

Project Identification

1. Primary Application: Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT)
2. Contact Information: Matthew Drost, Regional Planner

Maine Department of Transportation

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Northern Maine Development Commission

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4. Byway Name(s): St. John Valley and Fish River National Scenic Byway
5. Byway Designation Type: National Scenic Byway
6. Name of the Project: Gateway Signage and Informational Kiosk Development
7. Project Abstract:

The design and placement of a minimum of seven (7) kiosks containing maps and other visitor information. Kiosks would be located in Allagash, St. Francis, Frenchville, Sinclair, Madawaska, Grand Isle, and Van Buren.

The design and placement of larger greeting signs located in Cyr Plantation, Hamlin Plantation, and Sinclair welcoming visitors to the new National Byway. Update of gateway sign in Portage to include “National” language.

8. Primary Project Goal:

This Highly Qualified project meets the Economic Strength goal in assisting to grow the St. John Valley's economy. A high-quality gateway signage and informational kiosk program will help retain and potentially create jobs at the region's motels, hotels, sporting camps, restaurants, service stations and museums.

9. Primary Project Type:

The gateway signage and informational kiosks project meets C.3 number 7 of eligible projects, *development and provisions of tourist information to the public, including interpretive information about the scenic byway*. Wayfinding is a collection of maps, signs and electronic media that have been developed to aid travelers in their journey. A system of such information is critical to help travelers successfully choose a destination and plan their itineraries as well as to help them navigate once they arrive. As such, efforts to enhance a regional tourism economy must consider the strengths and deficiencies of existing wayfinding elements located along the full length of a byway corridor.

Project Description

10. Applicant Information:

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) is a cabinet-level state agency with primary responsibility for statewide transportation by all modes of travel and maintains more than 8,800 miles of road. Maine's All-American Road, six Nationally-designated Byways, and seven additional State-designated Byways cover more than 700 miles of MaineDOT's managed road network and are present in half of Maine's 16 counties. NMDC, established in 1969 and located in Caribou, Maine, is a public, non-profit 501 (c)

(3)) organization with a mission of assisting communities in northern Maine in economic development, comprehensive planning, transportation planning, and code enforcement officer training. NMDC serves municipalities in the Aroostook and Washington County Economic Development District. NMDC provides numerous services to the communities of northern Maine including, technical assistance with state contracts for local and regional planning, technical assistance to communities in applying for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), the development of Comprehensive Plans. NMDC also serves as the regional clearing house for the review of proposed projects and programs. State funding has also been provided to prepare region wide Tourism Development, Solid Waste Management, Water Quality, and Growth Management programs.

NMDC provides member municipalities with access to professional planning, financial counseling with respect to their local businesses, and technical assistance services offered on a non-profit contract basis for performance of work that cannot normally be accomplished within the scope of local, state, and/or federally subsidized programs. This enables the smaller communities of northern Maine the ability to compete on a more equal footing with larger metropolitan areas that have the financial capacity to maintain full-time, in-house planners, developers, and other professionals.

11. Project Description:

The St. John Valley Cultural Byway is a 134-mile byway in the St. John Valley of northeastern Maine, a rural region neighboring the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Québec. The byway includes Maine's first cultural byway (St. John Valley Cultural Byway) and the state's first scenic byway (Fish River Scenic Byway). Over 85% of byway communities are of French heritage (Acadian and French Canadian). The byway begins on

US Route 1 in Cyr Plantation and State Route 1-A in Hamlin. It moves west on Route 1 through Grand Isle, Madawaska, and Frenchville, with a side route southward on Route 162 to St. Agatha and Sinclair. The byway continues along US Route 1 to Fort Kent where it meets State Route 161, ending in Allagash. Returning to Fort Kent, the byway moves south along Route 11 through Wallagrass and Eagle Lake, and officially terminates in the town of Portage Lake.

The best time to experience the byway's cultural intrinsic qualities is seasonally from May to October. From late June to early September there is high visitation of annual festivals, museums, historic sites, churches and cemeteries. Located along the banks of the St. John River, the Acadian Landing Site in Madawaska is easily accessible at this time of year. Allagash Chainsaw Museum, St. Agatha Historical Museum and Acadian Village are open daily during the summer. Many sites are accessible year-round, such as the Acadian Archives, Le Centre Français, and Musée culturel du Mont-Carmel. All year long, visitors can hear French spoken, see French signs and Acadian flags, and eat traditional chicken stew and ployes. By mid-September visitors are treated to spectacular fall foliage, usually the first in Maine. By November the first snow falls here in New England, offering outstanding outdoor recreational experiences for the visitor.

