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16. Abstract This report documents the proceedings from the Transportation and Tourism Track at the Texas Rural Transportation Conference held in College Station, Texas on February 21, 2000. The Conference was sponsored by the Texas Transportation Institute, the Southwest Region University Transportation Center, and the Texas A&M University Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences Department. The proceedings summarize the presentations from the opening session and the breakout sessions. The two breakout sessions addressed tourism and transportation in Texas and Texas tourism trails. The main topics covered by speakers are highlighted. The proceedings also present the key issues and research needs relating to transportation and tourism in the state identified by the conference participants.		13. Type of Report and Period Covered	
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**Proceedings from the
Texas Rural Transportation Conference
Transportation and Tourism Track**

February 21, 2001

**George Bush Presidential Conference Center
College Station, Texas**

**Sponsored by
Texas Transportation Institute
Southwest Region University Transportation Center
Texas A&M University, Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences Department**



**Texas Rural Transportation Conference
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Department**

Conference Proceedings

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is the third largest industry in Texas, contributing approximately \$34 billion annually to the state's economy. The travel and tourism industry is diverse and touches all parts of the state, including many rural areas.

Transportation is critical to promoting travel and tourism. Providing convenient and affordable travel alternatives is key to attracting visitors to natural areas, historic sites, and attractions. All modes are needed to help facilitate travel by tourists. Ensuring that the transportation system in Texas supports the tourism industry is important to its ongoing success and growth.

The Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI's) Partnership for Transportation and Tourism is helping define and address issues associated with transportation and tourism in the state. To help identify critical issues and to assist in facilitating interaction among representatives from the transportation sector and the tourism industry, TTI sponsored a Conference on Rural Transportation that included a track on transportation and tourism. The Conference was held on February 21, 2001 at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center in College Station.

The Conference featured speakers addressing the role of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) in tourism, the Texas Historical Commission's Heritage Tourism Program, and tourism trails in the state. Participants also helped identify key issues and research needs associated with transportation and tourism in the state. All of these elements are summarized in the Conference Proceedings.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Maintaining a viable transportation system has long been recognized as a critical component to ensuring the economic health and vitality of rural areas in Texas. The safe and efficient movement of people and goods by highways, public transit, intercity bus, freight and passenger railroads, and air is important for the continued growth and prosperity of Texas.

Rural areas in Texas face significant transportation issues today. Maintaining adequate freeways, roadways, bridges, waterways, public transit systems, intercity bus services, freight and passenger rail systems, and airports and air services is critical to ensuring individual mobility and transporting agricultural and other commodities.

The transportation system is critical to the travel and tourism industry, which is an important component of the rural economy in Texas. Travel and tourism is the third largest industry in the state, with tourists spending approximately \$34 billion on an annual basis. The travel and tourism industry is very diverse and touches all parts of the state.

Transportation and tourism go hand-in-hand. Providing convenient and affordable travel alternatives is key to attracting visitors to natural areas and attractions. All modes – airplanes, automobiles, passenger rail, public transit, intercity buses, boats, bicycles, and walking – are needed. Further some modes, such as historic steam trains like the Texas State Railroad, became tourist attractions in their own right.

Ensuring that the transportation system in Texas supports the tourism industry is important to its ongoing success and growth. At the same time, the transportation network should not detract from the visitor's experience. Traffic congestion, lack of travel alternatives, vehicle generated air pollution, delays due to construction, deteriorating infrastructure elements, and intrusive modes represent just a few transportation issues that may detract from visitor's experiences and may limit the growth of tourism in the state.

The transportation issues associated with visitor attractions, recreation areas, state and national parks, public lands, and historic sites are complex and multidimensional. Providing multimodal travel alternatives to enhance the mobility of visitors, while protecting the pristine nature of these areas and addressing environmental concerns is a priority. Balancing the economic vitality, cultural values, and natural features of gateway communities are important issues. Designing, constructing, and operating a sustainable infrastructure is critical in environmentally sensitive areas.

The Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI's) Partnership for Transportation and Tourism is helping to define and address these issues. The Partnership is developing a multidisciplinary program of research, education, technology transfer, deployment, and evaluation supporting travel to and from and within visitor attractions, recreation areas, national and state parks, public lands, and historical sites. The Partnership is engaging a wide variety of public and private groups interested in providing multimodal transportation systems to maintain the environmental

integrity of these areas, to enhance the mobility of visitors, and to improve the economic vitality of gateway communities.

The Institute sponsored a conference on February 21, 2001 to help initiate a dialog with representatives from the travel and tourism industry in the state. The *Texas Rural Transportation Conference* was held at the George Bush Presidential Conference Center on the Texas A&M University Campus in College Station. Along with TTI, the Conference sponsors included the Southwest Region University Transportation Center and the Texas A&M University Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Department. Funding was provided by the Kellogg Collective Leadership Project and the Texas A&M University System.

One of the two conference themes focused on transportation and tourism, while the other theme addressed goods movement in rural areas. Conference participants included representatives from state agencies, local communities, regional tourism groups, universities, and other organizations.

The Video, *Uniquely Texas – A Lone Star Look at Cultural and Heritage Tourism*, was shown at the opening session to help set the tone for the conference. Breakout sessions on transportation and tourism in Texas and Texas tourism trails provided further information on various aspects of cultural and heritage tourism in the state. Participants in the breakout sessions had the opportunity to help identify critical issues and research needs relating to transportation and tourism in the state.

The main points covered in the video and the breakout session presentations are summarized in these proceedings, and issues and research needs identified by participants are presented. These proceedings will be used by TTI's Partnership for Transportation and Tourism and other groups to help advance needed research, outreach, and technology transfer activities related to transportation and tourism.

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OPENING SESSION–TOURISM AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION IN TEXAS

Katherine F. Turnbull, Presiding

*Transportation and Tourism
Uniquely Texas – A Lone Star Look at
Cultural & Heritage Tourism*



The opening session featured the video, *Uniquely Texas – A Lone Star Look at Cultural and Heritage Tourism*. The video represents the collaborative effort of the Texas Association of Museums, the Texas Commission on the Arts, the Texas Historical Commission, and the Texas Travel Industry Association. The video provides an overview of cultural and heritage tourism in the state and presents a five-point plan for creating and promoting cultural tourism in Texas. A few of the main points from the video are highlighted here.

Narrator: Texas is a place where our legacy became our living. Where there was work, there were families. Towns sprang up like new grass and as they grew and evolved, they took on a character and a flavor all their own. Today the very heritage that shaped our economic fortunes has become an industry itself. People come to Texas in droves to experience a history and a culture that is unique. In fact, tourism is the third largest revenue producing industry in the state. The benefits of historical or cultural tourism are huge and communities across Texas are looking for a way to turn Lone Star assets into actions.

If you are ready to cultivate or pioneer a historical or cultural tourism initiative, consider this five-point plan. Let's take a swing around Texas and see how five cities have put our five-point plan to work

Research

Start with an honest appraisal of your assets. What do you have going for you – history, folklore, and great old buildings, ceremonies? Another piece of the research process is identifying the themes that identify your town.

*Wanda Mitchell, Manager
Commerce and Tourism Bureau
Post, Texas*

In the early 1980's we took a look at what was going on in Post because the oil business began to drop and the cattle business was not great. The leaders in town, especially our mayor, began to look at Post and see what could be done to keep it alive and make it grow. In 1985, we applied for the National Endowment of Arts grant to renovate the Algerita Hotel. It was the first hotel built by C.W. Post. It is now the Algerita Arts Center. That project led to the renovation of more of the downtown area. A decision was made to apply for the Texas Main Street Program, and in 1987 we were designated a Texas Main Street City.

I think the themes that identify Post are our oil, agriculture, farming and ranching, and our heritage background. People are infatuated with C.W. Post. They equate him with being the cereal magnate so it is a natural thing for cultural and heritage tourism.

Interpretation

The next step is to interpret all of that information. Look for links between themes and resources to find the best way to tell your story. As you look for ways to tell your story you don't want to overlook the obvious. But at the same time you want to look beyond the obvious to create an experience that is authentic and unique. Maybe you create a walking tour, stage a festival, or develop a museum, or maybe you do all three.

