

SCENIC OHIO NEWS



Summer 2007

Our mission is to preserve and enhance the scenic character of Ohio's communities and countryside.

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The Newsletter of SCENIC OHIO an Affiliate of Scenic America

Volume 6, Issue 2

2007 Scenic Ohio Awards

For outstanding contributions to the visual and livable quality of the State of Ohio, Scenic Ohio presents its 2007 scenic awards to:

1. The City of Reynoldsburg, Mayor Robert McPherson, for the revitalization of their Commercial Corridors prepared by E.G.& G., Inc. of Akron, OH. Part of the National All-American Historic Road, the project updated infrastructure, signage and landscaping, creating a visual impact aimed at creating a positive image for its residents and new business investment.
2. The City of Akron, Mayor Don Plusquellic, for the design and building of Ohio's first vegetative sound wall, proving that a vegetative approach to noise attenuation is a viable alternative to structural sound barriers. The City and Scenic Ohio
3. Ohio Historical Society and Ohio National Road Association for the Ohio Historic National Road Design Handbook for the *Ohio Historic National Road Design Handbook*, a handbook providing guidelines, tools and techniques for the communities along the historic National Road/U.S. 40 to "protect, preserve, enhance, develop this All-American Road." By creating a jurisdictional database, a project website to gather input from the public and through workshops, the



project team produced the *Design Handbook* providing "guidelines and recommendations" for rural, urban and suburban settings along the 227 miles of National Scenic Byway and All-American Road.

4. City of Cincinnati and the Hillside Trust of Greater Cincinnati for the Cincinnati Scenic View Study providing an inventory of all public viewing locations of the downtown/Ohio River area, with a strategy to preserve and protect these view sheds. The Study provides a rational input on scenic issues of view encroachment and preservation with both public and private development projects in the Metro Area.

A Beautiful Ohio vs. the Billboard Industry

There is growing concern and growing opposition to the digital billboards that are popping up all over the country. Viewed as a distraction and safety hazard, there seems to be little the public can do to stop them. State legislators are being lobbied to pass bills that clear the way for LED [light-emitting diode] signs on state and federal roads.

In Ohio, for years, the billboard industry has had our state under their control. The money spent on lobbyists has paid off. Digitals are lucrative and are springing up everywhere. For example, Clear Channel Outdoor spent \$3.5 million converting seven static boards to digital in Cleveland and watched revenue jump from \$300,000 to \$3 million in the first year, according to Mark P. Mays, Clear Channel's CEO.

In 1998, with language inserted

into a transportation bill [without a public hearing] the billboard lobby successfully removed amortization from the Ohio Revised Code. Now, if a city wants to remove an unsightly billboard it must compensate the industry for the estimated value of the billboard. The cost can no longer be amortized over an average of 5-8 years which would give the owner time to recoup and make a profit. Scenic Ohio still considers billboards "litter on a stick."

Now we have a new challenge here in Ohio. The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) has become one of 28 states to write rules to permit tree removal in the public right-of-way so that you can get a better view of billboards*. In order to enhance the view to offices, institutions, commercial and industrial developments and billboards,

the ODOT has drafted a vegetative cutting and maintenance standard that will permit removing of vegetation within the public right-of-way. The original ODOT draft proposal was a 250 foot clearing and then was changed to 850 feet. The final draft does not specify the footage.

Scenic Ohio opposes this policy for the following reasons:

1. It is a "give away" of the public right-of-way to the billboard industry. It allows the taking of public land for private benefit. The public right-of-way belongs to the citizens of Ohio—not the billboard industry.
2. The compensatory vegetative plan in the policy might mitigate the loss of trees and

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Susan Deveny Pavloff
1957-2007

Scenic Ohio lost a wonderful friend and editor of this newsletter when Susan Pavloff passed away, July 11th. She began editing our newsletter in 2000 when, as a fellow Akron Garden Club member and editor of its newsletter, she offered to help with ours.

The last two years attest to her inner strength and determination when, despite her painful illness, she insisted on helping us produce three more publications. The last thing she wanted to do was "update" the look of our newsletter. We hope she would have liked the changes we have made, and we sure miss her!

Christine Freitag

(Continued from page 1)

shrubs by relocating them, but it will not compensate for the loss of habitat and biodiversity. It will result in the destruction of hundreds of acres of Ohio native landscape.

3. The bond required by ODOT is removed before there is a guarantee the new plant material has survived a one-year growing season.

4. Ohio's scenic vistas are an important attraction for tourism and economic development and should be protected.

5. The title, Vegetative Maintenance, is misleading. It should be titled "Vegetative Clearing or Removal."

What you can do:

Olentangy Heritage Corridor Scenic Byway

Who is Responsible for Preserving the Intrinsic Qualities of an Ohio Scenic Byway?

A travesty is occurring on the Olentangy Heritage Corridor (OHC) State Scenic Byway. The West Orange Road Bridge replacement project initiated by Chris Bauserman, Delaware County Engineer, will so dramatically alter the OHC's attributes that the organization responsible for getting the OHC designated a state scenic byway in 1998 is seriously considering an official request to ODOT to remove this scenic byway's designation.

