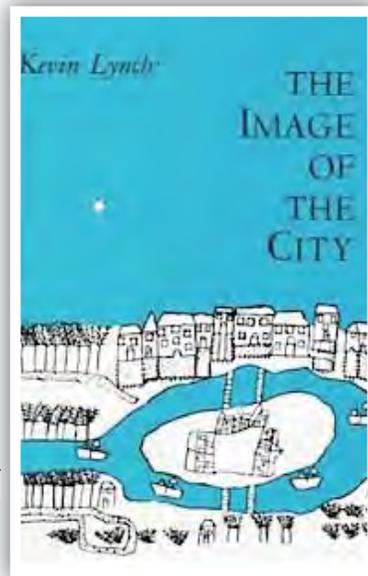
A description of what you plan to do to explain and interpret your byway's significant resources to visitors.

Wayfinding is defined as signs, maps, and other graphic or audible methods used to convey location and directions. Proper wayfinding allows for the traveler to successfully move in their present space to their destination, even if the destination is imprecisely known. In its simplest form, wayfinding answers the questions, "Where am I?" and "Which way am I facing?" It allows the user to make correct decisions and helps form a visual image of a space. This information is commonly spatial and environmental and is often the result of a deliberate plan or series of plans.

Traditional signage design is a small component of the larger concept of wayfinding. To manifest efficiency in wayfinding, the designer(s) assess all of the environmental issues that affect the user's ability to find their way along or within a location or along a corridor, such as this Byway. The result is a plan and/or design approach that produces a high-quality communications solution, capable of identifying sources of confusion in the environment, which may be operational, organizational, having to do with terminology, or due to the design of the site or resource itself. Wayfinding resolves these issues and presents an appropriate solution or a variety of options that the traveler can choose from.

During the development of this CMP there were many community workshops held. Wayfinding, and signage in general, came up as a topic of discussion at every workshop. It was clear that the public and the Steering Committee would like to see a comprehensive, detailed Wayfinding and Interpretation Assessment Plan (WIAP) produced in the short-term (1-2 years). A WIAP provides a detailed picture of existing wayfinding and interpretation and offers detailed methods to improve (if needed) the wayfinding environment along with locational options and suggestions.

Urban planner Kevin A. Lynch is credited with first using the term "Wayfinding" in his 1960 book *Image of the City*, where he describes wayfinding as "a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment."



Wayfinding design encompasses six (6) key principles:

1. Create an identity or theme at each location, different from all others (this will be discussed in the Discovery Zone chapter of this CMP as well)
2. Use landmarks to provide orientation cues and memorable locations
3. Create well-structured and easy to traverse pathways
4. Create regions of differing visual character
5. Don't give the user too many choices in navigation – keep it simple
6. Provide effective signs at decisions points to help wayfinding decisions

7.1 Wayfinding

Currently, the Nanticoke Heritage Byway has a limited wayfinding system in place, both in terms of signage along the corridor, and “soft” wayfinding such as brochures, maps, and booklets. Challenges presented to the traveler come in the form of road name changes, turns and deviations, and the loop and spur type layout of the Byway. The Byway could benefit greatly from the implementation of accurate and efficient wayfinding and the development of a well-reasoned WIAP will be crucial to ensuring the fulfillment of the Byway traveler’s experience.

Based on a proper understanding of the unique character and story of the NHB corridor, the following goals and objectives are considered critical to the development of an efficient WIAP.

- Relay the corridor’s history and culture through wayfinding design solutions.
- Enhance the arrival and wayfinding experience along the corridor through gateway development and enhanced wayfinding signage.
- Provide information (digital, paper, etc.) to assist travelers so they can easily access the corridor’s intrinsic resources.
- Enhance the NHB’s image as an accessible, attractive, and active destination through distinctive, themed/branded, useful graphics and wayfinding mediums.
- Present the travelling public with a cohesive wayfinding system that is recognizable and unique.
- Simplify traffic patterns by directing the travelling public along the most desirable routes.
- Remove Byway traveler’s anxieties and make their experience more memorable.
- Coordinate signage with other Byways in the region.

7.3 Wayfinding Categories

The following list of wayfinding categories group the different forms of wayfinding into similar areas:

Gateway/Entrance

Gateway features create a memorable impression on the traveler, signifying the boundary of the Byway. Gateway features can be located at the entrance,

termini, and at key locations along the corridor where main access points enter or merge with the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. Gateway features help to define the given space of a corridor and let the traveler know they are entering a uniquely special place.

Orientation

Orientation wayfinding and signage identifies direction and distance to intrinsic resources and other points of interest located along the Byway.

Identification

Identification signage and/or wayfinding specifies the names of intrinsic resources and points of interest for travelers.

Interpretive

Interpretive signage instructs or provides the education information about a site, resource, or location. Interpretive wayfinding relays the elements that are most personal and inherently unique to the corridor.

Regulatory

Regulatory signage provides the traveler with the applicable rules, laws, or safety information of the Byway.

