

**Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, October 11, 2023**

The RTAC held a regularly called meeting on October 11, 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	√	
Brent Detwiler, City of Hendersonville	√	
Nancy McKinley, Town of Laurel Park		√
Mike Egan, Conserving Carolina	√	

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

Call to Order

Chairman Chuck McGrady called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Public Comment

None.

Approval Meeting Summary

The committee approved the August 9, 2023, meeting summary by majority.

Updates

Conserving Carolina

Kristin Cozza reported that approximately 30 invitations will be sent to major donors regarding the groundbreaking event for the Ecusta Trail. She also stated that Conserving Carolina (CC) will send a press release out this Friday. CC is publicizing the event in other ways including emails and the website. She also reported that CC hosted a kickoff meeting with the Saluda Grade Stakeholders on the feasibility study being done by TPD.

Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET)

Mark Tooley reported that the FOET has been working with a group of individuals that include Henderson County and the City of Brevard on rebranding the trail. He showed a draft of the rebranding images to the group and requested feedback from the RTAC. Chuck McGrady stated that this information was also presented to the City of Brevard’s advisory group and requested that the RTAC give comments directly to Mark Tooley. He also stated that this information regarding the branding has not been made public. Mark also stated that the FOET is working with Henderson County on the groundbreaking event as well.

Ken Shelton noted that he wanted to thank Henderson County for the proclamation for North Carolina's Year of the Trail that the Board of Commissioners approved.

Henderson County

Chris Todd reported that the groundbreaking event for the Ecusta Trail is being scheduled for a Saturday in October at the Veterans Healing Farm. The event will begin around 10:00 and will include 30–40-minute program with various speakers, including the actual groundbreaking of the trail. Chris stated that approximately 100 invitations on the event will go out later today, but the County is anticipating around 300-400 people to attend so folks are encouraged to bring your own chair. Chuck McGrady commented that the event is being well planned and appreciates all the work.

Marcus Jones reported that the County is working closely with NCDOT with record speed on proceeding with the construction of Phase I and PE on Ecusta West documents. He reminded the RTAC that the County received 5 bids on the trail construction and 2 of those were not completed and were rejected. The award will go to NHM Constructors, and the bid was within \$100,000 of the engineers estimate. He stated that the project is expected to be complete by the end of calendar year 2024. He also stated that the Board authorized the County Engineer to select JMT for the PE of Ecusta West pending all needed documents with NCDOT. Chuck McGrady stated that NCDOT is working with feds to determine what types of amenities may be allowed as eligible grant expenses and suggested that the County and City of Brevard get that in writing. Chris Todd also stated that the County received an additional \$100,000 in the State Budget from their general funds for the trail.

Draft MOU Continued Discussion

Chris Todd stated that the County is still working with the jurisdictions and organizations on the draft MOU. He stated that the level of service and ongoing maintenance of the trail are still being discussed. Staff has received comments from Conserving Carolina and FOET and is incorporating all those requested changes. Staff is planning to meet with the City of Hendersonville and Town of Laurel Park. Chris Burns stated that the service levels of the trail are still unknown until the trail is officially opened. He stated that those items might need to be reviewed next summer or after phase I of the trail is constructed. He also stated that the possibility of event being held on the trail is an item of discussion. He suggested that staff look at "best practices" and reach out to the Thermal Belt group on how they are dealing with this issue. He stated that he would not want the trail to ever be closed for a specific event since many users will be utilizing the trail and unaware if closure occurred. Chuck McGrady stated that the goal is to have the MOU finalized by the end of the year. Chris Todd stated that he hoped the MOU would be in place before the jurisdictions consider their budgets for next year. The RTAC representatives were asked to speak to their jurisdictions or organizations to make sure that the MOU is moving forward to a final version.

Trail Partners Program

Janna Bianculli reported that Planning staff, with assistance from Joe Sanders of FOET, hosted two public meetings for business owners adjacent to the trail to primarily discuss the Trail Partners & Supporters Program. She explained the purpose of the program to the RTAC and explained that the program is not in effect until the first phase of the trail is completed. She also asked the RTAC for their input and feedback on program operations as well as how to connect with the business community. A recorded presentation from the public meeting is on the Planning Department's website for anyone who wants to learn more. Chris Todd commended the Planning Staff on their work with the trail partners program.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:14 a.m.

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

