

## Appendix F: History of Marketing and Economic Development Planning Efforts

### *Phase I (1992-1994)*

Begun in 1992 and completed in 1994, Phase One focused primarily on data collection, planning and design. The Jacob's Ladder Trail Advisory Committee was created during Phase One, as was the first marketing material produced through the program, a tour book for bicycle and motorist use of the Trail and the immediate surrounding area, entitled *Touring Jacob's Ladder by Bicycle or Car*. The core product of Phase One, however, was the Corridor Management Plan, a plan comparable to ones implemented for byways nationwide. The Corridor Management Plan was primarily intended as an inventory, and consisted of five sub-plans for historic preservation, transportation, land use, landscape improvement, and development of a signage system. Marketing and economic development issues were peripheral in Phase One, with a direct relationship only to the signage system component of the Corridor Management Plan.

### Corridor Management Plan

The Corridor Management Plan promoted the use of interpretive signs at turn-outs and other Trail landmarks to provide natural, cultural, and historical information. Whenever possible, signs are to be placed at uniform heights and in a consistent zone in order for travelers to adjust to where to look. In general, roadside signage should make use of the fewest and most discrete signs possible. The signage section recommends against installing identification signage, which states to visitors that they are traveling along the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway, as a separate sign category (the opposite recommendation was made in the Tourism Marketing Strategy produced in 2004, described later in this chapter). Instead the Corridor Management Plan proposes incorporating a logo for the Byway on signs for other main roads and towns and signs for businesses and services. The signage section concludes that no additional regulatory signs, informing travelers of pertinent laws, warning signs identifying potentially hazardous conditions, or guide signs for neighboring towns should be installed. The one exception is the addition of road-sharing bicyclist signs.

### Bicycle and Car Touring Guidebook - 1994

"Touring Jacob's Ladder by Bicycle or Car," a tour book for bicycle and motorist use of the Trail and the immediate surrounding area, was the first marketing material produced through the program. The guidebook does an excellent job of providing ready-to-use routes for exploring the area and identifying diverse attractions along the way. The pocket-sized guidebook features auto/bike rides, mostly loops of roughly twenty miles, of the natural and scenic beauty of the 33-mile "Jacob's Ladder Trail" and its surrounding areas. There are

individual maps that accompany the description of each route, as well as interpretive information on points of interest and profiles of the grade of steepness, which are exaggerated for the purpose of clarity. The guide also includes a map of the topography for the whole area surrounding U.S. Route 20, directions for getting to the trail, and covers major safety issues such as limited sight distance, gravel surfaces, and narrow shoulders. Many of the loops offer the opportunity to experience both scenic landscapes and historical attractions. The guide mentions the trail's role as a supply line during the Revolutionary War, its brief stint as a streetcar route, and its early 20<sup>th</sup> century reputation as the most traveled mountain road in America. It also lists places to obtain food, gas, lodging, and other local services of interest, one of the only marketing materials to have this level of detail for the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway.

### ***Phases II-IV (1995-2000)***

Phases Two through Four, beginning in 1995 and ending in 2000, included both plans and physical improvements. These phases expanded upon the program established in Phase I through attainment of local commitment, accommodation of increased tourism and development of scenic byway amenities, and preservation and conservation of historic and cultural resources adjacent to the highway. The efforts to develop these features also enhanced the roadside signage that was implemented with the new JLT logo.

The Scenic Byway Improvements Plan provides design plans and outlines of specifications for highway safety features and roadside amenities. Designs and cost estimates are presented for highway improvements, as well as the visitor information center at the former Chester Railroad Depot. The JLT Scenic Byway Development Guidebook was published to address the attainment of local commitment and the preservation and conservation of historic and cultural resources along the Byway. The Guidebook describes key elements of rural character while accommodating development. The part most related to economic development involves design guidelines for improvements of turn-outs, an important amenity along the highway. The first brochure for the JLT was also produced during these phases, providing a general history of the Trail and a hand-drawn map of many of its attractions.

Physical improvements during Phases Two through Four created additional amenities for travelers of the JLT. Five turn-outs with interpretive signage were constructed in areas that were part of the JLT before the road was straightened. Also, construction of the Newman Marsh Hiking Trail provided another place for visitors to experience scenic views, as well as read more about the area.

### Jacob's Ladder Trail Logo and Highway Signs – 1995-6

The JLTSB Advisory Committee held a competition for a logo to identify the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway. The winning logo was printed on small three-color aluminum highway signs, 18" by 24" and placed along the Byway on 6-foot poles two per town on each side of the road.

### Scenic Byway Improvements Plan - 1995

This plan presents designs for highway infrastructure improvements and amenities intended to enhance the scenic driving experience of motorists along the Byway across eleven sites. Marketing and economic development-related recommendations in the plan included:

- Adapt the closed Maple Street Bridge, formerly for automobile use, in Chester, MA, for use by pedestrians and cyclists
- Rehabilitate the former Chester Jail as an information and exhibit center
- Transform the Chester Railroad Depot into a multi-use facility and the Byway's primary visitor's center
- Enhance the five existing turn-out areas, one in each of the Byway communities (selected for either waterfront location, scenic vistas, or historical significance)

The Maple Street Bridge, located near Main St. in Chester and the Railroad Depot, was designated state funding in 2008 to rehabilitate the bridge for both vehicular and pedestrian use. Design work on this project is completed, the construction contract was awarded in September 2008, and the work will be completed in 2009.

The Chester Jail now has visitor information, and is open once a month or by appointment. Also, the unused Chester Railroad Depot has been turned into a visitor information center with well-designed interpretive display cases. The center is open Saturdays through Tuesdays, July through September, from 11-3. The entire site was re-graded, the road was relocated, and a paved parking area added. The site is enhanced with a flagpole and plantings.

Interpretive signs were constructed at the turn-out created for each town, so that drivers would be provided with a rest area where they could also learn about the history of the town they were visiting (the 2004 Marketing Tourism Strategy, summarized later in this document, has defined new standards which future interpretive signs should follow).

### Development Guidebook - 1995

The Guidebook includes 1) suggested design review guidelines for the built environment for both the woodland corridors and village settings of the Byway (encompassing site design, landscaping, architecture, signs, lighting, and parking); and 2) approaches to zoning for attracting economic development while preserving rural character. Central to both sets

of recommendations is a proposed corridor overlay zoning bylaw. The Overlay District Model Bylaw was designed to allow for economic development of the area while maintaining its natural beauty. New commercial uses would be allowed by special permit and would have to comply with design standards. The bylaw applies to land within 500 feet of Route 20, and farther for established commercial areas adjacent to the route. The bylaw includes both residential and business performance standards.

The guidelines for signs recommend setbacks from the road and use of vegetative buffers to create a muting effect, and blending with the natural or human-made surroundings. The section recommends against combining more than two signs in the same location. Other recommendations reinforce the guidelines presented in the management plan. For example, signs are supposed to be located on the buildings themselves, not along the roadway. The guide proposes that economic development can occur in the area without diminishing its rural character through innovative forms of residential and commercial development. Rural character is maintained if parking is built in the rear of buildings and buildings share a common drive and parking. Buildings should also be setback from the road and buffered with landscaping to blend better with the surroundings.

Alternative forms of residential development can preserve open space and agricultural land by using common driveways, abolishing large square lots, and secluding residences from the roadway. Residents that want to convert a home into a storefront should not add on a glassed-in porch or vinyl siding, which detract from a house's historic character. Existing features such as exterior clapboards and original doors and windows should be restored and parking directed to the rear. In the case of converted residences, signs should not be attached to the structure but should be built along the road, applying the principles governing roadside signage. Performance standards can be used to ensure that commercial developments are built without large parking lots by the road with little or no landscaping. With assistance from the Berkshire County Regional Planning Commission, the PVPC undertook several steps to promote the model overlay zone bylaw. The organization put together a slideshow demonstrating themes such as the character of the trail, its history, and why innovative land use strategies are necessary. Staff produced fact sheets summarizing the bylaw and the design guidelines for the review process. With the approval of the select boards of each town, staff met with town planning boards and tailored the bylaw to individual town needs. Staff also organized a discussion forum for representatives from all the towns. The town of Chester passed a Route 20 Overlay District bylaw. The bylaw includes requirements for permanent and temporary signs.

