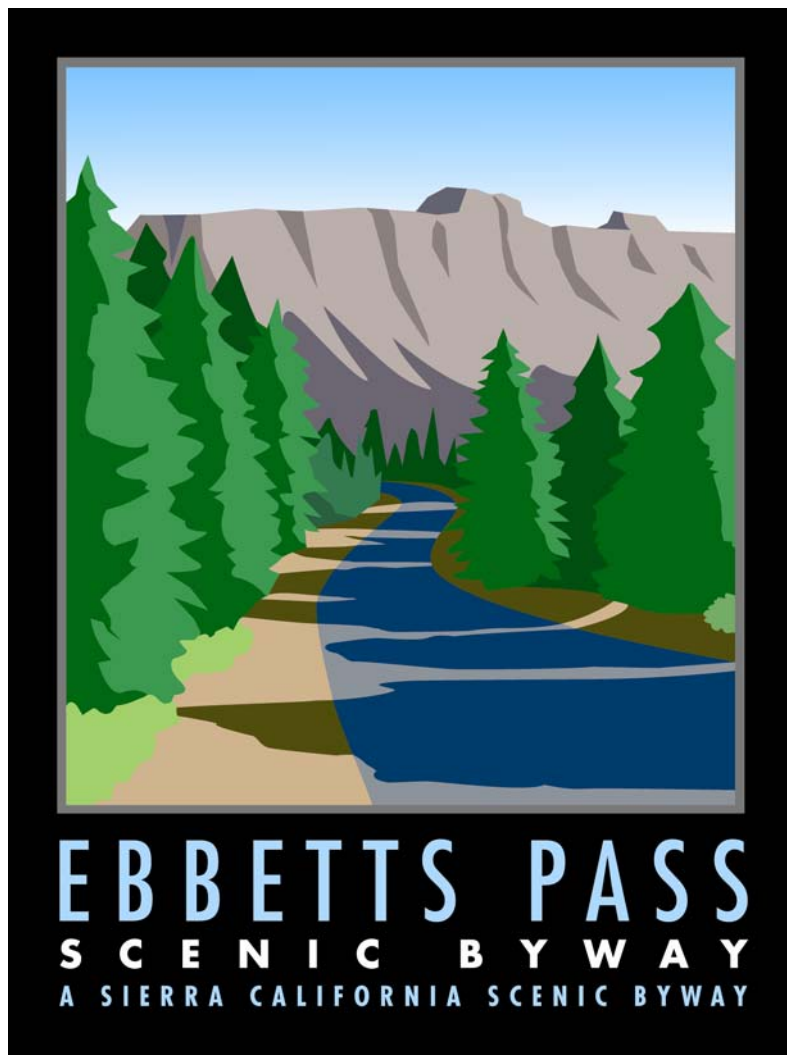

Corridor Management Plan

Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway



Produced with support from the Federal Highway Administration in partnership with the USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region, the California Department of Transportation, and many State and Local partners. The USDA, FHWA, and State of California are equal opportunity providers and employers.

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Introduction

Since the late 1960s, various state and federal agencies have recognized outstanding scenic and historical transportation routes. California, an early leader in the scenic highway program, has more than fifty designated state or national scenic routes, including Ebbetts Pass State Scenic Highway. The Ebbetts Pass State Scenic Highway (a portion of California State Highway 4) is a 58-mile route between Arnold, California and Markleeville, California (*Figure 1*). This portion of Highway 4 was designated as a California State Scenic Highway on November 9, 1971. The scenic route links destinations such as Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Grover Hot Springs State Park, Stanislaus and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, and several small communities in Calaveras and Alpine Counties.

There are a number of recognition programs that communities may seek for their highways. As noted above, Ebbetts Pass is a designated California State Scenic Byway. This designation is recognized with highway signs that depict the state flower, an orange poppy. At the time of printing this document, Ebbetts Pass has not been designated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as a National Scenic Byway. This document, or Corridor Management Plan (CMP), is a prerequisite for submission of “national” designation. For the purposes of this document, Highway 88 from Arnold to Markleeville will be referred to as a “National Scenic Byway” regardless of official designation.