Logic would tell us that all users and managers are responsible for the preservation of a scenic byway's intrinsic qualities. So, where do you turn when a byway's sponsor, ODOT, and other government officials decide to implement a project that is contrary to the goal of the Ohio Scenic Byway program?

Each Ohio Scenic Byway is charged with preserving and enhancing the intrinsic qualities by which the byway was designated. In this specific case, all efforts are to be directed toward preserving and improving the OHC's historic, scenic, and natural qualities.

Instead, Delaware County Engi-
(Continued on page 3)

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SITUATION

- The ODOT-designated OHC State Scenic Byway includes the ODNR-designated Olentangy State Scenic River and the National Register-listed 1898 West Orange Road Pratt Through Truss Bridge.
- Pratt Through Truss bridges are an endangered species in Ohio. In 1983, Ohio had 510 of them. Today, there are 122 left. (Of them, only 23 are eligible for the National Register.) In the past 23 years, 75% have disappeared. In the past 5 years alone, 9 have been removed each year. At this rate, all could be gone from the Ohio landscape in little over a decade.
- The 2006 Comprehensive Land Use Plan of Liberty Township states the historic West Orange Road Bridge should be preserved as a vehicular bridge in its current location.
- The OHC Byway Management Plan states the bridge should be preserved.
- According to work orders from the Delaware County Engineer's Office, no regular maintenance to the bridge's superstructure or substructure has occurred in the past decade. No major rehab work has been done since 1970.
- Delaware County already has torn down all other historic bridges in the OHC.
- Now, Delaware County is proceeding with plans to move West Orange

1. Contact your Senators – Statehouse, Columbus, OH 43215.
2. Contact your State Representatives - 77 South High St., Columbus, OH 43226.
3. Write to Governor Ted Strickland – 77 South High St., 30th Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.
4. Write to Director James G. Beasley, ODOT, 1980 West Broad St., Columbus, OH 43223.

Scenic Ohio believes that grassroots input (your calls and letters) can have a huge impact on this issue.

Christine Freitag

**For more information visit the Scenic America Website at www.scenic.org*

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near Bauserman has decided the OHC's National Register West Orange Road Bridge is "structurally deficient and functionally obsolete" and that relocating the historic scenic road and adding a new bridge and roundabout is necessary. This project negatively affects all of the intrinsic qualities by which the OHC was designated: *historic* (National Register-listed landmark), *scenic* (state scenic byway), and *natural* (state scenic river).

Knowing the project would be highly controversial, Mr. Bauserman has hired a PR firm to orchestrate "communications" for the project. Although the project is now in final design phase, Mr. Bauserman has refused to hold public hearings or discuss the historic bridge. Instead, "open houses" have been used to control and direct all public input.

ODOT has given a nod to the proposed roundabout on State Route 315, the narrow, winding river road at the core of the Olen-tangy Heritage Corridor. The "heritage" in the OHC's name refers to this road, a Native American trail that became the first road commissioned in Delaware County in 1808. The byway also honors the county's first white settlements, mill, school, and one of only two National Register bridges in the county. In spite of this, the byway's sponsor, the Liberty Township Board of Trustees, has not publicly opposed the project. Instead, the Board has voted to look into widening historic W. Orange Road after the new bridge is built, a step that will remove the road's landmark tree canopy.

In 2008, Delaware County will celebrate its bicentennial. Planning is now underway to showcase the county's history. Ironically, if Delaware County continues on its current path, it will be destroying its own "Heritage Corridor" in the very year it is celebrating its heritage!

Your letters of support for the OHC are urgently needed. Please send a one-sentence email with your name and address to Judi Brozek, Chairperson of Friends of the Olen-tangy River at jbrozek@columbus.rr.com. Stating, "I (we) believe the Liberty Township Comprehensive Land Use Plan should prevail with regard to the West Orange Road Bridge Project along the OHC Scenic Byway." Ms. Brozek will make copies and forward them in a group to the Delaware County Engineer, Delaware County Commissioners, Liberty Township Trustees, and ODOT.

Greater Ohio Announces Partnership with Brookings Institution



Greater Ohio is pleased to announce its partnership with the Brookings Institution, a Washington, D.C. policy institute, on a statewide initiative to revitalize Ohio cities and towns struggling with weak economies. This initiative is informed by recommendations contained in Brookings' new report, *Restoring Prosperity: The State Role in Revitalizing America's Older Industrial Cities*, which calls for state action to address these challenged areas. To view the full report, you may visit www3.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20070520_oic.pdf.

The report, which specifically identifies nine challenged Ohio older industrial cities—Canton, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, Lima, Mansfield, Springfield, Warren, and Youngstown—provides a framework for recovery and emphasizes that these cities are ripe for revitalization, due to new promising trends and attitudes that revalue these cities' qualities. Also, the report states these cities possess the right assets to overcome their challenges. Ohio's mix of educational and medical institutions, historic neighborhoods, and

natural amenities provide a strong basis for recovery, as long as the right state policies are in place. Greater Ohio will work in partnership with local leaders and state policymakers to forge an agenda for change that helps cities capitalize on their assets and catapult these cities into a new economic era.

