



Project Summary 2008

SB-2008-AK-54921: **Glenn Highway Gateway Visitor Center**

State Submission Date

Mar 14, 2008

Division Submission Date

not submitted

State Priority

0

This application must be completed online at <http://www.bywaysonline.org/grants/>, and submitted electronically and in printed form.

Project Category

Which category best describes the location of this project?

- Project that is associated with a highway that has been designated as a National Scenic Byway, All American Road, or one of America's Byways.
- Project along a State or Indian tribe scenic byway that is carried out to make the byway eligible for designation as a National Scenic Byway, an All-American Road, or one of America's Byways.
- Project that is associated with the development of a State or Indian tribe scenic byway program.

Choose from the following categories of eligible work the type that best fits your project.

- Byway Programs
- Corridor Management
- Safety Improvements
- Byway Facilities
- Access to Recreation
- Resource Protection
- Interpretive Information
- Marketing

Is this application a resubmission of an unfunded project from a previous year?

- Yes
- No

Project Location

State(s) involved in project:

Alaska

Indicate the byway's regional location within the State. Reference prominent landmarks such as parallel major highways, natural features, counties, or large cities, that makes the byway(s) easy to locate in a road atlas.

Beginning in Alaska's largest city of Anchorage, the Glenn Highway is a major highway corridor connecting all of the state's major highways. The highway is 138 miles in length north through the municipality of Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough and connects to the Parks Highway, Seward Highway and the Richardson Highway.

Briefly describe the project's location(s) on the byway using references to route numbers, byway gateway communities, project location communities and landmarks so any reviewer can identify the project sites.

A site has not been selected for the project. Easy access and visibility have been identified as high priority for the facility.

Associated Byways

State	Byway Name
AK	Glenn Highway

Is this project consistent with the Corridor Management Plan(s) for the byway(s) involved?

- Yes
- No / CMP not available

Congressional Districts

State	District	Representative (at time of application)
AK	At Large	Young, Don

Abstract

Project Description

Complete the sentence "This project will..." before adding remaining information.

Provide for a partnership of organizations to begin the planning and site selection of a new Gateway Visitor Center for the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway. As the main corridor for southcentral Alaska, the state's largest population base and entry point of visitors, a facility featuring the numerous opportunities along the byway is desired. Alaska is home to many U.S. parks and public lands, but has few facilities to support and promote the recreational and cultural activities. This project would bring together federal and state agencies as well as local nonprofit protection groups to create a destination visitor center on a scenic stretch of the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway.

Byway Benefits

Complete the sentence "This project benefits the byway traveler by..." before adding remaining information.

A gateway visitor center facility along the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway would exclusively serve byway travelers with information, interpretation and recreation activities to enrich the visitor experience. Existing interpretation along the byway reveals only a fraction of the byway's significance. Alaska's celebration of 50 years of statehood in 2009 suggests the young qualities of the 49th state and the limited access to undeveloped open spaces. A byway visitor center with easy access and a spectacular scenic view on this well-traveled road would also create a sense of pride for residents. The few Alaska visitor centers are located in urban and community centers.

Narrative

Project Summary

Completely describe all the major elements of your proposed project in a concise but complete summary.

Currently the Mat-Su Visitor Center built in 1988 serves highway travelers in southcentral Alaska. Located at mile 35.5 Parks Highway overlooking the new Parks-Glenn interchange, the site is now in a less than desirable location. Operated

by the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau, the center has seen a 50% decline in visitors due to the increased high speed of the new highway and decreased, limited access.

In January of 2006 the new Mat-Su Regional Medical Center opened adjacent to the Mat-Su Visitor Center significantly increasing the value of the surrounding land. A five year projection estimates commercial growth with new medical offices, assisted living, banks, restaurants and hotel construction surrounding the Center.

The Mat-Su CVB board of directors has recognized these challenges and supports development of a new “Gateway/Destination” visitor center located on the scenic Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway and prior to the Parks Highway interchange. Because many visitors now access travel information on the internet, the trend in developing new visitor centers focuses on creating a destination of learning and interpretation. Potential partners have been identified to increase the experience and share development and maintenance costs. These partners manage many of the intrinsic qualities of the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway and include:

The Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Partnership Board, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources Division of State Parks, National Park Service, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game, Alaskan’s for Palmer Hay Flats, Eklutna and/or CIRI Native Corporation and the Mat-Su Borough.

A similar partnership has been formed in Fairbanks to construct a new visitor facility. The new Morris Thompson Cultural Center is scheduled to open late summer of 2008. The \$29 million, 35,000 sq. ft. facility was funded with \$15 million federal funds, \$6 million from the state, and \$7 million in private fundraising. The partners who have signed a 10-year lease to occupy the building are the: Fairbanks Convention & Visitors Bureau, Alaska Public Lands Information Centers operated by the National Park Service, and the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

The Mat-Su CVB organized a potential partnership visioning session on February 19, 2008 including a presentation by a representative of the Morris Thompson Cultural Center. The Fairbanks project was first conceptualized in 1997 and in 2000 received a planning grant of \$75,000 from Federal Dept. of Transportation. In 2001 an Environmental Assessment grant was awarded and in 2002 architectural design and exhibit planning design began. A project manager was hired in 2003 to head fundraising efforts. Construction broke ground in May 2007. This model, combining the different fundraising elements and partners, demonstrates a successful plan in Alaska.

Therefore, our first step in developing and creating a Gateway/Destination Glenn Highway Visitor Center is to identify funding to create a detailed plan, select a site and formalize agreements with partners. The 2008 National Scenic Byways grant application is a perfect opportunity to begin this process. This is a multi-phase large-scale project which the initial planning stage will select a site for the visitor center, identify committed partners and future funding opportunities. Environmental impact study, design and construction will follow based on the planning stage.

The planning phase will include four elements: Why? Describe the mission, purpose and objectives of the facility, Who? Identify customer demand by segments, What? Identify the site, partners, products and services matched to customer demand, How? Define the marketing, delivery, action steps, budget, and funding.

The Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau will supervise the project and through an RFP process select and contract with a planner to complete the task. A final document will identify the lead agency in the next phase.

Benefit to Byway Traveler

Describe how the proposed project will benefit a byway traveler, add to their travel experience or fulfill an important objective of your CMP.

A Gateway/Destination Visitor Center on the Glenn Highway would provide the byway traveler an interpretive and recreational site resulting in an increase in the length of stay on the byway. A visitor facility meets all of the identified objectives outlined in the 2006 Glenn Highway Interpretive Plan including: enhance existing facilities along the Byway, enhance travelers’ experiences by offering more interpretive opportunities and adequate rest areas, provide travelers with information about Byway resources, provide travelers with opportunities to learn about the Byway’s natural, scenic, cultural, historical, recreational and archaeological qualities, encourage local communities, businesses, and residents to take ownership in the Byway and its resources, benefit Byway businesses.

Selecting a site requires easy access and visibility for the byway traveler. The first 35 miles of the byway is a divided highway with multiple lanes and exit and on ramps. Two existing exits have been identified to research land options: Mile 29.8 the Old Glenn Highway Exit and Mile 30.7 Knik River Access. Both options provide a world-class scenic location with opportunities to develop recreational activities.

Prior Projects

Describe any relationship between this project and previously funded National Scenic Byways grant projects. In addition, discuss how the proposed work relates to any multi-year work plan byway leaders have developed.

Two previously funded National Scenic Byway projects are important to this application. First, in 2003 the Glenn Highway was awarded \$113,684 to complete an Interpretive Plan. The document identifies and prioritizes interpretive projects along the byway. It also advises on partnerships and includes a detailed inventory of interpretive sites. A visitor center and interpretive kiosks are mentioned repeatedly in the Plan to better serve byway travelers. Second, is the Byway Public Relations Outreach Project awarded in 2005 and currently being developed to implement the summer of 2008. The project recognizes the need to communicate with the public the opportunities in traveling the Glenn Highway during a multi-year road improvement plan. The media messages will highlight the many intrinsic qualities and create awareness to travel the highway. A new Gateway/Destination Visitor Center would serve an ongoing communication need with the byway traveler.

Project Coordinator

Please provide contact information for a person responsible for this project.

Name: Bonnie Quill

Title: Executive Director

Organization: Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Address: 7744 E. Visitors View Court
Palmer, AK 99645

Phone: 907-746-5000

Fax:

E-mail: bonnie@alaskavisit.com

Work Plan

Milestone/ Task	Start Date	Duration	Responsible Party	Justification
Establish funding agreement with State	AAD*			
Select a planning professional	AAD + 30 days*	45 days	Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau	The individual responsible for research and documentation of a multi-phase plan to develop a Mat-Su Gateway/ Destination Visitor Center on the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway. (The Project Manager)
Develop site criteria	AAD + 2 months*	8 months	Project Manager	The project manager will research site locations and develop a site criteria including accessibility, scenic qualities, geology and land ownership. Consulting with an engineer will be necessary.
Programming	AAD + 2 months*	8 months	Project Manager	Determine the functioning use of a new Gateway/Destination Visitor Center. This task will be done simultaneously with developing the criteria and securing partnerships. Includes determining the size of the facility, the lobby function and exterior. Consulting with architects to complete a conceptual design will be necessary. Also includes completion of a cost estimate.
Securing partnership and funding opportunities	AAD + 2 months*	8 months	Project Manager	Determine partner agencies to be included in the project and funding opportunities. Establish how the organization will be formed. This task will also be simultaneous with the task of programming and determining the function and space of the new facility.
Create final document	AAD + 8 months*	2 months	Project Manager	The final document will detail the entire process in developing the new facility. It will include a site recommendation and funding options. Partners will be identified and defined in the function of the center. The plan will be designed and printed by a graphic artist (500 copies) and used as a marketing tool to acquire funding and support.

* AAD = Actual Award Date (estimated to be August 01, 2008)

Budget

Cost Breakdown

#	Description	Total Cost	Requested	Match
1.	Project Manager Fee	60,000	48,000	12,000
2.	Subcontractor Fees	50,000	40,000	10,000
3.	Design & Printing	30,000	24,000	6,000
4.	ICAP	7,000	5,600	1,400
Total		\$147,000	\$117,600	\$29,400

Matching Funds

Source	Type	Description	Amount
Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau	Cash		29,400
Total			\$29,400

Funding Allocation

Do the byways involved in the project cross any Federal Lands? (Check all that apply)

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Land Management
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- USDA Forest Service

If this project is selected for funding, please indicate your preference for carrying out the project (check one):

- FHWA allocates the funds for the project to the State DOT
- FHWA allocates the funds for the project to one of the Federal Land Management agencies marked above (provide contact information below)
- FHWA allocates the funds for the project to an Indian tribe or tribal government (provide contact information below)

If funding should be allocated to a Federal land management agency or Indian tribal organization, please provide contact information for that organization:

Name:
Title:
Organization:
Address:
Phone:
Fax:
E-mail:

Application Checklist

The following statements are for informative purposes. Please read and check each statement.

- I understand that this is a reimbursement program - funds are not available up-front.
- I have reviewed and responded to the Complete Application statements as outlined in the Grants Guidance.
- I have been in touch with the State scenic byway coordinator and have responded to recommendations or requirements of the State.
- I have verified with the State byway coordinator that this proposed project can receive authorization to proceed from the State and FHWA division before the end of the fiscal year for which the application is made.

Attachments

Use this as a checklist to verify that all attachments are provided with your printed application.



Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau Resolution

Mat-Su CVB Resolution FY08-01 was adopted on October 12, 2007. The resolution “supports the exploration of a partner driven destination visitor center to showcase the recreational opportunities in the Mat-Su Valley and increase the visitor experience and length of stay.”

Digital version: [08-01 New VIC Resolution.pdf](#) (13.7 KB)



Partnership Meeting Summary February 19, 2008

The Mat-Su CVB organized a meeting with potential partners in developing a new Gateway/ Destination Visitor Center on the Glenn Highway. This document summarizes the discussion and recommendations.

Digital version: [New VIC Meeting Summary.pdf](#) (19.1 KB)



□ **Letter of Support**

This document includes four agencies who support the grant application. Signatures from Alaska State Parks, Alaskans for Palmer Hay Flats, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game, and the Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Digital version: [Support Letter.pdf](#) (173.9 KB)



□ **Mat-Su Borough Letter of Support**

The Mat-Su Borough is in support of this application and creating a development plan that will detail the process of building a new Gateway/Destination Visitor Center.

Digital version: [MSB Letter.pdf](#) (547.1 KB)

Signatures

Application Completeness

I certify that this application is complete and correct, and is eligible for National Scenic Byways funding. (This should be completed by the State's scenic byways coordinator.)

Please print name:	Title:
Signature:	Date:

Matching Funds Certification

I certify that the matching funds for this project are available for use at the time of application.

Please print name: Bonnie Quill	Title: Executive Director
Signature:	Date: