



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

February 11, 2015

The Honorable Jon Jarvis
National Park Service
Director, U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

I am writing to request that the National Park Service (NPS) undertake a Reconnaissance Survey to identify the nationally significant route and resources associated with the Washington Trail-1753, and to determine whether the corridor merits future designation as a National Historic Trail.

NPS is currently working with the trail partners by providing technical assistance through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. As a Member of Congress from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and whose congressional district includes a considerable portion of this historic route, I believe a Reconnaissance Survey is critical to the local partnership as it advances its work in developing the trail through Western Pennsylvania, into Maryland and Virginia.

Washington's Trail-1753 is a project formed to commemorate the route taken by George Washington as he carried a diplomatic message through French-controlled territory in Western Pennsylvania ordering the French to abandon their posts and forts or otherwise confront the British Empire's military. The trail commemorates this journey by Washington and is an important historical resource in the understanding and interpretation of the onset of the Battle for Empire – the French and Indian War – and the roots of the American Revolution. Plans for the trail include signage, both road markers and interpretative, along with a driving and hiking route. Some of this work is already underway and being implemented by a non-profit organization in my district. The intent is for the trail to become a part of the growing trail network in Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States and complement the Great Allegheny Passage and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail.

The first phase, focusing on Western Pennsylvania (which this application is addressing), crosses through two National Heritage Areas – Oil Region National Heritage Area and Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area – along with several Pennsylvania State Heritage Areas (Route 6, Lincoln Highway, and the National Road), adding invaluable historical context to the history, culture, and heritage of this region. While existing in the rural landscape of Western

Pennsylvania, the proposed trail route would traverse the region's urban populations including Pittsburgh and its expanding suburbs to the north and east of the city. The trail will bring added recreational, interpretive, educational, and environmental benefits to this region and exist in partnership with nearby heritage areas.

The Washington's Trail-1753 would enhance opportunities for tourism and economic development that results from increased visitation and spending. It will provide opportunities for improved quality of life in places that might lack access to recreation, particularly in the urban and suburban areas of Pittsburgh and its growth areas in the north and east. The Trail will also provide greater educational opportunities for these underserved populations – particularly urban youth – to learn about NPS, our nation's history, our surrounding environment, and hopefully provide a means for these youth to become more involved in conserving their state's heritage. As the National Park Service looks toward its second century, the need to expand public-private partnerships to protect and conserve America's heritage becomes increasingly important. The Washington's Trail-1753 will help expand these partnership opportunities for NPS into Western Pennsylvania and build upon its successes with the Oil Region National Heritage Area and the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area by fostering greater community involvement in the development of the trail.

The Reconnaissance Survey will help further explore options for commemorating and interpreting this significant aspect of our nation's history and heritage. An opportunity exists to preserve this history, to build community pride, to connect communities, promote economic revitalization, and create jobs while telling this story of George Washington and the birth of our nation. With NPS's expertise and assistance, the significant resources along the route can be considered along with those options and strategies for coordinating the multi-state effort that is forming along the proposed trail. The Reconnaissance Survey will provide the Washington Trail-1753 partnership with a solid foundation for developing this regional and national asset.

I am respectfully requesting that, with your direction and approval of this Reconnaissance Survey, the National Park Service assemble and lead a team that engages experts, the states, communities, National Parks, National Trails, National Heritage Areas, and local partners along the route. I would like to have NPS guide this discussion and project and report to me by June 2016.

Please contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss this request in further detail.

Sincerely,


Mike Kelly
Member of Congress