

I-69: Scenic Corridor Management Study

Context

The study area encompassed approximately 47 miles of I-69 that passes through Branch and Calhoun counties. Landscapes within this corridor represent a variety of natural and built landscapes including active and fallow farmland, residential and commercial properties, historic structures, wetlands, woodlands, lakes, and rivers.



Purpose and Description

The purpose of the project was to evaluate a portion of I-69 for its potential as a scenic corridor and to develop a management plan.

Public Engagement

Active participation at the local and state level was important in developing a management plan that incorporated many locally based initiatives. Representatives from two committees provided guidance throughout the study. The Oversight Committee included members from several state agencies. The Steering Committee included staff from cities, counties, and townships, as well as state and federal agencies that were invited to participate. A Viewshed Preference Survey was used to gather data representing local people's perceptions of landscape views from the highway based on their knowledge of the corridor section they drove most frequently.

Context Sensitive Solutions Approach

Stakeholder involvement was important throughout the scenic corridor study and was key to identifying positive and negative elements of the viewshed adjacent to the corridor. The study process demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of residents and communities along the corridor by addressing the social, economic, and natural aspects of the corridor environment as well as the aesthetic attributes that contribute to its scenic quality.

Outcome

The I-69 Scenic Corridor Management Plan established a vision statement for the corridor as well as goals and objectives to support the plan's implementation. The plan also outlines strategies for improving or maintaining the quality of the corridor viewshed. The strategies may be used by MDOT, local governments, landowners, civic organizations, businesses or other interested parties either independently or in partnerships. The primary goal of the plan, designation of I-69 as a Recreational Heritage Route, was achieved in October of 2004. The stakeholder group is now pursuing grants to restore the prairie landscape along the corridor.

Funding

The project was financed with \$40,000 of Transportation Enhancement funds and \$10,000 MDOT matching funds.

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