

Letter of Introduction

Dear Alaskans and Visitors,

The Glenn Highway is synonymous with Alaskan history and scenic beauty. A drive along the Glenn Highway is one that you will not soon forget. It is magnificent. The Palmer Chamber of Commerce reminded the Department of Transportation how beautiful and how historically significant the Glenn Highway is at a chamber meeting in April of 2000. This gentle reminder started the cart rolling to recognize the qualities that make the Glenn Highway special. In the ensuing months, the Glenn Highway was named a State Scenic Byway, received a grant to prepare this Corridor Partnership Plan, and formed the Glenn Highway Partnership Board to guide the preparation of this plan.

There was a ground swell of grassroots support to have the Glenn Highway nationally recognized as an All American Road. The Mayors of Anchorage, Palmer and the Matanuska Susitna Borough identified a dynamic group of individuals to be members of the Partnership Board. Residents, business owners, lodge owners, Native organizations, tourist, recreation and business associations and local governments have all participated the development of this Glenn Highway Corridor Partnership Plan. This plan tells the many stories of the Glenn Highway Corridor from its geologic and glacial beginnings through its use as trail to its present use as a vital part of the National Highway System.

I want to commend the public; the Glenn Highway Partnership Board; the Mayors of Anchorage, Palmer and the Matanuska Susitna Borough and their staff, the Department's consultants; and, members of my staff who have worked on this project for an amazing effort to bring the stories of the Glenn Highway Corridor to life.

I invite you now to enjoy this document. Its stories will help you appreciate early life in Alaska and explain the tremendous forces that created the spectacular scenery that envelopes the Glenn Highway from its beginning at tidewater in Anchorage to its end on Alaska's interior plateaus near Gunsight Mountain and Eureka. I also invite you to enjoy driving the Glenn Highway. It is certainly a destination unto itself and a treasure to be shared by all Americans.

*Sincerely
Joseph L. Perkins, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Transportation
& Public Facilities*



Acknowledgements

Many people and organizations have been partners in developing the Glenn Highway Partnership Plan.

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The traveler is engulfed by the glacially sculpted wonders from the moment they begin their journey along the Glenn Highway as they trace this historic trade route from tidewater 135 miles to the start of Alaska's Interior. Matching this rugged beauty of the route are the stories of the people who have used and lived along this corridor throughout the ages. This document is a story unto itself. It is a story of partnership among the people who live, work and play along the Glenn Highway and their recognition that the Glenn Highway is more than road. It is history, it is beauty, it is wildness, it is a geologic wonderland, it is truly a destination unto itself. It is ever changing. This plan is the story of the partners' vision to have the Glenn Highway enjoyed by All Americans.

The Partner's Vision

The Glenn Highway Scenic Byway is a world-class drive for visitors and residents of Alaska. It embodies the Alaskan experience from its scenic vistas overlooking the Matanuska Glacier and River to its rich geological, historical, and cultural heritage. The Byway further enhances communities and places of interest along the corridor, increases tourism, and adds to the local culture and economic base. The Glenn Highway Scenic Byway Partnership Board seeks to tell the Byway's story and broaden the traveler's experience through Byway improvements that make the highway safer, more comfortable, and accessible to all who wish to experience the grandeur it holds.

The Glenn Scenic Byway Partnership Board crafted this Vision Statement for the Glenn Scenic Byway. Their vision is reflected in the Glenn Highway Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan that describes the incredible resource that is the Glenn Highway and establishes their intent to enhance and promote this resource for the traveling public. This board made up of local people with interests along the Byway, whether they are residents, business owners, politicians, or agency representatives, describes a grass roots effort and bottom-up approach that has resulted in broad acceptance and support for the national designation as an All American Road.

The Partners' Commitment

The Partnership Board met 4 times over the summer, fall and winter of 2001 to deliberate plan issues. In addition to crafting a vision statement the Partnership Board also developed the plan goals and objectives and had extensive review of the draft document. In addition to input from the Partnership Board we also held 4 public open houses to gain input from the general public on the plan and designation. Advertisements were taken out in local newspapers along the corridor to notify the public about the meetings, and turnout was good with about 70 people coming out to give their input. Once a

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draft plan was available it was posted to the World Wide Web, and advertisements were taken out in local newspapers to publicize its availability. In total 31 pages of comments were received from Partnership Board members and the general public. All comments were considered and the majority of comments were addressed in the final document.

The Glenn Highway: An Unique Destination

Carved by glaciers the Glenn Highway Scenic Byway follows the pathway of its ancient predecessors. Following the glacially braided Matanuska River for over half its length, this Byway winds its way though 135 miles of the most impressive terrain on earth. Whether looking at the rugged young peaks of the Chugach Mountains, or the folded and geologically tortured Talkeetna Mountains the scenic qualities of the Byway are peerless in their grandeur as the traveler moves through the corridor.

The scenic splendor of the Glenn Highway Scenic Byway only tell half the story of this corridor, because from the dawn of geologic time this pathway was built through the power of fire and ice. Glaciers and volcanic activity shaped the narrow rugged valley through which the corridor moves. As one travels the corridor you are overwhelmed by the sense that you are not only traveling through space, but through time as well. Whether it is giant vegetables grown in the Matanuska Valley, the roadhouses that were established to help weary travelers, or the prehistoric Matanuska Glacier, fully visible from the highway and waysides created to take advantage of the spectacular views, the traveler truly feels as though they have moved through time gaining the sense of the struggle and spirit of the lands early settlers.

