

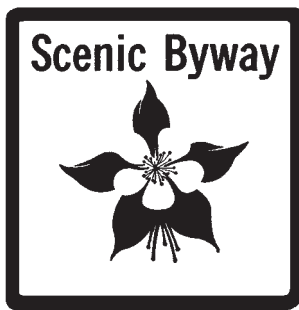
# Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway

Community Partnership:  
A Vision for the Future





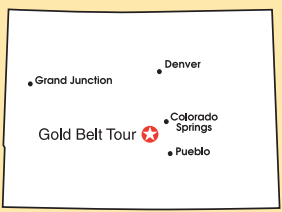
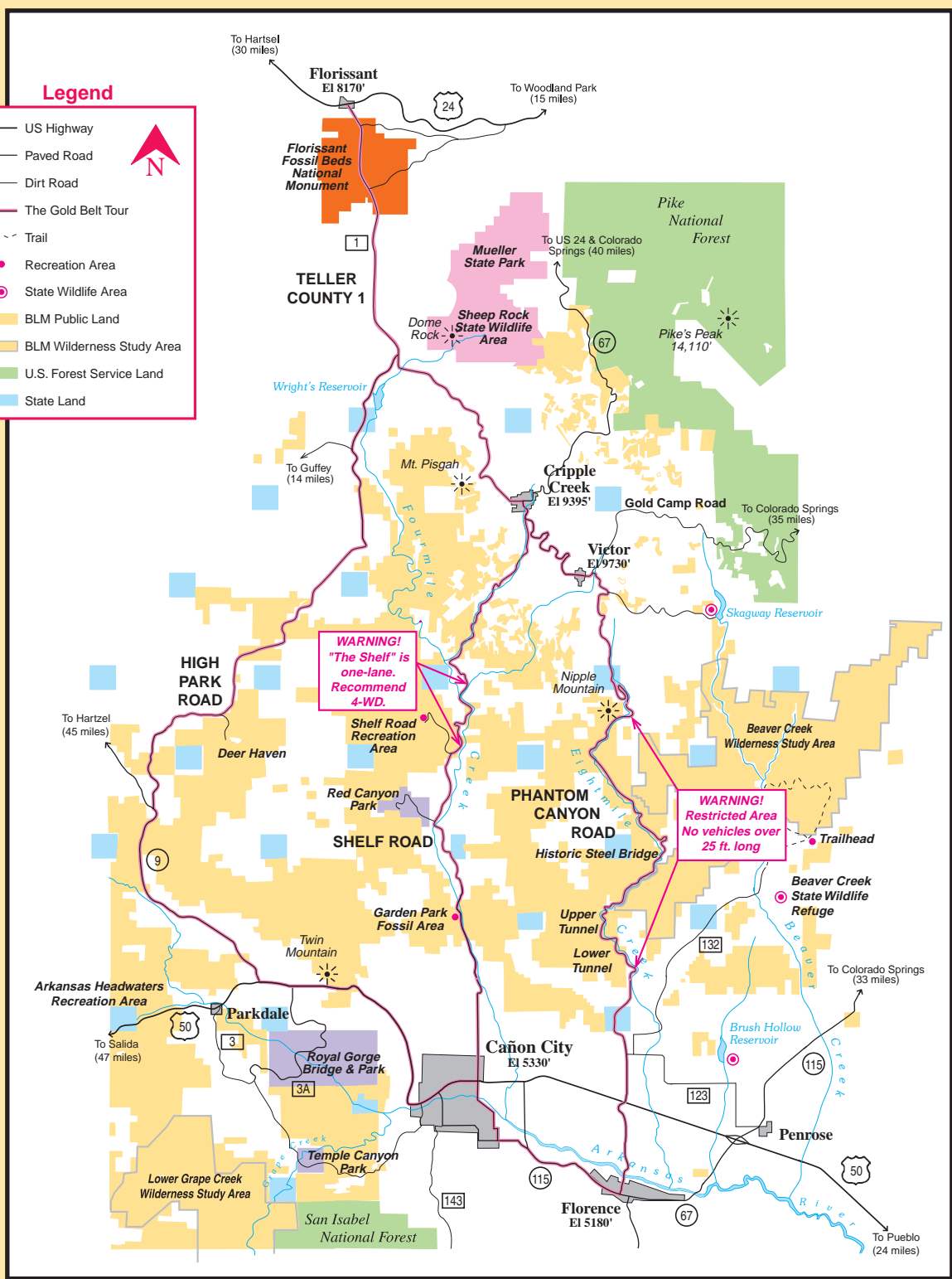
# **Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway Partnership Plan Summary**




A Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway

**Legend**

- US Highway
- Paved Road
- Dirt Road
- The Gold Belt Tour
- Trail
- Recreation Area
- State Wildlife Area
- BLM Public Land
- BLM Wilderness Study Area
- U.S. Forest Service Land
- State Land



COLORADO



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# Purpose of this Document

This document is a summary of the Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway Partnership Plan. It highlights the vision and goals for the Gold Belt Tour region and describes the important qualities we want to maintain in this scenic and historic area.

This document is intended for any group, agency, or person interested in helping to maintain the special qualities of the region, provide recreational and educational opportunities, and encourage tourism opportunities within our local communities.

The complete Gold Belt Tour Scenic Byway Partnership Plan is available by contacting the Bureau of Land Management in Cañon City, Colorado at 719-269-8500.

*Shelf Road  
Climbing  
Area  
Volunteers*



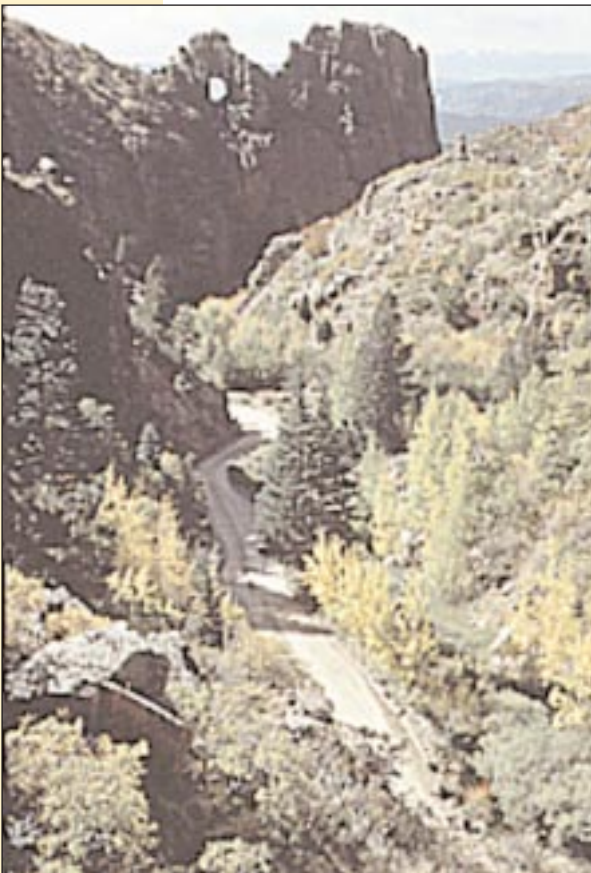
It is our hope that the people of the Gold Belt Region will adopt many of the goals expressed in this document, and that we will work together to achieve our shared vision for the Gold Belt Tour Region.

# Introduction

## The Gold Belt - A Great Place to Live and Visit

It was a combination of the historic railroads, scenic beauty and rugged mountains, and the cultural history of the Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Rushes that first drew the attention of scenic byway interests. The Cripple Creek and Victor Gold Rush, which produced more gold than the California and Alaska gold rushes combined, spawned the eventual construction of the Phantom Canyon and Shelf Roads. These roads link the towns of Florence, Cañon City, and Florissant to the towns of Victor and Cripple Creek. The Phantom Canyon road was originally the bed of the Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, and the Shelf Road was built as a stagecoach route and toll road.

