

Scenic Route 169 Advisory Committee

Meeting #5 Notes- January 6th, 2016

University of Connecticut Windham County Extension Center, Brooklyn, CT

Attendance

Sam Alexander, NECCOG

Jules D'Agostino, Brooklyn

Ken Mahler, Lisbon

Delia Fey, Woodstock

Dick Whitney, Southbridge

Topics

- Planning objectives and recommendations in Chapter 3 of the plan (*attached*)

Discussion

Goal 1: Communicate and plan on the local, regional, and State levels, to ensure that the vision of the Corridor Management Plan is realized

- First selectmen (or chief elected officials) should serve on the permanent Advisory Committee, as well as Planning/Zoning chairmen

Goal 2: Guide the future and planned growth of towns along the byway corridor in a way that does not diminish the rural character of the byway, but rather seeks to enhance aesthetics and sense of place, protect open spaces and farmland, and preserve historic buildings, sites, and patterns of development

- In years between Plan of Conservation and Development updates, work with Planning and Zoning Commissions to annually identify sensitive properties and resources along the byway. Publish and prepare a document of these areas and possible actions to be taken by the commission
- Review, with Planning and Zoning Commissions, the Plan of Conservation and Development and make recommendations for actions related to Route 169

Goal 3: Collaborate with ConnDOT, utility companies, public works departments, and landowners to achieve context-sensitive approaches to future maintenance and improvements that may alter the scenic character of Route 169 and diminish the road's relationship with its rural surroundings

- Education and outreach is important to gain buy-in
- A variation on “Green Up Day” in Vermont (<http://www.greenupvermont.org/>) would be a low-cost, community-based effort that would lead to a greater sense of ownership amongst property owners and other residents
- Public works departments could request permission from ConnDOT to perform certain maintenance activities

Goal 4: Position Route 169 as an economic driver by establishing a byway brand and strategy for marketing and tourism which would allow local businesses and attractions to capitalize off of their location

- Will the proposed signage design work on Route 169? Would ConnDOT approve? Similarly designed signs have been implemented in Massachusetts and elsewhere, but would agency policies in Connecticut prevent their implementation?
- Include Facebook and Twitter symbols on signage
- Are there wood-grained steel reflectors for sign posts that would meet current reflectivity standards?

Town Recommendations

- Consider the creation of a new zoning district for Woodstock Hill, or use a Village District (§8-2j), that would better address the types of uses that are compatible with the area and the existing Historic District. Consider the use of this new zone outside the existing Historic District as well
- Make recommendation to address sand and gravel operations in *all* towns
- Reference the POCD when recommending sidewalks in Newent
- Identify and plan for priority open space areas in all towns

Other Discussion

- If scenic pull-offs are developed, there should be signage warning against littering along the byway—littering has been an issue

Chapter Three: Ten-Year Strategy

Contents

Ten-Year Strategy	Planning Recommendations
Byway Vision	Recommendations for All Towns Norwich and Southbridge
Goal 1: Communicate and plan...	
Goal 2: Guide the future and planned growth...	
Goal 3: Collaborate with local...	
Goal 4: Position Route 169 as an economic...	

Ten-Year Strategy

Four corridor management goals (see right) were developed as part of this Plan to broadly capture its intentions and lay a foundation for strategies and plan recommendations.

Byway Vision

Each year, following the implementation of the Plan, the Connecticut State Route 169 National Scenic Byway will prove to be a more valuable scenic, cultural, and economic resource than it was in the previous year.

Goal 1: Communicate and plan on the local, regional, and State levels, to ensure that the vision of the Corridor Management Plan is realized

Goal 2: Guide the future and planned growth of towns along the byway corridor in a way that does not diminish the rural character of the byway, but rather seeks to enhance aesthetics and sense of place

Goal 3: Collaborate with local governments, utility companies, ConnDOT, and potentially massDOT, to achieve context-sensitive approaches to future maintenance and improvements that may alter the scenic character of Route 169 and diminish the road's relationship with its rural surroundings

Goal 4: Position Route 169 as an economic driver by unifying area businesses and attractions, promoting the image of the region as a whole, and spurring tourism investment



Key

Education and community outreach
Land use planning and regulations
Land preservation
Future planning and collaboration
Marketing, branding, signage, and tourism
Road character preservation or enhancement
Historic preservation

AC	Permanent advisory committee, to be established (see Goal 1 objectives)
CCs	Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce as well as other chambers of commerce with ties to regional businesses
CMRPPC	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
ConnDOT	Connecticut Department of Transportation*
Munis.	Municipal Governments, boards, commissions, and committees
NECCOG	Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
SCCOG	Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments
TLGV	The Last Green Valley, Inc.
TMC	Tourism and Marketing Committee, to be established (see Goal 1 objectives)
Utils.	Utility companies (primarily Eversource Energy) with an interest in the maintenance of the road