The Ebbetts Pass State Scenic Highway is considered one of the most scenic drives across the Sierra Nevada. Surrounded by national forests and wilderness areas along most of the route, visitors have the opportunity to witness and explore this rugged landscape that is still home to many of the descendants of both native peoples (particularly the Washoe and Miwok American Indian Tribes) of the area and to pioneering emigrants alike. The physical setting of this byway ranges in elevation from approximately 3000' to 8500'. The vegetation is primarily dense mixed conifer forests and high elevation lakes on the western side of the pass, while the eastern side of the pass is noticeably drier, offering open vistas and grasslands with trees in the lower elevations concentrating in riparian (river, meadow, and wetland) areas and north exposed slopes. Expansive views of granite outcrops, basalt columns, ancient volcanic peaks, deep river canyons, glacially carved valleys, majestic stands of conifers including giant sequoias, open meadows, clear mountain lakes, and swiftly flowing streams and rivers can all be experienced within this amazing byway. One can find relics of people who lived here before as well as present day resorts and recreation facilities. Appendix A, Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway Vicinity Map, displays where this segment of Highway 4 is located.

The Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP) provides the vision, goals, and management recommendations for protecting and enhancing a 58-mile portion of State Highway 4 referred to as Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway (NSB). The Ebbetts Pass CMP is designed to provide guidance to federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners, and interested businesses in showcasing the spectacular scenery, historical significance, and extensive recreation opportunities present along this

route. The CMP also identifies ways to make these experiences accessible to persons with disabilities.

History of Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway

Ebbetts Pass is one of the oldest trans-Sierra travel routes. Long before the discovery of gold and silver brought emigrants to seek their fortunes out west, Ebbetts Pass was a trade route and provided access to summer encampment for Washoe and Miwok peoples. When emigrants began trickling through the Sierra, the pass itself was overlooked, while the original route traversed north of Ebbetts Pass then headed south over Border Ruffian Pass into Hermit Valley and on to what is today State Highway 4.

Most accounts record that “Major” John Ebbetts, a title bestowed to him, first identified this route in the early 1850’s while leading a mule team over the pass. He organized a survey crew but his dreams to survey this route were never realized. Major Ebbetts who was a passenger on the steamboat, *Secretary*, was killed when it exploded and sank in San Pablo Bay.

It wasn’t until the late 1850’s discovery of silver on the east side of the Sierra that merchants from the gold rush town of Murphy’s located and financed the present route through Ebbetts Pass. The road was built from west to east to truck freight and supplies to the silver mines and boom towns on the “east side”.

The road, also known as the *Big Trees to Carson Valley Road*, was improved in 1855-56 providing access to eastern emigrants seeking their fortunes in the gold fields of the Sierra Nevada and served as the main supply route between California and the Comstock Lode silver mines in Nevada. The route was later realigned and became a toll road from 1864 through 1910. It reverted back to a free county road in 1911 and was accepted into the California State Highway system in 1926. Portions of the road were paved in the 1930s and then realigned and improved again in the 1960s.

Historically significant features along the route include Calaveras Big Trees, now a state park, which premiered as a tourist attraction in 1850’s. It highlighted the massive redwoods, including a tree that took five men 22 days to cut down in 1853. The remaining stump initially served as a dance floor, holding as many as 20 couples at one time. This stump is still at the park to marvel. Other noteworthy features along the route include the Dorrington Hotel and Stage Stop, Hermit Valley junction and way stop, Chalmer’s Mansion, the historic mining towns of Markleeville, Silver Mountain City and Centerville, and the Emigrant Road and Big Tree to Carson Valley Road Historical Areas.



Figure 1. Cape Horn Vista

Recreational opportunities are provided by State and Federal agencies and private businesses alike. Visitors can stay in one of over 20 National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and State Park campgrounds or rent a cabin, cottage or room at a lodge within one of the charming communities along the route. They can hike, mountain bike, ride horses, or off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on hundreds of miles of trails and backcountry roads that traverse this outstanding landscape. Visitors can fish the multitude of streams and lakes near the highway or hunt in the meadows and forests. Summertime offers festivals, theater and concert productions. Winter brings opportunities for cross-country and alpine skiing, as well as snowmobiling on the portion of the highway that is seasonally closed. All these activities combine for a year round tourist season along this byway.

Corridor Management Planning

A Corridor Management Plan (CMP), although secondary to National Forest Land Management Plans and County General Plans, reflects exceptional values the public places upon a particular scenic route. A CMP articulates a communities' vision for a scenic byway and represents a commitment to maintain and enhance its intrinsic qualities. It specifies the actions, procedures, operational and administrative practices, and strategies that will maintain the natural, scenic, recreational, historic, and cultural qualities of a byway corridor while recognizing the primary transportation role of the highway. A CMP is a working document intended to be continually reviewed and revised as new information becomes available.

Plan Contents

This CMP provides a vision for maintaining and enhancing the Ebbetts Pass NSB and prescribes management strategies including:

- Protection of the highway's intrinsic qualities,

- Development of interpretive features to enhance the visitor's experience,
- Recommendations for existing and future marketing needs,
- Implementation strategy for the CMP, and
- Continued public, land management agencies, highway agencies, and community participation.

