

Journey Through Hallowed Ground Named National Scenic Byway by U.S. Department of Transportation

Designation Prompts Whistle Stop Tour to Celebrate Hard Work, Designation Benefits, and Thank Local Officials and Public

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Waterford, Virginia — Federal Highway Administrator, Victor Mendez, announced today that U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, designated the 180-mile long thoroughfare running through the Journey Through Hallowed Ground -- US 15, VA231, VA20 and VA53 (the Old Carolina Road) – from Gettysburg, PA to Monticello, VA, a National Scenic Byway. This is one of the highest designations the Secretary can bestow upon a public road and one that could have a profound economic impact on the local jurisdictions along the Journey Through Hallowed Ground.

Upon learning of the news, the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership announced that it will host a Whistle Stop Tour on October 21, 2009, where the JTHG Partnership will celebrate the achievement and the potential economic benefits of the designation with elected officials, state tourism officers from Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, and the citizens who live within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, many of whom worked diligently to help obtain this honor.

“This designation represents years of dedication to sustaining the unique cultural, historic and national resources demonstrated by each community along this magnificent corridor, and we are thrilled that our partners have received this due recognition,” said Cate Magennis Wyatt, president of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership. “It’s only appropriate that this road and the generations of people who have lived, prospered and sacrificed in this region are acknowledged with this highly esteemed and internationally recognized designation.”

The day-long Whistle Stop Tour will follow the entire Journey route, stopping at key spots that offer Whistle-Stop riders a chance to see the diversity of the environmental, cultural and historical sites along the much-heralded national heritage area. The JTHG contains more history than any other region in the nation that includes: National and World Heritage sites, thousands of National Registered sites, nine Presidential homes, 13 National Park units, hundreds of African American and Native American heritage sites, 30 Historic Main Street communities, sites from the Revolutionary War, French-Indian War, War of 1812 and the largest collection of Civil War sites in the nation and much more.

“This route not only carried this country’s Founding Fathers, but also the not-so famous men and women whose ideals have shaped this great nation, making this road a destination unto itself,” said John Fieseler, executive director for the Tourism Council of Frederick County, Maryland.

Nationwide, only a select group of roads have been designated National Scenic Byways. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground marks the 99th to date and now will reap the benefits of exclusive worldwide marketing efforts as an American Byway and elevated status when seeking federal funds.

“The Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership can be proud of their nearly two-year effort, working with dozens of communities and local citizens, to win federal designation of the historic thoroughfares between Gettysburg and Monticello as a National Scenic Byway,” said Congressman Gerry Connolly of Virginia’s 11th District. “Besides benefiting the region through increased tourism and prestige, this scenic byway will stand as a permanent memorial to the rich culture, heritage and history spanning many generations that can be found along the 180-mile by-way.”

“I commend the dedication of the JTHG Partnership and the many citizens, community leaders, and elected officials who worked tirelessly to win this important federal designation that will provide economic benefits to the region and open a wide array of educational, cultural, and environmental activities to future generations of Americans and tourists from across the globe,” Connolly said.

The mission of the National Scenic Byways Program is: “to provide resources to the byway community in creating a unique travel experience and enhanced local quality of life through efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways.”

As part of this elite road system, the JTHG National Scenic Byway now will be included in the America’s Byways® tourism marketing plan, which promotes the road and its intrinsic qualities to visitors worldwide, encouraging them to visit the JTHG National Scenic Byway area, positively affecting local economies throughout the region. Run by the Federal Highway Department, America’s Byways® is the umbrella term used to market the “diverse collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places as the roads to the heart and soul of America.”

The American Byways Website is just one example of the marketing program, and it presently highlights the other four Byways in Virginia, three in Maryland, and two in Pennsylvania with descriptions, photos, news stories and more.

“The added value of the federal marketing program should translate into increased awareness from visitors around the country and across the globe,” explained Virginia Tourism Corporation President and CEO Alisa Bailey. “Every local heritage site, national park, winery, and Main Street community stands to benefit from this new national designation.”

Domestic and international traveler expenditures in the U.S. totaled \$739.4 billion in 2007. For JTHG Partnership counties, this translated into \$2.93 billion in revenue for the 10 Virginia counties within the JTHG for 2008; and more than \$675 million for the three Maryland Counties and \$345 million for Adams County, PA in 2007.

In addition, local jurisdictions along the JTHG National Scenic Byway can apply for funds with a new elevated status. Since the program started in 1992, the National Scenic Byway program has funded more than 2,600 projects at \$346 million, including 221 projects at \$38 million in 2008. In the past, these funds have helped communities create:

- Way Finding Systems and Visitor Interpretation Centers
- Access to Recreation Areas
- Context Sensitive Design solutions for their Departments of Transportation to utilize
- Heritage Tourism Brochures, Maps, Trail Guides and other collateral materials
- Public Service Announcements and Advertisements to attract visitors
- Educational Programs for students of all ages

“In Pennsylvania for example, there have been 37 projects supported through this fund since 1992,” explained Jackie Koons-Felion, Transportation Planning Specialist, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. “Some have been smaller in nature, others larger, but all have played an instrumental role in how people experience this Commonwealth. And now jurisdictions along the Journey Through Hallowed Ground can reap similar benefits.”

The National Scenic Byway designation is honorific. The lone restriction is that no new billboards can be created along the road. Each town, county and local jurisdiction along the JTHG National Scenic Byway, however, long ago passed resolutions banning additional billboards.

A road can become a National Scenic Byway only after rigorous review on both the state and federal levels. The area’s intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities serve as the criteria for the distinguished federal honor. But federal recognition can be achieved only after the state evaluates and recognizes the road as a State Scenic Byway. The states within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground have done just that.

For the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership and the people who live within the National Heritage Area, this has been a three-year process that has included the development of a Corridor Management Plan. The plan, which to date has been honored with three awards, was created over 20 months with 60 community-input sessions throughout the corridor to spell out the region’s dedication to sustaining its unique historic, cultural and environmental characteristics. It was a collaborative effort involving the communities from Adams County, PA, through Frederick Maryland, and 10 counties within Virginia, concluding in Albemarle, VA, including thousands of citizens, business owners, elected officials and representatives from the Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania Departments of Transportation and Tourism.

On October 21, the JTHG Partnership’s Whistle Stop Tour will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the Historic Train Station in Gettysburg, PA then head south to Catocin Mountain Orchard in Thurmont Maryland, then to General George Marshall’s Home Dodona Manor in Leesburg, VA, then to the Museum of Culpeper History in Culpeper, VA, then to James Madison’s Montpelier in Orange, VA, and winding up at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello in Charlottesville, VA.

Press are welcome on the Whistle Stop Tour and at each site, but please registration in advance as space is limited. There will be remarks by local officials at each stop, photos and press opportunities. An exact itinerary is available.

The National Scenic Byways Program is a grassroots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. It is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration.