

## Scenic byway plans moving along

By PAULETTE LIKOUDIS/Finger Lakes Times | Posted: Thursday, May 8, 2008 12:00 am

Organizers of an effort to have an 18-mile stretch of Route 414 from Watkins Glen to Lodi designated as a scenic byway say they are on track with the project.

On June 12, the board of Seneca Lake Scenic Byway Inc. will greet the public and area business owners from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Valois-Hector-Logan Fire Hall to give a progress report and answer questions. The last update session, held at the Lodi Town Hall a few years ago, drew a large crowd.

About five years ago, the West Hector Community Association first explored the possibility of having a portion of the highway - which winds along the eastern side of Seneca Lake - declared a byway in order to increase economic development in Schuyler County. Recently, a non-profit corporation was formed specifically for advancing the scenic route in northern Schuyler and southern Seneca Counties.

The purpose of the byway is to protect the economic and aesthetic interests of residents; enhance business enterprises such as agriculture, wineries, bed-and-breakfasts, inns, restaurants and recreation facilities; improve the safety of roadway access by autos, bicycles and pedestrians; and provide incentive for better highway maintenance, as well as state and federal grant funding.

Director Chris Kimball-Peterson said the ultimate goal is for the byway to encircle Seneca Lake, but for now, taking small steps in just two communities is the approach. The entire distance around Cayuga Lake has been marked as a scenic byway for two years.

Other byway groups in the state typically hire consultants to help them achieve the status, but the Seneca Lake Scenic Byway Advisory Committee is working solely with the talents of its members, said Kimball-Peterson.

Original committee members Bruce Adams, Vicky Kelly and George Kellogg of Hector have been joined by former Seneca County Attorney Steven Getman of Interlaken and former Lodi Town Supervisor Barry O'Neill, who is chair of the group.

Although not required, there are plans for the Seneca Lake Scenic Byway to have at least two pull-off points with small kiosks, where travelers can safely park to enjoy the view, look at a map and pick up information about area businesses, historic attractions and upcoming events.

“The purpose of the kiosk is to capture interest. The byway is not just a strip of highway,” said Bruce Adams, a longtime community activist and former councilman for the Town of Hector. A design has not yet been chosen for the roadside stands.

At the June meeting, state Department of Transportation representatives will outline the nomination process for a scenic byway declaration and address the needs of residents and business owners, some of whom mistakenly fear that the byway designation would bring restrictions on private property use and increased regulation of signage.

A reduction of the speed limit in the targeted distance is favored by most area residents and business owners, said Kimball-Peterson. The speed limit on a state highway is set by the DOT, not municipalities.

“However, if we get the byway, it might give us a little more clout,” said Kimball-Peterson, adding that the Schuyler County sheriff’s department has been made aware of concerns about the mix of increasing traffic density and a 55-mile-per-hour speed limit.

On April 8, the Seneca County Board of Supervisors issued a resolution to back the Seneca Lake Scenic Byway project.

Now, organizers are seeking support letters from residents in the communities of Hector and Lodi. Those will be added to a nomination package to be sent to the DOT’s Schenectady office for its approval. The request for byway designation would require passage by both houses of New York’s Legislature before proceeding to the governor’s office. That could take place in 2009, said Kimball-Peterson.

For more information, contact Kimball-Peterson at (607) 387-4990 or [clkp329@aol.com](mailto:clkp329@aol.com) or O’Neill at (607)582-6487 or [jboneill2@empacc.net](mailto:jboneill2@empacc.net).