*Maureen Patton, Executive Director
The Grand 1894 Opera House
Galveston, Texas*

When we started looking at what made Galveston different, we found an amazing array of things that have happened here. Galveston was a major port when it was first started – a thriving metropolitan area in terms of its cotton, shipping, and banking industries. We have Victorian architecture, the official Opera House of the State of Texas, and a downtown area that was the Wall Street of the Southwest.

What we have are the beaches and the history of the 1900 storm. The Grand 1894 Opera House is in many respects the microcosm of the spirit of survival of Galveston. They used the Grand as a place to come back together, to cry about what happened and to maybe laugh a little bit and forget about what happened, but they used it pull together as a community, which is what community is all about and it is what the heritage of community is all about.

When people come to Galveston they really do get the sense that they are stepping back in time on a Dickens street or they go into homes that have been lovingly cared for and

restored that they again give you that experience.

All of the things that go together to make a community special are part of cultural and heritage tourism. It is the unique features that draw people to you because they want to know about you and you want to tell them.

Community

Next you want to get the community involved. This kind of initiative is too big, too complex for one individual, even one organization to tackle. A good way to build support is make sure people understand the benefits of cultural and heritage tourism. If a community doesn't appreciate its history and culture, then why would anyone else? Community support for cultural and heritage tourism is absolutely essential. So getting that support should be a real priority.

*Joe Vera, City Manager
Hidalgo, Texas*

Hidalgo, Texas is a small community in the Rio Grand Valley on the Texas/Mexico border. What we were trying to do was find something that would make people want to stop in Hidalgo. There is really not a lot here. So we had to capitalize on some the historical buildings and other things that we have here. The Pump House was the project that we identified as something that we could capitalize on to get people to stop and visit Hidalgo. From day one, all segments of the community and the community leaders have been involved in the Pump House project. We applied for a \$900,000 grant for the project and received a grant for \$720,000. But when we went to bid out the project it came in at \$1.3 million. So the city had to find the rest of funding.

I would have to tell other communities, whether small or large, that if they have a cultural or heritage tourism project they should do all they can to put this project together. The benefits that you will see we have seen here in Hidalgo and the rewards are great. We have experienced a lot of tourism because of this project that otherwise we wouldn't have.

It is important that we instill pride in our kids and pride in our community and this is a project that has really done that.

Marketing

When you are ready for business, how do you get the people to come? That is where marketing comes in. You have to know who your audience is and make sure they get the message. There are lots of ways to do that from signs on the interstate to a Web Site on the Internet.

*Charlie Jarrell, Special Projects Officer,
Office of Cultural Affairs
San Antonio, Texas*

Cultural tourism is in the business sense marketing a destination through its cultural resources. San Antonio is a pretty sprawling community and a lot of very interesting activities are going on beyond the downtown area. "Beyond the Alamo," will hopefully, help people do just that, enjoy the Alamo and then go beyond it and find very interesting and unique things about San Antonio.

We have packaged different kinds of activities in three or four ways so that we can give people different options about where they want to go beyond the Alamo. The visitors we are trying to reach with the cultural tourism marketing efforts are people who tend to travel for more than just

the ordinary. This marketing effort helps people outside our community learn more about San Antonio, but it is also a wonderful way for people in our community to rediscover some of the richness of their own heritage.

We want to advertise in cultural publications and the Internet. We are hoping that people who come to San Antonio as cultural tourist and take advantage of our "Beyond the Alamo" offerings will spread the news by word of mouth. That is the strongest form of recommendation we can get.

Collaboration

Finally, once you get visitors to your exhibit or event, how do you make sure the experience lives up to their expectations? That is a pretty tall order and that is where partnerships can make a difference. Finding partners with the right skills to share the load can increase your chances of success.

Remember, partnerships don't have to stop at the city limits. For small and rural communities, connecting with neighbors is a great way to maximize your resources and create a critical mass of cultural and heritage attractions.

*Douglas Harmon, Executive Director
Fort Worth Convention & Visitors Bureau
Fort Worth, Texas*

Culture and heritage is such a big part of Fort Worth, such a big part of Texas, but you have to have the forums to dialogue, discuss, and go forward with it. You have to look at it as a system because when a visitor comes and sees a performance or a museum exhibit that is not the only thing they are doing. Hopefully, they are staying overnight, going to restaurants, or having

what is really a complete experience. That is why all of those people need to work together. Sometimes the hotel people are not use to talking to the museum people. We need to be facilitators of that collaboration. That is the key part of our role and everyone needs to come forward with the good ideas.

The City of Fort Worth, with the help of a lot of different entities and people, has created a project that I think is one of the premier projects from a heritage tourism standpoint. City employees dressed authentically like 1880s cowboys each day, twice a day, drive longhorns along Exchange Avenue. In just the first year we've had almost \$2 million worth of publicity about the cattle drive and

that is wonderful. The world knows about the cattle drive in Fort Worth, Texas.

The bottom line is that you need to be very creative in your collaboration to make cultural and heritage tourism successful. But the payoff is tremendous.

Well, there you have it. Research, interpretation, community, marketing, and collaboration. The fundamentals for making cultural and heritage tourism work. Every town has a story to tell and you want to tell yours in a way that is authentic and unique. Be creative, have a vision, and share it with everyone. Whatever you develop do it with quality, originality, and style.

BREAKOUT SESSION—TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM IN TEXAS

Jim Petrick, Presiding

TxDOT's Role in Tourism in Texas

Doris Howdeshell

Director, Travel Division

Texas Department of Transportation



Doris Howdeshell discussed the activities of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Travel Division and the role the Department plays in promoting tourism in the state. She presented information on the Department's Travel Information Centers, travel literature, *Texas Highways* magazine, and other activities. Doris covered the following points in her presentation.

- TxDOT's mission is to provide safe, effective, and efficient movement of people and goods. The Travel Division helps support this mission and provides an important link to the tourism industry. The Division conducts a number of activities to help promote tourism in the state. The mission of the Travel Division is to support and promote safe and pleasurable travel to and within Texas and to provide professional information, products, and services for the general public and for TxDOT.
- TxDOT operates 12 Travel Information Centers located along the state border. The first center was opened in 1936 in conjunction with the state's Centennial celebration. Each center is designed to fit into the local area. A program is underway to renovate many of these facilities. Each Travel Center includes

an information desk with TxDOT staff, a video viewing area, displays for local and regional tourist literature, and 24-hour rest rooms. Staff also provide information on weather and roadway conditions and issue permits for trucks. Some 3 million people visit the Centers each year.

- The Division coordinates with other state agencies and local groups in the development and operation of the Information Centers. For example, the new Center at Orange on I-10 was built over the Blue Elbo Swamp. TxDOT worked with the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife in developing the site and providing displays with information on the swamp for visitors. Legislation passed in 1963 directed the Department to take over the "Jersey Lilly" Opera House and the Judge Roy Bean facilities in Langtry as an Information Center. The Department worked with the Texas Historical Commission on renovating the facilities.



- Research sponsored by the Department identifies the importance of the information provided by the Travel Centers. Survey results indicate that approximately 62 percent of travelers stopping at the Centers extend their stay in Texas as a result of information obtained at the Centers.
- TxDOT maintains a 1-800 telephone number (800/452-9292) which provides tourist and road condition information. Travel information can also be found on TxDOT's Internet Site.
- TxDOT produces and distributes the *Texas Travel Guide* and the State Highway Map. The guide and map are available at Information Centers and District offices.
- TxDOT also produces and publishes *Texas Highways* magazine. *Texas Highways* has a circulation of approximately 300,000 and a readership of some 1 million. Survey results indicate that approximately 71 percent of subscribers travel to a destination as a result of reading something in the magazine.
- The Travel Centers, *Texas Travel Guide*, state map, and *Texas Highways* magazine all provide positive impressions of the state and help stimulate travel and tourism in Texas. Some 12 million pieces of literature are distributed annually at the Centers, much of which is produced by local organizations and attractions.

Texas Historical Commission's Heritage Tourism Program

Janie Headrick

Heritage Tourism Planning Director

Texas Historical Commission



Janie Headrick discussed the Texas Historical Commission's Heritage Tourism Program. She summarized the background of the Program, outlined current activities, and identified future efforts. She also described how the Commission works with TxDOT, other state agencies, and local groups. Janie covered the following topics in her presentation.

