

Scenic America



Annual Report

2020
2021



Scenic America

Our mission is to preserve and enhance the visual character and scenic beauty of America.

We advocate for a Scenic America for all people and communities.

Dear Friends,

Looking back on the past year, I am humbled, honored, and excited to consider all that we have accomplished under extraordinary circumstances. Like you, the team at Scenic America and I have spent more time in the outdoors and in our own neighborhoods and communities in the past several months. While staying closer to home, we have been reminded of the importance of creating safe and scenic places to live, work, and play for all people and all communities.



Despite the challenges we have all faced in the past year, Scenic America has continued to grow as an organization, adding to our staff and external support. As a result, we have increased our capacity to lead the fight for scenic beauty on the local, state, and national level. And we have inspired more supporters to join our cause. Our annual revenue topped the \$1 million mark again this year, representing our fourth consecutive year of solid growth.

Thanks to your support, we have landed significant wins this year:

- After working with Congress to re-establish the National Scenic Byways Program in 2019, we secured \$16 million in dedicated funding for our nation's most significant roadways—the program's first funding in nine years. At the time of this writing, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3684, the INVEST in America Act, allocating \$64 million in funding for the program for four years through the Highway Trust Fund beginning in FY23, plus another \$156 million in general funds. We will continue to fight for even more as the Senate and House deliberate on the final bill.
- Through our advocacy efforts, both the House and Senate versions of the surface transportation reauthorization bill included two of our key legislative priorities: allowing communities to use federal funds to support utility undergrounding and increasing flexibility and funding for programs for gateway communities located just outside of national parks and other public lands.
- In February, we celebrated the Federal Highway Administration's announcement of 15 newly designated All-American Roads and 34 new National Scenic Byways, earning widespread national media coverage and driving strong web traffic.
- We partnered with supporters, chapters, and affiliates nationwide—from San Jose to Utah to Providence—to help fight the spread of billboard blight on the local level.
- We launched interactive educational games on the *Agents of Discovery* platform to teach students about scenic conservation, both in classrooms and at home.

We have also laid the groundwork for even more work to be done in the year ahead as we continue to fight billboard blight and other affronts to scenic beauty. And we simply could not do it without your support.

As you read this annual report, I hope you will agree that your investment in Scenic America has delivered impressive returns. We look forward to adding on to this list of accomplishments next year and beyond.

With sincere appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Falzone
President



St. John Valley/Fish River National Scenic Byway. Photo by Larry Johannesman for Maine Department of Transportation

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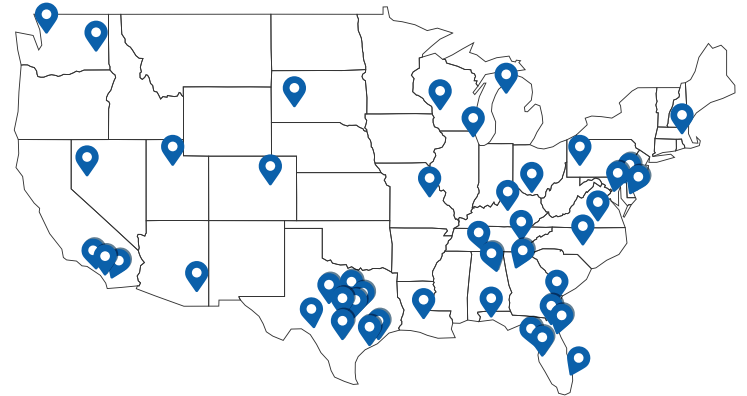
Larry Rockefeller

New York, NY

Chapters and Affiliates

Scenic America has 46 active chapters and affiliates. As the national leader for scenic conservation, we provide research, guidance, and resources while our chapters and affiliates work on the ground at the state and local level. Scenic chapters and affiliates also act as resources for us and each other, creating a nationwide network of experts and advocates who support and amplify the work of each other.

Chapters of Scenic America work in close collaboration with the national office on fundraising, advocacy, research, communications, and other initiatives.

