

**From:** [David L. Dahlquist](mailto:David.L.Dahlquist)  
**To:** ["rep.boswell.ia03@mail.house.gov"](mailto:rep.boswell.ia03@mail.house.gov)  
**Subject:** HR 7--National Scenic Byways Program  
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February 1, 2012

The Honorable Leonard Boswell  
1026 Longworth House Office Building  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 7—National Scenic Byways Program

Dear Representative Boswell:

I am writing as a citizen in your Congressional District in Iowa; as a longtime supporter of your successful political career both in the Iowa Legislature and the United States House of Representatives; and as a national byway planning expert and advocate for the National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration.

It is my understanding that the House of Representatives Bill (H.R. 7), the American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012, will eliminate the National Scenic Byways Program which has supported the development of locally based, community driven designations of scenic, historic and culturally important highway and backroads. These designated roadways support rural tourism economies and jobs as well as providing local citizens with well-deserved pride in the intrinsic resources which are central to the identity of virtually every part of the countryside of America.

I would respectfully call several points to your attention:

- While you served and led in the Iowa Assembly in the mid-1980s and as I had the privilege of working directly for the Iowa Legislature as its Director of the Recreation, Tourism and Leisure Interim Committee of the General Assembly, the Iowa House and Senate passed and Governor Branstad signed into law and created one of the America's first state scenic byways programs. In the years following its creation, the Iowa Byways program administered by the Iowa Department of Transportation continues to mature and gain increasing recognition as one of the top state-based programs in the United States.
- In part, Iowa's early efforts with developing its byways program led Congressman Oberstar (MN) and many other supporters to create and fund the National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) administered by the Federal Highway Administration.
- An underlying principle of the NSBP and its enabling legislation is that local organizations, citizen groups and support must underpin and sustain the

designation of the highway as a National Scenic Byway.

- Under the NSBP, various Secretaries of Transportation have designated 150 byways as National Scenic Byways including the Iowa Great River Road and the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway. A designation of a National Scenic Byway by the Secretary of Transportation represents the highest available public assurance that a highway or backroad meets a set of uniform standards and requirements upon which the traveling public can rely in planning, visiting, and recalling America's great landscapes.
- Designation of a road or highway as a National Scenic Byway in turn requires that a variety of appropriate measures be undertaken locally to assure that byway signage; maps; story interpretation; protection of visual, recreation, and historic resources; universal accessibility; highway pull-offs; and overall traffic safety are provided and maintained at the highest standards. After all, these special roads are the America's best and must provide national and international travelers with much higher standards than any other U.S. and state highway or local secondary road should provide. Fortunately, Congress has provided the Secretary of Transportation with discretionary funds over the life of the program for byway development grants. Unfortunately, in every annual grant application cycle of the NSBP the demand for funds to support viable and responsive byway project has far exceeded the actual availability of the discretionary funds thus leaving many American tourists in need of essential facilities and amenities to make their byway travel a truly rewarding experience.
- The economic impact of the NSBP and each designated byway is inherently exceptional. Designating a byway, making improvements to support leisure driving, and managing the intrinsic scenic and historic qualities underlying the designation capitalizes on and adds value to the very significant public investments that were originally made for right-of-way acquisition and construction of the highway itself. The \$500 million awarded in discretionary NSBP grants from 1992 to 2011 to local byway organizations represents a mere fraction of the total public investment that built these highways and backroads originally.
- There is little doubt that the level and source of funding for every type of federal transportation program needs to be examined in this post-recession time. Local byway organizations across the country are examining alternative sources of funding to assure continued sustainability of the values and benefits which state and national byway provide to the traveling public as well as the communities that rely on their byway for economic vitality. However, it is through their *designation* as a National Scenic Byway that they are often able to leverage NSBP funding into alternative funding streams. It is generally accepted that the twenty-year development support which the NSBP has reliably provided in the past will need to evolve to respect competing priorities and the limited availability of federal funds. But without federal designation and

the official National Scenic Byways Program, these organizations will have greatly weakened ability to secure alternative non-federal funding.

I own and manage a national byway planning and consulting practice headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa. Over the past twenty years I have provided professional planning services for 28 individual byways in 17 states. Nearly 100% of my firm's income is derived from providing services and products to byway organizations across the country. I am one of a few individuals who has worked continuously with the provisions, designations, and grants provided through the National Scenic Byways Program.

My experience in the world of byways clearly suggests that elimination of the National Scenic Byways Program as called for in H.R. 7 on February 1, 2012, will directly cause highly negative consequences to hundreds of local organizations across the country that have come to rely on, organize around, and add value to their communities through the designation of local highways as National Scenic Byways. Private sector jobs will be lost if the National Scenic Byways Program and the long-standing designation of National Scenic Byways are eliminated.

On behalf of communities, organizations and individuals across Iowa and the country who have invested their financial and human resources in their byways, I respectfully request that you and the honorable members of the United States House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reconsider the elimination of the National Scenic Byways Program as suggested in H.R. 7.

I would be honored to provide additional supporting information at your request.

All the best to you in these most important deliberations.

Sincerely,

David L. Dahlquist



**DAVID L. DAHLQUIST ASSOCIATES, LLC**  
5204 Shriver Avenue  
Des Moines, IA 50312  
515 326-1593

[ddahlquist@mchsi.com](mailto:ddahlquist@mchsi.com)

Visit: [DDAForum.com](http://DDAForum.com)