- In 1997 the State Legislature directed the Historical Commission to consider developing a heritage tourism program. Cultural or heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing and largest segments of the tourism market. Heritage tourism is travel directed toward experiencing the heritage and culture of a community, region, state, or country. Heritage tourism focuses on local customs, traditions, history, and culture. Historic sites, festivals, physical resources, and other unique features are all part of heritage tourism.
- The Heritage Tourism Program focuses on a five-point plan for developing, marketing, and operating historical and cultural resources in the state. The five elements are research, interpretation, community, marketing, and collaboration. Research provides an honest appraisal of an area's cultural and historic assets, identifies ways to capitalize on them, and defines common

themes. Interpretation identifies the best approaches to link themes and resources to tell the story of an area. Community-based involvement is critical for successful programs. Developing and implementing a marketing program to promote the area's unique features is the fourth element of the program. The fifth element is collaboration. Partnerships with other sites, agencies, organizations, tourism industry groups, and the media are important to successful programs.

- The Historical Commission's program encompasses five principles of heritage tourism. These principles are to preserve and protect historic and cultural resources, to focus on authenticity and quality, to make sites come alive for visitors, to find a fit between the local community and tourism, and to develop partnerships for sustainability.
- The Heritage Trails Program has been developed around TxDOT's travel trails system, which was initiated in 1968. There are 10 trail regions in the state. Every county is in at least one trail region and some are in two. The Heritage Trails Program has also been modeled after elements of the successful Main Street Program.
- The Texas Forts Trail Region was initiated as the first pilot project in 1998, followed by the Texas Independence Trail Region in 1999 and the Texas Forest Trail Region in 2000. The Forest Trail Region encompasses 35 counties, which represents the largest number of counties in a trail region.
- The Historical Commission provides each region with a grant of \$50,000 a year for three years to develop and implement the program. The funds can

be used to hire a coordinator to work with counties within the region. Each trail region also has a board comprised of representatives from different organizations and groups. At least 75 percent of the counties in a region must approve a resolution supporting the program. Some regions, such as the Forest Trail, requested funding from each county using a population-based formula as part of the resolution.

- The Historical Commission also provides Partnership Grants based on available funding. These grants have been used to develop new brochures on local historical sites, as well as other promotional activities.
- The Historical Commission recently implemented an initiative within the Heritage Trails Program. The Texas Heritage Corridors Program provides assistance to county historical commissions, chambers of commerce, visitors and convention bureaus, and other groups to identify and promote historical corridors, to increase tourist visitation, and to preserve historical sites.
- The Heritage Corridor Program must be theme specific, such as the Chisholm Trail, the Camino Real, and the Presidential Corridor. There have been recent discussions about a Jazz Corridor to promote jazz musicians in the state. It is important to remember that heritage tourism is more than just the built environment. In addition to music, heritage tourism may focus on ethnic traditions, cultural events, and other local activities.
- The Historic Commission is monitoring various aspects of the program. For

example, visitation levels at six sites along the Forts Trail are being monitored. Visitation has increased by 22 percent at these sites since the first promotional efforts associated with the Forts Trail Region Program began. A monitoring effort is being initiated along the Independence Trail. To date some 175,000 of 300,000 Independence Trail brochures have been distributed. While it is difficult to determine the exact influence of the brochures and maps, it appears that people are using them.

- The Commission also supports statewide heritage tourism activities. The Commission helped fund the video *Uniquely Texas: A Lone Star Look at Cultural and Heritage Tourism*, the brochure, *African Americans in Texas: Historical and Cultural Legacies*, and the travel guide, *Texas in the Civil War*. The Commission conducts application workshops on the various programs and provides other assistance to local groups and organizations.

BREAKOUT SESSION—TEXAS TOURISM TRAILS

Scott Shafer, Presiding

The Texas Great Coastal Birding Trail

Linda Campbell

Nature Tourism Specialist

Texas Parks & Wildlife



Linda Campbell discussed nature tourism and the Great Texas Wildlife Trails. She provided a background on the key elements of nature tourism, recent trends in tourism in the state, and specific elements of the trails program. Linda addressed the following points in her presentation.