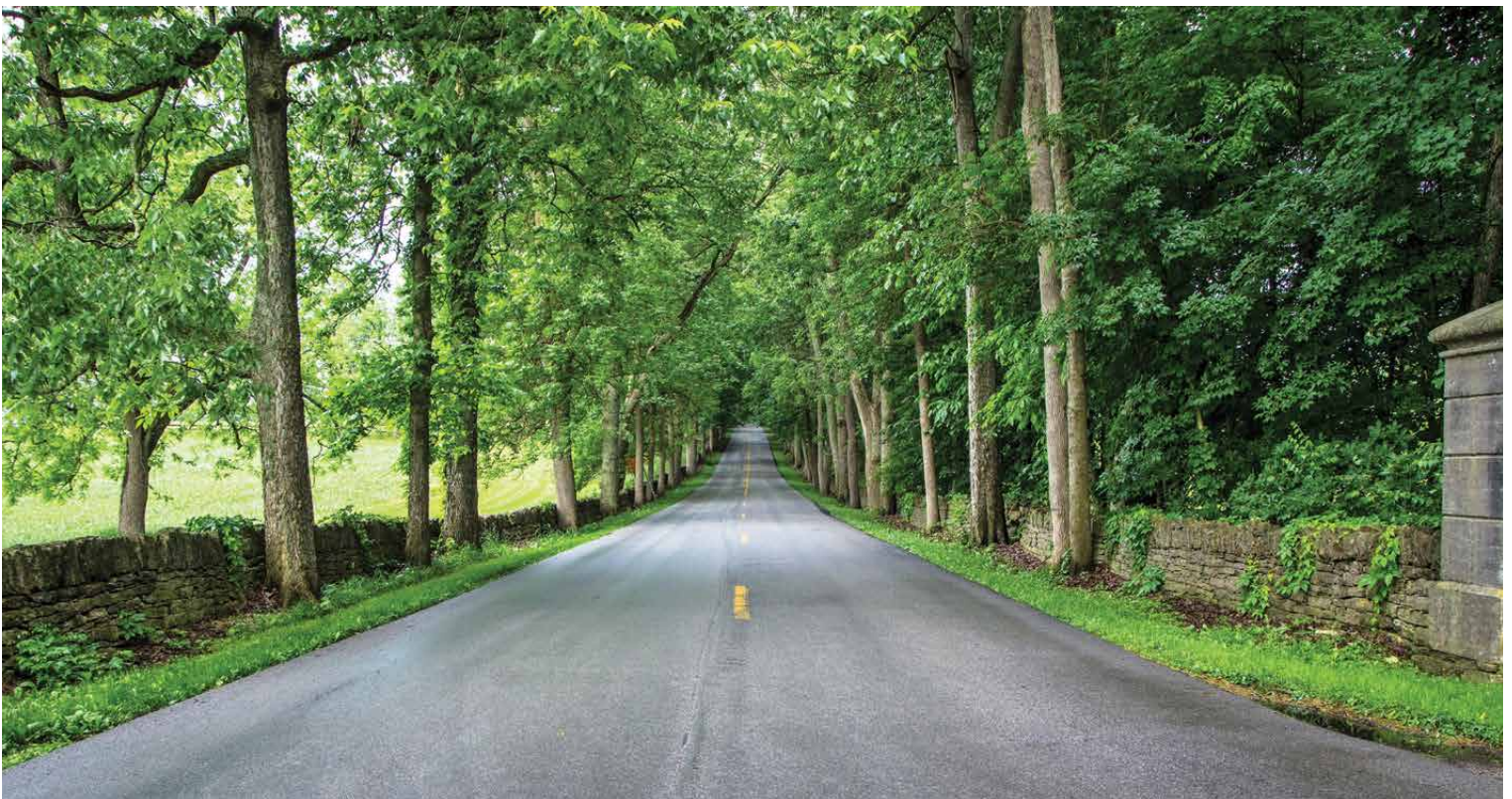


CHAPTERS

- Scenic Los Angeles
- Scenic Missouri
- Scenic Pittsburgh
- Scenic Prince George's
- Scenic Tennessee
- Scenic Walton

AFFILIATES

- | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Scenic Alabama | Scenic Galveston | Scenic Nevada | Scenic Texas |
| Scenic Arizona | Scenic Georgia | Scenic North Carolina | Scenic Utah |
| Scenic Austin | Scenic Hill Country | Scenic Oceanside | Scenic Virginia |
| Scenic Chatham | Scenic Illinois | Scenic Ohio | Scenic Washington |
| Scenic Clearwater | Scenic Jacksonville | Scenic Philadelphia | Scenic Wisconsin |
| Scenic Colorado | Scenic Kentucky | Scenic Pinellas | |
| Scenic Comal County | Scenic Lafayette | Scenic Rapid City | |
| Scenic Dallas | Scenic Manatee | Scenic San Antonio | |
| Scenic Delaware | Scenic Massachusetts | Scenic San Diego | |
| Scenic Florida | Scenic Miami | Scenic Spokane | |
| Scenic Ft. Worth | Scenic Michigan | Scenic St. Petersburg | |



