Michigan’s Scenic Byways
Driving Home Our Heritage

Michigan’s Scenic Byways Program
From shore to shore, from border to border, across Michigan, communities large and small are joining together to drive home their heritage. They’re preserving Michigan’s unique recreational, scenic and historic cultural treasures, knitted together through a common thread: roads. They’re encouraging travelers to slow down, take the roads less traveled, and discover the true beauty, wonder and traditions that are uniquely Michigan. Established by the Michigan Legislature in 1993, the Michigan Heritage Route Program is a grassroots effort uniting local residents, their government officials, landowners and interested groups in a common cause to preserve the state’s unique scenic, historic or recreational highways. This Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) program helps ensure that the rich heritage of local highways and roadsides continues to play an important role in improving Michigan’s economy and quality of life.

1. Copper Country Trail (US 41) 
47 miles from Houghton to Copper Harbor

2. Tahquamenon Scenic Heritage Route 
(M-123) 
62 miles loop through Paradise to Newberry

3. Iron County Heritage Trail (US 2) 
16 miles from Iron River to Crystal Falls

4. Hidden Coast Highway (M-35) 
64 miles between Gladstone and Menominee.

5. Huron Shores Heritage Route (US 23) 
200 miles from Standish to Mackinaw City

6. Tunnel of Trees (M-119) 
13 miles from Harbor Springs to Cross Village

7. Old Mission Peninsula Scenic Heritage Route (M-37) 
18 miles from Traverse City to the tip of the Old Mission Peninsula

8. Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route (M-22/ M-204/M-109) 
64 miles around the Leelanau Peninsula

9. River Road National Scenic Byway 
20 miles along the Au Sable River

10. Pathway to Family Fun (M-15) 
85 miles from Clarkston to Bay City

11. Bay City Historic Route (M-25) 
2 Miles in Bay City

12. Chief Noonday Trail (M-179) 
19 Miles (located south of Grand Rapids)

13. Woodward Ave (M-1) 
27 miles through Detroit Metro Area

14. I-69 
80 miles from the Indiana border to north of I-94

15. Monroe Historic Route (M-125) 
7 miles within City of Monroe

16. Heritage Trail (US 12) 
212 miles from Detroit to New Buffalo

17. Historic Territorial Road through Marshall (I-94 BL) 
14 blocks through Marshall
Michigan’s Scenic Byways
Slow Down....Take the Road Less Traveled

Scenic...
A state highway having outstanding natural beauty.

Historic...
A state highway having outstanding historic buildings and resources along its length.

Recreational...
A state highway maintained to serve the recreational driver as well as to capture that recreational setting of the facility or area itself, and set the mood for the recreational experience.
Huron Shores Heritage Route

Pathway to the Sunrise Coast

The Route
200 Miles of Linear Corridor...366 Miles of Coastline...6 Counties...43 Municipalities...3,703 Square Miles of County-Wide Area...6,000 miles of Rivers & Streams...170 Square Miles of Inland Lakes...635,000 Acres of Public Land...448 Square Miles of National Marine Sanctuary...200+ Shipwrecks!
Welcome to the US 23 Heritage Route Program
Traverses 42 municipalities and involves over 90 people...

Designation
Sunrise Side Coastal Highway
In 2004, the 200-mile stretch of US 23 from Standish to Mackinaw City was designated a Recreational Heritage Route by MDOT.

Management Plan
Guiding Our Route
The US 23 Route developed a Management Plan which identifies goals, objectives, and priority projects for each county along the route as well as the route as a whole.

Technical Assistance
Staffing the Program
NEMCOG (Northeast Michigan Council of Governments) receives funding from MDOT to coordinate activities and provide technical assistance to the US 23 Heritage Route program. NEMCOG staffing represents both the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments and the East Michigan Council of Governments. For all MDOT Heritage Routes, funding is allocated to regional agencies to provide staffing. Last year, NEMCOG received approximately $36,000 to provide staffing for approximately 2 days a week.

It’s All About Partnerships
Working Together in Collaboration
Management Council
NEMCOG provides coordination and technical assistance to an overall Management Council which consists of two representatives from each of the six county teams as well as from DNR, MDOT, NOAA, the US Forest Service, Michigan Sea Grant, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, and the tourism industry. The purpose of the Management Council is to provide overall organizational direction and structure and to inform, coordinate and unite the efforts of existing organizations, businesses, and municipalities engaged in economic and community development, natural resource management, preservation, travel and tourism, education, marketing, and promotional efforts along the Lake Huron coast. The Council recognizes the importance and impact that tourism has on the region and focuses on its enhancement and the delivery of a strong voice in the marketplace.

