

Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway



CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN



**ADOPTED BY
BYWAY COUNCIL
APRIL 2023**

Cover Photos

Byway Council Meeting in Auburn - August 2022

First Parish Congregational Church, East Derry - December 2020

Chester Scarecrows - October 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway connects the towns of Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester, Auburn, and Derry, and is designed to celebrate and interpret the historic Boston-Haverhill-Concord Stagecoach route that followed what is today NH Route 121; as well as the New England landscape featured in much of Robert Frost's work, including the settings of some of his most famous poems. The Byway highlights the numerous historic sites, scenic views, outdoor recreational opportunities, and other attractions that the region has to offer - raising awareness among residents and promoting visitation for economic development.

This Corridor Management Plan (CMP) serves as the key planning document for the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway. It begins with a description of the significance of the Intrinsic Qualities (scenic, historic, natural, cultural and/or recreational resources) along the Byway that merit designation, and includes an inventory of those buildings, sites and cultural events. Next the Management Plan summarizing existing conditions along the byway, including traffic volumes and road condition, current land use, zoning and other regulations in each community was developed. Finally, based on input gathered at a public visioning session in April 2013, multiple meetings with local selectmen and town councils over three years, and input from the Byway Council, the Management Plan identifies strategies for the preservation, enhancement and promotion of those historic buildings, scenic views and cultural events that define the area; as well as strategies for enhancing tourism opportunities along the corridor; and improving safety for all users of the Byway.



A. What is a Scenic Byway?

A Scenic Byway is a road recognized by the State of New Hampshire and the U.S. Department of Transportation for its scenic, historic, recreational, natural, cultural and/or archeological qualities. The National Scenic Byways program was established by Congress in 1991 to preserve and protect the nation's scenic but often less-traveled roads and promote tourism

and economic development. In New Hampshire the program is administered by the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

There are three levels of Scenic Byway designation. The most distinguished designation is that of *All-American Roads*. These routes are scenic enough to be tourist destinations unto themselves. Examples of All American Roads include Historic Route 66 across the southwest, or Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park. As of FHWA's latest designations in 2021, there are 37 All American Roads nationwide. The second category is *National Scenic Byways*, of which there are 150 nationally, including three in New Hampshire: the Kancamagus Highway, the White Mountains Scenic Trail, and the Connecticut River Byway. The final category is *State Scenic Byways*, designated at the State level as having exemplary qualities that make them attractive visitor destinations. There are 20 such byways in New Hampshire, including six in the southeastern part of the state.

B. Why establish a Scenic Byway?

First and foremost, to be identified as a State Scenic & Cultural Byway is an honor for the communities through which the Byway passes, as the designation speaks to the beauty and value of the scenic vistas, heritage, natural areas and recreational opportunities along the route. Second, having a byway in our communities is valuable for local tourism and economic development. America's Byways, the national Scenic Byway Program, maintains an online visitors' guide to Byway routes and standout places to visit in each State. Collaborative work among neighboring communities to designate a Byway corridor can carry over into collaborative work to protect the remarkable resources along the byway. Finally, designation as a State Scenic & Cultural Byway and completion of a Corridor Management Plan help position communities to be more competitive in pursuing federal grant funding for projects to improve safety, protect resources or otherwise enhance the visitor experience along the byway.

C. Are there regulatory implications to designating a Scenic Byway?

It is important to differentiate *Scenic Byways* from *Scenic Roads* defined by State law under RSA 231:158. Designation of a Scenic Road carries with it regulatory implications for abutting property owners. The one regulatory aspect of Scenic Byway designation is control of billboards or other off-premises advertising, though this is already regulated under separate state law, and existing advertising of this sort where it exists would be grandfathered. The Scenic Byway program is not intended to be a regulatory program, but rather is focused on engaging communities to collaborate on tourism development, and planning for the enhancement and management of those qualities that help make byways attractive visitor destinations.

D. Federal requirements for Byway Corridor Management Plans

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) lists 14 components that must be in any Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP). These are outlined below with reference to where in this Management Plan each is addressed.

The FHWA 14 requirements for Scenic Byway CMPs include:

1. A map identifying the corridor boundaries, location of intrinsic qualities, and land uses in the corridor. See Map 3.1 (page 19) and Map 3.4 (page 26).
2. An assessment of the byway's intrinsic qualities and their context (the area surrounding them). The product is typically a catalogue of the byway's scenic, historic, natural, archeological, cultural, and recreational qualities. See Inventory of Intrinsic Qualities starting on page 11 and Appendix A.
3. A strategy for maintaining and enhancing each of the byway's intrinsic qualities. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
4. A list of the agencies, groups, and individuals who are part of the team that will carry out the plan. See members of the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Byway Council on page 37.
5. A strategy for how existing development along the corridor might be enhanced and how to accommodate new development while preserving the byway's intrinsic qualities. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
6. A plan for on-going public participation. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
7. A general review of the road's safety record to locate hazards and poor design, and identify possible corrections. Identify ways to balance safety with context-sensitive highway design practices that accommodate safety needs while preserving the road's character. See Current and Physical Conditions, Safety and Traffic beginning on page 20, and Map 3.2 and 3.3.
8. A plan to accommodate commercial traffic while ensuring the safety of sightseers in smaller vehicles, as well as bicyclists, joggers, and pedestrians. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
9. A listing and discussion of efforts to minimize anomalous intrusions on the visitor's experience of the byway. This might include landscaping to screen an industrial site, relocating utility wires and poles, or planning for the sensitive location of wireless telecommunications towers along the byway. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
10. Documentation of compliance with all existing local, state, and federal laws about the control of outdoor advertising. Federal regulations prohibit all new billboards along designated scenic byways that are classified as federal-aid primary, national highway system, or interstate roads. States are free to impose stricter controls on billboards along scenic byways. See State and Local Sign Regulation on page 28, and Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
11. A plan to make sure that the number and placement of highway signs will not get in the way of scenery, but still be sufficient to help tourists find their way. This includes, where appropriate, signs for international tourists who may not speak English fluently. Two popular and effective ways of addressing this issue are logo signs and tourist-oriented directional signs (TODS). Logo signs are located on interstate highway rights-of-way and advertise gas, food, camping, and lodging at nearby exits. Highway-oriented businesses can advertise their company's symbol, name, trademark, or a combination of these things on a logo sign. A few states, like Utah and Maine, provide TODS primarily on non-interstate rural highways to help motorists find local businesses. TODS indicate only the name of local attractions, mileage to the establishment, and direction. See Sign Management on page 24, and Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.
12. Plans for how to market and publicize the byway. Most marketing plans highlight the area's intrinsic qualities and promote interest in the byway that is consistent with resource

protection efforts and maintenance of the byway's desired character. See Goals and Strategies starting on page 38.

13. Any proposals for modifying the roadway, including an evaluation of design standards and how proposed changes may affect the byway's intrinsic qualities. Byway groups should work with their state department of transportation to adopt context-sensitive highway design standards for the byway. Context-sensitive design takes into account the area's built and natural environment; the environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and preservation impacts of a road project; and provides access for other modes of transportation. See Goals and Strategies on page 38.
14. A description of what you plan to do to explain and interpret your byway's significant resources to visitors. Interpretation can include visitor centers, leaflets, audio tours, information panels, and special events. See Goals and Strategies on page 38.

Adapted from: "National Scenic Byways Program". Federal Register. Vol. 60, No. 96. May 18, 1995.

2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway was designated by the State of New Hampshire as a Scenic & Cultural Byway in May 2014. The route is located wholly within Rockingham County, and consists of two contiguous segments with distinct interpretive themes.

The **Old Stagecoach Byway** begins in Atkinson at the Massachusetts border and travels northwest along NH Route 121 through Hampstead, Chester, and Auburn to Lake Massabesic. The adjoining segment is the **Robert Frost Byway**, which follows NH Route 28 and local roads south from Lake Massabesic through Derry village center to the Robert Frost Farm State Park and continues along local roads heading eastward until it reconnects with NH Route 121 and the Old Stagecoach Byway in Hampstead, completing a loop of 44 miles.

The two segments feature a rich diversity of the intrinsic qualities highlighted by the NH Scenic and Cultural Byways program. The unifying theme of the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Byway is the history and culture of rural southern New Hampshire. This includes how it was shaped by the early transportation network of the region - most specifically the stagecoach service that connected Boston and Concord via Haverhill, Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester, Auburn and Manchester. More broadly, the Byway celebrates New Hampshire's rural landscape and communities through which the Byway passes - the villages, farmsteads, orchards, and denizens brought to life in the writing of Poet Laureate and former Derry resident Robert Frost.



Stagecoach service began between Boston and Haverhill, Massachusetts in 1793, and was soon after extended north to Concord, New Hampshire, on a route that largely follows present day NH Route 121 and the Main Streets of Atkinson, Hampstead, and Chester. Alternate local names for the route, or segments of it, have over time included the Stage Road, the Coach Road, and the Post Road. When looking out their stage windows, passengers on those early stagecoaches would in many areas have seen much the same landscape during the 19th century as contemporary travelers would see out the window of their car today - fields, stone walls, vistas, and a significant number of surviving historic buildings.

With the need to rest, water or change horses, and allow respites and refreshment for passengers, stops were needed along the 30 miles from Haverhill to Manchester. Numerous taverns and inns opened along the route to fill this need, much as gasoline stations and rest stops meet the needs of motorists today. Many of these tavern and inn buildings today survive as private homes. Examples include the Grover House in Atkinson; Gilman Inn, Colby Tavern, Taylor Tavern and Muzzy's Tavern in Hampstead; and the Elliot Tavern in Chester. The Chester stagecoach provided service between Chester and Derry/Londonderry. In 1887, the cost of the run was 15 cents. In 1896 the opening of the Chester

and Derry Trolley ended the need for this stagecoach.

In 1851, Lewis Downing and J. Stephen Abbot created the Concord Coach. Their intent was to minimize the discomfort of travel. The existing stagecoaches were not well-sprung and travel could be very uncomfortable. The Concord Coach, constructed in Concord, New Hampshire, was used as a mail coach and was able to accommodate up to 12 interior passengers, depending upon the model. The coaches were painted with bright colors and featured oil paintings on the doors.

By the mid-1800s, stagecoach service ended because of competition from railroads, which provided superior speed, comfort, and convenience. During their period of operation, though, the stagecoaches helped shape the towns through which they passed; and their route remains one of the main highways through the region.



The Byway also interprets American Poet Laureate Robert Frost, the period he spent living and teaching in the area between 1900 and 1911, and the New Hampshire denizens and landscape about which he wrote. Some of Robert Frost's most important poems were written while he taught at Derry's Pinkerton Academy, and he has cited his time in Derry as inspiring much of his work. The impetus for Frost's poem "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" was autobiographical. The setting is Webster's Corner in Derry, the current intersection of Route 28 and Island Pond Road. On an evening in late December, Mr. Frost paused for a moment

while returning home from town after an unsuccessful attempt to sell eggs. He had been trying to raise money for Christmas gifts.