7.4 Interpretation

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) defines interpretation as a “mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource” (Source: National Association for Interpretation, 2014). Through interpretation, the traveler is able to receive education and information about a resource. Interpretation is a vital function for the Scenic Byway industry as travelers seek information to build stronger connections with a resource, and ultimately, the Byway itself. The section will review interpretation and its beneficial uses along the NHB and address the different mediums, themes, and principles.

Through education, interpretation builds knowledge and helps to accomplish the NHB’s vision. Interpretation enhances understanding, resulting in a better informed constituency for supporting the

corridor's goals and strategies. It also encourages a sense of stewardship and ownership among both visitors and stakeholders. Interpretation encourages curiosity and provokes thought. It can come in a variety of forms, more than just words and images; interpretation can be incorporated into buildings and elements without labels or explanation.

7.4.1 Interpretive Mediums

There are a variety of mediums that can be used for the production and delivery of interpretation. Examples of these different presentation mediums are as follows:

Tours

Tours provide the benefit of a guided experience, narrated with a special understanding of the corridor. Travelers can use tours to gain unique perspectives on intrinsic resources that would otherwise go unshared. Tours along a Byway are one of the most utilized interpretive techniques and should be applied to the NHB as well.

Signage

Signage is extremely important for the purposes of sharing information or messages to travelers. Signage can take a variety of forms, be it free standing or incorporated into a building or structure/resource. Interpretive elements can also coexist with other types of signage such as wayfinding/maps with an interpretive sidebar.

Media/Digital Technology

Interpretation that delivers shared information or messages through technological devices is an emerging and constantly advancing/evolving area of visitor interpretation. Examples of such technologies include, but are not limited to: smartphones; electronic kiosks linked to global positioning systems (GPS), sound wands or listening devices linked to broadcast systems; and low-wattage FM radio stations. Social media also assists with interpretation through the use of uploaded videos, input and reviews, blogs, or other social media platforms. Social media can be a major component of this medium as it can oftentimes be a traveler's first exposure/impression of the Byway.

Programming

Programming includes non-recurring events, occurring at a specific period of time and date(s), such as special events, classes, lectures, symposia, and workshops.

Web Learning

Web learning involves information and images that are shared via the internet, including: activities; games; curriculum; identification; and graphics.

Exhibits

Through exhibits, travelers interact with three-dimensional displays, or activities, designed to be self-explanatory (independent of pre-programming or a guide).

7.4.2 Interpretive Categories/Themes

The NHB corridor encompasses several different, significant themes, including: seafaring and maritime heritage; agriculture and farming; Native American legacy through the Nanticoke Indian Association; and the influence on the region of DuPont and early to mid-twentieth century industry. These interpretive themes should be embraced by the Byway and should be a primary focus for all interpretation and signage that is developed along the corridor.

7.4.2 Interpretive Categories/Themes

The following principles are guidelines that interpretive material or mediums should follow to most accurately relay the story of the NHB corridor:

- Be appropriate and to the point – All elements of signage and interpretation along the Byway should be designed and constructed in consideration of the scale to the use and user.
- Be of consistent attitude – Everything seen and experienced by the public should reflect a consistent attitude and philosophy of the Byway. Publications (fliers, brochures, announcements, website, etc.) should be cohesive in nature, design, and style. This approach eliminates traveler confusion by indicating that the materials have emerged from, and most importantly, represents the character of the Nanticoke Heritage Byway.
- Engage all senses – The use of plants or other natural material for color, texture, smell, light,

sound, and scale have the ability to tell or enhance a story, when appropriate.

- Embrace change – Given the eventuality that resources and landscapes will grow, change, and even decay over time, natural properties should be included in the aesthetic message. Preparation should be made for this consideration early in the design process.
- Fit the historic context – Sign and marker design should represent the historical elements of the Nanticoke Heritage Byway without replicating them. Design concepts can express a sense of innovation while still reflecting the corridor’s past values.
- Use character befitting the place – Regional form and function should greatly influence the character of signage. The character of the naturalistic environment, so important to travelers and stakeholders, should be retained in displays, pathways, buildings, parking, and outdoor interpretive shelters. The Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) manual, prepared by DelDOT, may be a useful resource to ensure that this area of concern is addressed.
- Structures and materials tell the story – Style, design, and material types relay the NHB’s story just as effectively as words and graphic images. A structure can greatly influence visitor experience, allowing people to circulate in one direction, but not another. Structures can frame, inhibit, or enhance natural views. They can allow a traveler to sit, converse, participate, and interact, or not. Proper design should allow for the materials to relay the intended message, story, and feelings to the traveler.
- Place only a few, small, harmonious signs – It is important to consider that signs, markers, and other built elements are man-made items in natural landscapes. These physical structures, if not managed, have the potential to distract from the immersive quality of the intrinsic resource. It is important that the traveler feels a connection with the natural setting. Again, DelDOT’s CSS manual may assist with this effort.
- Be unobtrusive – Signage and markers should be located among the landscape, surrounded by vegetation when possible. This strategy gives the appearance that they have coexisted with the natural environment, even when they are new.
- Be polite – All signs and interpretation should have good manners. They should reflect the human hand and craftsman’s mind, displaying elements of warmth and imperfection that are relatable to the traveler.
- Cluster and incorporate – Interpretive markers should be located near, and incorporated into the design of the existing built element, when possible. This helps to avoid cluttering the landscape with signage.
- Use positive language – Emphasis should be placed on the behavior and activity that is encouraged at a particular location, as opposed to the negative connotation that regulation carries.
- Communicate effectively – Interpretation and wayfinding rely on effective communication. This requires the NHB to portray a recognizable identity and brand.
- Acknowledge contributions – Many opportunities exist to place donor recognition at built elements along the Byway, including: shelters; benches; graphic panels; and their supports. Visual recognition through engravings or symbols should ideally occur in a designated place, in standard design style, and on specific built elements. Donor recognition should be consolidated.

7.5 Discovery Zones

The Western Sussex County area of Delaware shares many common themes. Similar landscapes, cultural ties, development patterns, and recreational themes exist throughout the region. However, each community along the Byway corridor maintains their own unique qualities, perspectives, and activity levels. The concept of Discovery Zones helps highlight each of these special community characteristics, while tying together the region through the Nanticoke Heritage Byway. The Nanticoke Heritage Byway Discovery Zones are more than just geographic places, notated on maps and promotional publications. They define activity areas, personify each community’s personality and heritage, help relay the Byway story, and assist travelers in planning and making the most of their trip to the region.

Four (4) Discovery Zones have been identified for the NHB. These locations were determined and confirmed through much discussion at community workshops and Steering Committee meetings. The following four (4) Discovery Zones of the NHB are:

7.5.1 Seaford/Blades Discovery Zone

This Discovery Zone includes the following Intrinsic Resources:

- Cannon-Maston House; Edgar and Rachel Ross House; First National Bank of Seaford; Former DuPont Factory; Harriet Tubman Marker; Hearn and Rawlins Mill; Historic Seaford; Ross Mansion and Plantation; Seaford Museum; Seaford Train Complex; St. Luke’s Protestant Episcopal Church.



7.5.2 Laurel Discovery Zone

This Discovery Zone includes the following Intrinsic Resources:

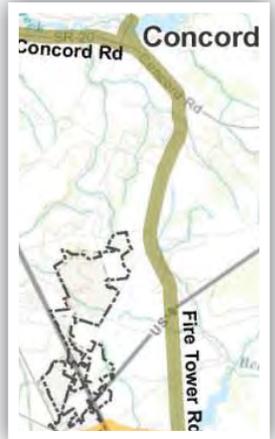
- Chipman’s Mill; Christ United Methodist Church; DuPont Factory Workers Homes; Historic Laurel; Laurel Heritage Museum; Old Christ Church; Ross Point School; Spring Garden; St. Philip’s Protestant Episcopal Church; Trap Pond State Park.



7.5.3 Concord Discovery Zone

This Discovery Zone includes the following Intrinsic Resources:

- Concord Pond Dam; Pine Grove Furnace Site.



7.5.4 Bethel/Woodland Discovery Zone

This Discovery Zone includes the following Intrinsic Resources:

- Bethel Historic District; Bethel Heritage Museum; Bethel Memorial Park; Bethel Store; Philips Landing State Park and Captain John Smith Memorial; Sailor’s Bethel Methodist Church and Graveyard; Cannon Hall; Woodland Ferry; Woodland United Methodist Church.



7.6 Next Steps

The NHB Steering Committee should focus on the following recommended steps in an effort to create a wayfinding and interpretation atmosphere along the NHB corridor that aligns with the vision and goals of the Byway communities and this CMP. In addition, promoting and adhering to the defined Discovery Zones and their character and “theme” should be a key item of focus.

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A plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not get in the way of the scenery, but still be sufficient to help tourists find their way. This includes, where appropriate, signs for international tourists who may not speak or read English fluently.

- Conduct an inventory of all existing and planned wayfinding and interpretation along the entire corridor, and possibly the region. The inventory should include a condition assessment and photo log and be available in GIS and GPS formats.
- Create an interpretative plan matrix that identifies, for each category, the statement of significance, subthemes, target audience/market, and the services and media that will be used.
- Addressing the maintenance and operations of the wayfinding and interpretation along the corridor, both existing and planned, is vital. The NHB should pursue active and continued coordination with DelDOT and the Byway's local municipalities. Adherence to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is imperative.
- Develop a Wayfinding and Interpretation Design Manual to be shared with local and state regulatory entities. This Design Manual can be part of the WIAP, if desired.
- Develop a series of prototype signs and panels, able to be replicated, to ensure consistency with the planned NHB wayfinding and interpretation.
- Assess the multi-lingual wayfinding and interpretation needs of the corridor.
- Ensure that the number and placement of signs will not impact traveler safety or the visitor's experience.
- Embrace and promote the four (4) identified Discovery Zones along the Byway.