GLENN HIGHWAY NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY MARKETING PLAN
MARCH 2006
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Prepared for
Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Partnership
March, 2006

Prepared by
Bradley Reid + Associates in conjunction with the Alaska Travel Industry Association
Funded in part with a National Scenic Byways Grant by the Federal Highway Administration

Photo Credits:
ATIA- Michael DeYoung        Bill Evans
ATIA- Clark James Mischler    Anchorage Daily News
ATIA- Frank Flavin            LDN

Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway Partnership
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I. OVERVIEW

The Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway is a 135-mile stretch of road that follows a historic trade route from Anchorage through glacially sculpted valleys to Alaska’s Interior. The route has world-class scenery and historic, cultural and recreational opportunities that make it worthy of this national designation.

The Glenn Highway Scenic Byway Partnership has created a Corridor Management Plan. One of the key elements in implementing the plan is to develop marketing strategies that can attract visitors and revenue to communities along the Byway. In other states, byway organizers have found that they can more effectively promote their route by working with existing tourism marketing partners. As such, the Glenn Highway Partnership Board has commissioned this marketing plan in conjunction with the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) and its advertising agency, Bradley Reid + Associates.

The plan addresses target markets and outlines a variety of strategies and tactics to promote the corridor to both Alaska residents and out-of-state visitors. It outlines a short and long-term approach to raising awareness and traffic along the Byway, and also provides a mechanism through which the partnership board, local governments, and convention and visitors bureaus can cooperatively market the Byway.

II. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Market Position

The national marketing concept for promoting byways is, "Before there were interstates, there was America. It’s still there.” This concept suggests to consumers that they should leave the interstates and experience a different type of trip. In research, consumers indicated that the idea of finding America was appealing and generated a host of positive images, such as getting off the beaten path and finding unique sights and experiences.

The America's Byways logo is used in marketing National Scenic Byways and All American Roads. Collateral materials for the National Scenic Byways also incorporate the “come CLOSER” tagline. Variations of the tagline are used depending on whether the ad focuses on culture, scenic beauty or recreation and include “come CLOSER and EMBRACE,” “come CLOSER and VISIT” and “come CLOSER and EXPLORE.”
Unlike many other byways in the nation, the Glenn Highway is not only a scenic route but also one of the primary roads in Alaska. Thus, it plays an important role in the state's transportation system and a link to the Lower 48.

Due to its position in Alaska, the route is distinctly more remote and has less development and roadside amenities than roads in other parts of the country. This is both part of the appeal of the Byway and yet one of the most difficult marketing challenges to overcome. Although the Byway is anchored by the state's largest city, the area is not often thought of as a destination in and of itself.

Relative to other byways in Alaska, such as the Seward Highway, the Glenn Highway has more private property along the corridor. This provides opportunities for private business development along the route and potential problems related to trespassing on private land.

Commercial traffic, local residents, visitors and businesses all use the Glenn Highway. However, vacation/pleasure travelers are most likely to be impacted by marketing whether they are Alaska residents or visitors from out of state.

**Alaska Visitor Trends**

Alaska's visitor industry has seen steady growth since its inception. As such, there has been a corresponding rise in the number of Alaska businesses and employees who benefit from, and are dependent on visitors. While there is no research specific to the Glenn Highway, there are overall travel trends and research that can be used to provide a backdrop for marketing plans and actions.

While Alaska has experienced strong growth in the last decade, there have been shifts in the mode of travel to Alaska. The number of visitors, particularly those that arrive via highway and ferry travel, has remained flat or declined. At the same time, package travel has increased. As a result, Alaska
has seen a substantial increase in airline departures and cruise ships consistent with worldwide growth within these industries. And while traffic entering the state by highway (long-haul highway visitors) shows low growth, there has been a substantial increase in the number of people who fly to Alaska and rent an RV or car (fly-drive visitors) and then travel within the state.

The following chart compares arrivals to Alaska by mode of travel between the summers of 1994 and 2004, the last year the state conducted the Alaska Visitor Statistics program.

**Alaska Visitor Profile**

The Alaska Travel Industry Association has conducted a considerable amount of research on Alaska’s visitors. Major trends include:

- Most visitors to Alaska are baby boomers between 45 and 65 with nine out of 10 having no children in the home
- The number one reason for visiting Alaska is the fulfillment of a lifetime dream, while the major barriers to travel include not enough time (both to travel and plan a vacation) and cost
- Increasingly, Alaska visitors return to the state for one or more trips. The percentage of repeat visitors sampled by ATIA has grown from 24% in 1994 to 40% of visitors in 2004

In addition to statewide visitor statistics, the 2004 Mat-Su Visitor Profile prepared by McDowell Group for the Mat-Su Convention and Visitor’s Bureau includes regional information on both cruise and non-cruise visitors. Among the findings are:

- The most popular Mat-Su visitor activities are wildlife viewing, hiking/nature walks, rafting, bear viewing and camping
- The leading source of information used to plan a trip is the Internet, followed by general travel brochures, the State Vacation Planner, the ferry brochure and travel agents

**Alaska Highway Travel**

Highway travelers are one of the most likely targets for marketing to out-of-state visitors. Over the past several years, Alaska has seen a flattening in the number of visitors who drive to Alaska from the Lower 48. This development pre-dates the high gas prices of recent years and is thought to be a result of the national trend related to shorter vacations.

In 2004, GMA Research conducted an Alaska Highway Market study on behalf of Tourism North, the joint Alaska-Canadian tourism marketing program. The study was developed to gain a better understanding of the size of the potential driving market and to profile the demographic and geographic characteristics of driving visitors. Major findings include:
"A majority of people, 82%, indicated that they would have traveled to the Mat-Su during summer if there had been a good enough reason to do so."

- 78% of long-haul drivers are over 55 years of age, with 42% of those between 55 and 64 years old, and 36% 65 years or older
- Only 14% have kids under 18 in the household
- 71% own an RV
- Main reasons for driving to Alaska include: freedom to travel at my own pace, just wanted to see it, and wanted to see the scenery
- Primary activities include: wildlife viewing 78%, Native cultural attractions 75%, sightseeing city tour 65%, day cruise 63%, fishing 57%, bird watching 56%, and backpacking/hiking 50%

**Alaska Resident Travel**

Alaska residents are also a primary target for marketing the Byway. According to the Mat-Su Visitor Impact Study conducted by Alaska Village Initiatives, in November 1998, three-fourths of respondents from Anchorage, Fairbanks and Kenai/Soldotna visited the Mat-Su region during summer. While this research is not specific to the Byway, it does provide useful data:

- Anchorage residents indicated a higher visitation than respondents from Fairbanks or Kenai/Soldotna
- One-half of visitors stayed overnight in the borough with 24% camping and 20% staying in commercial lodging
- Average length of stay was relatively short at 1.5 nights
- Nearly 40% of residents escorted visitors on their trips
- Summer resident visitors are primarily active visitors engaging in a variety of summer pursuits
- Convenience of services and activities is important

One of the key findings applicable to marketing the Glenn Highway is that a majority of people, 82%, indicated that they would have traveled to the Mat-Su during summer if there had been a good enough reason to do so.

Clearly, one of the best things we can do to attract visitors to the Byway is give residents a reason to visit.

Winter visitors along the highway are, for the most part, Alaska residents. Fall/Winter visitors are most likely from Anchorage – 59% of those residents say they visited the area. Fall/Winter visitors are relatively young and activity-oriented. They travel to the area to pursue recreational opportunities or visit friends and relatives.
Key Travel Trends

Effective marketing requires an understanding of what motivates travelers. The most important motivations are relaxation, scenic beauty and a variety of things to do. Two segments of travelers that are particularly important to scenic byways are outdoor enthusiasts and history buffs. These two groups comprise 35% of the traveling population and represent a significant marketing opportunity for the Glenn Highway. Another trend that impacts the Byway is an increasing interest in weekend getaways.

Historic Tourism

History buffs are the largest segment identified as users of scenic byways nationwide. They comprise 20% of the traveling population. The group is interested in a variety of traveling experiences, especially scenic beauty, historic sites, museums and cultural activities and educational experiences. This group tends to take fewer trips than the average, but their trips are generally longer. This group is older, with a significant number of retirees and couples without children. This market is similar to the average Alaska visitor, and those who drive the highway in particular.

The Glenn Highway offers a rich mixture of historic and cultural opportunities. That said, the average traveler in Alaska might not know how to find information or experiences related to the history and culture of the area.

Outdoor/Adventure Travel

Outdoor enthusiasts are younger, upscale families who like outdoor recreation, natural beauty and adventure. This group does not only travel along byways, they like to stop and enjoy activities along the way. This group is most likely to be Alaska residents who enjoy outdoor activities. Adventure travel is also part of the outdoor segment.

The Travel Industry Association of America (TIA) reports that in the past five years, one-half of American adults, or 98 million people, have taken an adventure trip, making adventure travel one of the fastest-growing parts of the travel industry. Adventure travelers expect to experience varying degrees of risk, excitement and tranquility, and to be personally tested or challenged. Adventure travel runs the gamut from "soft adventure," requiring little physical risk and little or no experience, such as cross-country skiing and rafting, to the more challenging "hard adventure" activities such as rock climbing. Alaska visitors are more inclined to participate in soft adventure, while younger, more physically fit residents make up more of the hard adventure market. The Glenn Highway is suited for a wide range of outdoor and adventure travel experiences.
Weekend Trips
Weekend trips by Americans jumped by 70% over the last 10 years and now account for more than half of all U.S. travel, according to TIA. “Time poverty” is leading to shorter trips. Travelers are staying closer to home, traveling within a three-hour range of their residence. Long weekend trips now comprise 53% of all trips, with longer vacations declining.

Scenic byways offer affordable, quick getaways. While the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway is longer than most byways (the average byway is less than 50 miles long), it provides a number of options for a weekend or even a day trip.

Educational Experiences
People are searching for educational and life-enriching travel experiences. Learning has become an important aspect for many people while on vacation. In addition, parents report that children gain valuable knowledge while traveling. Traveling the byways teaches lessons in history, geography, archaeology, social studies and much more. Educational information, when presented in an interesting manner, can help enrich the Glenn Highway traveler's experience.

Opportunities and Constraints
The largest opportunity for the Byway is the proximity to the state's major population base. This provides a significant source of potential visitors within a day's drive of the route. The Byway has magnificent scenery, glaciers, history and recreational activities. All are opportunities that can be marketed to both residents and potential visitors. A likely increase in Alaska visitors, especially fly-drive travelers, also represents a growing high-potential market for the Glenn Highway.

There are also several challenges and constraints in marketing the Byway. The first is the current lack of recognition. Few people are likely to be aware that the Glenn Highway has been named a National Scenic Byway and fewer still have any idea of what that means. Raising awareness in the marketplace will take time. There is competition within Alaska to visit other areas where there are more services and accommodations. Other challenges may come from working through a coalition of organizations and issues related to long-term funding. The partnership will refrain from trying to be all things to all people. Effective marketing relies on the ability to be very targeted.
III. MARKETING GOALS

The marketing plan is designed to be consistent with the overall vision of the Byway Partnership to enhance communities and places of interest along the corridor, increase tourism and add to the local culture and economic base. The following goals and objectives provide a basis for marketing the Byway:

**Goal 1 - Create an identity for the Glenn Highway National “Scenic Byway”**
- Objective 1: Reinforce the Scenic Byways designation
- Objective 2: Share information about the history, cultural heritage, geology and recreational opportunities along the corridor, but set the Byway apart by focusing attention on the glaciers

**Goal 2 - Increase local awareness of the Byway**
- Objective 1: Educate and engage Byway businesses and residents in understanding and supporting the Byway
- Objective 2: Work in conjunction with Byway communities and organizations to increase awareness

**Goal 3 - Promote economic growth through travel and tourism**
- Objective 1: Attract more visitors
- Objective 2: Promote longer stays

IV. TARGET MARKETS

Target markets are presented in three tiers starting with the most important. Ranking the markets helps determine where to focus energy and resources while emphasizing those areas with the highest return on investment.

**Tier One - Alaska Pleasure Travelers**
- Primarily Anchorage/Eagle River residents
- Interested in day trips and weekend getaways
- Outdoor enthusiasts
- Also target through specific niches*

**Tier Two - Non-resident Vacation/Pleasure Highway Travelers**
- Independent visitors from the Lower 48 who are planning to drive the Alcan Highway within the next two years
- Visitors who rent a car or RV in Anchorage (or RV in Whitehorse) then travel the highway for single or multi-day trips
- Interested in scenery, culture and history
Tier Three

- Byway partners and residents along the corridor
- Local and national media
- Motorcoach and package tour operators
- Alaska visitor industry organizations

Niche Markets*

A variety of niche markets within tier one can be pursued. A limited number of niches should be selected for targeting in the short term, with additional niches added in the future.