Old Frankfort Pike National Scenic Byway, Kentucky

Our Priorities

Placemaking



Celebrating America's Byways





Undergrounding Overhead Wires

Fighting Billboard Blight



Honoring Parks and Open Spaces



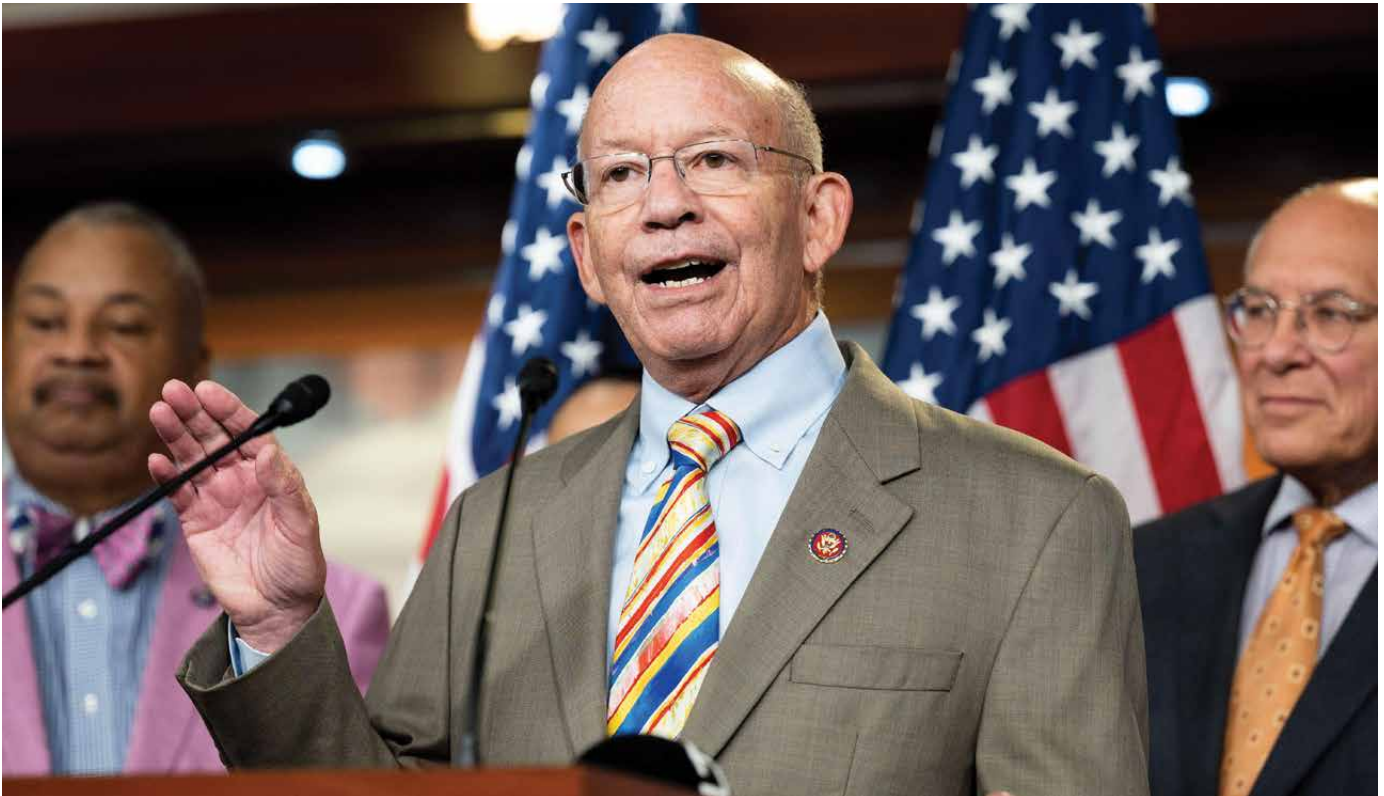
Celebrating Legislative Victories

Scenic America's advocacy efforts have paid dividends in the past year with more victories on Capitol Hill—from undergrounding to byways and more.

Recognizing the opportunity to stem billboard blight and drive smart, scenic-minded economic development, Scenic America took the lead in pushing for the revival of the National Scenic

Byways Program, which came roaring back in September 2019 under the leadership of Rep. David Cicilline (D-RI), Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA), and Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD).

And in December 2020, Scenic America again led the work in Congress to secure the program's first dedicated funding in nine years—a \$16 million investment in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, thanks to the leadership of Sen. Collins and



Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) chairs the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, which supported three of Scenic America's key priorities in its version of the surface transportation reauthorization bill.


Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), supported by Chairman David Price (D-NC) and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL).

When the 117th Congress convened in January 2021, both chambers immediately launched into work on a comprehensive surface transportation reauthorization bill. At the time of this writing, both the House and Senate versions of the bill text included language in support of two of Scenic America's legislative priorities: allowing communities to use federal funds to pay for utility undergrounding and providing flexible funding to support programs in gateway communities. The House's version also included \$64 million in funding for the National Scenic Byways Program over four years from the Highway Trust Fund. This figure was augmented with an additional \$156 million over four years from the general fund, subject to appropriation, thanks to an amendment introduced by Rep. Cicilline.

"Getting three of our key priorities into this legislation is a huge win for Scenic America," said Scenic America President Mark Falzone. "By building relationships with members of

Congress and their staff, and by urging our growing list of supporters to speak out to their elected officials, we've been able to bring about real change."

Nevertheless, Scenic America's work on this front is far from complete. As of the time of this writing, the legislation failed to include provisions protecting publicly owned trees from being cut down for better billboard visibility, despite an amendment introduced by Reps. Chris Pappas (D-NH), Nancy Mace (R-SC), Anne Kuster (D-NH), and Kay Granger (R-TX).

"As the legislation moves through Congress and on to the president's desk, we will continue to fight for protections for publicly owned trees and for more byways funding," added Falzone. "And we will need our supporters to continue to speak out to their senators and representatives to let them know how much this matters." 

To keep abreast of legislative developments on the federal level, sign up for Scenic America's newsletter or follow us on social media.



Bringing Back Byways

Boom or Bust highway Cypress Black Bayou Motorcycle. Photo by J. Fontenot, Shreveport-Bossier Convention and Tourist Bureau

The National Scenic Byways Program is back. After the Reviving *America’s Scenic Byways Act* was signed into law on September 22, 2019, Scenic America turned its attention to the next step in bringing back the program: securing dedicated funding to enable byways organizations to apply for grants that maximize each roadway’s economic impact.

“There are many reasons why the byways program’s revival and funding are critical to Scenic America’s mission,” explained Scenic America President Mark Falzone. “In addition to delivering economic benefits to communities located on and around these iconic roadways, byways represent another advantage to scenic-minded people: more byways means fewer billboards.”

Scenic America scored its first victory in its goal to restore funding to the byways program in late 2020. Thanks to the leadership of Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI), the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 was signed into law on December 27, 2020, with \$16 million allocated for the National Scenic Byways Program—its first dedicated funding since 2012.



Newfound Gap, Sevier County, Great Smoky Mountains. Photo courtesy of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

*No new billboards
are permitted
on designated
scenic byways.*



Supporters of the Flaming Gorge All-American Road held a ribbon cutting on June 9 to celebrate their designation.



Bayshore Heritage

The buzz about byways ramped up again in February 2021 when the Federal Highway Administration named 15 new All-American Roads and 34 National Scenic Byways to this list of esteemed roadways.

More good byways news followed in May 2021, when Texas became the fiftieth and final state to establish a state scenic byways program, thanks to a robust advocacy effort by Scenic Texas.


The revival of the National Scenic Byways Program also provided a prime opportunity for Scenic America to grow its audience and stake its claim as a leading authoritative source for byways information and outreach. Our announcement of the new designations generated widespread media attention, including placements in top travel outlets such as *Travel + Leisure*, *Lonely Planet*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, and the *Washington Post*.

