

*Priorities One and Two
Management of the Midland Trail
Building Partnerships, Participation
and Collaboration*



Experience tells us that management by volunteers of a 120-mile and growing road encompassing three counties, fifteen incorporated municipalities, and 12 unincorporated villages, and serving a region of over 250,000--approximately 8 %--of our state's population is difficult. We've tried and we've succeeded to this point; however, it is not effective or feasible over the long run. Yet, viewing our development village by village, city by city, and county by county does not work either. Management, with all of its challenge, works best when we treat the Trail as a region and operate as one "community" with each individual community's respect for another as one would a neighbor.

The structure of the organization that will manage, organize, and market the Midland Trail Scenic Highway Region will be both public and private and will form a partnership. A combination of local and regional organizations, together with many volunteers, will support these efforts. The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association will rely on financial contributions and support from both public and the private sector, using its designation as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The responsibility of this not-for-profit-management organization will be to implement and coordinate the comprehensive 20-year management action plan. This Association's governance falls under a Board of Directors which reflects the partnership of, as well as the commitment of voluntary services to, the organization. An Executive Director will be responsible for implementing the operating plans for the Corridor.

The management organization should evolve and grow over a 10-year period. This growth begins with the Board of Directors, which provides oversight, direction, and guidance to the management of the staff. The Board will be representative geographically of this region; furthermore, as a group, it will serve as a resource from which to provide the top tier of

talent, energy and leadership to the region. Interests of these members should be regional.

FIRST PHASE FUNCTIONS: 2000-2001

Success in organizational development involves good planning as well as offering something to our diverse membership. During the initial or first phase (the organization has been in position since 1996) we have proven to our membership that as an organization we have something to offer. We provide marketing, planning, grant writing, fundraising, public relations, and promotions. We also offer strategic planning, event planning, legislative representation, and even international connections and coordination. Through these services, we have begun to help member partners to understand what is possible through membership in MTSHA.

In developing this orientation of service, we have positioned MTSHA as "the organization" to represent a diverse range of groups with a unified vision and a "management organization". This body will provide professional services in planning, fundraising, marketing, promoting, interpreting, and preserving. We also speak a coherent agenda of recreation, preservation, open-space, and greenbelts and viewshed preservation. As the organization grows, it continues to mature. We offer new and different services to members

and partners. It is likely that the Association will acquire, manage, and deepen its involvement in greater tourism planning and economic development projects.

THE MIDLAND TRAIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Providing guidance and oversight to the Executive Director and serving as an extension and support of the Executive Director's efforts will be the primary function of the Board of Directors. Equally as important will be the Board's role in fundraising efforts. We will be accomplish this function either by assisting the organization in achieving its fundraising goals through corporate, personal, foundational or public gifts or by influencing others to participate or partner in the Corridor's programs and activities.

To achieve these things the Board must itself be visionary. Making a commitment to the Management Plan is a step. This does not mean that the plan cannot be altered. It can and should be altered whenever necessary.

During the Trail Blazer marketing period (1999-2001), when emphasis is primarily on local/educational efforts, a consistent and clear identity of the organization is important. This period will create impressions as to future leaders' involvement and the effectiveness of the organization. Thereafter, programs, events and activities will form and enhance the image of the region as a destination for tourists. The Midland Trail Association will require a broad range of support not only from participants in the Trail region, but also from educational, business, governmental, and foundation leaders.

From its beginning, the public sector has responded with vision, enthusiasm, and resources, signs of support which chal-

lenge local communities and the private sector to do the same. It will be necessary that this confidence continue and increase in order for MTSHA to reach its vision and goals.

It is only logical that the organizational structure evolve out of the present Midland Trail Scenic Highway organization. However, we should note that the Association now has the opportunity to revitalize and refresh the organization. The evolution of this new management organization for the Midland Trail Region repositions the Association with a new and expanded mission, image, and higher-profile Board of Directors as it takes on new challenges.

A STAND-UP KIND OF ORGANIZATION

The MTSHA has emerged because there was a need for what it has to offer. It has gone on to distinguish itself as a regional body which can manage diverse and varied political, social, and economic interests. This ability makes it an ideal leadership organization within West Virginia. The Association's Board of Directors sees the opportunity for linkages and connection with other Trails. In the first instance, the Coal Heritage Trail and the Highland Scenic Highway are logical candidates for a tourist's regional Trail network. However, there is always room for developing partnerships and collaborative efforts with other scenic highways and trails in the future.