Examples include:

- Watchable wildlife
- Snowmachining
- Fishing
- Native culture
- Backcountry hiking
- Nature walks
- Glacier viewing and visiting
- Tent or RV camping
- Cross-country skiing
- Visiting historic roadhouses
- Rafting
- Mountain biking
- Scenic and loop drives
- Geocaching
- Fall harvest and u-pick
- Celebrations
- Horticulture

Longer-term options:

- Groom and promote cross-country and skijoring trails
- Groom and promote snowmachine trails
- Organize and promote antiquing weekends, a winter carnival or other event

V. STRATEGIES

The following strategies are meant to maximize investment and exposure for the Byway. Some of the strategies overlap while others apply to specific target markets:

1. Incorporate website link in all materials and information
2. Communicate attractions, recreational opportunities and amenities that can be found along the Byway
The Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway will be positioned as a world-class scenic drive where one can easily experience a land that is “Glacier Made”.

**Strategies targeting Alaska residents**
1. Give residents a reason to travel by providing specific ideas, itineraries, packages and location of recreational opportunities
2. Emphasize proximity to Anchorage and travel time
3. Distribute targeted information to a select number of niches with the highest likelihood of producing Byway travelers

**Strategies targeting visitors**
1. Market to long-haul highway travelers who have already expressed interest in driving the highway
2. Promote the Byway to independent travelers who rent a car or RV in Anchorage or RV in Whitehorse
3. Piggyback on existing state and local tourism marketing programs as a cost-effective way to reach potential visitors

**Strategies targeting package tour market**
1. Provide information on the Scenic Byway designation to package tour operators for inclusion in their marketing
2. Highlight areas of interest suitable for inclusion in package tour itineraries

**Strategies targeting media**
1. Provide writers and editors of Alaska travel guidebooks with information on the designation and highlights of the route
2. Promote coverage of the Byway to Alaska media, especially as a day trip from Anchorage

**Strategies targeting Byway businesses and residents**
1. Incorporate economic impact messages into information
2. Encourage product packaging

**Positioning**
As the Glenn Highway Corridor Partnership Plan points out, Alaska’s road system presents limited glacier viewing opportunities. The Glenn Highway is unique in this respect. The distinct impact of glaciers is shown in the landscape, the mountains, valleys, rivers and moraines of Southcentral Alaska.

The Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway will be positioned as a world-class scenic drive where one can easily experience a land that is “Glacier Made”.

Materials and interpretive information can share the history, cultural heritage, geology and recreational opportunities along the corridor, but there needs to be a focus to set the Byway apart from other highways in the country. Highlighting the impact of the glaciers makes it distinctly different from the outset.
VI. MARKETING TOOLS

To follow are recommended marketing tools to reach each of the target markets and to focus limited resources.

Portal Website

In 2005, the Travel Industry Association of America estimates that 78% of travelers that use the Internet went online to get travel and destination information. As one of the first marketing tasks, a website will be developed. Rather than creating information on all of the communities and businesses along the route it is recommended that a portal website be created.

The site will be easy to use and enticing to the potential visitor, yet simple and easy to maintain. A portal site will bring people into the site, provide information on the highway, then push people out to other sites for accommodations, activities and communities along the corridor in a seamless manner. This will reduce redundancy of information and reduce maintenance and updates. The site will also be professionally designed, as this will be the only marketing tool that many people will ever see.

Website Online Marketing

Just building a website does not ensure that anyone will find the site. A first step to promoting the website will be to purchase or place links on high traffic websites that target Alaska residents and highway travelers such as:

- Sponsorship link on driving section of ATIA website
- Purchase link on Alaska.com
- Ask all communities along the route to include information and a link on their websites
- Approach other organizations such as the Alaska Railroad and Alaska Marine Highway to add reciprocal links

The URL GlennHighway.org has been secured and will be highlighted in all marketing materials, with additional URLs secured for tracking specific marketing campaigns in coming years. In the long term, or as budget allows, additional online marketing techniques will be employed such as purchasing key words on search engines like Google, and conducting ongoing search engine positioning to increase the likelihood of the website appearing higher in the search engine ranking.

Another opportunity to target Alaska Highway travelers is through the use of the ATIA's e-mail database. This will allow the Glenn Highway Partnership to utilize a highly targeted approach to contacting people who have identified themselves as interested in traveling to Alaska this year by car or RV. An e-mail would be sent to these individuals with a link directly to the Glenn Highway website.
Public Relations
Public relations will be an important tool to generate awareness of the Byway. In-state media will be sent e-releases as well as pitched stories related to day trips and weekend getaways. The Byway also has the ability to work with national and international travel writers in conjunction with existing national PR programs conducted by ATIA, North to Alaska, ACVB, Mat-Su CVB and Alaska Media Road Show. In order to best take advantage of these contacts, public relations staff will be briefed and provided with information and materials on a regular basis.