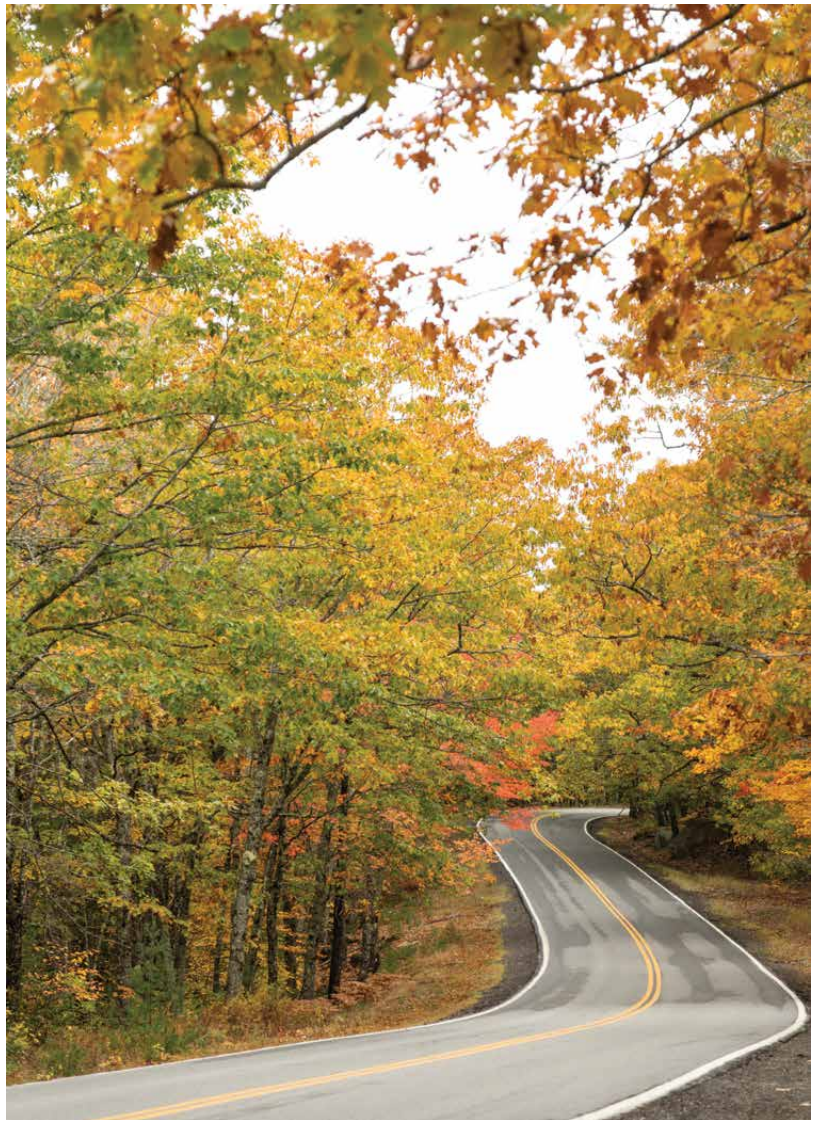


The announcement also ran in *The Hill* and in several local and regional news outlets.

The media attention drove record-high visitation to Scenic America's website, which now features new and expanded scenic byways content. In February and March 2021 alone, website visits increased by 350% and page views increased by 273% year over year.

Our social media feeds have also hopped on to the byways bandwagon, featuring a different byway each week on #BywaysFridays.

This summer, as Congress develops the surface transportation reauthorization bill, Scenic America is exploring additional opportunities to secure funding for byways. On July 1, the House of Representatives passed the INVEST in America Act including \$64 million in dedicated Highway Trust Funds and an additional \$156 million in general funds, subject to appropriation, but our work is not complete. At the time of this writing, the Senate's version of the bill does not include any dedicated funding for byways. However, Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA), John Cornyn (R-TX), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) co-sponsored an amendment to change the bill. We are also working with Scenic chapters, affiliates, and other organizations to identify new byway routes to bring the program's benefits to more communities across the country and encouraging more people to take the scenic route while planning their travels. 



Bold Coast National Scenic Byway. Photo by G. Rybus for Visit Maine



Iowa Delaware Crossing Scenic Byway. Photo by Kenneth G. West Jr.




Earning Recognition

Scenic America Wins ASAE “Power of A” Gold Award for the Second Year in a Row



In recognition of its work in securing funding for the National Scenic Byways Program, Scenic America earned a 2021 “Power of A” Gold Award from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

ASAE is a national organization that represents more than 46,000 association executives and 7,400 organizations. The “Power of A” awards recognize the extraordinary contributions associations make to society by enriching lives, creating a competitive workforce, preparing society for the future, driving innovation and making a better world. Scenic America was one of only five organizations to receive a Gold Award for advocacy.

This year’s award also builds on the Gold Award Scenic America earned last year for its leadership in passing legislation that revived the National Scenic Byways Program. 

Supporting Communities in the Fight Against Billboard and Signage Blight




In addition to acting on legislative opportunities on the federal level, Scenic America also helps communities across the country to fight signage blight and ensure that scenic priorities remain at the forefront in community planning matters.

