

History

The initiative to protect and preserve the M-119 corridor originated in 1936. Mrs. C. F. (Alice) Irwin, an early preservationist and naturalist living in Harbor Springs was able, via her state-wide newspaper column, to initiate a grass roots effort to protect and preserve the corridor. At that time several hundred people met to consider protecting the corridor as opposed to other plans being entertained that would have significantly modified the route to accommodate growing usage. Mrs. Irwin successfully petitioned the State legislature to protect and preserve the road in its natural state. Based on a desire to control soil erosion and preserve the natural beauty the preservationists carried the day. That movement continues to the present day.

The following is a timeline of more recent events that continue to accomplish that original goal:

December	1964	Emmet County Road Commission Scenic Route Study
Summer	1972	Emmet County Lakeshore Association (ECLA) formed by like-minded property owners to protect and preserve the corridor
July	1990	MI Department of Transportation (MDOT) completes an Origin and Destination Study
Summer	1990	Preservation discussions begin
December	1990	MDOT contracts with the Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) to conduct a scenic inventory of the route
February	1993	MDOT Traffic Accident History Study is conveyed to the LTC
March	1993	First informal public meeting held
April	1993	MDOT Base Plots conveyed to LTC
May	1993	Property acquisition information request from LTC
September	1993	Review of Scenic Corridor Study Draft begins
November	1993	ECLA passes unanimous resolution supporting the Heritage Route Designation
November	1993	County Commissioner and long time 'activist' ECLA president Paul Lenahan requests State Attorney General's opinion on liability issue to the Townships
November	1993	Public comments on Scenic Corridor Study Draft
January	1994	Public hearing on Heritage Route guidelines
February	1994	LTC M-119 Scenic Corridor Study is submitted to MDOT
February	1994	Final M-119 Scenic Corridor Study is sent to interested parties
December	1994	ECLA survey indicates 95% of membership supports Heritage Route Designation
February	1996	Public meeting at Little Traverse Township Hall to discuss Heritage Route Designation
May	1996	Discussion and debate on the Designation of M-119 continues through September 1996
September	1996	Meeting at West Traverse Township Hall; MDOT publicly proposes the Designation of M-119 as a Scenic Heritage Route
September	1997	Pete Hanses becomes MDOT Heritage Route program director
June	1998	MDOT applies for National Scenic Byways Grant to develop M-119 Management Plan
January	1999	National Scenic Byways Grant awarded to MDOT
February	1999	M-119 discussions resume
March	1999	MDOT requests NW MI Council of Governments (NWMCOG)* to develop Corridor Management Plan
Summer	1999	Discussions with Emmet County Planning Department and Emmet County Board of Commissioners to proceed with developing the Management Plan for M-119
October	1999	MDOT contracts with NWMCOG to develop a Management Plan
Fall/Winter	99-00	NWMCOG begins preliminary discussions with the Townships
March	2000	Draft Outline for Management Plan Contents
Spring	2000	Meetings with Townships and Harbor Springs to solicit input on Management Plan Outline
Spring	2000	Formation of M-119 Scenic Heritage Route Corridor Management Plan Committee, an advisory committee comprised of three delegates from each Township: Friendship,

		Readmond, Cross Village; three delegates from ECLA; in partnership with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, MDOT, County Planning/ Commissioners
Summer	2000	Scheduled monthly meetings drafting the Management Plan through Winter 2001
January	2002	Formal Adoption of M-119 Heritage Route Management Plan
June 28	2003	*Dedication of the M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route at Cross Village Township Hall*
Summer	2003	Rollover of Management Plan Committee to Implementation Committee
Summer	2004	Historical Signs Unveiling Ceremony at Devils Elbow
Summer	2006	Community Preference Survey
Summer	2007	Township Resolutions in support of Survey Results and Committee Actions
July	2007	Inventory of Tree Species
Fall	2007	Inclusion of West Traverse Township
September	2008	Statewide Heritage Highway Conference Traverse City
Spring	2009	M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route Management Plan first 5 year Update 2008
Ongoing	2009	Monthly committee meetings; Implementation projects
Summer	2013	Second Management Plan 5 year Update
Ongoing	2013	Monthly committee meetings open to the public and implementation projects continue

In essence: Many years of citizen-volunteer efforts and persistence.

Summary:

- Authority derives from MDOT and the MDOT Scenic Heritage Highway Public Act 69 of 1993
- Funding initially from a National Scenic Byways Grant
- Facilitated by NWMCOG* via a contract with MDOT
- Initial drive began 1936
- More recent efforts beginning 1964
- ECLA was created in 1972 for the purpose of corridor protection and preservation
- Championed by ECLA with the full support of Emmet County Planning, Emmet County Commissioners, LTC, LTBB and the community at large.
- Management Plan Committee 2000
- Management Plan Adoption 2002
- Implementation Committee 2002
- Dedication of the M-119 Tunnel of Trees Scenic Heritage Route June 28, 2003
- Unveiling of Historical Signs 2004
- Management Plan 5 year Update 2008
- Management Plan 5 year Update 2013
- Monthly Committee Meetings and Implementation Projects Ongoing

*The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG): provides regional planning services, economic development, and workforce development to the ten member counties of Emmet, Charlevoix, Antrim, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Wexford and Missaukee.

Revised August 2013