A key Senate committee has moved to reinvigorate the National Scenic Byways Program.

The Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works (EPW) has voted in favor of S. 349, the "Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act of 2019," sponsored by Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD). The bill now moves on to the full Senate for consideration.

Companion legislation passed the House of Representatives in February on a vote of 404 â€“ 19.

"We are excited about the support in EPW today for the National Scenic Byways Program," said Mark Falzone, president of Scenic America. "We are grateful to Senators Collins and Cardin for their leadership on this important issue. The program is a proven winner: it protects our most iconic roadways and benefits the communities they traverse with increased visitation and spending on local goods and services."

"I am proud that Maine boasts not only three National Scenic Byways, but also the Acadia All-American Road. These roadways provide Mainers and tourists alike with spectacular views and memorable experiences, while at the same time spurring much-needed economic activity in the surrounding areas," said Senator Collins. "The National Scenic Byways program represents a true win-win scenario by protecting precious corridors and providing tangible benefits for local communities. I am pleased to see that our bipartisan bill is now one step closer to becoming law."

"Maryland's scenic byways are historic, recreational and educational treasures. Reviving this grassroots program will be beneficial to future development and maintenance of these important routes," said Senator Cardin. "Millions of visitors traverse our great roads each year to take in Maryland's natural beauty and rich history. I appreciate the strong, bipartisan support for this national program that will help direct visitors to areas of interest along America's Byways preserve our cultural heritage and generate revenue for the surrounding communities."

The program was created by Congress in 1991 and has since designated 150 roads in 47 states as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads. However, the last round of designations occurred in 2009 and the program has been dormant since.

National Scenic Byways generate significant economic activity for nearby communities, many of which are small and rural in nature. A 2010 report from the University of Minnesota showed a $21.6 million economic impact from traveler spending along both the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway and nearby Lake Country Scenic Byway. A 2013 study of Scenic Byway 12 in Utah found that the byway generated nearly $13 million annually in local spending.

"The 'National Scenic Byway' designation brings tourism and economic benefits to communities from travelers around the globe. It is critical that we provide state-designated byways with the opportunity to seek national recognition and reap the well-established benefits," said Falzone.

Scenic America encourages the public to reach out to their Senators in support of this bill by visiting: www.scenic.org/byways

Allied organization statements on EPW favorable reporting of S. 349:

"As part of the coalition that helped create the National Scenic Byways Program in 1991, the American Motorcyclist Association is excited about today's passage of S. 349, the Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act. Today's vote moves us one step closer to reopening the National Scenic Byways Program, which has preserved and enhanced many motorcyclists' favorite roads like the Blue Ridge Parkway, stretching from North Carolina to Virginia, and the Beartooth Highway between Montana and Wyoming. The AMA thanks Senator Susan Collins and Senator Ben Cardin for sponsoring this important legislation."

Michael Sayre  
Government Affairs Manager, On-Highway  
American Motorcyclist Association

"The unique cultural, historic, and natural qualities of America's scenic byways are irreplaceable. Landscape architects, as stewards of the built and natural environments, work to protect and preserve these remarkable pieces of our national identity and history.

The American Society of Landscape Architects whole-heartedly supported the Reviving America's Scenic Byways Act when it passed the House earlier this year, and we're proud to support it as it moves toward passage in the Senate. We commend Senator Susan Collins (ME) and Senator Ben Cardin (MD) on their bi-partisan efforts and truly hope to see this bill become law soon."