

**State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan
 Summary of Comment Themes (June 2009 to March 2010)
 March 2010**

Comment Themes	WSDOT Response to Comments
<p>Support for additional emphasis on preservation and protection of resources (all types) associated with Scenic and Recreational Highways.</p>	<p>WSDOT funded analysis of opportunities for preservation and resource protection conducted by the University of Washington. The Report titled, "Development of a Resource Planning Index for Washington's Scenic and Recreational Highways" is available on WSDOT's website: http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/ScenicByways/BywaysPlan.htm</p>
<p>Support (as well as some opposition) for integration of Corridor Plans into the broader planning framework within the state/RTPOs should play a role in Scenic and Recreational Highways.</p>	<p>FHWA direction is for better integration of Corridor Plans funded through the National Scenic Byway Grant Program with broader state, regional, tribal, and local planning efforts. The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan includes implementation steps that increase WSDOT technical assistance in support of FHWA's direction related to Corridor Planning.</p>
<p>Confusion about the role of a Plan and confusion between State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan and National Scenic Byway Program. What is WSDOT's Role in National Scenic Byway Grant Program?</p>	<p>(Response Published on WSDOT website January 2010) This plan will not change the National Scenic Byway Program itself. WSDOT's role is to administer the National Scenic Byway Program by providing technical assistance, coordination and support to the scenic byways, evaluate and rank grant proposals and work with the byway project sponsors to ensure that the funded Scenic Byway Projects are implemented according to Federal Rules and Regulations.</p> <p>The Plan is anticipated to establish guiding principles (goals, objectives, performance measures) that will help WSDOT administer the National Scenic Byway Program. Consistent with other grant processes WSDOT administers, we ask stakeholder agencies and organizations who do not have a potential conflict of interest or plan to apply for funding through the grant program to help us further develop the ranking criteria. We post all criteria and guidelines to the website and issue a press release when the grant program becomes available.</p> <p>Based on recommendations from the Steering Committee, WSDOT has incorporated a glossary of terms in the Plan.</p>

General Comment Themes	WSDOT Response
<p>Desire to show/demonstrate consistency of State Scenic and Recreational Highways with National Scenic Byway Program, particularly grant program and recognition program and include discussion of National Scenic Byway grant program.</p>	<p>(Response Published on WSDOT website January 2010) FHWA is represented on the Steering Committee for this Plan and WSDOT has been consulting with the lead staff for the National Scenic Byway Program. FHWA staff have said that there is not conflict with US Code or federal regulations and the Draft Plan and National Scenic Byways Program are mutually supportive. WSDOT will continue to coordinate with FHWA throughout the development of the Plan to ensure it is consistent with federal direction.</p> <p>In an attempt to make it clear that WSDOT is developing a state plan for Scenic and Recreational Highways, the background papers, documents, and the DRAFT Plan do not discuss the National Scenic Byway Program administered by FHWA at length. The DRAFT Plan says that the National Scenic Byway Grants are important and will continue to be important to Washington to help us implement our state Plan and reach our goals. To avoid duplication of the good information provided by FHWA and avoid further confusion, we have not included a more extensive discussion about the National Scenic Byway Program.</p>
<p>Local byway volunteers, if expected to develop and implement integrated corridor plans for State Highways, need additional technical assistance and support.</p>	<p>The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan includes implementation steps that increase WSDOT technical assistance in support of FHWA's direction related to Corridor Planning.</p>
<p>Continued emphasis on economic development, tourism and marketing associated with Scenic and Recreational Highways and small communities along these corridors.</p>	<p>The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan identifies three emphasis areas including Tourism and Traveler Services, Stewardship, and Planning based on information including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from the Steering Committee, • A review of historic project funding information • A review of unfunded project needs • Content of the Corridor Management Plans written by local byway groups • University of Washington's Study titled, "Resource Planning Index Report"