Robert Frost, his wife Elinor, their toddler daughter Lesley and about 300 Wyandot chickens moved to Derry in the fall of 1900. They lived on a 23 ½ acre farm that had been purchased for them by his grandfather. In March of 1906, economic considerations forced him to give up farming and he became a teacher at Pinkerton Academy. Within a couple of years, he was recognized by the State Superintendent as the state's best teacher. In the summer of 1911, he sold the farm and began teaching at Plymouth Teachers College. The Derry years are critical in the development of Robert Frost as America's favorite poet. The four-time Pulitzer Prize winner and US Poet Laureate would use themes from these years in all of his books of poetry. Perhaps the best testimony to the importance of his decade in Derry comes from Mr. Frost himself. In a letter he wrote, "To a large extent the terrain of my poetry is the Derry landscape, the Derry farm. Poems growing out of this, though composite, were built on incidents and are therefore autobiographical. There was something about the experience at Derry which stayed in my mind, and was tapped for poetry in the years that came after. It is all fact - no fancy, but lots of teasing."¹

¹ *Robert Frost, Life and Talks – Walking*, Mertins, Louis, 1965, p 72

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS

A. Route Description

The ideal starting point for traveling the Byway route is in the Town of Atkinson near the Massachusetts-New Hampshire border. Much of the fabric of Atkinson's historic town center has been well preserved, with houses and civic structures dating from the colonial era through the 19th Century. Atkinson's Main Street, now NH Route 121, was the route of the first regular Stagecoach service between Boston, MA and Concord, NH, as well as the main commerce and travel route to get from Concord and Manchester to Boston during the colonial era.

The leafy tree canopy of Atkinson's Green Tunnel shades travelers as they continue northward into the Town of Hampstead, which similarly features many historic homes dating to the 18th and early 19th centuries. Hampstead's Meeting House, built in 1749 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was recently rehabilitated, and features a bell from the foundry of Paul Revere.



The town of Chester features an historic village center with multiple properties on the National Register, including the former Chester College and the home of Daniel Chester French, sculptor of the statue of President Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial among other famous works of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Byway travelers will find myriad outdoor recreation opportunities surrounding Lake Massabesic in Auburn. The Massabesic Audubon Center is a wildlife sanctuary featuring 5 miles of hiking trails connecting the shores of the Lake to adjacent upland habitat, as well as hosting interpretive and educational programs. The lake is also a beautiful location for canoeing/kayaking, and connecting to a broader regional networks of rail trails.

From Lake Massabesic the Robert Frost portion of the Byway runs southward following local roads through former orchards and other conservation land, arriving in the community of Derry. Derry's downtown features shops, restaurants, the Derry Opera House and museum and other historic civic and residential architecture. In Derry travelers will also find the Robert Frost Farm Historic Site, where the poet lived while teaching at nearby Pinkerton Academy from 1906-1911 and writing some of his most well-known work, including "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening", "Mending Wall", and "The Black Cottage". The sites inspiring each of these works are all nearby the Robert Frost Farm. After a visit to the Frost Farm, travelers can continue along the Byway route, rejoining the Old Stagecoach route in Hampstead.

Route Description by Road Segment

Road	Description	Mileage
Old Stagecoach Byway Segment		
NH 121/Main Street (Atkinson)	Begin at Plaistow/Atkinson Town Line in Atkinson. Follow NH 121/Main Street past through Atkinson's historic Town Center.	4.2
NH 121/Old Stage Road (Hampstead)	Continue on NH 121 through the Town of Hampstead. Old Stage Road becomes Main Street in Hampstead, and on the north side of the village center it becomes Haverhill Road	4.8

NH 121/Main Street (Chester)	Continue on NH 121/Haverhill Road, entering the Town of Chester.	3.9
NH 121/Haverhill Road	Turn Left at intersection with Sandown Road to remain on NH 121/Haverhill Road. Proceed through Chester Town Center, crossing NH 102/Derry Road. Becomes Chester Street	0.2
NH 121/Chester Road (Auburn)	Continue on Chester Street, crossing into the Town of Auburn. Becomes Chester Road entering Auburn. Pass Calef Lake Camping Area.	6.1
NH 121/Manchester Road (Auburn)	Turn left onto Manchester Road to remain on NH 121. Continue to intersection of NH 121 and NH 28/Londonderry Turnpike at the roundabout. This is the northern terminus for Stagecoach Byway segment.	2.8

Robert Frost Byway Segment		
NH 28 Bypass/Londonderry Turnpike (Auburn)	Begin at Lake Massabesic Waterfront Park. Proceed south on NH 28 Bypass/Londonderry Turnpike.	7.2
English Range Road	Turn Left onto English Range Road.	2.0
NH 102/Chester Road (Derry)	Turn Right onto NH 102/Chester Road. Follow past Beaver Lake to Roundabout at intersection with NH 28 Bypass/Londonderry Turnpike.	1.5
NH 102/East Broadway (Derry)	Proceed half-way around roundabout to continue straight on NH 102, which becomes East Broadway as it approaches Derry town center.	0.9
NH 28/Birch Street (Derry)	Turn Left onto NH 28/Birch Street at town center traffic light	0.8
NH 28/Rockingham Road (Derry)	Turn Left onto NH 28/Rockingham Road	0.8
NH 28/Rockingham Road (Derry)	Bear Right at split with Island Pond Road to remain on NH 28/Rockingham Road. Pass Robert Frost Farm Historic Site.	1.1
Lawrence Road (Derry)	Turn Left onto Lawrence Road	1.0

Island Pond Road (Derry)	Turn Right onto Island Pond Road. Cross Rockingham Recreation Trail. Bear Left at Y with Gulf Road to remain on Island Pond Road. Bear Right at Y with Warner Hill Road to remain on Island Pond Road	3.6
North Shore Road (Hampstead)	Turn Left onto North Shore Road. Pass Escambuit Campground.	1.2
Drew Road (Hampstead)	Turn Right onto Drew Road. Becomes North Salem Road.	0.8
NH 121 Main Street	North Salem Road intersects NH 121 Main Street in Hampstead, rejoining the Stagecoach Byway. Southern terminus of Robert Frost Byway.	0.2

B. Intrinsic Resources

The Byway route is highly scenic, leading visitors through quintessential New England colonial villages, rolling farmland, working orchards, and picturesque ponds and lakes. The route provides visitors access to recreational resources including Lake Massabesic and local ponds with recreational access, and a range of hiking and biking trails, including the Rockingham Recreation Trail, and the Granite State Rail Trail. There are networks of mountain bike and Audubon Center hiking trails at Lake Massabesic. Seasonal festivals and year-round museums, restaurants, and town centers provide opportunities to experience the culture of the region, and offer the visitor an “off-the-beaten path” experience through a unique, little known part of New England.

Historic Resources

The following pages feature brief thumbnail histories for each of the five corridor communities, noting significant characters, events, and sites. Detailed information on structures and sites of historic interest can be found in the full Inventory of Intrinsic Resources included as Appendix A.

Atkinson²

Atkinson has a rich history, dating back to before the American Revolution. The town was part of a tract of land purchased from the Indians by settlers of Haverhill, MA on November 15, 1642. The first settlements were made in 1728 by Benjamin Richards of Rochester and Jonathan and Edmund Page and John Dow of Haverhill.

Set off from Plaistow on September 23, 1767, Atkinson was named for Colonel Theodore Atkinson. Col. Atkinson had been a commander of some renown during the French and Indian wars and served as collector of customs at Portsmouth. In 1748, he was appointed Secretary of the New Hampshire Colony, a position he received through his uncle, Benning Wentworth, the colonial Governor. Although he never actually lived in Atkinson, his estate located on Providence Hill Road was known as the Atkinson Farm.

Colonel Atkinson served as secretary of the colony until the Revolution and was one of the Masonian Proprietors who parceled out New Hampshire lands to over 30,000 settlers. Colonel Atkinson bequeathed funds to establish Atkinson Academy, incorporated in 1787. In 1809, the state granted 13,000 acres of land in Coos County to the Academy, an unincorporated place now known as Atkinson & Gilmarnton Academy Grant.

Atkinson Academy, the second oldest co-educational school in the country, was founded as a boys school in 1787 by Reverend Stephen Peabody, General Nathaniel Peabody and Doctor William Cogswell; it began admitting girls in 1791. The school building burned to the ground in 1802 and was rebuilt in 1803 at a cost of \$2,500. That building remains a part of the Academy, with only four classrooms. Other historic buildings, such as the Kimball House and Rockwell School (current police station) grace this southern New Hampshire town.

² Town of Atkinson, Historical Society webpage, March 2014

Relatives of former President John Quincy Adams live in Atkinson, along with famous politicians and businessmen.

Hampstead

The first known inhabitants of what later became known as Hampstead, were Native Americans. There were several campsites located around both Island Pond and Wash Pond. In 1642, the members of the Massachusetts Bay Colony purchased from the Indians, the lands known as Pentucket. The land was renamed Haverhill. Their lands extended roughly 12 miles to the north and included modern day Hampstead. It was not until the early 1720s that the citizens of Haverhill began to explore and settle this dense wilderness. The area was known as Timber Lane Parish of Haverhill due to the great abundance of valuable timber. The early settlers were known to be "men well fitted to encounter the toils, endure the hardships, and practice the self-denial necessary for the successful building up of a new settlement."

Originally settled in 1728, the population steadily increased and in 1733, twenty-five families petitioned the general court to see if they could hold meetings by themselves due to the great difficulty of traveling to Haverhill. Permission was granted and a rude meeting house was erected. In 1741 the boundary between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was established that put Timber Lane in the province of New Hampshire. A petition was presented to His Excellency Benning Wentworth, Esq. Governor and on January 19, 1749, the Town of Hampstead was incorporated. The town is named after the English residence of Sir William Pitt, a close friend of Benning Wentworth, New Hampshire's royal Governor. Hampstead is often described as a "picture postcard town with an elegant historic Main Street, characterized by antique Colonial homes."

The cornerstone for a new meeting house was placed in 1745. This meetinghouse is still standing today and it is the second oldest meetinghouse in the State. Hampstead residents are very proud of this building as well as the Paul Revere, Jr., bell which hangs in the belfry. The bell is traditionally rung every year to "ring in the 4th of July". The building has been used as a place for worship and, for nearly a hundred years, had no second floor. It has seen its share of famous New Hampshire people too, including Daniel Webster, who attended a trial there in 1814.³

Hampstead was primarily an agricultural community, although little of the agriculture exists today. There are three ponds in Hampstead that made the town a popular destination for recreation. In the early days, the population rose dramatically in the summer months. The town still has two active campgrounds. The railroad came through and ran from 1870 to 1936. Along with the railroad came a great deal of prosperity; the railroad bed exists today and is used as a multi-use recreational trail.

On Main Street, the old library now houses the Hampstead Historical Society which maintains a museum that has artifacts from Hampstead as well as all kinds of information about the history of the town.

³ http://www.hampsteadnh.us/Pages/HampsteadNH_BComm/Historic/house Town of Hampstead website

The Old Town Meeting House, located in Hampstead's Historic district, houses what is believed to be one of two Paul Revere Jr. bells still in existence. The bell is believed to originate from Paul Revere's foundry.

Chester⁴

The process by which the Town of Chester was incorporated began in 1719 with a petition to the Royal Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (which included the not yet independent New Hampshire) from 125 businessmen, or proprietors. The grant was issued in 1720, and the town was incorporated in 1722. Of the original 125 proprietors, only 13 actually settled in Chester. Future settlers were primarily Scots Irish, and purchased, leased, or married into land from the original proprietors.

The original grant for Chester stated 100 square miles, and if surveyed today it would reflect approximately 158 square miles of wooded land. Roads were barely cart paths, and travel from what is now Hooksett to Chester Center for a Town Meeting or to Church was a round trip that took all day or longer. It was no wonder that outlying areas created their own communities, their own parishes, and schoolhouses. Eventually these areas broke away and incorporated their own towns, now known as Candia, Raymond, Hooksett, Auburn, and Derryfield (now Manchester from Belmont Street to the Merrimack River, and up to the Mall of New Hampshire).

Today, within Chester's boundaries of about 27 square miles, Chester Center, located at the intersection of NH Routes 102 and 121, is the geographic center of the community, and is little changed from a hundred years ago. It is still the commercial and civic center of the community. Chester Center is a landmark, with National Historic Sites on three of the four corners. On the northwest corner is the Village Church (Chester Congregational Baptist Church). Constructed in 1773, it served as the site of the annual Town Meeting through 1836. On the northeast corner is the Village Cemetery, a wealth of history in itself, and includes all those veterans who served in the Revolutionary War. The southwest corner reveals Stevens Memorial Hall.

During the Post-Revolutionary Period (1780-1830), Chester was an important stop on the first stage route, which was established between Haverhill, Massachusetts and Concord, New Hampshire. In 1793, many of the larger homes along Haverhill Road and Chester Street served as inns and taverns for the travelers. In 1803, a company was formed to build the Chester Turnpike, a straight-line toll road, between Chester and Concord. This venture was not profitable and was abandoned with the development of the Merrimack River for waterpower and transportation, which left Chester as a small, rural community.

During the Pre-Civil War Period (1830-1860), shoes were made in small shops in the community. Fine fabrics were imported but mostly all fabric for clothing and household use was manufactured in the home. With the introduction of more advanced mechanization, the shoe and fabric industries moved to large factories in the cities where waterpower, rail facilities and more labor were available, and production could keep up with the demands of larger markets. In the 1870's, the Nashua to Rochester railroad was built to service these factories, but went through Hampstead and Sandown, again leaving Chester off the beaten path of commerce.

⁴ http://chesternhhistorical.org/?page_id=120, Town of Chester Historical Society website

Although Chester never became a manufacturing center, its residents have played a major role in politics and the arts in both New Hampshire and the nation. Chester has given the State of New Hampshire three governors, three senators, a chief justice of the State Supreme Court, a President of Dartmouth College, and numerous judges, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and financiers. It is also famous as the home of the Revolutionary period Dunlap Family of Cabinetmakers, and as the summer home of the sculptor Daniel Chester French, who created the statue of Abraham Lincoln for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.

During the latter part of the Post-Civil War period (1860-1900), Chester became a popular summer resort. The estates of the wealthy, the inns and the summer boarding houses provided summer employment for many of the year-round residents. As the summer resort activities began a decline, which continued well into the 1900's, the inns, taverns, and the smaller stores in the outlying areas could not afford to remain open and were gradually converted to private homes.

In 1877, the New Hampshire Legislature granted a charter to the Chester & Derry Telegraph Company. The telegraph line was operated successfully until 1884, when it was converted to a small private telephone company, The Chester Telephone Company, which survives today as Granite State Telephone.

Unlike the surrounding towns of Auburn, Candia, Raymond, and Sandown, no steam driven railroad was ever built into Chester. It did, however, have an electric railroad, the Chester & Derry Electric Railroad, a line that ran from Chester Center to East Derry Village, then into Derry, near the Derry Depot. *The Trolley*, as it was called, ran passengers and freight from 1896 to 1928, a time when Chester's population had declined to its lowest level (653 residents). The cause was the same as for scores of other small New England communities, lack of industry, which forced people away from the farms to better employment opportunities in cities such as Manchester and Nashua. This and development of the automobile which brought improved roads saw the demise of the Trolley. In 1924, electric streetlights were installed for one mile on each road emanating from Chester Center, thus beginning the electrification of the Town. Within a few years, the main streets were paved, as you see today, with only a few of the lesser traveled roads still gravel.

Auburn⁵

Auburn was named from the poem "The Deserted Village" by Oliver Goldsmith, "Sweet Auburn! Loveliest Village of the Plain." Auburn was originally part of Chester, an area known as "Chestnut Country" which became a separate township on May 8, 1722. The first white settlers were recorded in 1614. Auburn was part of this large town "north of Exeter" and it was the last to split off with the incorporation signed by Governor Steele, on June 23, 1845. This area of Chester was known as Long Meadow West, Chester, or Chester Woods. Some say that Auburn split from Chester because of poor roads, or it was too far from Chester Center to attend Sunday service and town meetings. One theory is this area of Chester had grown increasingly independent. The rapid growth of Manchester may also have played a part. Manchester's rising population gave better markets for goods; there were off farm employment

⁵ Information taken from "Where has Auburn Been?", presentation by D. Dollard, Auburn Historic Association

opportunities, and better transportation as rail travel was available, not to mention the ever-present politics.

Approximately one third of Auburn is covered by Lake Massabesic which was being considered as a potential municipal water source due to the contamination of many wells and a need for a reliable source of water for fire protection. There had been three attempts to form private water companies with little success. In 1871, the General Court passed an act and the Manchester Water Works was formed as an agency of the City of Manchester. In 1874, the Legislature conveyed water from the Lake to the City of Manchester. On July 4th of that same year, the first water was pumped to the city with the completion of the Cohas Dam and the Mammoth Road Reservoir. In 1885, Manchester Water Works began acquiring land around the lake. By 2006, over 3400 acres and 95% of shoreline was owned by the Water Works.

Auburn remained primarily an agricultural town but was augmented by the many seasonal summer boarders. Auburn has had a colorful history. It is built on seven hills, all of which are about 500 feet above sea level. The last friendly Indians were seen around Pingree Hill in 1738. The Indians in Auburn were of the Algonquin Nation, Abenaki group, and Pennacook and Amoskeag Tribes. Steamboats were a common sight on Lake Massabesic; among them were *Winnie L*, *City of Manchester*, *Joe Cobb*, *Mineola*, *The Dark Secret*, *The Lone Star*, *Fannie Belle*, *Gem of the Lake*, *Daisy*, and *Annie Oakes*. Auburn used to be home to the Pavilion, which was constructed in 1896 by the Manchester Street Railway to encourage people to the area. It burned in 1932. Auburn was a resort area known throughout New England. There were several summer boarding houses and hotels in town to accommodate the summer tourists. Transportation options included a trolley line and rail service.

- A trolley line to the town operated between 1895 and 1940.
- There were several train stations, including the Massabesic Station utilized in Auburn until 1861; the Severance Station/icehouse which was torn down during the 1950's, and the original depot burned in 1934.
- The last passenger train came through in July of 1954.
- Freight traffic continued to the 1970s.
- Mail came by train; before that, mail was delivered by stagecoach to the Anderson Tavern in Candia, which was located on the Chester Turnpike.

Colonel Francis Wayland Parker (1837-1902) is known as the Father of Modern Education; he taught in the basement of the Longmeadow Church for three winters. The Griffin Free Library was gifted to the town on April 26, 1893, from Sebastian Griffin. The Methodist Church was constructed in 1836 and is the current Town Hall. On the seedier side, Carry Nation, known as a great Temperance Crusader, came to Auburn and declared "Auburn was the worst" in her campaign against liquor. Auburn had many saloons and dance halls (one had a 75-foot bar with ten bartenders). The Auburn Rifle Range was used for military training during both World Wars and by the Army National Guard. It is now the site of Wellington Business Park. The era of cottages, dance halls, hotels, trolleys, steamboats, and the railroad are long gone, but Auburn still has many gentler, recreational opportunities available along the shores of Lake Massabesic.

Derry⁶

Derry was settled in 1719 by sixteen families led by their pastor, James McGregor, who came from Aghadowey, County Londonderry in Northern Ireland. The families settled a 144 square mile grant called Nutfield. Pastor MacGregor is now remembered as the Moses of the Scotch Irish in America. Derry was originally incorporated as the Town of Londonderry in 1722. In 1827 the eastern portion broke away to form the Town of Derry which was the original name of the city and county of Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Derry, Northern Ireland is originally *Doire*, which is Gaelic for 'oak covered hill'. The Nutfield grant is now the towns of Derry, Londonderry, and Windham with major parts of Hudson and Manchester and minor portions of Salem and Pelham.

Derry remained primarily agricultural until the railroad came through the town in 1849. Derry's development has historically been linked to regional transportation patterns. The first village in town was in East Derry (Upper Village) and contained the first church, tavern, and stores. This area was located along the east/west stagecoach road to Portsmouth. When Londonderry Turnpike (Route 28/By-Pass 28) opened, the area known as Derry Village became more populated. The mercantile center developed closer to Londonderry in the area known as Derry Depot or West Derry about 40 years later when railroad came to town. Each of the town centers has survived surprisingly intact, preserving the architectural styles of each period.

In 1870 Colonel William Pillsbury moved his shoe factory from Londonderry to the Broadway section of town, closer to the railroad. In 1856, Harvey P. Hood began shipping milk via the rail from Derry to Boston. He eventually established his own dairy farm in Derry, purchasing the Redfield Farm and its large set of buildings. HP Hood manufactured all its butter from its Broadway creamery and shipped that by rail to Boston.

Millions of shoes were manufactured in Derry each year and shipped to five continents. The Manchester & Lawrence branch of the Boston and Maine System was not a priority branch but during the height of rail travel in the area there were several freight and passenger trains traveling through Derry. In the late 1930's, passenger service decreased to one round trip a day to Boston with passenger service ending in June of 1953. During the Great Depression of the 1930's, most of the factories closed and there was an unemployment rate of about 30%. For the next three decades, Derry suffered from economic decline. Prosperity came again in 1963 with the opening of I-93. Derry's population doubled within a decade; land that was once pastureland now provides housing. Pinkerton Academy, a private high school established in 1814, is the largest such school in the United States.

Pre-European Settlement

When the first European settlers came from Haverhill, Massachusetts to Hampstead, local historical accounts describe "only one Indian living near Angle Pond". The New England Indians had contracted some of the early European explorers' diseases and their immune systems could not tolerate them, so their population had shrunk considerable by the later 1600's and 1700's. On November 15, 1642, Rev. John Gard purchased for Haverhill a large

⁶ Information from Derry Town Historian, Richard Holmes; *A Second Glimpse of Derry 1719-1998*, and the 2010 Derry Master Plan

tract of land, including most of Hampstead, from the Indians Passaconaway and Saggattew, with the consent of Passaconaway, for 3 pounds, 10 shillings. The intent of this purchase was to keep the Indians peaceful, but the raids continued.

In the early years, many stone tools, stone axes and arrowheads were found in the area along with evidence of villages or campsites. There was a large village at the eastern end of Island Pond, where the settlers found many artifacts. Several artifacts have also been found on the big island in Island Pond. Another location was at the eastern end of Sunset Lake, where the early settlers found the remains of a village and stone tools. In Island Pond there is an island known as "Escumbuit Island" which was the home of Chief Escumbuit in his later years until he died (1727). Chief Escumbuit led two raids in Haverhill, during one of which Hannah Duston was taken⁷. Prior to both raids, the Indians spent the night on Escumbuit Island.

The original settlers of the area were part of the Abenaki Confederations. The Indian population in the area was reduced to near zero by the time the area towns were settled, mainly due to disease and war. Derry had an Indian population of one in 1719 - an elderly man who was living alone on the shores of a pond that was named after him, Ezekiel's Pond, located just off Route 28 heading south toward Salem, a few miles south of the Frost farm.

