

Developing & Marketing Tourism Drive Routes

Look before you leap!

This information paper has been compiled to assist local government, local and regional tourism organisations, economic development and other stakeholder organisations in the process of developing tourism drive routes, and to help them avoid the mistakes that have been made in the past. The content of this paper has been primarily drawn from the wide range of sources listed in the References and Bibliography.

JUNE 2004

Know your market

To be successful in any facet of tourism you must know your market. Tourism drive routes are no exception. It is essential that you know who is travelling the proposed route and who is not. Research undertaken by Tourism Queensland to better understand the drive market to Queensland has found it to be a market with a number of distinct segments that relate to the types of holiday these travellers undertake.

These segments include: the touring market (travelling around multiple destinations), the fly-drive market, the point-to-point market, 4WD enthusiasts, and short breaks (1-3 nights).

Each of these market segments has different dynamics, different approaches to trip planning, and interests. There are however, some common issues that will help to better understand the drive market:

- People on touring holidays drive because they like the 'sense of journey and discovery', 'flexibility', 'meeting locals and other travellers', and 'spending time together';
- Planning most drive holidays starts before they leave home where around 60% of decisions are made, and this planning continues using maps, brochures, signage and information centres; and
- The majority of longer touring holidays (over three nights) are taken by older middle-income couples who are 50+, with no children.

While it may seem that every visitor driving around is the market for your route, your product cannot be all things to all people, so identify and select your primary market very carefully. If in doubt talk to your regional tourism organisation (RTO) or at the very least your visitor information centre as a guide to better understand the current market.

For more information on these markets look at the drive market factsheet in the Research Section of Tourism Queensland's website: www.tq.com.au

A route or a destination – which should be your priority?

Before you begin to plan your route you may first want to consider if a tourism drive route is actually the best option. When it comes to developing a product for the drive market many people think that a route is the only way to go. Recent research however, indicates 80% of travellers choose their destination before they choose the route they will travel, so aligning your town or tourism attraction with an established destination or region may be more effective and better leverage your product or region.

That is not to say that tourism drive routes don't work, while they have failings, they also have a number of benefits...

What a Tourism Drive Route Can Do

- ▶ Provide an avenue for better co-operation between private and public stakeholders along the route;
- ▶ Group attractions to create a critical mass of product in the mind of the consumer;
- ▶ Create better awareness of the attractions and experiences along a stretch of road – provided communication with the target market is effective; and
- ▶ Improve the experience along a road making the best path easier to find, thereby improving the chances of encouraging visitors to travel off the main road, to make more frequent stops, and increase their spending.

What a Tourism Drive Route Cannot Do

- ▶ It is not the single answer to all problems faced by your town or region;
- ▶ It is not a substitute for lack of desirable products and experiences;
- ▶ It is not an easy way to promote your area; and
- ▶ It is not a low-cost, minimal-time project.

Types of Tourism Drive Routes

If after reading this you are convinced that a route is the way to go for your region, it is important to know there is not just one type of route that visitors use or expect. Tourism Queensland and the Department of Main Roads (DMR) have agreed on nine strategic tourism drive routes in the state (see map attached), and these provide the backbone for touring the state. If you are planning another route, there are four different types of routes that visitors are aware of:

Route Type	Characteristics	The Challenges	Examples
National Highways	The main roads people travel on. Typically they have better quality road infrastructure, have high amounts of traffic and are marked as the main routes on most maps.	Need to focus on visitor awareness of the product along the route. Give a reason to stop on the road on which they're already travelling.	Bruce Highway Warrego Highway
Themed Routes	Often thought of by communities as the only or best tourism drive route. They are linked by a common theme or experience with a logo and brand.	They take a lot of work and commitment and while they can present a critical mass of product to attract visitors, one bad experience can affect the entire route.	Matilda Highway Explorers Way
Touring Routes	Typically less trafficked routes, they present visitors with a practical reason to choose the route – it is more direct or has less traffic.	Need to communicate to your market as early as possible so your route is a viable option. Once you have them then you need to stop them.	Great Inland Way Country Way
Local Tourist Drives	Primarily comprising route markers, short-loop or alternative routes.	If signage is planned it must be done through DMR or your Council.	Moreton Bay Tourist Drive Cobb & Co Tourist Drive

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Signage is the priority.

NO! The priority is creating awareness and ensuring promotional material is available to the target market pre-departure and enroute to the area of your tourism drive route.

Why are you developing a tourism drive route?

Be very clear about why you want to develop a tourism drive route. Just because it seems like a good idea does not necessarily make it so.

