

New Interpretive Signs Greet Kansas Byway Travelers

Travelers on the 12 scenic or historic byways in Kansas will enjoy their trips even more this year thanks to new or upgraded interpretive signs at 39 locations across the state. Kansas Byways are a collection of routes that highlight the beauty, history and heritage of Kansas; help stimulate the economy through tourism; and promote a positive image of the state.

The Kansas Byways program is jointly managed by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), the Kansas Historical Society (KHS) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Nine of the routes are scenic byways (two of which are national scenic byways) and three are historic byways.

The latest \$1.44 million project included construction of five new kiosks housing interpretive panels, the rehabilitation of 12 existing kiosks and their signs, 26 interpretive signage plazas and 12 Kansas Byway welcome boards which will guide travelers to the byways as they travel the state. In all, 142 panel surfaces were produced.

KDOT and KDWPT received a \$220,000 National Scenic Byway grant from the FHWA in 2010 to develop the Kansas Byways Interpretive Plan. KDOT and KDWPT evenly split the required 20 percent match of \$44,000. Fermata, Inc. of Austin, Tex., was awarded the contract for the plan, which served as the basis for the signage project.

In 2014, KDWPT received a two-phase Transportation Alternative Grant from the FHWA which was administered through KDOT for design and construction. RDG Planning and Design, Omaha, Neb., was responsible for the design phase (\$235,560). GSR Construction, Inc., Lawrence, served as general contractor (\$986,168) for the construction phase. KDWPT paid the required 20 percent match for each phase.

“The project is the result of a huge partnership, and we want to thank our partners in this effort,” said Scott Shields, KDOT Byways Manager. “They include the National Scenic Byway Program, the FHWA, local byway committees, KDOT and KDWPT staff, local Kansas Byway cities and counties and the KHS.”

Members of the local byway committees appreciate the enhancements to their byways.

“The kiosk and new interpretive signage add so much to the history and

understanding of the surrounding area for tourists to stop and read,” said Kaye Kuhn, Gypsum Hills Scenic Byway, south central Kansas.

Jayne Humphrey Pearce added, “The Western Vistas Historic Byway Steering Committee is delighted that these new features are now available to those exploring our byway.”

For information about exploring the Kansas Byways, visit <https://www.travelks.com/ksbyways/>.