There was an Indian "village" on the shores of Lake Massabesic. Both Atkinson and Derry claim their land was purchased from the Indians and not simply taken from the Native Americans. Derry's land was by deed from the great Abenaki Sachem Passaconaway. Over the centuries, many stone artifacts from the original Native American inhabitants have been found in the soil of each of the towns including a dugout canoe on display at the Derry Museum of History that was found at the bottom of Derry's Beaver Lake.

Sebastian Griffin of Auburn had a well-known passion for archeology. He had a collection of Indian artifacts that he found along the shores of Little Massabesic that were kept at the Griffin Free Library but unfortunately are no longer found there. In the late 1900's thieves tunneled under the foundation of the library and removed the artifacts.

Recreational Resources

The route provides visitors access to recreational resources including Lake Massabesic and local ponds with recreational access, and a range of hiking and biking trails, including the Rockingham Recreation Trail, the Southern NH Rail Trail and networks of mountain bike and Audubon Center hiking trails at Lake Massabesic. Seasonal festivals and year-round museums, restaurants, and town centers provide opportunities to experience the culture of the region.

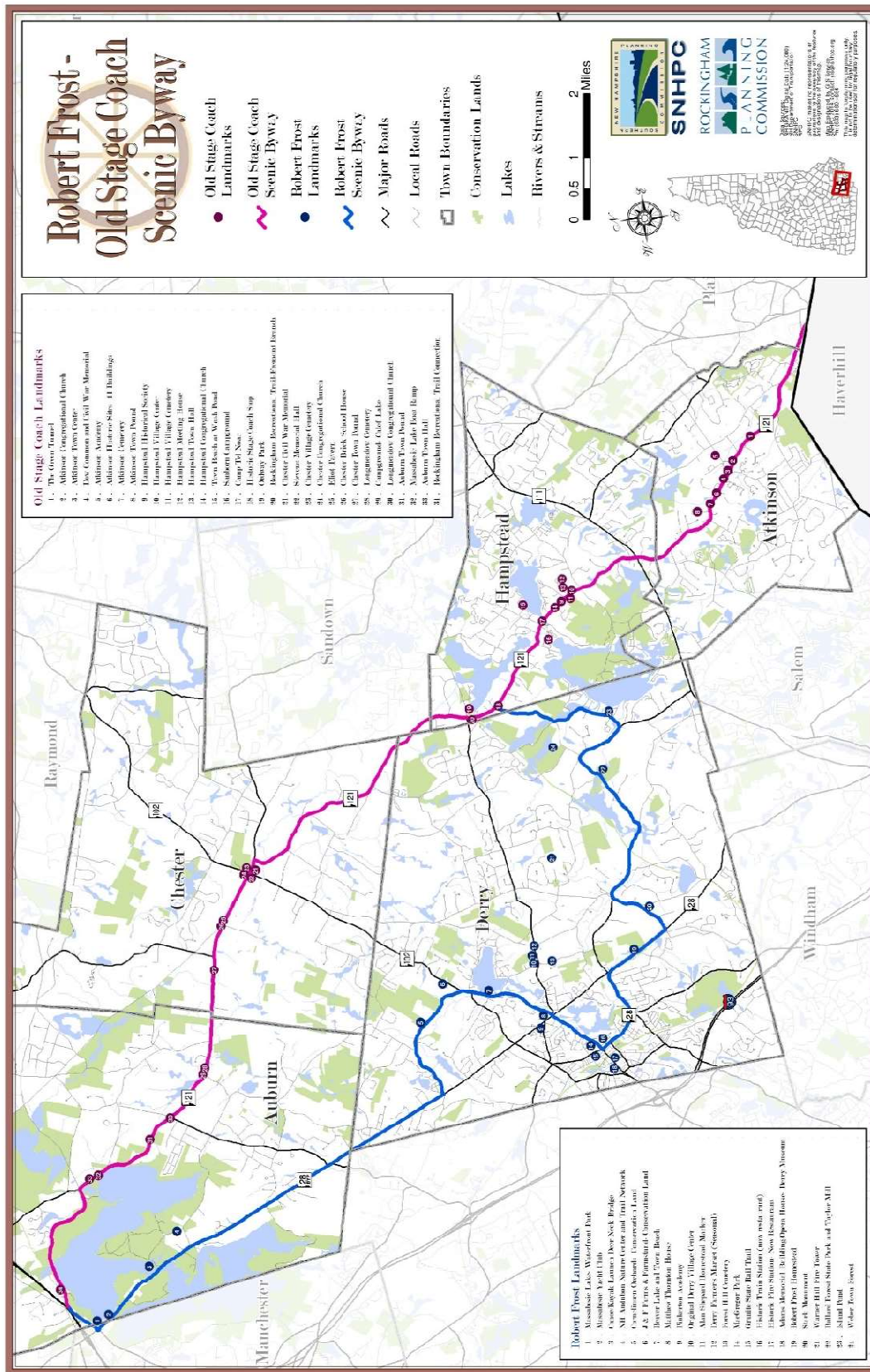
The Byway also provides recreational opportunities for on-road cycling. NH 121 in Chester and Auburn has been designated by NHDOT as a Regional Bicycle Route. Much of the alignment of the Robert Frost Byway segment also follows State Bicycle Routes, along Auburn Road, Old Derry Road, English Range Road, Lawrence Road, Island Pond Road, and Drew Road. Shoulder

⁷ During the King William's War, Hannah Duston, her infant daughter, and her nurse Mary Neff, were taken captive by the Abenaki in 1697. The daughter died enroute to what is now known as Dustin Island near Penacook, New Hampshire. Mrs. Duston, Mrs. Neff and 14 year old Samuel Lennardson killed and scalped ten of the Abanaki holding them captive. The three escaped by canoe back to Haverhill, Massachusetts.

width varies along the route from 4' in some sections to less than a foot in others, though segments with narrow shoulder tend to have lower traffic volumes. Opportunities exist for bicycle safety improvements in locations along the route. Sidewalks are present along NH 121 only in short segments through town centers.

Major recreational resources are inventoried in detail in Appendix A together with historic resources discussed above.

MAP 3.1 - Intrinsic Resources of the Byway



C. Road & Traffic Assessment

Safety and Traffic

The primary roads along the byway are NH 121, NH 28 Bypass, and NH 28. These roads are classified as state maintained primary roads. All of these are heavily traveled and are the primary routes from Manchester to points southeast. There are several safety hazards that have been identified in each of the community's Master Plans. The NHDOT has formally adopted the context sensitive solutions process in defining problems and their solutions on the state's transportation system. The following are problem areas that have been identified for each community.

Auburn:

While none of the highest crash locations on the byway are in Auburn, there are still areas of concern. Several locations along NH 28 Bypass, as well as the intersection of NH 121, Hooksett Road, and Raymond Road have all experienced a moderate number of crashes over the last decade. Traffic volumes generally range from 3,000-6,500 AADT on NH 121 to just over 7,000 on NH 28 Bypass just south of the Massabesic traffic circle (2018-19 data).

Chester:

Chester is home to a somewhat dangerous intersection along the byway, that of NH 102 and NH 121. A road safety audit completed in February 2012 found safety issues including:

- Vegetation
- Visibility & location of signs
- Vertical alignment/slope creating line of sight issue
- Turning traffic double stacks and bypasses on all approaches
- Vehicles from NH 121 are not yielding to oncoming NH 102 traffic
- Flashing beacon is not visible/effective

No other intersections in Chester typically experience a high number of crashes. Potential solutions to these and other issues include evaluating sign locations, the effectiveness of the flashing beacon, formalizing turn lanes, and the potential for creating a roundabout or vertically realigning the roadway in the long term. Traffic volumes along NH 121 in Chester are generally in the 3,000-4,000 AADT range but have increased to 5,600 (2019) just south of the NH 102 intersection.

Derry:

Many top crash locations along the byway can be found in Derry. These include:

- NH 28/Island Pond Road
- NH 102/Tsienneto Road
- NH 28/NH 102

Traffic volumes vary greatly in Derry, but it is generally the most well-traveled section of the byway. NH 28 near the Robert Frost homestead saw an average of 11,000 vehicles a day in 2019. Secondary roads like Island Pond and English Range Roads see roughly 3,000-4,000 vehicles per day (2018-19).

Hampstead:

Several the top crash locations on the byway are in Hampstead, including NH 121/NH 111 and NH 121/Emerson Ave. NH 121/Emerson Avenue is a somewhat unusual intersection in that there are two different ways to turn onto Emerson Ave, one from southbound NH 121, and one from northbound. The two spurs of Emerson converge, where one side is stop-controlled, and the other is not. This, combined with a poor sightline, contributes to ambiguity at the intersection, and results in a relatively high crash rate for the volume of traffic on the road. A third high crash location in Hampstead is at the intersection of NH 121 and Hampstead Road.

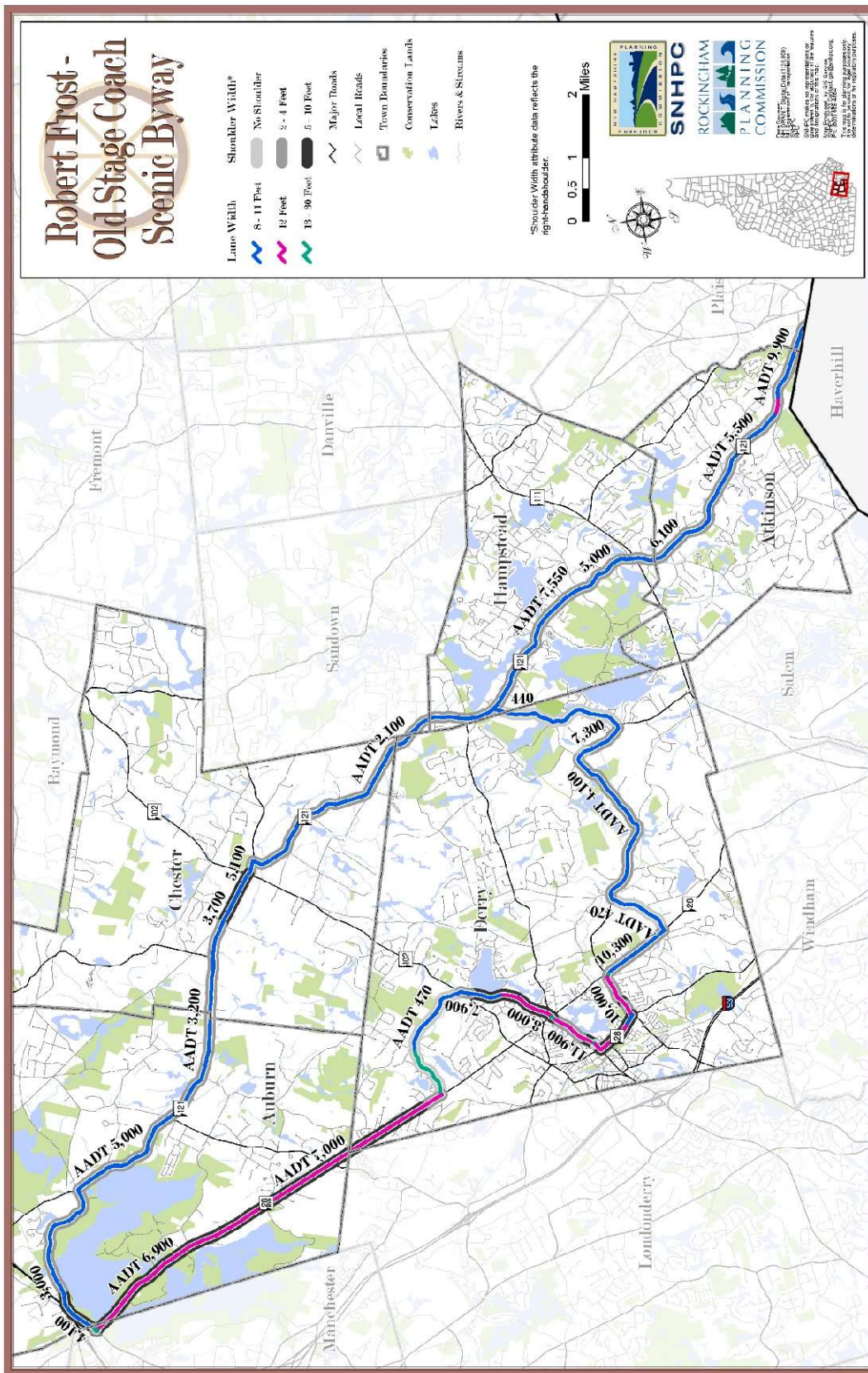
Atkinson:

None of the Top 10 crash locations along the byway reside in Atkinson. The location with the most crashes with Atkinson is at the intersection of NH 121 and Island Pond Road. Excessive speed has been mentioned as a potential byway issue going forward, especially on NH 121 near the center of town.

