



# **Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan**

**June 2023**

**Colorado Department of Transportation  
Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways**





# **Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan**

## **Produced by**

Tony Gurzick, Grizzly Peak Consulting

## **Created for**

Mesa Verde Country: Brian Bartlett, Acting CEO

## **Funded through a grant from**

Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways Program

## **Cover photo**

Sunrise from Park Point at Mesa Verde National Park

© Spencer Burke, National Park Service (NPS)

To learn more about the Trail of the Ancients, visit:

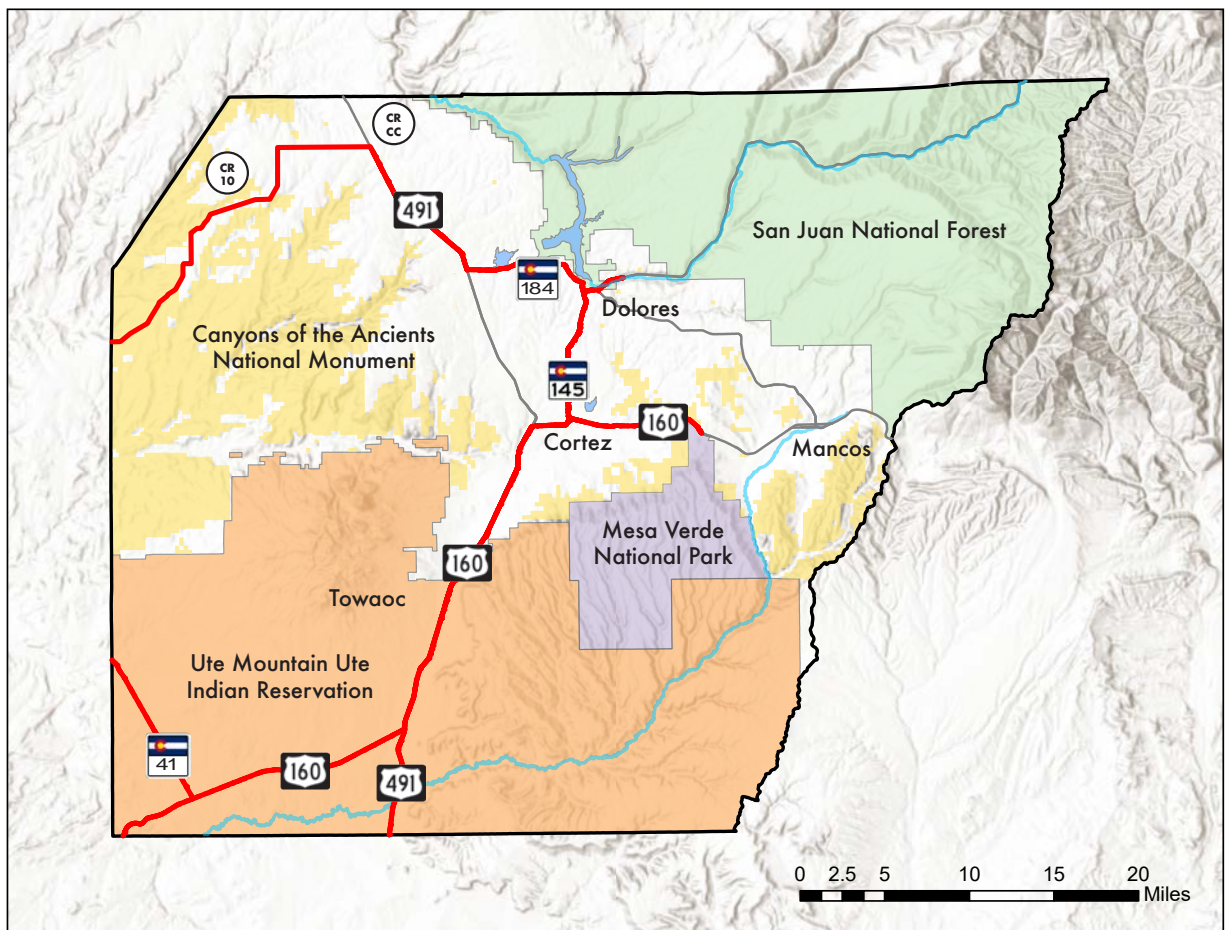
**[trailoftheancients.com](https://trailoftheancients.com)**

To learn more about Colorado's Scenic Byways, visit:

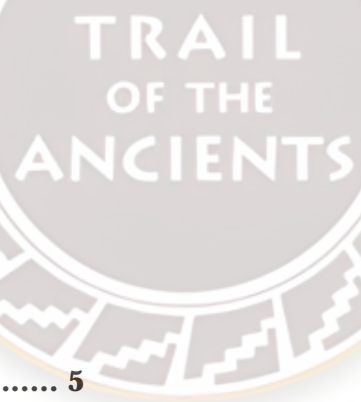
**[codot.gov/travel/colorado-byways](https://codot.gov/travel/colorado-byways)**

© 2023 Tony Gurzick





Trail of the Ancients Byway area map



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Overview of the Trail of the Ancients Scenic & Historic Byway..... 5**
  - Introduction ..... 3
  - Background..... 5
  - Location & Route ..... 5
  - Communities ..... 6
  - Trail of the Ancients Success Stories ..... 9
- **Mission & Vision ..... 11**
  - Mission Statement..... 11
  - Vision Statement ..... 11
- **Byway Organization ..... 12**
- **Partners & Stakeholders ..... 14**
- **Trail of the Ancients Goals ..... 17**
  - Short-term goals: 1–3 years ..... 17
  - Mid-term goals: 4–6 years ..... 18
  - Long-term goals: 7–10 years ..... 18
  - Road G ..... 19
- **Intrinsic Qualities ..... 21**
  - Archaeological Qualities..... 22
  - Cultural Qualities ..... 26
  - Historic Qualities..... 29
  - Natural Qualities ..... 32
  - Scenic Qualities ..... 35
  - Recreational Qualities ..... 36
- **Byway Marketing & Promotion ..... 39**
  - Demographics..... 39
  - Marketing Strategy ..... 39
  - Overall Marketing Goals ..... 40
  - Marketing Goals ..... 40
  - Select Events..... 42
  - Promotional map..... 43

■ <b>Signage</b> .....	<b>44</b>
Wayfinding .....	44
Outdoor Advertising.....	47
Interpretive Sign & Inventory Plan.....	47
■ <b>Highway Information</b> .....	<b>49</b>
Highway Condition.....	49
Highway Type.....	49
Structural Integrity.....	50
Accidents .....	50
Average Annual Daily Traffic .....	51
Economic Benefit.....	51
Highway Project Planning.....	51
Additional Considerations .....	53
Table 1: Highway Description & Condition Ratings .....	54
Table 2: Structural Integrity & Sufficiency Ratings .....	54
Table 3: Accident Statistics .....	55
Chart 1: Average Annual Daily Traffic.....	55
■ <b>Appendix 1</b> .....	<b>56</b>
■ <b>Appendix 2</b> .....	<b>57</b>



# OVERVIEW OF THE TRAIL OF THE ANCIENTS SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAY

## INTRODUCTION

Few places in the United States captivate the imagination as much as the Southwest. Sweeping landscapes, ancient peoples, diverse cultures and deep history call and stir the imagination. A trip to southwest Colorado on the Trail of the Ancients Scenic and Historic Byway helps people see their place in time and space, and marvel at those who came before. The visitor to southwest Colorado realizes that others once lived in this harsh environment, where the only things between themselves and the clear skies above were their thoughts, their dreams and their ingenuity.

## BACKGROUND

The Trail of the Ancients Byway, which also winds through Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, was designated a scenic byway by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in 1994, following years of petitioning and planning by the local community. In 2005, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration recognized the Trail of the Ancients as a National Scenic Byway, making it the only byway to receive that designation for archaeological reasons. The Utah and Colorado portions received federal recognition in 2005, while the New Mexico portion was recognized in 2021. Trail of the Ancients is one of 13 National Scenic Byways in Colorado.

## LOCATION & ROUTE

The Trail of the Ancients traverses 116 miles through Montezuma County in southwest Colorado, entering the state at three separate locations. Names like Cliff Palace, Painted Hand Pueblo, Cutthroat Castle and Sleeping Ute beckon visitors to leave their cars behind for a time and encourage them to explore the many canyons and archaeological sites. Starting from the Four Corners Monument, the byway follows U.S. Hwy. 160/491 north to Cortez and then east to the entrance of Mesa Verde National Park. From Cortez, the byway also travels north to Dolores along Colorado Hwy. 145. After Dolores, the byway takes the traveler north and west on Colorado Hwy. 184 and U.S. Hwy. 491, eventually leaving the highway system and follow-

ing Montezuma County Road CC and County Road 10, where it exits Colorado to enter Utah. The traveler eventually reenters Colorado on Colorado Hwy. 41, which connects back to U.S. 160.

## COMMUNITIES

Several communities lie along the Trail of the Ancients Byway, including the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation, incorporated cities and rural communities. Cortez and Dolores serve as official gateway communities for the byway, and Mancos serves as an unofficial start for those travelers coming from Durango.



Four Corners Monument © Tony Gurzick

### Crossroads of Time

Communities have existed in southwest Colorado for millennia. Although the contemporary communities along the Trail of the Ancients Byway are relatively new to the landscape, they remind residents and visitors alike of the progression of people through the area. Long before the towns of Cortez or Dolores were built, Spanish explorers and missionaries traversed the region in the 16th and 17th centuries, leaving behind their influence on the local culture and history. Before them, the Ute people and the Navajo people called this area home and knew these rivers and canyons intimately.

The Ancestral Pueblo people once thrived on this landscape, with populations as high as triple the current number of Montezuma County residents. Those ancient ones left behind hundreds of known communities with places like Spruce Tree House, Yucca House, Sand Canyon Pueblo and Goodman Point Pueblo. Indigenous knowledge and Western science both tell us that people have moved in and out of the area we call the Southwest for thousands of years. A report that summarizes the byway's communities is incomplete without understanding, appreciating and acknowledging the fact that many cultures, many histories and many people once traversed the lands along the byway. The Trail of the Ancients is truly a crossroads.



## **Cortez**

Cortez is the largest town in Montezuma County, Colorado, and it serves as the county seat. Cortez also acts as the cultural hub for the area, and contains a treasure trove of history and heritage. Established in 1886, the town was named after Hernando Cortez, the legendary and infamous Spanish conquistador. Today, Cortez boasts a bustling economy with a range of services and amenities, including charming hotels, a modern food scene, quirky shops and fascinating museums. The Colorado Welcome Center offers a starting point for visitors, providing a wealth of information and resources for travelers.

## **Dolores**

Nestled among the trees at the foot of the southern San Juan Mountains, Dolores is a charming town with a rich history dating back to the Spanish explorers of the 1700s, predating the actual town. Named after the nearby river whose original Spanish name was *Rio de Nuestra Señora de los Dolores* (River of Our Lady of Sorrows), the town was established in the late 1800s. The early 1900s witnessed a significant event in the town's history when McPhee Dam was constructed, providing the area with much-needed water. Presently, Dolores attracts outdoor enthusiasts, with the nearby San Juan National Forest offering opportunities for fishing, rafting and hiking. Additionally, Dolores houses the Galloping Goose railcar and hosts the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center.

## **Mancos**

Although not on the Trail of the Ancients Byway, Mancos serves as the unofficial start of the byway for visitors coming from Durango, heading west. It is the last location for amenities before entering Mesa Verde National Park. The town originally served as a trading center for local farmers and ranchers, and today it is known for its vibrant arts community. The Mancos Creative District is a hub for artists and artisans, and visitors can explore galleries, studios and workshops.

## **Towaoc**

At the foot of Sleeping Ute Mountain lies Towaoc, the headquarters of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe, making Towaoc an important cultural center where visitors can learn about the Tribe's traditions and their long history in Colorado. Towaoc also features the Ute Mountain Casino and Hotel, offering gaming, dining and entertainment options. While primarily a resi-

dential area and seat of government for the Tribe, Towaoc is an ideal destination for those seeking an authentic experience of the rich cultural heritage of the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe.

