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FABRICATOR CHOSEN TO REPAIR FAILING WAYFINDING SIGNS

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (September 7, 2010) — The Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority (BCTDA) has entered into a contract for replacement of the aluminum vehicular sign panels with Geograph Industries, Inc., a third-generation sign fabricator in Harrison, OH.

Geograph was one of three fabricators who met with representatives of the Partnership on Wayfinding and Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority to discuss their respective responses to a request for proposal issued by BCTDA. Each of the three companies presented repair options that were within the remaining \$207,000 that was part of the original amount allocated for the project, but was not paid to the original vendor, L & H Signs, Inc. in Reading, PA, since the job was not properly completed.

Further inspection of the signs last week indicated that the back sides of the panels are now also beginning to peel, requiring repair of both sides of the panels and necessitating additional responses from the vendors. Upon recognizing this latest failure and based on a review of recommended solutions, BCTDA was compelled to move forward to fabricate all new vehicular sign panels. The cost for the new signs will be \$279,864 with funding coming from the dollars still in reserve for project completion as well as additional room tax collections that are dedicated for tourism efforts and paid by overnight visitors staying in lodging properties in Buncombe County. MERJE, the design firm on the project, will continue to assist BCTDA during the repair process at no additional charge. BCTDA is also consulting with an attorney on its future legal options.

The wayfinding project was the culmination of more than three years of community input and public meetings to address design and implementation of the project. BCTDA granted \$1.5 million dollars for the project from the Tourism Product Development Fund which comes from the one percent lodging tax paid by overnight visitors staying in lodging accommodations in Buncombe County. Another \$150,000 was dedicated for maintenance and attic stock for a five year period.

The entire project encompasses 330 elements, including vehicular and pedestrian signage, parking banners and garage entrance/exit signs, gateway and district identification signs and monuments and kiosks located throughout Buncombe County. Local artisans designed the finials for the poles and many of the signs feature the literary works of notable North Carolina authors.

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