Are visitors already travelling the proposed route? If so, what additional benefits will be achieved by developing the route? Or will you be wasting time and money on a project that in reality, cannot be justified?

During recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of tourism drive routes. Some have been successful, however, others have failed to provide the experiences sought by the drive market and have simply been a waste of resources. These failures have primarily been caused by one or more of the following reasons:

- ▶ Routes developed for political reasons without regard for the product and the market;
- ▶ Lack of effective planning;
- ▶ Limited products/experiences along the route;
- ▶ Lack of commitment to such issues as signage maintenance and ongoing product/experience quality monitoring and marketing;
- ▶ The absence of a dedicated ongoing management committee for the route; and
- ▶ A vision for the future.

Where do you start?

At this stage you should be thinking:

- ▶ *'Our target market is ...'*;
- ▶ *'A tourism drive route is the best action to take because ...'*;
- ▶ *'The type of route will be ...'*; and
- ▶ *'Our partners will be ...'*.

The first thing to do when you are planning on developing a route is to check if it is already being promoted to the touring market. Your key contacts are your RTO and DMR District. Also, check the map attached to see if it coincides with any of the strategic tourism routes.

Once you are sure no one is promoting it (possibly under another name), ask yourself, why not? Is it just because you can see the potential and no one else can, or are there overriding circumstances that prevent it being promoted and developed (road quality, etc.) If the idea has merit, and does not clash with any other routes you will need to prepare a Corridor Plan (this is like a business plan for your route). This will help you gain the support of your RTO and Tourism Queensland. If your route is to have signage you will also need to contact your District Tourism Signage Committee (DTSC) run by DMR and get the relevant road signage guidelines.

The following information needs to be included in a Corridor Plan:

- ▶ A clearly defined and substantiated target market that can and wants to travel on your route and supporting research;
- ▶ A map of the route to show it does not clash with other routes;
- ▶ A marketing plan;
- ▶ A development plan including signage if required;

- ▶ An established committee or group of partners working together; and
- ▶ An ongoing commitment to the marketing and infrastructure development of the route.

Developing the route

Touring routes are not designed to be destinations in their own right. Rather, they create product and experience options that travellers can mix and match within their overall planned itinerary.

The primary objectives of tourism route development are to:

- ▶ Provide a traveller with a reason to travel your route and with a better experience;
- ▶ Assist in trip planning;
- ▶ Highlight attractions both along and off the main routes;
- ▶ Encourage dispersal of visitors within the region; and
- ▶ Foster alliances and partnerships for further product development and for a co-ordinated marketing effort.

For travellers unfamiliar with the region or area, a tourism route takes much of the guesswork out of 'driving into the unknown'. Visitors deciding to travel a touring route expect that it will be clearly marked and encapsulate a range of interesting features and experiences **that will justify taking that route.**

Touring route development must therefore be well planned, resourced, maintained and marketed if the above objectives are to be achieved.

A successful tourism drive route has:

- ▶ Industry as the driver, with public and private sector involvement;
- ▶ Unique drive experiences and attractions distinctive to the route, OR
- ▶ A corridor that provides a mix of product suited to the consumer's needs and creates a competitive advantage for the region. e.g. landscapes, heritage features, sea/mountain/outback vistas;
- ▶ A safe and efficient road network;
- ▶ Clear directional and tourist signage (not necessarily signage specific to the route);
- ▶ Adequate service infrastructure including rest areas, driver-reviver stops, scenic lookouts, camping areas, etc.;
- ▶ Efficient user-friendly information networks underpinned by information centres;
- ▶ Towns and visitor services linked and packaged for the convenience of the drive market;
- ▶ A well-managed and committed network with shareholder co-operation and consensus; and
- ▶ An ongoing plan for management for the route.

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Dedicated signage is an essential part of promoting a tourism drive route.

NO! If the route is already clearly marked with DMR signage (e.g. Warrego Highway or a tourist drive), then additional signage is not essential. Remember, signage is for direction, not promotion!

Planning

Planning the route must be undertaken in a systematic way and will take considerable time. This process will also rely heavily on cross-sector and cross-region co-operation and support.

The variety, standard and location of rest areas, lookouts, feature walks and other facilities at the roadside are important to tourist experience and comfort. Touring is enhanced by the provision of appropriate infrastructure, such as picnic areas, lookouts, tourist information bays and toilet facilities. A comprehensive audit of products, experiences and support facilities will need to be conducted along the proposed route and must include:

- **Feature stops** e.g. attractions, lookouts, nature and other walks, cultural and heritage product, places providing opportunity to appreciate scenery and other features of interest, and potential locations for tourist information bays.
- **Rest areas** e.g. toilets, running water, seating and shaded areas providing drivers with an opportunity to stop, rest and refresh; and
- **Picnic facilities** e.g. barbecues, picnic areas and play equipment for children.

For details on how to conduct this audit and record the information, go to Tourism Queensland's website (www.tq.com.au) under 'Industry' for an example Corridor Plan.

Implementation

Development and marketing of a tourism drive route is time-consuming, hard work and costly, so, you will need to establish a special committee or working group for the project. Most importantly, there are three key factors that must be addressed:

- Commitment** There must be strong, ongoing commitment from stakeholders along the route because if this commitment wanes, the project will usually fail.
- Alliances** Partnerships must be identified, negotiated, and confirmed (if necessary through Memorandums of Understanding). These partnerships must involve both the private and public sectors.
- Resources** Government funding may be available for establishment of the project, however, sufficient human and financial resources must be available on an ongoing basis for route maintenance, further product development and marketing. The importance of this issue cannot be over-emphasised.

If your route needs to have signage on a dedicated main road it will need to conform with the DMR Policy on Tourism Signage, available from your district office of DMR (see contacts list attached). DMR and Tourism Queensland have also designed a helpful CD Rom for people wanting to develop tourism drive routes, which is available from Tourism Queensland.

Marketing the route

Drive route development must be considered from the visitor's perspective.

For 80% of drive travellers, the destination is the primary factor; whereas for 20%, the experience offered by the route is key. For the majority of travellers focusing on their destination, a quality tourism drive route may offer an alternative and interesting way to get to their destination.

Generally, the trip planning process focuses on five stages:

DESTINATION ► ROUTE ► ATTRACTIONS ► ACTIVITIES ► ACCOMMODATION

In terms of marketing your route to your target market it is important to remember that with the drive market 60% of the route is planned prior to departure. That is why it is important to be able to get information on your route to your target market before they leave home. The most effective way to do this is in partnership with your RTO and Tourism Queensland.

Effective promotion is crucial, and as with development and maintenance of the route, marketing will require substantial ongoing financial resources:

- ▶ The primary **sources of information** are: maps (47%); motoring organisation brochures (46%); other brochures (27%); and the Internet (25%). Previous knowledge (43%) and family and friends (30%) are also important sources.
- ▶ As tempting as it may be to create a dedicated **brochure** for your route, distribution is the expensive and difficult part. Would you be better placed taking additional advertising in your regional guide?
- ▶ **Maps** must be accurate, have sufficient detail (i.e. times, distances, how to get there), and be updated with each printing.
- ▶ **Signage** must be well positioned so that visitors are left in no doubt the way they are to go.
- ▶ **Logos** – do you really need one? Qualitative research shows very low levels of recognition for most route logos, yet they are expensive to develop, must meet strict criteria to be used on road signage and can create disharmony amongst your working group. Ask yourself where will it be used, how often, and is this the key message you want to get across?
- ▶ A **logo** on signage is not essential, but if used, it must be simple and distinctive, and must communicate your message to the target market. If in doubt it is always useful to test your logo and marketing approach in a focus group of your target market.
- ▶ Be clear about the **key message** you want to get across. Think about how the drive route message links with the destination message that is already in the marketplace.
- ▶ When considering a **name for your route**, it is important to note that existing highway names (e.g. Warrego Highway) have some of the highest levels of recognition with consumers. If your route has an existing name that covers the whole route, it may be best to use this name.
- ▶ Forty-seven percent of all visitors go to **information centres** which are key information sources along the route. Touring visitors are much more likely than other sectors to rely on local sources of information and word of mouth.
- ▶ Less than 5% of travellers **pull over to get information**, whereas almost 60% will read information boards at natural stopping places and rest areas where they are already stopped.
- ▶ Think **DISTRIBUTION**, DISTRIBUTION, DISTRIBUTION. How will you get your brochure out to your visitors? While good, supporting collateral for the route is crucial, so too are the distribution channels for this information, outlets must be carefully identified and a distribution plan prepared. In many cases it is better to use an existing brochure than try to create and distribute your own brochure.

COMMON MISCONCEPTION

All tourism drive routes need their own brochure.

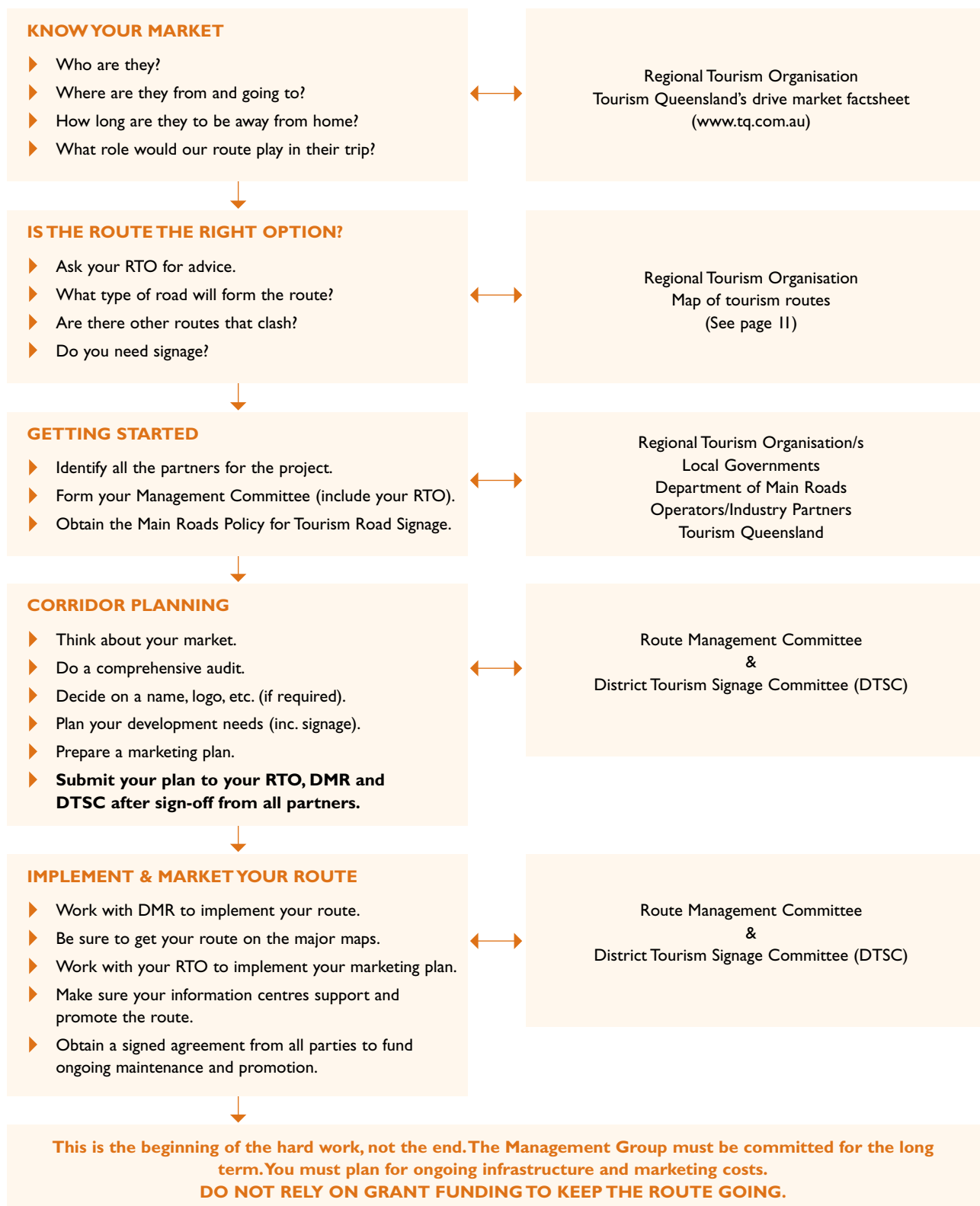
NO! In many cases the most effective way to promote your route is by using publications your market already reads. For assistance in marketing, ask your RTO.

Where to from here?

The following flowchart is a basic overview of the entire process for developing a tourism drive route from inception to implementation. Next to the steps are the organisations you will need to consult at the various stages to make sure your route is a success.

STEPS

KEY CONTACTS



CASE STUDY – An exaggerated example

This is a fictitious case study that gives examples of situations that can occur in developing tourism drive routes. All these things *have happened* – and much more! . . .

The 'Great XYZ Touring Route' links several regions over approximately 400kms. The route was developed by a group of passionate locals who put in a funding submission and obtained a tourism development grant. With the money they developed a logo and produced signs all along the highway, in towns and in roadside pull-over bays at the entrance to towns. Along with the signage they produced a brochure and distributed this promotional material at motels along the route.

One year after the route was established and the celebrations were over, the group stopped meeting because the Chairperson who had put in the submission for funding left to take another job.

The group got back together three years later following a second successful grant funding submission to examine the impact of the development of the route on the community. Much to their dismay the review of the route and the visitor survey showed:

- After three years, 70% of the signs that were supposed to last for seven years had been stolen or vandalised. The group had no money and no plan to replace them;
- The pull-over bays had been vandalised and items had been stolen. Also, the information was out-of-date, and the survey showed that only 6% of people even acquired information from the bays;
- The brochure looked great but only 5% of people had ever seen it, and only 1% had used it on their trip. Twelve boxes of brochures were found in one committee member's garage;
- One of the local government authorities along the route decided after two years they had higher development and marketing priorities and withdrew their support from the project;
- It was impossible to tell how many more visitors had been attracted to the region due to the route as no one had described the target market, so it was also impossible to know if the route product was working effectively;
- When asked why they were taking the route, visitors said it was because it was the only way to get to the destination they had read about before leaving home;
- Even with the brochure in hand, many visitors said that the product along the route did not suit them or their interests;
- Less than 10% of people on the route had ever heard of the 'Great XYZ Touring Route' and only 5% recognised the logo; and
- The route was not mentioned in any motoring brochures, maps or trip-planning information. In fact, many of the volunteer staff at visitor information centres along the way had never heard of the route.

What this route needed was:

- A clear Corridor Plan and an ongoing commitment from stakeholders along the route;
- A clearly identified market, an understanding of what they needed, or why they would travel on the route; and
- Targeted promotion in key publications and effective distribution of the brochures to the market before they arrived, in co-operation with the RTO.

Most importantly, the route's promotional material did not clearly show why people should use it, or what was different about the Great XYZ Touring Route.

Your key contacts start here

When developing your tourism drive route these contacts will be your first point of call. There are many more partners you will need to talk to but start by contacting your RTO and the relevant DMR office:

Regional Tourism Organisations	
Brisbane Marketing	Ph: 3006 6200
Bundaberg Region Ltd	Ph: 4153 8888
Capricorn Tourism & Development	Ph: 4927 2055
Gladstone Area Promotion & Development	Ph: 4972 4000
Fraser Coast South Burnett	Ph: 4122 3444
Tourism Sunshine Coast	Ph: 5477 7311
Gold Coast Tourism	Ph: 5592 2699
Mackay Tourism Ltd	Ph: 4944 5888
Tourism Whitsundays	Ph: 4946 6673
Outback Qld Tourism Authority	Ph: 3211 4877
Southern Downs Tourist Association	Ph: 4661 3122
Toowoomba & Golden West Regional Tourist Association	Ph: 4632 1988
Tourism Tropical North Qld	Ph: 4031 7676
Townsville Enterprise Ltd	Ph: 4726 2728

Department of Main Roads Districts	
Metropolitan (Brisbane)	Ph: 3834 8383
Wide Bay (Bundaberg)	Ph: 4154 0200
Central District (Rockhampton)	Ph: 4931 1500
Central Highlands (Emerald)	Ph: 4983 8700
North Coast Hinterland (Gympie)	Ph: 5482 0333
South-Coast Hinterland (Nerang)	Ph: 5583 8111
Mackay District (Mackay)	Ph: 4951 8555
North Western District (Cloncurry)	Ph: 4769 3200
Central Western (Barcaldine)	Ph: 4651 2777
South Western (Roma)	Ph: 4622 9511
Border District (Warwick)	Ph: 4661 6333
Southern District (Toowoomba)	Ph: 4639 0777
Peninsula District (Cairns)	Ph: 4050 5444
Northern District (Townsville)	Ph: 4720 7217

The above information was correct at the time of publishing. For up-to-date regional and district contact details, go to:

Tourism Queensland – www.tq.com.au

Department of Main Roads – www.mainroads.qld.gov.au

QUEENSLAND'S STRATEGIC TOURISM DRIVE ROUTES



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Glossary of terms

DMR

Department of Main Roads

RTO

Regional Tourism Organisation

DTSC

District Tourism Signage Committee, operated by DMR to assess tourism signage applications

Tourism Drive Routes

All road corridors, short or long, being developed for visitors

Tourism Themed Routes

A particular type of tourism drive route that has a theme or story, a name, a logo and signage

Touring Routes

A type of tourism drive route marketed to visitors but without necessarily having a logo and dedicated signage

Tourist Drive

Short loop or alternative routes, typically marked by the DMR, with brown and white route markers

Corridor Plan

Like a business plan for your tourism drive route, essential if your route links a number of local government areas or tourism regions

Memorandums of Understanding

Agreements between partners on a tourism drive route for the ongoing management of things such as signage, and marketing of the route.