

ODOT, Scenic Byways announce
designations across state

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During this Centennial year, Oklahoma has even more reasons to celebrate as three communities have officially received an Oklahoma Scenic Byways designation.

Noted as an official Centennial Celebration project, the Byways Program is a grass-roots collaborative effort with local communities working with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the University of Oklahoma Outreach to establish, recognize and preserve selected roads based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities. Designation promotes community sustainability, fosters efforts to preserve the unique history of the Byway and encourages travelers to experience our state's diversity.

Newly recognized Byways include:

Osage Nation Heritage Trail along US-60 which features Bartlesville, Ponca City and Pawhuska and the area's Tall Grass Prairie Preserve.

Wichita Mountain Byway along SH-115 and SH-49 offers a spectacular natural environment featuring the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

Cimarron Heritage Trail extends from Keyes in the Panhandle on US-64 and SH-325 west to the New Mexico state line and features Black Mesa and other archeological sites.

"We welcome these communities into Oklahoma Scenic Byways Program. The next tier of designation is, of course, the national level, and there is a possibility some of these very routes possess characteristics or qualities which fulfill national requirements. I encourage sponsors to pursue that designation, further highlighting the distinctive qualities of our state," David Smith, Chairman of the state Scenic Byways Advisory Council and ODOT Division Engineer, said.

Other Oklahoma Byways include **The Mountain Pass Scenic Byway** on US-59/270, **Mountain Gateway Scenic Byway** on US-259 both in southeastern Oklahoma; the **Talimena Scenic Drive** also in the southeast, which expands into Arkansas and was officially designated a National Scenic Byway in September 2005; and **Route 66** spanning nearly 400 miles with endpoints in Quapaw and Texola. Route 66 communities are currently seeking designation as an All-American Road.

The Program is a cooperative effort between ODOT and the University of Oklahoma Outreach and its Council is responsible for considering state applications and consists of several federal and state agencies and community organizations.

The Oklahoma Scenic Byways Program recently received the Recognition of Excellence Award for Innovations in Outreach and Engagement from the national organization, the University Continuing Education Association. The award was presented April 14 at the UCEA Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia.

For more information on how your community can apply for Oklahoma Scenic Byway designation, contact University Outreach, 405-325-2848 or ODOT Enhancements Division, 405-521-2454 or visit www.okscenicbyways.org.

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(Editors and News Directors: For more information call the ODOT Public Affairs Division at 405-521-6000. To download the ODOT and/or Scenic Byways logo visit www.okladot.state.ok.us/public-info/press/)