

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Tourism Takes Territory's Marketing Efforts To Race Track

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In addition to the highways and byways of mainland America, the Virgin Islands Department of Tourism (D.O.T.) is taking its marketing message to race tracks up and down the East Coast, a press release D.O.T. issued late Thursday says.

Governor Kenneth Mapp and D.O.T. Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty were recently in Glenn Dale, Maryland, to formalize a partnership with Paradise Racing, led by U.S. Virgin Islander Luis Corujo, and to witness the unveiling of the company's race car and its trailer, both branded with the vibrant logo and colors of the territory.

According to D.O.T., the trailer will serve as a moving billboard for the U.S. Virgin Islands as Paradise Racing travels to more than 15 races at which Virgin Islands premium items will be shared with race car fans.

"When the trailer is not in use for races, the Department of Tourism will use it for marketing and promotional events in key cities," said Mrs. Nicholson-Doty, adding that "Spot the Trailer" sweepstakes are being developed for social media.

Mr. Mapp, whose administration is pursuing an initiative to diversify the territory's tourism product, according to the release, specifically by identifying sports tourism opportunities, has high hopes for a project currently before the 31st Legislature to construct the first National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)-specified track on St. Croix.

With a community of Caribbean residents who own dragsters and racing cars and who ship them around the region and to the U.S. mainland for racing, the potential economic benefit of welcoming these visitors is significant to the territory, D.O.T. says.

"We had someone down from NHRA and learned that there are a number of people that would be very interested, if we had the specification track, to bring them to the Virgin Islands," Mr. Mapp said. "You have the driver, the crew count, the owners, wives, children, fans. The issue is how do we get people to come to the island, and sleep in the hotel rooms, rent the cars, eat in the restaurants, and shop in the stores?" The governor also predicted that the branded vehicles will draw much attention to the territory.

"Our team is very proud to have been chosen for this opportunity," said a beaming Corujo. "For us, it's the equivalent of being able to be an Olympic team. To be able to represent your homeland and do something that you love all at the same time... We're very proud and happy.

"From a tourism angle, we are very excited to be a part of this, to be able to bring new people home, new money home. The sport of drag racing is something that's been near and dear to my heart for over 20 years now. I think that it brings great opportunities to the territory," he added.

Mr. Corujo's team is scheduled to race in several upcoming events on the East Coast, in Pennsylvania, Orlando and Maryland. "Drag racing attracts over 30 to 40,000 spectators at these events and we intend to represent our islands with pride," he said.