### **Arriola and Lewis**

Arriola and Lewis are small, unincorporated communities along the byway. Both communities are primarily agricultural centers with some residential areas, all with a rural character. Arriola is known for its peaceful atmosphere and scenic views, while Lewis offers easy access to McPhee Reservoir. Visitors to Arriola and Lewis can enjoy the natural beauty of the area and learn about Montezuma County's extensive agricultural history. The Lewis Arriola Community Center hosts various events and activities throughout the year.

### **Yellow Jacket and Pleasant View**

Both Yellow Jacket and Pleasant View are unincorporated agricultural communities located along the Trail of the Ancients Byway. While the communities are known for their agricultural heritage, as evident in the many fields of hay, grains, beans and livestock, they also have an in-depth archaeological history. Yellow Jacket Pueblo, located near Yellow Jacket, is an Ancestral Pueblo site that features a great kiva — a circular ceremonial structure. The Lowry Pueblo, located near Pleasant View, is another archaeological site that features a great kiva. These sites offer a glimpse into the ancient cultures that once thrived in the area and are of great importance to the study of the American Southwest's archaeology.

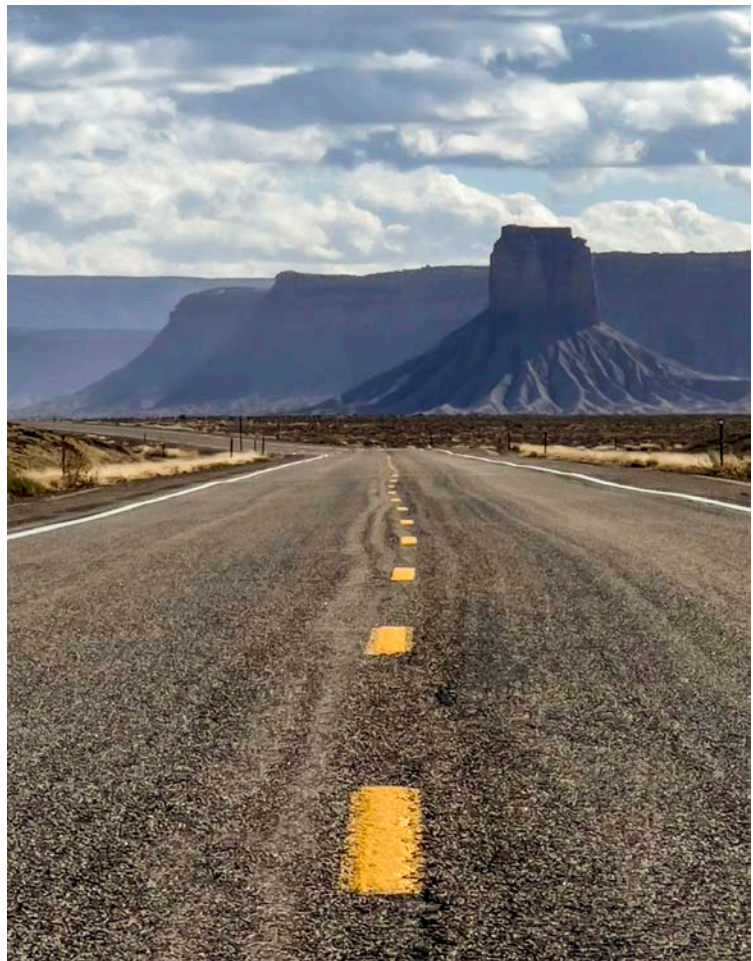
### **Mesa Verde**

Although not an actual town or unincorporated area, Mesa Verde National Park, a World Heritage Site and an International Dark Sky Park, is situated on the eastern end of the byway and acts as a gateway for the Trail of the Ancients. During the summer months, the number of visitors to the park rivals the number of residents in some of the surrounding communities. The park is known for its well-preserved Ancestral Pueblo people's sites, especially cliff dwellings and mesa top dwellings, which were inhabited by the Pueblo people from approximately 550 AD to 1300 AD. As a community along the byway, Mesa Verde offers visitors a unique opportunity to learn about the history and traditions of the Ancestral Pueblo people and other Indigenous peoples, and to witness firsthand the impressive architecture and engineering of their world. Visitors leave Mesa Verde with an appreciation for the enduring connections that descendant Pueblo communities and other Tribes maintain with the area.

## TRAIL OF THE ANCIENTS SUCCESS STORIES

The Trail of the Ancients achieved remarkable success as the nation's first and only byway designated for archaeological significance. This unique designation sets Trail of the Ancients apart from other scenic routes, emphasizing the importance of protecting and interpreting the architecture, life and culture of the Ancestral Pueblo people. By offering travelers a remarkable opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich archaeological heritage of the region, this byway stands as a trailblazer in promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of Colorado's and America's distant past.

One notable achievement that has contributed to the success of Trail of the Ancients is the collaboration and support from various grants. These grants have played a vital role in enhancing the visitor experience and promoting the byway. For instance, a 1996 grant facilitated the development of a comprehensive Corridor Management Plan, ensuring the sustainable management and preservation of the byway. Subsequent grants in 1997 and 2010 focused on interpretation, marketing and wayfinding, effectively educating and engaging visitors about the historic and cultural significance of the area.



Trail of the Ancients highway © Tony Gurzick

Additionally, the Trail of the Ancients has forged a valuable partnership with National Geographic, resulting in the creation of a Geotourism Map Guide. This collaboration has not only provided visitors with an invaluable resource for exploring the byway, but has also brought

broader recognition to the historic and archaeological wonders along the route. The National Geographic maps highlight key attractions, landmarks and interpretive sites, further enhancing the experience for travelers.

The construction of the McElmo Flume Overlook stands as a testament to community collaboration along the byway. Made possible by a grant in 2012, this impressive infrastructure addition offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape and provides a unique vantage point for appreciating the agricultural heritage of the county.

Collectively, these investments totaling over \$500,000 have significantly contributed to the success of the byway. Through the preservation and promotion of archaeological sites, the development of interpretive resources, the improvement of visitor facilities and the valuable partnership with National Geographic, Trail of the Ancients has become a model for other scenic byways nationwide.



# MISSION & VISION

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway is dedicated to preserving and celebrating the rich archaeological sites, the diverse cultural and historic heritage, and the natural beauty of Montezuma County and the Four Corners region. Through responsible and sustainable tourism, we aim to provide visitors with immersive and educational experiences that promote appreciation of the region's rich history, unique landscapes and diverse people.

By working closely with Tribes, local communities, business partners, government agencies and local nonprofits, we seek to enhance economic vitality while protecting our archaeological, historic and natural environment for future generations.

## VISION STATEMENT

Our vision for the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway is to be a globally-recognized leader in archaeological and cultural tourism, inspiring visitors from around the world to explore and discover ancient and diverse cultures and natural wonders of the Four Corners region. We aspire to create unique visitor experiences that celebrate our rich cultural and historic heritage, while fostering sustainable growth and development that benefits both residents and visitors.

Through our leadership and innovation in responsible tourism, we hope to inspire other organizations to follow our example in promoting sustainable development and cultural preservation, including the recognition and inclusion of Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

## BYWAY ORGANIZATION

The Trail of the Ancients byway committee and board has recently undergone significant changes due to various factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic, time constraints and budgetary shortfalls, resulting in a period of disbanding of the byway board. Recognizing the importance of the byway to the local economy, Mesa Verde Country, the Direct Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Montezuma County area, stepped in to administer the byway and lead the byway's board in 2022. Since early 2023, Mesa Verde Country has been working to reorganize the byway board, inviting former members and new individuals to serve. There is growing interest in the byway, and community members are willing to contribute their time and resources to support its management.



Mesa Verde Country 2023 logo  
© Mesa Verde Country

To establish a more effective and sustainable management structure, several elements are being considered. First, the board's composition is under review to ensure it reflects the diversity and expertise necessary to oversee the byway's operations successfully. Second, the bylaws are being updated to align with the byway's current needs and goals. Third, the byway's resource needs are being identified, recognizing the limited capacity of Mesa Verde Country staff to take on additional workload. Fourth, the frequency of meetings is being reduced, with a focus on achieving specific goals at each meeting; these meetings will be announced locally, and public participation will be encouraged. Finally, Mesa Verde Country is working with local agencies to establish partnerships that can promote the byway and maximize its potential as a tourist destination.

As part of the reorganization, it is crucial for the new board to prioritize the development of a succession plan for board members. A well-defined succession plan ensures continuity, stability and effective leadership within the organization. By proactively identifying and nurturing potential board members, the new board can ensure a smooth transition of knowledge, skills and expertise. Moreover, a succession plan allows for the cultivation of diverse perspectives

and talents, promoting long-term sustainability and adaptability in fulfilling the Trail of the Ancients mission, vision and goals.

It is likewise imperative for the newly reorganized byway board to actively seek grants and other funding opportunities. Pursuing grants from entities such as CDOT, the Colorado Tourism Office, and the federal government can provide essential financial support for initiatives, programs and projects. Securing grants enables the board to enhance visitor experiences, improve infrastructure, implement educational initiatives and undertake conservation efforts. By diversifying funding sources, the board can help ensure the long-term sustainability and growth of the byway's operations. Effectively leveraging grant opportunities demonstrates the board's commitment to maximize resources, foster collaboration and advance goals for the benefit of the community and visitors, and the preservation of the region's cultural heritage.

This updated Corridor Management Plan (CMP) for the byway has generated renewed interest and excitement about the potential to attract new visitors and educate them about the area's archaeological, historic and cultural significance. By serving as a common thread that winds through the entire area, the byway acts as a cohesive force that unites the community and serves as a catalyst for forming new partnerships and strengthening existing ones. The CMP update has helped position the Trail of the Ancients Byway as a valuable resource for promoting the local economy while protecting the area's rich cultural heritage.

# PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

The success of the Trail of the Ancients Byway relies on the collaboration and cooperation of various partners, including federal, Tribal, state, local, private and nonprofit organizations. Each partner plays a critical role in maintaining, promoting and ensuring the accessibility of the byway to visitors. Although many different organizations manage the resources around the byway, the byway serves as the common thread that unites them all.

Federal agencies have played an instrumental role in developing many of the attractions along the Trail of the Ancients. The National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) act as caretakers and stewards of many of the archaeological sites and landscapes that attract visitors to the area. These agencies are responsible for preserving and maintaining the natural and cultural resources along the byway, as well as ensuring that visitors have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Tribal governments and Tribal agencies also play a significant role in the success of the byway. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Southern Ute Tribe have lived in the region for thousands of years and have a deep understanding of the cultural significance of the area. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe has a special connection to the byway, as they manage the Ute Mountain Tribal Park and, along with the Navajo Nation, manage and administer the Four Corners Monument.

Without the support of state partners at CDOT, the byway would not exist. CDOT and local government agencies work together to maintain the infrastructure of the byway, ensuring visitors have safe and accessible roads to travel. The Colorado Tourism Office is a key stakeholder in managing the Welcome Center and providing messaging to visitors in southwest Colorado. Colorado Parks and Wildlife manages several local state wildlife areas, and helps ensure a safe and fun outdoor experience. Local governments have also sup-



Ranger TJ Atsye in front of Point Lookout © Spencer Burke, NPS



ported the byway's efforts in updating the CMP, and promoting the byway and attractions along the route.

Mesa Verde Country is an essential partner in the management and promotion of the Trail of the Ancients Byway. As a regional organization, Mesa Verde Country plays

a crucial role in connecting the community with the byway, and fostering a sense of pride and enthusiasm for the area's rich cultural and natural heritage. Mesa Verde Country actively contributes to the economic development of the area by supporting tourism providers, hotel operators, guides, outfitters, restaurateurs and other private-sector entities. Their commitment to the byway's success is evident in their willingness to take on a leadership role in its management and promotion, exemplifying their dedication to preserving and showcasing the beauty and significance of the Trail of the Ancients Byway.

Private sector partners, such as tourism providers, hotel operators, guides and outfitters, restaurateurs and local businesses, contribute to the economic development of the region. Museums, cultural centers and nonprofit organizations provide a critical connection between the community and the visitor. The private sector offers a variety of services that enhance the visitor experience and create jobs for local communities.

Through the stakeholders and partners of the Trail of the Ancients, a new enthusiasm for the byway has emerged, and there is significant community interest once again. Stakeholders have expressed a desire to include Road G in the byway (*see the CMP section on Road G*), create promotional material for the byway, and cooperate with each other on signage and messaging.



Dillard site, Crow Canyon © BLM

## BYWAY PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

### Federal Government

Bureau of Land Management  
National Park Service  
U.S. Forest Service

### Tribal Government

Ute Mountain Ute Tribe  
Ute Mountain Tribal Park

### State Government

Colorado Department of Transportation  
Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
Colorado Tourism Office/Welcome Center  
History Colorado

### Local Government

Cortez City Council  
Mancos Creative District  
Montezuma County Commissioners  
Town of Dolores

### Local Tourism & Business Partners

Cortez Chamber of Commerce  
Dolores Chamber of Commerce  
Mancos Chamber of Commerce  
Mesa Verde Country

# TRAIL OF THE ANCIENTS GOALS

## SHORT-TERM GOALS: 1–3 YEARS

- Work with CDOT to replace all brown-colored Trail of the Ancients Byway signs and way markers with approved columbine logo and arrow signs, plus the America's Byway sign.
- Work with CDOT to ensure that "Beginning" and "Ending" signs are appropriately marked.
- Work with the Montezuma County Commissioners, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, CDOT and the local community to prepare and submit an application to include Montezuma County Road G as part of the Trail of the Ancients Byway.
- Work with area partners, especially the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, federal agencies and state agencies to create and implement an interpretive sign program to educate visitors about the Ancestral Pueblo people, local Tribes, cultural heritage and historic significance of the area.
- Update, maintain and promote the Trail of the Ancients website.
- Work with the Montezuma County Commissioners, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, CDOT and the local community to prepare and apply for including the portion of Hwy. 160 between Mancos and the entrance to Mesa Verde National Park as part of the Trail of the Ancients Byway.
- Develop with partners a campaign focused on educating visitors about responsible, sustainable and ethical behavior around the area's archaeological sites.
- Develop and implement a marketing campaign that promotes to a regional and national audience the Trail of the Ancients Byway and its unique archaeological, cultural and natural assets.
- Develop and implement a strategy to incorporate the Trail of the Ancients Byway logo and/or title on applicable signage produced and erected by partner organizations.
- Implement the signage goals of the 2019 Wayshowing report (*see section on Wayfinding*).
- The Trail of the Ancients Board will initiate discussions with the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe to explore potential opportunities for applying for grants aimed at enhancing the visitor center for the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.
- Work with partners to create an infrastructure to make the Tail of the Ancients an electric-vehicle-friendly byway.

## MID-TERM GOALS: 4–6 YEARS

- Work with the Montezuma County Commissioners, the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, CDOT and the local community to prepare and apply to upgrade the U.S. Department of Transportation's designation of the Trail of the Ancients from a National Scenic Byway to an All-American Road.



Starry night sky at Canyons of the Ancients © BLM

- Work with local communities and organizations to develop sustainable tourism practices to protect the archaeological resources, conserve the natural environment and respect the cultural heritage of the region.
- Develop and implement a combined marketing plan and management plan that both promotes the dark skies opportunity in the area and protects the dark sky resource.
- Support and highlight programs that support and promote local agriculture and agritourism that showcase the region's unique agricultural heritage, such as wineries, farms and heirloom orchards.
- Create a program to support and promote local businesses and artisans that showcases the region's cultural heritage, including partnerships with Indigenous-owned businesses.
- Work with The Trail of the Ancients Byways in New Mexico and Utah to develop regional goals, educational material and promotional opportunities.

## LONG-TERM GOALS: 7–10 YEARS

- Create a sustainable tourism industry that benefits local communities and supports the conservation and preservation of natural and cultural resources along the Trail of the Ancients Byway.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the region's cultural heritage — including the contributions of Indigenous communities — through promotion and dissemination of various educational programs and interpretive exhibits.



- Develop and implement a comprehensive conservation and preservation plan that protects the natural, cultural and historic resources of the region for future generations. This may include partnering with Keep It Colorado's conservation strategies. There is also potential to partner with History Colorado as they work on a statewide historic preservation plan.
- Work with the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe and other Indigenous communities to create economic opportunities that are rooted in their cultural heritage and that promote self-determination.

## ROAD G

Based on the requirements for scenic byways in Colorado and at the federal level, a scenic byway must possess outstanding scenic, natural, historic, cultural, recreational or archaeological significance. Montezuma County Road G lies in the heart of an area that is abundant in archaeology, history, culture and natural beauty, making it an excellent candidate for inclusion in the Trail of the Ancients. The road connects Hovenweep National Monument to Hwy. 160 in Cortez through scenic McElmo Canyon. Inclusion of Road G allows the visitor to complete a loop when exploring the byway from Lowry Pueblo to Hovenweep to Cortez.

One of the byway's key features is its focus on the ancient cultures that once thrived in McElmo Canyon. Road G passes through an area steeped in the history of the Ancestral Pueblo people, who left behind a wealth of artifacts and building. The road passes several significant archaeological sites, including Hovenweep National Monument and Canyons of the Ancients National Monument. These sites provide insight into the daily lives, customs and culture of the ancient peoples who inhabited the area, making it an essential part of the Trail of the Ancients.

Dozens of historic farms, ranches, vineyards and orchards line Road G on the way to the Ismay Trading Post, one of the state's oldest trading posts. Although re-



Canyons of the Ancients entrance © Scott Smith

cently closed, for a century the Ismay Trading Post supplied the Ute and Navajo people, local farmers and ranchers, and Mormon settlers traveling to Utah with goods and food.

Road G is more than archaeology and history; it also offers stunning natural beauty. The road winds through towering sandstone cliffs, scenic canyons and expansive plateaus. Along the route, visitors can enjoy breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape, which is home to a diverse array of wildlife, including deer, elk and birds of prey. The scenery alone makes Road G an ideal candidate for inclusion in the Trail of the Ancients Byway.

Finally, Road G meets the criteria for a scenic byway in terms of its recreational potential. The road provides access to a wide range of outdoor recreational activities, including hiking, biking, camping and touring. The road connects several trails that allow visitors to explore the natural beauty and history of the area while enjoying a range of outdoor activities. After a day on the trail, visitors can stop at a local vineyard to enjoy wines made from locally grown fruit.

Road G should be included as an official part of the Trail of the Ancients. Mesa Verde Country and the byway committee will work with CDOT and the Federal Highway Administration to begin the application process.

# INTRINSIC QUALITIES: INVENTORY & ASSESSMENT

Intrinsic refers to something that is inherent, essential, genuine or belonging naturally to a particular entity or object. They reflect the identity or value of the subject. Intrinsic qualities, as they pertain to a byway, encapsulate the inherent features, characteristics and experiences that make it truly remarkable.

A National Scenic Byway's intrinsic qualities are:

- Archaeological
- Cultural
- Historic
- Scenic
- Natural
- Recreational



Ancestral Pueblo mug  
found in McElmo Canyon  
© Tony Gurzick

A key strategy for maintaining the intrinsic qualities of the Trail of the Ancients Byway is a strong focus on preserving its natural, cultural and historic features. With a significant portion of the byway protected as public lands, collaborative efforts should be fostered among federal, Tribal, state and local entities responsible for land management. This includes implementing measures to minimize human impact, such as promoting responsible visitor behavior, enforcing regulations, and conducting regular monitoring and maintenance activities.

Additionally, education and interpretation programs can play a vital role in raising awareness about the byway's unique qualities, instilling a sense of stewardship among visitors and fostering a deep appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the region. By emphasizing the significance of public lands and engaging in sustainable management practices, the Trail of the Ancients Byway can ensure the preservation of its intrinsic qualities for future generations to experience and enjoy.

A key strategy for preserving the intrinsic qualities of the Trail of the Ancients Byway while accommodating development is through a robust design review process. By implementing design review measures, existing development can be enhanced in a way that respects and preserves the corridor's unique character while also accommodating the needs of the local

community. This ensures that any modifications or additions align with the visual and cultural integrity of the byway. Furthermore, as new development opportunities arise, the design review process becomes instrumental in guiding and shaping these projects to seamlessly integrate with the surrounding landscape and with the surrounding communities. By emphasizing the importance of design guidelines, the Trail of the Ancients board can advocate for a harmonious balance between preserving its intrinsic qualities and accommodating responsible development, ensuring that the corridor remains a captivating and authentic experience for visitors and residents alike.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL QUALITIES

Archaeological intrinsic qualities of a byway refer to the presence of ancient sites, artifacts, rock art and other evidence of past human activity that is inherent to the area. These qualities are closely related to the historic and cultural qualities of the byway, as they provide valuable insights into the past practices and beliefs of the people who once inhabited the area. By interpreting and sharing the stories of the past through archaeological evidence, a byway can offer visitors a unique and enriching experience that helps them better appreciate the cultural and historic heritage of the area.

The Trail of the Ancients Byway in Colorado is renowned for its exceptional archaeological intrinsic qualities, as it traverses an area that was once inhabited by the Ancestral Pueblo people, and it remains the only byway in the nation that received its design-



Inside Long House, Mesa Verde National Park © Spencer Burke, NPS

nation because of the archaeological qualities of the area. Few places in North America have such a treasure trove of archaeological sites as does the American Southwest. These sites help visitors to the byway appreciate the people who were here first, and that those people farmed and raised livestock, made and traded goods, celebrated and worshiped, and had hopes, joys and tragedies, like all people. These sites also remind the visitor that the ongoing legacy of the ancestral people is found in contemporary descendant communities.



The byway provides access to significant archaeological sites and locations, including Mesa Verde National Park, Yucca House National Monument, Hovenweep National Monument, the Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, and the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

To preserve and promote the archaeological intrinsic qualities of the Trail of the Ancients Byway, education and interpretation play crucial roles. Educating visitors with accurate and engaging information about the region's history and culture fosters a deeper appreciation and understanding of the archaeological sites and artifacts. Interpretation effectively encourages responsible tourism practices such as respecting cultural

sites, leaving artifacts undisturbed and following park regulations. Furthermore, educational and interpretative programs are essential in promoting cultural appreciation, encouraging dialogue between different communities, and contributing to greater social cohesion and understanding. Therefore, allocating adequate resources to these programs is essential to protecting and celebrating the cultural heritage of the area for future generations.

Ensuring the preservation of the byway's cultural resources requires promoting sustainable, responsible and respectful visitation of archaeological sites. Over-visitation and lack of awareness about appropriate behavior can damage sites, erode landscapes, and cause loss of artifacts and features. Educating visitors about the fragility of these sites, promoting Leave No Trace principles and instilling respect for cultural sites are important steps to take. Promoting sustainable tourism practices is also crucial to ensure that local communities share the economic benefits of tourism, contributing to the long-term sustainability of the region.

## **Mesa Verde National Park**

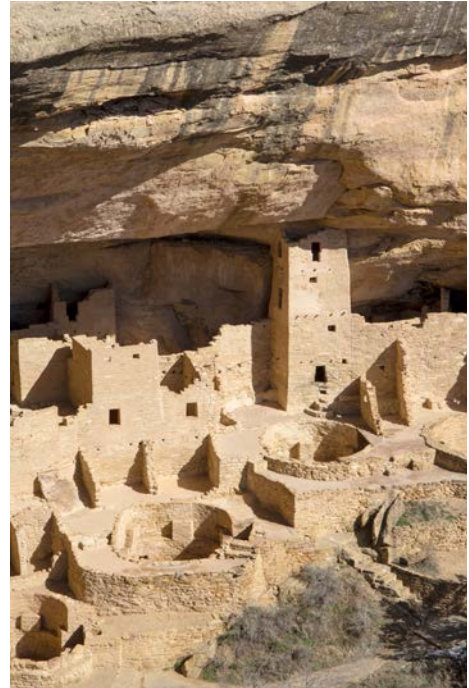
Established in 1906 by President Theodore Roosevelt, Mesa Verde National Park was Colorado's first National Park and the seventh National Park in the country. The park is over 50,000 acres in size and contains over 5,000 archaeological sites, including 600 cliff dwellings. Some of the most notable sites include Cliff Palace, Balcony House and Long House, which are con-



Yucca House sign © Tony Gurzick

sidered some significant examples of Ancestral Pueblo architecture. Mesa top sites like Sun Temple and Far View Sites are easier to visit and inspire fascination.