- Nature tourism is responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local population. Travelers today want to experience a diversity of natural resources. Interest in nature tourism is growing in Texas, especially in rural areas where it is viewed as one way to diversify local economies.
- Nature tourism in Texas is different than in other areas based on the unique characteristics of the state. Ninety-seven percent of land in Texas is privately owned. As a result, empowering private landowners to participate in nature tourism, such as bird watching and hunting and fishing, represents a major focus of the program. Another key element of nature tourism in Texas is providing recreational opportunities while conserving natural areas. A further intent of the program is to help diversify the economy of local areas.
- Many landowners in Texas currently derive substantial income from wildlife-associated recreation. A 1996 survey of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-related recreation showed that fishing contributed \$2.9 billion to the Texas economy, hunting contributed \$1.4 billion, and wildlife viewing contributed \$1.2 billion. Activities such as bird watching, photography, backpacking, horseback riding, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, and canoeing and other water sports are becoming more popular.
- On average, each dollar spent by travelers in the state in 1997 produced approximately \$0.4 in state tax receipts. Further, every \$60,000 spent by travelers directly supported one job in the state. Other benefits from nature tourism in the state include instilling community pride and providing jobs for residents.
- Goals of nature tourism include promoting habitat conservation, promoting sustainable economic development, and building broad-based public support for wildlife conservation programs. Nature tourism provides incentives for local communities and landowners to conserve wildlife habitats. It promotes conservation by placing an increased value on the remaining natural areas in the state.
- The Great Coastal Birding Trail is a cooperative project with TxDOT. Funding from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 was used for the project, which took five years to implement. Texas was the first state to use ISTEA funding for

this type of project. Other states are now using Texas as a model and starting similar programs.

- Bird watching is an important economic generator in Texas. Four of the top 12 bird watching sites in the country are located in Texas. The state's location in the funnel of the flyway makes it an ideal location for bird watching. One of the efforts underway is to expand on the bird watching areas people are familiar with and introducing new destinations for visitors.
- The Great Coastal Birding Trail was developed to provide a promotional and marketing platform for nature tourism in the area. Roadway signs located along the trail correspond to numbers on the map. The map also contains information on the sites, as well as accommodations, restaurants, chambers of commerce, and other attractions. Approximately 350,000 maps have been distributed. In addition, communities and private landowners have set aside habitats, built viewing areas, and made other enhancements.
- Survey results highlight the importance of the trail to the economy of the area. The responses indicate that bird watchers spend approximately 31 days a year on the trail. The most recently reported trip was 9 days and 8 nights, which is longer than the 3- to 4-day average bird watching trip in the U.S. Bird watchers spent approximately \$987 per person, not including airfares or about \$78 per day. Most respondents indicated a willingness to pay more before they would cancel their trip. Seventy-one percent of the respondents indicated that the trail was very important to their visit, while 25 percent

rated it important. Thus, a total of 96 percent reported the trail was either important or very important in their decision to visit the area.

- The Great Coastal Birding Trail is considered a great success and plans are underway to develop additional trails. Funding is being sought to develop a Great Texas Wildflower Trail and a Heart of Texas Trail is also being considered, along with trails in other areas of the state.

The Colorado River Trail

Glenn Altwein

Senior Economic Development Specialist

Lower Colorado River Authority



Glen Altwein provided an overview of the Colorado River Trail. He discussed the development of the trail, current activities, and future plans. Glen covered the following points in his presentation.

- The Colorado River Trail (CRT) was created in 1993 by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) in cooperation with the original 10 counties. Lampasas County was added to the trail in 1995. The CRT links the cultural, recreational, agricultural, and environmental features of the 11 counties.
- The CRT follows the Colorado River across 600 miles of beautiful Texas country. It intersects with seven other Texas trails or corridors, including the

Texas Hill Country Trail, the Texas Brazos Trail, the Texas Forts Trail, the Texas Independence Trail, the Texas Pioneer Trail, the Presidential Corridor, and the Texas Settlement Independence Region.

- The CRT was developed to accomplish three major purposes or goals. These goals are to increase the tourism base in the 11 counties, to utilize the natural resources in the area, and to maintain cooperative efforts between the 11 counties and the LCRA.
- A Tourism Advisory Council was established in 1994 to help oversee the CRT. The Council is made up of representatives from the 11 counties, communities, chambers of commerce, convention and visitor bureaus, historical parks, and other groups. The Advisory Council meets quarterly, including an annual meeting in November. The Council decides what trade shows and expos to participate in during the year. Community volunteers help staff the CRT booth at these shows and distribute information on the CRT.
- The mission of the CRT has been carried out by printing the “Explorer’s Guide,” printing “niche” marketing brochures, attending trade shows, expos, and riverfests, and advertising in various directories, and other regional, state, and national associations.
- A wide range of travel activities are available to visitors along the CRT. These activities include attractions, outdoor sports, nature, culture, touring, shopping, dining, and entertainment.
- The CRT helps promote local tourism attractions and community programs. It

also draws attention to major festivals, featured attractions, historic sites, and scenic drives. The CRT highlights the many LCRA parks, Black Rock Park on Lake Buchanan, Canyon of the Eagles, and 9-Highland Lake Recreation Areas. Other areas downstream include Lake Bastrop’s South and North Shore Parks at Lake Fayette near La Grange, Oak Thicket Park, and Park Prairie Park.

- The McKinney Roughs is a 1,600-acre site, seven miles west of Bastrop on Highway 71. It features an Environmental Learning Center, with activity areas and meeting rooms, a 1,100-acre nature preserve, and about nine miles of hiking and horseback riding trails. Several parks owned by the LCRA are operated either individually or jointly with Texas Parks and Wildlife and other groups.
- The CTR draws attention to the whole river region, not just to one community. Activities and areas highlighted include water-related recreation, the Highland Lakes area, the Coastal Birding Trail, Canyon of the Eagles, historical sites and scenic drives, parks, festivals, bed and breakfast inns, and regional and ethnic restaurants.
- A variety of activities are planned for the future, including acquiring more access points along the river, increasing signage to identify the CRT, increasing community participation, continuing to draw attention to CRT to help stimulate tourism in the region, and developing other partnerships that will support counties and communities in the whole region.

The Presidential Corridor

Dick Forester

Director

Bryan/College Station Convention and Visitor's Bureau



- Texas is the only state in the country with two Presidential Libraries that are part of the National Archives. California has two Presidential Libraries, but the Nixon Library is privately funded and operated. In 1995, the Texas Legislature designated Highway 21 and US 290 as the Presidential Corridor linking the Bush Presidential Library in College Station and the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin. The corridor encompasses five counties. The Legislative intent was to promote tourism in the corridor and to use the corridor as a rural economic development tool. Many people orient vacations around visiting presidential libraries and the leisure travel market is increasing at a rapid rate.
- While the Presidential Corridor has not yet reached its full potential, a number of activities have been undertaken. Highway signs have been placed along both Highway 21 and US 290. The first edition of the *Presidential Library Guide* was published promoting sites, businesses, and communities along the corridor. A second guide is being developed and will be published soon.

The paid advertising in the second guide is helping to offset publication costs.

- It was initially anticipated that a travel show would be conducted every year. Rather than focusing on a separate show, however, the group has cooperated with other trade fairs and activities in Bryan/College Station and Austin. There is also interest in developing and marketing more attractions and activities along the corridor, especially in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas Historic Commission, LCRP, TxDOT, and other groups.
- To date, Bryan/College Station and Austin have benefited the most from the corridor designation and the libraries. The economic impact of the Bush Library in the Bryan/College Station area is every evident. For example, the year before the Library opened, the Visitor's and Convention Bureau helped coordinated 35 motorcoach tours. The year the Library opened the number of coach tours increased to 450.
- The motorcoach industry is facing a changing market. The senior market represents the main client group for motorcoach tours. This group is growing smaller. The baby boom generation is aging, but has a much different lifestyle. Motorcoach tours do not fit into their travel and vacation plans. The motorcoach industry is exploring different approaches to promoting travel with younger generations. There are numerous opportunities to market activities and attractions in the corridor to all age groups.

TRANSPORTATION AND TOURISM—KEY ISSUES AND RESEARCH NEEDS

A number of issues, topics of interest, and research needs were discussed by participants throughout the conference. The major items identified during these discussions are highlighted in this section. Participants were not asked to rank or rate the issues. Thus, the topics are not presented in any priority order.

TTI will use these suggestions to help develop a research agenda for the Partnership for Transportation and Tourism. The agenda will include a description of research, outreach, and training activities.

