

Executive Summary

The Corridor

The Ridge Scenic Highway, located in Polk County, extends 38.7-miles along the Lake Wales Ridge, from its intersection with US 27 south of Frostproof to its intersection with US 17/92 in Haines City. The proposed scenic highway corridor travels through the historic communities of Frostproof, Hillcrest Heights, Babson Park, the Village of Highland Park, Lake Wales, Lake of the Hills, Dundee, Lake Hamilton and Haines City. This scenic corridor introduces travelers to historic communities and rural agricultural Central Florida. SR 17, or Scenic Highway as it is locally known, serves the historic centers of these communities and provides access to cultural facilities and historic sites that help promote and preserve the local culture. Winding along the Lake Wales Ridge, SR 17 provides scenic vistas and access to lakes, natural areas, citrus agricultural fields and unique Florida attractions.

The Scenic Highway Designation Process

The Ridge Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) is seeking Florida Scenic Highway designation for SR 17, from its intersection with US 27 south of Frostproof to its intersection with US 17/92 in Haines City. The Florida Scenic Highway process is divided into three phases:

1) Eligibility Phase

- Organize Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG), the applicant for the corridor.
- Submit the Letter of Intent, which informs the Florida Department of Transportation of the CAG's intent to pursue Florida Scenic Highway designation.
- Develop the Eligibility Application, a detailed presentation of existing conditions and intrinsic resources found along the corridor.

2) Designation Phase

- Develop the Corridor Management Plan, which presents recommendations for preserving, maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the resources located along the

roadway. The Corridor Management Plan will serve as a long-range planning tool, laying out both a vision for the roadway and mechanisms by which to achieve the vision.

- Submit the Designation Application form providing general information about the roadway and endorsement of the Corridor Management Plan by the Corridor Advocacy Group, and local governments. This form and the Corridor Management Plan make up the Designation Application.

3) Implementation Phase

After designation, a Corridor Management Entity, comprised of community representatives from the entire corridor, will implement the vision and action plan outlined in the Corridor Management Plan so that the Scenic Highway becomes a reality.

The Ridge Scenic Highway Corridor Advocacy Group, consisting of over 50 members representing each of the municipalities found along the corridor, business groups, civic groups, environmental groups and local residents, was formally organized on March 11, 2003. The CAG submitted the Letter of Intent to the Florida Department of Transportation on May 21, 2003 and held a pre-application meeting on May 19, 2003 at the Haines City City Hall. The CAG submitted the Eligibility Application on December 22, 2003, completing phase one of the application process.

This Designation Application, which includes the Corridor Management Plan, will complete the second phase of the designation process. The Corridor Advocacy Group and the local governments, in partnership with the Florida Department of Transportation, look forward to working together in the implementation phase to implement the Vision outlined in the Corridor Management Plan.

The Corridor Management Plan

The Corridor Management Plan is the culmination of over a year of work by the Corridor Advocacy Group. The Corridor

Management Plan outlines the Vision, policies and a plan by which to maintain, preserve, protect, and enhance the intrinsic resources located along the scenic highway. The document is an implementation tool to be used by the Corridor Management Entity throughout the implementation phase to organize their efforts, pursue funding, and garner community support.

The Designation Application and Corridor Management Plan have been formatted to meet all the requirements of the Florida Scenic Highway program as outlined in the Florida Scenic Highway Manual. The report consists of thirteen sections.

- 1 *Vision and Concept Plan* This is the most critical section, summarizing the overall approach of the entire Corridor Management Plan. It contains the Corridor Vision, Goals and Strategies, and the Concept Plan. The Vision describes the Corridor Advocacy Group’s wishes for the corridor twenty years from now. The Goals and Strategies and the Concept Plan define the tools and projects that the Corridor Management Entity will enlist to achieve the Vision.
- 2 *Action Plan* This section outlines in a step-by-step manner how the Corridor Management Entity will protect the resources of the Scenic Highway. The Action Plan outlines projects and activities along with potential partners and funding sources.
- 3 *Community Participation and Promotion* This section describes how the Corridor Management Entity will publicize the scenic highway and get the residents and businesses of the Ridge communities involved.
- 4 *Local Support* This section lists collected letters of support and newspaper articles.
- 5 *Partnerships* This section includes a list of targeted members and partners of the Corridor Management Entity.
- 6 *Corridor Management Entity* This section describes the future Corridor Management Entity by presenting its bylaws. The Corridor Management Entity will be the caretaker of the Corridor Management Plan, overseeing implementation of the plan and the preservation and enhancements of resources located along the Ridge Scenic Highway.
- 7 *Background Conditions Analysis* This section is a summary of current conditions along SR 17, including land use, environmental, and transportation-related issues.
- 8 *Designation Criteria* The Florida Department of Transportation has 10 criteria roads must meet to be eligible for scenic highway designation. This section describes how the Ridge Scenic Highway meets all 10 criteria.

- 9 *Corridor's Story* The history of Scenic Highway and its communities is part of the Florida Story. This section is a historical background on SR 17 and the communities through which it passes.
- 10 *Protection Techniques* Outlines the tools to be used to protect, preserve, enhance and expand the intrinsic resources along the corridor.
- 11 *Funding* Potential funding sources matched to specific Action Items are included in the Action Plan. This section consists of a more general discussion of potential funding sources, including a listing of state and federal grants.
- 12 *Comprehensive Plan Relationship* This section summarizes how the Scenic Highway Goals and Strategies are supported by the Comprehensive Plans of local governments, and vice versa. It is a requirement of the Florida Scenic Highway Program that all local government Comprehensive Plan's reference the scenic highway.
- 13 *Definitions* Like many government programs, the Florida Scenic Highway program has a language all its own. In this section, the jargon is defined in plain English.