Texas

The National Scenic Byway Program

The National Scenic Byways Program, established by Congress in 1991, recognizes historic, scenic and culturally important roads and promotes tourism and economic development in nearby communities. 150 National Scenic Byways have been designated but no new byways have been named since Congress halted funding for the program in 2012. The lack of an active program means existing National Scenic Byways don’t receive adequate federal support and their full potential as drivers of economic development is unrealized. Meanwhile over 1,000 state-designated scenic byways across the country remain eligible for nomination as National Scenic Byways but need action from Congress before they can apply. The Federal Highway Administration has said they do not need additional funds to reopen nominations, only a directive from Congress.

Key points:
- A 2010 study by the University of Minnesota School of Business found that the state’s Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway generated nearly $22 million in visitor spending annually.
- Research found that the annual economic activity from Route 66 stood at $132 million in 2011.
- A study of the Blue Ridge Parkway concluded that visitors spent $1.8 billion in counties adjacent to the parkway, resulting in $147 million in tax revenues and the creation of over 74,000 jobs.
- A recent National Scenic Byway Foundation survey showed that 44 state scenic byways in 24 states are prepared to seek designation as a National Scenic Byway.