§ 233-b. New York state freedom trail commission. 1. a. There is hereby established within the department the New York state freedom trail commission. The commission shall consist of twelve members, to be appointed as follows: three members to be appointed by the governor, three members to be appointed by the board of regents, two members to be appointed by the temporary president of the senate, one member to be appointed by the minority leader of the senate, two members to be appointed by the speaker of the assembly, and one member to be appointed by the minority leader of the assembly. Such members shall be representative of academic or public historians, corporations, foundations, historical societies, civic organizations, and religious denominations. In addition, the following state officers, or their designees, shall serve as members of the commission: the commissioner of education, the head of the state museum, the head of the state archives, the head of the office of state history, the commissioner of economic development, the head of the state tourism advisory council and the commissioner of parks, recreation and historic preservation.

b. The commission shall begin functioning upon the appointment of a majority of its members. The chair of the commission shall be chosen by the members of the commission for a three year term. Commission members, other than ex officio members, shall serve for terms of five years and vacancies shall be appointed in the same manner as provided for original appointments.

c. The department and the office of parks, recreation and historic preservation may provide the commission with such staff, equipment, and facilities as it may need.

2. As part of its responsibilities the commission shall be charged with reviewing and assisting in the implementation of a master plan in conjunction with federal authorities; sponsoring commemorations, linkages, seminars and public forum; assisting, encouraging, and promoting the making of applications for inclusion on the national or state registers of historic places by the parties eligible to do so and the inclusion of such places therein; and developing partnerships and seeking private and public funds to carry out activities to protect,

preserve, and promote the important legacy and lessons of the freedom trail and the underground railroad in New York state.

3. The commission shall report annually to the governor, the legislature, and the board of regents for a period of five years from the date of establishment of the commission, but beginning no later than January first, nineteen hundred ninety-nine.