

Prairie Passage: a route to rediscovery of the North American prairie landscape, culture and history.

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Prairie Passage: a route to rediscovery of the North American prairie landscape, culture and history

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Abstract

In 1995 the departments of transportation in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas formed a partnership to develop and implement a plan to establish a national wildflower corridor from Canada to Mexico. Plan objectives included identification and protection of prairie remnants and rare species found in highway rights-of-way, establishing local origin native grasses and wildflowers to connect native remnants thus establishing a linear corridor; interpretation and educational efforts to increase awareness of natural and cultural prairie resources; assistance and cooperative efforts with communities along a designated and signed Prairie Passage route. In 1995 The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) provided a \$50,000 grant to each of the six states to perform initial surveys and planning for the Prairie Passage. Implementation of each state's plan is being accomplished through a variety of funding packages created by each state. From 1999 through 2003 Minnesota was funded by a \$750,000, 20:80 match between the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and TEA-21. Brochures, guide-books, posters, rest area kiosks, interpretive trails, and signage have been developed with this funding. Kansas and Oklahoma also received TEA-21 funding. Plantings have been established and interpretive materials are being developed. Iowa and Missouri have received other state funding. Response to signage and distribution of interpretive materials in Minnesota has been enthusiastic and positive. Several communities on the signed route have proposed cooperative projects around Prairie Passage to further promote economic development and tourism in their areas. DOT district personnel have requested further information and training for use in planning and maintenance. It is hoped that other states will see similar results with materials and projects developed for their states.

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