



The Economic Development Council for Central Illinois

NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Byways Nationally Recognized For Statewide Partnership

The Illinois Alliance of Byways, a collection of seven nationally recognized byways throughout Illinois termed America's Byways, won the AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) award for Sustainable Organizations at the 2007 National Scenic Byways Conference held last week in Baltimore, Maryland. The Alliance includes the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway, which travels along both sides of the Illinois River from Ottawa to Havana, Illinois. This road way was designated as a National Scenic Byway in 2005.

The Alliance was awarded this honor for its collaborative partnership among Illinois Byways, the innovative approach to cooperative funding and marketing, and the model of broad-based leadership it created between the byway organizations and state and federal government. Most notably, the members of the Alliance issued a joint request for funding from the Illinois Bureau of Tourism that resulted in a \$40,000 budget allocation for each byway for FY2007, the first ever received by the byways from the State of Illinois.

The formation of the Alliance was crucial as expanding funding sources increase the byways' viability. This funding has been critical to the Illinois River Road's success by enhancing its ability to create promotional tools and administer programs to elevate the awareness of byway in an effort to attract visitors to the area.

"The byway is an important catalyst in bringing visitors to communities along the Illinois River and increasing economic development for our region through tourism," states Anaise Berry, Director of the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway. "Additional funding sources enable us to focus on many of our State's objectives, including rural economic development and nature and agri-tourism."

Ongoing sustainability is a major objective and continual challenge for all of America's Byways. The primary sources of funding for National Scenic Byways are the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as well as local grassroots community support. Through continued support and funding, the Alliance hopes to implement projects that will contribute to the long-term sustainability of Illinois' byways.

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The Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway is one of a collection of 126 routes recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation as the most significant routes throughout the country, based on their scenery, cultural, historical, natural, recreational or archaeological opportunities.

Links to Illinois' National Scenic Byways can be found at www.illinoisbyways.org.
Learn about the Illinois River Road at www.illinoisriverroad.org.
Information and links to other National Scenic Byways can be found at www.byways.org.

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