



Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been working for the last three decades to build Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley to a tourism destination. The Council has worked successfully to clean-up the Blackstone River, preserve numerous historic sites, regenerate downtowns, create arts & cultural events, and promote businesses that augment the tourism experience. This methodology was, and still is, necessary to have a strong economic climate in Northern Rhode Island. The crowning achievement of Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was when President Obama signed the designation of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, an idea that emerged from our office.

## Quick facts about Blackstone River Valley National Park

The newly designated Blackstone River Valley National Historic Park is conservatively expected to bring between **250,000 to 500,000 visitors** to the area on an annual basis<sup>1</sup>. The economic effect of this will be tremendous and **provide an estimated \$64.8 million dollars in Rhode Island Gross State Product**<sup>2</sup>. If managed correctly, this number could double. The Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor has an additional benefit of **providing access to federal grant money** if a site is located within the Corridor's boundaries. This includes sites like **Fox Point** and **Neutaconkunt Hill** in **Providence**.

## A Prime Example – THE POLAR EXPRESS

For the last 16 years, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has produced THE POLAR EXPRESS Train Ride to bring visitors into Blackstone Valley's economically depressed downtowns. The impact is a prime example of how "bottom up" development has worked in the area! This past season, over 13,000 passengers experienced The Polar Express. **Production staff to create this event was funded through Rhode Island hotel tax dollars**. The visitors that came from around the country to Woonsocket had **an economic impact of \$6 million in tourism expenditures** that added **\$3.4 million in Rhode Island Gross State Product** and **created 64 new Rhode Island jobs**<sup>2</sup>. Cutting hotel tax dollars will virtually **eliminate the work done to produce THE POLAR EXPRESS Train Ride**, thus greatly reducing the money that comes into Rhode Island.

## What Will Be Lost

The money that was spent to produce THE POLAR EXPRESS Train Ride in Woonsocket, RI was able to be leveraged by our partners, Blackstone Heritage Corridor Inc., to **unlock over \$600,000 of federal funding**. These dollars will be used to fund the development of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park, and as matching **grant money to build up and preserve the assets** found its boundaries. Simply put, without Blackstone Valley Tourism Council putting on just this single event this money would not be in place. In the end, **total reinvestment in Blackstone Valley's businesses and attractions is nearly \$2 million from a program of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council**.

<sup>1</sup> Based on visitation numbers from nearby Lowell National Historical Park.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Commerce RI's Global Insight IHS tourism report

## **Sustaining Community Values Since 1985**

Winner of the prestigious "Ulysses Award" from the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the "Tourism for Tomorrow Destination Award" from the World Travel & Tourism Council



- The newly designated Blackstone River Valley National Historic Park is conservatively expected to bring between **250,000 to 500,000 visitors** to the area on an annual basis.
- This will **provide an estimated \$64.8 million dollars in Rhode Island Gross State Product.**
- The new National Park also **provides access to federal grant money** if a site is located within the Corridor's boundaries. This includes sites like **Fox Point** and **Neutaconkanut Hill** in **Providence.**
- Production staff to create tourism events in Blackstone Valley is **funded through RI hotel tax dollars.**
- The Polar Express has **an economic impact of \$6 million in tourism expenditures** that added **\$3.4 million in Rhode Island Gross State Product** and **created 64 new Rhode Island jobs.**
- Cutting hotel tax dollars will virtually **eliminate the work done to produce events, such as THE POLAR EXPRESS Train Ride,** thus greatly reducing the money that comes into Rhode Island.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council **unlocked over \$600,000 of federal funding last year.**
- **Total reinvestment in Blackstone Valley's businesses and attractions is nearly \$2 million from just a single program of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.**

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