County Teams
Each of the six counties along the route has its own county team which implements projects in its county as well as working on route-long projects. Each team is a collaborative effort involving representatives from local governments along US 23, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Michigan Department of Transportation, the US Forest Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, local chambers of commerce, DDA’s, local tourism bureaus, historical societies, lighthouse organizations, bicycling advocates, and interested citizens. NEMCOG provides technical assistance to each of these teams.

The volunteers have made a concerted effort to work together as a region rather than as individual counties to achieve the major goals of the program. Working together, we have achieved a great deal in a very short period of time. Our major focus has been on tourism development and marketing the coast as a destination and US 23 as the pathway. Our goal is to coordinate with as many groups as possible so that we are not duplicating efforts along the coast.

Heritage 23 Partners
Michigan Arts & Culture Northeast
Cheboygan County Community Development Office
Cheboygan County Commissioners
MSU Extension
Mackinaw City Chamber of Commerce
Cheboygan Area Historical Society
Cheboygan History Center
PH Hoefi State Park
Presque Isle Co. Hist. Museum
Presque Isle Co. Dev. Commission
40-Mile Point Light
Mackinaw City
Regers City Area Chamber
Presque Isle County Library
City of Rogers City
Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary
Alcona County Historical Society
Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association
City of Alpena
Alpena Township
Sanborn Township
Senator Moolenar’s Office
Alpena County Commissioners
Alpena CVB
Alpena DDA Target Alpena
Alpena County Library
Alpena Township
Alcona County Road Commission
Bicycling Advocates
Alcona County Commissioners
City of Harrisville
Sunrise Coastal Coalition
Oscoda/Ausabie Chamber
Alabaster Township
Iosco County Road Commission
Tawas City
Michigan Sunrise Tours
Oscoda Township
City of East Tawas
Tawas Area Chamber
Oscoda Wurtsmith Airport
City of AuGres
Iosco County Commissioners
Hale Area Association
Oscoda DDA
Oscoda CVB
Iosabie Township
Michigan Sea Grant
Whitney Township
Baldwin Township
Standish Depot
Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
Modern Craft Winery
Arenac County Commissioners
Michigan DNR
US Forest Service
River Road Scenic Byway
Brochures
Wow! We Look Like a Region!

In 2010, brochures were created for each county highlighting the recreational attractions along the route. The brochures are coordinated in design and have the look of a unified tourist destination. NEMCOG designed the brochures and worked with each county to put together funding for a joint printing. 15,000 brochures were printed per county and are available at Michigan Welcome Centers, online at www.heritage23.org, and at local tourism information locations. The brochures were so popular that tourism information centers couldn’t keep enough in stock and still receive calls requesting the brochures. New brochures were reprinted in 2012. The brochure project was a great example of individuals and groups from a 200 mile corridor working together to assist with the choosing of attractions, design approval, and fund-raising for printing.

New Logo
Branding the Route

In 2010, a new US 23 logo was adopted by the Management Council. The Council also received a trademark from the US Patent and Trademark Office for exclusive use of the logo. We distribute the logo for use on inbound website links. In addition, window stickers were created and have been distributed to members as a promotional device to display on their vehicles.

Pure Michigan
Sunrise Coastal Coalition

The Management Council has welcomed members of the “Sunrise Coastal Coalition” to be part of the Council and has incorporated the Coastal Coalition as a marketing partner of the Heritage Route. The route and coast are on their way to being successfully branded through partnership with the Pure Michigan campaign and the diligent efforts of local communities to raise money to participate in this highly successful ad campaign. We are currently in the third year with Travel Michigan’s Pure Michigan campaign for the summer and fall seasons. The Sunrise Coast is a featured destination on Pure Michigan’s website. Our new US 23 website calls the Huron Shores Heritage Route “Your Pathway to the Sunrise Coast”. Two “Sunrise Coast” radio ads were produced in collaboration with the Pure Michigan campaign. The ads featured actor Tim Allen narrating over the signature Pure Michigan music. Local businesses are already seeing an increase in revenue as a direct result of the radio ads.
Discover 23
www.heritage23.com

Heritage 23 on the Web
The Ultimate in Regional Tourism Trip Planning

Funding was received from MDOT to develop a website which we have done in partnership with the Land Information Access Association (LI4A). This website provides a regional resource to the potential visitor to access information on over 1,400 attractions along the coast.

Visitors are able to search the site based on either their local destination or by area of interest which we call “Active Adventures”, “Outdoor & Farm Fun”, “Arts, Culture, & History”, and “Eat, Shop, & Sleep”. Users can view maps of all attractions within each category or choose subcategories to view maps of only one type of attraction. In addition, users can view attractions in specific geographic regions. Once they click on an attraction on the map, they are directed to a page for that attraction which will give them detailed information and photos (including icons showing seasonality and fees).