These sites offer a rare glimpse into the daily lives and cultural practices of the ancient people, including their complex social structure and sophisticated architectural techniques. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1978 and an International Dark Sky Park in 2021, Mesa Verde remains a popular destination for tourists and researchers interested in exploring the rich cultural history of the region in a spectacular natural setting.



Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde National Park  
© Tony Gurzick

## **Hovenweep National Monument**

Located on the Colorado-Utah border, Hovenweep National Monument features clusters of ancient structures, including towers, kivas and multistory dwellings built by the Ancestral Pueblo people in the late 13th century. Canyons and mesas surround the monument and provide visitors with breathtaking views that transport them back in time. Hiking trails wind through the rugged terrain, providing access to unique features such as the Square Tower, Little Ruin Canyon, and Horseshoe and Hackberry canyons.

## **Canyons of the Ancients National Monument**

Established by presidential decree in 2000, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument is known for its well-preserved archaeological sites and stunning natural landscapes. Managed by the BLM, the 176,000-acre monument contains the highest density of archaeological sites in the United States, with over 6,000 documented sites representing various Indigenous cultures from the past 10,000 years. Visitors can explore the Ancestral Pueblo structures, rock art and other artifacts that provide insight into the daily lives and cultural practices of the area's original inhabitants.

## Ute Mountain Tribal Park

The Ute Mountain Tribal Park, managed by the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, offers visitors an opportunity to explore not only sites of the Ancestral Pueblo people, but also the ancestral lands of the Ute people, and to learn about their history and culture. Located adjacent to Mesa Verde National Park, the Ute Mountain Tribal Park offers people a new way of experiencing the Ancestral Pueblo sites, especially cliff dwellings. The Tribe allows visitors to see these archaeological sites as they have naturally aged over the centuries.

### Threats to the Archaeological Qualities of the Byway

- Artifact collection
- Cultural disrespect
- Development
- Graffiti
- Overuse/visitation
- Vandalism

### Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Archaeological Qualities of the Byway

- Develop a regional, comprehensive interpretive sign plan
- Develop a self-guided driving tour of archaeological sites
- Educate and interpret:
  - ▶ How to visit a site with respect while learning and exploring the area
  - ▶ Learn about the Ancestral Pueblo people – their lives, culture and architecture
  - ▶ Leave artifacts in situ
  - ▶ Leave No Trace
  - ▶ Create an interpretive film of the area
  - ▶ Understand the past
- Partner with local and state education organizations
- Highlight certain archaeological sites
- Promote responsible and sustainable tourism
- Create wayside exhibits



Cedar Tree Tower at Mesa Verde National Park © NPS



## CULTURAL QUALITIES



Native American Dancer © Sandy Opitz

Cultural intrinsic qualities refer to the cultural significance of people and their beliefs, customs and practices found along a byway. Cultural qualities help tell the story of the area's people and their heritage, and can provide a sense of place and identity. They can also help to attract visitors interested in cultural tourism and provide economic benefits to local communities. To promote and protect the cultural intrinsic qualities of a byway, it is important to encourage respect, education and interpretation of the area's history, support local cultural events and businesses, and ensure the preservation of historic sites and buildings.

The Ancestral Pueblo people who inhabited the area for centuries initially shaped the culture of the area, leaving behind an invaluable legacy of archaeological sites and artifacts. Today, the Four Corners region is home to several Native American Tribes, including the Ute Mountain Ute, Southern Ute, Navajo, Hopi and Zuni, who have lived in the region for centuries and have a strong connection to the land. The byway features scores of cultural sites and attractions

that highlight the ingenuity and creativity of the Indigenous people. Visitors can learn about the history and customs of these Tribes by visiting museums and interpretive centers, attending dances and cultural demonstrations, and interacting with local Tribal members.

In addition to its Native American heritage, Montezuma County is also home to

a vibrant Hispanic community with a rich cultural history. Many of the Hispanic residents are descendants of the early Spanish settlers who came to the Four Corners area in the 16th century, and later generations of immigrants who came to work in the local agricultural industry. The region's place names, architecture, cuisine and arts reflect the vibrant Hispanic culture. Visitors can explore the depth of the Hispanic community's heritage by visiting local markets, attending cultural events and experiencing delicious food.

The area's farming and ranching heritage is an important part of the cultural intrinsic qualities of the Trail of the Ancients. Picturesque farms, ranches and homesteads dot the byway and speak to the area's agricultural past and present. Visitors to the area can learn about farming or winemaking, and they can partake of locally grown food at the area's restaurants. The agricultural industry has played a significant role in the area's economy and continues to do so.

Trail of the Ancients offers a unique opportunity for visitors to experience and learn about the diverse cultural history of the area and its people. The intrinsic cultural qualities of the byway showcase the rich and diverse history of the area, spanning from the Ancestral Pueblo people to contemporary Native American Tribes, Hispanic settlers, and the modern-day agricultural industry. Few places in Colorado can boast millennia of tradition.



Cortez Cultural Center, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country



## Cultural Resources: Places & Events

- Bear Dance — Ute Mountain Ute Reservation
- Cortez Cultural Center
- Cultural demonstrations — Mesa Verde
- Escalante Days
- Hopi dances (July Fourth weekend) — Mesa Verde
- Montezuma County Fair
- Navajo tacos
- Notah Dineh Trading Post
- Pueblo dances in the summer — Mesa Verde
- River Fest
- Tribal lands — Ute and Navajo
- Ute Mountain Rodeo
- Ute Mountain Ute dances — Mesa Verde

## Threats to the Cultural Qualities of the Byway

- Lack of wayfinding
- Loss of young people staying in the area
- Not enough funding
- Poor signage
- Stories not told
- Young people not learning about their culture



Red Sky Dancers, Ute Mountain Ute, at Mesa Verde Campground  
© Spencer Burke, NPS

## Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Cultural Qualities of the Byway

- Better/more heritage marketing
- Learning/interpretation for all ages
- More media developed by Tribal authors
- Promotion of Tribal events
- Promotion of the Cortez Cultural Center
- Public awareness and education
- Small farm tours and stays (B&B/AirBnB/VRBO)

## HISTORIC QUALITIES

Historic intrinsic qualities of byways usually encompass physical features on the landscape, whether natural or human-made, that reflect the actions of people. They are identifiable elements that contribute to the historic identity and character of a region. Historic qualities are not limited to written history or the recent past, but encompass all human history in the area. They include archaeological sites, historic buildings, bridges, monuments and other landmarks. These historic qualities provide a tangible connection to the past and serve as a reminder of the people, events and cultures that have shaped the region over time.

The Trail of the Ancients is a rich and diverse landscape that tells the story of the region's past. Montezuma County has 34 places on the National Register of Historic Places, including 17 places of national significance and five places of statewide significance.

The Trail of the Ancients is a window into the past and a testament to the region's incredible history. One of the most significant historic qualities of the byway is its wealth of archaeological locations. The area is home to thousands of Ancestral Pueblo sites, including cliff dwellings, pit houses and kivas. Although these sites are the foundation of the archaeological intrinsic quality of the Trail of the Ancients, these structures offer a fascinating glimpse into the lives of the ancient people who once inhabited the region, and they provide valuable insights into their social and cultural practices. The visitor also sees the enduring connections that descendant Pueblo communities and other Tribes maintain with the area.

The Trail of the Ancients is also home to contemporary Native American Tribes, including the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, the Southern Ute Indian Tribe and the nearby Navajo Nation. These Tribes have lived in the region for hundreds of years and have a long cultural heritage that is deeply connected to the land. The Ute people have endured numerous hardships, including forced removal from their ancestral lands and the suppression of their cultural practices. Despite this, they have persevered and continue to maintain their identities, languages and



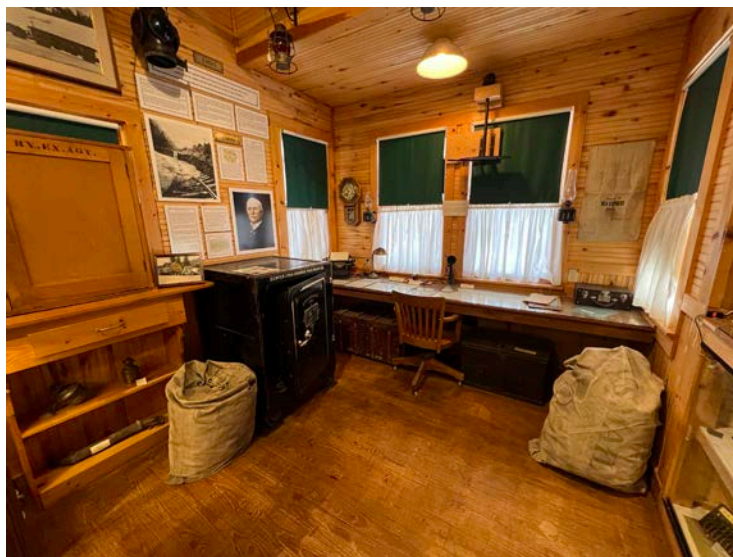
Mancos Valley, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country

traditions. Visitors to the byway can learn about the Tribes' histories and cultures at museums, cultural centers and other Tribal facilities, gaining a deeper appreciation for the area's diverse cultural landscape.

The trading of goods and ideas is evident along the Trail of the Ancients, beginning with Ancestral Pueblo trade routes and continuing into the Spanish colonial era. The region was part of the Spanish Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries, and this legacy is evident in the area's architecture, language, place names and culture. The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition explored the area in 1776, providing the first detailed, written account of the land, people and cultures in the area. Linking Santa Fe, NM with Monterey, CA, the expedition helped create the Old Spanish Trail trading route, portions of which the byway currently follows.

The byway also follows the paths and trails of explorers, pioneers, miners and others who traveled through the region in search of new homes and new opportunities. The area boasts a significant agricultural history, as both Native American Tribes and early settlers cultivated crops and raised livestock in the fertile lands of the Montezuma Valley. This history is evident in the many agricultural structures and irrigation systems that can still be seen today. Locations like the McElmo Flume, the Montezuma Heritage Museum and the Galloping Goose Museum offer travelers unique insights into 19th- and early-20th-century life in Montezuma County.

The Trail of the Ancients is a diverse landscape that tells the story of the region's past. Its archaeological sites, Spanish legacy, and agricultural and mining history all contribute to its historic intrinsic qualities and make it an important location in the understanding of Colorado and the American Southwest.



Train depot in Dolores © Tony Gurzick

### **Historic Resources: Places & Events**

- Canyons of the Ancients Museum
- Canyons of the Ancients National Monument
- Cortez Museum
- Dominguez and Escalante Expedition
- Farming history
- Four Corners Monument
- Galloping Goose Museum
- History of dendrochronology development at Mesa Verde
- Hovenweep National Monument
- Ismay Trading Post along Road G
- Lam House
- McElmo Canyon addition
- McElmo Flume
- Mesa Verde CCC Camp History
- Mesa Verde National Park
- Montezuma Historical Museum
- Narraguinnep Lake and Ute history
- National Register of Historic Places — 34 locations
- Pioneer history
- Ute people and their history

### **Threats to the Historic Qualities of the Byway**

- Aging population — losing historical information
- Deterioration of historic locations
- Inadequate funding to preserve landmarks, and to identify and protect potential landmarks
- Lack of preservation of oral histories and stories
- Lack of written sources

### **Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Historic Qualities of the Byway**

- Celebrate local history through festivals, education and interpretation
- Create digital recordings like “Story Corps”
- Ismay Trading Post
- Montezuma History Museum
- Open Lam House
- Promotion of the Cortez Cultural Center
- Storytelling
- Write and record local history and stories



## NATURAL QUALITIES

Natural intrinsic qualities refer to the presence of natural resources and ecosystems surrounding the byway. This includes geological formations, bodies of water, plant communities, wildlife and other natural features that contribute to the overall environmental experience. The natural intrinsic quality of a byway helps preserve biodiversity and ecological systems, as well as providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and education. By highlighting the natural intrinsic quality of a byway, responsible tourism and sustainable economic development can be promoted while also protecting the environment.

The Trail of the Ancients travels through or near two ecoregions, the Colorado Plateau and the Southern Rockies. These ecoregions are further divided into:

- Monticello and Cortez uplands (Colorado Plateau)
- Semiarid benchlands and canyonlands (Colorado Plateau)
- Shale deserts (Colorado Plateau)
- Mid-elevation forests (Southern Rockies)
- Subalpine forests (Southern Rockies)



Claret cup cactus © Spencer Burke, NPS

Visitors to the Colorado Plateau ecoregion may see desert shrubs such as sagebrush, rabbitbrush and greasewood, as well as cactus species like prickly pear and barrel cactus. Wildlife that can be observed in these areas include mule deer, coyotes, collared lizards, wild turkeys and golden eagles.



Collared lizard © Tony Gurzick

In the Southern Rockies ecosystem, travelers may see coniferous trees such as ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce and aspen, as well as wildflowers like lupine, penstemon and paintbrush. Wildlife in these areas includes black bears, elk, mountain lions, marmots and a wide variety of songbirds.

The highest point in elevation in Montezuma County is Hesperus Mountain, 13,237 feet in elevation. Although this mountain and the other mountains that make up the La Plata range are easily seen from the byway, the highest point



along the Trail of the Ancients is Ute Peak, located within the Ute Mountain Ute Indian reservation, at over 9,800 feet.

The Trail of the Ancients possesses a "dark sky" resource in addition to the flora, fauna and geological features typically associated with the byway. Once a visitor leaves Cortez at night, the sky comes alive with myriad stars and our own Milky Way galaxy against a velvet backdrop. The local community values the dark sky resource and actively manages for the preservation of this quality.

**Flora & Fauna Resources:  
Places to Observe & Learn,  
& Unique Features**

- Dolores Field Office of the BLM
- Dolores River
- Hovenweep National Monument
- McElmo Creek
- McPhee Lake
- Mesa Verde National Park
- Narraguinnep State Wildlife Area
- Old-growth piñon forest at Mesa Verde
- Piñon-juniper forests — BLM and USFS
- San Juan National Forest
- Totten Reservoir State Wildlife Area



Sand lily at Hovenweep National Monument © NPS

**Geological Resources**

- Alcoves at Mesa Verde
- McElmo Canyon
- Sand Canyon
- Ute Peak and the other mountains that make up the Sleeping Ute



Ute Mountain, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country

## **Threats to the Natural Qualities of the Byway**

- Development
- Erosion
- Illegal tree cutting
- Invasive species
- Light pollution
- Social trails — OHV, bikes and foot
- Wildfire

## **Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Natural Qualities of the Byway**

- Maps and COTREX app promotion
- Permits
- Promote night sky viewing
- Support grazing and other agriculture while removing trespass livestock from public lands
- Wildlife viewing and awareness
- Winter trails



Spruce and Navajo Canyon © Spencer Burke, NPS

## SCENIC QUALITIES

Scenic qualities refer to the visual beauty and aesthetic appeal of a landscape along the byway. This can include both natural and human-made features, such as mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, fields, historic buildings, bridges and other structures that contribute to the overall visual experience of the area. The scenic qualities of an area can be influenced by factors such as the geography, climate, flora and fauna, and cultural history of the region. Appreciation of scenic qualities can lead to increased tourism, recreation and economic development, while also promoting the preservation and protection of the natural and cultural resources of the area.

Travelers of the Trail of the Ancients experience amazing scenic vistas. From Park Point in Mesa Verde, visitors get a 360-degree panoramic view of the valley and mesas surrounding the park. From most locations along the byway, the La Plata Mountains with the identifiable Hesperus Mountain and Sharktooth Peak are readily visible. Views of the Sleeping Ute allow for educational opportunities about Ute culture and stories.

Stunning views of mountains, water and desert plateaus abound along McPhee Lake. A drive along County Road CC and Road 10 provides visitors views of the La Sal and the Abajo Mountain Ranges in Utah, as well as canyons and buttes in Colorado. A drive to the Four Corners Monument provides views of Shiprock (*Tsé Bit'a'í* in the Navajo language) in New Mexico. Finally, driving along Road G and other “country roads” along the byway helps visitors appreciate the agricultural heritage from picturesque farms to open range grazing lands.

### Scenic Resources

- Dark skies
- Dolores River Canyon
- Far View in Mesa Verde
- McPhee Lake Overlook trail
- Old barns, homesteads and farms throughout the byway
- Park Point — Highest point in Mesa Verde
- Ute Mountain from Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center and from Mesa Verde

### Threats to the Scenic Qualities of the Byway

- Billboards
- Light pollution
- Social trails — OHV, bikes and foot
- Wildfires

### Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Scenic Qualities of the Byway

- Photography tips and trips
- Pull off signage (way signs) and overlooks
- Story promotion

## RECREATIONAL QUALITIES

Recreational intrinsic qualities refer to outdoor recreational opportunities found along a byway that contribute to visitors' enjoyment and engagement with the surrounding environment. These qualities include scenic vistas, wildlife viewing, hiking trails, camping facilities and water-based activities. While education is not always considered recreational, it can certainly be a part of the recreational experience on a byway. Recreational opportunities provide visitors with the chance to connect with nature and the outdoors. Recreational intrinsic qualities can also stimulate the local economy through increased visitation and spending on outdoor recreation and equipment. It is important to balance recreational use with conservation efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of the natural environment.

The Trail of the Ancients offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities for visitors. Outdoor enthusiasts can explore the area's rugged landscape by hiking, camping, mountain biking and rock climbing. Due to milder winters and an earlier spring as compared to other parts of Colorado, the area around the byway can provide year-round opportunities. Although not technically considered a recreational intrinsic quality, the Ute Casino in Towaoc is certainly a recreational opportunity.



Fishing at Dolores, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country

The byway is home to national parks and monuments, including Mesa Verde National Park, Yucca House National Monument and Hovenweep National Monument. At Mesa Verde, visitors can explore cliff dwellings and mesa top sites, and take guided tours to learn about the history and culture of the Ancestral Pueblo people who once lived in the area. The park also offers hiking trails and scenic drives. In addition, Mesa Verde is a popular destination for camping. The Ute Mountain Tribal Park provides a unique recreational experience, especially when juxtaposed with Mesa Verde.

Canyons of the Ancients National Monument also offers a variety of recreational opportunities. The area has an extensive network of trails, with options for hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding. Visitors can explore the rugged canyons and mesas, and discover ancient

Pueblo dwellings and rock art. Popular trails include the Sand Canyon Trail, the Lowry Pueblo Trail and the Painted Hand Trail.

In addition to exploring the archaeological sites along the byway, recreationists can explore OHV trails, mountain bike and hike. Totten Reservoir, Narraguinnep Reservoir and McPhee Lake offer fishing and watercraft opportunities. Phil's World, located near Cortez, is a popular mountain-bike trail system. The site offers over 60 miles of trails, with various levels of difficulty for riders of all skill levels, and features scenic views of the surrounding desert landscape.

### **Recreational Resources: Places & Activities**

- 12 Hours of Mesa Verde cycling event
- Annual Ute Mountain Mesa Verde Birding Festival in Cortez
- Boating, fishing, water skiing and swimming in McPhee Reservoir
- Boggy Draw, back side
- Camping at Mesa Verde, Hovenweep, Canyons of the Ancients, and BLM and Forest Service sites
- Carpenter Natural Area
- Colorado Birding Trail
- Fishing and hunting — nearby rivers, lakes and reservoirs
- Four Corners Monument
- Conquistador Golf Course
- Guided tour of Ancestral Pueblo sites at the Ute Mountain Park
- Hawkins Preserve
- Hiking and backpacking in the nearby San Juan Mountains, Mesa Verde National Park, Hovenweep, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument and other public land locations
- Phil's World — Mountain biking trails and tours through unique landscapes
- Bicycling in Mesa Verde National Park on the Mesa Top Loop and Wetherill Mesa Hike and Bike Loop
- Rock climbing and bouldering in the sandstone formations of the area
- Sand Canyon
- Winter sports such as snowshoeing and snowmobiling



## **Threats to the Recreational Qualities of the Byway**

- Losing private lands
- Not enough enforcement
- Not enough parking at trailheads
- Over-visitation at some locations
- Phil's World Access — Hwy. 160
- Weather — snow and mud
- Wildfire
- Workforce housing

## **Opportunities to Promote & Protect the Recreational Qualities of the Byway**

- Better multi-modal access
- Develop McPhee recreational area
- Easier permitting process
- Hunting and fishing education
- Improve infrastructure like bathrooms and parking lots
- Maintain assets and infrastructure
- More trails at  
Canyons of the  
Ancients where  
appropriate
- Promotion
- Promotion of  
winter  
opportunities
- Wine tours



Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country

# BYWAY MARKETING & PROMOTION



The Trail of the Ancients winds through some of the most spectacular and culturally significant landscapes in southwestern Colorado. The byway offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the region's rich history, archaeology and natural beauty, and it provides access to the area's most popular destinations, including Mesa Verde National Park and the Ute Mountain Tribal Park.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Trail of the Ancients and Montezuma County are popular destinations for tourism, with most visits occurring from May to October. The top demographic group of visitors are those aged 45–64 with a household income of \$100,000 or more and typically traveling in small groups of 1–2 people. In 2022, there were 2.1 million trips to the area, resulting in 5.3 million visitor days, and an average length of stay of 2.5 days. The most frequently visited locations include the Colorado Welcome Center at Cortez, Four Corners Monument, Mesa Verde National Park, Ute Mountain Casino Hotel and Yucca House National Monument. The primary visitor markets include Colorado, Texas, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and California.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

Today's traveler wants to feel a deep, vivid and valid connection to the place they are visiting, and no place in the Southwest area offers a better sense of connection than the Trail of the Ancients Byway.

Visitors want experiential, hands-on activities, deep learning opportunities on local resources and attractions, and chances to participate, not just observe. Experiential tourism is more likely to extend the stay of visitors in the market. It is important to promote the experiential opportunities along the entire byway:

- Outdoor experiences — Mesa Verde National Park, Hovenweep National Monument, Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, Ute Mountain Tribal Park, Phil's World, etc.
- Farm-to-table dining options
- Cultural and heritage experiences

- Quality food and beverage experiences in Dolores, Mancos and Cortez
- Pioneer history opportunities, especially relating to oral histories
- Local and regional events and activities, from Third Thursdays of Native American dances, to local car shows and quilting bees

## OVERALL MARKETING GOALS

- Advance low-impact travel experiences county wide
- Promote sustainable and responsible tourism-management practices
- Foster inclusive travel opportunities for a variety of demographics and groups
- Encourage responsible visitations for all who enjoy our resources
- Address seasonality with focused campaigns for shoulder and low seasons
- Champion the value of tourism for partners, stakeholders and businesses
- Target conscientious travelers with highly focused marketing efforts
- Provide reasons to return with grandchildren for deeper engagement opportunities

## MARKETING GOALS

### 1-Year Goals

- Develop a new website for the Trail of the Ancients Byway featuring updated information, interactive maps and engaging content to attract potential visitors.
- Increase social media presence by launching and maintaining accounts on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, and regularly sharing captivating photos, videos and stories about the byway.
- Develop promotional materials such as brochures, flyers and postcards to be distributed at local visitor centers and other tourism-related businesses in the area.

### 5-Year Goals

- Develop and implement a branding and signage program that identifies and promotes the byway along its entire route and at key access points.

- Establish new partnerships with local businesses and organizations to offer a wider range of activities and experiences along the byway, such as guided tours, cultural events and outdoor-recreation opportunities.
- Develop and publish a comprehensive guidebook/brochure, both print and digital, that highlights the byway's unique history, culture and natural features, and provides visitors with detailed information and recommendations for their visit.
- Increase visitor traffic to the byway over each previous year through continued promotion, strategic partnerships, and ongoing development of new visitor experiences and amenities.
- Increase the number of visitor centers and information kiosks along the byway that can provide travelers with more resources and a better overall experience related to the byway, especially through promotion of the National Geographic map.

## 10-Year Goals

- Establish the Trail of the Ancients Byway as a nationally recognized scenic byway and a premier destination for cultural and natural tourism in the region.
- Increase visitor traffic to the byway over the previous year through sustained marketing efforts, and the continued development of new visitor experiences and amenities.



Fourth of July festivities, courtesy of Mesa Verde Country

- Foster ongoing community engagement and support for the byway through the creation of a formal byway association, the establishment of an annual byway festival and ongoing outreach to local stakeholders.
- Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program that measures the byway's economic impact, visitor satisfaction, and overall success in achieving its mission and goals.

## **SELECT EVENTS**

- 12 Hours of Mesa Verde bike race
- Annual Dolores Chamber Banquet
- Christmas at the Galloping Goose
- Cortez Balloon Rally
- Cortez Cultural Center dances
- Cortez Gun and Sportsman Show
- Dolores Harvest Festival
- Escalante Bike Race
- Escalante Days
- Fourth of July
- Harvest Beer Festival in Cortez
- Indian Arts and Cultural Festival
- Luminaria Night
- Mancos Art Show
- Mancos Burro Fest
- Mancos Cowboy Half Marathon, 5K and Fun Run
- Mancos Creative District
- Mancos Days
- Mancos Film Festival
- Mancos Grand Summer Nights
- Mancos Summer BrewFest
- Music in the Mountains
- Parade of Lights
- Pueblo to Pueblo Run
- Pumpkin Festival
- Riverfest
- Southwest Concert Series
- Ted Talks
- Ute Mountain Birding Festival
- Ute Mountain Round-up Rodeo
- Wine Fest





Promotional map of the Trail of the Ancients Byway area © Mesa Verde Country

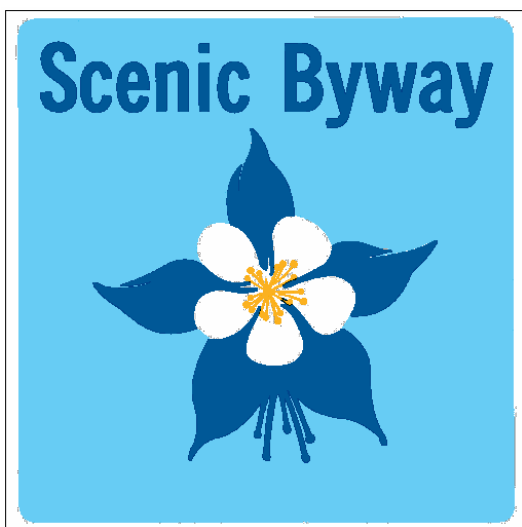
# SIGNAGE

## WAYFINDING

Wayfinding, as it relates to a byway, refers to the process of orientation and navigation through the landscape, often involving the use of signage, maps, landmarks and other visual cues to help travelers find their way and reach their intended destination. Wayfinding is especially important for Trail of the Ancients Byway because the route follows several highways and county roads, and there are multiple entry and exit points, intersecting roads, and points of interest along the way.

The byway also travels across state lines and through two Tribal reservations. Without clear and effective wayfinding, visitors may become disoriented, confused or lost, which can negatively impact their experience and potentially discourage them from returning or recommending the byway to others.

Wayfinding is essential for the Trail of the Ancients Byway to help visitors navigate through the diverse landscape and enhance their overall experience. The wayfinding system should



Blue columbine Scenic Byway logo



America's Byways logo

consider the needs and preferences of the target audiences, such as tourists, locals and outdoor enthusiasts, to provide effective and appropriate signage. Good wayfinding can also improve safety and reduce the risk of accidents or other incidents by providing clear directions and alerts to potential hazards.

Unfortunately, the Trail of the Ancients lacks strong wayfinding. In 2018, the Walden Mills Group was hired to assess the byway's wayfinding condition. The final report, A Framework for

*Wayshowing: Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway*, published in 2019, highlighted several key areas. Soon after the report was finalized, the COVID pandemic hit and the Trail of the Ancients Byway board all but disbanded. As such, the recommendations were not initiated.

The 2019 plan recommended 10 specific action items. As part of this CMP update, those recommendations are reiterated. Specifically:

- Rebuild a new governing committee. (CMP note — This is currently happening under the leadership of Mesa Verde Country.)
- Inform staff at visitor centers throughout the byway that The Trail of the Ancients has a continuing relationship with National Geographic, and they should promote the map produced by National Geographic.
- Work with CDOT to install 30 blue columbine signs.
- Consult with CDOT to improve signage at the entry to the Canyons of the Ancients Visitor Center to aid both arriving and departing travelers. Consult also about adding directional signage at the intersection of Hwy. 184 and Hwy. 491, and directional signage from Lowry Pueblo on Road 10 to Painted Hand Pueblo.
- Add directional signage at the intersection of Hwy. 184 and Hwy. 491. Also add directional signage from Lowry Pueblo on Road 10 to Painted Hand Pueblo.
- Support the Ute Tribal Park in raising funds to improve both signage and landscaping at the junction of Hwy. 160 and Hwy. 491.
- Replace sun-faded signage in McElmo Canyon (CMP note – Although this is important, until Road G becomes part of the byway, this action item can wait).
- Consider designing an information piece that communicates to travelers the distinction between the Canyons of the Ancients and Trail of the Ancients.
- Consider replacing NPS signage in Cortez, east intersection. NPS signage is too small and unreadable.
- Work with CDOT to consolidate byway sign clutter at the Cortez intersection of Hwy. 160 and Hwy. 145.



McElmo Flume sign © Tony Gurzick

As part of the CMP process, the 2019 wayfinding plan was studied and evaluated. All 10 recommendations remain important and will be pursued; however, Mesa Verde Country emphasizes the following three wayfinding needs:

## **Replace byway signs**

The priority needs to be updating the Trail of the Ancients Byway signage from the byway's current brown-colored logo to the CDOT blue columbine sign. The current signs are difficult to see and read. Since they are brown, drivers may confuse them for a "park" sign instead of a byway sign. Additionally, directional arrows are difficult to see or understand. Using the standardized CDOT blue columbine sign and directional markers not only updates wayfinding on the byway, but is also readily identifiable by drivers as a byway sign. Finally, the start and end points of the byway are difficult to find on the highway, and they need attention and updating.

## **County roads**

The signs leading people to Lowry Pueblo, Painted Hand, and directions along County Road CC and County Road 10 are either nonexistent or difficult to find. Additionally, cell phone coverage is spotty, making mapping programs unreliable. Drivers along this section of road may become disoriented and either turn back or become lost. Clear byway signs and signs leading to archaeological sites need to be updated.

## **Maps**

*The Four Corners Region: Trail of the Ancients* destination map, produced by National Geographic, is an excellent, detailed map of not only the Colorado portion of the byway, but the entire Trail of the Ancients National Scenic Byway. The map needs to be more readily available for purchase at local stores, gift shops and visitor centers.

Although the National Geographic map is comprehensive, there is a need for a smaller Colorado road map of the byway. Mesa Verde Country will explore the possibilities of designing a simple-to-use map.



## Implementation

To ensure the successful implementation of the recommended improvements to the byway wayfinding system, especially the highlighted three goals, it is crucial that the byway's board, CDOT and other entities work cooperatively. This includes establishing clear lines of communication, setting specific goals and objectives, and regularly checking in on progress towards these goals. It would also be beneficial to establish a timeline for when each of the recommendations will be completed, with regular progress reports provided to stakeholders and the public. By working collaboratively and transparently, the entities involved can ensure that the improvements are implemented in a timely and effective manner, ultimately enhancing the experience of travelers and residents alike on the byway.

The majority of the 10 goals highlighted in the *Framework for Wayshowing* can be completed in the next 18–24 months. The replacement of the byways signs with the blue columbine sign should be completed in the next 12 months. Also, working with CDOT and the county, better signage on Road CC and Road 10 should be completed in 18 months. Finally, the creation of a simple-to-use map of the byway can be completed by the spring of 2024.

## OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Mesa Verde Country and the Trail of the Ancients Byway board will work with state, Tribal, county and city officials, and community members to ensure that outdoor advertising and signage conform to applicable laws and regulations. Specifically, CDOT has the following rules related to outdoor advertising:

- Rule 6.03.1(C) states, “No Off-Premise Sign shall be erected adjacent to a Scenic Byway, except for directional and Official Signs.”
- Rule 9.00(B) states, “No new Advertising Device shall be erected along a Scenic Byway that is visible from the Controlled Route with the exception of 1) Official Signs; On-Premise Signs; and Directional Signs.”

## INTERPRETIVE SIGN INVENTORY & PLAN

Interpretive signage plays a critical role in enhancing the experience of travelers on any scenic byway; this is especially true for the Trail of the Ancients. Interpretive signs provide travelers



with context, history and information about the environment they are passing through, and ways to sustainably enjoy the resource. However, for interpretive signage to be truly effective, it must be well-planned and well-executed. This is why it is crucial to have a comprehensive interpretive sign plan that involves all stakeholders, including federal, Tribal, state, local and non-governmental organizations.

Before embarking on the development of a comprehensive interpretive sign plan, a thorough assessment of the existing signs along the Trail of the Ancients scenic byway must be conducted. Evaluating the current inventory of interpretive signage will provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses and gaps that exist within the byway's interpretive program. By analyzing the content, design and placement of these signs, stakeholders can ascertain the accuracy, relevance and consistency of the information being presented to travelers. This assessment will enable a more informed and strategic approach to creating an effective interpretive sign plan.

By creating a comprehensive interpretive sign plan that involves all stakeholders, the accuracy, relevance and consistency of the information presented on signs can be ensured. The plan would consider the local community, the environment and the history of the area to make sure that the information provided is both informative and engaging for travelers passing through the byway.

Each entity has its own design requirements, and therefore it may not be feasible to have a common sign standard. However, the plan could still include guidelines for consistency in content, such as the type of information to be presented, the words used (e.g., site vs. ruin), the level of detail, and the overall tone and style of interpretation. Additionally, the plan could establish a consistent approach to accessibility, ensuring that all interpretive signs are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. The plan should encourage using the Trail of the Ancients Byway logo to help create consistency in byway-related signage.

Moreover, the interpretive plan would allow for the coordination and integration of interpretive signage with the byway wayfinding system. This would help travelers better understand the significance of the areas they are passing through and enhance their overall experience on the byway. Travelers could see where they are and have a clearly defined route to other locations.

A comprehensive interpretive sign plan would allow for the allocation of resources in a more effective manner, ensuring that interpretive signage is placed in strategic locations and is maintained in a sustainable manner. It would also help to prevent duplication of effort and reduce the risk of conflicting information being presented on different signs.

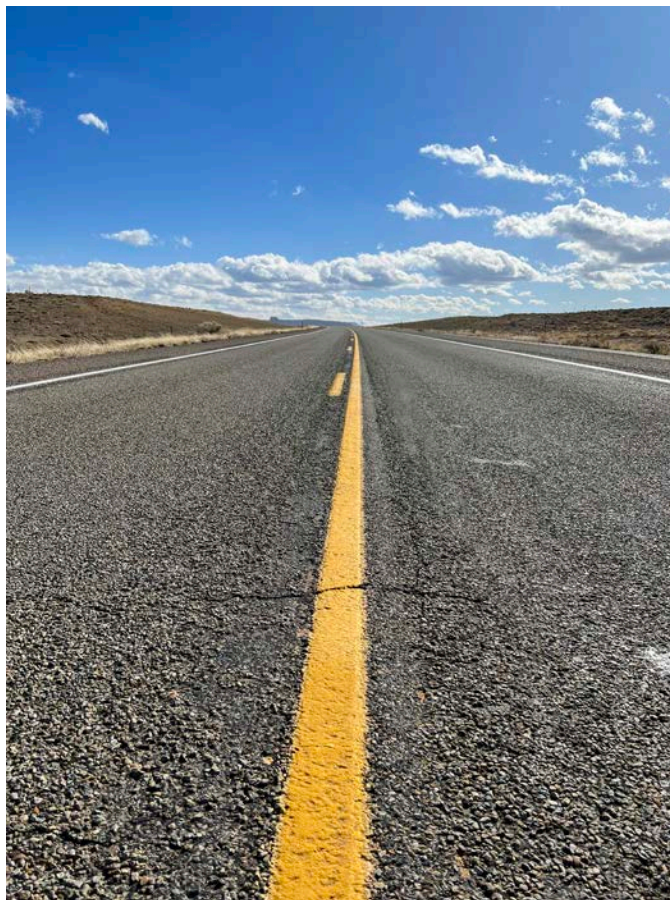
# HIGHWAY INFORMATION

## HIGHWAY CONDITION

The Trail of the Ancients Byway consists of segments from two U.S. highways: Hwy. 160 and Hwy. 491; three state highways: Hwy. 145, Hwy. 184 and Hwy. 41; and two county roads: CR CC and CR 10. CDOT maintains various data regarding Colorado's highways, including drivability records. Drivability is assessed as high, medium or low, representing the projected number of years a highway will maintain acceptable driving conditions. High or medium drivability indicates a lifespan of 3 or more years.

However, a small section of Hwy. 160, encompassing approximately eight miles from the New Mexico line (mile post 0–8) and a two-mile stretch near Cortez (mile post 35–37), is rated as low drivability, requiring treatment for

safe driving conditions. (Note — At the time of the writing of this report, CDOT was in the process of resurfacing the first eight-miles of Hwy. 160 from the state line.) *Please refer to Table 1: Highway Description & Condition Ratings.*



Trail of the Ancients highway © Tony Gurzick

## HIGHWAY TYPE

Hwy. 160 is a principal arterial, with a surface width ranging from 30 to 96 feet. Drivability ranges from high to low, and the speed limit on this segment varies between 25 and 65 miles per hour (MPH). Hwy. 145 is also a principal arterial, with a surface width between 36 and 81

feet. The speed limit ranges from 35 to 65 MPH, and the drivability is rated as high. Hwy. 184 is classified as a major collector, with a surface width varying from 28 to 69 feet. The speed limit on this segment ranges from 35 to 55 MPH, and it is considered to have high drivability. Hwy. 491 falls under the category of principal arterial. The surface width ranges from 32 to 83 feet, with a speed limit of 35 to 65 MPH. The drivability is rated as high. Hwy. 41 is a minor arterial with a surface width ranging from 26 to 41 feet. The speed limit on this segment is 65 MPH, and the drivability is high to medium. *Please refer to Table 1 for additional information.*

## STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY

Table 2: Structural Integrity and Sufficiency Ratings provides valuable insights into the structural integrity and sufficiency of various highway improvements and structures along the Trail of the Ancients Byway. It includes details about the different types of structures such as welded girders, corrugated metal pipes, concrete on rolled I-beams, concrete slabs and girders, and concrete box culverts.

The sufficiency ratings in the table reflect the condition and maintenance needs of these structures. It is worth noting that the overall ratings for the structures along the byway range from fair to good, and there are no structures that are rated as poor. This indicates that the structures are in acceptable condition, but some may require maintenance or improvements in the future to ensure their continued functionality and safety.

## ACCIDENTS

The occurrence and severity of accidents varies along the Trail of the Ancients Byway across its different segments. As expected, busier highways such as Hwy. 160 and Hwy. 491 experienced the highest number of accidents over a three-year period (2018–2020), with 405 and 187 incidents, respectively. The only fatalities recorded on the byway during this period also took place on Hwy. 160 and Hwy. 491. However, the short stretch of Hwy. 145 exhibited the highest accident rate, averaging 3.3 accidents per mile along the byway. Conversely, the nine-mile segment of Hwy. 41 had the lowest number of accidents, with only one occurrence over the three-year period. It is worth noting that while Hwy. 160 had the highest total number of accidents among the byway segments, it is also the longest. The majority of the 405 accidents on Hwy. 160 were concentrated in or near Cortez, the urban hub of the region. *For additional details, please consult Table 3: Accident Statistics.*

## AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC

Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) is a crucial measure that provides an understanding of the traffic volume on various segments of the Trail of the Ancients Byway. It is important to note that only highways 160 and 491 have continuous traffic counters, providing comprehensive data throughout the year. For highways 145, 184 and 41, and the majority of 160 and 491, short-duration traffic counters are used, providing a snapshot of traffic volume during specific periods. Despite this variation in data collection methods, these AADT figures play a vital role in transportation planning, enabling a comprehensive understanding of traffic patterns and facilitating effective infrastructure enhancements along the Trail of the Ancients Byway. Hwy. 160, the longest stretch, serves as a principal arterial and experiences a significant flow of daily traffic with AADT ranging from as few as 1,800 at the state line to as many as 20,000 in Cortez. Conversely, Hwy. 41 has the least amount of traffic with an AADT of 860. *See Chart 1: Average Annual Daily Traffic.*

## ECONOMIC BENEFIT

The development and maintenance of transportation infrastructure along the Trail of the Ancients Byway can have significant economic benefits. Improved road conditions and accessibility attract tourists, promote local businesses and stimulate economic growth in the surrounding communities. Visitors who come to explore the scenic byway may spend money on accommodations, dining, shopping and other recreational activities, contributing to the local economy. Additionally, transportation projects often create jobs during construction and support long-term employment opportunities related to tourism, hospitality and transportation services.

## HIGHWAY PROJECT PLANNING

CDOT's planning process involves considering environmental impacts, collaborating with local, state, and federal agencies, and addressing the specific needs of Native American Tribal lands. By focusing on these key areas and engaging in strategic partnerships, CDOT aims to enhance road conditions, support the tourism industry, improve freight transportation, build resilient infrastructure, and mitigate environmental impacts in the Southwest Region. The Southwest 2045 Regional Transportation Plan for CDOT's Region 5 prioritizes six focus areas:

## **1. Road conditions**

Well-maintained roads in the Southwest Transportation Planning Region (TPR) are vital for residents, employers and visitors. They ensure safer driving, minimize vehicle wear and tear, enhance the efficiency of goods and services transportation and enable reliable transit services. The road condition directly impacts travel accessibility, be it for recreational biking or pedestrian mobility in downtown areas.

## **2. Tourism and federal land**

Tourism is a major economic driver in the Southwest TPR, attracting visitors with outdoor recreational activities like hiking, hunting, camping and biking. Improved access to sites along the Trail of the Ancients benefits both the community's quality of life and the local economy, supporting the tourism and resource extraction sectors. The Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) provide funding for access improvements to national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and historic sites. The Southwest TPR aims to collaborate with federal, state and local agencies for planning and implementing mutually beneficial projects.

## **3. Tribal lands**

The Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Reservations, the only Native American Tribal lands in the Southwest TPR, have significant economic influence through Tribal enterprises that provide employment for Tribal members and others in the region. In July 2019, CDOT held meetings with the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe and Southern Ute Indian Tribe to discuss transportation systems serving Tribal lands. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe prioritizes adding passing lanes, widening highways, and improving safety through shoulders and intersection enhancements. The Tribe also emphasizes the importance of improving public transit connections to local communities and neighboring states.

## **4. Freight**

Freight is essential for transporting valuable goods in the Southwest Region. Industries like agriculture, logging, mining, and oil and gas heavily rely on trucks for transportation. A reliable network is crucial for delivering products from the Southwest TPR to meet the growing demand as Colorado's population and economy expand.



## 5. Resiliency

Resiliency is vital for communities to adapt and thrive amidst challenges like disasters, climate change and changing conditions. The Southwest TPR has faced extreme events such as rockfalls, avalanches, floods and fires. Highways like Hwy. 491 and Hwy. 160 are crucial evacuation routes for residents during emergencies. As Colorado experiences more natural disasters, CDOT must assess options for reducing risk, implementing resilient design solutions and collaborating with regional agencies.

## 6. Environmental mitigation

Transportation activities have an impact on the environment, and CDOT must consider these impacts as part of the statewide and regional planning process. Regulations require coordination with other agencies to address environmental concerns and restore impacted areas.

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Funding and prioritization:** The Southwest TPR aims to secure additional funding through grants and strategic budget allocations to prioritize key focus areas, ensuring adequate resources for transportation projects that enhance safety, accessibility and sustainability.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Recognizing the importance of community input, CDOT actively engages with residents, organizations and agencies to gather feedback, foster collaboration, and ensure that transportation plans and projects align with the needs and aspirations of the Southwest TPR communities.
- **Multi-modal transportation:** Emphasizing a holistic approach to transportation, the Southwest TPR seeks to promote multi-modal options such as expanded public transit networks, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and cycling routes to provide residents and visitors with diverse and sustainable mobility choices.
- **Maintenance and preservation:** CDOT is committed to ongoing maintenance and preservation efforts, implementing proactive strategies to extend the lifespan of existing transportation infrastructure within the Southwest TPR, reducing future repair costs and promoting long-term sustainability.

**Table 1: HIGHWAY DESCRIPTION & CONDITION RATINGS**

Byway segment	Approx. mile marker	Functional class	Surface width in feet	Speed limit, MPH	Drivability
Hwy. 160	0–49	Principal arterial: other	30–96	25–65	high, medium and low
Hwy. 145	0–11	Principal arterial: other	36–81	35–65	high
Hwy. 184	0–8	Major collector	28–69	35–55	high
Hwy. 491	27–46	Principal arterial: other	32–83	35–65	high
Hwy. 41	0–9	Minor arterial	26–41	65	medium

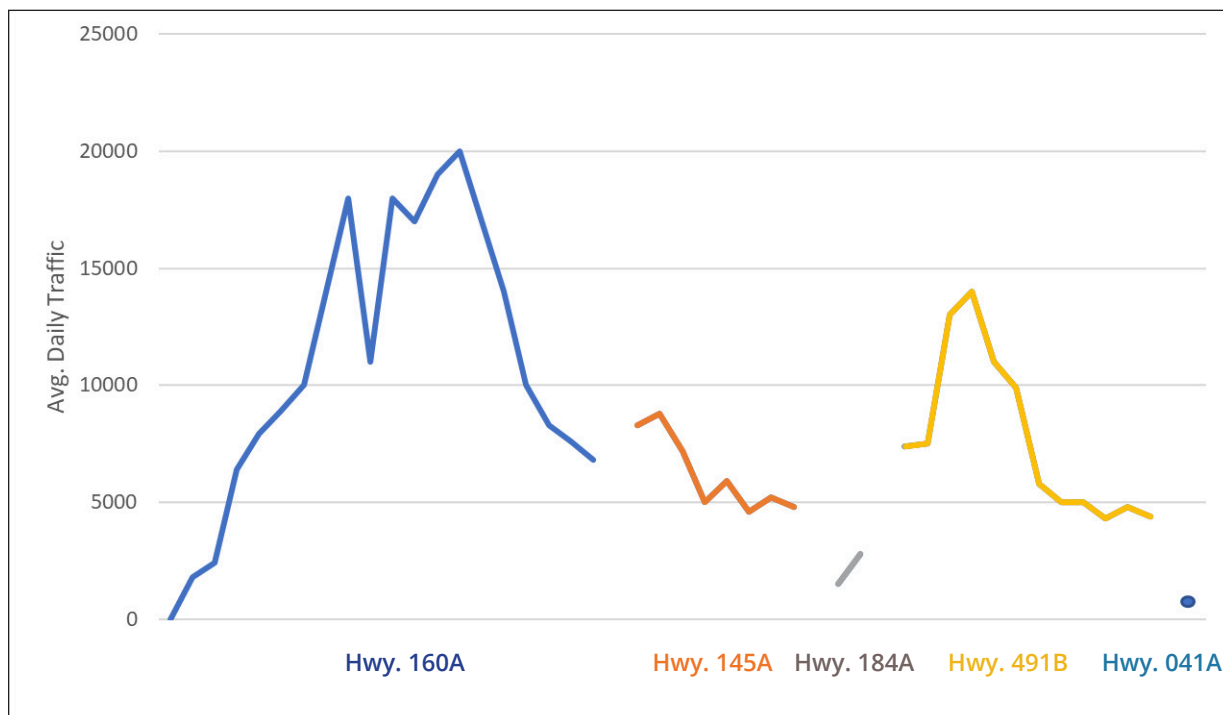
**Table 2: STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY & SUFFICIENCY RATINGS**

Structures					
Route	Ref. Point	Structure ID	Type	Sufficiency Rating	GFP
Hwy. 160	0.185	P-01-G	Welder girder continuous	60.5	F
Hwy. 160	7.408	P-01-F	Corrugated metal pipe	81.2	G
Hwy. 160	7.49	P-01-A	Concrete on rolled I-beam	66.8	F
Hwy. 160	17.079	P-02-C	Concrete on rolled I-beam	58.7	F
Hwy. 160	35.759	O-02-I	Concrete slab and girder	78.9	F
Hwy. 160	43.397	O-03-I	Concrete box culvert	96.3	F
Hwy. 160	48.601	O-03-C	Concrete box girder (overpass to Mesa Verde National Park)	87	F
Hwy. 145	9.217	O-02-E	Welded girder continuous and composite	93.5	F
Hwy. 184	1.268	O-02-C	Concrete box culvert	99.5	G
Hwy. 491	40.246	N-02-B	Concrete box culvert	77	F

