



**CITY OF ANNISTON MEDIA ADVISORY**

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**— CITY OF ANNISTON RECEIVES GRANT FOR PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SITE —**

(ANNISTON, AL) – The city of Anniston has been awarded a \$496,375.00 outright grant from the National Park Service to be used in the renovation of the former Greyhound Bus Station in the city's downtown historic district. The Station was the site of a historic moment in the struggle for Civil Rights when, on May 14, 1961, a bus carrying Freedom Riders was attacked by a white mob then later fire bombed when it broke down six miles west of the City. Grant funds will assist the City in preservation of the station, which has remained virtually unchanged since the event.

The National Park Services (NPS) FY2016 African American Civil Rights Grant Program was developed to document, interpret and preserve the sites and stories related to the African American struggle to gain equal rights as citizens in the 20th Century. (Source: <https://www.nps.gov/preservation-grants/civil-rights/>) A 2008 National Park Service study, *Civil Rights in America, A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*, served as the principal reference for determining the eligibility of proposed projects for the grant program. The funding was appropriated by Congress through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which uses revenue from federal oil leases to provide assistance for a broad range of projects without expending tax dollars. Anniston's Greyhound Bus Station project was one of 39 projects in more than 20 states that were funded.

The bus station and the site of the bus burning were visited last summer by the Honorable Sally Jewell, former Secretary of the Interior the Honorable Johnathan Jarvis, former National Park Service Director. The visit was a prerequisite to a proposal by Secretary Jewell to President Obama to declare the sites a National Monument.

Within hours of receiving notification of the grant award, city officials learned that President Obama had declared the sites a national monument. (See separate media release.)

### **About the 1961 Freedom Riders Bus Incident**

The Greyhound Bus Station in Anniston was the site of a protest on May 14, 1961, when a mob of whites attacked a Greyhound Bus carrying black and white “Freedom Riders”. As the mob hit the bus with bats and pipes and slashed its tires, the Riders remained on board. After local law enforcement intervened, the bus departed for Birmingham. Six miles outside of Anniston on Highway 202, the bus was forced to stop because of damage inflicted earlier. The mob attacked again, this time tossing a fire bomb onto the bus. As the Riders exited the bus, they were attacked by the mob. State Troopers intervened, and injured Riders were transported to Anniston Memorial Hospital.

*Freedom Riders* were Civil Rights Activists who were testing integration of the interstate bus system in the South. The rides were organized by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Although desegregation of public transportation was ruled illegal by the Supreme Court in 1956 and again in 1960 in *Boynton v. Virginia*, the cultural traditions of the deep South were slow to change. Freedom Riders drew national attention to the problems of race relations in the South.

### **About the Anniston Greyhound Bus Station**

The Greyhound Bus Station is located at 1031 Gurnee Ave., Anniston Alabama. It’s exterior has remained unchanged since 1961. The interior has had cosmetic changes, but remains virtually untouched (no structural alterations). It was most recently the business location of Howell Signs.

The Greyhound Bus Station in Anniston is included in the *National Register of Historic Places for Downtown Anniston Historic District* in a 2010 update and boundary increase, resource #86. Date of construction is noted as ca. 1957\*. The building is described as a “one story brick commercial style building with a flat roof. Off-center entrance at facade flanked to the north by two storefront windows. Retains aluminum bus canopy along south elevation.” The event of the protest on May 14, 1961 is further described in this document.

An advertisement in The Anniston Star places the opening of the Greyhound Bus Station on August 8, 1952. The bus station was acquired by the city of Anniston from its owners in September 2016.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, contact City Manager Kent Davis at 256-236-3422.

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