



**SCENIC  
AMERICA**

# Support our causes that preserve and enhance America's scenic beauty for all to enjoy

## Help us invigorate our advocacy of utilities undergrounding

Scenic America proposes to convene and lead a National Undergrounding Coalition to coordinate and accelerate efforts to underground electric transmission and distribution infrastructure across the United States.



Building on relationships developed over the past two years with utilities, state utility commissioners, technology innovators, nonprofits, and academic experts, the coalition would provide a structured forum for collaboration through monthly meetings. Its core purpose would be to identify high-risk overhead transmission and distribution proposals early, share technical and policy expertise, and support timely, coordinated responses.

In parallel, the coalition would work proactively to advance best practices, elevate emerging technologies, and strengthen the policy case for undergrounding as a resilience, safety, environmental, and community-protection strategy, while respecting regional differences in grid design and regulatory frameworks.

## For more than 40 years, we've led the fight to keep our communities and roadways scenic, safe, and free from visual blight

Scenic America was founded in 1982 by a group of citizens from around the country who were concerned about the state of America's visual character, particularly that of our country's roadsides. We are now the national leader of a network of 40 state and local affiliates that help us preserve and enhance the scenic character of America.

Every day, Scenic America helps citizens, public officials, and neighborhood groups improve the character and aesthetics of their communities. We believe beauty is good for business and everyone deserves to live, work, and play in beautiful places.

## Our Mission

We are the only national nonprofit that helps citizens safeguard America's scenic qualities. We are a 501(c)(3) that advocates for a Scenic America for all people and communities.

## Our Impact

Scenic America supports citizens who believe in the importance of preserving and protecting our nation's scenic beauty. We provide research, advocacy, communications support, and guidance to people faced with scenic conservation challenges, from development issues to sign ordinance questions.

## Key Issues

### Energy Infrastructure & Equity

With natural disasters and extreme weather events growing worse each year thanks to climate change, creating a resilient power grid has never been more important. Overhead wires raise aesthetic concerns while also threatening our safety and the integrity of our natural and built environments. Undergrounding utility infrastructure can improve the safety and aesthetics of our landscapes and communities. However, marginalized communities often suffer from inequitable exposure to unsightly energy infrastructure and a lack of awareness and investment in alternative energy sources.

### Billboards & Sign Control

Static and LED billboards do more than damage the scenic qualities of our communities. They distract drivers, bring down property values, and bombard us with marketing messages that we can't avoid. They have also caused the clear-cutting of millions of trees for the sole purpose of improving the billboards' visibility. The \$9 billion billboard industry is known for working behind the scenes, swaying decision-makers to make policies that put more signs on our streets. We want this to stop.

## Help us save millions of trees

Scenic America proposes a policy initiative focused on the practice of tree cutting and vegetation removal for billboard visibility.

This practice, actively occurring in 35 states, allows billboard companies to remove publicly owned trees along federally funded highways. This project would document the scope and impacts of tree cutting, equip local officials, advocates, and the public with useful tools to identify, question, and respond to harmful practices, and engage federal policymakers and transportation agencies, including FHWA and Congressional offices, through educational briefings, informational materials, and media outreach.



Through our scientific research using a novel billboard dataset and USDA tree canopy cover data, **we estimate that more than 11.4 million trees have already been cut down across the country for the sole purpose of enhancing billboard visibility.**

This tree loss translates into more than 326,000 tons of annual carbon sequestration lost — including nearly 287,000 tons from trees themselves, and over 39,000 tons from accompanying vegetation such as shrubs and grasses.

Over the span of 50 years, that amounts to more than 10 million tons of lost carbon sequestration, equivalent to placing 3.5 million cars on the road for one year, heating 5.1 million American homes with natural gas for a year, or erasing the entire annual carbon footprint created by 1 million Americans.

## Placemaking & Community Planning

We believe everyone deserves to live, work, and play in beautiful places. The scenic qualities of our communities impact our quality of life — promoting economic prosperity, mental health, and community pride. Our elected officials have a responsibility to encourage responsible development that preserves what's unique about our communities while looking to the future.

## Scenic Byways

Scenic America is the leading advocate for scenic byways. We fought to bring back the National Scenic Byways Program when its funding lapsed and its designation process disappeared, and we continue to fight for federal support for this critical program.

## Parks & Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces deliver big benefits, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, protecting plants and wildlife, showcasing scenic beauty, fueling our sense of well-being — and boosting the economy. The role of open spaces can't be taken for granted, and we must all do our part to protect them.

## Recent Wins:

- Leading the way in Congress to pass the Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act of 2019, and securing a total of \$50 million in funding for byways in the FY 21, 22, 23, 24 appropriations acts.
- Scoring a win in the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022 as the court affirmed the constitutionality of digital billboard bans.
- Fighting billboard company-backed amendments that would have gutted the Highway Beautification Act in 2020, 2021, and 2022 — and winning.
- Successfully advocating for federal support for utility undergrounding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021, including an amendment to the Stafford Act to allow FEMA funds to be used for undergrounding and a new \$5 billion resiliency grant program.
- Landing more flexible funding to support signage, highway beautification, native plantings, and other provisions in the \$300 million Federal Lands Access Program.
- Joining with like-minded allies to urge the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act in 2020.

## To donate online:



<https://www.scenic.org/fy-25-26-valued-donor/>

