

# Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway



**Letter of Intent Information Package**  
**September 1, 2010**

September 1, 2010

Mr. Garry Balogh  
Scenic Highways Coordinator  
Florida Department of Transportation, District 5  
719 South Woodland Boulevard  
Deland, FL. 32720

RE: Letter of Intent (LOI) for the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway

Dear Mr. Balogh:

The Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway Corridor Advocacy Group (CAG) has been established for the express purpose of applying to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for designation as a Florida Scenic Highway. The CAG is seeking the "Scenic" classification for a series of roads within Sumter County that encompasses the communities of Webster, Bushnell, Lake Panasoffkee, Carlson, Rutland and the surrounding unincorporated areas. The CAG believes that this proposed corridor offers a diversity of resources that are valued by the community, significant to the region and continuous along the network of roads identified. Combined, these resources embrace a multi-dimensional designation including natural, recreational and scenic resources that make up this corridor.

Over the last 18 months a group of citizens representing the varied interests of the region (Appendix A) have met to discuss the formation of a CAG and to draft a proposed roadway corridor that embraces the intrinsic resources that are held so dear by the people of this region. The name *Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway* has been selected as the name of our corridor.

This proposed byway includes:

- SR 50 from the General James Van Fleet Trail State Park to CR 478A
- CR 478A from SR 50 to SR 471/South Market Boulevard
- SR 471/South Market Boulevard from CR 478A to CR 478
- CR 478 from SR 471/South Market Boulevard to US 301
- US 301 from CR 478 to CR 673
- CR 673 from US 301 to CR 476B
- CR 476B from CR 673 to CR 476
- CR 476 from CR 476B to US 301/North Main Street
- US 301/North Main Street from CR 476 to Noble Avenue
- CR 48/North Main Street from Noble Avenue to Belt Avenue
- CR 475/North Main Street from Belt Avenue to CR 470
- CR 470 from CR 475/North Main Street to SR 44
- SR 44 from CR 470 to the Withlacoochee River (Sumter/Citrus County Line)

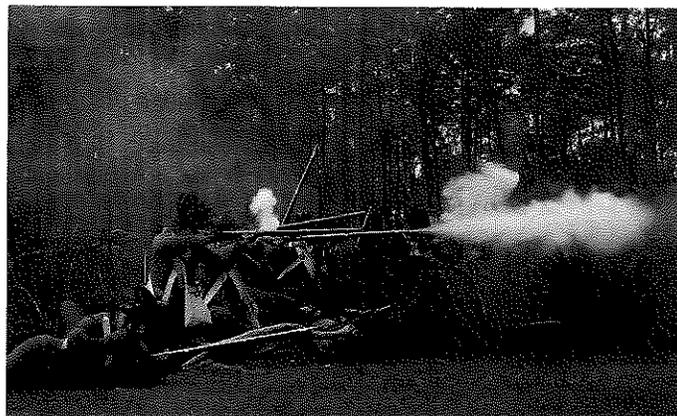
This network of interconnected roads is approximately 40 miles in length. Appendix B highlights the corridor limits.

As can be seen in Appendix B, the roads that comprise our byway include a cross section of the natural beauty that Sumter County is blessed with. From south to north the byway traverses upland scrub communities that support pastoral farmlands, cattle ranches and horse farms with lush open fields. The corridor then passes through several of the most interesting small country towns in the region and finally traverses the lush hardwood hammock and floodplain parklands that are part of the Withlacoochee River watershed. The Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway has something for everyone!

#### Statement of Significance

As required on the Letter of Intent form from the *Florida Scenic Highways Program Manual*, below please find a discussion regarding the many different types of intrinsic resources present in the corridor. It is significant to note that the intrinsic resources along this byway are continuous for the entire length of the corridor. These resources will be documented in greater detail as part of the eligibility document but several of the most significant include:

- **General James Van Fleet Trail State Park:** This trail is officially designated as part of Florida's Statewide System of Greenways and Trails and serves as the southern starting point for our corridor. This rail-trail is one of Florida's most rural. It runs through the Green Swamp, the headwaters for some of Florida's most canoed rivers, including the Withlacoochee (South), Hillsborough, and Peace. Landscapes include the natural environments associated with the Green Swamp, former citrus lands and cattle ranches.
- **Richloam Wildlife Management Area (WMA):** This WMA is one of seven large tracts of land that make up the Withlacoochee State Forest. The Richloam Tract, consisting of more than 56,000 acres is located in Sumter and the surrounding counties. Pine flatwoods with scattered oak hammocks, bottomland hardwoods, and cypress swamp are the main natural communities in this area. Hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, horseback riding, hiking, and bicycling are popular recreational activities. This area includes over 8 miles of shared trails for horseback riding, bicycling and hiking.
- **Dade Battlefield Historic State Park:** Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), this 80-acre park features historic battlefields, nature trails through 40 acres of pine flatwoods, picnic areas and pavilions. The park also includes segments of the historic Fort King Military Trail used by both the United States military troops and warring Seminole Indians as they traveled throughout the region (Tampa to Ocala) in the early 1800s.



- Florida National Cemetery: As a monument to our nation's fallen heroes, the Florida National Cemetery is located within and embraced by the Withlacoochee State Forest. The rolling lawns and stark marble headstones of this special place serve as a sentinel to the men and woman who have protected our country through the ages. These heroes are nestled among stately moss covered oaks, green lawns and in a tranquil, respectful and purely "southern" setting.



- Lake Panasoffkee: This special resource features some of the best fishing in the state. The Lake Panasoffkee preserve encompasses close to 10,000 acres of lush floodplain forest, freshwater marshes and oak forest. It offers numerous access points for fisherman and boaters and supports a fish camp community reminiscent of 1950/1960s Florida. Lake Panasoffkee along with lakes Gant, Deaton, Miona and Okahumpka offer unequaled recreational, natural and scenic opportunities for those that visit our corridor.



The corridor also passes through several of the most unique towns that this part of the state has to offer. Each has their own personality and story but combined they offer a picture of the “Real Florida” that is fast disappearing.

- City of Bushnell: Named in honor of J.W. Bushnell, who surveyed the route of the Florida Railway and Navigation Company Railroad, the City was established in 1885 and then incorporated in 1911. The City is a growing and dynamic community that has held tightly to its deep community roots. The downtown district offers visitors a picture of Florida in the early 1900s with the historic Sumter County Courthouse, Pierce Hotel, Bilby House and other community monuments that offer a slightly different spin on the term “scenic.” Additionally, the City abounds in natural beauty and is one of very few cities in the state that has been named a bird sanctuary.



- City of Webster: Webster was originally settled in 1885 making it the oldest incorporated town in Sumter County. In the early 1900s it was known as the “Cucumber Capital of Florida” because of its vegetable crops and markets. To this day the Sumter County Farmers Market, located in Webster, draws thousands of visitors yearly. And finally, the Webster Flea Market is known throughout Florida as a “can’t miss” attraction. Scenic highways attract visitors of all types and all types of visitors are attracted to the Webster Flea Market.



Mr. Garry Balogh  
September 1, 2010  
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As required by the *Florida Scenic Highways Program Manual*, the CAG has included the following information for your review and consideration:

- List of current CAG participants (Appendix A)
- Corridor location map (Appendix B)
- Signed LOI form from the *Florida Scenic Highways Program Manual* (Appendix C)
- Photos of key intrinsic resources located along the corridor (Appendix D)

Additionally, please find letters from the community (Appendix E) supporting the designation of the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway as a Florida Scenic Highway.

We appreciate your consideration and approval of this LOI. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Scott Cottrell  
Interim Chairperson  
Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway CAG  
(352) 793-0240  
scott.cottrell@sumtercountyfl.gov

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

- APPENDIX A:** List of Current CAG Participants
- APPENDIX B:** Corridor Location Map
- APPENDIX C:** Signed LOI form from the *Florida Scenic Highways Program Manual*
- APPENDIX D:** Photos of Key Intrinsic Resources along the Corridor
- APPENDIX E:** Letters of Support from the Community

# **APPENDIX A**

## **List of Current CAG Participants**



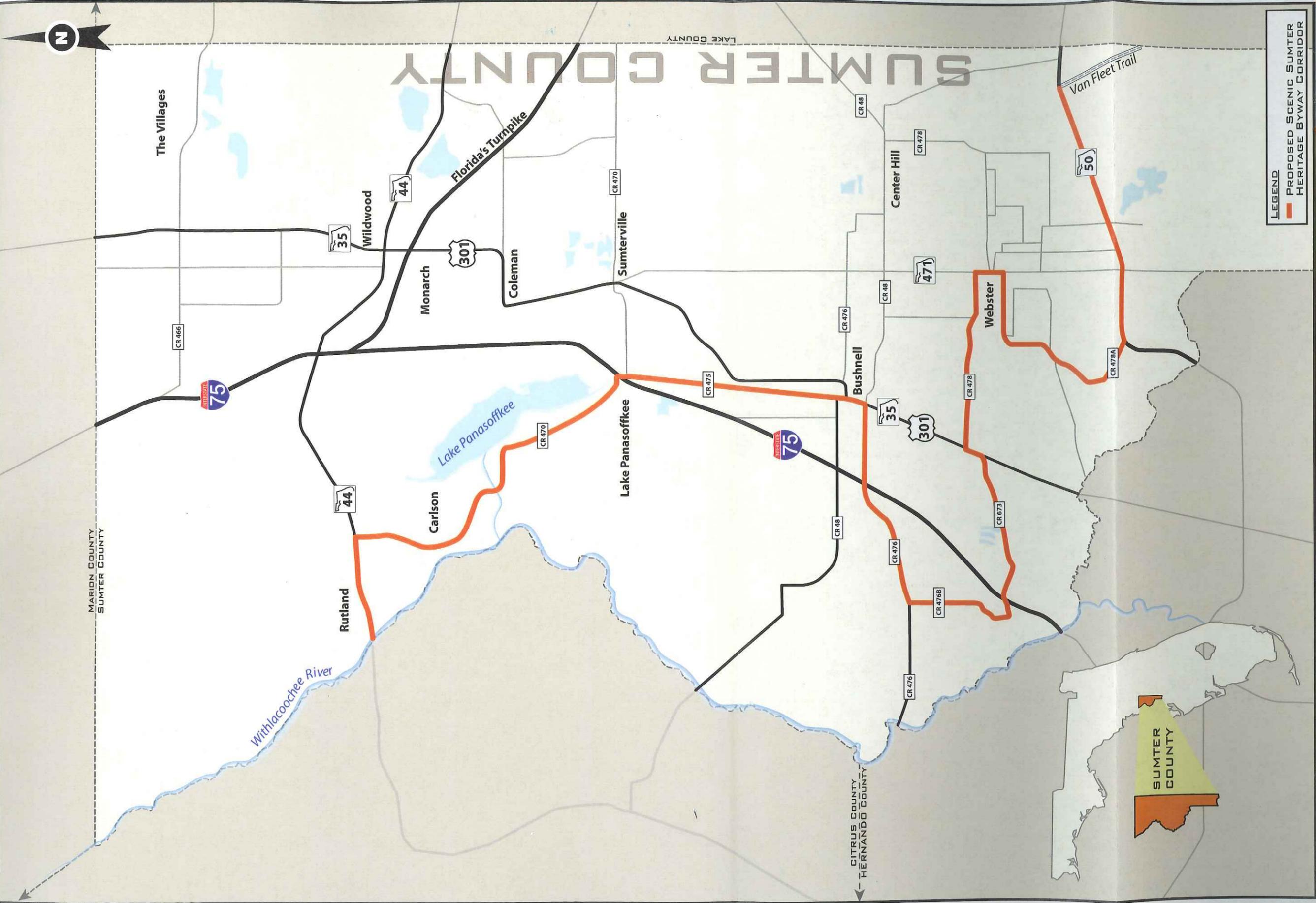
Subject: Sumter Co Scenic Highway

Comp by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Sheet Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Check by: \_\_\_\_\_ Job Number: \_\_\_\_\_ February 15, 2010

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Mike Palozzi	PBS & J. Engineering	800 477-7375
Billy Ray	Sumter Co. Historical Soc.	(352) 793-1489
<del>Barbara</del> <del>Thornson</del>	Citizen	352-793-4040
Jackey Jackson	SLPW	352-793-0240
William D Smith	Sumter CI	352 569 6101
Kenneth Williams	Sumter CI	(352) 569-6114
Nancy Dwyer	FL Native Plant Soc.	" 330-1370
Ray Adams	Diog. Forestry	793-2431
Brandell Campbell	CEMEX	793-4526
Rick Start	FWC	352-583-4518
Brooke Burn	UF/IFAS Extension	352-793-2728
Donna Kester	UF/IFAS Extension	352-793-2728
Glenn Martz	VFW POST 10137	352-793-8511
Joyce Hanson	VFW Aux 10137	352-793-3547
Duane Wilcox	VFW memb Aux 10137	<del>352</del> 585-919-9388
Jordan Barnes	S.C. Chamber of Comm.	793-3099
Paul Lewis	City of Webster	(352) 457-6229

# **APPENDIX B**

## **Corridor Location Map**

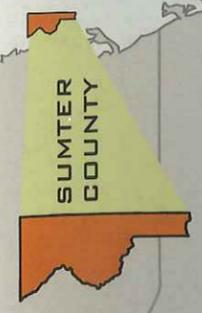


**LEGEND**  
 PROPOSED SCENIC SUMTER HERITAGE BYWAY CORRIDOR



# SCENIC SUMTER HERITAGE BYWAY

PROPOSED SCENIC HIGHWAY



SUMTER COUNTY

MARION COUNTY  
SUMTER COUNTY

LAKE COUNTY

CITRUS COUNTY  
HERNANDO COUNTY

# **APPENDIX C**

## **Signed LOI form from the *Florida Scenic Highways Program Manual***



STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
**LETTER OF INTENT**  
**Florida Scenic Highways Program**

FORM 650-050-01  
 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT  
 OGC - 08.96  
 Page 1 of 2

Applicant seeking National Designation?  
 Yes  No

Submission of this **Letter of Intent** verifies that designation as a Florida Scenic Highway is being sought for the corridor identified below. Please submit the completed form to the District Scenic Highways Coordinator in your area.

**Roadway/Route Number and Name** - Provide the state and US road number (if applicable), the local or any regionally recognized roadway name and, if known, a potential scenic highway name.

See attached L.O.I. package for requested information.

**Roadway/Corridor Limits** - Define the roadway/corridor limits (beginning/ending termini) according to the presence of the intrinsic resources as well as to recognizable geographic locations and/or mile posts. Provide the corridor length in miles and attach a location map detailing corridor limits.

See attached LOI package for requested information.

**Governmental Jurisdictions** - Provide the names of **ALL** local general purpose governments as well as the planning/management agencies whose jurisdiction the corridor traverses. These include, but are not limited to city, county, unincorporated areas, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Water Management Districts, Forestry Service, Transportation Authorities and Parks and Recreation Departments.

Board of Sumter County Commissioners  
 Entity Name

Bradley Arnold 910 North Main Street, Bushnell, FL 352-793-0200  
 Potential Contact Address 33513 Phone Number

City of Bushnell  
 Entity Name

Vince Ruano 117 East Virginia Avenue, Bushnell, FL 352-793-2591  
 Potential Contact Address 33513 Phone Number

City of Webster  
 Entity Name

Stephen Croft 49 SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Webster, FL 352-793-2073  
 Potential Contact Address 33597 Phone Number

Lake Sumter MPO  
 Entity Name

Mike Woods 1666 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Leesburg FL 352-315-0170  
 Potential Contact Address 34748 Phone Number

**Statement of Significance** - In the space provided, identify and discuss the different types of intrinsic resources present in the corridor (see Chapter 5 - Designation Criteria of Program Manual). Concentrate on detailing why these resources are important and valued by the community. In other words, what makes this roadway special to the community and its visitors?

See attached COT package for requested information.

**Pre-Application Meeting** - Please indicate several time(s) and date(s) when the CAG could meet for the Pre-Application Meeting or the time and date of a Pre-Application Meeting that has already been arranged with the District Scenic Highways Coordinator

The third Monday of each month starting on September 20, 2010  
at 11:00 AM.

X Scott Cottrell Date 9/4/10  
Corridor Advocacy Group Chairperson

X \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Local General Purpose Government Representative

X [Signature] Date 9/1/10  
Local General Purpose Government Representative

**Additional Information** - On a separate sheet, provide the names, titles, addresses and phone numbers for the following groups: 1) additional governmental/planning/management entities, 2) additional local general purpose government representatives with signature, and 3) CAG Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and additional membership.

# **APPENDIX D**

## **Photos of Key Intrinsic Resources along the Corridor**



Lake Panasoffkee Outlet River



Lake Panasoffkee Fishing Camp



**General James Van Fleet Trail State Park – Mabel Trailhead**



**Withlacoochee State Forest Entrance**



**Dade Battlefield Historic State Park Entrance**



**Florida National Cemetery**

# **APPENDIX E**

## **Letters of Support from the Community**

SUMTER COUNTY  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, INC.

*"THE GATEWAY TO THE SUMTER COMMUNITY"*

PO BOX 100 SUMTER VILLE, FL 33585 (352)793-3099



**Lee Ann Carr**  
Executive Director

**Officers:**

President

— **Dawn Cary**

Vice President

— **Bob E. Hunt**

Secretary

— **James Duncan**

Treasurer

— **Marilyn Connell**

Past President

— **Tangie Staton**

**Directors:**

**Andrea Benda**

**Brandell Campbell**

**Joe Capporelli**

**Bobby Caruthers**

**Cary Cohrs**

**Brett Hage**

**Brad McNeill**

**Joe Santoro**

**Danny Smith**

**Ex-Officio Directors:**

**Bradley Arnold**

**Vince Ruano**

**Robert Smith**

March 31, 2010

Mr. Garry Balogh  
Environmental Scientist/Scenic Highways Coordinator  
FDOT/Environmental Management Office  
719 S. Woodland Boulevard, MS 4-501  
Deland, FL 32720

Dear Mr. Balogh:

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am writing in order to request an exception to the Florida Scenic Highway Program (FSHP) freeze on Scenic Highway designations as it applies to Sumter County.

We have been working on this process for some time and want to make sure that the Scenic Highway Advisory Committee (SHAC), which I understand will be meeting on April 2, 2010, is aware of how much we have already invested in the process including how close we were to submitting our letter of intent.

Our Community Action Group (CAG) began meeting in March 2009 with the express purpose of improving the South entrance to Sumter County through which almost 500,000 visitors enter each year in order to visit the National Cemetery. Our first order of business was to hold a dedication for the Veteran's Memorial Highway which was designated but never dedicated.

As we began to discuss the Scenic Highways designation immediately following the May 2009 Highway Dedication, it took us some time to understand how to best move forward. We found the on-line site and manual and began discussing the best way to achieve the designation. It was not until approximately August 2009 (according to my notes) that we had our first contact with Mr. Balogh who forwarded more detailed information about the program. It was at that time that we began to understand the value and importance of the program for our County, particularly in the area of partnership with other counties.

In September 2009, the County Administrator and I attended the St. Johns By-The-Sea Loop meeting where the importance of partnership and working together to promote not only our community and our region, but Florida Tourism in general became evident.

At that point we began speaking with you in earnest and our CAG began to grow, with a focus on the following points:

- Our community is a rapidly urbanizing area, but we still have a rural character which we value. We would like to maintain this rural nature, which we see as a non-renewable resource.

- Many of our neighbors have already received a Scenic Highway designation (some have more than one) which offers them a distinct advantage in the formation of partnerships and the promotion of tourism for their County. We feel that failure to achieve this designation will place Sumter County at a distinct disadvantage.
- It would be approximately two years before the Scenic Highway designation would be final, offering Florida an opportunity to move past current economic challenges.

It was also our understanding that we might select to follow a Scenic Byway or Historic Highway designation. Given that Sumter County is rich in history; preliminary planning leads us to seek the Historic Highway designation rather than the Scenic Byway designation. It is our understanding that the Historic Highway designation is not as widely used as the Scenic Byway designation.

It took us approximately three additional meetings to draft a proposed route (a map is attached). At this point, we held our most recent CAG meeting, (which you will remember was difficult to arrange because of the holidays) and to be rescheduled twice. Mr. Palozzi and you facilitated our most recent Community meeting, which was well attended by Sumter County stakeholders (sign-in sheet attached). We had identified our next step as submission of our letter of intent when we received word that the FSHP had been frozen. After all of our effort, this was very disappointing.

Garry, thank you for holding our hand through this process (thus far!) and for providing us with direction. Since you are aware of how long we have been working on this project and how much effort we have put towards the designation already and considering that we are planning to seek the Historic Highway designation, perhaps the SHAC would consider making a single exception in our case.

It was our understanding that the SHAC meets on April 2, 2010. We hope that you will forward this email, along with your recommendation to make an exception in our case, in order that we might move forward with the process.

Sincerely,

Lee Ann Carr  
Executive Director

Enclosures: Corridor Map  
February 15, 2010 CAG Sign-in Sheet



Received

JUN 01 2010

Do executive Suite

May 26, 2010

Ms. Noranne Downs  
District Secretary  
FDOT, District 5  
719 South Woodland Blvd.  
Deland, FL 32720

**Re: Support of Sumter County's Pursuit of Scenic Byway Designation**

Dear Secretary Downs:

The Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) would like to formally provide support of Sumter County's efforts to establish a Scenic Byway designation for certain corridors within the Sumter County community.

The Lake~Sumter MPO was recently informed that the project to gain state designations for certain corridors has been put on hold due to a freeze on the state's Scenic Byway program. If in fact the program is temporarily suspended due to fiscal constraints, we respectfully request that the planning and administrative work necessary for the designation be continued. If there are limitations in utilizing FDOT personnel on the project, the Lake~Sumter MPO can provide support to Sumter County in moving this initiative forward until such time that FDOT can resume the supporting role.

Any details you can provide will be most appreciated in directing the Lake~Sumter MPO and Sumter County on how to best proceed on this project. There is a strong community desire and demonstrated local support for the Scenic Byway project. In addition to the support from the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners and the Lake~Sumter MPO, the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce has been a vocal supporter and consensus builder for this initiative.

Thank you in advance for any guidance you can provide.

Sincerely,

Sanna Henderson  
Chairman, Lake~Sumter MPO  
Commissioner, City of Leesburg

*"Promoting Regional Transportation Partnerships"*  
[www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com)

1616 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Leesburg, Florida 34748  
Phone (352) 315-0170 – Fax (352) 315-0993

Lake County  
Sumter County  
Town of Astatula  
City of Bushnell  
City of Center Hill  
City of Clermont  
City of Coleman  
City of Eustis  
City of Fruitland Park  
City of Groveland  
Town of Howey-in-the-Hills  
Town of Lady Lake  
City of Leesburg  
City of Mascotte  
City of Minneola  
Town of Montverde  
City of Mount Dora  
City of Tavares  
City of Umatilla  
City of Webster  
City of Wildwood  
Florida Central  
Railroad  
Lake County Schools  
Sumter County Schools



## Florida Department of Transportation

CHARLIE CRIST  
GOVERNOR

719 S. Woodland Blvd.  
DeLand, FL 32720

STEPHANIE C. KOPELOUSOS  
SECRETARY

June 25, 2010

The Honorable Sanna Henderson  
Chairman, Lake~Sumter MPO  
Commissioner, City of Leesburg  
1616 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Leesburg, Florida 34748

**RE: Sumter County's Pursuit of Scenic Byway Designation**

Dear Chairman Henderson:

Thank you for your interest and support for scenic highway designation of roadways within Sumter County. A formal presentation about the Department's Florida Scenic Highways Program was given to a group of 17 Sumter County citizens on February 15, 2010. The presentation was only two days before the Department placed a "freeze" on all new scenic highway designations. Applicants for designation would have needed to have an official "Letter of Intent" to the Department prior to February 17.

There has been tremendous support for designation of roadways in Sumter County from the Sumter County Chamber of Commerce, Sumter County Board of Commissioners, Lake~Sumter MPO, Sumter County Historical Society, Florida Native Plant Society, Division of Forestry and the City of Webster. Due to the amount of time invested by these citizens and agencies prior to the "freeze," the Department is allowing Sumter County to continue with the Florida Scenic Highways Program process.

If you have any questions about the process or would like additional information, please call our District Scenic Highways Coordinator, Garry Balogh, at 386-943-5393, or me at 386-943-5474.

Sincerely,

Noranne Downs, P.E.  
District Five Secretary

cc: Brian Stanger  
Garry Balogh