As part of a multi-year process, Greater Ohio has conducted initial listening sessions around the state with city leaders to gather input on city strengths and challenges and to hear about local revitalization efforts. Many cities are already hard at work rebuilding neighborhoods, reforming their business base, and tying cities to their regions to overcome these challenges. Effective state policies and decisions will play a pivotal role in supporting these efforts. Greater Ohio will identify state policy directives that help these cities get back on track.

Scenic Ohio supports Greater Ohio's efforts to develop smart growth and scenic stewardship.

Electronic Billboards Create Power Drain

From Scenic America:

In May, a syndicated column by the highly regarded journalist Neal Peirce revealed that electronic billboards "consume 4,800 watts of electrical power per square yard per hour."

Recently, Citizens for a Scenic Florida conducted an informal study of the power drain of digital versus standard billboards and found that electronic signs consume over 15 times the amount of electricity as regular billboards. They compared the power consumption of a double-sided regular billboard with a double-sided billboard that had one digital face and one regular face, and found that the electronic face used an average of 334.2 kWh per day, compared to the 22.1 kWh required to light the regular face with flood lamps each evening/night. If the board had been equipped with two digital faces, as some are, the results would have been even more.

With a growing focus in this country on energy consumption and climate change, this is yet one more reason communities should prohibit the construction of these unnecessary and wasteful energy hogs. Stay tuned, as Scenic America will be doing more research on the subject and bringing you our findings.



Lady Bird Johnson 1912 – 2007

From Scenic America:

America has lost a national treasure. Lady Bird Johnson, of course, was a special hero to Scenic America and the entire scenic conservation movement. She was our spiritual godmother and the inspiration for our work. We serve proudly as the guardian of her legacy.

Lady Bird taught us that beauty is not a luxury, and that the landscape has an intrinsic value that cannot and should not be ignored or de-based. She wanted America the Beautiful to be more than just a song title; it should be a description of our way of life and an expression of our most cherished values.

Her true legacy is not just the landmark Highway Beautification Act, the Wildflower Center, or the countless acts of conservation undertaken in her name. It is the movement she inspired. She leaves behind not just millions of acres of natural beauty, but millions of people, spurred to action by her example and courage, who share her commitment and passion for protecting our precious scenic heritage.

Lady Bird's passing is an opportunity to reflect on her astonishing achievements and to rededi-

cate ourselves to ensuring that her work continues. We must redouble efforts to complete the job she began over four decades ago.

Every time we see a field of wildflowers bloom or a billboard fall, we will think of her and remember the debt our nation owes to this remarkable woman, one of the most beautiful spirits America has ever known.

Scenic America extends its sincere condolences to the Johnson family and to her friends and promises to continue to do the vital work she said we all must do to save the American land.

Sincerely,

Kevin E. Fry
President

This is a link to Scenic America's first "visual essay" on topics of concern to Scenic America. These "essays" will be a periodic feature of its online communication strategy. Visit www.scenic.org/var/uploads/trusted/New1/ to view a narrated slideshow. Make sure your sound is turned up.

Changeable Billboards A Hazard or Just Annoying?

Scenic Ohio is waiting for a definitive study to be completed that will decide once and for all if the changeable copy billboards are a safety hazard or just annoying and ugly.

This from the Pennsylvania Resources Council, Inc.

Here is information about a traffic study on changeable message signs done by University of Minnesota in 2003 for the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Office of Research Services. The study used 120 drivers of different age groups in simulators. It's called "The Effectiveness and Safety of Traffic and Non-Traffic Related Messages Presented on Changeable Message Signs (CMS)." The primary goal was to see if drivers were able to read and understand changeable message signs with either an Amber Alert or a notice not to use a certain exit. One clear thing the study demonstrated is that a certain number of driv-

ers would slow down in order to read the signs.

As the study noted: "Of the 120 participants in the experiment, there were 26 who slowed down by at least 2 mph (3.2 km/h). Therefore, 21.7% of the participants slowed down. If this percentage of drivers were to slow down on freeways in real life, they would be likely to cause traffic delays. Further, it is worth noting that while 26 of 120 (21.7%) of the participants slowed down by at least 2 mph (3.2 km/h) as they approached the AMBER Alert, in the Older Group, 17 of 40 (42.5%) of the participants slowed down. Participants in the Older Group were more than eight times more likely to slow down than the participants in the Younger Group."

So while this study doesn't make a clear statement on traffic safety, I think most people would say adding to traffic delays is not a very good public policy position.

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Water Towers

Scenic Ohio received this note from a supporter in Erie County concerned about huge water towers that are being erected with billboard size block lettering which draws attention to the tower. "Not only are the towers a negative element added to the landscape, but the lettering is an additional ugly distraction. Is this a state or county issue?" If any other communities have this problem, please call Scenic Ohio (330) 865-9715 or write to us P.O. Box 5835 Akron, OH 44372.





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- Protect open space
- Support highway beautification
- Encourage billboard control

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