Issue: Local officials do not always understand the importance of developing historical, cultural, and natural resources to help attract visitors.

Research/Outreach: Research is needed on the benefits of cultural and heritage tourism, especially the influence it has on the economy of communities and rural areas. Workshops or other outreach activities are needed to inform local officials of these benefits. Facilitating peer-to-peer interaction and networking would also be beneficial.

Issue: The public and private sector tourism groups in many communities are still learning to work together. It is not an easy process to reach agreement on common themes, goals, and programs.

Research/Outreach: Research is needed on the successful approaches used in communities throughout the state to develop, fund, implement, monitor, and evaluate tourism programs. Special focus is needed on the institutional arrangements and the methods used to foster interaction,

coordination, and cooperation among agencies, private businesses, tourism associations, and other groups.

Issue: Little information is available on the influence different programs, marketing efforts, and informational pieces have on attracting visitors.

Research/Outreach: Before and after studies should be conducted to monitor and evaluate the influence of different travel and tourism programs and activities. These studies should include surveys of tourists, businesses owners, attraction operators, and other groups to measure the influence of different programs and marketing materials.

Issue: Groups in many communities are not aware of potential funding sources for various tourism activities.

Research/Outreach: Developing a simple guide outlining available programs and funding sources would be beneficial. This guide could be incorporated into training and outreach programs.

Issue: The influence of the new trails program is still relatively unknown.

Research/Outreach: Research is needed on the influence of the new trails program, including the effectiveness of various roadside signs and other information materials.

Issue: Promoting tourism in small towns and rural areas depends a great deal on small businesses. Ensuring that individuals working in local restaurants, gas stations, hotels, shops, and attractions have positive

attitudes and have a good knowledge of the local areas is important to the success of tourism in those areas.

Research/Outreach: Developing a guide to provide quality service to visitors and tourists would be of great help. Possible hospitality training could also be provided in different areas of the state.

Issue: Many tourist and recreation sites in the state became very congested during the peak visitor times. Traffic congestion is a major problem at many of these locations.

Research/Outreach: Examining traffic issues at specific sites and locations and alternative approaches to addressing these problems is needed. A sourcebook outlining methods for addressing different types of tourist-oriented transportation problems would be beneficial.

Issue: Providing multimodal transportation alternatives to visitors could help alleviate dependence on the private automobile, enhance mobility options, and address traffic concerns in some areas.

Research/Outreach: Research examining the issues and opportunities of improving multimodal services to visitors and tourists in the state is needed. This research should explore the roles all forms of transportation – air, rail, transit, water, and roadway – can play in facilitating visitor and tourist travel in the state. It should also examine the connections among modes, information needs, and policy/institutional issues.

Issue: How can highways, roadways, railroads, and other components of the transportation system be used to help “tell” the cultural and heritage story of the state and support tourism efforts? The wildflower viewing in the state is one possible example.

Research/Outreach: Research is needed exploring the role the various transportation modes played in the development of Texas, how these stories can best be told, transportation design elements and other features that can enhance local tourism efforts, and other ways the transportation system can support cultural and heritage tourism.

Issue: Motorcoach tours and the motorcoach industry are a major element of tourism in Texas. Currently, motorcoach tours are popular with elderly travelers. The aging Baby Boom generation is less likely to take motorcoach tours.

Research/Outreach: Research is needed exploring the changing demographics of motorcoach tour markets and the influence these changes may have on the motorcoach industry and tourism activities catering to motorcoach tours. Research is also needed to explore potential new markets and the types of destinations, attractions, activities, and services desired by these markets.

Issue: Are there safety issues with facilities like the Great Coastal Birding Trail?

Research/Outreach: Research is needed on the potential safety concerns associated with developing birding and other trails. Potential issues to explore include signing needs, pedestrian/vehicle interaction, pull-off areas, and other concerns.

Issues: Can Texas develop a system of hike and bike trails for more point-to-point or inn-to-inn travel?

Research/Outreach: Research is needed exploring the potential of developing hiking and bicycle trails in the state linking visitor areas and scenic locations. The successful experience in other states with these types of

facilities should be examined, along with an assessment of inns, hotels, restaurants, and other services needed to support these facilities.