

The Ridge Scenic Highway 2014 Annual Report



March 9, 2015

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Corridor Information

Road: State Road 17 (Scenic Highway)
Limits: US 27 to US 17/92
Centerline Miles: 38.7
Name: The Ridge Scenic Highway
Location: Polk County
Designation: February 2005

CME Contact Information

Full Name: Diana Webster-Biel
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Section 1: Completed Projects

1. Did your byway organization complete one or more projects in 2014?

Yes

Completed Project #1

- **Project Name:**
 - 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale
- **Category/Type:** “Program”
 - Physical or Built - scenic pull-out, landscaping, wayfinding signage, interpretive panels/kiosks, visitor center, etc.
 - Planning – CMP update, interpretive, marketing, wayfinding, master plan, etc
 - Organizational Development – fundraising plan, strategic plan or retreat, accreditation, etc.
 - Program – cell phone app, website, beach cleanup, map, Kids Ocean Day, etc.
- **Project Costs:**
 - Government Grant(s) - (federal, state, or local):
 - \$0.00

- Private (individual donations, business sponsors, foundations, special events, membership):
 - \$700
- Earned Income (merchandise sales, fees for programs, etc.):
 - \$300
- In-Kind Value:
 - \$0.00
- Total Cost:
 - \$1,000.00

- **Project Dates:**
 - Start Date: November 1, 2014
 - End Date: November 1, 2014

- **Project Lead:**
 - **Did the byway organization lead the project (obtained/helped obtain funding, managed project, etc.)?**
 - The CME lead the project through a Yard Sale Committee to coordinate the details.

- **Brief Description of the project:**
 - The CME began this event in 2008 and is an annual event held on the first Saturday in November. The goal is to provide local awareness of the Ridge Scenic Highway as a resource for promoting Economic Tourism in the small unique towns and larger city centers. The event has been widely attended and visitors had a lot of compliments on how well it was organized and the scenic views along the highway.

- **Lessons learned from the project: What worked well? What would you do differently? What elements were critical to success?**
 - Each year the event is a learning experience. We have used local newspapers to send press releases and develop articles about the event. We have handed out flyers at different events throughout the year as well as provided the flyer to the local Chambers of Commerce. With the growth in attraction to our Facebook page, we will engage our friends and partners about our event in the years to come to gain support and exposure.

- **Project impact: What is known about the economic, quality of life, and/or environmental impacts of the project?**
 - We have heard from local business (restaurant, retail, libraries, other) during this event they have had a dramatic positive shift in customers. We have also heard from those same businesses months later, they have repeat customers due to the “new” customers finding out about them at the Yard Sale event.
 - The local police and sheriff’s office provide extra patrol along the highway during the event.

- **Byway goals addressed: What planning goals are addressed by the project?**
 - Increase Community Support and Participation
 - Increase Transportation and Safety
 - Increase Education and Publicize Corridor Story

- **Please list and describe the role of the project partners.**
 - Local governments – provide staff and rental locations to host the designated spots for the CME to rent out – serves as income for the event for the CME
 - Residents – the residents along the corridor setup their yard sales which supports the success of the corridor event
 - Webber International University – provided 1,000 event flyers
 - Lake of the Hills Community Club – provided 750 event flyers

- **Please forward 3-5 high-resolution photos of each project that the FSHP has permission to include in the FSHP Annual Report.**



Figure 2: Church Yard Sale Dundee Area



Figure 1: Community Area Yard Sale Lake Wales Area



Figure 3: Vendor at Community Area Yard Sale - Babson Park Area



Figure 4: Ed Esteve and Susan Welborn wearing the official 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale T-Shirts

Completed Project #2

- **Project Name:**
 - Ridge Scenic Highway Website

- **Category/Type:** “Program”
 - Physical or Built - scenic pull-out, landscaping, wayfinding signage, interpretive panels/kiosks, visitor center, etc.
 - Planning – CMP update, interpretive, marketing, wayfinding, master plan, etc
 - Organizational Development – fundraising plan, strategic plan or retreat, accreditation, etc.
 - Program – cell phone app, website, beach cleanup, map, Kids Ocean Day, etc.

- **Project Costs:**
 - Government Grant(s) - (federal, state, or local):
 - N/A
 - Private (individual donations, business sponsors, foundations, special events, membership):
 - \$164.03
 - Earned Income (merchandise sales, fees for programs, etc.):
 - N/A
 - In-Kind Value:
 - N/A
 - Total Cost:
 - \$164.03

- **Project Dates:**
 - Start Date: June 2014
 - End Date: October 3, 2014

- **Project Lead:**
 - **Did the byway organization lead the project (obtained/helped obtain funding, managed project, etc.)?**
 - The CME lead the project through the Polk TPO staff.

- **Brief Description of the project:**
 - The old website was hosted by a company that no longer wanted to allow changes to the website without a full purchase redesign. The Polk TPO researched website providers and presented the new website to the CME Board for approval in September 2014. The Polk TPO staff continues to maintain the website for the CME. The website is widely used as static information about the Scenic Highway and the CME organization. The website can be viewed on mobile devices unlike the old website.

- **Lessons learned from the project: What worked well? What would you do differently? What elements were critical to success?**
 - When creating a website use a nationally recognized company. Having the experts in outreach with the Polk TPO helped the CME make an informed decision to go with a new company which allowed a new website to be created. The new website is now mobile friendly as well.
- **Project impact: What is known about the economic, quality of life, and/or environmental impacts of the project?**
 - Many people praised the Polk TPO staff in the efforts for the new website, its simple but sophisticated looks including the information found throughout the site.
- **Byway scenic goals addressed: What planning goals are addressed by the project?**
 - Increase Community Support and Participation
 - Increase Education and Publicize Corridor Story
- **Please list and describe the role of the project partners.**
 - Polk TPO – provide staff support to create and maintain the site
- **Please forward 3-5 high-resolution photos of each project that the FSHP has permission to include in the FSHP Annual Report.**



Figure 6: Ridge Scenic Highway Website - Home Page

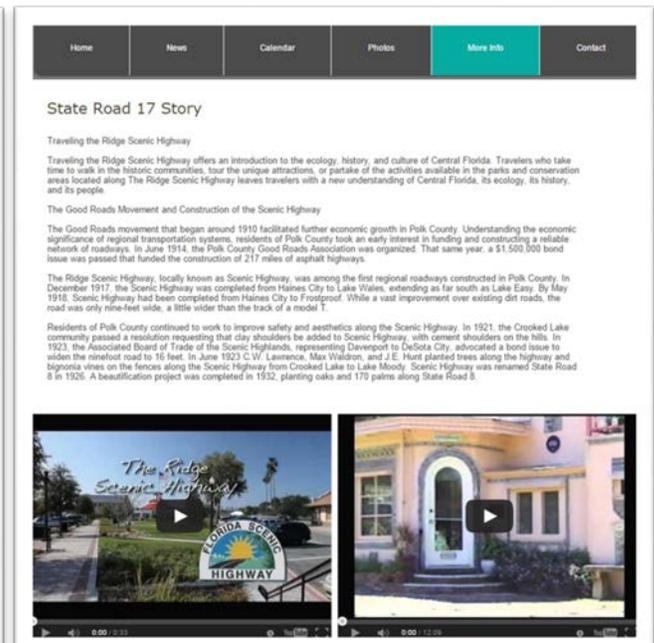


Figure 5: Ridge Scenic Highway Website - Story

Section 2: Other Accomplishments

1. Please describe any other noteworthy accomplishments from 2014 not included in the Completed Projects section.

- N/A

Section 3: Previously Completed Projects

1. In 2014, were any significant benefits or positive impacts from previously completed projects documented? If so, please name the project, and summarize any impacts in all areas below that apply:

Economic:

- N/A

Quality of Life:

- Each year many of the local government and communities host annual events. This year the Town of Dundee noticed more pride with their events. Their events grew in participation to provide the event and attend the event.

Environmental:

- N/A

Other:

- Town of Dundee installed street lights along Main Street (SR 17, The Ridge Scenic Highway). The lights provide great lighting for those walking on the new street tree lined sidewalks at night to the local shops and restaurants.
- The Chalet of Suzanne closed their doors this year. The owners of the Chalet will auction the property off in February 2015. The CME held several meetings at this location throughout the years since designation in 2005. While we do not know what is in store with the property, this was a loss to the community both historically and economically.

Section 4: Public Participation and Partnerships

1. Describe how byway stakeholders (residents, business owners, local government officials, and partners) were routinely updated about the scenic highway in 2014.

- Stakeholders were routinely updated through the quarterly meetings held by the CME board. The 39 Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale committee worked with local stakeholders. The CME recreated their website in 2014 with new content, look and feel. The CME also increased their presence on Facebook. This has been a great resource to reach out to our partners throughout the year.

- 2. Are there issues or concerns regarding the scenic highway in corridor communities?**
 - There is a concern on how the new Central Polk Parkway will cross SR 17, The Ridge Scenic Highway. Although the roadway in this area is in the planning stages now and not scheduled for construction at this time.

- 3. How are new byway organization members, leaders, volunteers, and partners recruited?**
 - The CME is currently having a hard time recruiting new members to the At-Large positions. One of the priorities for 2015 is to find ways to reach out and gain support with new members. We are reaching out with our network of local business, Chambers of Commerce, Facebook friends, and other ways. The CME changed their meeting time from 9:00am to 4:00pm in efforts to gain additional attendance to the meetings from the membership.

- 4. Is there evidence that more stakeholders are involved/interested in and/or aware of the scenic highway (more people receiving newsletter, attending meetings, volunteering, etc.)?**
 - In 2014, the Facebook friends increase from 134 likes to 211 likes. This was due to an increase usage of Facebook as a tool for communication.
 - The 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale has increased in estimated size of 1000 people in 2014 from 2013.

- 5. With how many stakeholders does the byway organization routinely communicate (meeting notices, newsletters, etc.)?**
 - The meeting notice is sent via email to 40 people and 6 people get hard copies via mail due to not having an email address.

- 6. Did the byway organization assist its partners with any projects in 2014? If so, please describe.**
 - The CME provided \$100 towards the Pioneer Days event in Lake Wales.

Section 5: Funding

- 1. Does your byway organization have a budget?**
 - Yes

- 2. In addition to the project funding described in Section 1, please list other amounts of funding by source:**
 - **Government Grant(s) - (federal, state, or local):**
 - N/A
 - **Private - (individual donations, business sponsors, foundations, special events, membership):**
 - N/A

- **Earned Income:**
 - N/A
 - **Total Other Funding - (merchandise sales, fees for programs, etc.):**
 - N/A
3. **Please describe your outstanding funding needs in the following categories:**
 - **Project(s) or program(s) that lack funding**
 - N/A
 - **Total Amount of funding needed**
 - N/A
 - **Potential sources of funding identified**
 - N/A
 4. **Please list potential funding sources being pursued (if not identified above).**
 - N/A
 5. **Please describe the organization's challenges to obtaining funding.**
 - The funding that has been sought after included a requirement for a dollar match. The CME does not have enough money in the bank to match many of the grants.
 6. **Do you have a funding success story from 2014? For example: a successful fundraising event or identifying a new source of funding. If so, please describe.**
 - None

Section 6: Marketing

1. **Describe the marketing methods used (website, brochure, festival booths, advertisements, etc.) in 2014 for the scenic highway and the effectiveness of each.**
 - Website (www.ridgescenichighway.com): was redesigned in 2014. The new website allows the CME Board to post events, news, documents, and photos.
 - Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/TheRidgeScenicHighway>): was used throughout 2014. The CME went from 134 likes to 211 likes in 2014. The post topics vary: events, website temporarily down, and yard sale information.
 - Flyer: To promote the 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale event 3,250 flyers were created and dispersed at local events. Webber International University donated 1,000 flyers, Lake of the Hills Community Club donated 750 flyers, and the CME paid Staples for 1,500 flyers.
2. **What was the total amount spent on marketing?**
 - \$100.00
3. **What were the sources of revenue for marketing?**
 - Table/Spot rental at the 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale

4. **Describe any local tourism trends based on available data (number of tourists increasing, new local/regional economic impact data, etc.).**
 - This information has been requested from the local chambers of commerce; however, at the time their reports have not been completed.
5. **Has the impact of the scenic highway on local tourism trends been identified in any way? If so, please describe.**
 - This information has not been documented.
6. **Please describe how the byway organization is working with local tourism agencies:**
 - The CME includes the Chambers of Commerce in the email notification of meetings and events. The Chambers also allow the CME to place flyers for events at their offices.

Section 7: Byway Organization

1. **What is the organization's current structure (nonprofit, informal citizen group, etc.)?**
 - Non-Profit Florida Corporation since June 6, 2008
2. **In what organizational development activities did the byway organization engage this year (training, evaluation/assessment, accreditation, strategic planning, etc.)?**
 - The CME sent out letters to the local governments requesting participation with the CME board and committees.
3. **What are the organization's greatest challenges (recruiting new members, getting the work done, etc.)?**
 - One of the challenges is to get the At-Large positions filled by active participants. In 2015, the CME has listed it as a priority to get these positions filled. The CME changed their bylaws to reduce the number of required members for a quorum to five.
 - Lack of participation of current membership has been an issue with committee meetings for the 39-Mile Scenic Highway Yard Sale.

Section 8: Final Comments

Is there anything significant from 2014 that has not been captured in this report?

- None