

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: April 1, 2019

SUBJECT: Draft Greenway Master Plan

PRESENTER: Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Draft Greenway Master Plan Executive Summary
2. PowerPoint Handout

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

The 2020 County Comprehensive Plan recommended designing a master plan to revise the Apple Country Greenway Master Plan through integrating greenway and recreation planning. The Board of Commissioners directed staff to work with the Recreation Advisory Board to develop this greenway plan for the County. The Recreation Advisory Board appointed a subcommittee to draft the plan. After many meetings, the committee drafted a countywide greenway master plan, which outlines future greenway efforts for the next thirty years. The Greenway Master Plan also establishes and communicates a broad and realistic vision for a countywide Greenway Network, as well as provides guidance to Henderson County and its partners, so that all involved can collaboratively work towards and benefit from that vision.

The committee held two public input sessions in late October where over 100 community members attended. An online survey was also hosted online and received approximately 600 unique responses with an overwhelming majority of respondents in favor of the draft plan. During the public input period, the draft Greenway Master Plan was presented to various boards and organizations. Many of these groups formally endorsed the plan, including: the Henderson County Chamber of Commerce, Pardee Hospital, Advent Health Hospital, Wingate University, the Henderson County Planning Board, Recreation Advisory Board, Board of Public Health, and the Environmental Advisory Committee.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

The Board of Commissioners may adopt the draft Greenway Master Plan. A suggested motion is provided if the Board wishes to adopt the draft plan.

Suggested Motion:

I move that the Board adopt the Henderson County Draft Greenway Master Plan and direct staff to continue to work on the corresponding feasibility studies.

Greenway Master Plan Summary

VISION

“CREATE A SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, COMPREHENSIVE AND CONNECTED SYSTEM OF CONSTRUCTED GREENWAY TRAILS THAT ENHANCES QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGHOUT HENDERSON COUNTY BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION, RECREATION, PUBLIC HEALTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.”

Over the past twenty years, the County has been involved in greenway planning and creation on a small scale. During this time, the desire for greenway creation and greater connectivity between greenway trails was established in the various trails proposed in adopted municipal plans.

In order to be more proactively involved in this process, and to address the growing interest in greenway trails, Henderson County created this plan and determined a county-wide vision for a greenway network as well as recommendations for itself and partnering entities.

The purpose of the plan is to serve as a guideline for future trail development and provide a framework for local governments and partners to create a connected greenway system across the County for all to enjoy.

GREENWAY OBJECTIVES

Greenways allow multiple objectives to be met at once. They create open space recreation that promotes healthy living, conserves habitats and biodiversity, aids in tourism and economic development, and preserves cultural and community assets. Henderson County first planned for county-wide greenway connections in 1999. Since then, almost eight miles of greenways have been constructed in the County.

Today, the County is planning for the future with realistic and achievable goals like improving the quality of life, protecting the County's natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources, providing safe and accessible recreation, and creating alternative transportation opportunities. This Greenway Master Plan establishes and communicates a broad vision for a countywide Greenway Network, and provides guidance to Henderson County and its partners, so that all involved can collaboratively work towards and benefit from that vision.



Photo credit: Jock Aplin

GOALS

- IMPROVE ACCESS TO RECREATION FOR HEALTH
- INCREASE COUNTY CONNECTIVITY & TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS
- ENCOURAGE ECONOMIC SUPPORT OF LOCAL BUSINESSES
- PROMOTE THE NATURAL BEAUTY & ENVIRONMENTAL DIVERSITY IN THE COUNTY

BENEFITS

- Strengthening the local economy (increased tourism, higher property values, new business attraction, worker recruitment)
- Encouraging physical fitness and healthy lifestyles
- Providing a safe, alternative method of transportation
- Creating new recreational opportunities for all ages
- Preserving Henderson County's natural, historical, and cultural environments
- Mitigating flood damage and preventing soil erosion



Photo credit: Jock Aplin

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this Greenway Master Plan will be a long-term process. Through the creation of new goals and reaffirmation of goals previously adopted in the Comprehensive Plan, Community Plans, and Community Health Assessments, this plan will lay the foundation for the continued success of the County in its greenway efforts over the next thirty years. As time passes, the County will adapt to growth and change - public objectives, local situations, and funding opportunities will evolve. The Henderson County Greenway Master Plan should be viewed as a working document that will still be relevant thirty years from now. The County should update the entire document, as well as reevaluate the recommendations and implementation method, approximately every five to ten years to ensure the continued improvement and enhancement of the area's greenway efforts.



Photo credit: Jock Aplin

This master plan identifies Priority Greenways, Destination Greenways, and Connection Greenways. The three Priority Greenways are the Oklawaha Greenway, Ecusta Trail, and French Broad River Greenway. These greenways are important connections to other western North Carolina residents. The trails would eventually join a proposed regional trail network, The Hellbender Regional Trail, via adjacent counties. This Master Plan's identified Destination Greenways are: Community of Edneyville, Mills River Valley Trail, Town of Fletcher Greenways, Green River Game Land Greenway, and the Village of Flat Rock's Carl Sandburg Home Greenway. These potential routes link the different greenways together expanding the reach of each greenway for the user. Connection Greenways are yet to be defined and will evolve over time. They are meant to be direct routes, extensions of Priority or Destination Greenways, that can be utilized for commuting as well as recreation.

In the next pages, the Policy and Action Step Recommendations are laid out in their entirety. Each recommendation is integral to the success of this plan, so all are included within the Greenway Master Plan Summary.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greenways should be recognized in County policies as a tool to build communities, promote health benefits, provide outdoor education opportunities, encourage a sense of safety and awareness of the surrounding neighborhoods and properties, provide transportation connectivity, and a safe place for our future generations to walk, bike, and explore our natural environment.
- The County should determine a policy to incorporate the use of existing and future utility easements for public use greenways.
- The County should adopt a similar policy as the Mountain to Sea Trail to explore alternative options to work around uninterested property owners such as the use of NCDOT roads, bike lanes, sidewalks, etc.
- The County should request that NCDOT reconsider its policy on bike/ped projects related to required local match requirements. Many local governments cannot provide the required funding match.
- The County should consider adopting a Greenway Overlay District in the Land Development Code that would primarily apply to the identified Priority Greenways.
- The County should strive to connect greenways to existing public transportation facilities.
- The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) should support the greenway network by seeking the advancement of projects and funding in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) when local matching funds are available.
- Economic development opportunities should be supported and encouraged along identified greenway corridors.
- The County should work with non-profits, the Partnership for Health, and the Council on Aging to educate the public and property owners about the benefits of greenways as a health and wellness goal.
- The County should work with the NC Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry to further develop outdoor recreation in Henderson County and the region with a focus on the Greenway Network.
- When appropriate, the County should work with the Henderson County Board of Public Education and local school representatives to connect schools with greenway opportunities.



Photo credit: Tricia King

ACTION STEP RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt the Plan

- The previously adopted community plans and future community plan efforts should be used to explore locations and needs for the County's Priority and Destination Greenways.
- The County should consider establishing a greenway board to implement the Master Plan and feasibility studies.
- The County should continue to seek public participation, including public information sessions, while implementing various plan recommendations.
- The County should publish a website dedicated to this Master Plan and include an interactive map to encourage greater public input.



Photo credit: Jock Aplin

Complete Priority Greenway Segments

- Priority Greenways, as identified in the Master Plan (Section 2.2), should be considered first for construction to create regional connections.
- The county's Priority Greenways should be identified and included as part of the regional greenway system for the French Broad River MPO area.
- The County should work in cooperation with Transylvania County, the City of Brevard, the City of Hendersonville, and the Town of Laurel Park to develop the proposed Ecusta Trail, if it is reasonably determined that the rail line from Hendersonville to Brevard has no viable future rail use. As part of this effort, the County, in conjunction with the above local governments, should consider requesting the State acquire the rail line for the purpose of establishing a greenway. The County and its partners should also review the federal rail banking statute as a means of securing and preserving the line.

