

## I-75 in Kentucky is named Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail

Plans afoot to extend trail in other states

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GEORGETOWN - Interstate 75 was dubbed the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail on Friday afternoon during a dedication attended by state government leaders and others affiliated with the African-American airmen.

It was the second dedication for the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail. A 23-mile stretch in Fayette County was dedicated in August 2007. Fayette County was cho-

spearheaded the project four years ago, has even bigger plans.

"We're not going to be just satisfied with I-75 in Kentucky," Spriggs said.

He said he wants to see the trail extended to Tennessee and Ohio. Eventually he would like the trail to run the entire length of I-75, from Miami, Fla., to Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.

Kentucky was the first state to officially name a roadway honoring the Tuskegee Airmen, Spriggs said. Since then, other cities such as Tuskegee, Ala., and Denver have named roads for the flyers.

Spriggs said it's important to remember the airmen while many of them are still alive. Most are in their late 80s or 90s. Spriggs also

"Tuskegee Airmen history is not black history," Spriggs said. "Tuskegee Airmen history is American history. Beshear noted that it's appropriate that Kentucky has led the way in honoring the airmen. Eleven cadets in the original group of men were from Kentucky, he said. Noel Parrish, a white Army officer from Versailles, was the first commander of the base at Tuskegee, Ala., where the group trained.

State Sen. Kathy Stein and state Rep. Reginald Meeks, two of four legislators who Spriggs said were the "driving force" behind the project, attended Friday's dedication. The other two, Rep. Bob Damron and Sen. Tom Buford, were unable to attend.

Beshear and the four legislators were given their own Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail signs. There will be two signs in each Kentucky county on I-75, except Fayette, which has five signs.

Frank Weaver, 84, of Louisville, is considered an original Tuskegee Airman. He said he was glad that so many steps had been taken to remember the men, but he said that wasn't on their minds years ago. "It was just something that had to be done," Weaver said. "It's an honor to serve the country and make it better for the young folks."



sen because the county is home to the state aviation museum and several of the Tuskegee Airmen were from Central Kentucky. But those working on the project felt the flyers who made history more than 60 years ago deserved more.

Motorists entering Fayette County will see one of the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail signs on I-75 South near Iron Works Pike.

On April 12, Gov. Steve Beshear signed On Friday, at the Thomas and King Leadership and Conference Center in Georgetown, Beshear assisted in unveiling an oversize version of the sign that will be placed in every county along the interstate.

Still, Ron Spriggs, executive director of the Ron Spriggs Exhibit of Tuskegee Airmen Inc., who

wants those who don't know about the Tuskegee Airmen to become motivated to do more research.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized an "experimental program" to train African-Americans as military pilots at the Tuskegee Institute starting in 1941. The airmen went on to become one of the most decorated American air outfits of the war, overcoming not only attacks by enemy planes but racial discrimination in the military and at home.



Pablo Alcalá | Staff  
 HERALD-LEADER - James Shaw, left, a 30-year veteran of the Air Force, and Frank Weaver, a WWII veteran and Tuskegee Airman, at Georgetown College after the dedication of Kentucky's I-75 expansion of the nation's first and longest highway named the "Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail."