

Visitor Guidelines and Assessment Questions

First Impression Byway Corridor Research Program

Visitor Guidelines:

Introduction: Thank you for volunteering to be a 'visitor' through the First Impressions Byway Corridor Research Program. The purpose of your visit is to help a byway organization to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their byway corridor as you perceive them to be as a first-time visitor.

The research design is to determine a visitor's first impression of a byway. Two byways shall participate that are interested in discovering a visitor's first impression of their byway. Two byways are needed to engage in a cross-byway study.

Byway Exchange: Identify two investigative teams willing to exchange places – one from Byway A and one from Byway B. Byway A will visit Byway B corridor and vice-versa. Both Teams will receive the same instructions and guidelines for their investigation. The team members should be first time visitors, or almost never visitors, to the other byway corridor. Research will take place in a motor vehicle and on foot to businesses, restaurants, lodging options and sites.

Prepare to be an actor like a "Secret Shopper": Each research team will be visiting the opposite community anonymously. Prepare a story regarding your visit in case you need a reason for your visit. You get to be actors for the day, so team members might say "I'm just traveling through and wanted to see if I want to vacation here next summer" or "I'm on a business trip or visiting relatives and wanted to see some sites and scenery as part of my trip."

Tips:

- * Start by visiting websites containing information about the targeted byway corridor. Then visit the byway's and DMO's websites. Take lots of notes, frequently, because it's easy to forget your impressions with so many places to visit and see.
- * Ask for directions along the corridor, places to eat, things to see, sites to visit, what makes the area special.
- * Have someone in the group take a camera to document sites on the byway. These photos can then be shared with the community along with the written report. "A picture is worth a thousand words."
- * Look for the positives as well as problems. We all need to know what we are doing right as well as what we need to fix.
- * There is no wrong way to do this, remember, two people may see the same thing and react differently – it is ok, just document the perceptions.
- * Have fun! Be gracious and thankful.

Visitor Assessment Questions – 9 categories

For all the questions, if you need more space to answer, use the back of the question sheet or provide your own paper. Thank you.

Preparation Questions:

Before you visit the byway corridor, please record your thoughts below (please answer questions silently on your own):

1. What are your expectations of the area you are about to visit?

2. What specifically do you expect to experience on your visit?

3. Please identify websites and other references that you found helpful in preparing for your visit.

The following question is for the members in your team who made the arrangements for your visit:

4. What was your experience like in arranging your visit? How easy was it to find and obtain overnight accommodations? How easy was it to identify organizations that could provide your team assistance?

Byway Driving Questions

Please answer these questions in silence without discussion from other group members: Drive down the byway a few miles, then pull over to the side of the road to record your thoughts:

1. What is your first impression as you enter the byway?

2. How do you feel about what you are experiencing in this first encounter?

3. Does anything stand out as attractive or unattractive?

4. Please identify the point when you felt you were entering the byway.

5. How did you know you are on the byway?

Continue to drive along the byway and as you travel record your thoughts on the following:

6. Please note points of interest that you would like to stop at if you had time. Please indicate if these points of interest that reinforce the theme(s) of the byway.

7. Were there any obstructions that hindered your appreciation of the area while traveling? If so, please list.

Wayshowing and Availability of Visitor Accommodations

Please comment on how the following items support or take away from your enjoyment of and ease of navigating the byway corridor:

1. Signs, including welcome signs, directional signs and attraction signs.

2. Appearance of buildings along the corridor.

3. Vehicle traffic, including volume, types of vehicles, speed of travel, road conditions, safety.

4. Adequacy and frequency of areas to pull off the road to enjoy a view or attraction.

5. Areas to serve alternative forms of transportation such as biking, horseback riding and hiking.

6. Other considerations.

Evaluate the corridor on availability and appearance of the following:

7. Parks, athletic facilities, playgrounds, picnic areas.

8. Emergency care facilities.

9. Public restrooms, including frequency and cleanliness.

10. Cash machines.

11. Parking.

12. Other.

Information Seeking

Please stop in various communities to seek information, eat, visit businesses, and get a feel for how the communities contribute to your byway corridor experience.

Find an organization that you feel is responsible for providing information about area attractions. Go inside and seek assistance.

1. What organization did you choose?

2. Why did you choose this organization?

3. What was your experience like?

4. What kind of material did you receive?

5. How do you rate the quality of the material?

Byway Walking Questions

As you visit businesses along the corridor:

Business (1) visited _____

1. *How helpful were the employees in suggesting places to visit and points of interest?*

2. *What was the level of hospitality and friendliness demonstrated by the business you visited?*

3. *Did they say positive things about the byway and the surrounding area or were they negative or neutral?*

Business (2) visited _____

1. *How helpful were the employees in suggesting places to visit and points of interest?*

2. *What was the level of hospitality and friendliness demonstrated by the business you visited?*

3. *Did they say positive things about the byway and the surrounding area or were they negative or neutral?*

Business (3) visited _____

1. *How helpful were the employees in suggesting places to visit and points of interest?*

2. *What was the level of hospitality and friendliness demonstrated by the business you visited?*

3. *Did they say positive things about the byway and the surrounding area or were they negative or neutral?*

Downtown Commercial Areas

6. Please comment on each downtown business area visited. Architecture, cleanliness, signage, vacancies, business hours, other.

City/Village/Town visited _____

City/Village/Town visited _____

City/Village/Town visited _____

Byway Intrinsic Quality Questions

The National Scenic Byway Program defines a byway as containing intrinsic value. Intrinsic is defined as “six possible features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area.” Some people refer to them as themes.

1. Which of the following six features do you recognize as you travel this corridor: scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, or natural? (Please list all that apply)

2. For those features you listed please express how well do you feel the community emphasized this feature along the corridor.

Visitor Perceptions and Responses

Please share your thoughts about this corridor through use of your “senses,” besides sight:

1. What does the byway corridor experience TASTE like? (Bakeries, restaurants, snack shops, etc.)

2. What does the byway corridor experience SMELL like?

3. What SOUNDS did you hear?

4. What did the corridor FEEL like?

Final Thoughts and Impressions

1. Please list the four most important features that you feel makes this corridor attractive and inviting.

2. Please list the three features that you found least attractive or inviting about the corridor.

3. Please describe one idea that you will take from your experience and use in your own community.

4. What will you remember most about this corridor six months from now?

5. Other comments that just don't seem to fit anywhere else.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and impressions that can be used to improve our byway!