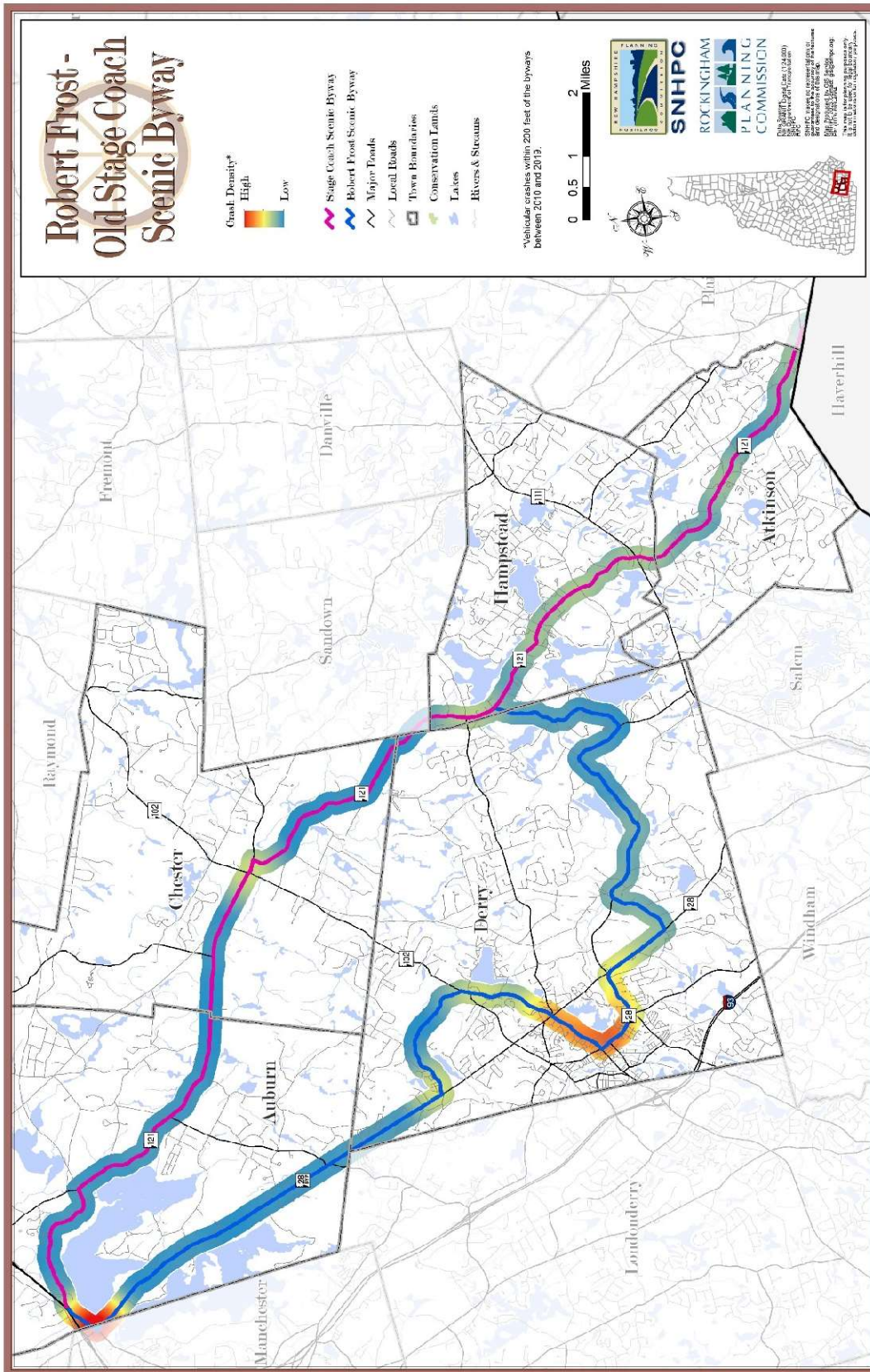
Commercial Traffic

All the roads on the byway are state-maintained paved roads and are able to accommodate two-wheel drive passenger vehicles. Tour buses can travel the route with the following exceptions: Drew Road and English Range Road are impassable due to narrow width and sharp turns. A detour for tour buses is available. Derry has sidewalks and crosswalks in the areas where the greatest number of sites is located. Most commercial traffic will be experienced on NH 28 Bypass and NH 28 through Derry, as Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counts on some segments of these routes surpass 10,000. NH 121 in Atkinson also has AADTs over 10,000, especially just north of the Massachusetts border.

MAP 3.2 - Roadway Characteristics



MAP 3.3 - Roadway Crash Data



D. Land Use & Zoning

Planning and Land Use Regulations

Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances

Each community addresses future development in their Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances. The byway passes through portions of Auburn that are zoned agricultural and industrial, in addition to conservation land surrounding Lake Massabesic. As the byway winds through Derry, Chester, Hampstead, and Atkinson, it passes through primarily residential zoning. There are agricultural zones adjacent to the byway in all five towns, but most notably in the southern portion of Chester.



While the byway passes through relatively few commercial zones, it does traverse the Central Business District (CBD) of Derry, providing travelers the best opportunities to refuel, dine at local restaurants, stop off at a pharmacy, and take advantage of other essential services. Other smaller commercial districts are present near the northern edge of the byway in Auburn, and in the southern reaches of Hampstead, just north of the border with Atkinson.

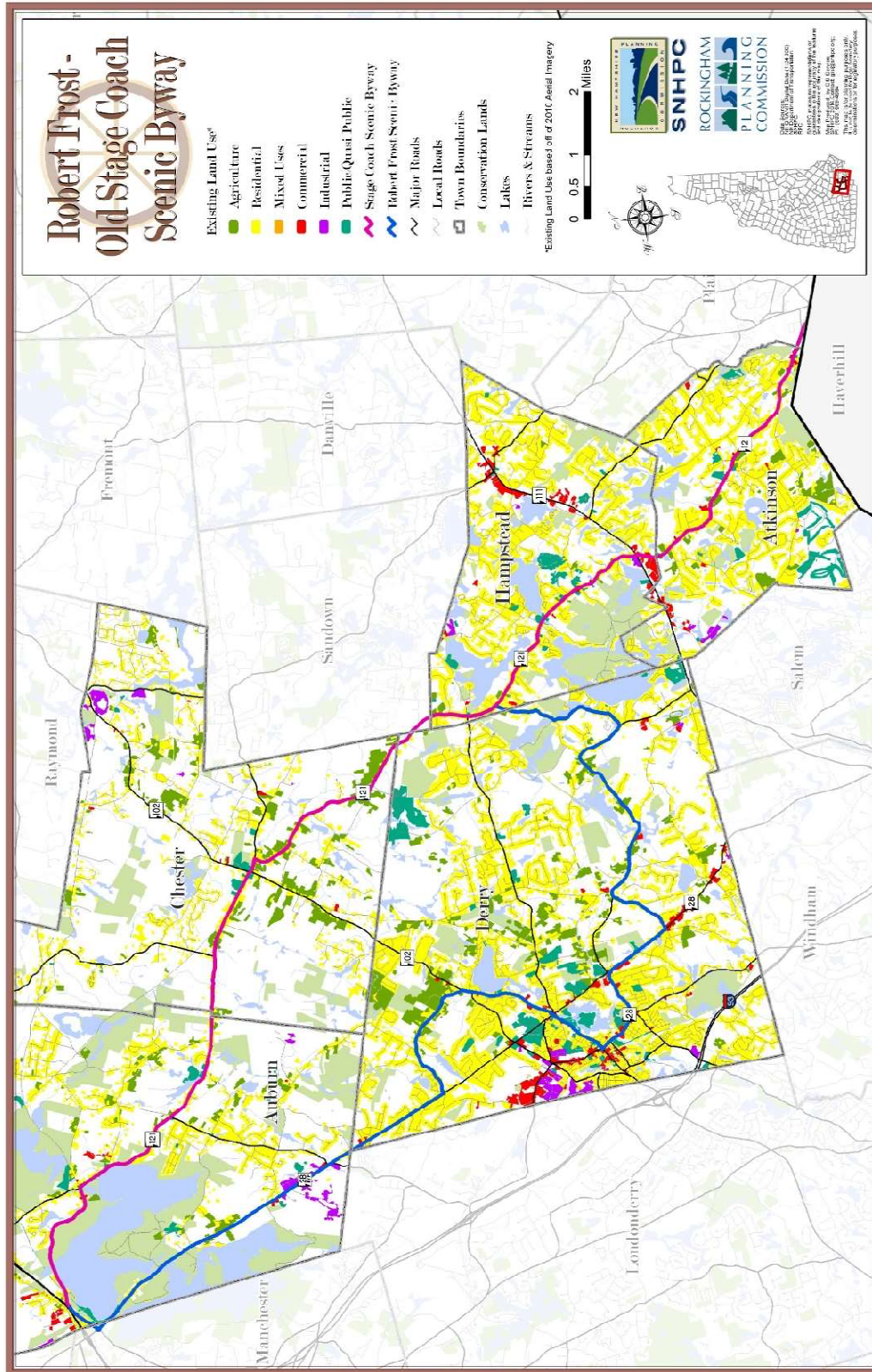
There is a variety of existing land use alongside the byway route; land use is primarily residential as one drives north across the MA border and through Atkinson and Hampstead. In southern Chester, agricultural use is predominant south of the intersection of NH 121 and NH 102. While passing through Auburn, there is a considerable amount of conservation land next to Lake Massabesic, and adjacent to both the Frost and Stagecoach portions of the byway.

The Frost Byway then passes south through the western part of Auburn along NH 28 Bypass and continues into Derry, taking many twists and turns through residential and agricultural lands. Upon its journey through Derry's CBD, the byway returns to more rural land uses, finally reconnecting with the Stagecoach Route (NH 121) at the Derry/Hampstead town line.

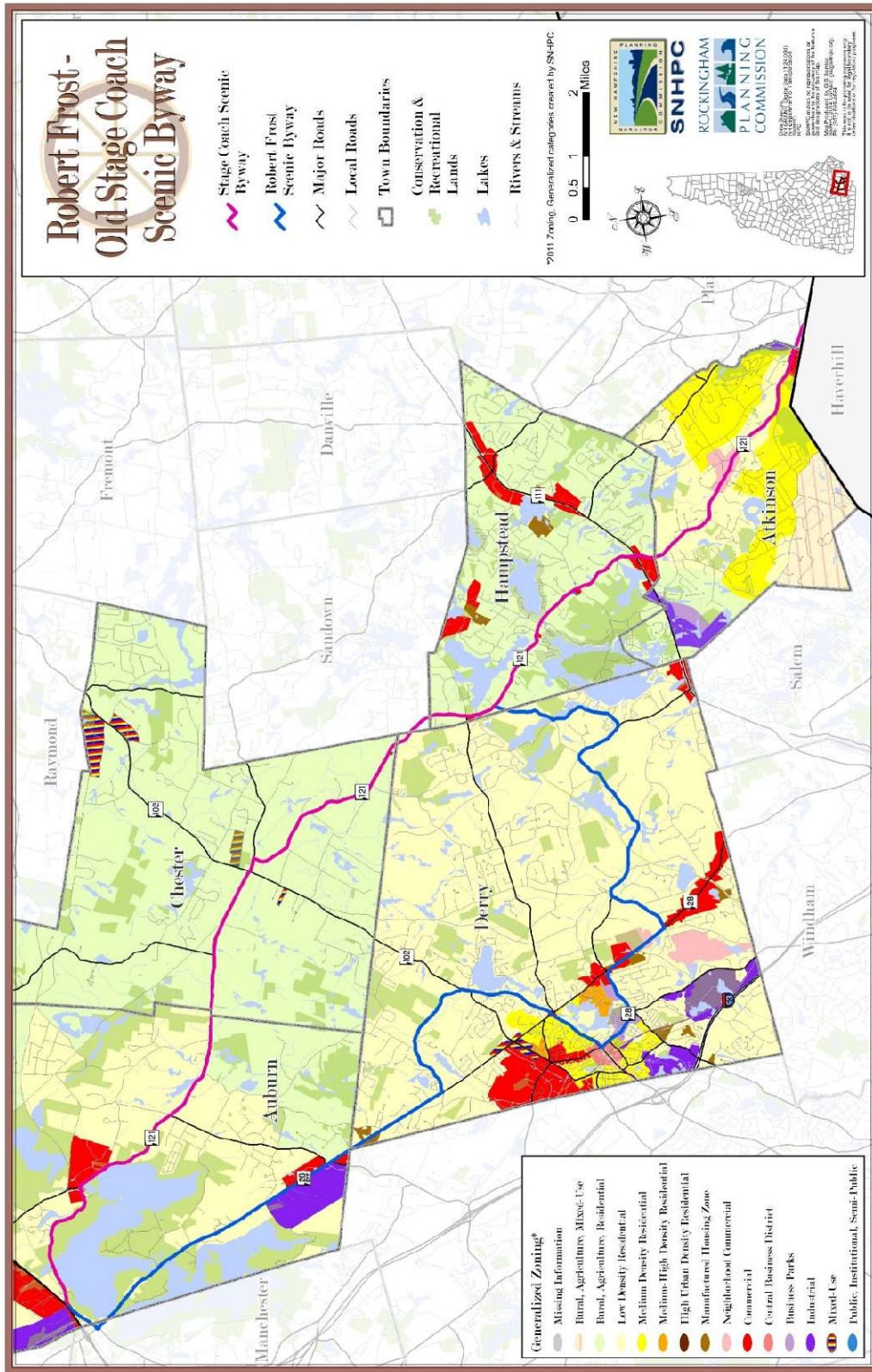
State and Local Sign Regulations

Part of the byway is on a Federal-aid primary highway system and is subject to 23 U.S.C 131 (s) that prohibits outdoor advertising on a state designated scenic byway. In addition to the federal regulation, New Hampshire has enacted a regulation, RSA 238:24, that prohibits outdoor advertising on any state designated scenic and cultural byway with two exceptions: (1) any directional sign that would cater to the traveling public, such as hotels and restaurants and (2) on-premises signs. As such, this regulation would apply since the entire Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach has been approved as state scenic byway. Local sign regulations for each community are in compliance or stricter than the state regulation. There are a few signs that appear to be out of compliance although it is believed that these signs have been grandfathered in prior to these regulations.

MAP 3.4 - Land Use in Corridor Communities



MAP 3.5 - Generalized Zoning in Corridor Communities



Design Standards

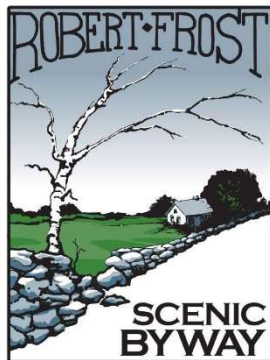
While not directly on the byway, there is an historic district in East Derry, (roughly bounded by Cemetery, Hampstead, and Lane Roads). Chester has established design guidelines to ensure that future growth and development in its historic center is compatible with its surroundings. The guidelines already in existence in Chester pertain to preservation of historic buildings and the maintenance of the town's historic character. As of the last master plan (2018), a historic district was under consideration in Auburn as well.

Open Space/Landscaping

Potential needs for landscaping exist at each of the gateways of the five towns. Each community will work to involve screening and buffering some parking lots using techniques such as planting wildflowers. The byway council has the potential to work with the town planning boards and private landowners to incorporate landscaping guidelines into the site plans.

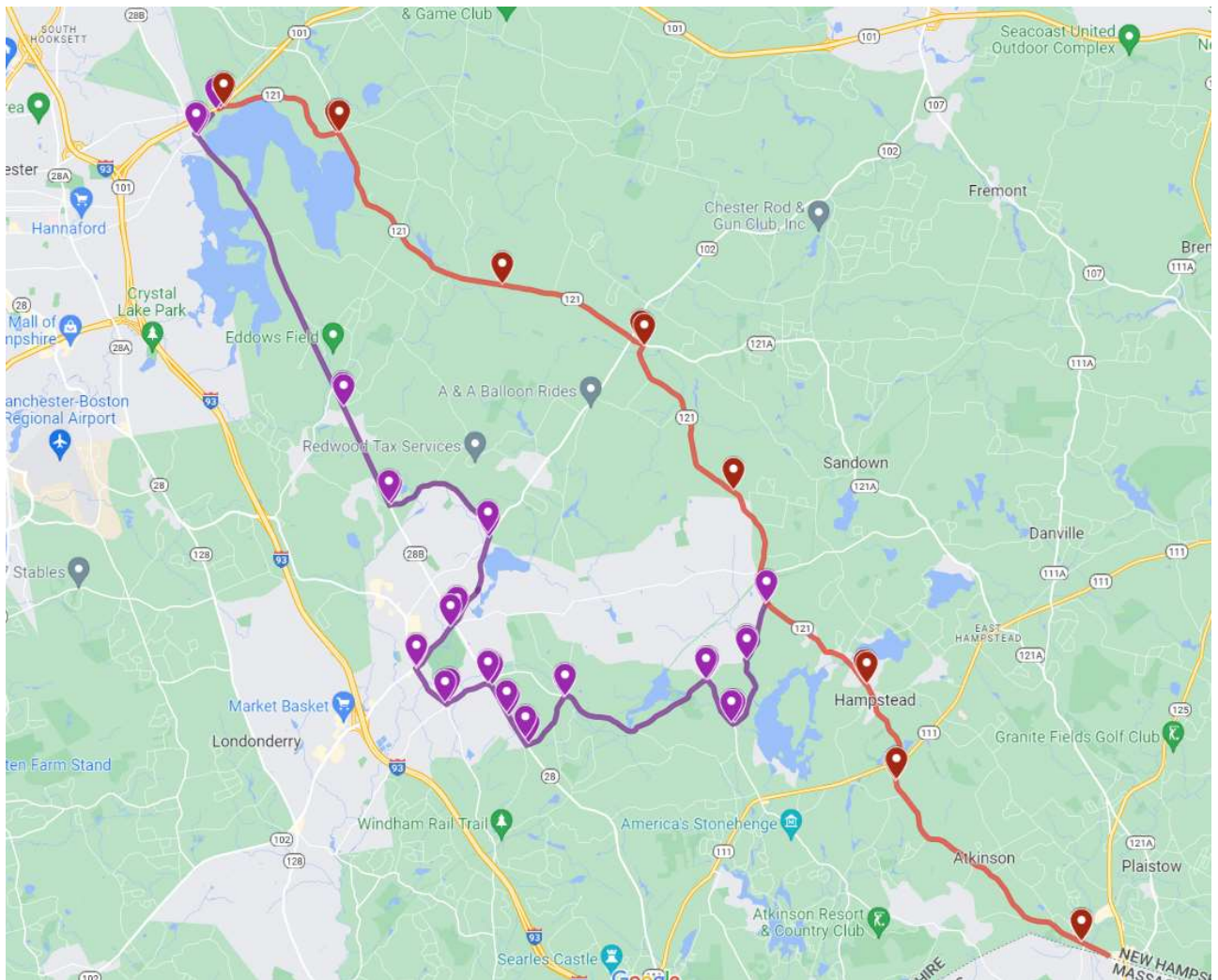
The Atkinson Garden Club began a daffodil planting program in 2017 that has become noteworthy for the proliferation of tens of thousands of yearly blooms. Other towns have begun similar programs, which highlight not only the beauty of the byway, but also the community pride of residents. The planting efforts were covered in an [April 2020 article](#) of the Derry Eagle-Tribune.

Sign Management



Signage was designed and installed along both portions of the byway in 2015-16. The byway council occasionally discusses replacing damaged or destroyed signage, and has worked with local road agents on installation and upkeep. A map of current byway signage is below, and a list of specific sign locations can be found in the appendix.

Number of Signs by Community			
	Robert Frost	Old Stagecoach	TOTAL
Atkinson	0	4	4
Auburn	6	4	10
Chester	0	4	4
Derry	24	0	24
Hampstead	2	2	4
TOTAL	32	14	46



E. Visitor Services & Amenities

An inventory of visitor services and amenities for Byway travelers was developed along with the inventories of Intrinsic Resources described in the previous sections. Byway information will be available at all town halls and libraries along the Byway, as listed below.

This list was current as of February 2023. Key amenities include the following:

Public Rest Rooms - Public Restrooms are available in the following locations along the Byway:

- Atkinson Town Hall - 21 Academy Avenue, Atkinson - 603-362-4920
- Atkinson Community Center - 4 Main Street, Atkinson - 603-362-5531
- Kimball Library - 5 Academy Avenue, Atkinson - 603-362-5234
- Hampstead Town Hall - 11 Main Street, Hampstead - 603-329-4100
- Hampstead Public Library - 9 Mary E. Clark Drive, Hampstead - 603-329-6411
- Chester Public Library - 3 Chester Street, Chester - 603-887-3404
- Auburn Town Hall - 47 Chester Road, Auburn - 603-483-2281
- Griffin Free Public Library - 22 Hooksett Road, Auburn - 603-362-5234
- NH Audubon Center at Lake Massabesic - 16 Audubon Way, Auburn - 603-668-2045
- Derry Municipal Center - 14 Manning Street, Derry - 603-432-6100

Visitor Information & Interpretive Centers

- NH Audubon Center at Lake Massabesic - 16 Audubon Way, Auburn - 603-668-2045
- Greater Derry Londonderry Chamber - 29 W. Broadway, Derry - 603-432-8025
- Robert Frost Farm Historic Site - Route 28, Derry - 603-432-3091
- Adams Memorial Hall - Derry Museum - 29 W. Broadway, Derry - 603-434-1247
- Atkinson Historical Society - 3 Academy Avenue, Atkinson - 603-362-9317
- Chester Historical Society - 1 Chester Street, Chester - 603-887-4545

Restaurants

Atkinson

- Eggie's Family Restaurant - 6 Main Street

Auburn

- Auburn House of Pizza - 15 Chester Road
- Auburn Tavern, 346 Hooksett Road

Chester

- Olde Post Restaurant - 15 Chester Street

Derry

- Appolo Vineyards - 49 Lawrence Road
- Blue House of Pizza - 21 Birch Street
- Casa Java - 17 Birch Street
- Cask & Vine, 1 ½ East Broadway
- Charlie Mac's Pizzeria - 127 Rockingham Road

- Chen's - 122 East Broadway
- Clam Haven - 94 Rockingham Road
- Destination India, 14 East Broadway
- Fody's Tavern - 187 ½ Rockingham Road
- Hare of the Dawg - 3 East Broadway
- The Grind Rail Trail Café - 5 West Broadway Street
- The Hill Top - 187 Rockingham Road
- The Lobster Claw II - 4 S. Main Street
- Los Reyes Street Tacos & More - 127 Rockingham Road
- Lucky Panda - 49 E. Broadway
- Lei's Garden - 150 Rockingham Road
- Mary Ann's Diner - 29 East Broadway
- Paisano's Pizza - 4 Chester Road
- Palermo's Pizza - 5 Rockingham Road
- Sabatino's North, 1 East Broadway

Hampstead

- BeanTowne Coffee House & Café - 201 Route 111
- English Muffin - 10 Main Street
- Toss 'N Sauce - 10 Main Street

Just off byway (Manchester)

- Bonsai's Restaurant - 2264 Candia Road
- Sandy's Variety & Sub Shop - 2281 Candia Road

Lodging

- Stillmeadow Bed and Breakfast
545 Main Street, Hampstead, NH
www.still-meadow.com
- Kent House of Chester
30 Chester Street, Chester, NH
www.kenthousechester.com
- Atkinson Resort & Country Club
85 Country Club Drive, Atkinson, NH
www.atkinsonresort.com
- The Westbrook Inn
49 South Main Street, Derry, NH
www.thewestbrookinn.com

Additional amenities are identified above in descriptions of Intrinsic Qualities

4. FINDINGS

A. Summary of Public Process

The development of the Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Byway began in the early 2000s when the Town of Atkinson began working to establish the Old Stagecoach Byway following NH Route 121 within Atkinson. The Atkinson Byway was designated in 2010, with a recommendation from the NH Department of Transportation to widen the geographic scope and develop a multi-town regional byway corridor. Representatives of Atkinson approached Rockingham Planning Commission and Southern NH Planning Commission in 2011 for assistance in pitching a regional byway initiative to other Route 121 corridor communities. Initial presentations of the concept were presented to the other potential corridor communities during the summer of 2011, and a multi-town planning committee convened for the first time in the fall of 2011. Since then, considerable work has been done identifying resources in the five towns, developing the Corridor Management Plan, and refining the Byway map.

- May/June 2012: proposed byway endorsed by Auburn, Chester, Derry, Hampstead, and Atkinson
- July 2012: nomination for State Scenic & Cultural Byway designation completed and submitted to NH DOT
- November 2012: towns formally appointed members to serve on Byway Council
- April 2013: public visioning session held in Chester
- November 2013: proposed byway presented to State Scenic & Cultural Byways Council
- March 2014: regional public hearing on byway nomination held in Derry
- October 2015: Corridor Management Plan adopted by Byway Council
- **2016-present: While there have not been official public hearings, members of the public are always welcome at quarterly council meetings. All meetings are posted in advance on the SNHPC and byway websites.**

B. Key Issues

The following key issues have been identified through ongoing discussion by the Byway Council as well as public input received at the April 2013 public visioning session and March 2014 public hearing on Byway designation. These issues shape the goals and strategies identified in Section 5.

Public Appreciation for Historic Resources

A 2013 statewide survey by the UNH Survey Center for New Hampshire's nine regional planning commissions showed strong public interest in historic character. A full 90% of respondents indicated that their communities should be actively involved in protecting historic buildings and neighborhoods, second only to promoting local agriculture. Similarly, access to Cultural and Recreational Sites was identified as among the top five factors important to have in their community, with 82% of respondents identifying this as "important" or "very important". At the same time, when it comes to development review, or management of publicly owned historic resources, the perception of participants in the Byway public input event was that historic resources are not as well understood or appreciated as they should be. The

Recommendations section proposes a range of actions to improve public awareness of local history, from historic markers to audio tours to incorporating local historical resources into 4th grade New Hampshire history curriculum.

Traffic Safety

The April 2013 public input session identified concerns around excessive speed on byway roads, cut-through traffic avoiding segments of I-93 and NH Route 101, and improvements to bicycle and pedestrian safety. Data from NHDOT show traffic volumes from permanent counting stations along the Byway route largely holding steady or in some cases declining in recent years, but this doesn't necessarily contradict the concerns noted above. Specific intersections identified as needing safety improvements include Hampstead Four Corners, NH 121/NH 102 in Chester, and NH 102/NH 28 Bypass in Derry. Portions of the Byway alignment are already designated State Bicycle Routes, including NH 121 from Drew Road in Hampstead north to Lake Massabesic, English Range Road and NH 102 into downtown Derry, and Island Pond/North Shore Road and Drew Road.



More recently, there have been discussions about installing a roundabout at the 121/102 intersection in the center of Chester. The byway council has discussed this and is in favor of improvements that retain/preserve the historic integrity of the intersection and downtown area.

The Recommendations section contains strategies intended to further increase the safety of all byway users.

Resource Protection

Protecting key buildings, sites and vistas that shape the history and character of the Byway corridor communities is a goal that has been identified throughout the planning process. This was a clear theme at the public visioning session, and a strong interest of members of the



Byway Council. This desire to protect historic resources is countered by a sense that there is limited awareness of the value of historic resources by community residents, and inadequate attention paid to their protection as part of development review. At the same time there is a desire to accomplish this as much as possible through private sector volunteer activity rather than through regulatory means.

Strategies discussed have included updating local inventories of historic properties and working to list additional properties on the National Register of Historic Places; communities adopting advisory design guidelines for new construction in historic districts or rehabilitation or adaptive reuse of historic properties; outreach to owners of historic properties regarding their importance to the community; and recognition programs including landmark signs on historic properties and interpretive signage in other locations.

Economic Development

The visioning session and deliberations by the Byway Council have also identified a strong interest in using the Byway and its assets as a tool to strengthen local economies in corridor communities through increased visitation. Scenic Byways have been used effectively by rural communities elsewhere in the country to spur visitation to a region and encourage longer stays by visitors that do come. The visioning session identified opportunities to use the Byway to market local agriculture as well as historic resources, outdoor recreation centered around the Southern NH Rail Trail and Lake Massabesic, and cultural attractions like Chester's annual town-wide display of scarecrows, which draws significant crowds of visitors around Halloween and fall harvest time. Going forward there is a desire to work with the Greater Derry Londonderry Chamber of Commerce and the NH Division of Travel and Tourism to promote the Byway and the region.

COVID's Impact on Tourism

The COVID-19 pandemic has had major effects on the tourism industry in New Hampshire much as it has on other industries. This impact was sharpest during the spring of 2020 in the earliest phases of the pandemic as schools and businesses suspended in-person operations and people were urged to stay at home to stop the spread of the virus. Air travel through Manchester-Boston Regional Airport (MHT) in April 2020 was only 5% of that for April 2019 - a 95% drop. By April 2021 this had recovered to 29% of 2019 levels, and by April 2022 to 71% of 2019. These patterns are influenced by other trends in air travel beyond COVID, but still a

notable effect. Auto travel on New Hampshire's highways also saw a major dip in the spring and summer of 2020, dropping as much as 50% below 2019 levels, but has largely recovered.

New Hampshire suffered less and has recovered faster than domestic or international travel destinations reliant on visitors arriving by plane, as many travelers in New England stayed closer to home for vacations and avoided air travel. New Hampshire's fall 2021 tourism season broke records for visitation, increasing 38% from the prior record year of 2019 with spending up 65% over 2019.² Research by the NH Division of Travel and Tourism (NHDTTD) found that top activities for visitors included scenic drives, dining, shopping, visiting State Parks, hiking, wildlife watching and visiting breweries. Scenic drives are consistently the top activity cited by visitors in NHDTTD's market research.

A lingering impact of COVID on tourism is staffing. Tourism destinations were impacted in 2020 and 2021 by suspension of the H1-B visa program which typically supplies seasonal workers to many service sector business such as hotels, restaurants, and tourism attractions. Restaurants and other service industry employers in many parts of the state continue to face challenge with an adequate labor pool, especially in areas with relatively high housing costs.

Funding

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Established in [Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code](#) under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and reauthorized and expanded significantly in 1998 under TEA-21 and again under [SAFETEA-LU](#) in 2005, the program is a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States.

On September 22, 2019, the Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act of 2019 was signed by the President and became [Public Law 116-57](#). This law requires the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to solicit nominations for certain roads to be designated under the National Scenic Byways Program as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260), enacted on December 27, 2020, appropriated \$16 million for the National Scenic Byways Program under section 162 of title 23, United States Code. The explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 stated that FHWA should make new designations under the scenic byways program, as required by the Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act of 2019 (Public Law 116-57), prior to issuing a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for the scenic byways program. FHWA announced the [2021 Designations](#) to America's Byways® on February 16, 2021.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-103), enacted on March 15, 2022, appropriated an additional \$6 million, making up to \$22 million available for the NSBP. Section 162(b) of title 23, United States Code, establishes the "Grants and Technical Assistance" portion of the NSBP. The law requires that grants and technical assistance be made available

to States or Indian Tribes to (a) implement eligible projects on designated highways and (b) plan, design, and develop a State or Indian tribe scenic byway program.⁸

Within New Hampshire, intersection improvement or other safety projects not defined as bicycle or pedestrian projects can also be put forward by towns for general highway funding through the biennial solicitation of projects for the State Ten Year Transportation Plan and the four-year State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). As with the TA program this is a highly competitive process, and with an even longer timeline, as new projects are typically added to the back end of the state Ten Year Transportation Plan.

One means of generating local funding is local vehicle registration fees. Under RSA 261:153 IV, the legislative body of a municipality may vote to collect an additional fee for the purpose of supporting a municipal and transportation improvement fund to address improvements to the local or regional transportation system including roads, bridges, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, parking and intermodal facilities and public transportation.

Use of the local option fee has several advantages as a local funding source for transportation improvement. First, surveys by Rockingham Planning Commission have found this to be a relatively palatable approach to revenue generation for local transportation needs as compared to gas taxes, as people tend to see it as a nominal cost paired with local control over use of the revenue. The fee is dedicated by statute to transportation use and is stable from year to year and not subject to an annual appropriations process. This said, only 35 communities statewide have adopted the fee. Derry is the only one of the five Byway communities that uses the fee. Raising local awareness of this funding option can be a role for the Byway group to assist corridor communities in meeting local transportation needs.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Vision Statement

The Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway will celebrate and help protect the historical features, rural character, and natural and scenic qualities of the corridor communities through which it passes. It will tell the story of how the area was shaped by the early transportation network of the region - most specifically the Stagecoach service that connected Boston and Concord via Haverhill, Atkinson, Hampstead, Chester, Auburn, and Manchester. More broadly, the Byway will celebrate New Hampshire's rural landscape and the villages, farmsteads, orchards, and denizens brought to life in the writing of Poet Laureate, and former Derry resident, Robert Frost. The byway will offer an enriching historical and cultural experience for the traveler while also helping connect residents to local history and the region's heritage.

B. Ongoing Management

The Byway Council's bylaws were first adopted in November 2012; the current iteration dates from March 2016. The Council consists of 13 voting members:

⁸ www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/scenic_byways/. Accessed 3/9/23.

- Town of Atkinson (2)
- Town of Auburn (2)
- Town of Chester (2)
- Town of Derry (2)
- Town of Hampstead (2)
- Daughters of the American Revolution, Molly Reid Chapter (1)
- Rockingham Planning Commission (1)
- Southern NH Planning Commission (1)

Additional organizations with an interest in the mission of the Byway may be invited to participate as non-voting members on the Council. Invitation will be by majority vote of the existing membership.

The Council generally meets four times per year at the call of the Chair to coordinate efforts among the five communities. The Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission and Rockingham Planning Commission have prepared this Corridor Management Plan with the support and consensus of the Council and have provided administrative support to the Council. The Council will continue to work with each of their respective communities to encourage public participation in the implementation of the strategies and actions identified on the following pages, and in the overall management of the Byway.

Robert Frost/Old Stagecoach Scenic Byway Council Membership (as of April 2023)

Town/Organization	Representative(s)
ATKINSON	Linda Jette Richard Pyne Alternate 1 (vacant) Alternate 2 (vacant)
AUBURN	Elizabeth Robidoux (Vice-Chair) Deb Mancini Paula Marzloff, Alternate Alternate 2 (vacant)
CHESTER	Jean Methot Voting Member #2 (vacant) Alternate 1 (vacant) Alternate 2 (vacant)
DERRY	Catherine Baumann Margie Ives George Sioras, Alternate Alternate 2 (vacant)
HAMPSTEAD	Rob Morris (Chair) Tina Harrington Alternate 1 (vacant) Alternate 2 (vacant)
DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (Molly Reid Chapter)	Adrienne Dancer Alternate (vacant)
ROCKINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION	Scott Bogle
SOUTHERN NH PLANNING COMMISSION	Adam Hlasny

C. Goals and Strategies

The Council's goals and strategies were initially developed for the ongoing management of the Byway, based on input gathered through a corridor visioning session in April 2013, presentations to Selectmen and Town Councils in corridor communities, and from the locally-appointed Byway Council members.

Since the 2015 development of the original Byway CMP, the following items have been accomplished:

- Develop a Byway website with information on historic, scenic, cultural and resources, other visitor attractions and a calendar of events. Link website through State Scenic Byways program, State Division of Travel and Tourism, local chambers of commerce, and regional planning commissions.
- Track Byway website traffic.
- Develop an informational brochure and map for the byway with visitor information, for distribution through chamber visitor centers, Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, state highway rest stops, and local businesses.
- Develop a series of interpretive signs for key locations along the corridor using the Byway logo with a consistent graphic design.

During the CMP update process, the Council participated in a series of exercises to adjust and reprioritize Goals and Strategies based on the more realistic limitations of limited membership/volunteer bandwidth. The final Goals and Strategies are below; they were ranked at the Council's November 21, 2022 meeting.

Goal 1: Protect the historical and cultural features of the Byway. Ensure that new development is consistent with the historical character of the area.

Strategies:

- Work with property owners, developers, and town staff in maintaining historical sites and properties, including public structures and historic road features.
- Support local efforts to adopt design guidelines to help ensure new development is consistent with the historical character of the area.
- Work with local historical societies and historic district commissions to add historical points of interest to the State and National Registers of Historical Places.

Goal 2: Encourage the traveling public and local residents to investigate the historical and cultural resources of the byway.

Strategies:

- Maintain and enhance a Byway website with information on historic, scenic, cultural and resources, other visitor attractions and a calendar of events. Link website through State Scenic Byways program, State Division of Travel and Tourism, local chambers of commerce, and regional planning commissions.
- Work with print and broadcast media outlets to provide information about the byway, including newspapers, radio, statewide and local cable television.

- Develop podcasts and/or an application for mobile devices with interpretive information for travelers to access while driving on the route.
- Work with the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development Travel and Tourism Division in promoting the byway.
- Engage elementary school teachers from the five communities to cooperatively develop local history lessons linked to the Byway targeting 4th graders as part of the statewide New Hampshire History curriculum.

Goal 3: Ensure that the Byway is clearly marked, safe and attractive for both visitors and residents.

Strategies:

- Add to the inventory of roadway hazard areas described here, including hazard areas for bicycles and pedestrians. Engage town road agents, public works directors and NHDOT in formulating safety improvement projects using NHDOT's Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) process.
- Identify, improve and/or create appropriate pullover locations for scenic areas. Identify, improve, and/or create off-road parking areas for points of interest, picnic areas, and recreational activities.
- Pursue safety improvements at the following intersections: NH 121/NH 102 in Chester, Hampstead Four Corners, NH 121/NH 111 in Hampstead, and NH 102/NH 28 in Derry (Derry Circle)
- Work with the planning commissions in applying for federal funding to partially underwrite improvements to safety and visitor amenities, including from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).
- Engage volunteers in beautification projects, whether through ongoing adopt-a-highway relationships or periodic volunteer beautification projects such as landscaping and gardening.

Goal 4: Encourage appreciation and protection of the area's natural resources.

Strategies:

- Identify unprotected parcels of land which hold scenic and environmental value along the route.
- Work with local land trusts and landowners to place critical locations into easements. Partner with local land trusts to support the continued preservation of currently protected conservation lands.
-
- Identify areas for landscaping improvements.

Goal 5: Expand existing local businesses, including local artists, agriculture, and tourist-related businesses. Encourage businesses and communities to market the Byway in their advertising. Promote new tourism-related businesses.

Strategies:

- Work with each community to incorporate the Byway in their economic development

strategy.

- Disseminate Byway visitor information through local businesses, including brochures on-site and links to the Byway website from business websites.
- Work with business owners to get involved in the byway planning process.
- Inventory and promote local agricultural activities, including community gardens, farms, farm stands and farmer's markets.

Goal 6: Encourage recreational opportunities including sport fishing, hiking, walking, non-motorized boating, and cross-country skiing along the route.

Strategies:

- Create new bicycle lanes along segments of NH Route 121 and other key locations.
- Develop a recreational guide of biking, hiking and cross-country ski trails in the area including publicly-owned forest and conservation land, where recreational uses are allowed.
- Encourage outdoor recreation-oriented businesses.
- Encourage recreational events.

Goal 7: Establish and monitor a set of performance measures to ensure that the goals are met and the action plan is implemented by targeted deadlines.

Strategies:

- Track visitation at key destinations along the Byway including the Massabesic Audubon Center, Frost Farm, Taylor Mill, Southern NH Rail Trail and Rockingham Recreation Trail. Work with partner agencies and volunteers to conduct counts.
- Continue to track traffic volume and crash statistics along the Byway.
- Encourage local businesses to track sales in relation to any Byway special events
- (Continue to) track Byway website traffic.

Rank	Total Score	#	Strategies (as ranked by Byway Council, 11/21/22)	Priority	Realistic	
1	2	(1b)	Support local efforts to adopt design guidelines to help ensure new development is consistent with the historical character of the area.	1	1	
	2	(2e)	Maintain and enhance a Byway website with information on historic, scenic, cultural and resources, other visitor attractions and a calendar of events. Link website through State Scenic Byways program, State Division of Travel and Tourism, local chambers of commerce, and regional planning commissions.	1	1	
	2	(4a)	Identify unprotected parcels of land which hold scenic and environmental value along the route.	1	1	
	2	(7c)	(Continue to) track Byway website traffic.	1	1	
2	3	(2c)	Work with the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development Travel and Tourism Division in promoting the byway.	1	2	
	3	(3b)	Engage volunteers in beautification projects, whether through ongoing adopt-a-highway relationships or periodic volunteer beautification projects such as landscaping and gardening.	2	1	
	3	(5b)	Disseminate Byway visitor information through local businesses, including brochures on-site and links to the Byway website from business websites. Work with business owners to get involved in the byway planning process.	1	2	
	3	(6d)	Encourage recreational events.	1	2	
	3	(7b)	Continue to track traffic volume and crash statistics along the Byway.	2	1	
3	4	(1c)	Work with local historical societies and historic district commissions to add historical points of interest to the State and National Registers of Historical Places.	3	1	
	4	(2b)	Develop podcasts and/or an application for mobile devices with interpretive information for travelers to access while driving on the route.	3	1	
	4	(4c)	ID areas for landscaping improvements.	2	2	
	4	(6b)	Develop a recreational guide of biking, hiking and cross country ski trails in the area including publicly-owned forest and conservation land, where recreational uses are allowed.	1	3	
	4	(7a)	Track visitation at key destinations along the Byway including the Massabesic Audubon Center, Frost Farm, Taylor Mill, Southern NH Rail Trail and Rockingham Recreation Trail. Work with partner agencies and volunteers to conduct counts.	2	2	
4	5	(1a)	Work with property owners, developers and town staff in maintaining historical sites and properties, including public structures and historic road features.	2	3	
	5	(3c)	Identify, improve and/or create appropriate pullover locations for scenic areas. Identify, improve and/or create off road parking areas for points of interest, picnic areas and recreational activities.	1	4	
	5	(3e)	Work with the planning commissions in applying for federal funding to partially underwrite improvements to safety and visitor amenities, including from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program, Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).	2	3	
	5	(4b)	Work with local land trusts and land owners to place critical locations into easements. Partner with local land trusts to support the continued preservation of currently protected conservation lands.	2	3	
5	6	(2d)	Engage elementary school teachers from the five communities to cooperatively develop local history lessons linked to the Byway targeting 4th graders as part of the statewide New Hampshire History curriculum.	2	4	
	6	(3a)	Add to the inventory of roadway hazard areas described here, including hazard areas for bicycles and pedestrians. Engage town road agents, public works directors and NHDOT in formulating safety improvement projects using NHDOT's Context Sensitive Solution (CSS) process.	2	4	
	6	(3d)	Pursue safety improvements at the following intersections: NH 121/NH 102 (Chester), Hampstead Four Corners, NH 121/NH 111 (Hampstead), and NH 102/NH 28 (Derry Circle)	2	4	
	6	(6c)	Encourage outdoor recreation oriented businesses.	3	3	
6	7	(2a)	Work with print and broadcast media outlets to provide information about the byway, including newspapers, radio, statewide and local cable television.	4	3	
7	8	(5a)	Work with each community to incorporate the Byway in their master plans and/or economic development strategy.	4	4	
	8	(5c)	Inventory and promote local agricultural activities, including community gardens, farms, farm stands and farmer's markets.	4	4	
8	10	(6a)	Create new bicycle lanes along segments of NH Route 121 and other key locations.	5	5	
Key to Goals						
Goal 1:	Historic/Cultural					
Goal 2:	Marketing					
Goal 3:	Safety/Appearance					
Goal 4:	Natural Resources					
Goal 5:	Business/Community Outreach					
Goal 6:	Recreation					
Goal 7:	Performance Measures					