*and Massachusetts Department of Transportation if Southbridge is to be included in as part of the byway

Goal 1: Communicate and plan on the local, regional, and State levels, to ensure that the vision of the Corridor Management Plan is realized

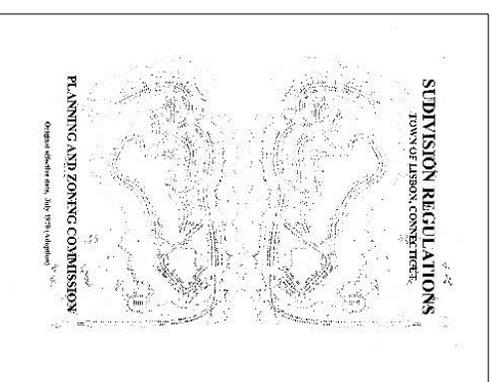
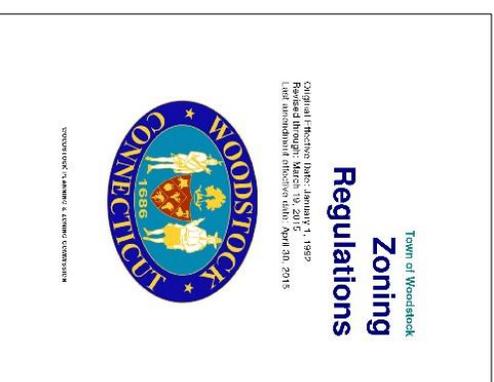
- NECCOG and local, regional, and State-level stakeholders must not only monitor the progress of the Plan, but create a framework for implementation that allows interested parties to take ownership of initiatives
- Too often, planning recommendations are not implemented because the onus for implementation rests on a single party without an ongoing committee of involved persons

Objectives	Parties	Timeframe
Establish a permanent Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from local government, ConnDOT, NECCOG, The Last Green Valley, businesses, land trusts, the public, and additional partners to be identified	NECCOG	2016
Establish a permanent Tourism and Marketing Committee that represents the economic interests of business owners	NECCOG, AC	2016
Assign a staff person to coordinate meetings of the Advisory Committee and the Tourism and Marketing Committee, as well as advocate with municipal and State governments for the implementation of Goals and recommendations of the Plan	NECCOG	2016
Develop a detailed plan for tourism, marketing, and signage	NECCOG, AC	2016 - 2018
Advocate for and pursue extension of the byway to terminate in Tataville (Norwich) and Southbridge, making the byway more characteristic of the Quinebaug-Sherucket region	NECCOG, AC, Norwich, Southbridge, SCCOG/CMRPPC	2016 - 2026

Goal 2: Guide the future and planned growth of towns along the byway corridor in a way that does not diminish the rural character of the byway, but rather seeks to enhance aesthetics and sense of place, protect open spaces and farmland, and preserve historic buildings, sites, and patterns of development

- Uncontrolled growth has always been the most significant threat to the rural and scenic character of Route 169
- Responsibility lies with individual municipalities to adopt future land use plans and regulations that treat Route 169 as a national treasure, deserving of special attention
- NECCOG is able to educate land use commissions and help to coordinate inter-municipal cooperation on land use matters

Objectives	Parties	Timeframe
Work with towns to amend plans of conservation and development to address local priorities for the byway's intrinsic qualities and incorporate goals and recommendations of the Plan	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 - 2026
Adopt local design guidelines and/ or utilize the Scenic Road Land Use and Maintenance Considerations (Annex B) to aid in the preservation of rural lands, villages, and mill villages	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 - 2026
Advocate and plan for the use of an overlay zoning districts to protect scenic vistas along the byway	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 -2026
Educate municipalities on Village District zoning (C.G.S. §8-2j) for identified villages along the byway and advocate for its use	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 - 2026
Prioritize property and development rights acquisition for parcels abutting or visible from the byway	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 - 2026
Assist towns in prioritizing historic properties for preservation and applying for funding for restoration	NECCOG, Munis.	2016 - 2026



Goal 3: Collaborate with ConnDOT, utility companies, public works departments, and landowners to achieve context-sensitive approaches to future maintenance and improvements that may alter the scenic character of Route 169 and diminish the road's relationship with its rural surroundings

- The merits of geometric road improvements, upkeep of guardrails and signs, and cutting of overhanging tree limbs must be balanced with a need to preserve Route 169's unique character and discourage increased driving speeds
- Features like bridges and guardrails can complement the scenic character of the byway if properly constructed
- The stone walls and scenic vistas visible from the roadway were instrumental in Route 169's designation as a National Scenic Byway
- Working with ConnDOT, municipalities, and private landowners, scenic views and the intimate character of the roadway can be maintained

