

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 201

Commending the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail initiative.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 31, 2014

Agreed to by the Senate, February 6, 2014

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail initiative, created by the Greenways and Trails Task Force, is one of five programs to establish new statewide trails for the enjoyment of the citizens of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail concept traverses southern Virginia from the Cumberland Gap to the Chesapeake Bay, bringing unique opportunities for economic development, tourism, and recreation to a significant portion of the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, linking existing and proposed trails and support resources, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail will create a diversified trail system, attracting a significant variety and number of visitors from all over the East Coast to southern Virginia, while serving the daily recreational and alternative transportation needs of the communities from the mountains and the sea; and

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail will expose visitors to diverse, spectacular natural scenery, including mountain peaks, river views on both sides of the eastern continental divide, vistas of the Blue Ridge across the Piedmont, mountain meadows, old forests, small streams, black water swamps, tidal marshes, and sandy beaches; and

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail will traverse the historical agricultural and industrial regions that were the base of Virginia's formative economy, traveling along the river and rail corridors that supported that economy; and

WHEREAS, local communities will be able to determine how best to offer access to the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail throughout the five conceptual trail segments: the mountains, the western Piedmont, the Tobacco Heritage Trail crossing of the eastern Piedmont, the coastal plain, and the Tidewater; and

WHEREAS, local control of trail development will allow each trail section sponsor to tailor its section of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail to its citizens' and visitors' needs by creating on-trail bicycling, equestrian, or pedestrian paths or using existing paved roads; and

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail will offer outdoor recreational opportunities, including walking paths on all trail sections, which the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has determined to be of high public interest and which can improve the physical health of the citizens of southern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, in cooperation with the Virginia Tourism Corporation and the Virginia Department of Transportation, commissioned a corridor study in 2013 on the proposed Beaches to Bluegrass route through southern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail concept utilizes former railroad corridors through southern Virginia because so many abandoned lines follow an east-west course, more of which pass through expanses of undeveloped, rural land than along any other potential statewide corridor; the corridors also provide an easy grade and substantial bed for trail development; and

WHEREAS, a majority of localities along the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail have identified practical routes of current, existing roads braided with current and potential trails; however, in a few rural locations, the combination of remote potential rights of way, concerns over trail user safety, possible conflict with adjacent land uses, and a lack of prospects for support facilities has limited local community support, making the need for regional input on alternate routing essential; and

WHEREAS, in a few urban locations, local officials have not yet confirmed support for the optimum routes for the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail, which would allow the best access to current or future intermodal transportation nodes and commercial support facilities; and

WHEREAS, cooperation among local governments, regional planning organizations, local and regional economic development organizations, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and other agencies of the Commonwealth will ensure the best outcomes for route location and development that will enhance outdoor recreational opportunities, citizen health and wellness, transportation connectivity, and business development opportunities for trail user services, such as food, lodging, equestrian support, and equipment maintenance services; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail initiative; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Greenways and Trails Task Force, as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the potential economic, recreational, and health benefits of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail

initiative.