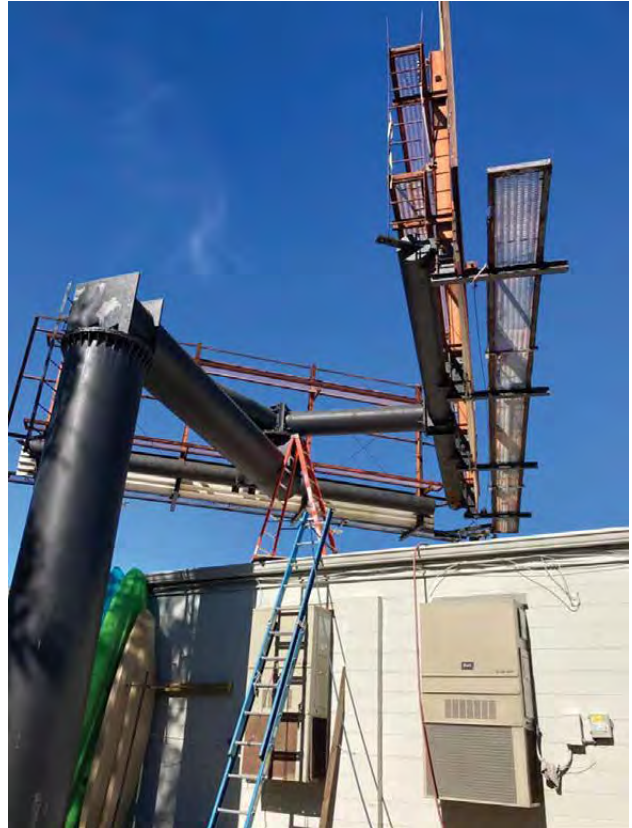


Above, a rendering of downtown Houston as it might appear if new billboards are authorized. Below, Houston as it appeared in the 1960s when overrun with sign blight. Courtesy Scenic Houston.

To help communities facing visual pollution issues, Scenic America has deployed resources from the national office to fuel grassroots activism at the local level. We have drafted public comments and letters of support, provided expert testimony, fielded online petitions, and conducted media, social media, and public outreach to better position communities to win in their fights against scenic blight. In the past year, the Scenic America national office has taken action on nearly 50 different local scenic conservation efforts.

Here are just a few examples of our advocacy in action in the past year.

- In San Jose, CA, Scenic America supported a strong local campaign to ban digital billboards by hosting an online petition and providing public comment. The City Council voted down a proposal to for digital signs in February 2021.
- Beginning in October 2020, Scenic America partnered with our Rhode Island citizen activists in an ongoing effort to combat a digital billboard proposal in Providence, with leadership from Chairman Emeritus Ron Fleming, and continued assistance from local supporter Jonathan Stevens. Multiple versions of the bill have been submitted, and Scenic America consistently applied pressure in the form of email campaigns, policy statements, and testimony at public hearings. We took action against the most recent version of the bill which went before the city council on June 3, and we will continue to monitor the proposal after it was referred back to the Committee on Ordinances.
- Scenic America helped champion a local effort in Burlington, IA, to preserve the Cascade Bridge for recreational and pedestrian use. The bridge provides a crucial link to city parks and to views of the Mississippi River basin below. The bridge also forms a segment of the original Great River Road National Scenic Byway route in Iowa, which passes through Burlington and which was granted All-American Road status in February 2021. 



A billboard was removed earlier this year on Florida's Scenic A1A All-American Road in St. Johns County. Photo courtesy of Friends of A1A.

Scenic America stands ready to provide similar research, advocacy, and communications support to any jurisdiction facing issues with signage, billboards, or other scenic issues. Contact us at scenic@scenic.org if you have an issue in your community.



A photographer captures video of Scenic Walton County for a video project. Courtesy of Modus Photography.

Building Our Brand

In addition to developing new research platforms, Scenic America has enhanced and expanded its communications program this year. By strategically adding new content to our website and ramping up our outreach efforts, we have grown our brand awareness, earned national media coverage, and staked our claim as the leading voice for scenic conservation issues.

Through a combination of proactive and behind-the-scenes work, such as media outreach, social media posting, email marketing, strategic content

development, and search advertising through our Google Grant, we have developed a forward-looking communications program that has driven a dramatic increase in website traffic and public engagement. Comparing FY19-20 with FY20-21, scenic.org traffic has doubled.

While driving additional website traffic is important, it is equally imperative to deliver quality content reflective of our mission and responsive to our audience's needs. Recognizing the growing importance of video and storytelling in engaging people across the country in our mission, we have heightened our focus on creating compelling



new content—including video. Through support from the J.W. Couch Foundation and its production company, JWC Studios, we developed an inspiring new video for our Scenic Walton chapter. In addition to building brand awareness for Scenic Walton, the video will serve as a powerful tool in the organization’s major gift initiative.

To keep our supporters informed of news and developments, we also launched an expanded monthly email newsletter. In addition to providing updates on scenic conservation issues and legislative matters, each issue also includes a profile on a leading figure—past or present—in Scenic America’s history and a spotlight on an American city or town that incorporates great placemaking principles in its approach to community planning and design. Through a combination of paid and organic acquisition efforts, we added nearly drove a nearly 120% increase in email subscriptions between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, focusing on key states and congressional districts and building stronger Scenic chapters.

With an ambitious communications plan in place and more publicity opportunities on the horizon, Scenic America’s brand-building and awareness-raising activities are just getting started. [S](#)



Inspiring Young People

Engaging young people in scenic conservation through education outreach has never been more important—nor timelier. When the pandemic shuttered schools and canceled camps and activities, families turned to parks, trails, and open spaces for recreation and learning.

