

COMMUNITY

Governor Martin O'Malley Announces Funding for Harriet Tubman Visitors Center

Memorial to Freedom Fighter Slated to Open in 2013, 100 Years After Her Death

CAMBRIDGE, MD (August, 2011) — Governor Martin O'Malley announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation has awarded the State of Maryland \$8.5 million in Federal Transportation Enhancement Program funding for construction of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Dorchester County. This is the final funding component necessary for the \$21 million project of national significance to move forward.

The construction is estimated to support as many as 225 local jobs in all facets of the construction industry over the course of a year. In addition, Harriet Tubman State Park, the site of the center, will directly support 10 full-time employees as well as spinoff jobs related to hospitality, tour guides and recreational activities. Upon completion of the center, visitation to the park is anticipated to grow to more than 200,000 annually, with an anticipated long-term economic impact of \$20 million annually.

"Once complete, the Visitor Center will honor one of our nation's great and courageous heroes," said Governor O'Malley. "Like Marylanders today, Harriet Tubman understood that we progress as a people not on the weakness, but on the strength of our neighbors. This Visitor Center is a step forward in promoting Maryland's critical role in the fight for freedom, in recognizing the efforts of a remarkable Marylander, and for creating new jobs on the Eastern Shore. Together, we can educate and share the story of how Tubman and those like her changed the course of American history, bending the arc toward justice."

The long-awaited Visitor Center, 10-miles south of Cambridge on Maryland's Eastern Shore, is the key component of an effort to create a Scenic Byway and National Historical Park honoring Maryland native Harriet Ross Tubman. This historic endeavor is extremely important to Eastern Shore residents and is of local, regional, national and international significance. Groundbreaking for the center will take place next year, with the center slated for completion in 2013, 100 years after Tubman's death.

The project has been made possible by unparalleled collaboration at the federal, state and local level. The Maryland Departments of Natural Resources, Business and Economic Development, Transportation via the State Highway Administration, and General Services are all project partners.

Senator Barbara Mikulski played a critical role in obtaining nearly \$1 million in Housing and Urban Development grants for the project. Senator Ben Cardin is currently pursuing a National Historic Park designation that would create a National Park Service unit comprising significant lands in Dorchester, Caroline and Talbot County. The Maryland Departments of Business and Economic Development, Natural Resources, Transportation via the State Highway Administration and General Services are all project partners.

"Harriet Tubman was a courageous fighter who delivered 300 slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad and was tireless in her commitment to fight for those who could not fight themselves. I am proud to support federal dollars that will help honor her memory," said Senator Barbara Mikulski. "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Harriet Tubman knew that, and so do I. Her legacy continues to inspire me and I am proud to fight every day for the freedom and equality she dedicated her life to."

"Harriet Tubman left a remarkable legacy for Maryland and I commend the State for moving forward with funding to complete the Harriet Tubman Visitors Center," said Senator Ben Cardin, who has introduced legislation to create a National Historical Park on the Eastern Shore in her name. "The Visitors Center will attract thousands of visitors a year to Dorchester County and the Eastern Shore and they will learn about her life and her courage as a "conductor" on the Underground

Railroad. The Visitors Center also will help preserve the important historical significance of her life and times on the Eastern Shore."

The center will provide a year-round exhibit exploring Tubman's birthplace and early life in Dorchester County, and her successful efforts to help slaves secure freedom. The facility also will provide information about the federally-designated Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, which winds from Maryland north to Ontario, Canada.

"We're looking forward to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Center, which will add to the great tourism and culture of Dorchester County," said Donald Pinder, president of the Harriet Tubman Organization, which has worked for many years to bring this project to fruition. "The story of Harriet Tubman is an international story about freedom, which is one of the most important words in our vocabulary right now."

"Governor Martin O'Malley's announcement regarding funding

for the Harriet Ross Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor's Center is a major step in keeping the history, legacy and memory of this great woman alive for generations to come in the State of Maryland and around the world," said Cambridge Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley. "The major goal of the Visitors Center is to be a principal point of contact for visitor orientation to and interpretation of Harriet Tubman's role in the Underground Railroad. The Center will also have significant

stimulus for the local, regional and state economy. We thank Governor Martin O'Malley for his continued support of this project and the City of Cambridge as a whole."

Underground Railroad 'conductor' Harriet Tubman was born in Dorchester County on the Madison Plantation of Anthony Thompson. Tubman escaped to freedom in 1849, after which, she made 13 trips to Maryland, leading 70 of her family and friends to freedom.



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