PARTNERS IN THE PROCESS:

VOLUNTEERS AND SUPPORTERS

PUBLIC

FEDERAL - The Federal Highway Administration, National Park Service, Environmental Protection Agency, The Army Corp of Engineers, the Department of Agriculture, and The National Endowment For the Arts.

STATE - WV Department of Transportation, WV Department of Culture and History, WV Department of Education, WV Department of Tourism, WV Department of Natural Resources, and WV Department of Safety.

COUNTY - County Commissions, County Highway Departments, County and Regional Convention and Visitor Centers, and Conservation and Planning Authorities.

LOCAL- Cities, Municipalities, Zoning Boards, School Boards, and local improvement associations

PRIVATE

FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS-

Benedum Foundation, Greater Kanawha Valley Found-ation, Clay Foundation, Greater Beckley Foundation, and Hawks Nest Foundation. Conservation, environmental, historical, recreational, and interpretive organizations in the Kanawha, Fayette and Greenbrier county areas. MTSHA maintains a complete list of these organizations.

INDIVIDUALS- Year-round as well as seasonal residents of the Midland Trail Region should be involved in the Association. As tourism continues to develop, seasonal Trail residents will welcome the opportunity of involvement in and updates on activities of the Trail. While we have begun with a diverse population of MT residents, we must continue to draw upon niche groups, including the African-American population and travel associations which serve this group as well as whitewater enthusiasts, skiers, climbers, artists, cyclists, industrial workers and unions, to mention a partial list.

PROFESSIONAL GROUPS - We must remember that professionals of all sorts have a vested interest in the development of the Trail. Members of chambers of commerce, historical societies, environmental groups, parks, and various clubs should be involved.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS - The Boards of Education in Kanawha, Fayette and Greenbrier Counties should be drawn deeper into this project. There has been a strong interest by social studies teachers at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels where West Virginia History is taught. West Virginia Tourism Education programs are an additional important source of support for the program.

Riverside High School in Kanawha County serves the entire Midland Trail Area of Kanawha County. Newly-opened in fall 1999, this school will focus its Tourism Education program on the Midland Trail. A strong curriculum emphasis involves students in local volunteer activities at the Midland Trail Visitor Center as well as in service as tour guides

at Malden's Booker T. Washington Cabin and other sites along the Trail in Kanawha County.

ON VOLUNTEERS

The long-term success of the Midland Trail requires that an active functioning cadre of volunteers of all ages and from all backgrounds be involved. This network will be one of the key components in positioning the Association for long-term management success. Within the Midland Trail there are a number of organizations which we must convince of the mutual benefits of coordination and cooperation as it relates to the MTSHA. A partial list of these organizations and businesses includes coal haulers, timber companies, and coal operators.

TOMORROW'S TRAIL TOURISM LEADERS

Youth's appreciation of the Midland Trail as "their" tourism/heritage region is a necessary first step towards developing a culture which welcomes outsiders. Rural West Virginians are suspicious by nature. While we will obviously not eliminate this tendency, we must create a hospitable and accepting environment for visitors. Inclusion of the Trail into mainstream educational curricula is an important step towards improving the hospitality culture in our state.

Fourth- and eighth-grade level students study West Virginia history, which precedes elective opportunities for secondary students in Community Service Learning and West Virginia Tourism classes. Students who elect the Tourism class, of which there are over eighty programs in the state, will be taught a section on the Midland Trail. They will also be taught a cultural diversity model based on Malden and its work with Booker T. Washington on the Midland Trail. Students at the new consolidated Riverside High School on

the Midland Trail in Kanawha County will be encouraged to participate in volunteer and Service Learning Opportunities at the Midland Trail Visitor Center at Malden as well as the Washington Complex next door to the Visitor Center. Training in the use of the Association's Trail Website, www.midlandtrail.com, as well as opportunities for service as tour guides and interpreters, are examples of future service positions for secondary students from Riverside.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Both in 1997 and 1998 study tours from Slovakia visited West Virginia. A total of 15 mayors from that country have visited here in extended stays along the Midland Trail, examining all aspects of our rural tourism and development programs. The visit, in part under the sponsorship of the United States Agency for International Development, was extremely popular and well received, with a follow-up visit, including two visits by a member of the Association, who has been involved in providing technical advice in Slovakia and Poland. Midland Trail Board members, Trail mayors, and elected representatives have met with these groups and learn from these visitors as well.

HERITAGE TOURISM STUDIES PROMOTES UNDERSTANDING AND BUSINESS

West Virginia and MTSHA are ideally positioned to host a Center for the Study of Rural Tourism both nationally and internationally. The timing for this development is perfect given our stage of development, size, diversity and connections to potential funding sources.

This concept grew after the Association was involved in hosting the aforementioned study tours. Also, Midland Trail members have provided consultation services in an international arena for the VOCA through the United States Agency For International Development. In December 1998, a group of international travelers met with the Board and with area business leaders as they traveled the Midland Trail.

An American Rural Tourism Center for the Study of Rural Tourism and Heritage Roads would:

1. Advance scholarship in the field
2. Provide a base of support for proposed staff who are practitioners in the field.
3. Create a forum for creativity and advancement in the field
4. Serve as a laboratory for the study and practices in the field.

To accommodate this vision of a national and international Center, the Association proposes that a staff which is already credentialed to meet the challenges of a national-international center be folded into this project.

AN EXPANDING MIDLAND TRAIL MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

The MT organization is envisioned as one which will expand. It will serve a much wider geographic area and expand its mission into areas which are completely new. The MT has had a presence in the region as early as the 1920's, with the surge in automobile

travel over the Trail, then in the mid-1980's, with its rebirth following the opening of Interstate 64. This interstate opening injured the MT's economy just as the railroad did in the 1870's.

However, it is worth acknowledging here that this same hardship served as an important catalyst for change. Without this asphalt competitor, the Trail might otherwise have continued to take a great deal for granted. We are learning to appreciate and protect the intrinsic qualities identified by the U.S. Department of Transportation, a process of identification which now motivates our organization.

For reasons of development and economy, the Association proposes an expanded program. This program will function efficiently and effectively by significantly expanding its staff. This staff will be available to other tourism regions and Scenic Byway areas in a "circuit rider" fashion. As we expand and extend ourselves and our participation into new areas with staffing, we will bring together the network of Scenic Byways which are completely isolated from one another at this time. This coordination will advance tourism and minimize the expense of specialized staff which are unaffordable to most scenic areas in the next decade.

CIRCUIT-RIDING SPECIALISTS

There will be specialized staffing needs for Interpretive Experts in coal mining, recreation, transportation, and in small-structure museums, as well as open-air interpretive museums. Folklore experts will be needed in Appalachian, African-American, and immigrant cultures; interpretive themes will include Appalachian music and dance. In some cases, this expertise is already available and under-utilized. In other instances, professionals are not available in our state because of limited demand for their services.

We need historians who are trained to interpret history for all age levels. Also, historians who have the ability to develop copy for brochures, script videos, or interpret resources are rare in rural West Virginia. Archaeologist and geologist skills for interpretive purposes have been rarely applied to rural West Virginia tourism projects.

Specialists in other areas such as Interpretation, Folklore Coordination, Marketing Coordination, and Open-Space Coordination could be used. Given the needs in these areas statewide, MTSHA recognizes the value of contracting services to other Scenic Byways and coordinating and cooperating wherever possible to improve our statewide system of byways.

Management advantages anticipated from this approach:

1. Lower startup costs for MT
2. Greater coordination of programs and services with other Scenic Byways
3. Utilizes, expands, and develops a limited skill and knowledge base in these technical areas.
4. Broadens and enhances the organization's public perception as a professional organization, strengthening its support and donor base

These advantages position the Association for the challenges which are ahead in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. It will be extremely important to have a representative and visionary Board of Directors. A qualified staff capable of carrying out development steps is essential to success.

Services of all professionals could be available to other organizations as a part

of a better coordinated scenic byways system in WV.

RUNNING ON ADRENALINE

The MTSHA organization has rested heavily upon volunteer support, its executive committee, and staff at The Midland Trail Visitor Center based at Cabin Creek Quilts, the law offices of Larry L. Rowe, and the staff of *WV Quarterly* magazine, all in Malden. While this has been workable to this point in the organization's history, it has reached its limits. A new organizational structure based on permanent staffing must be in place in order that the Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association might continue its growth and development.



PERFECT - WORLD STAFFING PATTERN

In anticipation of extending the Trail an additional 60 miles to the western border, we see staffing of the Trail not only as important for the development of the CMP, but also for marketing and interpretation of the Trail as a whole. Additionally, as the state's only east-west scenic byway, the Trail has the opportunity to staff cooperatively with other byways, offering important advantages of coordination, marketing, professionalism and economy.

This management team would cover several hundred miles of scenic byways. The Trail contains at least three recognized Historic Districts, thousands of acres of land, and over a hundred or more historic sites. As proposed, this staff faces a long-term mission and a vision that has developed with this CMP. Management of the Trail will be impossible for volunteers without professional help.