In addition, a press kit will be compiled to provide basic information on the Byway as well as story ideas and contact information. The press kit will contain: a fact sheet, press release, map suitable for reproduction, photography, local contacts and sample story ideas. Sheets will be printed individually so that they can be easily updated and customized. A limited number of press kits will be printed for distribution at trade shows and other venues, with the majority distributed online.

Special releases including Byway fact sheets and information will be sent to package tour operators/motorcoach tour operators for use in their marketing materials. An e-release will also provide similar information to the many publishers of Alaska guidebooks.

Collateral Materials
In the past, much of the information distributed about a destination was printed in collateral materials. While always popular, it is recommended that general inquiries for information be fulfilled through the website to save printing and production costs. This does not eliminate the need for some printed materials.

The Partnership has an interest in reprinting the current placemat, which features a hand-drawn map and brochure. In addition, it is recommended that two to three niche maps and/or brochures be created. Examples include a map showing an activity such as hiking, cross-country or snow machine trails, which will be distributed online and where outdoor equipment is sold. Other brochures will show where to see and touch glaciers, places to experience Native culture or roadhouses.

Brochures and other collateral materials will be created in a similar graphic style and be available both online and in printed form.

Advertising
In the short term, advertising recommendations are directed primarily to Anchorage area residents. A series of smaller space ads will run in the Friday entertainment guide of the Anchorage Daily News called Play. People often use the guide when looking for information about what to see and do in the
There are many opportunities to include exciting, yet doable itineraries in programs that promote visitation to and within Alaska.

Ads will run each week for approximately 15-20 weeks. Individual ads will give readers a weekend trip itinerary or target a niche market with specific ideas.

In addition, at least one highway publication is recommended, the Alaska Milepost. As budget allows, additional highway publications will be recommended such as AAA and Good Sam Club magazine.

**CD Driving Guide**

A Glenn Highway audio CD will be created similar to the popular *Road to Hana* CD in Hawaii. The CD will provide visitors with the historical, cultural, geological, recreational and archaeological highlights of the Byway in an entertaining and educational manner. CDs will be available for sale in visitor centers, gift stores, book stores in Anchorage, Tok, Valdez, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, Denali and on the website.

**Itineraries**

There are many opportunities to include interesting itineraries in programs that promote visitation to and within Alaska. Several basic and themed itineraries will be created and submitted to organizations such as the National Scenic Byway Program and the Alaska Travel Industry Association for distribution and inclusion on their website. The itineraries will also be used for public relations and posted on the Glenn Highway site as well.

**Logo**

In the long term, it is suggested that a new logo for the Byway be created. The logo will incorporate a clean, distinctive typeface. The Board of Directors will delineate how the existing logo will be used, while the marketing logo will be reserved for the website, printed materials and other marketing efforts.

**Cooperative Marketing**

The plan will be implemented in coordination with other programs such as local visitor bureaus, chambers, statewide marketing, local and national scenic byway programs. Anchorage, Chugiak/Eagle River, Palmer and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough each have a chamber of commerce, convention and visitor bureau and/or visitor center. The resources of these local organizations will be used to ensure the Byway is promoted and publicized locally and on the Internet.

In the future, the Glenn Highway Partnership will also seek to work in conjunction with other organizations such as the Seward and Richardson Scenic Byways groups, parks and the Alaska Ferry to promote the Byway.
APPENDIX
# PROJECT BUDGET

**Short-Term Project Estimates**

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<td>Portal Website</td>
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<td>- Copy writing/editing</td>
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<td>- Layout and design</td>
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<td>- Infrastructure and hosting</td>
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<td>Website Maintenance</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
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<td>- Minor annual updates</td>
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<td>Itineraries</td>
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<td>- Write sample itineraries</td>
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<td>- Distribute to state and national organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logo Development</td>
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<td>- Develop a distinctive identifying mark for use on the Glenn Highway website, in addition to all other marketing materials</td>
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<td>Print Advertising for Website</td>
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<td>- Series of Anchorage weekend getaway ads</td>
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<td>Marketing Tools</td>
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<td>- Reprint brochures and placemats</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Long-Term Project Estimates**

In addition to the short-term projects listed above, the following projects are recommended as budget allows.

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<td>Collateral Materials</td>
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<td>- Produce niche maps and brochures</td>
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<td>Visitor Advertising</td>
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<td>- Highway-related publications such as:</td>
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<td>Good Sam Club and AAA publications</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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## Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway 2006 Marketing Flow

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</table>
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Prepared for the Alaska Travel Industry Association.

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