The Garden Park Fossil Area, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, and Indian Springs Trace Fossil Area combine to form an internationally important center for paleontological discovery and research. Equally significant to the byway are the scenic beauty of the area and the biotic and ecosystems diversity. From the arid grasslands of Florence and



Cañon City to the fir and spruce forests near Cripple Creek, Victor, and Florissant, visitors come to hike, camp, hunt, fish, watch wildlife and drive the scenic and historic roads of the Gold Belt.

*Window  
Rock along  
Shelf Road*

## From Roadways to Byways

The Gold Belt Back Tour Scenic and Historic Byway (Gold Belt Byway) was created in response to the 1986 President's Commission on America's Outdoors which revealed the ever-growing popularity of scenic driving as an American pastime. The scenic beauty, outstanding geological areas, and historical significance more than qualified the Gold Belt Byway as one of the first scenic and historic byways in Colorado.



Governor Roy Romer, by Executive Order, established the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program and the Scenic and Historic Byways Commission: "A statewide partnership intended to provide recreational, educational and economic benefits to Coloradans and visitors through designation, interpretation, promotion and infrastructure development of outstanding touring routes in Colorado."

## The Byway Planning Process

The Gold Belt Byway is a large geographical area with remarkably diverse recreational and educational opportunities. A broad-based level of citizen involvement was needed to develop this byway partnership plan.

In 1994, a unique partnership was formed to develop a collective vision for the byway. This partnership was formalized through an agreement whereby the original 10 representatives from managing agencies appointed and empowered a 38-member steering committee, chosen to represent a broad spectrum of community interests.



*Gold Belt Plan Steering Committee*

This committee, through the solicitation of public opinion and visitor surveys, personal interviews, and the media, invited public feedback in order to develop a plan that would reflect the hopes and desires of the entire Gold Belt Byway community.



## Byway Benefits

**Development of a Community Vision** - The Gold Belt Byway offers the opportunity for the people of the byway region to work together to define their vision and goals. This clear direction makes it possible for all managers, citizens groups, landowners, business owners, and individuals to work together to achieve a shared vision.

**Preservation of Culture** - The Gold Belt Byway provides an excellent opportunity to preserve the history and culture of the past.

**Maintaining the important qualities that make this area a special place to live** - Defining the importance of a region or place is always a difficult task. This plan takes the first step toward defining these important qualities about the Gold Belt Byway region. It is these qualities that define Colorado as a special place, and they should not be compromised.

**Cooperative Projects** - Working together on projects like clean-up efforts, trail developments, and historic preservation is beneficial for everyone. In most cases, projects cost less and require less time to complete when everyone works together.



**Funding** - Collaborative planning and management of the Gold Belt Byway region creates additional opportunities to receive funding. In many cases, grants are possible only when teamwork and collaboration are evident.

**Communication** - The byway encourages improved communication between local, state, and federal agencies, local businesses, organizations, and the general public.

*Cattle  
Drive on  
High Park  
Road*

# Vision for the Future

We feel that a healthy natural environment must be maintained and that the open space and rural lands must be preserved. We want to leave intact the broad, open plains, rugged mountains and clear mountain streams that surround the five communities along the Gold Belt Byway.

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We want to promote tourism that contributes to our local economies and does not intrude upon our privacy. We want to celebrate and share with others the diverse cultural history and traditional lifestyles of our people and places.

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We want to maintain healthy habitat for the animals that help make Colorado unique. We also want to instill an appreciation for the diverse natural history and significant paleontology and geology that make this byway special.

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We have a strong desire to preserve the rural and small town lifestyles. We must carefully plan and guide future growth and development so that they are compatible with our community values.

*"The people in South Central Colorado created a vision for the Gold Belt Byway that reflects their values and goals for the future."*

*Governor Roy Romer*

# Byway Goals

## Beautification

Provide a clean and attractive appearance along the byway for residents and visitors.

## Education

Increase awareness, understanding, stewardship, and appreciation for the rich natural and cultural history, traditional lifestyles, paleontology and land uses that have endured.

## History

Maintain the significant historical characteristics along the byway and in each community.

## Signs

Signs will represent a clear, professional, attractive, and consistent message along the byway.

## Tourism

Market the various byway opportunities, attractions, and communities so that we match visitor preferences and expectations with the actual product.

## Economic Health

Develop healthy and diverse economies by enhancing existing businesses and tourism related activities and expanding needed services appropriate to each community.

## Safety

Strive to provide a safe place for people to live and visit.

## Open Space

Maintain the landscapes surrounding our communities as rural ranch land and open space.

## Environment

Ensure that the natural environment is healthy and able to flourish.

## Quality of Life

Sustain the important qualities unique to each byway segment and community.

# Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are the significant stories that are developed for each area, intended to guide the interpretive programs, facilities and media.

## Overall Byway Theme

### The Roads to Riches:

Drive the Gold Belt Byway and follow the historic routes of the roads and railroads to the Cripple Creek and Victor Mining District, one of the wealthiest gold mining districts in the world.

*Phantom Canyon Road*



### Roadway Themes

**Phantom Canyon** - The Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, the busiest narrow gauge railroad in the west during its heyday, traveled the rugged terrain of Phantom Canyon hauling coal and supplies up to the mining district and returning with gold ore.

**Shelf Road** - As you travel the Shelf Road, you are following the historic route of stagecoaches and wagons that carried people and supplies between Cañon City and Cripple Creek.

**High Park and Teller I** - Long before gold was discovered in Cripple Creek, these mountain park lands were valuable rangeland for grazing cattle. This traditional use of the land continues today.

## Community Themes

**Cañon City** - Cañon City, a supply center for the mining district, built the Shelf Road, the first toll road to Cripple Creek.

**Florence** - Florence, an important processing and shipping center for Cripple Creek's gold ore, also mined its own mineral wealth — coal and oil.

**Cripple Creek** - Cripple Creek, once the fourth largest city in Colorado, was the commercial and social hub for the fabulous wealth of the mining district.

**Victor** - Colorado's City of Gold Mines: Home to miners, mines and mills, Victor was the muscle of the mining district.

**Florissant** - Since it was established, Florissant has benefited from its location along major transportation routes. During the Cripple Creek gold rush, as many as sixteen stagecoaches daily left Florissant traveling to the mining district.

## Natural Resource Themes

**Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument** - The Florissant Fossil Beds, shale encrusted "photographs" of life in a prehistoric era, illustrate the dynamic change between today's environment and the environment of 35 million years ago.

**Indian Springs Trace Fossil Area** - The 460 million year old tracks, trails and burrows of arthropods found at Indian Springs Trace Fossil Area provide valuable insights into the evolution of living things.

**Garden Park Fossil Area** - Past and present dinosaur discoveries in Garden Park have created significant scientific knowledge and tremendous public interest in dinosaurs.

**Geology** - Textbook examples of almost every type of geologic feature and event imaginable are found along the Gold Belt Byway.

**Ecosystems** - The Gold Belt Byway traveler experiences many different ecosystems — evident in changes in vegetation, wildlife, terrain, and scenery.

# Defining the Byway's Special Qualities

## What Makes the Gold Belt Byway Special?

The Gold Belt Byway offers an adventurous, back country driving experience. The Gold Belt Byway is one of three byways in the state of Colorado that has portions that are gravel, back country roads. The Gold Belt Byway winds through rugged, narrow canyons and traverses expansive mountain grasslands.

As visitors drive the Gold Belt Byway and experience the dramatic changes in scenery, vegetation, and wildlife, they observe the diversity and richness of the southern Rocky Mountain region.

Visitors travel along historic railroad and stagecoach routes that connected the Cripple Creek Mining District to the communities, allowing visitors to imagine what life was like in the 1890s.

The Gold Belt Byway also offers an opportunity to explore rural and diverse communities. Florence, Cañon City, Cripple Creek, Victor, and Florissant are all located along the byway. They are interconnected communities, but each has a unique character and contribution to the history of the region. Visitors will be able to enjoy shopping, museums, restaurants, and activities in these historic towns that reflect the culture of each community.

The Gold Belt Byway also links several significant tourist attractions — Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, the City of Cripple Creek, the Cripple Creek Mining District, and the Royal Gorge of the Arkansas River — and is accessible from several Front Range cities.

# Important Characteristics that Must be Maintained in each Community and along the Byway



*Florissant Heritage Museum*

## Teller County 1

Maintain the open space and scenic views along this route. Important qualities include the peaceful, open rural landscapes, and clean air and water.

## Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument

Preserve and interpret the significance of the fossil resources, history, and the natural ecosystems. The National Monument is a place where people can spend time with family and friends, learn about fossil resources, history and natural ecosystems on-site, get away from the everyday routine, relax and enjoy a peaceful setting, and feel safe and comfortable.



*Historic  
Hornbeck  
Homestead*

## Florissant

Preserve the historic integrity of the community. Preserve the history of the Midland Railroad, the Hundley Stagecoach, and the Native American history. The community wants to increase byway visitation through town, capture expenditures from the byway visitors, and attract new business and service providers.

The community wants to have a better connection with the Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument. Goals also include restoring the downtown area with historic street lights, bringing to life the history of this community, beautifying the community, and providing recreational and educational opportunities in town.



*Petrified  
Sequoia  
Tree Stump*

## Cripple Creek

Preserve the historic turn-of-the century character of downtown Cripple Creek. Preserve the historic structures, streets, and other features. Also preserve the historic flavor or character of Cripple Creek a bustling city of influence, historic types of transportation, melodramas, and the sights and sounds of Cripple Creek in the 1890s. Maintain a small town atmosphere with a strong sense of community.



*Downtown Cripple Creek*

Encourage planned growth that strives to preserve the historic character and small town atmosphere of Cripple Creek. Serve as a destination community and provide a variety of overnight accommodations, restaurants, recreational opportunities, historic educational tours and programs, art and literature, and limited stakes gaming. Enhance and broaden the types of cultural opportunities that are reflective of the period 1895 to 1905.

## Cripple Creek to Victor (Highway 67)

**Maintain a connection to our mining heritage.** This winding, high elevation highway offers glimpses of numerous mountains, historic mines, and present day mining.



*Historic Mining*

## Victor

**Maintain the historic mining-town character and small mountain town atmosphere of downtown Victor.** The town is focusing on re-creating the historic downtown of Victor to the early 1900s. Visitors would experience what it was like to live in Victor during the gold mining days of the early 1900s.

The small mountain town atmosphere is also very important to residents. Important qualities include: peaceful, quiet, slow pace, friendly people, and clean air and water. This community would like to expand the resident population with a limit of 1,200. Planned growth and long-range planning is critical to ensure that these important qualities are not lost.



*Victor City Hall*



## Florence

Maintain our small town atmosphere and preserve the historic integrity of downtown Florence. The community vision is: Strive for a healthy, caring community, focusing on the past, having an eye on the future, while maintaining our small town atmosphere.

Florence is a gateway community on the southern end of the byway.



*Scenic  
Florence*

## Florence to Cañon City (Highway 115)

Maintain the rural, small town characteristics of this area. The community wants to maintain a winding secondary highway that parallels the railroad and the Arkansas River. The scenic views of small farms, coal mines, and beautiful natural bluff formations make this drive a peaceful and relaxing trip.