"Discover Jacob's Ladder Trail: The First of the Great Mountain Crossovers" Brochure - 1996

The brochure focuses primarily on the history of the Trail. It expands upon the history of the trail's expansion and its use as a transportation route. The brochure alludes to the Trail's scenic beauty, such as the "rocky shoulders of Mount Tekoa" near the Trail's eastern

terminus. It discusses the building of the railroad around 1840, and its legacy of hand-crafted keystone arch bridges.

The brochure states that the JLT has always had many artists and artisans working in the surrounding area, ranging from stonecutters to dramatists, and painters to writers. The brochure also discusses attractions in the area, including many natural attractions located on Route 20 or on side roads immediately off of it.

The brochure also points out many recreational opportunities in the area, such as kayaking on the Westfield River, fishing opportunities, with lakes offering trout and bass among other fish, and access to the Appalachian Trail from its crossing near Greenwater Pond.

### ***Phases V-VI (1998-2004)***

Phases Five through Six, beginning in 1998 and ending in 2004, included creation of a number of educational and marketing-related products: mobile exhibit and associated brochure, trail maps, antique postcards, and a video.

Efforts were also undertaken during this phase to enhance the scenic quality of the JLT and create new recreational spaces. A Viewshed Protection Program was undertaken which consisted of the purchase of an easement for the stone cairn site and subsequent landscape improvements on that site. An approximately seven acre parcel of land in Huntington Village was also purchased as part of the program for passive recreational use.

### Vegetation Management Plan - 1999

The Vegetation Management Plan focuses on enhancing the scenic quality of the Byway area and presents landscaping strategies for creating ideal views along the length of the Byway. It also includes a number of recommendations aimed at enhancing the curb appeal of area businesses to increase patronage and developing visitor facilities.

A general streetscape improvement design is applicable to the four towns with village centers along the Byway, Russell, Chester, Huntington, and Lee. A design in Russell opens views of the Westfield River and Russell Center and suggests building a “welcome center” for the eastern end of the route on the site. There is a design for Becket that proposes creating additional trails and picnic areas at the site of the former Summit House and establishing the building as the Trail’s primary visitors’ center.

### Reproduced Classic Postcards

As a number of postcards for the Byway were created in the early 1900s, these iconic images were reproduced in new postcards, packaged in groups of 12 in a specially designed envelope. The following are locations for some of the pictures:

- Riverside Inn, Chester
- Main Street, Huntington
- Congregational Church and Lee Park, Lee
- Bonnyriggs Four Corners, Becket
- Green Water Pond, Becket
- Maple Street and Railroad Bridge, Chester
- State Road, Russell
- Railroad Station, Russell

The postcards are sold at various sites along the Byway and serve as a reminder of the way the road corridor used to look and the history of the region, and provide a keepsake or souvenir for residents and visitors.

“Discover Jacob’s Ladder Trail: The First of the Great Mountain Crossovers” Video

The video touches on the themes of marketing, the history of the general area, the histories of each town, suggested activities for different seasons, and annual events (there is also a 3D-visualization of some of the natural features of the Trail. The Knightville Dam in Huntington is mentioned for providing the necessary current for the Westfield canoe races which begin in Huntington. The Jacob’s Ladder area is host to other annual events besides the river races, such as the Littleville Fair for the agricultural arts in Chester.

“Jacob’s Ladder Trail: Off-road Bicycle & Multi-Use Trail Maps” (Eastern & Western Regions) - 1999

Two fold-out maps were produced, one for the western half and one for the eastern portion of the Byway. The routes expand upon the bicycle tours recommended in the Touring for Bicycles or Cars guidebook, and landmarks are incorporated into the maps. The Road Bicycle & Multi-Use Trail Maps expand upon the directions and maps found in the guide for bicycles and cars by creating route descriptions and accompanying maps of specific interest to mountain bikers (nowhere do the brochures indicate that the routes should be used for hiking or running). They also provide mile markers and estimates of total trip time for each suggested route. Both maps include the same introduction which provides an overview of the terrain with some history of the natural and built environment.

“Jacob’s Ladder Trail: From Wilderness Trail to Scenic Byway” Mobile Exhibit and Brochure - 2002

This mobile exhibit and accompanying brochure expanded upon the history provided in the 1996 “Discover Jacob’s Ladder Trail” brochure by including new discussions of the history of transportation along the route and the individual histories of each town. It also offers the first detailed map that features most of the area’s major attractions. The historical

information takes up one side of the publication when completely unfolded. The entire opposite side is taken up by the visitor's map.

The exhibit and brochure highlight sixteen attractions, including seven outdoor recreational sites, six historic sites, and three arts and culture attractions. They also feature nine seasonal events from March through October, including four festivals, two country fairs, two bike tours, and one wildwater race.

### ***Phases VII-VIII (2003-2005)***

Phases Seven through Eight, beginning in 2003 and ending in 2005, consisted of critical marketing initiatives as well as physical designs and construction improvements. The most significant marketing project was the Tourism Marketing Strategy, an assessment of the visitor experience and a guideline for future marketing efforts.

The Tourism Marketing Strategy's top recommendation, a stand-alone website, was also produced during this time period, along with a press kit. The press kit and website are the first marketing materials to use the teaser "The Seven Hidden Gems of the Berkshire Foothills," followed by the positioning statement "along Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway," recommended by the Tourism Marketing Strategy to be the primary branding language for the Byway.

Efforts were also undertaken during these phases to increase traveler amenities and attractions on the Jacob's Ladder Trail Scenic Byway. The Boulder Park Accessible Trail was constructed, along with a trailhead parking area which includes an interpretive sign. A parking area and information kiosk were also built at the Appalachian Trailhead, located at the Lee turn-out, with some improvements made to the trail. Also, designs were created for the rehabilitation of Hampden Park in Chester.

### **Tourism Marketing Strategy**

The 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy, prepared by Destination Development, Inc. of Olympia, Washington is extremely comprehensive and should be consulted for additional background and guidance before attempting implementation of any of the recommendations below. The firm first completed a visitor/tourism assessment of the Byway, with a set of photographs focused on "trouble spots" as well as positive examples and a series of suggestions for how to improve conditions along the route. This assessment was presented to residents, businesses and other stakeholders at two locations along the Byway in the fall of 2004. Subsequently, a set of 25 recommendations was formulated to set forth a long-term strategic marketing plan. The recommendations were grouped by the following objectives: Visibility, Attractions and Lures, Branding Initiatives, Product

Development, and Marketing. The plan is discussed in more detail in chapter seven of this corridor management plan.

“Jacob’s Ladder Scenic Byway: Western Massachusetts’ Historic Route 20” Website

The 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy identifies development of a website as a crucial marketing effort, second only to the creation of information gazebos and new interpretive signage. It is the best way to attract visitors to the area, superior to printed materials, or promotion at visitor information centers or trade shows. Studies show that over 60% of the United States’ general population uses the Internet as their primary travel resource. The report makes several suggestions for what content should be included on the website. Several of these are present in the website’s current incarnation. The website’s home page has a slideshow with a rotation of several photographs of the area. There is a page on the history of the Byway, as well as a separate page for the history of each town. A map of major attractions in the area is available, and printable as an 8.5x11” PDF file, and directions to attractions are complete with mileage markers. There is a page suggesting activities for different seasons, as well as a list of annual events with web links and a request form for obtaining more information. A Links page has links to other websites featuring some of the area’s other major attractions. The seven hidden gems are highlighted on one page; the list is slightly changed from the list recommended in the 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy. A contact email, mailing address, and phone number is provided.

Jacob’s Ladder Scenic Byway Press Kit - 2005

The 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy identifies creation of a press kit as one of the most important printed materials to be produced. A full press kit provides much more extensive information than a simple press release and is a more useful tool for gaining media attention. Press kits also complement online marketing through the offering of print materials, and the design should mirror that of the website. In fact a printable version of the press kit is available online and includes the page of photographs. Press kits sent to niche publications should be tailored to those interests.

The report makes several suggestions for the contents of the press kits. Most of these have been incorporated. The “At a Glance” section provides general information about the area, including a brief history, and contact information for the Byway Association as well as visitor’s centers, other websites, and other sources of information on the region. A section entitled “Historic Towns of the Berkshire Foothills” provides a brief description for the center of each town and for any additional villages contained therein.

The “Attractions” section offers summaries of secondary attractions and diversions for each of the five towns, mostly natural and historical attractions. Only a handful of businesses selling goods or services are included. A map of the Byway includes the seven hidden gems

as well as attractions and town and village centers. The map is available in digital form from the JLSB website, as is the entire contents of the Press Kit.

The kit also has a sample photo sheet, consisting of nine color photos. The photos are of the:

- Becket Arts Center
- Parade in Lee
- Wild and Scenic Westfield River
- Goldmine Brook Falls
- A Keystone Arch Bridge
- First Congregational Church in Lee
- Carm's Restaurant and Gas Station
- Chester Railroad Depot and Museum
- Huntington Country Store

### ***Phases IX-XI (2005-present)***

Phases Nine through Eleven began in 2005 and include significant efforts to implement the marketing recommendations of the 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy, as well as a full-scale update and revision of the corridor management plan, this time with a new chapter on Tourism, Marketing and Traveler Services. In addition to these tourism-related initiatives, Phases IX – XI include the implementation of several designs from the Vegetation Management Plan, the construction of the previously designed Hampden Park improvements, and improvements to the former Methodist Church building in Chester, all under way or completed.

### **Corridor Management Plan II**

The Corridor Management Plan revision is under way to evaluate progress and establish new objectives in the areas of land use and development, natural resources and outdoor recreation, cultural and historic resources, transportation, landscape improvements, and marketing, tourism, and traveler services.

### **Interpretive Signage and Way-finding Project**

The FY06 Interpretive Signage and Way-finding Project has been awarded but is not yet under contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department. It will address Tourism Marketing Strategy suggestions to implement a signage program identifying the Byway and attractions and to greatly expand and redesign interpretive signage. Directional information will be given to travelers through signage leading them from the Massachusetts Turnpike exit to Route 20 in Lee and Westfield, thus enticing some of the 25 million annual travelers on the Pike, or pulling in local residents and Berkshires tourists from gateways to the Byway at its heavily-traveled borders with Lenox and Westfield. Directional signage to

recreational, historic and cultural sites on the Byway will then further help travelers on their way. Once on the Byway, the road itself will be identified with new signage every two miles in each direction. A number of new interpretive signs will be placed at the most significant and popular sites along the Byway. Finally, an Activities Guide will be created that will serve as a comprehensive resource for visitors.

#### Western Massachusetts Byways Promotional Campaign

This FY06 project has been awarded but is not yet under contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department. This project will create a standard and searchable inventory of the assets of the five western Massachusetts scenic byways, create a tourism brand or theme for these byways, develop a strategic marketing and promotional campaign, create an Internet presence for the western Massachusetts byways, design and produce maps and brochures, create and install a wayfinding sign program, and conduct an advertising campaign. The five byways to be included are: the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway, Route 112 Scenic Byway, Mount Greylock Scenic Byway, Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway, and the Connecticut River Scenic Byway. An additional byway was recently designated in this area as well – the Route 116 Scenic Byway. The Jacob's Ladder Byway is now linked with all of the other scenic byways via Route 112.

#### Marketing Implementation Project

The FY07 Marketing Implementation Project will implement six of the 25 marketing recommendations in the 2004 Tourism Marketing Strategy, including 1) getting recognition on other organizations' maps and marketing materials, 2) and 3) local and regional interpretive materials distribution programs, 4) implementation of a public relations and partnership program, 5) implementation of visitor assessment suggestions, and 6) creation of a brochure, bookmark, poster and tear-off map.