Building towards a full-time professional staff over a thirty-six-month period will enable the MT to ramp-up, absorb the services, and work towards developing self-sufficiency over a sixty-month period. It also provides a suggested timetable and a framework which is adaptable based upon a variety of scenarios.

2001-2005: Funding for this Plan might come from the WV Parkways Authority, the U.S. DOT, the Benedum Foundation, or the Appalachian Regional Commission. Following is the proposed staff structure for implementation and realization of this Plan:

CORRIDOR MANAGER (\$40,000 - \$50,000 per year)

For the first two to five years, we will need a manager with the ability to create consensus and raise funds from a wide range of sources. The organization will still be very dynamic during this phase. The ability to promote, to build awareness, and to utilize volunteers will be critical. The Manager's ability to market the Trail and to develop strong relationships with a

variety of sources during this period will figure significantly in building a local market for the Trail. Following this first phase, the job will shift from local to regional/national/international, and the skills may well change with this transition; as such, the Board should be prepared for these circumstances. The position may well be advertised or presented as a transitional or startup one which will terminate at the completion of a specified date or at the completion of certain startup tasks. In addition to the Corridor Manager, the following positions are recommended:

MARKETING COORDINATOR (Full time: \$25,000 - \$35,000 per year)

This position will work directly under the Corridor Manager and will implement the Corridor Marketing Plan. Activities such as the reprinting of the Destination Guide, development of Metro-Trail Guides, or Connecting-Linking Backways and Bikeway Guides, creating public relations activities and events and generally increasing the visibility of the Trail will be the Marketing Coordinator's responsibility. Executing a signage program and markers which extend and connect the Trail into new areas would also be part of the position's responsibilities.

DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR (Fulltime: \$26,000 - \$38,000 per year)

This individual will provide grant and technical writing skills and assistance to MTSHA and associate members. The Development Coordinator will work on funding strategies at the Federal, State, and community levels as well as with corporate, individual and foundation contributors.

OPEN-AIR COORDINATOR (Half-time \$12,500 for 36 months)

This individual will provide leadership and support in coordinating all open-air activities along the Trail. Responsibilities

will include management of the Corridor's greening and cleaning programs and conservation, preservation, and advocacy efforts. Developing open-air parks and pull-offs and promoting their use will come under this position.

HISTORIAN / PLANNER (Half-time \$12,500 a year for 36 months)

Besides developing informational brochures, scripting videos, and writing copy for pamphlets, the Historian will coordinate and expand upon the "Trail Tales" as introduced in this Plan. As a speaker, the Historian will work with the marketing and development coordinator in preparing presentations and ensuring historical accuracy.

COORDINATOR OF INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS (Half-time \$12,500 a year for 36 months)

This position will work closely with other partners within the Trail region to coordinate interpretive projects, programs, and activities. At present, there are forty fairs and festivals along the Midland Trail. With unifying themes such as "Lights Along the Trail" at Christmas, extreme adventures, or foliage activities in the fall, the Coordinator would package and market programs jointly as Trail concepts.

FOLKLORE COORDINATOR (Half-time \$12,500 a year for 36 months)

This staff position would coordinate with the coordinators of interpretive programs and marketing to manage and develop activities which are already in operation as well as new ones. The professionalism of this individual will add a great deal to existing activities, providing a level of authenticity and excitement which presently can be lacking in community fairs, festivals and programs. The work of the Humanities Council Scholars' WV History Alive program is one of many such programs which offers opportunities in new promotional ways.

SUPPORT STAFF (3) (\$13,000 - \$18,000/year for each)

These key support positions provide important administrative and business services for the organization. During the startup phase, the Historian, the Interpretive Coordinator, and the Folklore Coordinator will generate large quantities of work. The ongoing Corridor Manager, Development, and Marketing Coordinator positions will also have significant responsibilities which necessitate staff assistance.

ORGANIZATION

The Midland Trail Scenic Highway Association (MTSHA) is under the management of its Board of Directors. By recent vote, the Association opened seats for a member from the Coal Heritage Scenic Highway and for members from areas on the western extension.

Our organization will rely upon its membership, community planning bodies, committees, volunteers, and partners to implement the strategies developed in this Plan. Attached you will find two organizational charts. Chart A represents the startup organization for this initial phase; Chart B represents the full staffing pattern once the organization is operational. Flexibility is key here. We see an efficiency and professionalism possible for the development of our western sector CMP as well as for other important activities along the Trail (see page 7.10). It is the intent of this organization that phase A be in place in 2000 and operational through 2002. The full Midland Trail Organization will be operational by 2003.

The Center for the Studies of Scenic Byways or its related proposed International Study Center will be part of this scheme.

