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Four Maryland routes named to America's Byways program

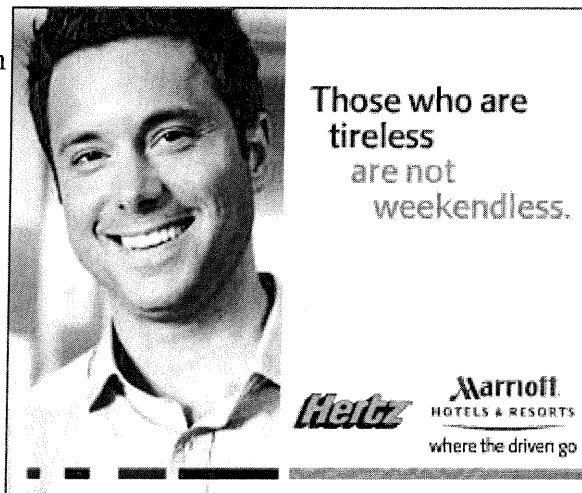
By Michelle Deal-Zimmerman | michelle.deal@baltsun.com

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The Federal Highway Administration designated four Maryland routes as America's Byways Friday, placing them among the best driving tours in the nation.

"The journey is the destination along these nationally designated Scenic Byways that provide an authentic Maryland experience," Transportation Secretary Beverly K. Swaim-Staley said in a press release.

The National Scenic Byways Program was created in 1991 to recognize roads with unique archaeological, cultural, historical, natural, recreational and scenic qualities. Roads that have more than one of the qualities receive an All-American Road designation. Both types of routes are included among America's Byways.



The program announced 42 new designations on Friday, including five All-American Roads and 37 National Scenic Byways. Nationwide, 46 states have roads that are part of America's Byways.

The Maryland routes named as National Scenic Byways include "Baltimore's Historic Charles Street," stretching from downtown to Towson; the "Religious Freedom Byway," a 195-mile route in southern Maryland that features some of the nation's oldest churches as well as historic St. Mary's City; and "The Journey Through Hallowed Ground," a 179-mile route that stretches through three states, including Pennsylvania, Virginia and western Maryland.

The " Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway," a 125-miles route along the Eastern Shore, was designated an All-American Road.

"Maryland Byways are a fun way for Maryland residents and visitors to access places of great beauty and illuminating history," said Margot A. Amelia, executive director of the Maryland Office of Tourism.

The state now has six of America's Byways, including the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway, which includes the Bay Bridge and the Historic National Road, which traces U.S. 40.

Earlier this week, Maryland received a \$5.6 million federal grant to improve and market its scenic roads in preparation for two upcoming historic anniversaries, including the sesquicentennial of the Civil War starting in 2011 and the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812.

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