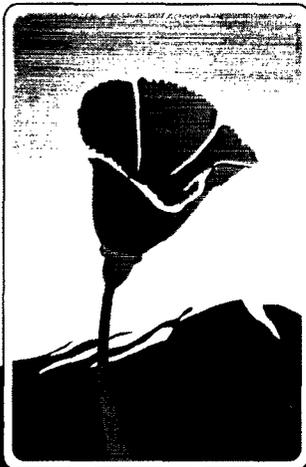


The
California
Scenic
Highway
Program



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION

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California's Scenic Highway Program

What is the California Scenic Highway Program and when did it start?

Many state highways are located in areas of outstanding natural beauty. California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change which would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.

What elements make a highway "scenic"?

A highway may be designated *scenic* depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view.

What does the "State Scenic Highway System" include?

The *State Scenic Highway System* includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. These highways are identified in Section 263 of the Streets and Highways Code. A list of California's scenic highways and map

showing their locations may be obtained from Caltrans' Scenic Highway Coordinators.

What is the difference between an "eligible" and an "officially designated" scenic highway?

The status of a state scenic highway changes from *eligible* to *officially designated* when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to the California Department of Transportation for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a Scenic Highway.

What is a scenic corridor protection program?

When a city or county nominates an *eligible* scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. The agency must also adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes. These ordinances make up the scenic corridor protection program.

What is included in a scenic corridor protection program?

There are minimum requirements for scenic corridor protection:

1. Regulation of land use and density of development;
2. Detailed land and site planning;
3. Control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards);
4. Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
5. The design and appearance of structures and equipment.

Citizen participation in developing these requirements is very important if the program is to have popular support.

How are the boundaries of a scenic corridor determined?

A scenic corridor is the land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway. A scenic corridor is identified using a motorist's line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. Jurisdictional boundaries of the applicants are also considered.

What steps are necessary to receive official designation?

If a route is included on the list of scenic highways eligible for official designation, contact the Caltrans District Scenic Highway Coordinator for a copy of the *Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways*. The city or county with jurisdiction over lands adjacent to the highway must take the following steps:

1. Inspect and evaluate the route to determine if it meets the current scenic highway criteria and to what extent, if any, development has intruded on the scenic views.
2. Submit a Resolution of Intent Package to the Departmental Transportation Advisory Committee (DTAC) through the appropriate Caltrans district office. The package should include a Resolution of Intent by the local governing body, maps showing the scenic corridor and existing zoning, a map overlay of development in the corridor, a narrative description of the scenic elements, and a videotape representative of the highway segment. DTAC evaluates each proposal. If the advisory committee concurs that the corridor meets the scenic criteria, the applicant proceeds to Step 3. If the route fails this review, it is not advisable to continue seeking official designation.

3. Prepare and adopt a scenic corridor protection program. DTAC reviews the protection program. If DTAC determines that the program meets the legislative standards, the committee will recommend that the Caltrans Director designate the highway as scenic.

Can highways still be added to the Scenic Highway System?

A city or county may propose adding routes with outstanding scenic elements to the list of eligible highways. However, state legislation is required. Local governments should consult Caltrans' District Scenic Highway Coordinator before initiating action, to ensure that the route qualifies.

Can county roads become part of the Scenic Highway System?

Yes. To receive official designation, the county must follow the same process required for official designation of state scenic highways.

How are officially designated scenic highways identified?

Caltrans places the colorful "poppy" sign, logo of the scenic highway program, along the route. Also, the poppy logo identifies scenic highways on travel maps, and maps produced by the State Division of Tourism.

Is there special funding for the Scenic Highway Program?

There is no special funding for preparation of scenic highway nominations. Some types of projects on scenic highways may qualify for funding under the Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA) program.

Can scenic highways be widened or otherwise changed?

Official scenic highway status places no restrictions for making improvements on scenic highways. However, Caltrans works with appropriate agencies to coordinate transportation proposals and maintenance activities and to ensure the protection of scenic corridors to the maximum extent feasible.

Does official designation preclude development?

No, but the corridor protection program seeks to encourage quality development that does not degrade the scenic value of the corridor.

Can official designation be revoked?

The most critical element of the scenic highway program is implementation and maintenance of the scenic corridor protection program. Caltrans monitors officially designated scenic highways at least every five years. Designation can be revoked if the local government ceases to enforce its protection program. A city or county may request revocation if it no longer wishes to be part of the program.

What advantages does official designation offer?

A scenic highway can create a positive image for a community, preserve and protect environmental assets and encourage tourism.

How can I find out more about the Scenic Highway Program?

The Scenic Highway Coordinator at your local Caltrans district office can provide additional information or visit our web site at:

www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/shpg.htm

