



February 23, 2024

Delegate Marc Korman, *Chair*  
Delegate Regina T. Boyce, *Vice-Chair*  
House Environment & Transportation Committee  
House Office Building, Room 251  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: *House Bill 1032: Highways – Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program – SUPPORT***

Dear Chairman Korman and Members of the House E&T Committee:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Allegany Museum and the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, we would like to take this opportunity to pledge our support for *House Bill 1032: Highways – Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program*.

As written, House Bill 1032 establishes a Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program for the State of Maryland. Its purpose is to create a system of supplemental guide signs to direct motorists to eligible individual attractions by directing the first to groups of attractions.

The Allegany Museum is a non-profit, volunteer organization committed to educating their visitors about the region’s rich history. Allegany Museum is helping promote Maryland as a destination for heritage tourism.

Two years ago, the Museum unveiled their new and interactive exhibit, *The Crossroads of America*, which traces the history of human movement through Cumberland and Allegany County from 1750 to 1900. The Museum is also home for Civil War artifacts, a presidential carriage, fossilized mammals from 500-700 thousand years ago, and archaeological evidence of Native American settlement in the area – these are just some of the treasures housed in the Museum for tourist and historic enthusiasts to view and enjoy.

The WMSR is a scenic railroad initially created to serve as a tourist destination to draw visitors to Allegany County and the surrounding cities of Cumberland and Frostburg. The organization has been in operation for thirty-five (35) years and has emerged as a significant economic engine for the entire region. Led by the historic locomotive (No. 1309), this train serves as an economic driver to attract visitors and regional citizenry to Western Maryland.

Since 2021, the Railroad has experienced record-breaking revenues, increased ridership, and cultivated new local relations and partnerships. Last year, the Railroad experienced an historic milestone of having over 75,000 tourists enjoy the train and our unique family-oriented events, such as *The Polar Express* and *Murder Mystery Dinner Trains*.

The successful growth of the Railroad has also extended well beyond Canal Place. The City of Cumberland has witnessed, firsthand, surrounding restaurants and other local businesses directly benefitting from the Railroad's tireless efforts in making this organization one of the centerpieces in downtown Cumberland. According to the *VisitMaryland.org*, the Railroad's provides approximately \$17 million in economic impact to the State of Maryland, annually.

The success and growth of our organizations is attributed to many favors including our staff, attractions/ events, and most importantly, how we market to our local communities and tourists (both in-state and out-of-state). Tourism gives the Cumberland area an essential economic boost and creates pride in the region's rich history. For the Museum and the Railroad, the creation of Tourist Area and Corridor Signage Program will offer us new and exciting opportunities to attract new visitors to our organizations and Allegany County, while generating an increase in economic development and tourism dollars to Western Maryland.

It's for these reasons, that we support this legislation and respectfully request this committee to give House Bill 1032 a **FAVORABLE** report.

Thank you for your consideration and ongoing support to our organizations in Cumberland, Maryland.

Sincerely,



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Christopher Logsdon, *President*  
Allegany Museum



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Wes Heinz, *Executive Director*  
Western MD Scenic Railroad