## Florence to Phantom Canyon

Maintain the scenic and historic open spaces and encourage well-planned, clustered, commercial and industrial areas. This route, which retraces the path of the historic Florence and Cripple Creek Railroad, offers open, unobstructed views of the Wet Mountains. The quiet, peaceful, rural lifestyles along this road are what make this area special.

## Cañon City

Preserve the historic integrity of downtown Cañon City, the 19th and 20th century architecture and other historic and cultural features. Cañon City has identified quality of life as an important goal of the community. Quality of life means: clean and beautiful downtown area, a safe place to be, well-planned businesses and services, friendly people, quality goods and services, and appreciating the culture and features of a small, rural, western town.



*Dinosaur Depot*

*Scenic view of the Royal Gorge*



## Highway 50

Maintain the scenic views and exciting tourist opportunities of this gateway to the Rocky Mountains. For westbound travelers, this is the first ascent into the mountains of Colorado. The views along Eight Mile Hill of the Sangre de Cristo mountains are breathtaking. The character of the open meadows should be maintained.

Various tourist attractions and activities such as the Royal Gorge Bridge, Buckskin Joe, Tunnel Drive, Skyline Drive, helicopter rides, horseback riding, whitewater rafting, rock shops, and restaurants add to the excitement and create memorable experiences of the journey into the mountains of Colorado. We plan to build the Dinosaur Discovery Center and provide access from this highway. We want to ensure that growth and development in this area are carefully planned and maintained.



*Rancher Nate Patton*

## Shelf Road

**Maintain the scenic views and rural lifestyles along this route.** These qualities include the area's quiet, peaceful, and relaxed pace, its clean air and water, and its character as a safe, rural environment. These qualities are critical to byway area residents who live and recreate here.

## Garden Park Fossil Area

**Preserve the natural resources and recreational opportunities.** This segment of Lower Shelf is known primarily for the internationally important paleontology discoveries made there, and for its continuing importance as a paleontology research and education center.



*Garden Park Fossil Area*

Area residents find the area ideal for many recreational activities, including off-highway-vehicle use, hiking, camping, biking, and target shooting. Garden Park's proximity to Cañon City and other urban areas, and its easy accessibility have made it a perennial favorite of area residents. It is important to maintain the area's ability to support these activities and maintain the integrity of the environment at the same time.

## Red Canyon Park

**Maintain the scenic, natural landscapes as a peaceful mountain park.** This Cañon City Park is unique because of its spectacular, red rock formations and breathtaking scenic views. Red Canyon Park, despite its seeming remoteness, is within miles of Cañon City, and is easily accessed via this section of the Lower Shelf Road.



*Red Canyon Park*

Area residents enjoy picnicking, camping, hiking, climbing, and scenic viewing. They enjoy being close to nature, spending time with family and friends, and relaxing in this quiet, clean and peaceful environment.

## Shelf Road Recreation Area

**Maintain the natural landscapes and recreation opportunities.** Juniper and piñon covered plateaus give way to sheer limestone cliffs, over 100 feet high in places, which curve and wind throughout the area. The cliffs offer some of the finest expert sport climbing anywhere.

The area's relative isolation and high degree of difficulty encountered, challenge even the most experienced climbers. Here they can enjoy the sense of community shared by the many who seek the solitude, sense of adventure and closeness to nature the best climbs offer.



*Climbers at the Shelf Road Recreation Area*

## Upper Shelf Road

**Maintain the rough, rugged, back country, mountainous qualities of this area.**

This area is for the adventuresome familiar with Colorado's unpredictable, ever-changing climate. Plans are to maintain this section of Shelf Road as a rugged, 4-wheel drive route. Minimal amenities and developments will be provided in this area. Only undeveloped, dispersed recreational use, such as rock climbing, wildlife viewing, and picnicking will occur.

This rugged backcountry area provides a place for people to feel a sense of adventure and discovery, to challenge themselves in a rough back country area, to see a scenic part of Colorado with minimal human impact, and the opportunity to see and learn about wildlife, mining, geology, and ranching.