To capitalize on this renewed interest in outdoor recreation, Scenic America launched a free new mobile game. Using the educational gaming platform “Agents of Discovery,” the new tool focuses on issues like visual pollution and underscores the importance of protecting parks and green spaces. This smartphone-based platform, which is geared towards grade-schoolers, teachers, and families, uses augmented reality (AR) to guide users through a “mission,” similar to a scavenger hunt.

While the platform is typically designed with missions that can be played at a specific location, like a park, nature center, or museum, Scenic America has created a mission that can be played from any location, as well as missions designed for play in Pittsburgh’s Point State Park and in Bradenton, FL.

These missions aim to educate users about the principles of scenic conservation, like preservation of scenic beauty, the eradication of scenic pollution in the visual environment, and the value of scenic areas. Some examples of scenic pollution include billboards,



One of Scenic America’s missions explores Pittsburgh’s Point State Park.

overhead wires, light pollution, litter, and tree cutting. This mission includes challenges like selecting which scenes have been affected by visual pollution, identifying sources of visual pollution, and using AR to play a recycling mini-game.

A classroom curriculum developed in partnership with Project Green Schools enables the Agents of Discovery missions to be easily incorporated into elementary and middle school curricula.

Since the platform’s launch in April 2021, hundreds of teachers, parents, and students have downloaded the app to tackle the missions. Additional outreach is planned in Pittsburgh this later this year. [S](#)

Learn more about how to access the game and curricula at scenic.org/agents.

Scenic America

DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP AND (CHECK OUT OUR MISSIONS

- 1 Join **Agents of Discovery**, the not-so-secret, secret agency dedicated to learning and playing outdoors to solve Challenges.
- 2 To get started, **download the FREE game and Scenic America Mission of your choice** to your mobile device. After downloading the app, **Play the Mission from anywhere, home, Classroom and etc.**
- 3 This game will help you to test your knowledge of scenic conservation and help you learn how to keep your community beautiful!

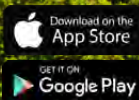


HELLO AGENT...
EXPLORE SCENIC CONSERVATION
IN A WHOLE NEW WAY!



Agents of Discovery® is an augmented reality mobile game to play and discover the world around you. Unlock hidden geo-located challenges that can only be solved through exploration and discovery.

**DOWNLOAD AND
PLAY FOR FREE**






Supporting Our Chapters

Scenic America’s national footprint and impact continues to grow and expand with the creation and enhancement of chapters throughout the country.

While supporting more than 40 Scenic affiliates nationwide, Scenic America has forged deeper connections with its six chapters: Scenic Los Angeles, Scenic Missouri, Scenic Pittsburgh, Scenic Prince George’s, Scenic Tennessee, and Scenic Walton. These organizations partner with Scenic America’s national office on fundraising opportunities, marketing and communications outreach, research, advocacy, and other initiatives. Scenic America’s national team meets regularly with staff and board members from each of its chapters to provide guidance, support, and to discuss opportunities for growth and collaboration on the state and local level.

“Our chapters are at the heart of our work. When we have the chance to test out a new research tool, to grow our supporter base, or to apply for certain grants, we always look to our chapters,” said Mark Falzone. “They share a deeper investment in Scenic America, and we deliver on that investment.”

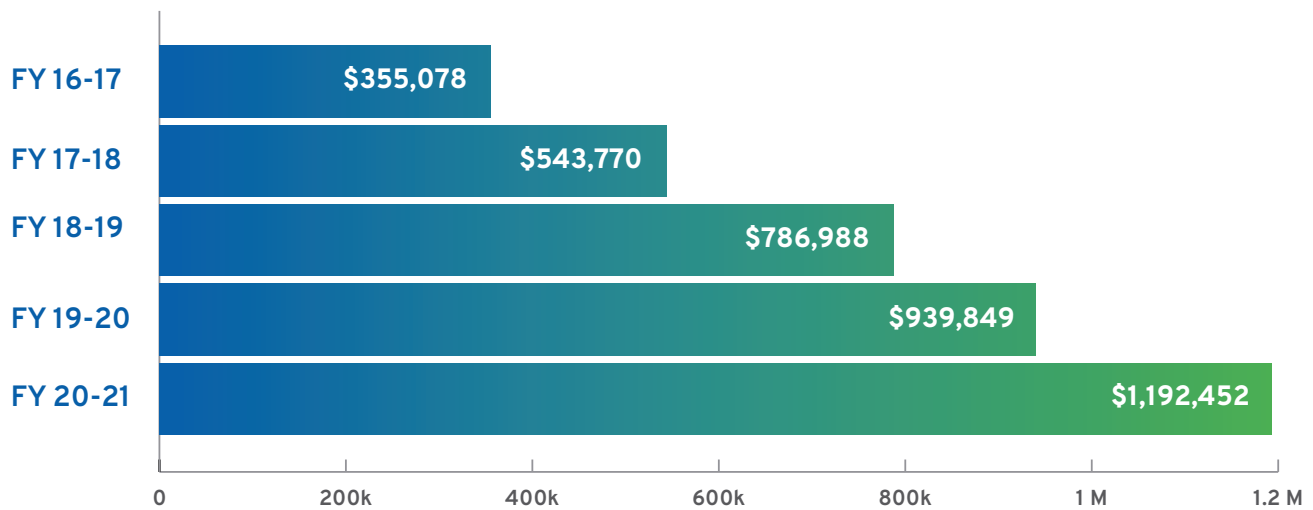
In support of its chapters this year, Scenic America has tackled ambitious programs: developing a comprehensive billboard research project centered on Scenic Los Angeles, creating a video project with JWC Studios in partnership with Scenic Walton, securing fundraising grants to promote communications strategies and educational outreach platforms with Scenic Pittsburgh, to name a few. The newest chapter, created in early 2021, will focus on scenic issues in Prince George’s County, MD. 