Explore Feasibility of Destination and Connection Greenways

- Destination and Connection Greenways, as identified in the Master Plan, should be constructed as funding opportunities become available.
- The Municipal Inner Loop Greenway should be supported to connect historic Hendersonville, Laurel Park, and the Village of Flat Rock to the Priority and Destination Greenways with health and wellness destinations, local attractions, and businesses.
- County staff should have the discretion to assess when an area is "ready" for the greenway process. The county should also consider completing formal feasibility studies to aid in this assessment.

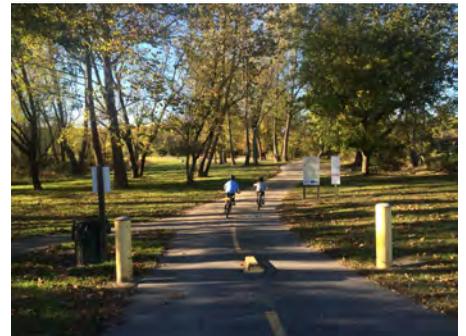


Photo credit: Tricia King

Evaluate Greenway Easement Options

- The County should develop greenways through voluntary negotiations or contributions.
- The County should encourage non-profits to work with local landowners to secure easements and establish a method to receive and hold financial contributions for greenways.
- The County should determine a policy to incorporate the use of existing and future utility easements for public use greenways.

Identify Funding and Community Partners

- The County should utilize public-private partnerships and work with local business owners, industries, and the Partnership for Health to secure funding to complete the Greenway Network.
- The County and surrounding municipalities should consider setting aside funding each budget year for greenway development that would be used for grant match and other related funding needs related to the Greenway Network.
- The County should work with the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) to secure funding for portions of the Greenway Network that will increase tourism and enhance economic development.
- The County should coordinate with municipalities to seek funding that is only available to municipal governments for the creation of the identified Greenway Network within those municipalities.

Design and Construct Trails

- The County should coordinate design and construction efforts with other local governments and non-profits for a uniform and consistent Greenway Network.
- All greenway construction efforts should be based on a phasing plan as identified in a corresponding feasibility study.
- The County should consider phasing greenway construction when necessary if a paved trail cannot be achieved. This could include acquiring easements for a grass walkway or mulch or gravel type surface in order to get a greenway on the ground. Funding for final trail paving could then be achieved later.
- The County should work with NCDOT to provide multi-use paths or utilize sidewalks to achieve the overall connection of the greenway network. NCDOT roads and bike routes should connect sections of the greenway network when no other connections are available or for short-term connection solutions.
- Appropriate hydraulic modeling should be performed whenever a greenway is to be constructed in a floodplain.
- Greenway designs and plans should consider the surrounding environment and minimize adverse effects.
- Greenway design should consider not only the greenway itself, but also trail amenities to create a complete, accessible, and comfortable experience for a wide variety of expected users. As the trail network grows, key amenities for longer greenways could include restrooms, lighting, benches, water fountains, and bike repair stations.
- The County should work with its partners to establish a regional trail branding and way-finding program. This will help legitimize the network and create a consistent way to market greenways for economic development, community health, and tourism purposes.



Photo credit: Jock Aplin

Maintain Trails

- Maintenance of existing greenways should be a priority.
- The County should coordinate maintenance efforts with other local governments, non-profits, and partners.
- Greenway maintenance is essential to the long-term viability and sustainability of the greenway network. The network should be viewed and maintained as a public resource. This plan recommends a strong, collaborative approach to maintenance.
- The County should not only consider low-maintenance greenway designs, but also the most efficient and cost-effective means for maintaining the greenway network. Options include:

Contracting a private party that specializes in outdoor facility maintenance

Creating an inter-governmental agreement with the City of Hendersonville and other municipalities to garner equipment and resources

Working with non-profits to set-up volunteer maintenance on certain sections when possible

Establishing a separate fund in the Parks and Recreation budget to cover greenway maintenance costs

Creating an avenue for greenway users to report maintenance issues specific to the trail. This could be done via a smart phone application, a specific telephone line, or an email address dedicated to the greenway

- A routine maintenance schedule for the greenways should be developed and tracked. Maintenance of trail amenities such as lights and solid waste collection should also be considered.



