

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Heritage Route Implementation Committee generally meets the second Tuesday of every month at 9:30 a.m. Meeting locations rotate throughout the M-119 corridor communities. Upcoming meeting schedules and past meeting minutes are available for review on the Tunnel of Trees website, [www.m119tunneloftrees.org](http://www.m119tunneloftrees.org). Please feel free to attend. All meetings are open to the public.

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Corridor is designated as a Scenic Heritage Route because of its natural beauty and the community's commitment to its integrity. The Implementation

Committee seeks to educate the community on how to protect and maintain those characteristics. Through the development of the Management Plan, the Committee worked to synthesize the concerted efforts of community members who had worked to protect the corridor for the past 30 years. Designation as a Heritage Route enhances a community's opportunity to work closely with the Michigan Department of Transportation and the County Road Commission to create or maintain a corridor that fits with the community's vision.

**Committee Members:**

- West Traverse Township
- Friendship Township
- Readmond Township
- Cross Village Township
- Emmet County Lakeshore Association

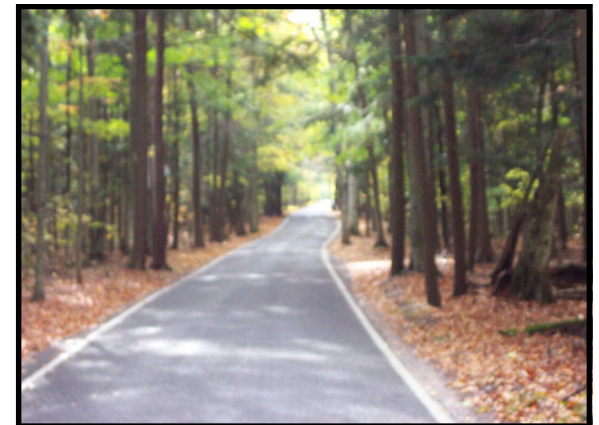
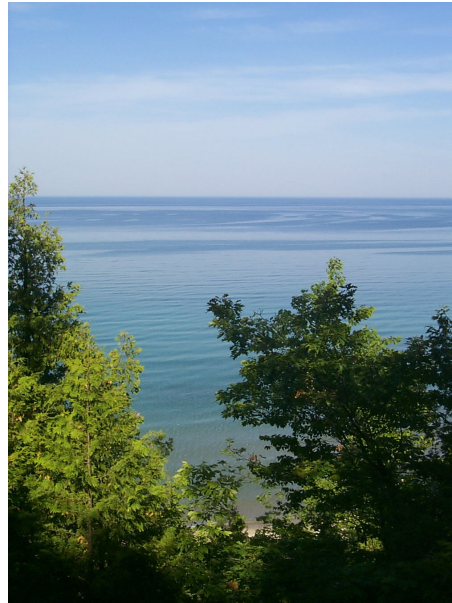
**Partners:**

- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
- Little Traverse Conservancy
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Emmet County Planning and Zoning
- Networks Northwest

**Copies of the M-119 Management Plan, Guidebook, and Bike Etiquette Brochure**

can be accessed at

[www.m119tunneloftrees.org](http://www.m119tunneloftrees.org)



The Committee receives on-going technical and administrative assistance from the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments dba Networks Northwest with financial support from the Michigan Department of Transportation.

**For more information, please contact:**

Networks Northwest  
 PO Box 506  
 Traverse City MI 49685-0506  
 231-929-5000

**Updated April 2023**

*Working to preserve and enhance the scenic, natural, and cultural integrity of the M-119 corridor*

**West Traverse Township  
 Friendship Township  
 Readmond Township  
 Cross Village Township**

## About the M-119 “Tunnel of Trees”

The M-119 Tunnel of Trees Heritage Route rambles for 13 miles through the townships of West Traverse, Friendship, Readmond, and Cross Village. M-119 is renowned for its riveting fall colors and its exhilarating views of Lake Michigan.

Northern Michigan’s popularity as a tourist location has contributed to the road’s use, not only as a route, but as a destination for travelers. With the increase in M-119’s popularity reflected by the steady increase in both seasonal and permanent populations, environmental, transportation and land use management issues have gained the increased attention of local officials and residents. It is for these reasons that a group of local citizens initially came together to discuss the future of the M-119 corridor.

In June 2001, the M-119 Heritage Route Committee was formed to develop the *M-119 Heritage Route Management Plan*. The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) staff members worked with a dedicated group of representatives from Cross Village, Friendship, and Readmond Townships and the Emmet County Lakeshore Association to develop the Management Plan. The Heritage Route Plan Committee met monthly to gather and review data and maps, and to draft and finalize the management plan. The plan inventories the unique qualities of the roadway and outlines a process for preserving and enhancing the special character of the area. This document describes goals, strategies, and recommendations to promote preservation, maintenance and design, and safety. The management plan was unanimously approved by local units of government and in December 2002, the Michigan Department of Transportation designated M-119 as a Scenic Heritage Route. West Traverse Township was added in 2007.

## What is a Heritage Route?

In 1993, the Michigan Heritage Route Program was created by Public Act 69 of 1993, giving the State of Michigan the authority to designate heritage routes. Under the Heritage Route Program administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation, local communities have the opportunity to apply to have routes designated under one of three categories: scenic, recreation, or historic. Essentially, route designation enables local communities to preserve or market the corridor.

For more information about the Michigan Department of Transportation's Heritage Route Program, please visit:  
<http://www.michigan.gov/mdot>  
*Projects and Programs*  
*Highway Programs*  
*Heritage Routes*

The Heritage Route Program is designed to identify, inventory, protect, enhance, and in some cases, promote state trunk lines and adjacent land with distinctive or unique scenic, cultural, or historic qualities.



## Goals of the M-119 Tunnel Of Trees Scenic Heritage Route Committee

The Committee is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the scenic, cultural, natural, and historic characteristics of the M-119 Corridor.

- **Promote Preservation and Conservation of the Tunnel of Trees for Balanced Growth and Development.**

Future land use along the corridor will be influenced by a variety of factors: individual land owners’ decisions, regulations administered by the County and the local units of government, state legislation, the state of the economy, land costs, and pressures resulting from changing demographics and recreational and travel patterns.

- **Balancing Roadside Safety with Aesthetics**  
Safety is of primary importance along the roadway. Preserving and protecting the natural, cultural, and scenic character of the corridor is an equally important goal.

- **Promote Wise Land Use Development**  
Residents along the corridor have continued to express concern regarding development along the Lake Michigan shoreline. The M-119 Management Plan supports efforts to minimize the disruption of steep slopes that could damage the integrity of the roadway and undermine the safety and character of the corridor.

- **Prevent Intrusions to Scenic Character**  
Intrusions to scenic character include any built structures or landscape element that contrast with the scenic and natural character of the corridor. The plan advocates the use of natural materials for built structures, as well as the use of outdoor lighting that does not detract from the night sky.

- **Promote Appropriate Use of the Corridor and Alternative Routes**  
The curves, narrow roadbed, and the Tunnel of Trees render M-119 as a road less traveled, a characteristic that local communities would like to continue.