

## Old Cascade Scenic Highway Heritage Corridor

**Location:** Northeast King County

**Length:** 13.3 miles

**Begins:** Stevens Pass Ski Area

**Ends:** U.S. 2 (Money Creek Bridge)

Corridor includes three discontinuous remnants of the old highway over Stevens Pass, each accessible from present-day U.S. 2. These three road segments are currently named NE Old Cascade Highway. Beginning at Stevens Pass, and heading west:

- **Segment No. 1** begins at a gravel turn-off on the north side of U.S. 2, just west of Stevens Pass Ski Area, and continues 4.9 miles west to a bicycle/pedestrian bridge (autos must re-trace route to ski area).
- **Segment No. 2** begins at a marked turn-off to Iron Goat Trail, and ends 3.9 miles west where it reconnects with U.S. 2.
- **Segment No. 3** begins at a south turn-off east of Skykomish, and ends just west of Money Creek Campground, where it reconnects with U.S. 2.

### Road history in local context

Construction of a serviceable road over Stevens Pass came relatively late to King County. The elevation and rugged terrain made this route a poor second choice to Snoqualmie Pass, where efforts to build and maintain a wagon road had begun at a very early date. Instead, the focus remained on the survey and construction of the Great Northern



*Ames & Adams Map of Stevens Pass, 1893*

Railroad and its terminus in Seattle. Even after its completion in 1893, severe problems with the railroad's mountain crossing forced continuous changes in its alignment and engineering for several decades to follow.

The earliest rudimentary road on this route may have been built by the railroad as a tote road for use in connection with the construction of its grades and tunnels. An 1893 map by the Ames & Adams shows a wagon road in existence along the Tye River above the present-day location of Skykomish all the way to the Pass. This road is undocumented on maps dated from 1900-08. Road records indicate that the Skykomish Tote Road (County Road No. 851) connected the towns along the rail line at least



*Cascade Scenic Highway, 1917. Courtesy of AAA*



Cascade Scenic Highway through Skykomish. Image courtesy of Skykomish Historical Society



as far as Skykomish. Photographs of the same era indicate a rough graveled road at Baring, Berlin and Skykomish, with a few rustic recreational accommodations in operation.

In 1912, King County citizens along the rail corridor formed a Good Roads Club to promote a cross-Cascades highway. The boosterism had its desired effect and, in 1913, a historic collaboration was jointly announced by King, Chelan, and Snohomish counties to build an auto route over Stevens Pass. In May, the Board of King County Commissioners resolved:

Whereas, it is deemed advisable by the Board of County Commissioners, King County, Washington, by unanimous vote, that a road known as the Stevens Pass Road be established not less that 60 feet nor more the 100 feet in width. Said road being described as follows: Beginning at the Snohomish County boundary; thence southeasterly and easterly connecting with the towns of Baring, Grotto, Berlin and Skykomish to the east boundary of King County in [Stevens Pass] following the most practicable route.

This route was formally and immediately named the Cascade Scenic Highway (King County Road No. 999). The route was quickly surveyed by the County Engineer in May 1913. Not surprisingly, much of the alignment at the upper end west of the Pass would follow the original Great Northern Railroad switchbacks. Over the following year, the Cascade Scenic Highway involved 27 takings of prop-

erty in King County, most of which was held by timber companies—Weyerhaeuser Timber Co., Grotto Lumber Co., Baring Cedar Co. and Skykomish Lumber Co. John Maloney, founder of the town of Skykomish, relinquished some 8.5 acres of private land.

Completion of the entire highway was delayed by World War I, and by funding and construction delays on the part of Chelan County. King County, however, essentially completed its 28-mile share by 1917. The Forest Service contributed \$90,000 to the road as a means of providing better access to recreation and fire suppression on forest lands. Nonetheless, the road remained incomplete. It was not until 1924 that the first automobiles even attempted a crossing, and the official opening of the highway did not take place until July of 1925. On a sunny day, 1200 people and 283 cars arrived at Stevens Pass with picnics in tow. Governor Hartley, county commissioners, state highway and national forest service officials celebrated the occasion together. Ms. Peggy Green of Monroe was named the queen of Stevens Pass.

Sources: King County records: Assessor's Property Record Cards, Land Use and Aerial Survey - 1936-1941, Historic Preservation Program HR database, *Index to Roads Records, Engineer's Road Establishment Book - 1913*, Roads' Map Vault database. Anderson - 1888, 1907; Kroll - 1912, 1913, 1926, 1930, 1936, 1938; Metsker - 1926, 1936; Washington Map & Blueprint Co. - 1900, 1905, 1908. JoAnn Roe, *Stevens Pass* (Mountaineers, 1995).



## Corridor signature

- Forest and mountain immersion
- Authentic auto-tourism experience
- Connection to early railroad history

The Old Cascade Scenic Highway Heritage Corridor represents three remnant sections of the 1914 - 1925 cross-mountain highway over Stevens Pass. This corridor takes the traveler back in time to the sights, sounds, and smells of early 20th century travel in the forested Cascade Range. Historic resources relate to the history of the Great Northern Railroad, Stevens Pass Historic District, logging and mining, and include the picturesque railroad and mill town of Skykomish. Today this corridor is a part of the Stevens Pass Greenway, a National Scenic Byway.

## Contributing features

The following **roadway features** contribute positively to overall corridor character:

- Narrow roadway width throughout
- Historic curvilinear alignment
- Profile rises and dips, follows terrain
- Lack of roadway crown
- Lack of centerline some sections; faded striping some sections
- Minimal shoulders; natural vegetation over shoulders to edge of road
- Narrow vegetation cuts; trees closely bordering or overhanging roadbed
- Miller River Bridge (King County Landmark)

The following **contextual features** contribute positively to overall corridor character:

- Scale of road within setting
- Majestic mountain views
- Forest environments varying by elevation
- Aged stumps with springboard cuts
- Railroad-related features on Iron Goat Trail at Wellington and Scenic
- Skykomish Historic District
- King County Landmarked Skykomish Masonic Hall

## Non-contributing features

The following elements visually detract from overall corridor character:

- Some high tension wires in right-of-way
- Wide vegetation cuts in some sections
- Industrial clearings
- Modern railroad and highway maintenance facilities

