

contribute to meet the objectives of the Maryland Land Preservation and recreation Plan, and the objectives of existing and future growth management plans at all levels of government; and

WHEREAS, There are no consistent policies or programs in Maryland addressing the protection and multiuse of abandoned railroad corridors;

WHEREAS, the General Assembly recognizes the importance to the citizens of Maryland of retaining abandoned railroad corridors for public multiuse including possible future rail use, supports the results of the Maryland Rails-to-Trails Study, and is prepared to assist in its implementation; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Natural Resources

5-1009.

(A) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS THAT:

(1) IN ORDER TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH ACCESS TO THE USE, ENJOYMENT, AND APPRECIATION OF THE OUTDOOR AREAS OF MARYLAND, IT IS DECLARED TO BE THE PUBLIC POLICY OF THIS STATE TO PROVIDE THE MEANS AND PROCEDURES FOR ESTABLISHING AND EXPANDING A NETWORK OF RECREATIONAL AND SCENIC TRAILS;

(2) ABANDONED RAILROAD CORRIDOR PROPERTY IS A UNIQUE SOURCE OF LAND CORRIDORS THAT ARE, IN MANY CASES, SUITABLE FOR RECREATIONAL TRAILS;

(3) RAILROAD CORRIDOR PROPERTY IS BEING ABANDONED AT A HIGH RATE AND IS OFTEN SOLD IN SEGMENTS, THEREBY FRAGMENTING THE ORIGINAL CORRIDORS AND LEAVING UNCONNECTED SEGMENTS WHICH ~~ARE~~ MAY BE SUITABLE FOR ACQUISITION FOR RECREATIONAL TRAIL USE;

(4) THE PRESERVATION OF ABANDONED RAIL CORRIDOR PROPERTY FOR USE AS RECREATIONAL TRAILS IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST; AND

(5) A SYSTEMATIC AND CONTINUING STATEWIDE PROGRAM OF ACQUIRING ABANDONED RAILROAD CORRIDOR PROPERTY IS NEEDED TO PRESERVE THIS UNIQUE AND IRREPLACEABLE SOURCE OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS.

(B) (1) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MAINTAIN LIAISON WITH, PROVIDE FACTUAL DATA TO, AND WORK WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, THE STATE RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION, THE OFFICE OF PLANNING, AND OTHER AGENCIES, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO DETERMINE THE SUITABILITY FOR TRAIL PURPOSES