Major problems associated with the byway is the lack of large gateway signs informing the visitor that they are on the National Byway and informational kiosks in the larger communities or hubs assisting the visitor with wayfinding. The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has placed small signs at the beginning of the byway which can be easily missed by the traveling public and informational kiosks at key locations help those unfamiliar with the byway "find their way" to resources.

There are currently 32 interpretive panels that details the stories of the byway. These panels were professionally developed and placed at strategic locations along the byway. An issue is that the visitors may not know where these panels are located as there is no central location where information can be obtained to assist in their wayfinding. The placement of informational kiosks are locations such as pocket parks, recreational areas, municipally owned parking areas, or other such amenities will help point the visitor to the resources that make the St. John Valley/Fish River National Scenic byway special.

This Highly Qualified project meets the Economic Strength goal in assisting to grow the St. John Valley's economy. A high-quality gateway signage and informational kiosk program will help retain and potentially create jobs at the region's motels, hotels, sporting camps, restaurants, service stations and museums.

The project is broken into two parts, both designed to assist the visitor, often who are unfamiliar with the Byway, with their wayfinding needs. The first part is the identification of the beginning of the byway through the placement of gateway signage. The design, construction, and installation of this gateway is imperative so that visitors know that they have "arrived." Signage will ultimately be located on US Route 1 in Cyr Planation, State Route 1-A in Hamlin, and State Route 162 in Sinclair. An existing gateway sign located on State Route 11 in Portage Lake will be updated to include the word "National."

As stated above, MaineDOT has placed small gateway signs in these locations with the exception of Portage Lake. However, these signs are unremarkable and often go unnoticed by the traveler as speed limits are high. New gateway signage will be larger and more eye

catching to the traveler. The form, materials, and colors will reflect the St. John Valley's history, culture, and geography. The design influence will be guided by the region's Acadian and Scottish culture and will be bilingual. The non-commercial signage will be designed to be low maintenance with as little visual clutter as possible. Signs will fit into the right-of-way and comply with all state and local sign regulations. Gateway signage will be designed to provide a better sense of place while minimizing driver distraction or compromising safety.

The second part of the project is to inform visitors as to "where they are" once traveling along the byway. A minimum of seven (7) informational kiosks containing maps and other visitor information will be produced. Kiosks would be located in the towns of Allagash, St. Francis, Frenchville, Sinclair, Madawaska, Grand Isle, and Van Buren. These towns are the hubs of the byway and contain most of the commercial and retail establishments as well as the cultural resources so important to the byway,

Sites will be selected in cooperation with municipal officials and public meetings will provide insight on directions. Exhibit drafts will be presented to the byway's working group, planning committee, and additional community advisors for review and revision. The exhibits incorporate both French and English text to complement the pictorial stories and reflect the bilingual nature of the region.

The exhibit signs are warranted for ten years. The materials holding them in place are stainless steel and granite, which will last for 50 years. Signs range in sizes: 42"x 24" and 42" x 48". They are constructed in parts so that the entire exhibit can be moved to another location if necessary. Security fasteners are used in to deter and prevent theft. The exhibit

final designs will be transferred to a durable, non-fading sign medium. Symbols will include standard regulatory icons as well as those customized to the area.

The results are a high-resolution product that is nearly indestructible and fade resistant. Once the fabrication is completed, exhibits will be installed according to MaineDOT standards. Use of technology enhancements will be explored and integrated where possible, such as QR Codes to direct the traveler to a URL link to learn more about the exhibit's theme, supporting content, and other places to visit.

This interpretive panel project lays a strong foundation for additional interpretation. There is the potential for sites to not be included because of accessibility issues or final themes and stories selected were not relevant. There is an opportunity to expand the themes and stories for additional interpretive signage.

Neither the gateway signs or information kiosks will contain commercial advertising or sponsorship. They will not have dynamic messaging, nor will they resemble a traffic control device. Lighting will not be allowed. Maintenance will be the responsibility of the municipality in which they are located.

12. Project Selection Criteria:

Description of how each project meets each selection criteria (use language from "High)

This high qualified project addresses the challenge and issue of informing an unfamiliar traveler on the St. John Valley-Fish River National Scenic Byway that they have entered the Byway and where the region's intrinsic resources are located.

This project is designed to help support existing businesses in the St. John Valley Fish River region. Many of these are advertising that they are located on the byway. The region's Chamber of Commerce, municipalities, Aroostook County Tourism, and the

Maine Office of Tourism are all beginning to market the national byways in the region. This in turn will bring visitors to the region or allow them to extend their stays. This increase helps to retain jobs as local motels/hotels, beds and breakfasts and restaurants. The multiplier effect of byway signage and increased visitation helps with areas museums, historic sites, and cultural resources. Increased visitation increases revenues and in turn, helps those maintain their displays, update displays, and helps pay for the everyday expenses of the facility.

Museums are an important part of the local economy and people's travel experiences. Museums are cultural institutions that preserve and promote culture through their collections, foster learning and research, and provide educational opportunities. Museums are also economic drivers (e.g., job creation, increasing tourism, taxes) and visiting them may even promote wellness and help us live longer!

Museums, especially those that accept public money, are expected to make their collections as publicly accessible to as many people as possible, to attract a diverse set of visitors, and to engage and play a positive role in the local community. The gateway signage and informational kiosk program will help direct travelers to these important resources.

The location of gateway signage and informational kiosks will be added to the Aroostook County Tourism (ACT) website. This is the go-to website for those looking to visit Aroostook County contains a scenic byway section that is continually updated.. It receives over 75,000 visitors each year with Massachusetts, New York, and New Hampshire being states with the largest inquires.

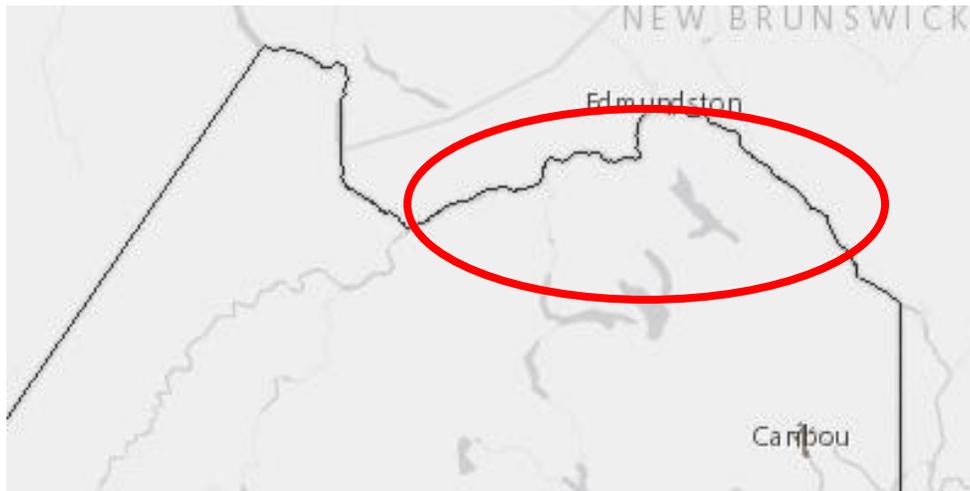
Statutory Priority and Policy Considerations

Statutory Priority:

These projects are associated with a highway designated as a National Scenic Byway and are consistent with the corridor management for the Byway.

Project Goal Priorities:

The majority of the project's costs will be spent outside of a Census-designated urban area and is located in an economically distressed county.



Economic Distress Criteria

24-month Avg. BLS Unemployment Rate ending **April 2022**

2020 Per Capita Personal Income (BEA PCPI)

2019 Per Capita Money Income (ACS 5-year PCMI)

	24 Month Unemployment	Threshold Calculation	BEA PCPI	Threshold Calculation	ACS 5-Year PCMI	Threshold Calculation
Aroostook County, ME	5.36	-0.89	\$47,605	80.0	\$47,605	80.0
U.S.	6.25	0.00	\$59,510	100.0	\$59,510	100.0