Objective	Parties	Timeframe
Petition responsible parties to consider context-sensitive approaches outlined in the Route 169 National Scenic Byway Land Use Guidelines	NECCOG, ConnDOT, Munis., Utils.	2016 -2026
Develop a program to educate landowners to improve landscaping practices that enhance the scenery of the byway	NECCOG, TLGV	2016 - 2026
Work with responsible parties to remove overgrown vegetation from key scenic areas	NECCOG, ConnDOT, Munis., Utils.	2016 - 2026



Goal 4: Position Route 169 as an economic driver by unifying area businesses and attractions, promoting the image of the region as a whole, and spurring tourism investment

- A National Scenic Byway presents a real opportunity for economic development¹
- Signage and marketing suggestions (Annex A: Marketing and Signing the Byway) were developed as part of this plan
- The use of branding elements and signage can elevate the image of the byway

Objective	Parties	Timeframe
(Repeat) Establish a permanent Tourism and Marketing Committee that represents the economic interests of business owners	NECCOG, AC, CCs	2016
Develop and maintain a calendar of cultural events	NECCOG, TMC, TLGV, CCs	2016
Identify locations for possible scenic pull-offs and visitor information	NECCOG, ConnDOT, TLGV, Muris.	2017
Increase tourism and wayfinding signage along the byway	NECCOG, TMC, ConnDOT, CCs	2017
Develop a dedicated, promotional website for the byway, its corridor, and the region	NECCOG, AC TMC, CCs	2017
Implement a marketing plan after development	NECCOG, TMC	2018 - 2026



¹Economic Development Research Group, *A Review of Impact Studies Related to Scenic Byway Designation*

Planning Recommendations

Recommendations for All Towns

Recommendation

Develop a unique vision for the conservation and development of land along Route 169, and incorporate that vision into the municipal POCD and land use regulations

Review, through the Planning and Zoning Commission(s), Annex B: Scenic Road Land Use Considerations, of this Plan, and consider adopting its suggestions into design guidelines, zoning regulations, subdivision regulations, ordinances, or municipal projects

Norwich and Southbridge

Recommendation

Plan for the preservation and reuse of mill structures and mill buildings in Tataville and downtown Southbridge

Pursue, along with NECCOG, the Advisory Committee, CMRPC, and SCCOG, a lengthening of the byway into Norwich and Southbridge

Lisbon

Recommendation

Amend subdivision regulations to encourage developers to preserve existing stone walls, trees, and other features

Amend subdivision regulations to allow for “cluster subdivisions” that award a density bonus for greater opens space set-aside

Connect municipal buildings, parks, and historic buildings in Newent with sidewalks

Investigate and prioritize possible locations for a new town green in Newent

Canterbury

Recommendation

Investigate how and where sand and gravel operations are permitted in town, along the byway, and what the town can do to limit the long-term impact of those operations on open land and scenery

Consider the appropriateness of a Local Historic District or Village District in the center of town

Amend subdivision regulations to allow for “cluster subdivisions” that award a density bonus for greater opens space set-aside

Connect municipal buildings, parks, and historic buildings in the center of town with sidewalks

Encourage property owners with land abutting the byway to trim overgrowth blocking important vistas to the east

Consider adopting a scenic road ordinance to protect the character of scenic town roads

Acquire development rights or help seek conservation easements for land in high quality scenic vistas east of the byway

Brooklyn

Recommendation

Investigate how and where sand and gravel operations are permitted in town, along the byway, and what the town can do to limit the long-term impact of those operations on open land and scenery

Acquire development rights or help seek conservation easements for land in high quality scenic vistas east of the byway, near the Canterbury town line and Pomfret town line

Pomfret

Recommendation

- Amend subdivision regulations to allow for “cluster subdivisions” that award a density bonus for greater opens space set-aside
- Prioritize development rights of land abutting or visible from the byway for purchase by the town, the State, or land trusts
- Create a pedestrian connection between Pomfret Community School and the Baffin Wildlife Sanctuary

Woodstock

Recommendation

- Consider the use of Village District zoning for areas in Woodstock Hill and South Woodstock that are outside of the bounds of the Woodstock Hill (Local) Historic District
- Encourage ConnDOT and property owners with land abutting the byway, especially between Woodstock Hill and North Woodstock and North Woodstock and the Massachusetts state line, to trim overgrowth on stone walls

Special Projects

Covered pedestrian bridge carrying the Air Line Trail over Route 169 / 44 in Pomfret

Description

Air Line Trail State Park crosses Route 169 in Pomfret, roughly 200 feet north of where the road joins U.S. Route 44, and 475 feet south of Railroad Street. Poor sight lines in this area make crossing dangerous for pedestrian, cyclists, and horseback riders using the trail.

Funding

Planning for this project may be funded by NECCOG, through the State Planning and Research Program of the FHWA and ConnDOT.



A COVERED, HOWE TRUSS BRIDGE CARRYING THE HOP RIVER TRAIL IN ANDOVER, CT