*The "Shelf" Road*

## Phantom Canyon

Preserve the natural, scenic and historic characteristics of the canyon. This road is one of the most scenic and historic drives in Colorado. The route increases in elevation from 5,500 to 9,500 feet and offers the chance to see a wide range of plants and wildlife in their natural setting. We want to ensure that these diverse ecosystems are healthy and allowed to flourish. We want to have the road maintained as a gravel road that follows the route of the F&CC Railroad. The unique bridges offer a visual link to the areas historic past and should be preserved. The road condition and narrow bridges encourage people to slow down and view the scenery.

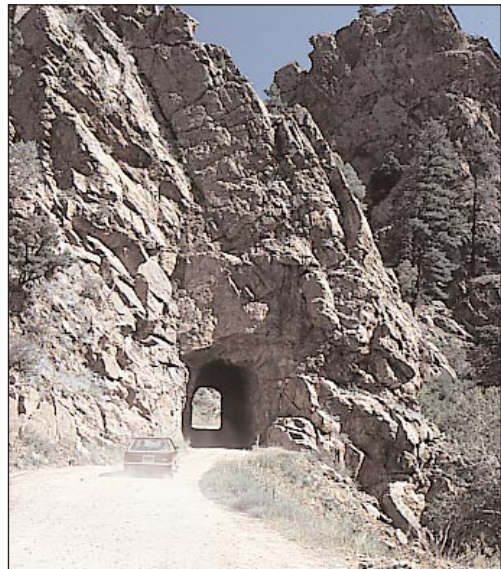
This beautiful area provides a place for people to reconnect with nature, a chance to get away from the everyday routine, a drive that is exciting and stimulating, to reaffirm a spiritual connection, and the opportunity to leave the developed world and to re-establish our link with the natural world.



*Historic  
Tunnel*



*Steel Bridge*



*Tunnel  
Today*

## High Park

Maintain the scenic views, open space and rural ranching culture. This route passes many historic ranches and scenic, open views. There are spectacular unobstructed views of Pikes Peak, Dome Rock, and Sheep Rock and high mountain parks. Large ranches and range lands cover the landscape. We want the road to be maintained as a paved and safe route. This is the only paved road from Cañon City to Cripple Creek and Victor.

This scenic and rural ranching area provides a place for people to take a leisurely drive through high mountain parks, to enjoy the scenic views, to escape the stress of everyday life, to be able to experience relaxation and peacefulness, and to see and experience the rural ranching culture.



*Scenic view of High Park*



*Early Cattle Drivers*

## Byway Connection to Colorado Springs

Preserve the historic connections between Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek/Victor.

Colorado Springs is historically connected to Cripple Creek and Victor. The routes of the Midland Railroad and the Gold Camp Road are some of the important connections that should not be lost.

Colorado Springs is the major hub where much of the traffic to the byway originates and serves as the “base camp” for the Gold Belt Byway and other attractions in the Pikes Peak region.



*Historic Gold Mill in Colorado Springs*



*Historic Midland Train*

# A Partnership Approach

## Who are the partners to this plan?

**Gold Belt Byway Organization** - This is the primary organization that will coordinate and make recommendations for the Gold Belt Byway efforts. The organization will coordinate with the managing agencies, volunteer groups, and other organizations and individuals defined below. This byway organization will ensure that all local citizen concerns and affected interests are represented.

**Managing Agencies** - Through a formal Cooperative Agreement, 10 managing agencies have committed to jointly manage the Gold Belt Byway. The 10 managing agencies include: the cities of Florence, Florissant, Cripple Creek, Victor, and Cañon City, the Bureau of Land Management - Royal Gorge Resource Area, Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument, Colorado Department of Transportation - Region 2, Fremont County and Teller County.

**Volunteer Support** - Numerous volunteer groups and individuals currently assist agencies and civic organizations in ways that directly support the goals and vision of this plan. With the continued support and dedication of these volunteer groups and individuals, a great deal of this plan can be accomplished and the byway vision will become a reality.



*Quad Dusters volunteer clean-up of Phantom Canyon*



*Max and Mamie Bond, Max grew up in Phantom Canyon*

**Local Landowners** - Many private landowners live along or near the byway. The byway organization will look for ways that will benefit local landowners while helping to meet the byway goals and vision. Examples include clean-ups, increased law enforcement, and support for traditional land uses, such as ranching.

**Local Business, Industry, Schools, Interest Groups and Government** - Many tourism, recreational, and educational businesses and organizations have similar goals with this byway plan. The Gold Belt Byway Organization will look for ways to form new partnerships with these businesses and organizations.

# Opportunities for the Future

## Strengthen the Economies of Local Communities -

Tourism is a major industry in Colorado. The communities along the byway benefit from byway-related tourism. The communities also benefit by rebuilding and restoring their downtown areas in ways that feature their historic significance and links to the byway. There are many opportunities for small businesses in each community.



*Victor Museum*

## Preserve Cultural and Natural Resources -

There are many cultural and natural resources important to the people of this region. Agencies, communities, and other parties can work together toward fulfillment of common goals.

*100th  
Celebration  
of Florence  
& Cripple  
Creek  
Railroad*



*Rocky  
Mtn.  
Bighorn  
Sheep*



**Promote Clean-ups and Beautification** - One of the great opportunities for the byway is the opportunity to work together on clean-up projects and provide incentives for beautification. Imagine roadways free of litter, carefully landscaped



*Volunteer Effort*

**Increase Local Involvement** - Agencies, organizations, and volunteer interests will be encouraged to work together to achieve the vision for this region.



*Doris  
Wolfe and  
Stump  
Witcher,  
local  
Historians*



**Focus Attention on Education** - The byway will focus education on the rich natural and cultural history, traditional lifestyles, and land uses that have endured. We can't expect our schools to do it alone. We must be involved in teaching our children and visitors the importance of caring for the environment and respecting the people who live in the area.



*Information Kiosk at Tenderfoot Hill*



*Wayside Exhibit at Garden Park Fossil Area*

**Increase Collaboration and Communication** - There is a great opportunity to bring together a cross-section of citizens who can address new issues and concerns. Such a collaboration that involves local citizens and the various agencies can have a very strong voice, in the state as well as the nation, for funding support and other benefits.

**Coordinate Marketing** - There is a clear need to coordinate marketing efforts. Develop shared marketing information so that consistent information will be given to byway visitors.

**Support Well-Planned Recreational Developments** - Through this collaborative planning effort more appropriate recreational opportunities can be planned and developed, such as support for the Arkansas River walk, sanitation facilities for Phantom Canyon, and improvements for Red Canyon Park.



*Arkansas Riverwalk*



*Mountain Biking in Phantom Canyon*

# People Working Together

People working together is what the Gold Belt Byway is all about. The Gold Belt Steering committee has given us the starting point - the vision. Now it is critical that we work hard to ensure that everyone, from restaurant owners and gas station attendants, from government officials and neighboring landowners, to local school teachers and real estate agents work together toward achieving this shared vision.

There are many ways that you can get involved: help to preserve a historic building, beautify a stretch of roadway, preserve open space, or teach others about our local history.

*The Santa Fe Train Depot was restored through a community partnership effort.*



## Here's How

To get involved or find out more about the Gold Belt Byway, contact one of the following agencies:

Bureau of Land Management, Cañon City	719-269-8500
Cripple Creek Chamber of Commerce	719-689-2169
Cañon City Chamber of Commerce	719-275-2331
Florence Chamber of Commerce	719-784-3544
Victor Chamber of Commerce	719-689-3211
Dinosaur Depot, Cañon City	719-269-7150
Florissant Fossil Beds National Monument	719-748-3253

# Notes



Partnerships