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Desire for consistency of signs statewide and additional information about getting signs.	The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan includes implementation steps and performance measures supporting consistency of traveler information and signage statewide.
Will this plan result in different design standards for Scenic and Recreational Highways?/There should be different design standards for Scenic and Recreational Highways.	The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan includes implementation steps and performance measures incorporating Scenic and Recreational Highways in WSDOT transportation plans, corridor studies; from the project level to the programmatic level and refinement of WSDOT scoping processes to include routine inclusion of Scenic and Recreational Highways.
More emphasis on both recreational resources and economic development associated with Scenic and Recreational Highways.	The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan places emphasis on recreational resources and discusses the importance of economic development in all three emphasis areas including Tourism and Traveler Services, Stewardship and Planning.
Better align implementation strategies with performance measures.	Based on feedback on the Draft Plan, WSDOT worked with the Steering Committee to align the implementation strategies and performance measures.

General Comment Themes	WSDOT Response
<p>Concern about use of Resource Planning Index (for National Scenic Byway grant review).</p>	<p>WSDOT stands behind the report produced by University of Washington and the methods used. The Resource Planning index provides WSDOT a baseline for tracking performance toward the Environmental Goal in the Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan and will be developed and improved upon over time. This study was undertaken because the Environmental element of the Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan did not have adequate data to support performance measurement.</p> <p>University of Washington independently acquired the best available data from state and other agencies that developed and maintain the data. The purpose of this Resource Planning Index is to help WSDOT establish a baseline to track performance related to protecting and preserving resources associated with the Scenic and Recreational Highways. In addition to the work University of Washington has done, WSDOT has evaluated the state's scenic and recreational resources in relation to the Safety and Mobility Goals in the Plan. Because some scenic and all recreational resources require and encourage public access and the goals related to these elements may not always be compatible with protecting and preserving resources, it was necessary to evaluate scenic and recreational resources separately.</p> <p>The Natural Resource Planning Index is a broad screening tool that intentionally inventories environmental features of a variety of types, such as wetlands, wildlife corridors, parklands and historic sites. The purpose is to get a "big-picture view," of where these resources occur in relationship to Scenic and Recreational Highways in Washington. The index values then provide a measure of which sites have the greatest concentrations of environmental features associated with a corridor. This approach is consistent with WSDOT's policy on environmental stewardship.</p> <p>Aquatic habitats are not double counted in the methodology. In certain circumstances, both terrestrial and aquatic habitats can get higher index values if certain criteria are met (such as for being in a protected area). There is a tremendous amount of scientific literature that speaks to the importance of upland buffers around aquatic ecosystems. The inclusion of buffers in the methodology acknowledges their important role in protecting the functions and values of aquatic ecosystems. In addition, wetland inventory data layers are imprecise and generally under-represent the wetland area, so we have assigned a 1000' buffer width to better assure that wetlands are captured in the analysis.</p>

General Comment Themes	WSDOT Response
<p>CONTINUED... Concern about use of Resource Planning Index (for National Scenic Byway grant review).</p>	<p>The University of Washington's <i>Resource Planning Index Report</i> has now been peer reviewed by other faculty at other Universities as well as experts in a number of state agencies in Washington. Based on positive technical reviews by these independent experts, WSDOT finds the analysis used appropriate for this initial study. The desired outcome was not a comparison of data sets or a determination of risk, but a compilation of data and a determination of density of the various resources associated with Scenic and Recreational Highways.</p> <p>WSDOT agrees with University of Washington's assessment of the limitations of the Resource Planning Index as well as their recommendations for use. The Index is a first-pass assessment of locations where there may be a confluence of opportunities for protecting, preserving, or enhancing resources associated with the state Scenic and Recreational Highways. Therefore, if the goal of an investment is to address multiple opportunities at once, the Index can be used to roughly determine whether or not a location may be appropriate for this goal. As always, a local-scale analysis of the location should assess exactly what opportunities exist there and whether a proposed project would actually provide the desired benefit or impact to the location.</p>
<p>Desire for more inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian transportation/bicycle and pedestrian transportation should play a bigger role.</p>	<p>The State Scenic and Recreational Highways Plan includes implementation steps and performance measures supporting bicycle and pedestrian transportation as part of the Scenic and Recreational Highways.</p>