This plan has been prepared under the guidance of the Ebbetts Pass Scenic Byway Planning Group and cooperatively funded by the Federal Highway Administration TEA-21 Grant, US Forest Service, Calaveras Council of Governments, and Alpine County.

Benefits of National Scenic Byway Designation

Scenic byways are roads that highlight the special natural, historic, and cultural features of an area. These roadways provide an enjoyable experience for travelers, while providing local communities with tourist revenue. Designating and protecting scenic byways is a way to preserve America's beauty and heritage for everyone to enjoy. For designation as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess multiple intrinsic qualities that are nationally significant. In addition, a Corridor Management Plan must be prepared which identifies key resources, threats to those resources, preservation strategies, and marketing plans.

Although this portion of State Highway 4 is already recognized as the Ebbetts Pass State Scenic Highway, formal recognition as a National Scenic Byway will provide many benefits to area visitors, nearby residents and businesses, and local communities. Some of the benefits include:

National Recognition

National Scenic Byway recognition carries with it not only a heightened awareness of the highway route as one of the premier scenic routes in the U.S., but also recognition of the agencies, organizations, and communities that sought designation. Identification of the route on state, federal, and auto club highway maps can lead to more tourism opportunities for the area.

There has been some concern locally that national designation could increase traffic and cause congestion and change the lifestyle of local residents. Yet, overall, a sense that planning was desirable verses not planning and of letting growth or uses occur without direction or thought towards the long term. Communities want to be involved in tourism planning.

Increased Pride

National Scenic Byways are a source of local pride, a chance for citizens to showcase the beauty of their region. The CMP provides a way for stakeholders to determine what they like and want to feature about their communities. It also identifies how to preserve these qualities while encouraging thoughtful economic growth.

Increased Funding Opportunities

National Scenic Byway designation will help the Ebbetts Pass Scenic Highway become eligible for federal funds through the National Scenic Byways Program (*see Funding and Financing*). These funds could be used to develop interpretive facilities, information kiosks, restrooms, and other needed byway improvements. In addition, implementation of the CMP could result in increased business, tax revenue, and jobs from tourist dollars.

Public Participation

This CMP was developed under the guidance of the Ebbetts Pass Planning Group. This group includes representatives from the Calaveras Council of Governments, Alpine County, Stanislaus and Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forests, California State Department of Transportation, Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Greater Arnold Business Association, and the Bear Valley Business Association.

In the fall of 2001 and the summer and fall of 2002 six pairs of public meetings were held in the communities of White Pines and Markleeville, California. The purpose of these meetings was to gain local public support for National Scenic Byway designation, identify concerns and opportunities, develop a vision and goals, and gain financial support for marketing icons. In addition, there were multiple planning group meetings, interviews with key community leaders, and briefings and presentations to local interest groups. The opportunities and concerns identified at all these meetings included:

- Lack of interpretive information along the highway,
- Lack of adequate parking and sanitation at some locations,
- Need to highlight wheel chair accessible facilities
- Need to develop consistent signage along the highway,
- Too much visitation may negatively affect the intrinsic qualities,
- Too much, or the wrong type of, development could alter the existing roadway experience,
- Highway should not become an all-season route across the Sierras,
- Billboards should not be allowed in the highway corridor,
- Concern about timber harvesting within sight of the corridor,
- CMP shouldn't overly regulate private land uses, and
- CMP can help pull local residents together.

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Niche, Vision and Goals

Niche

The niche of Ebbetts Pass will be a diversion from the crowd and the hustle of 21st Century. Over the least-traveled and most rustic trans-sierra pass, one can find a “natural high.” Whether driving for pleasure, or using the corridor as the vacation destination, the natural character dominates. The scale and character are more intimate and less crowded.

The upper elevations of the highway are a narrow ribbon of asphalt gently laid on the landscape with twists and turns, floating up and down along a roller coaster ride.

The vegetative screen enhances the intimate scale of the road. Views of lakes, nearby peaks, rivers, meadows, historic structures, fall color, etc. usually come as a surprise. There is no warning, and usually little time to savor the grandeur or detail of this landscape. Perhaps this provides an incentive to drive slower, stay alert, or return to drive it again. As far as vehicles go, small is better. Trailers and buses are much too cumbersome to navigate the route over the pass.

Ebbetts Pass is unique from its neighbors, Highway 88, 89, 395, 108, and 120. All of these highways travel through bigger landscapes with open and expansive views, beautiful and grand in their own right, where as Highway 4 maintains a more intimate feel further removed from development and people.

Vision

The vision statement for the CMP describes the value, purpose, and future of the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway. It also provides a foundation from which to establish goals and management strategies that will protect the highway's intrinsic qualities. The vision statement for the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway CMP was crafted by the Ebbetts Pass Planning Group and the public, and reflects a diverse set of interests.

Our Vision:

"Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway is managed in a manner that protects its intrinsic qualities; and enhances visitors' appreciation of the scenic, natural, recreational, cultural, historical, and archaeological resources of the corridor. The highway serves as a vital link to many of the tourism attractions of the Central Sierra region. The uppermost segment of the highway retains its backcountry mountain character while the lower reaches of the highway are characterized by moderate rural development amidst the natural environment. The outstanding campgrounds, trails, parking areas, wayside stops, and information stations provide pleasant places for residents and visitors of all abilities to experience the natural beauty of the area. The communities of Arnold, Dorrington, Camp Connell, Lake Alpine, Tamarack, Bear Valley, and Markleeville provide unique restaurant and lodging opportunities that highlight the intrinsic qualities of the scenic byway. These and other nearby communities benefit from the economic vitality that tourism dollars have brought to the area. Visitors drive the Ebbetts Pass National Scenic Byway leisurely, get out of their cars to experience this timeless High Sierra landscape, and return often."

Goals

Goals are developed to translate the vision into reality. Goals address specific steps that can be implemented through policy and management. Goals for the Ebbetts Pass NSB are:

- To protect and enhance the intrinsic qualities of the corridor for the enjoyment of present and future generations,
- To provide interpretive and educational opportunities related to the scenic, natural, recreational, cultural, historical, and archaeological features so visitors may develop an appreciation for the unique qualities of the highway corridor,
- To promote tourism along the highway consistent with community goals and resource development needs,
- To develop collaborative strategies among communities within and near the National Scenic Byway that encourage visitors to enjoy the wide array of opportunities found along the corridor, while staying in the local communities,
- To develop partnerships to broaden the base of support for the highway,
- To design, build, and maintain interpretive sites to enhance the knowledge, appreciation, and enjoyment of the highway among visitors and residents of all abilities,

- To design, build, and maintain parking, sanitation and other support facilities to be accessible to people of all abilities, and to protect the resources of the corridor,
- To develop an integrated highway signage program that incorporates the National Scenic Byway logo and marketing icons, and is consistent with state and local signing policies, and
- To design and implement a “living guidebook” website to assist travelers before they tour the area.

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Existing Land Use and Commerce

Ownership

National Forest lands within the corridor are managed for a variety of uses, but primarily for recreation and wildlife habitat. Both National Forests have Land and Resource



Figure 2. Mosquito Lake

Management Plans that establish goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for management of forest resources such as vegetation, wildlife and fish, wilderness, range, timber, minerals, soils and water, wetlands and floodplains, recreation, cultural and historic, and scenery. A comprehensive list is in Chapter 13, References.

Special land use designations on the two National Forests within the NSB corridor and/or viewshed include three proposed or eligible Wild & Scenic Rivers (East Fork of the Carson, North Fork of the Stanislaus, and Mokelumne Rivers), two designated Wilderness areas (Mokelumne and Carson-Iceberg Wildernesses), one proposed Wilderness addition (to Carson-Iceberg), two designated historic areas (Emigrant Road and Big Trees-Carson Valley Road, Silver Mountain City), one potential historic district (Monitor Creek Historic Mining District), and one National Scenic Trail (Pacific Crest Trail).

Federal Lands

Stanislaus National Forest. The Stanislaus National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan identifies Highway 4 as a scenic corridor. Management of scenic corridors on the Stanislaus National Forest emphasizes the scenic and recreation values of major trail, road, and highway corridors, developed recreation sites, major rivers and lakes, and other areas of concentrated recreation use.

The Lake Alpine Area is a designated recreation area. Camping is only allowed in developed campgrounds. The Forest LRMP specified that a Recreation Area Plan be prepared, but this activity has not been funded. A draft master plan for the area has been completed showing some new facilities. This plan primarily addresses trails and walkways, with an emphasis on making most activities and areas fully accessible.

An accessible paved bicycle path was constructed in 1998 with TEA funding. This route connects several of the developed sites along the shoreline. The main route will be extended with the construction of several pedestrian bridges and constructed pathways.

The accessible routes will also reduce the impact of foot traffic on soil and vegetation. A network of camping, picnicking, fishing, and water related activities will be made accessible in the future through a combination of funding sources including: Forest Service capital investment program (CIP), hydro license mitigation improvements, concessionaire fee offset projects and improvements, and various partnership and granting sources.

