



**Otter Trail Scenic Byway  
Investment Priorities Addendum  
Corridor Management Plan  
April 2015**

## **Acknowledgements**

Jean Bowman, Fergus Falls

Nick Leonard, Otter Tail Lakes Country Tourism Association

Emily Rutten, Perham Chamber

Jennifer Hams, Pelican Rapids Chamber

Mike Henkenius, City of Battle Lake

Brad Stevens, Otter Tail Convention and Visitors Bureau

Mary Murphy, Clitherall

Janice Satre / Mayor of Vining, Vining

Darla Ellingson, History Museum of East Otter Tail County

Larry Martin, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Jeff Wiersma, Glendalough State Park

## **Overview**

Members of the Otter Trail Scenic Byway in conjunction with West Central Initiative developed this project-specific addendum, which identifies and prioritizes projects from 2015 onward. The intent of this document is to guide the byway in the development and funding of projects in addition to facilitating partnerships between local and regional organizations. The byway group systematically chose the projects in order to achieve the vision and goals for the byway.

## **Vision**

The surrounding Otter Tail County resources, when connected by this distinctive Scenic Byway, can provide visitors and residents with a unique and meaningful way to explore and enjoy the “sense of place” found within this beautiful lake and prairie region of Minnesota.

## **Goals**

1. Interpret the rich history found along the Byway’s scenic and historic route in an effort to “bring-to-life” the historic, cultural and natural resources.
2. Provide protection and maintain these resources for future generations.
3. Utilize the Byway as an attraction that can provide economic impacts to businesses and communities throughout the region, increasing the number of visitors and encouraging longer stays and repeat visitation.
4. Provide safe travel along the Byway route for the visiting public by providing clear signage and adequate pull-offs at roadside visitor facilities.

## **Investment Priorities**

The investment priorities identified below were developed by the members of the Otter Trail Scenic Byway:

### Intrinsic Resource / Planning

1. Conduct an assessment of current roadside interpretation along the Byway and consider maintenance of interpretive kiosks, panels and sites as enhancements are needed.
2. Ensure turn-outs and pull-off areas along the Byway are safe and provide adequate room for all types of vehicles.

## Marketing

1. Install a sign on Interstate 94 to designate the Otter Trail Scenic Byway's presence.
2. Develop additional marketing and informational tools such as digital maps, a GIS mapping system and a Touring App.
  - The Committee will work with the regional tourism entities, the Ottertail Community Group and the State Office of Tourism to develop and advance marketing, informational and interpretive materials.

## Planning

1. Coordinate with regional trails groups to identify ways to jointly market amenities and expand bicycle facilities when possible.
  - Work with a trails group representative to solidify partnership.
2. Collaborate with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, and the State Parks to ensure projects and investments align when possible.

## **Projects**

The following projects were identified by the Otter Trail Scenic Byway members, based upon the above investment priorities:

### **Transportation**

1. Create a pull-off area at County Road 59 between Vining and Urbank.

### **Marketing**

1. Scenic Byway, Trails and Points of Interest Navigation or Touring App
2. Greater and more cohesive marketing at the State level
3. Focus on targeted groups such as:
  - i. Motorcyclists – Ensure Otter Trail Byway brochure is made available in Motorcycle shops.
  - ii. Bicyclists
  - iii. Birders
  - iv. Scenic Drivers and Tourists

## **Recommendations**

Based upon the 14 National Scenic Byway CMP components we recommend the Otter Trail Scenic Byway expand on the prioritized projects by including the following information in their CMP or as an addendum to the CMP:

1. A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location of intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the corridor. U. S. Geological Survey maps of your corridor region are ideal and inexpensive base maps for your corridor management planning group,
2. A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians, and
3. Conduct a complete update of the CMP.

## Funding

### What funding sources are currently available to achieve the various investments identified?

1. Are there annual dues collected from counties or cities involved in the Byway?
2. Are there contributions or donations from local businesses or communities?

#### *FHWA National Scenic Byway Program*

---

##### **Eligible Activities**

- a. State and Tribal Programs
- b. Corridor Management Plan
- c. Safety Improvements
- d. Byway Facilities
- e. Access to Recreation
- f. Resource Protection
- g. Interpretive Information
- h. Marketing Program

\*Funding through FHWA is no longer available. The current federal fiscal year, which started October 1, 2014, is the final year to allocate byway grant funds. Funds must be obligated by the State DOT by September 30, 2015 – that means the projects must be under agreement, although the funds do not have to be spent by that date.

\*During the November Coordinator Call there was one question about the likelihood of byways receiving discretionary funds again. With the current situation regarding the Highway Users Trust Fund, there are not enough funds to keep existing programs going and that needs to be addressed before any conversation can begin regarding re-establishing funds for programs that lost funding in recent years.

**Purpose**

Grants are available to use in marketing programs that will attract nonresident travelers to the state and encourage Minnesota residents to vacation within the state. Grant funding can be used for advertising, trade and sports shows, familiarization tours, direct mail, international sales missions and research.

Organizations must represent a single facet of the travel industry, or be a local organization representing all facets of the travel industry and designated as the primary tourism promotion organization for a city or community to qualify for the grants program. Scenic Byway grants are offered to non-profit scenic byway organizations or in the absence of an established organization a scenic byway application may be submitted on the byway's behalf by a non-profit tourism organization along the byway.

**Who may apply?**

Minnesota non-profit organizations formed for the primary purpose of tourism promotion or having tourism marketing as a major component of their programming, and scenic byway organizations having scenic byway tourism marketing as a component of their programming.

**Eligible Activities**

1. Consumer Advertising, Travel Trade Advertising
2. U.S. Travel Trade Shows, International Trade Shows
3. Out-of-State Sport Shows
4. Meetings and Conventions and Sports Marketing Trade Shows
5. Media Familiarization Tours, Travel Trade Familiarization Tours
6. International Sales Missions
7. Direct Marketing
8. Research

**Funding**

- A maximum of \$8,000 is available for component and special grants, per organization.
- A maximum of \$8,000 is available for a multi-community grant and is considered separate from each individual partner's maximum funding. Organizations are allowed to participate in only one multicomunity grant.
- Special grants will be subject to the same funding cap.
- Final funding for all grants is dependent upon the number of requests received and the amount of funding available.

**Link**

<http://www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/ways-to-get-involved/grants/>

## *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Grants*

---

### *Natural and Scenic Area Grants*

**Purpose**

To increase, protect and enhance natural and scenic areas. This program is established in [Minnesota Statutes 85.019](#). For more information, see the [Natural and Scenic Area Program](#).

**Who may apply?**

Cities, counties, townships and school districts.

**Eligible Projects**

Eligible projects include fee title acquisition and permanent easement acquisition. Minimal betterment activities are eligible as part of the proposed acquisition project and include interpretive, educational or boundary signing and protective fencing. For more information, read the use guidelines in the [Program Manual](#).

Funding

**Link**

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/land/nsa/index.html>

### *Outdoor Recreation Grants*

**Purpose**

Park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds. All park projects must meet requirements for perpetual outdoor recreation use.

**Who may apply?**

Cities, counties, townships and recognized tribal governments.

**Eligible Projects**

Park acquisition and/or development/redevelopment including, internal park trails, picnic shelters, playgrounds, athletic facilities, boat accesses, fishing piers, swimming beaches and campgrounds. All park projects must meet requirements for perpetual outdoor recreation use.

**Funding**

Total project cost of at least \$10,000. Grants are reimbursed based up to 50 percent of the total eligible costs. The maximum grant award is \$100,000.

**Link**

[http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor\\_rec.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html)



## *Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program*

### **Purpose**

To provide grants to local units of government to support parks and trails of regional or statewide significance. Funding for this grant program is from the Parks and Trails Fund created by the Minnesota Legislature from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment.

### **Who may apply?**

Cities, counties, and townships outside of the seven county metropolitan area as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 473.121, subdivision 2.

### **Eligible Projects**

Eligible projects include acquisition, development, improvement, and restoration of park and trail facilities of regional or statewide significance. All park projects must meet requirements for perpetual outdoor recreational use. Trail acquisition projects require a perpetual easement for recreational purposes. Trail development projects require a 20 year maintenance commitment by the project sponsor.

### **Funding**

Grants are reimbursement based up to 100% of the total eligible project costs. Additional consideration in the selection process will be given to applicants that provide a non-state cash match.

Project costs must be incurred and paid before reimbursement can be made. Project costs become eligible for reimbursement once a contract agreement is established between the DNR and the grantee.

The minimum grant award is \$20,000. Grant funding available:

- FY 2015 funds: \$3,914,880 for the grant program.

### **Link**

[http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt\\_legacy.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt_legacy.html)

Eligible projects fall into three project categories: **community history projects, historic preservation projects, and structured grants**. Keep in mind that these are guidelines, not a catalog of all possible projects. In addition, some projects might appear to fit under more than one category. If your planned project does not appear to fit into one of these categories, or if you are unsure which category should be applied to your project, call, e-mail, or write the Grants Office before submitting an application

### *Interpretive Programs and Public Education*

#### **Purpose**

Public Education offers an opportunity for the grantee to provide instruction or assistance with the development and promotion of a historical understanding of Minnesota history that will be of benefit to the public. The grants program will support these kinds of projects if project materials (papers, recordings, and other documents) will be preserved in a repository accessible to the public. Public Education projects must demonstrate:

- Association with Minnesota history
- How the public will benefit
- The importance of promoting education on a particular Minnesota history topic
- How public education will further a Minnesota history legacy

#### **Who may apply?**

1. Nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations
2. Government units
3. Tribes
4. Educational organizations and institutions

#### **Eligible projects include but are not limited to:**

1. Research:
  - Gathering research scattered at numerous institutions
  - Gathering research materials to ground in solid history
  - Analyzing resources that were previously assembled
  - Organizing resources in preparation for an implementation project
  - Drafting text intended to communicate history
  - Formal interpretive plans created by interpretive specialists
2. Exhibits:
  - Interpretive exhibits telling compelling stories from the community
  - Vignettes (e.g., a historical family room)
  - Particular local collections (local art, dolls, etc.)
3. Films: Research, writing the script, editing document, production, post-production, distribution.
4. Historical markers: Single markers or marker systems in a variety of materials. More than simple labels, markers must communicate a story.
5. Audio-visual presentations
6. Tour brochures
7. Hosting or planning a conference, program, or workshop

8. Hiring a consultant to develop a Minnesota history-based public educational kit/curriculum for a community, school, or organization
9. Web Development:
  - Development of website and/or web capabilities that enhances Minnesota history
  - Online indexes/databases of government records, city directories, cemetery records, etc.
  - Development of video or audio podcasts that include Minnesota history topics, historic tours, and oral histories
10. Development of mobile/web apps
11. Interactive Technology such as:
  - Kiosks/touch screens
  - Augmented reality technology
  - Game-based learning development (video games, alternate reality games, crowdsourcing games, etc.)

**Funding**

Varies

**Link**

<http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants/interpretive-programs-and-public-education>

**Purpose – Greater Minnesota**

*For FY16 we have \$1.5M Transportation Alternative funding available to use for Scenic Byways projects.* TAP combines funding for Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School infrastructure, and Scenic Byways - separate programs under the previous federal transportation bill - into one grant program. Minnesota will be soliciting approximately \$7.5 million across the state. Interested applicants must submit a letter of intent describing the key components of their project by Oct. 31, 2014. A regional representative will contact applicants to help review the project proposal and the steps necessary for delivering a federally funded project prior to local communities and regional agencies submitting a full grant application.

**Who may apply?**

1. Local governments;
2. Regional transportation authorities;
3. Transit agencies;
4. Natural resource or public land agencies;
5. School districts, local education agencies, or schools;
6. Tribal governments; and
7. Any other local or regional governmental entity with responsibility for oversight of transportation or recreational trails (other than a metropolitan planning organization or a State agency) that the State determines to be eligible, consistent with the goals of subsection (c) of section 213 of title 23

**Eligible Activities**

1. Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas.
2. Community Improvement activities, including –
  - i. Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising;
  - ii. Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities;
  - iii. Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way to improve roadway safety, prevent against invasive species, and provide erosion control;
  - iv. Archeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of transportation project eligible under this title.

**Cost Sharing**

For all Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects, including Safe Routes to School (SRTS) projects funded with TAP funds, the Federal share is the same as for the general Federal aid highway program: 80 percent Federal/20 percent State or local match subject to the sliding scale adjustment.

**Link**

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/map-21/tap.html>

<http://trade.railstotrails.org/index>

**Purpose**

Federal Highway Administration Eastern Federal Lands (EFL) will be accepting Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) applications in order to develop a four year program of projects for Fiscal Years (FY) 2015 through FY 2018. Project approvals will be contingent upon availability of funds.

The goal of the Access Program is to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands. Proposed projects or studies must be located on a public highway, road, bridge, trail or transit system that is located on, is adjacent to, or provides access to Federal lands for which the facility title or maintenance responsibility is vested with a State, county, city, township, tribal, municipal, or local government. Generally, a 20% matching share of the project total is required for this program. Other Federal (non-title 23 or 49, with the exception of FLTP) funds may be used as match.

**Who may apply?**

All projects must be submitted using the EFL Access Program Application form (attached). The applicant must be the facility owner and/or have maintenance responsibility of the facility. The application may be submitted on behalf of the facility owner/maintainer contingent on written notification to FHWA-EFL by the facility owner/maintainer indicating that the application is being submitted on their behalf. Project applications must have concurrence by the appropriate Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) and signature on the application and/or letter of support from the FLMA.

**Eligible Projects**

Funds made available under the Access Program shall be used to pay the cost of:

1. transportation planning, research, engineering, preventive maintenance, rehabilitation, restoration, construction, and reconstruction of Federal Lands Access Transportation Facilities<sup>[3]</sup> located on or adjacent to, or that provide access to, Federal land, and-
  - i. adjacent vehicular parking areas;
  - ii. acquisition of necessary scenic easements and scenic or historic sites;
  - iii. provisions for pedestrians and bicycles;
  - iv. environmental mitigation in or adjacent to Federal land to improve public safety and reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity;
  - v. construction and reconstruction of roadside rest areas, including sanitary and water facilities; and
  - vi. other appropriate public road facilities, as determined by the Secretary;
2. operation and maintenance of transit facilities; and

3. any transportation project eligible for assistance under title 23 that is within or adjacent to, or that provides access to, Federal land.[\[4\]](#)
  - i. In regard to (B) above, "operation and maintenance of transit facilities" includes the operation of all components of a transit system, including vehicles.

**Funding**

- Call for projects will be up to 4 years (FY15-18). An estimated total of \$1.3 million will be available for each federal fiscal year. The action program of projects will be subject to the availability of funds.
- Project awards that exceed \$700,000 are preferred
- Call for projects opens November 15, 2014 through February 15, 2015

**Link**

<http://www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/federal-lands-access.aspx>

## Additional Funding Resources

Additional funding resources are identified in the following table.

### Potential Scenic Byway Funding Sources

Funding Source	Responsible Entity	Infrastructure	Non-Infrastructure	Notes
Scenic Byway Solicitation	MnDOT	X		Final solicitation occurring in CY 2015
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	ATPs / MnDOT	X		<a href="http://www.dot.state.mn.us/map-21/tap.html">http://www.dot.state.mn.us/map-21/tap.html</a>
Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	U of M		X	<a href="http://www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/">http://www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/</a>
Community Development Funding	DEED	X		<a href="http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/community-funding/">http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/community-funding/</a>
Greater Minnesota Public Infrastructure Program	DEED	X		<a href="http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/business-funding/infrastructure-grants.jsp">http://mn.gov/deed/government/financial-assistance/business-funding/infrastructure-grants.jsp</a>
Explore Minnesota Grant Program	Explore MN		X	<a href="http://www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/ways-to-get-involved/grants/">http://www.exploreminnesota.com/industry-minnesota/ways-to-get-involved/grants/</a>
Parks and Trails Legacy Grant Program	DNR	X		<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt_legacy.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/pt_legacy.html</a>
Outdoor Recreation Grant Program	DNR	X		<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/outdoor_rec.html</a>
Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Rail-Crossings	MnDOT	X		
General transportation programming	MnDOT; Counties; Cities	X		Share Byway needs with responsible roadway entities; some may be able to be accommodated through standard transportation programming processes.
Minnesota Geospatial Information Office	MnGeo		X	Not a funding source but may be used as an information resource <a href="http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/">http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/</a>
Minnesota State Demographic Center	Admin Minnesota		X	Not a funding source but may be used as an information resource <a href="http://mn.gov/admin/demography/">http://mn.gov/admin/demography/</a>
State Health Improvement Program (SHIP)	MDH	X	X	<a href="http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/">http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/</a>
County Fair Arts Access and Cultural Heritage	MDA		X	<a href="http://www.mda.state.mn.us/en/grants/grants/countyfair.aspx">http://www.mda.state.mn.us/en/grants/grants/countyfair.aspx</a>

<b>Grants</b>				
<b>Recreational Trails Program</b>	DNR	X		<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_federal.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_federal.html</a>
<b>Local Trail Connections Program</b>	DNR			<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_local.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_local.html</a>
<b>Regional Trail Grant Program</b>	DNR	X		<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_regional.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/trails_regional.html</a>
<b>Other DNR Grants</b>	DNR	X		Depending on the project, other DNR grants may be appropriate <a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/index.html</a>
<b>Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants</b>	MHS		X	<a href="http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants">http://legacy.mnhs.org/grants</a>
<b>RDC Transportation Planning Grants</b>	MnDOT / RDCs		X	
<b>Private Foundation Grant Opportunities</b>	Varies			<a href="http://www.lmc.org/page/1/private-grant-sources.jsp">http://www.lmc.org/page/1/private-grant-sources.jsp</a>
<b>Chambers of Commerce</b>	Varies		X	Local chambers may have funding available to assist with byway activities related to economic development
<b>Byway Membership Fees</b>	Byway groups		X	Consider charging a byway membership fee to accomplish small projects and/or provide match to other grant opportunities
<b>Advertising Revenue</b>	Byway groups		X	Sell advertising in byway publications to cover costs
<b>Regional Arts Councils</b>			X	<a href="http://www.arts.state.mn.us/racs/">http://www.arts.state.mn.us/racs/</a>
<b>Hazard Mitigation Assistance</b>	FEMA	X		<a href="https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance">https://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance</a>
<b>Federal Land Access Program (FLAP)</b>	FHWA	X		<a href="http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/">http://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flap/</a>
<b>Minnesota Design Team</b>	AIA Minnesota		X	<a href="http://www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/committees/minnesota-design-team/">http://www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/committees/minnesota-design-team/</a>
<b>SHPO Grants</b>	MHS		X	<a href="http://www.mnhs.org/shpo/grants/">http://www.mnhs.org/shpo/grants/</a>



## **Next Steps**

In order to keep the Otter Trail CMP project list up-to-date, it is recommended that the list be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.

It is estimated that annual updates to the project list would require approximately 80-100 hours of staff time to complete. This would involve organizing and holding committee meetings, including travel time; staff time for review of existing project lists, development of updates, including associated research, communication, etc.; development of documentation and submittal of reports to MnDOT.