**Table 3: ACCIDENT STATISTICS**

Accidents 2018, 2019 & 2020								
Highway segment	Approx. mile marker	Accident type			Total accidents	Average/ year	Accidents/ mile	Average accidents/ mile
		Property damage only	Injury	Fatality				
Hwy. 160	0-49	277	121	7	405	135	8.2	2.8
Hwy. 145	0-11	81	23	0	104	35	9.5	3.2
Hwy. 184	0-8	28	13	0	41	14	5.1	1.7
Hwy. 491	27-46	147	39	1	187	62	9.8	3.3
Hwy. 41	0-9	1	0	0	1	.3	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>0-49</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>2.6</b>

**CHART 1: AVERAGE ANNUAL DAILY TRAFFIC**



# APPENDIX 1

Federal Register Requirements	CMP page number(s)
Map of the byway	inside front cover
Ongoing public participation	8
Byway partners	9
Intrinsic qualities and assessment	15–27
Strategy for maintaining the byway’s intrinsic qualities	15–27
Marketing plan	28
Signage plan	31
Compliance with outdoor advertising	33
Interpretation plans	33
Byway’s safety and accident record	35–37
A plan to accommodate commerce	35–37
Visitor experience	throughout
Discussion of design standards	Appendix 2

# APPENDIX 2

## COLORADO SCENIC AND HISTORIC BYWAYS CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

As of November 8, 2021

### ROADSIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES, VISUAL RESOURCES, SIGNAGE & MORE

In addition to the FHWA's interim policy for the National Scenic Byways Program, these documents are of interest for planning, construction, and maintenance of the scenic and historic byways in Colorado – CDOT Roadway Design Guide, CDOT Project Development Manual, Environmental Stewardship Guide, CDOT Visual Resource Impact Assessment Guidelines, Federal Lands Memorandum of Understanding, CDOT Guide Signing Policies and Procedures Manual, and CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual. Most importantly, byways should consult with the CDOT Region Environmental Section located at <https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental>.

### National Scenic Byways Program

FHWA's May 18, 1995 interim policy, Section 9. Corridor Management Plans (CMP), lists the 14 items required in a CMP, plus 3 additional items for All-American Roads. This document provides the state's guidance and references for these three required CMP items or sections, including Maintenance & Enhancement, Outdoor Advertising, and Sign Plans as follows:

- (3) A strategy for maintaining and enhancing those intrinsic qualities. The level of protection for different parts of a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road can vary, with the highest level of protection afforded those parts which most reflect their intrinsic values. All nationally recognized scenic byways should, however, be maintained with particularly high standards, not only for travelers' safety and comfort, but also for preserving the highest levels of visual integrity and attractiveness.
- (10) A demonstration of compliance with all existing local, State, and Federal laws on the control of outdoor advertising.
- (11) A signage plan that demonstrates how the State will insure and make the number and placement of signs more supportive of the visitor experience.



**Resource:**

[fhwa.dot.gov/hep/scenic\\_byways](https://fhwa.dot.gov/hep/scenic_byways)

## **CDOT Roadway Design Guide & Project Development Manual**

The Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Process is an approach to use Decision Science principles and can be followed on all projects from corridor-wide planning to construction change orders. (CDOT Landscape Architecture Manual 2014, Revised 2020, section 1.3.2) The level of work to achieve the CSS process can vary. While some projects are minor in nature, large system changing project will require a more robust decision making effort. It consists of 6 steps and includes community stakeholder and public input.

First, CDOT has committed to using the CSS process for engineering projects, as noted in both the 2005 Chief Engineer Policy Memo 26 and formalized in the CDOT Roadway Design Guide (Section 20.1.6 Context Sensitive Solutions) and Project Development Manual, Rev. June 29, 2020 (Section 8.13 – Context Sensitive Solutions).

Key elements of CSS (from National Cooperative Highway Research Program, NCHRP Report 480):

1. The project satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and amended as warranted as the project develops.
2. The project is a safe facility both for the use and the community.
3. The project is in harmony with the community and preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area.
4. The project exceeds the expectations of both the designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.
5. The project involves efficient and effective use of resources (such as time, budget, and community) of all involved parties.
6. The project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.
7. The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community.

Secondly, the CDOT Roadway Design Guide, Chapter 2.7 ENVIRONMENT cross-references: See Section 3 (Environment) of the CDOT Project Development Manual (3.14 Social Resources: Visual Resources) and directs the engineer to consult with the Region Environmental Section for information on environmental issues. Visual resources are evaluated by their uniqueness and the strong emotion they inspire in human viewers. Such special places often provide a sense of community to the inhabitants of an area and may attract tourism and drive its economy. Visual resources are regulated by the FHWA and CDOT.

Social resources, specifically visual resources include features that define the character of an area. These can be natural features, vistas, or view-sheds, but also urban characteristics such as architecture, skylines, or other characteristics that create a visual definition.

**Resources:**

[codot.gov/business/designsupport/bulletins\\_manuals/cdot-roadway-design-guide-2018](https://www.codot.gov/business/designsupport/bulletins_manuals/cdot-roadway-design-guide-2018)

[codot.gov/admin/business/designsupport/bulletins\\_manuals/2013-project-development-manual](https://www.codot.gov/admin/business/designsupport/bulletins_manuals/2013-project-development-manual)

[codot.gov/business/designsupport/policy-memos/archived-policy-memos-codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture](https://www.codot.gov/business/designsupport/policy-memos/archived-policy-memos-codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture)

## **CDOT Environmental Stewardship Guide**

In addition, for non-engineering projects such as CDOT maintenance work and those that CDOT issues permits for to use the transportation system for access, or utility installation, etc. CDOT has committed to operating under a standard which considers the impact of actions on the environmental and community. This commitment to the public is embodied in the CDOT Environmental Stewardship Guide:

CDOT will design, construct, maintain and operate the statewide transportation system in a manner which helps preserve Colorado's historic and scenic heritage and fits harmoniously into communities and the natural environment.

**Resource:**

[codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/guidance-standards](https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/guidance-standards)

## Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines

Visual and scenic values are specifically addressed in CDOT's Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines. This guide gives high value to Scenic and Historic Byways in the transportation system of Colorado, as it explains how to evaluate a project's impact to the visual character of the surrounding area and the road system. In the guidelines, Scenic Byways are considered a high level of viewer sensitivity to changes. Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways are important resources that have been designated by the Colorado Transportation Commission. Also specific byways are designated as follows: National Scenic Byways (America's Byways®) by the US Secretary of Transportation; National Forest Scenic Byways by the U.S. Forest Service; and Backcountry Byways by the Bureau of Land Management.

The Guidelines apply to Colorado actions involving:

- CDOT sponsorship of projects with state and/or federal funding
- Local agency sponsorship of projects that involve state highways and/or project development funding sources that prompt CDOT oversight
- Third-party use of highway right-of-way (ROW), permitted by CDOT
- CDOT property management

### Resource:

[codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture/visual-resources/visual-impact-assessment](https://codot.gov/programs/environmental/landscape-architecture/visual-resources/visual-impact-assessment)

## Federal Lands Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (2016)

Supplemental Visual and Scenic Resources Guide for CDOT Maintenance and Operations (APPENDIX A-3).

CDOT has agreed to implement project-specific design protocols to support USFS and BLM management plan standards and guidelines for visual and scenic quality. These protocols help soften visual impacts associated with highways and their appurtenances.

Topics discussed in this overview apply to new construction, reconstruction and maintenance projects by CDOT and do not apply to existing conditions. Health, safety, and welfare will take precedent concerning temporary replacement of the items in this appendix.

**General Requirements:**

1. All projects will avoid and/or minimize disturbance to vegetation. All disturbed areas will be revegetated as appropriate.
2. Color selection will be determined during the NEPA process. In this document, Federal Standard colors are referenced.
3. All signposts, hardware, and related appurtenances, including back of signs, will be either painted Federal Standard 595 Color FS 20059 or, if metal, stained dark brown.
4. Delineator posts will be Forest Service brown (Federal Standard 595 FS 20059) or dark green in color (Interstate Green, in accordance with Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices [MUTCD] Color Specifications [23 CFR 655]).
5. All exposed concrete and shotcrete surfaces will require a color-treatment. The preferred method of color-treatment is the use of stain or colored concrete to achieve an appearance agreeable to the USFS or BLM.
6. CDOT Maintenance will get guidance from the CDOT landscape architect for all maintenance activities, including standard colors, stains, visual impacts, reflectivity, hydrologic features, sound attenuation and landscaping.
7. CDOT landscape architect will consult with USFS and BLM landscape architects for all substitutions and replacements.

**Resource:**

[codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/intergovernmental-agreements](https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/resources/intergovernmental-agreements)

**CDOT Guide Signing Policies and Procedures Manual:  
Columbine & America's Byways**

The CDOT Guide Signing Policies and Procedures Manual 2021 conforms to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which contains the standards and guidelines for the design and installation of highway signing. Specifically, this document provides the signing policy and procedures for the Scenic Byway marker, including the Scenic Byway “Blue Columbine” marker, byway name, directional arrow, and if at the beginning or end of a route shall include “Begin” or “End” plaques, respectively.

If designated as a National Scenic Byway, install the "America's Byways (D6-4a)" sign on the existing columbine signs as a supplement.

**Resource:**

[codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/assets/documents/mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003/part2/fig2d-14\\_longdesc.htm](https://codot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/assets/documents/mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/HTM/2003/part2/fig2d-14_longdesc.htm)

## **CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual**

CDOT regulates outdoor advertising along the Colorado state highway system and information is located in the CDOT Outdoor Advertising Manual. Under state and federal law, CDOT issues permits approving specific information signs (LOGO) on interstates, freeways and expressways, and tourist-oriented directional signs (TODS) on non-interstate highways.

Rules Governing Outdoor Advertising in Colorado (2 CCR 601-3) in section 9.00 Advertising Devices on Scenic Byways [§ 43-1-419, C.R.S.; 23 U.S.C. 131(s)], such as billboards:

- A. A Scenic Byway is a road designated as such by the Colorado Transportation Commission along a Controlled Route.
- B. No new Advertising Device shall be erected along a Scenic Byway that is visible from the Controlled Route with the exception of:
  - 1. Official Signs;
  - 2. On-Premise Signs; and
  - 3. Directional Signs.
- C. Existing Advertising Devices along Scenic Byways which are in compliance with state and federal law and these Rules may continue to be maintained; however, they will have the status of Nonconforming Signs.
- D. For purposes of this section, an Advertising Device shall be considered to be Visible from a designated highway if it is plainly visible to the driver of a vehicle who is proceeding in a legally designated direction and traveling at the posted speed. [23 C.F.R. 750.153 (j); § 43-1-403(17), C.R.S.]
- E. The designation of a Scenic Byway shall specify by Global Positioning System or other technology the precise location of the Scenic Byway.



**Resources:**

[odot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/standard-and-specifications/manuals-and-guidelines](https://odot.gov/safety/traffic-safety/standard-and-specifications/manuals-and-guidelines)

[codot.gov/programs/signs](https://codot.gov/programs/signs)

**Colorado Downtown Streets**

This publication is meant to aid both Colorado communities and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) in striking a balance between the many demands that face our downtown streets, particularly where a main street is also a state highway. It provides options for how to increase safety for all users across all modes of travel through creative and flexible design.

It is important to note that there is no such thing as a cookie-cutter template for great street design: the design of every street must be tailored to its unique circumstances, as well as adhere to engineering standards and requirements. As such, this publication is not a substitute for the engineering process. Rather, it serves as a tool to aid in the development of thoughtful partnerships, compromise, and informed decision-making for improving Colorado's downtown streets.

**Resource:**

[bit.ly/ColoradoDowntownStreets2020](https://bit.ly/ColoradoDowntownStreets2020)