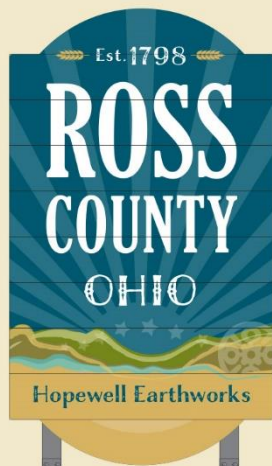
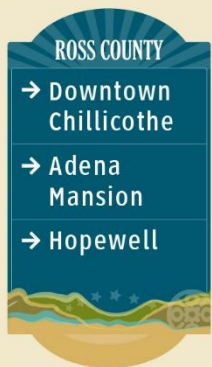




# Comprehensive Wayfinding Program for Ross County



## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau became the organization to lead the development of a comprehensive wayfinding system for Ross County. With funding assistance through the Ross County Commissioners and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), the Bureau secured a contract with Corbin Design, Inc. to provide consultation and design services to develop an effective countywide wayfinding and signage plan. The implementation of this wayfinding plan is to address the current need of signage and messaging for visitors while preparing the community for the potential influx of travelers as the World Heritage designation of the *Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks* approaches later this year.

The objectives of this project are:

- Identify the county in a consistent manner while acknowledging its history and looking ahead to its future.
- Complement the environment and mesh with other design disciplines such as urban planning, landscape architecture, and brand communications.
- Create a strong first impression for visitors.
- Boost visitor satisfaction as they navigate to attractions during their visit.
- Support economic development and improve tourism by encouraging exploration of area assets, longer stays, and return visits.

### **Importance of Wayfinding**

Wayfinding programs provide a unique opportunity not only to move people through a space to their intended designation, but also to carry brand elements and, by nature of its design, to integrate with the character of the streetscape. Educated visitors feel confident and capable as they move toward their destination and are made aware of other opportunities once the initial reason for their visit is accomplished.

## **WAYFINDING NEEDS**

Two members of Corbin Design, Inc. visited Ross County to begin their analysis of the current wayfinding signage and where improvements could be made. They identified the following conditions that impact wayfinding:

- Longer routes between villages and attractions are not supported with a consistent signage system.
- Lack of impactful gateway signage that announces arrival into Chillicothe.
- Address inconsistent names on current signage (i.e., “Outdoor Drama” and “Tecumseh!”)
- Inconsistent destination priority and representation on signage.
- Create visual consistency (colors, fonts, logos, hierarchy, etc.) between the application and the established signage.

In addition to analyzing the current conditions, the following proposed recommendations were made to improve service to visitors:

- Clearly identify main entry points into Ross County.
- Use monument signs to create a sense of arrival and prominently identify gateways into Chillicothe.
- Highlight for visitors the unique history of the area and identify the county as home to the Hopewell Mounds/World Heritage Designation.
- Establish consistent identity to be used throughout wayfinding and identification signage.
- Consistent wayfinding signs directing to significant areas and destinations.
- This project would also complement the City of Chillicothe’s Comprehensive Plan.

### WAYFINDING SIGNAGE ARRAY



This array of signage would be first introduced to travelers as they enter the county utilizing the I-1A, I-1, and I-1B designs. This begins to build the awareness of a comprehensive wayfinding program for visitors.

Consistency to reassure travelers of the wayfinding program would be established with gateway signage which would be constructed at key points.

- The City of Chillicothe would have a large Gateway Monument installed on North Bridge Street/State Route 159 utilizing the M-2 sign. Two smaller Gateway Monuments would be installed on East Main Street and South Bridge Street utilizing the M-1 design.
- Entrance points into villages and communities (excluding Chillicothe) would receive the City Welcome signs depicted in I-2 and I-3.

The consistency would continue through the implementation of the multi-directional signage (G-1, G-3, G-3a, G-4, G-4a) which would serve to make travelers aware of attractions they are approaching followed by trailblazing signage to guide them to the specific attraction (G-2, G-5 signs).

An additional component of the Wayfinding System would be to implement a “Chillicothe” gateway for World Heritage travelers on the pedestrian/bicycle bridge that crosses North High Street/State Route 104 as depicted in the image below.



The installation of this array of signage would accomplish the goals of the wayfinding project and address the recommendations that were made during the analysis of the current system. This will be a key factor when welcoming domestic and international travelers that are expected to visit upon the World Heritage designation.



## COST ASSESSMENT FOR WAYFINDING PROJECT

Corbin Designs, Inc. prepared the bid documents for the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau. The Bureau selected the bid submitted by the company, IMG, who would be awarded the project. The total cost for the complete wayfinding system would be \$682,139.00. This includes the fabrication and installation of the signage system.



\$52,938.00 (1 unit)

M-2  
Gateway Monument



\$68,996.00 (2 units)

M-1  
Gateway Monument

I-1A COUNTY WELCOME HIGHWAY	I-1 COUNTY WELCOME	I-1b COUNTY WELCOME	I-2 CITY WELCOME 1	I-3 CITY WELCOME 2
\$39,050.00 (5 units)	\$19,308.00 (4 units)	\$3,717.00 (1 unit)	Not Used	\$37,741.00 (11 units)

G-1 MULTI-DIRECTIONAL GUIDE (6")	G-2 TRAILBLAZER (6")	G-3 MULTI-DIRECTIONAL GUIDE (5")	G-3a MULTI-DIRECTIONAL GUIDE (5")
\$90,987.00 (13 units)	\$29,967.00 (7 units)	\$65,534.00 (14 units)	\$25,686.00 (11 units)

G-4 MULTI-DIRECTIONAL GUIDE (4")	G-4a MULTI-DIRECTIONAL GUIDE (4")	G-5 TRAILBLAZER (4")	R-1 PARKING GUIDE
\$29,736.00 (8 units)	\$13,424.00 (4 units)	\$44,610.00 (15 units)	Not Used

## **PROPOSED FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS**

This project will take multiple funding sources to successfully complete in a timely manner and to ensure readiness of Ross County for the World Heritage traveler. Funding sources identified include:

- Main Investors:
  - The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau
  - Ross County Commissioners
  - City of Chillicothe
  
- Secondary Investors:
  - Villages of Bainbridge, Frankfort, Clarksburg, Kingston, South Salem, Adelphi,
  - Communities such as Richmond Dale, Londonderry, Hallsville
  - Ross County Park District (Trail Signage System)

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau is prepared to invest \$200,000 towards the project upon a matching commitment from the Ross County Commissioners and the City of Chillicothe. This would provide \$600,000 of the funding to complete most of the project but would limit reach into some communities and would not complete a trail signage system. The Bureau would coordinate with the secondary investors to contribute towards the remaining \$82,139.00 to achieve the full project scope of work.

There is potential for some funding reimbursement to the main investors through the Appalachian Community Grant Program. This would be determined through the grant process and by the Governor's Office of Appalachia (GOA). This Grant Program currently is continually updating their guidelines and restrictions, and this project has been included into the application that will be submitted on behalf of Ross County. Reimbursement may become available after the completion of the project and funds are awarded through the GOA.

## **RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau understands the importance of identifying the return on investment to the stakeholders for a project of this size and magnitude. Much of the impact will be immeasurable as it will come in the form of community pride, community beautification, and provide necessary assistance for current and future visitors to Chillicothe and Ross County.

Implementation of the wayfinding system would allow more control of the routes that visitors are utilizing when navigating to area attractions. This could potentially assist city and county on maintaining roads by removing unnecessary visitor traffic on more residential streets. Additionally, the signage would assist in encouraging visitors to explore nearby sites or Ross

County communities that may not have been planned in their original itinerary. This could potentially increase visitor counts and revenue for area attractions, shops, and restaurants. Thus, increasing demand at these destinations for potential to generate sales tax, labor force, income tax collection, and the potential for extending a visitor's stay and lodging taxes.

A well-established wayfinding system also provides visitors with the ability to gain a sense of place and relate to the community. This will contribute to a visitor's satisfaction and positive experience in which they potentially assist in bringing awareness to Chillicothe and Ross County as a destination. Their influence with friends and family could lead to additional visitation, furthering the impact of tourism on the local economy.

## **CONCLUSION**

Implementing the proposed comprehensive Wayfinding Program will allow Ross County to be prepared for the influx of travelers upon the *Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks* World Heritage destination. This will provide much needed assistance to travelers as they navigate through the community and to attractions supporting Ross County tourism.

Partnership between the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau and other identified stakeholders would allow for a complete implementation of the project in one phase. This would be ideal to ensure that the functionality of the wayfinding program is complete and effective for visitors and residents. Incomplete, or multi-phase projects, could potentially cost the program's reputation for effectiveness and trustworthiness to visitors due to lack of information between phases.

This program would provide a system that would be lasting for Ross County. Plans and designs for the signs are available if future signage is needed. This would ensure a cohesive program is in place and avoid multiple designs that could potentially cause confusion and undermine the effectiveness of the program.