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## **B&O Railroad Museum Executive Director, Kris Hoellen, Responds to City Council's Vote to Defund Baltimore City Police Mounted Unit**

Baltimore, MD (June 18, 2020) – On June 15, 2020, the Baltimore City Council voted to defund the Mounted Unit of the Baltimore City Police Department, the oldest, continuously operating Mounted Unit in the country. This Unit serves as ambassadors for the Police Department, performing the exact type of policing called for in the consent decree as well as recent reform packages.

Why do I care as the Director of the B&O Railroad Museum that the City Council voted to eliminate a unit that comprises a minor fraction (far less than 1%) of the Police Department's overall budget? For several important reasons. First, this Unit was poised to move into its new home, a recently constructed, privately funded, state-of-the-art equestrian facility located on the B&O Railroad Museum's property. Two years ago, following the Baltimore unrest, a lease was negotiated to move the Mounted Unit to the new Stable reflecting the City's interest in investing in the west side. Defunding the Mounted Unit at this point, unfortunately sends the signal that the City Council is no longer interested in west side investment or improvement.

Second, this \$3.5 million-dollar facility was supported by the State of Maryland, the private sector, and several philanthropic foundations. To date, the City of Baltimore has not contributed financially to the cost of constructing the Stable. In defunding the Unit and walking away from this project, the City is risking support from the same private donor pool for other citywide initiatives, which in the wake of COVID-19 becomes a particularly untenable risk.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, we believe the work the Mounted Unit does with the community and local children is exactly the type of work that is needed to change the culture. The Stables have been constructed with a classroom as a centerpiece so that neighboring children could have the opportunity to learn first-hand about equine studies, law enforcement, and transportation fields as potential career pathways, all while bonding with the Police. Please view this short video as proof of concept of the importance of this Unit: <https://youtu.be/Xen4hptiWQs>

We remain hopeful that the City Council will daylight its decision process, consider all of the facts and listen to its constituency. We thank Councilman John Bullock for his leadership on this issue and respectfully urge the City Council to reconsider its decision.

### **About the B&O Railroad Museum**

The B&O Railroad Museum™, a full affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of American railroading and its impact on American society, culture and economy. The Museum is home to the oldest, most comprehensive collection of railroad artifacts in the Western Hemisphere including an unparalleled roster of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century railroad equipment. The 40-acre historic site is regarded as the birthplace of American Railroading and includes the 1851 Mt. Clare Station, the 1884 Baldwin Roundhouse and first mile of commercial railroad track in America. In 2019, the Museum welcomed guests from all 50 states and 40 countries. For further information on the B&O Railroad Museum, please call 410-752-2490 or visit [www.BORail.org](http://www.BORail.org).

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