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US Hwy 12 now officially named the White Pass Scenic Byway

CHEHALIS, Wash. – February 20, 2008 – The White Pass Scenic Byway is one of twenty six byways designated by Washington State Department of Transportation. It is a goal of the new organization promoting this corridor to have US Hwy 12 referred to as The White Pass Scenic Byway.

A corridor management plan was published this spring to lay out plans for enhancing and promoting US Hwy 12 from I-5 at Exit 68 to Naches in Yakima County. This 124-mile corridor has an average traffic volume of 40,000 vehicles per day. More significant is the tremendous diversity of recreational, cultural and geological features along the corridor. The hope is that this byway will become recognized as a National Scenic Byway which will make available more funds for new and exciting projects. The communities along the byway, together with the US Forest Service will develop the byway according to the corridor management plan.

After four years of community planning, a new organization was created on July 19, 2007 to execute a plan to promote the intrinsic values of the byway's natural and cultural resources. This will be accomplished by promoting and enhancing the assets and resources located along the byway. The non-profit organization is governed by a board of directors with representatives from communities along the byway from Salkum to Naches, including Mossyrock, Morton, Packwood, Randle and Glenoma. Agencies and groups associated with tourism and economic development along the byway have also been asked to join the effort. The goal of the group, aside from promoting and enhancing traveler experience on the byway, is to increase the economic vitality of this areas of Lewis and Yakima Counties.

The initial efforts of the organization will include submitting grants for funding a major gateway signage project through the Federal Highway Administration. Signs have been designed for each community along the byway in addition to signs indicating the east and west entrance of the byway corridor. Other current projects underway include marketing material, maps and website design. Future projects already identified include enhancing turn-out and viewpoints, creating informational display kiosks, as well as wayfinding signage for the byway. The byway effort has no regulatory component. It is strictly a promotional and enhancement effort, led by a grassroots and community-based group of individuals for economic benefit.

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