Photo credit: Jock Aplin



Henderson County Draft Greenway Master Plan

30 Year Vision

Board of Commissioners Meeting 4-1-19

HENDERSON COUNTY:

- PARK AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD
- GREENWAY MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE
- PLANNING DEPARTMENT & PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

Greenway Master Plan Committee

Chris Burns <i>(Chair)</i>	Jennifer Hensley
Milton Butterworth	Tricia King
Sharon Carlyle	Renee Kumor
Mike Egan	Hunter Marks
Philip Ellis	Scott Rhodes
Graham Fields	Rebekah Robinson
Linda Giltz	Joe Sanders
Suzanne Hale	Ken Shelton

Greenway Master Plan Committee

- Realtors
- Medical professionals
- Small business owners
- Tourism Development Authority (TDA)
- Henderson County Planning Board
- Henderson County Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Henderson County Recreation Advisory Committee
- Park Ridge Hospital (Advent Health Hendersonville)
- Pardee Hospital
- Partnership for Health
- Obesity Action Team
- Henderson County Public Schools
- Blue Ridge Bicycle Club
- Conserving Carolina
- Friends of the Oklawaha Greenway
- Friends of the Ecusta Trail
- Former Apple Country Greenway Commission
- Mills River Valley Trail stakeholders

The Planning Process

Plan Conception

- BOC directed the Recreational Advisory Board to draft a plan

Greenway Master Plan Committee

- 16 members
(Five also serve on the Recreation Advisory Board)
- 12 meetings

Presentations

- All endorsed the plan
 - Planning Board
 - Recreation Advisory Committee (RAB)
 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Public Input

- 2 Public Input Sessions
- Greenway Master Plan Survey
- Greenway Network Website
 - Hcgreenways.org



Need for Greenways

- Reduce bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities
- Improve health and wellness through active living
- Offer alternative transportation options
- Create opportunities for equitable recreation
- Increase property values and generate economic activity
- Protect property from flood damage

NC is one of the least safe states in the US for walking and bicycling. Greenways reduce this statistic by 60% (when compared to on street facilities)

According to a report by Research Triangle Foundation for East Coast Greenway, greenways raise the value of immediately adjacent property by 5-20%

