

Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, March 8, 2023

The RTAC held a regularly called meeting on March 8, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. in the King Street Meeting Room and via Microsoft Teams. Voting members that were present virtually, online are denoted with the letter “O”.

Voting Member	Present	Not in Attendance
Chuck McGrady, Chair	√	
Chris Burns, Vice Chair	√	
Douglas Moon, at-large	√	
Selena Einwechter, at-large		√
David Adams, at-large	√	
Dr. Ken Shelton, at-large	O	
Brent Detwiler, City of Hendersonville	O	
Nancy McKinley, Town of Laurel Park		√
Mike Egan, Conserving Carolina	O	

Also present: Maureen Copelof, Mayor of Brevard; Chris Todd, Business & Community Development Director; Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director; Marcus Jones, County Engineer; Janna Bianculli, Senior Planner

Call to Order

Chairman Chuck McGrady called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed Mayor Copelof.

Approval Meeting Summary

The committee approved the January 25, 2023, special-called meeting summary by majority.

Updates

Conserving Carolina

No updates.

Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET)

President Mark Tooley let the committee know that he and County staff are working on a grant sub agreement to utilize the \$500,000 grant received from the state. He also stated that his group is working on creating draft trail etiquette and is using examples from other trails as guides.

City of Brevard

Mayor Copelof shared that Brevard is working on an encroachment policy. They are also working with property owners in a similar way as the County to ensure that people are comfortable with the trail and understand the benefits as well as work together to minimize any negative impacts. The City partnered with the County on two different grants, RAISE and NSFLTP for construction funding and hope to hear back soon. The City received a FLAP grant for the preliminary engineering of their portion of the trail and are beginning that process with Traffic Planning & Design (TPD). Additionally, they are planning for trail amenities and are excited to work with the RTAC and the County on shared projects.

Public Comment

Various comments were received during the meeting pertaining to the trail partners discussion and the need to identify trail amenities ahead of time.

Trail Maintenance

County Engineer, Marcus Jones and Business and Community Development Director, Chris Todd, presented on trail maintenance. As the project progresses, the various jurisdictions will need to work together to finalize an agreement for the most efficient method of trail maintenance, which will likely be “managed” by one entity. Currently, the County Engineer is working with property owners on a case-by-case basis to address encroachments as well as ensuring light maintenance continues like mowing.

Business Community Outreach Plan

Janna Bianculli, Senior Planner, presented information to the RTAC regarding the relationship between the business community along the Ecusta Trail and the County/management. There is an immediate need to forge relationships, including to ensure any concerns of property owners are addressed and to capitalize on opportunities. The County’s STBG-DA grant that is funding the engineering of the trail cannot be used for parking or restroom facilities. The County, with the help of the Friends of Ecusta Trail, can create partnerships with contiguous businesses to help with these real considerations. Staff are currently working with FOET to develop a questionnaire for business owners and churches and plan to begin “one-on-one” meetings to introduce the idea and see if there are any specific concerns or ideas that should be discussed with the individual.

These business partners are vital to the success of the trail in multiple ways. The long-term goal is for these entities, if they so wish, to form a group that can help guide the County on Ecusta issues as the trail progresses, even years from now. Mrs. Bianculli spoke to the RTAC about how she created a similar group in James Island that is still in existence today and is now self-governed, as it was originally designed after the initial government formation. She also asked the RTAC to think about the trail’s future in 2045 and how the land use along the trail will look. Formal tools are available to the various jurisdictions to create a cohesive, trail-oriented built-environment and it can be done without displacing current residents. These things are highly technical and would need greater planning, including stakeholder input before anything could be addressed. But even without formal regulations, staff from the various jurisdictions and representatives from RTAC, FOET, and others, can proactively prepare for the economic boom the built trail will likely catalyze. [Click here](#) to view the PowerPoint slides.

Other Discussion

Other comments pertained to the next steps with NCDOT. Staff notified the committee that the 90% designs were submitted to the Department for approval and that we are in the process of following the appropriate steps to get construction documents ready for summer.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

This meeting was recorded and the MP4 file can be made available upon request. Please contact County staff.