There is also a “plan your itinerary” feature where users can make multiple selections relating to what they want to do along the route and the site will search through the database to come up with all places that match those needs. For example, if a person is interested in bird watching, kayaking, and staying at Bed and Breakfasts, the site will return all attractions which have any of those activities listed. The visitor can then add those sites to a “shopping list” and print out their own itinerary. Maps are also part of this site to give the visitor a geographic perspective of where the attractions are. A coastal events calendar is another popular feature.

The website features both publicly-owned and privately-owned tourism attractions. There is no charge to private businesses for appearing on the site. The website was completed after a monumental volunteer effort coordinated by NEMCOG. Heritage Route program volunteers from the 200-mile stretch of coastline put in hundreds of hours collecting data on attractions as well as uploading data and photos onto the website. In addition, NEMCOG staff participated in uploading data and GPS coordinates, writing site descriptions, and reviewed and edited over 1,900 entries. In addition, NEMCOG staff collected, edited, and uploaded all photos which are used for the main page, interest area pages, and county pages. NEMCOG staff and volunteers from the coastal communities work together to keep the site updated and the events calendar current. The website is a truly unique method of presenting information for the tourist in a comprehensive, user-friendly, and detailed manner. The ability that it gives the tourists to design their own tours and itinerary maps is groundbreaking because of the scale in which it is accomplished.

Main Page:

Individual Attraction Page:

Attractions on www.heritage23.com

Trails
Tours
Fishing & Fisheries
Charter Boats
Boating/public accesses
Golf
Hunting
Sledding
Swimming
Laser tag/paint ball
Lighthouses
Art and demonstrations
Educational sites
Historic sites
Museums
Maritime history sites
Shipwrecks
Industrial tourism sites
Quilt trails
Cultural sites
Music and theater
Craft shows
Beaches
Land formations
Migration waypoints
Natural springs
Parks
Waterfalls
Wildlife viewing
Bird Viewing
Campsites
Scenic viewing
U-Pick & farm markets
Petting zoos
Hayrides, sleigh rides
Fossil collecting sites
Amusement Parks
Places to stay
Places to eat
Transportation
Tourism information
Places to shop
Health care
Outdoor goods
Outdoor guides
Visitor information
Wine & Hops

www.heritage23.com....
Over 50,000 visitors
Over 144,000 pageviews
Visits come from 109 countries
128 Inbound Links to our website
Nearly 500 visitors per day!
Coming soon to Heritage 23!

In 2011, the Heritage Route Teams began work on “Telling the Stories of the Sunrise Coast”. NEMCOG coordinated with six historical Heritage Route teams, humanities scholars, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and Emmy-award winning professional filmmakers to tell the stories of the Sunrise Coast through the website, mobile devices, and print media. The stories being collected focus on history, cultural features, natural resources, and legends and lore. NEMCOG plans to utilize multiple forms of media to engage a wide variety of travelers. Stories will be available on www.heritage23.com. Travelers will be able to click on a segment of US 23 and read the written stories available for that area, view photos, listen to an audio clip or watch a documentary, and develop and print out their own itinerary which will include the stories and selected nearby points of interest and amenities. GPS coordinates of each mile segment will also be available for download in order to assist the traveler in locating the actual site of the stories, photos, and videos.

On the website travelers can post their own stories of their adventures on the Sunrise Coast. In the field, travelers will have access to a route-long guidebook which will present the stories in print format. In addition, the stories will be available to the traveler in route through the use of QR Codes at each point of interest that has an associated story (using logo signs with a site number which corresponds to the site number on the website) so travelers with a smartphone to scan the barcode and read the story or watch the video on their phone while they are traveling. The group plans to place the QR code on print materials as well. In addition, the groups are working on a US 23 app for mobile devices.
Interactive Trail Maps Enhance www.heritage23.com

NEMCOG received funding in 2010 from DEQ Coastal Management to develop a coastal water trail (Huron Blueways) and the Huron Greenways (network of land based trails). The “Huron Blueways & Greenways” has been incorporated into the US 23 website to provide visitors with even more detailed information on land and water trails in addition to detailed information on natural resources and landforms along the Sunrise Coast in order to encourage natural resource-based tourism in northeast Michigan.

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Community Tourism Projects

Heritage 23 Projects Along the Route

Standish Historic Depot
US 23 Welcome Center

With MDOT/Federal Highways grant funding, the Arenac County Heritage Route Authority undertook a renovation project of the historic Standish Depot. The end result is a beautifully restored depot building which also serves as a Welcome Center at the southern gateway to the Heritage Route.

Alabaster Trail & Arboretum
Native Tree Arboretum

The Iosco County Heritage Route Team has worked to establish a Native Tree Arboretum on the Alabaster Bike Path along US 23. The trail will use QR codes to allow users to experience an interactive tree identification exercise via www.heritage23.com.

Heritage Coast Sailing & Rowing
Construction of the “Heritage 23”

Heritage Route Team members have formed a 501c3 to promote rowing and sailing on the Great Lakes. The group teamed up with Alec Jordan of Scottish Coastal Rowing to build the prototype Heritage 23 Mackinaw boat. The group intends to use the boat in community events!

Dockhand Training
Putting the Emphasis on Hospitality

Heritage Route Team members organized training for dockhands along the Huron Coast. They brought in instructors certified by the US Power Squadron to instruct on dockhand safety, boater safety, docking and departing procedures, greeting boaters, and local attraction guides.

Tourism Maps
Guiding Visitors Around Our Communities

County Teams have worked to create various tourist guides including the Harrisville Heritage Route Bike Trail Map highlighting historic buildings through Harrisville, the Sunrise Trail Map highlighting points of interest along the trail from Rogers City to 40 Mile Point Light, the Alcona Quilt Trail Map - a driving tour to view quilt squares around the county, and Alcona Bike Trail Maps - five bike tours highlighting historic sites and providing detailed biking directions and amenity information in a biker-friendly format.
Interpretive Program Underway

NEMCOG has received a grant from National Scenic Byways to develop an interpretive program for the 200 mile Heritage Route. Using the interpretive information, several types of large format tourism maps will be developed and printed.

Route-Long Overview Map:
A map displaying interpretive information for the entire Heritage Route will be developed.

Themed Maps:
Themed maps being developed include an Eco-Tourism Map, a Hiking and Biking Tour Map, an Arts & Culture Map, and an Historic Map.

County Tourism Maps:
Six individual detailed maps being developed include even more detailed interpretive information for the local communities.

Route Atlas:
A US 23 “route atlas” will be developed in book format which will provide all of the interpretive information in one document on a mile by mile basis.
**Accomplishments & the Future**

What we’ve done and where we go from here...

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**US 23 Wins National Trailblazer Award!**

The National Association of Development Organizations chose the US 23 Heritage Route for its “2011 Trailblazer Award”. NADO President Tim Ware says “creative projects like the US 23 Heritage Route advance the economic growth and sustainability of our nation’s regions and communities.” At the NADO conference in Miami, FL, Innovation award winners from across the country competed for the top prize in the nation from NADO, the prestigious “Trailblazer Award” which was awarded to a project which demonstrated unique partnerships, creative thinking, and strategic leveraging of resources to deliver results. At the conference, the US 23 Heritage Route program was selected to receive the “Trailblazer Award” for 2011!

**Partnerships are Key**

*The US 23 Heritage Route will continue to seek out and establish partnerships for the betterment of the economy of NE Michigan!*

**Supporting Place-Based Stewardship Education**

The Heritage Route partners with the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative to protect our Great Lakes natural resource through hands-on learning. In 2011, 27 schools participated in the program, 79 educators were supported through professional development activities, and 3,329 youth were directly engaged. The initiative also engaged 80 individual community partners representing 36 unique organizational partners. Partnership between US 23 and GLSI focus on community tourism projects.

**Coastal Tourism Business Development Support**

The Heritage Route partners with Michigan Sea Grant to support the development of coastal tourism businesses at www.discovernortheastmichigan.com. The site provides tools and resources for new coastal businesses.

**Eco-Tourism on the Sunrise Coast**

NEMCOG created a resource guide to assist with eco-tourism business development and marketing.

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**Continued Development & Stabilization of Michigan’s Scenic Byways Program**

*Economic Development that Bridges the Gap between Transportation, Natural Resources, the Environment, History & Culture*

The Michigan’s Scenic Byways Program (Michigan Heritage Routes) is a state-created tourism program and has been funded solely by MDOT through a combination of State and Federal funding. Active Heritage Routes receive funding for staff time equaling a less than a half time position. The program is critical because Heritage travelers provide a strong market as evidenced in a recent study which states that 78% of all leisure travelers in the US participate in cultural or heritage activities contributing more than $192 billion to the US economy. Heritage travelers seek out culinary activities, historic sites, art, crafts, State parks, museums, and urban neighborhoods - all of which make US 23 a prime destination. Combine this with the potential for Eco-Tourism and the result is a need for the continuation of the Byway program.

The Michigan’s Scenic Byways program holds the potential to be a major tourism draw by offering authentic experiences within larger regional packaged destinations to heritage travelers. Currently, however, this program is underfunded and State officials often remain unaware of its existence. While MDOT and the Heritage Routes have collaborated to provide consistency to the program (through the development of website templates and a statewide uniform signage strategy, for example) there needs to be a greater partnership between MDOT and other State agencies to stabilize this critical economic development program.

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For more information about the US 23 Heritage Route, please contact Denise Cline at dmcline@nemcog.org.