Strengthening Our Foundations

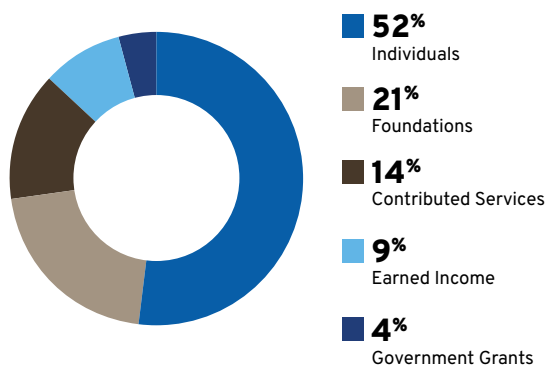
Scenic America continued its trajectory of impressive growth this year despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, the political climate, and other factors. Our income neared \$1.2 million, representing a 27% increase over last fiscal year and a nearly four-fold increase in four years.

TOTAL INCOME

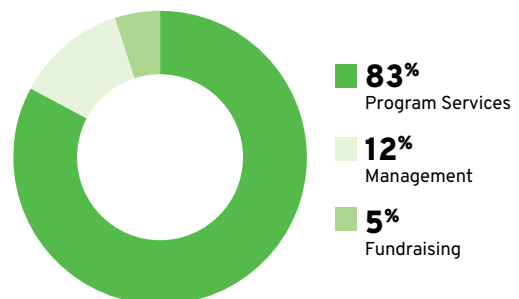


FINANCIALS: FISCAL YEAR 2020-21

Revenue:



Expenses:





SAVE THE DATE

2022 Scenic Symposium

Make plans to join us:

Nashville, TN
October 19-21, 2022

The meeting will take place at the Scarritt Bennett Center next to Vanderbilt University. Registration details will be posted in early 2022.

Photo

Newfound Gap, Sevier County, Great Smoky Mountains. Courtesy of the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development

- **Gather with colleagues** who share your interest in scenic conservation for this much-anticipated event.
- **Get a how-to look** at the Visual Resources Survey being developed by Scenic Tennessee to assist communities with long-range planning.
- **Learn how** Nashville's Second Avenue historic district is emerging from the rubble of the Christmas Day bombing in 2020.
- **Get insider tips** on creating online tours for visitors, enjoy dinner and music outdoors at one of Tennessee's thriving wineries, and connect with scenic colleagues from across the nation.

For more information, contact Scenic Tennessee President Marge Davis at margedavis@scenictennessee.org.



Our work is not done. Every day, we learn of new threats to the scenic beauty we strive to preserve and protect. To continue to grow and advance our mission in a challenging political environment, we rely on contributions from individuals and corporations who share our vision for America the Beautiful. Thank you for your continued support.

Your contribution will assist Scenic America in our mission to help citizens safeguard the scenic qualities of America's roadways, countryside and communities. You can support Scenic America by making a donation at www.scenic.org, by mailing a check to the address below, or by arranging a stock donation.

Scenic America
727 15th Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005-6029



All contributions are 100% tax-deductible. To make a gift of appreciated stock or to learn about estate planning please contact Mark Falzone at 202.792.1301.



One of the simplest and most efficient ways to support Scenic America is by donating at work through Earthshare, a network of more than 400 local, state, national and international environmental and conservation organizations. To learn more, visit them online at earthshare.org, call them at: 1.800.875.3863 or contact Scenic America at 202.792.1300.



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