The Partnership Plan

The Glenn Highway Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan provides a structure around which improvements and agreements can be reached for the longer term management and improvement of the Byway. This included the development of goals and objectives, identification of mechanisms to ensure quality Byway development and continuing improvement through successful grant writing and working in cooperation with local management agencies. The plan identifies strategies to ensure the on-going promotion of the Byway and identifies agencies responsible for the on-going improvement of the Byway resource.

The Partners' Goals and Objectives for the Glenn Highway All American Road

Provide opportunities to learn about the history and the cultural heritage of the Byway.

- Work with area historical societies to provide historic points of interest markers along the Byway.
- Work with local chambers of commerce, visitors centers and local tribal governments to promote the historic elements within the corridor including:
 1. Chickaloon and Eklutna Native Settlements
 2. Sutton and Chickaloon Coal Fields
 3. Alaska Railroad History
 4. Military Presence and Importance
 5. Palmer Colonization and Settlement
 6. Hatcher Pass Gold Mining History
- Look for grant opportunities to continue Native research on traditional place names and locations to be shared with travelers along the Byway.
- Work with Alaska Native heritage representatives to develop culturally-educational interpretive sites along the Byway.
- Develop a self-guided tour brochure of the historical and cultural significance of the Byway and its surrounding locations.

Enhance scenic views along the corridor.

- Strategic clearing of brush and trees to enhance views of surroundings.
- Identify additional areas for scenic pull-offs.
- Incorporate scenic improvements and interpretive waysides into Byway improvement projects.
- Enhance and promote wildlife viewing from the corridor.
- Where available, identify scenic alternates or loop drives that can be taken along the Byway.

Provide opportunities to learn about the significant geologic events and processes that have shaped the land around the corridor.

- Develop interpretive sites (like the Matanuska Glacier Wayside) that describe the geology of the area.
- Develop Self-guided geological tour brochure.

Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Corridor Partnership Plan



- Work with land management agencies to enhance roadways to gain access into areas for geological interpretation.

Enhance the year-round Alaskan experience on the Byway.

- Provide more frequent rest areas with facilities.
- Look for opportunities to expand year-round visitor services along the Byway.
- Provide the traveler with additional information through improved signage and advanced notice (1 mile previous) of upcoming attractions along the Byway.
- Improve access to significant scenic, historic, cultural, recreational and developed natural sites along the Byway.
- Develop a self-guided brochure about year-round recreational opportunities along the corridor.

Enhance safety along the corridor.

- Stabilize or barricade areas of known rock fall hazards.
- Investigate high accident locations and determine whether improvements can be made to decrease accidents.
- Realign areas with sub-standard curves.
- Improve cycling and walking environment along the corridor.

Observe private property boundaries and limit access to the public.

- Clearly post and mark trails that are accessed from the Glenn Highway.
- Work with local property owners to ensure private property is clearly posted around areas of summer and winter recreation.

The Glenn Highway's Many Roles

Roads in Alaska are unlike many places in the contiguous 48 states where the scenic route usually isn't the primary route for all types of traffic including commute traffic and commerce. In Alaska, because of the limited number of roads, even the most scenic highways are essential pieces of the State's transportation system. This is the case with the Glenn Highway.. It is a scenic wonder and tells of the historic development of the State like no other facility, but it

also is a key defense highway and is part of Alaska's National Highway System. This route serves as an important route for commerce within the State, and as a vital link between Alaska and the lower 48 states.

The Partnership Plan recognizes that the improvement and modernization of the highway will benefit all users. Not only will it benefit the commerce and commuter traffic, but also the recreationalists and visitors will benefit from making the drive easier, more relaxed and enjoyable. With the improvements are also opportunities to improve the views along the Byway, manage vegetation that blocks views and provide additional pull offs and interpretive opportunities. With improvements, further opportunities will become available for entrepreneurs to establish businesses that attract tourist and recreationist dollars. With improvements, the infrastructure needed to support potential resource development activities will be in place if the markets prove viable. All of these activities are consistent with designation of the Glenn Highway.

The Future View

This Partnership Plan recognizes and interprets the spirit of the people of the Glenn Highway and finds common ground to work with business interests, tourists and resident alike. The Partners believe strongly and the plan demonstrates this vision that less can be more, that scenic qualities can be enhanced and conserved while embracing thoughtful economic development activities, ensuring that visitors and residents can enjoy the scenic marvels within this special place for generations to come. It requires nothing less than a dedicated commitment and partnership by all involved to be certain that a proper balance is realized and that the outstanding experience of traveling the Glenn Highway is maintained and enhanced.

The uniting thread throughout the process has been the Glenn Highway, what it has meant in the past, what it means today, and what it will mean in the future to the corridor residents, businesses and travelers. The Glenn Highway is truly a story of repeated struggles and successes down through the ages in Alaska. The Glenn Highway stories relate to all who wish to experience life in the Last Frontier. The treasures of the Glenn Highway truly belong to All Americans.



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