

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

The following Community Participation Program (CPP) was formalized during the designation phase. The CPP is an outreach program designed to heighten awareness, build consensus, and foster public involvement in support of the corridor. The Scenic US 441 Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) utilized a variety of public participation techniques in an effort to involve all interested parties and ensure sufficient public notice and participation.

Background

The Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) is a grassroots effort to heighten awareness of our state's history and intrinsic resources. The program was developed in response to state legislation with directives to preserve, maintain, protect and enhance Florida's outstanding cultural, historical, archeological, recreational, natural and scenic resources. It is voluntary and is dependent on strong local citizen and government support to help meet objectives.

The Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) focuses on community-based support and resource protection while seeking to promote regional and economic benefits that may result from the designation. The Florida Scenic Highway Mission Statement reflects the interconnected nature of Florida's roadways, resources and communities

The Florida Scenic Highways Program seeks to preserve, maintain, protect, and enhance the intrinsic resources of scenic corridors through a sustainable balance of conservation and land use. Through community-based consensus and partnerships, the program will promote economic prosperity and broadens the traveler's overall recreational and educational experience.

The benefits of program participation include the following:

- ◆ Showcases and protects natural resources
- ◆ Helps to establish community vision
- ◆ Enhances the travel experience
- ◆ Increases community pride and recognition
- ◆ Promotes tourism and economic development
- ◆ Encourages community partnering
- ◆ Tells Florida's story, providing education and history appreciation

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Participation Plan (CPP) is to organize an approach to provide information, and obtain public input regarding the proposed corridor and the potential future Scenic Highway designation. The CPP heightens public awareness, builds consensus and foster public involvement in the development of the Corridor Management Plan. The CPP seeks an ongoing continuous public participation program.

Organization

As part of the Eligibility Phase of the Florida Scenic Highways Program, a **Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG)** was organized. This group serves as the applicant for the Scenic US 441 Corridor and is responsible for preparing or acquiring all required documentation for both the Eligibility Phase and Designation Phase. The list of CAG members is included in Appendix A. The CAG recently formed a Steering Committee with the core members. David Carr is the designated CAG Chairperson.

Organizational meetings were held between the CAG and the local community during the development of the Corridor Management Plan (CMP). The general number of meetings, type, and a brief summary of the meeting's objective are provided in future sections of this report.

Identification of Stakeholders

The following is a list of Scenic US 441 Corridor stakeholders that received correspondence and program information and were invited to participate in the development of the CMP. As other concerned individuals or groups were identified during the CMP development process, they were contacted and added to the list.

- ◆ Landowners and tenants adjacent to the Scenic US 441 Corridor
- ◆ Neighborhood and business associations
- ◆ Civic/fraternal organizations
- ◆ Community leaders
- ◆ Elected officials
- ◆ Local business owners
- ◆ Tourist and other travelers
- ◆ Special Interest Groups
- ◆ Environmental and conservation groups
- ◆ Government agencies
- ◆ Economic development agencies

Public Meetings

The public participation efforts were designed to foster local support for the CMP elements such as the Vision, Goals and Objectives; the Action Plan; and the Protection Techniques. The meetings were advertised in the local newspaper at least two weeks before the meeting date, and meeting announcements were distributed along the corridor and in local neighborhood newsletters. In developing the CMP, two public meetings and two public workshop were held with the CAG and the local community.

Public Meeting 1: This meeting included discussions on the procedures for conducting the Community Participation Program (CPP). Specifically, how the CPP will be utilized to refine the Vision statement and the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies for the corridor. The meeting was held on July 13, 2000 at the Matheson Museum in Gainesville from 6:00pm to 7:30pm. The list of meeting attendees for all public meetings is included in **Appendix A**.

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Meeting 2/Public Workshop: This meeting was held on August 21, 2000 at the Micanopy Town Hall. The meeting included a presentation on the Florida Scenic Highway Program and draft Goals, Objectives, and Strategies. The Vision Statement was discussed and finalized.

Public Meeting 3: The third meeting was held on September 21, 2000 at the Micanopy Town Hall and began with a summary of the workshop meeting and led into a discussion on finalizing the Goals, Objectives, and Strategies. The meeting included creating seven working groups to address the seven goals and discussion of the potential Corridor Protection Techniques, and Funding and Promotion of the scenic corridor.

Public Meeting 4/Public Workshop: The fourth and final meeting was held November 6, 2000 at the Micanopy Town Hall. The discussion included review of the draft Action Plan, Corridor Management Entity Agreement and scheduled presentations to the Alachua County Commissions and the Micanopy Town Commission. The finalization of the loop/spur roads identification, terminus, and significance was also completed.

Public Meeting 5: The fifth and final public meeting was held February 1, 2001 at the Micanopy First Baptist Church. All property owners adjacent to Scenic US 441 and the loop/spur road system were sent a letter of invitation for the meeting. An overview of the Scenic Highway Process was provided as well as specific issues related to the Scenic US 441 and loop/spur road Corridor Management Plan. The group of approximately 55 people were extremely supportive of the designation and discussed their concern for bicycle safety and protection of area's intrinsic resources. The meeting sign-in-sheet is included in Appendix A.

In addition to these meetings, several other public participation techniques were utilized during the development of the CMP. They included the following:

- ◆ Program newsletters
- ◆ Focus groups
- ◆ Newspaper ads
- ◆ Pamphlets/brochures
- ◆ Information flyers
- ◆ Local events (Micanopy Fall Festival)
- ◆ Briefings to elected officials
- ◆ Website development for program information and review/comments

Conclusion

The CPP was a critical element for the success of Corridor Management Plan (CMP) and ultimately the corridor designation. Strong local support built as part of the CPP is essential since the supporters will eventually become the caretakers of the designated corridor. The CPP is a dynamic document and was modified and refined throughout the CMP development.

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Future Plans for Citizen Involvement

The committee that will manage the Scenic US 441 and the Loop/Spur road system once the designation process is complete, the Corridor Management Council (CMC), has extensive plans for a proactive citizen and local business involvement. The Action Plan has identified several outreach and promotional efforts such as a user friendly website, a bicycle rally, quarterly or bi-annually newsletters, the annual Micanopy fall Festival, well publicized CMC meetings and “word of mouth” efforts by existing CMC members and local advocates.

The CMC will continue the efforts established by the Corridor Advocacy Group by making every effort possible to involve citizens and local residents in all issues that may effect the integrity of the scenic corridors and their protection and enhancement.