North Carolina Statistic

1969: 48% of kids walked or biked to school

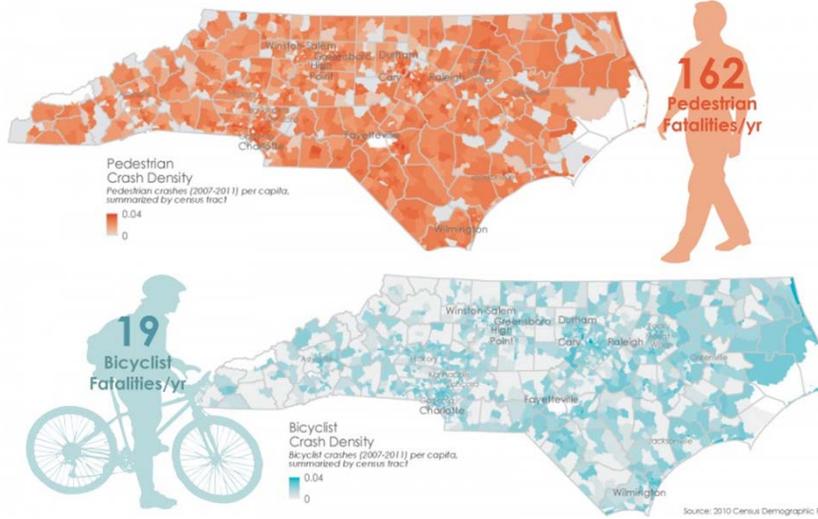


Sources: NCSRTS 2011, NCSRTS 2015

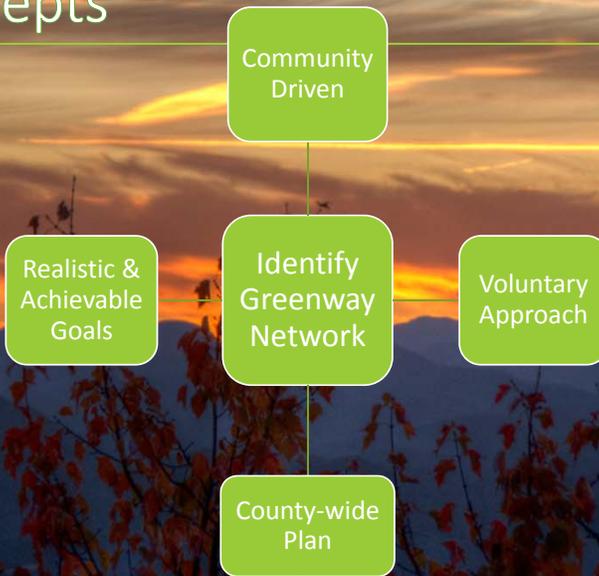
Average Yearly Fatalities for Bicyclists and Pedestrians from 2006-2010

13% of all traffic fatalities in NC were bicyclists & pedestrians

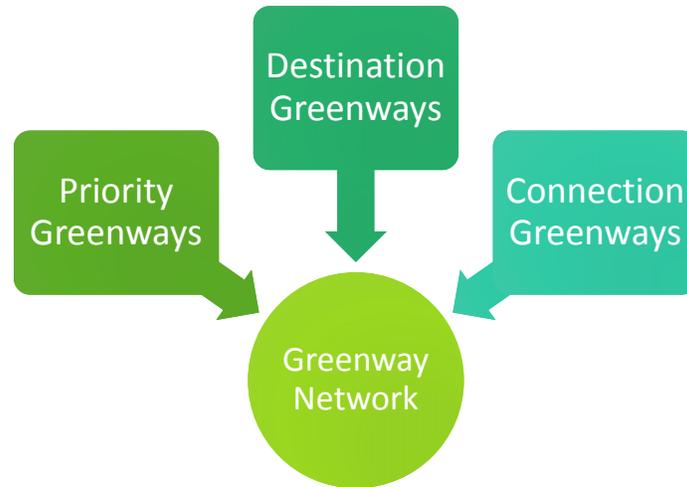
In the past 5 yrs bike/ped. crashes accounted for 15% of all crashes that caused injury in Henderson County



Core Concepts



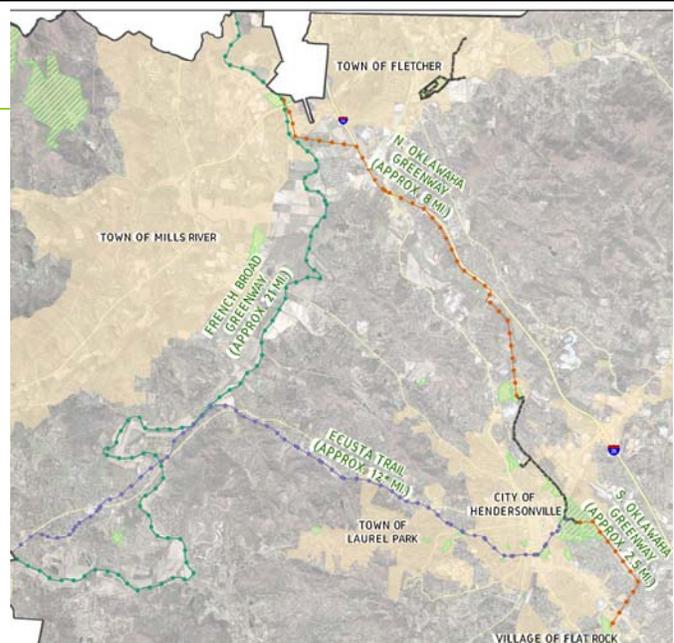
Greenway Network



Greenway Network

Priority Greenways

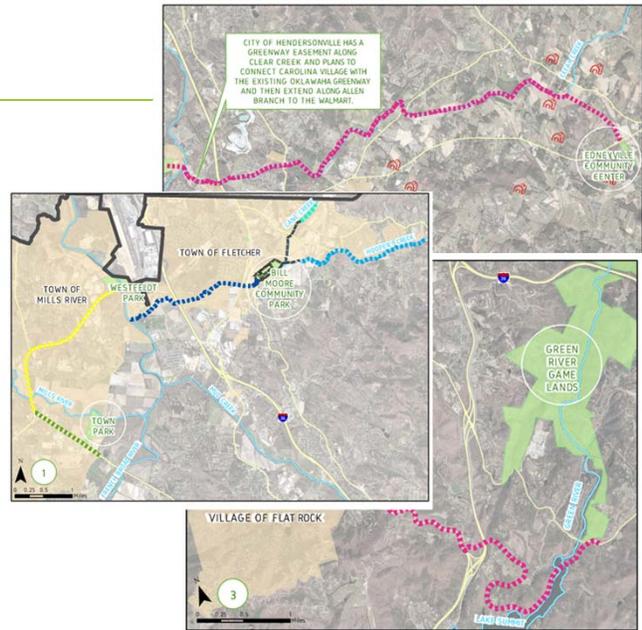
- French Broad River Greenway
- Oklawaha Greenway
- Ecusta Trail



Greenway Network

Destination Greenways

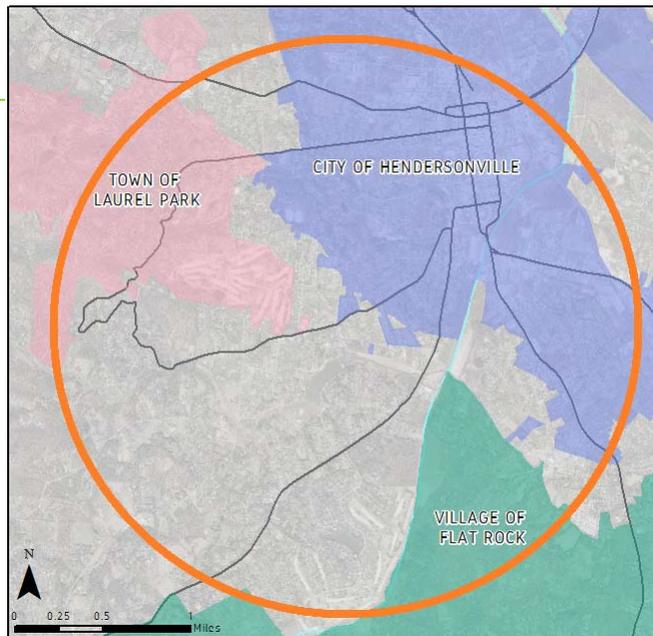
- Community of Edneyville
- Park at Flat Rock and Green River Gamelands
- Mills River Valley Trail/Fletcher Greenways



Greenway Network

Connection Greenways

- Municipal Inner Loop
- Health and Wellness Destinations
- Schools, Parks, and Community Hubs



Recommendations and Implementation

- Policy Recommendations
- Action Steps
- Funding Considerations and Cost Estimates
- Procurement Strategies



ADOPT THE PLAN

COMPLETE PRIORITY GREENWAY SEGMENTS

EXPLORE FEASIBILITY OF
DESTINATION AND CONNECTION GREENWAYS

IDENTIFY FUNDING AND
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

EVALUATE GREENWAY EASEMENT OPTIONS

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCT TRAILS

MAINTAIN TRAILS

Action Steps

Implementation

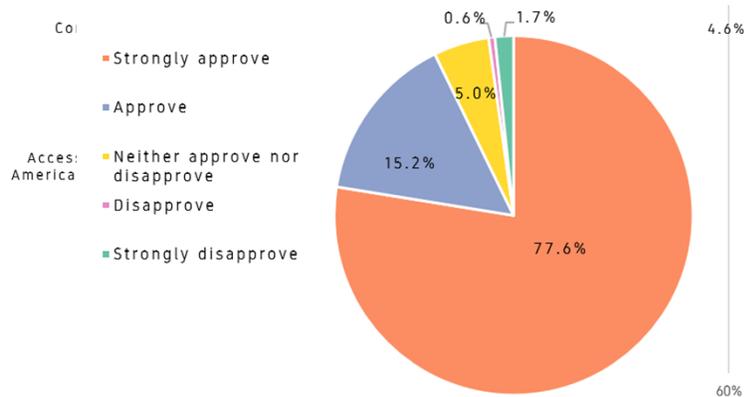
"THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT KEY TO OBTAINING STATE GRANT FUNDING IS TO HAVE ADOPTED PLANS FOR GREENWAY, BICYCLE, PEDESTRIAN OR, TRAIL SYSTEMS IN PLACE PRIOR TO MAKING AN APPLICATION FOR FUNDING."

- General Plan to Guide the County
 - Long-term vision and process
 - Adaptable and flexible
 - Opportunity-driven
- Feasibility Studies
 - Needed to specify greenway locations
 - Preliminary engineering, design, & construction
- Receive Permissions
 - Create partnerships
 - Multiple methods of procurement
 - Work with individual landowners to address needs and concerns
- Voluntary Approach

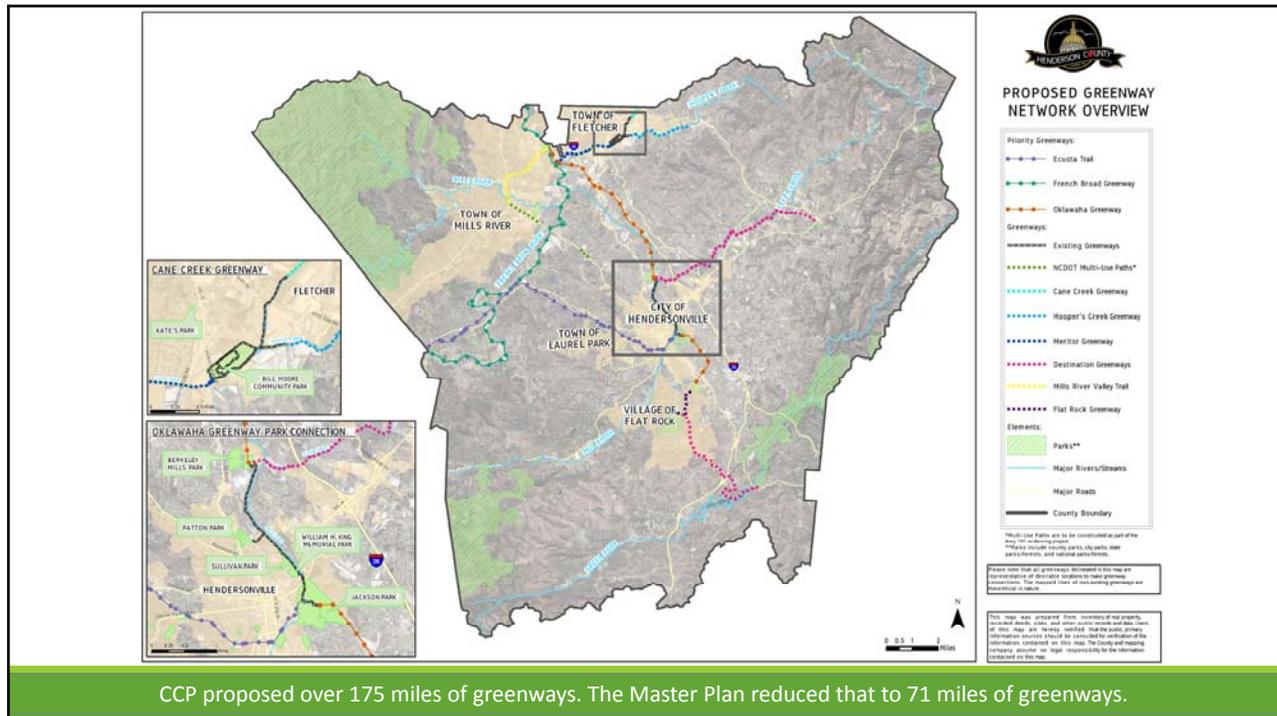
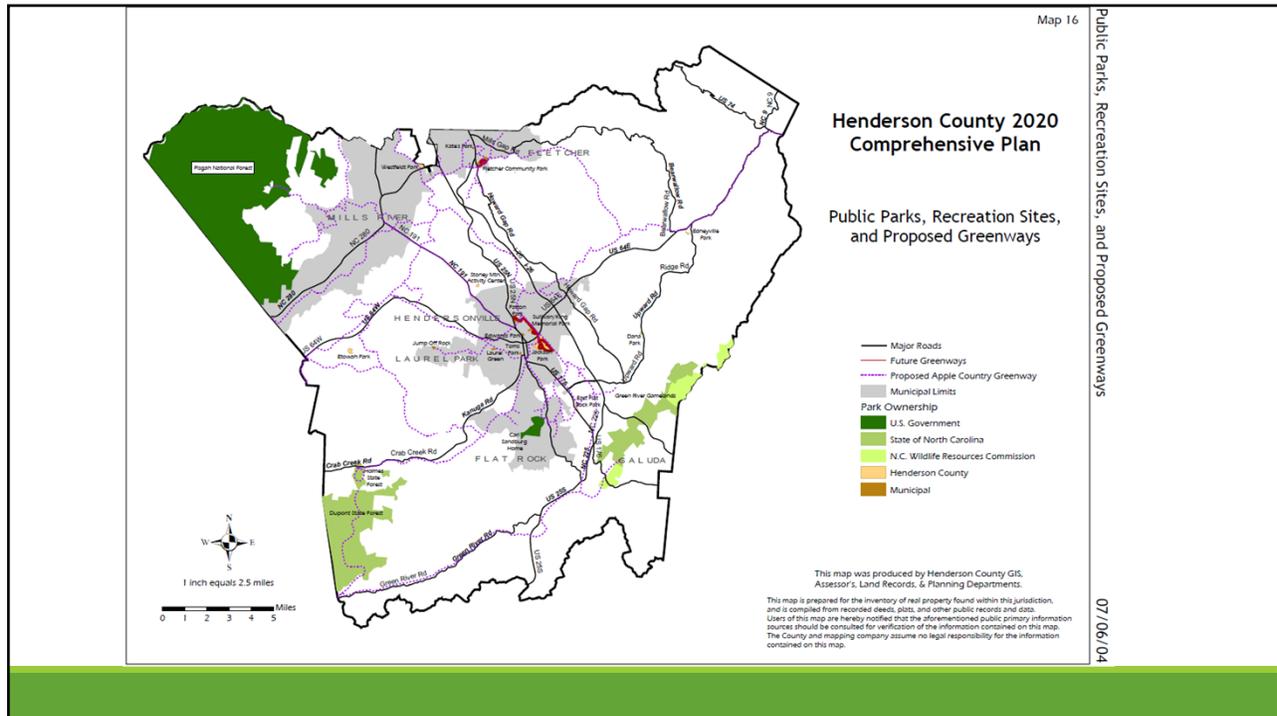


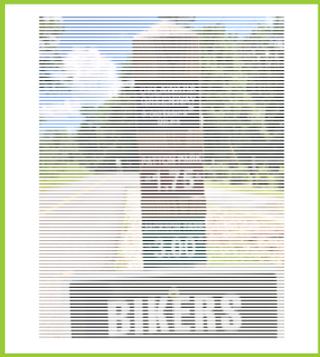
Public Input - Summary

Please indicate your level of support/approval for the proposed Greenway Master Plan.



93% approval rating





Board Discussion & Questions