Other uses such as cattle grazing, mining, and timber production may occur in or near the scenic corridor where these uses are consistent with the maintenance of the scenic and recreational values of the corridor. The Calaveras Ranger District administers this portion of the Stanislaus National Forest.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan included the Highway 4 corridor in its Alpine Management Area. The management emphasis here is on providing both developed and dispersed recreation within a roaded natural setting along State roads. In addition, wildlife, aesthetics, and watershed are emphasized. Other uses such as cattle grazing and mining may occur in or near the scenic corridor where these uses are consistent with the maintenance of the recreation, wildlife, aesthetic, and watershed values of the corridor. The Carson Ranger District administers this portion of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest.

Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administers lands adjacent to Markleeville. Their jurisdiction covers a very small portion of the scenic byway. It includes the Hangman's Bridge site, a popular boat put-in and take-out location and nearby, the BLM manages the popular Indian Creek Recreation Area and reservoir which offers a variety of recreation opportunities to experience camping, boating, and fishing etc. According to the Consolidated Resource Management Plan, the BLM "shall maintain the undeveloped character of a vast majority of the Public Lands". Lands managed along the scenic byway are included in the Indian Creek/East Fork of the Carson River Management Area. This area is a *Special Recreation Management Area* and is identified for potential designation as a Scenic Area. The Carson City Field Office administers the Indian Creek/East Fork of the Carson River Management Area.

State of California

State Scenic Highway. The 58-mile route on Highway 4 between Arnold and Markleeville, California was designated as a California State Scenic Highway in 1971. The intent of the California Scenic Highway Program is to "protect and enhance California's natural scenic beauty and to protect social and economic values provided by the State's scenic resources."

Calaveras Big Trees State Park. The Calaveras Big Trees State Park General Plan guides management direction of the 6,000 acre State Park. The park was established for the protection of two giant sequoia groves and is an outstanding example of primeval mixed conifer forest. The management emphasis established in the General Plan states that all management policies for park resources should be consistent with and supportive of perpetuation of these forests, and of optimum conditions for their appreciation by park visitors.



Figure 3. Calaveras Big Trees State Park

California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). CalTrans is responsible for maintenance and management of the highway.

Counties

Alpine County. The Alpine County General Plan identifies Highway 4 as a Scenic Highway. This designation provides a variety of protections for scenic, natural, cultural, and historic values on private lands along the corridor and in adjacent areas. The General Plan identifies both Bear Valley and Lake Alpine as Planned Development areas intended to be carefully planned to insure conformance with other goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan. Bear Valley is envisioned as a relatively intense mixed-use development while Lake Alpine is a small-scale resort. Land uses that are appropriate in these areas include agricultural, residential, commercial, institutional, and recreational.

Calaveras County. The Ebbetts Pass Highway Special Plan (1988) guides management of private lands in the vicinity of California State Scenic Highway 4 in Calaveras County. The purpose of the plan is to protect commercial and residential land use designations throughout the corridor. While the area is well recognized for its outstanding natural, scenic environment, no particular provisions are made in the plan for the preservation of these attributes. Acceptable land uses within the corridor include community centers, resort centers, commercial, recreational, residential, agricultural, and resource production.



Figure 4. Bear Valley

Commerce

The communities of Arnold, Dorrington, Tamarack, Camp Connell, Cottage Springs, Bear Valley, Lake Alpine, and Markleeville provide necessary services and facilities to varying degrees, for visitors and year-round residents. Arnold, Markleeville, and Bear Valley also have several retailers specializing in outdoor recreation and a significant number of outfitter guides for water sports, and hunting and fishing in the area. There are more than 16 National Forest, State Park, and privately developed campgrounds along the NSB route.

Services at these campgrounds range from full hook ups with on-site hosts and convenience stores to more primitive unstaffed, camping facilities with few amenities. Many of these public and private facilities operate year-round, while some are seasonal.

Additional visitor services can be found in South Lake Tahoe and the Carson Valley/ Carson City area at the eastern end of the route as well as the foothill towns of Angel's amp and Sonora on the western end.

Table 1. Summary of the Hospitality Infrastructure along Ebbetts Pass

	Lodging	Vacation Rentals	Restaurants	Convenience/ Food Stores	Fuel	Shopping	Visitor Info Center	Guided Services	Recreational Rental Equipment	Professional Services	Emergency Services
Arnold	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dorrington	Yes		Yes	Yes							FS Fire Station
Camp Connell			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Cottage Springs									Yes		
Tamarack	Yes		Yes								
Bear Valley	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes
Lake Alpine	Yes		Yes	Yes					Yes		
Markleeville	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes