



Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan Update 2023

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

Prepared by Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails

Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan – 2023 Update
Trail Development Progress Report and Action Plan

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Attachments

- A.** Southside Active Transportation and Trail Community Survey, Fall 2022
- B.** Tobacco Heritage Trail Segment Analysis

I. Introduction

The vision of an interconnected system of rail-trails and connecting routes in Southside Virginia was initiated in 2003. Fifteen years of operation has resulted in some successes and many lessons learned - - from the challenges of acquiring rail right-of-way, to the intensive communication and coordination needed to align multiple jurisdictions and private and non-profit interests. Several guidance documents have been utilized in the development of the trail system, specifically the Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan (2008) and the Tobacco Heritage Trail Management Plan (2009). This Master Plan Update is intended to build upon the 2008 and 2009 Plans. It is not intended to be a comprehensive re-write of earlier planning documents, but rather provides a status report of progress and gaps remaining in the system.

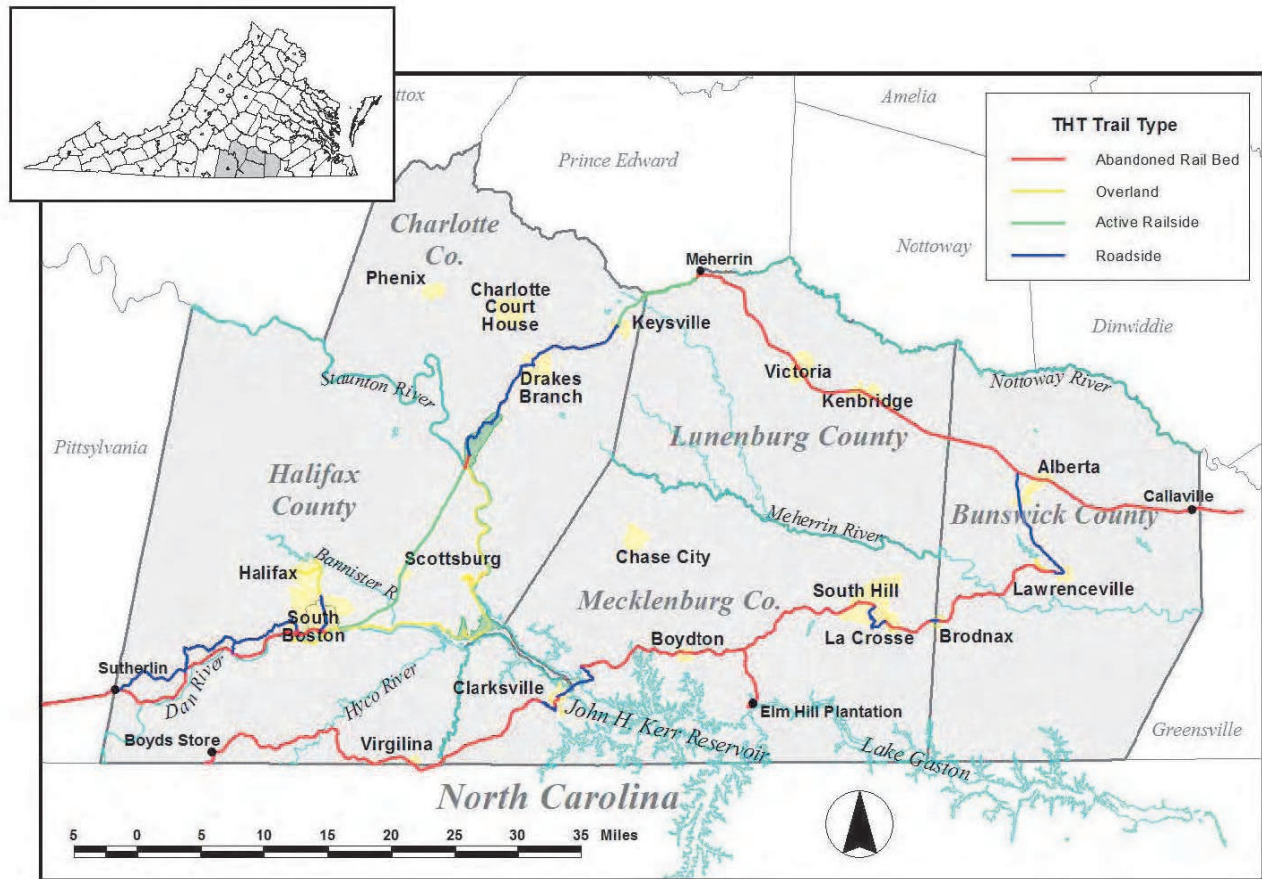


Figure 1. Tobacco Heritage Trail, Proposed Network (from Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan 2008)

Secondly, the Plan Update takes a closer look at undeveloped segments and establishes a phased approach for initiating trail projects. The Plan Update assesses opportunities based on current trail needs and trends, and includes state level survey data, as well as community-level research on the trail's current or perceived benefits and value. And finally, the Plan Update

clarifies and streamlines the trail designation process for both on-road and off-road segments, and fully designated versus interim trails, based on lessons learned over the past fifteen years.

It is intended that the Plan Update be a tool for the Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails Board (RRRT) and local Southside communities to assess potential barriers, help coordinate and prioritize future trail development projects, and provide guidance to overcome past issues related to trail design and maintenance. Ultimately, the Updated Plan will benefit citizens and visitors of all ages and abilities, for whom trails can provide access to nature and to community destinations, serving recreation, wellness, and transportation needs.

Background

In 2003, the Southside Planning District Commission established the Lake Country Trails Advisory Committee, to assist in the development of a regional bike plan. The committee recognized the opportunity for creating a regional off-road trail system, utilizing abandoned rail corridor and connecting routes, and suggested that a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation be established to acquire abandoned railroad property as a foundation for the trail network.

Within a year, the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails (RRRT) was formed, and Tobacco Heritage Trail (THT) was selected as the name of the regional trail system in recognition of the importance of the tobacco industry to Southside Virginia.

In 2004, the first THT segment was established between the Towns of La Crosse and Brodnax, utilizing an abandoned rail segment that local governments had acquired in the 1970s for underground transmission lines, sewer, and fiber optics. RRRT also began negotiating for acquisition of several abandoned rail lines owned by Norfolk Southern Corporation and over the next five years funding was securing and RRRT closed on 150 miles of abandoned rail corridor.

In 2008, the Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan was adopted, providing a vision, goals and overall guidance for trail development including: corridor alignments, spur trail connections, the location of trailheads and support amenities, design standards, and planning level cost estimates. The Plan divided the trail system into nine regions and suggested a region-by-region approach to trail construction. It also suggested pilot projects be initiated in multiple regions to show tangible progress throughout the network.

A second guidance document, the Tobacco Heritage Trail Management Plan was adopted in 2009 to establish a management framework for the evolving trail system. The Plan focused on policies related to trail management, maintenance, and operations, and outlined a trail designation process, minimum design standards, and model agreements to formalize the roles and responsibilities of the RRRT Board, local jurisdictions, and Friends Groups in managing the trail. To-date, 30 miles of off-road and 46 miles of on-road trail segments, spur trails, and connecting routes have been constructed.

Purpose of Plan Update

In Summer 2021, Roanoke River Rails to Trails and the Southside Planning District Commission believed the timing was right to take a fresh look at regional trail planning efforts, to take stock of past accomplishments and refocus future efforts to regain momentum and enthusiasm for future expansion. Several external and internal factors led to this course of action including:

- The THT Master Plan is 12 years old.
- Trail sections have been built since completion of the master plan.
- Community spur trails are under development.
- Planning for regional and statewide trails has advanced in the past 12 years.
- Interest in the outdoors and trail-related recreation has increased due to the pandemic and other factors
- There have been new insights and learning based on the past 12 years of operations
- There was a need to address maintenance more comprehensively
- There was a need for updated information on economic impacts, the initial study was published in 2006
- VDOT program criteria has changed and there are new state and federal funding sources available for trails, resulting in the need for a revised and expanded funding strategy
- There is an opportunity to integrate the trail system review with the Active Transportation Plan, underway by the Southside Planning District Commission
- There is an opportunity to engage new audiences and increase outreach to economically distressed areas.

Future Opportunity

In the past year, additional actions have been taken at the state level that provide new opportunities for rail-trail projects like the Tobacco Heritage Trail. In January 2022, the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP) published the ***“Virginia Multi-Use Trails Initiative: A Report on Multi-Use Trail Master Planning, Prioritization and Funding,”*** in collaboration with other state agencies and consultants. The report was requested by the Virginia General Assembly, and resulted in three top-line recommendations:

- Establish a State Multi-Use Trails Office
- Develop a State Multi-Use Trails Plan
- Implement a State Multi-Use Trails Program

At the Virginia General Assembly Special Session in June 2022, funds were appropriated to establish the Virginia State Trails Office with the responsibility of developing a Multi-Use Trails Plan. In addition, \$79 million in General Funds and \$14million in Transportation Alternatives Program funds were targeted for regional multi-use trails. The Tobacco Heritage Trail was identified as one of five priority trails; each trail is to receive *up to \$1million per trail to support project evaluation, and scoping, RW negotiation, and construction planning*. As of the writing of the Plan, a specific implementation policy and process for distribution of these funds had not yet been established.

Project Scope and Planning Process

In August 2021, RRRT requested and received assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) to help support the THT Master Plan update. A 3-way partnership was formed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Develop a Trail Master Plan Update that documents existing conditions and identifies priorities and alternative solutions for the next phase of trail development.
2. Expand community awareness, understanding, and engagement in the trail initiative.
3. Develop a trail management strategy among RRRT, local jurisdictions, property owners and partners to address management, maintenance, and operation issues.

The Tobacco Heritage Trail Planning Committee was established, that included RTCA, SPDC, and the RRRT leadership (chair, vice-chair, and secretary). The planning process was initiated with a series of site visits and meetings with local jurisdictions to assess current conditions, and document needs and opportunities. RRRT Board members hosted the visits, with support from SPDC and RTCA. Following the meetings, a spreadsheet of trail mileage was developed that segmented the trail regions into smaller areas for planning. In addition, issues related to trail design standards (interim versus full designation), maintenance options and costs were also discussed.

During Summer 2022, a second round of locality meetings were held in conjunction with the Active Transportation Plan, to verify local perspectives and priorities related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, including on-road bike routes and off-road trails. In August 2022, a web-based community survey was launched to expand the dialogue with the larger Southside community. Also launched was the Active Transportation and Trail Hub. In addition to the community survey, the site included information on the Tobacco Heritage Trail, background data and resources, and a regional health dashboard.



Figure 2. Tobacco Heritage Trail Site Visits, September 2021



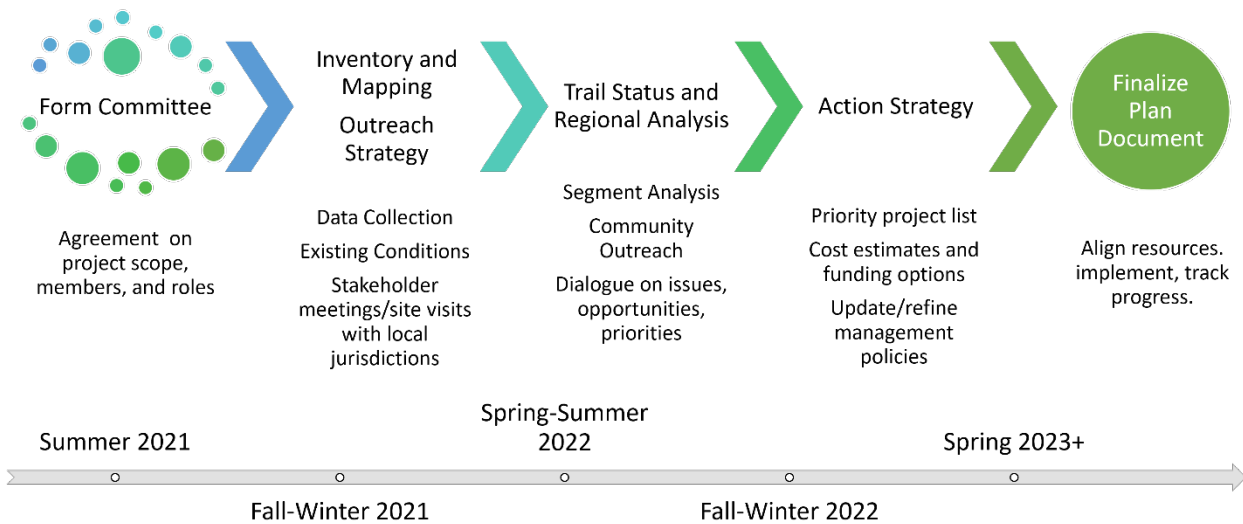
Figure 3. Brunswick Community Meeting, October 17, 2022

In October 2022, a series of community forums were held to gather ideas and input from Southside residents on walking, biking, and trail-related needs and preferences.

An interactive mapping activity provided participants with the opportunity to identify key sites of interests, priorities for trail and bike-ped connections, as well as barriers and challenges.

The Committee worked during Winter 2022 to compile a draft plan, incorporating the results of the community forums, on-line survey, and further technical analysis. The Plan was reviewed by the Roanoke River Rails-To-Trails Board and adopted in Spring 2023.

Tobacco Heritage Trail – Plan Update 2022



II. Tobacco Heritage Trail Vision



The vision for the Tobacco Heritage Trail is one of a connected ribbon of non-vehicular pedestrian transportation that will link towns, counties, natural resources, and cultural destinations all without the need for an automobile.¹

Goals: The 2008 Master Plan further defines the vision for the trail network as follows:

1. The trail should be a community trail system that must always consider and care for the private and public properties that it parallels or crosses, including homes, businesses, farms, and neighborhoods.
2. The trail should enhance the lives of people who live in and visit the region.
3. The trail should be a recreational outlet for hiking, walking, jogging, biking, and horseback riding.
4. The trail should be an accessible “off the road” means for people to travel between neighborhoods, downtown areas, recreational areas, and educational sites.
5. The trail should improve access to downtown businesses and create an enhanced tourist profile.
6. The trail should enable educational opportunities to learn more about regional cultural and natural heritage.
7. The trail should work in concert with natural resources conservation efforts to act as a continued safeguard for regional watersheds and wildlife.
8. The trail should afford the opportunity to exercise civic pride by creating a multi-jurisdictional natural and cultural highlight. It should be a trail system to leave for future generations of Virginians.

The following Guiding Principles established in the 2008 Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan² are still relevant today, ensuring that trail planners work collaboratively with local communities, businesses, and private property owners to achieve a coherent and integrated trail system.

- **Ownership:** To develop a trail ownership structure that is comprehensive, by evaluating various ownership options within each region.
- **Management and Maintenance:** To develop policies for centralized and shared trail management and maintenance, in order to ensure consistent accessibility and extend the life of the trail.
- **Easements:** To work with private and public property owners to gain trust and understanding with the goal of negotiating legal access for trail users.
- **Funding:** To fund trail design and construction through a public-private partnership model, utilizing grants, private donations, and in-kind contributions.

¹ Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan, 2008, p.9

² Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan, 2008, p.14-15

Trails and Community Development

Over the past several decades, there has been a growing base of research that supports the numerous community benefits of trail systems. Studies, as early as 1974, began asserting the economic value of trail systems. Rail-trail projects like the Tobacco Heritage Trail, have helped revitalize communities, spark new local business opportunities, and attract and retain residents. They are powerful assets that can make local towns better places to live, work and play. Here are a few examples:

- The Great Allegheny Passage rail-trail in southwest Pennsylvania has contributed significantly to the revitalization of the small rural communities in southwestern Pennsylvania. A study released in November 2021 showed that more than 800,000 visit the trail annually, contributing \$74.7 million in direct spending by tourists at businesses near the trail.³
- An older study of the Virginia Creeper Trail, conducted in 2004 showed that non-local trail users generated \$1.6 million in economic impacts in Washington and Grayson counties in southwest Virginia and supported the equivalent of more than 27 new full-time jobs.⁴

In spite of the pandemic, or perhaps as a result of it, interest in outdoor recreation, and the popularity of trail-related activities continues to grow.

- Last year, the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation released an economic impact report conducted by the University of Richmond in collaboration with the Institute for Service Research. The report concluded that the Capital Trail contributed approximately \$8.9 million in economic activity during FY 2018-19. In 2019, the trail saw a 65% increase in trail usage in March and a 46% increase in April over the previous year, and is a driving stimulus for local business, tourism, and economic activity.⁵
- Statewide, visitation to Virginia State Parks in 2020 increased 1 % over 2019, with nearly eight million visitors. In addition to an increase in visitation, state parks saw an increase in annual pass sales as well as Trail Quest Program completions.⁶

Trails and Wellness

Trails have a well-documented positive impact on community health. Today, about half of all American adults suffer from cardiovascular disease and other health-related problems due, in part, from inactivity. Research has shown that seven of the ten most common chronic diseases are favorably influenced by regular physical activity, and yet nearly 80% of adults are not meeting the key activity guidelines. This lack of physical activity is linked to approximately \$117

³ *Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study*,

⁴ Bowker, J.M.; Bergstrom, John C.; and Gill, J.; *The Virginia Creeper Trail: An Assessment of User Demographics, Preferences, and Economics*; prepared for the Virginia Department of Conservation, 2004
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/userdems-vct.pdf>

⁵ [Capital Trail Economic Impact Study FY2018-19.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

⁶ Wells, Kim, [Big Increase in Park Visitation in 2021](#), Virginia DCR, Posted February 7, 2022.

billion in annual health care costs and about 10 percent of premature mortality.⁷ Trails play a critical role in addressing this public health issues by providing the “health infrastructure” that enables people to be physically active outdoors.

In addition to improved health outcomes, communities with trail systems often benefit from savings in medical costs. For example, a cost-benefit analysis of trails in Lincoln, Nebraska conducted in 2011, reported that every dollar spent on recreational infrastructure can yield close to \$3 of savings in healthcare costs.⁸

The vision of the THT is more than building a trail. It is about building a healthy community with access for all to trails, parks, and open space. It is about leveraging the trail to help build a sustainable regional economy and support revitalization in towns throughout the system.

Realizing that vision will require expanding the 35 miles on the ground and connecting the various regions to attract a larger market of recreation and heritage tourist. It will also require addition investment in visitor services that are easily accessible, and marketing to promote the region’s assets to both local residents and visitors.

For more information on the Economic and Social Benefits of Trails: [Southside Active Transportation Hub](#)

⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018, p.2. <https://health.gov/our-work/nutrition-physical-activity/physical-activity-guidelines/current-guidelines>

⁸ Wang G, et al. A cost-benefit analysis of physical activity using bike/pedestrian trails. *Health Promotion Practice*: 2005; 6(2): 174-9. <http://hpp.sagepub.com/cqi/content/abstract/6/2/174>

III. Tobacco Heritage Trail – Visitor Use and Needs Assessment

Trail Counts

In 2020, RRRT participated in VDOT’s Bike and Pedestrian Count Program, whereby a trail counter was placed at the La Crosse trailhead to document trail visits between June 27, 2020 and October 7, 2020. Although the count was useful in identifying daily, weekly, and seasonal variations in trail usage, it was not comprehensive, in that it only counted visitors to La Crosse and not the other open THT segments.

The La Crosse trailhead count showed a daily average of 70 visits/day or 25,550 annually; approximately 37% were cyclists, and 63% pedestrians. This data is 10 years old, and it is likely that trail counts today could be somewhat higher. In 2021, RRRT acquired their own trail counters to better document trail use at various trail locations. Plans are underway to install the counters in Spring 2022. For more info: [Virginia Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Network \(eco-counter.com\)](https://www.eco-counter.com)

Active Transportation & Trails, Community Survey Findings

During September and October 2022, a web-based community survey was conducted via the Active Transportation and Trail Hub website, with the link distributed widely through local partners and posted at trailhead locations. The majority of survey responses came from Mecklenburg County followed by Clarksville, South Hill, and Brunswick County. Survey respondents said they use the trail primarily for health and fitness and to enjoy nature. The most popular activity was walking/running, followed by biking, and pushing a stroller or wheelchair. The largest barrier to trail use cited by respondents is that the trails are too far away, and the largest improvement needed was restrooms.

The highest priorities for future trail development identified by survey respondents (which are consistent with mapping activities from the community meetings):

1. Boydton east to Tapped Branch tributary
2. Miry Creek to News Ferry and west to Sutherlin
3. South Hill to Boydton
4. Boydton to Clarksville

Other priorities included:

1. Lawrenceville to Brooks Crossing
2. Kenbridge to Victoria
3. La Crosse to South Hill - off-road alternative

Additional survey information can be found in Attachment A and the Tobacco Heritage Trail website [\[insert link\]](#)

Virginia Outdoors Survey, Southside Planning District

Every 5 years, DCR conducts the Virginia Outdoors Survey to assess the level at which Virginians participate in specific outdoor recreation activities. The latest survey was, conducted in 2017, by the University of Virginia, Center for Survey Research (CSR) a unit of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service. The survey results can be queried by planning district for a closer look at regional responses.

Listed in Figure 4. are the top five most popular outdoor recreation activities reported by Southside residents.⁹ Figure 4 also shows the top five responses from Southside residents when asked about the most needed outdoor recreation opportunities.¹⁰

Figure 4. Virginia Outdoor Survey, Southside Survey Responses

Most Popular Recreation Activity	% households that participate
Driving for pleasure	61
Freshwater fishing	58
Visiting natural areas	56
Walking for pleasure	54
Visiting parks (local, state, national)	43

Outdoor Recreation Need	% response
Parks	58
Natural areas	55
Historic areas	46
Water access	38
Trails	37

Community Health Statistics

Data collected by the Virginia Department of Health and other sources show that residents in Southside have significant health disparities compared to the statewide average.

Southside Planning District					
Health Indicator		Brunswick County	Halifax County	Mecklenburg County	Statewide
Adult obesity	% adults with BMI over 3	36	32	31	27
Adult smoking	% adults reported smoking	20	19	18	17
Physical Inactivity	% adults reported no physical activity	26	28	28	21
Access to locations for exercise	% reported adequate access	23	40	48	81

Figure 5. Southside Community Health Statistics

As illustrated in Figure 5, counties in Southside have a higher percentage of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity, and lower access to locations for physical activity than the state average.¹¹ U.S. Census data show that Southside also has a lower median income, a

⁹ 2017 Virginia Outdoors Survey. For more information: [Participation in Outdoor Recreation Activities Across Virginia](#)

¹⁰ 2017 Virginia Outdoors Survey. For more information: [Most Needed Facilities for Outdoor Recreation Across Virginia](#)

¹¹ County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Initiative, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2022

lower life expectancy, a higher poverty rate and a more elderly population than the Virginia statewide average. For more information on community health: [Southside Active Transportation Hub](#)

Success Stories: Community Benefits of Completed Trail Segments

South Boston Trailhead -Community Art Project

On the retaining wall at the South Boston, Tobacco Heritage Trail parking lot, the community is working on an art project to paint quilt squares that represent the secret codes used by freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. As of Winter 2022, 19 quilt squares have been created. The painters represent residents of all ages and skill levels, who have enjoyed creating their “masterpiece” on the retaining wall. Bikers, hikers, birders, joggers and horseback riders alike have commented on how bright and cheerful the artwork has made the park. In addition, trail visitors from near and far have enjoyed learning about the Underground Railroad and the secret codes of the quilt squares.

Tobacco Heritage Trail as a Venue for Community Walk/Run

For the past 15 years, a Halifax County resident has been doing mission work to help the poverty-stricken citizens of Nicaragua. The ministry called “Save them One by One” started as a school sponsorship program which is providing support to 2300 children to attend school. The non-profit has grown to include a food program, and their most recent project – to build a church. In 2022, a fundraiser 5K Walk/Run event was held on the Tobacco Heritage Trail that drew 66 participants and raised nearly \$4000 to help with the Nicaragua efforts. According to the program coordinator, *“Not only is the trail a great location for events such as this but I personally love having an area here in my hometown to enjoy walking and riding my bicycle.”*

Tobacco Heritage Trail Partnership with Virginia Master Naturalist

Virginia Master Naturalist (VMN) is a statewide corps of volunteer educators, citizen scientists, and stewards helping Virginia conserve and manage natural resources and public lands. The Southern Piedmont Chapter enjoys a mutually beneficial relationship with the Tobacco Heritage Trail, which was the new chapter’s first local partner. VMN regularly organizes litter patrols on the Trail, including an on-road section which the chapter has registered with the VDOT Adopt-a-Highway program. VMN introduces people to the Trail by offering free educational hikes themed around topics such as tree identification, native versus invasive plants, bird watching, and forestry management.

Additionally, the Tobacco Heritage Trail provides a perfect venue for some of the classes required in the Virginia Master Naturalist basic training course, such as Dendrology and Botany. Through volunteering and citizen support the partnership is helping to keep the trail clean, introduce residents and visitors to the diverse ecosystems found along the trail, promote healthy family recreation, and encourage ongoing visits, engagement, and stewardship of the trail corridor and Southside’s beautiful natural resources.

IV. Trails in Southside Virginia

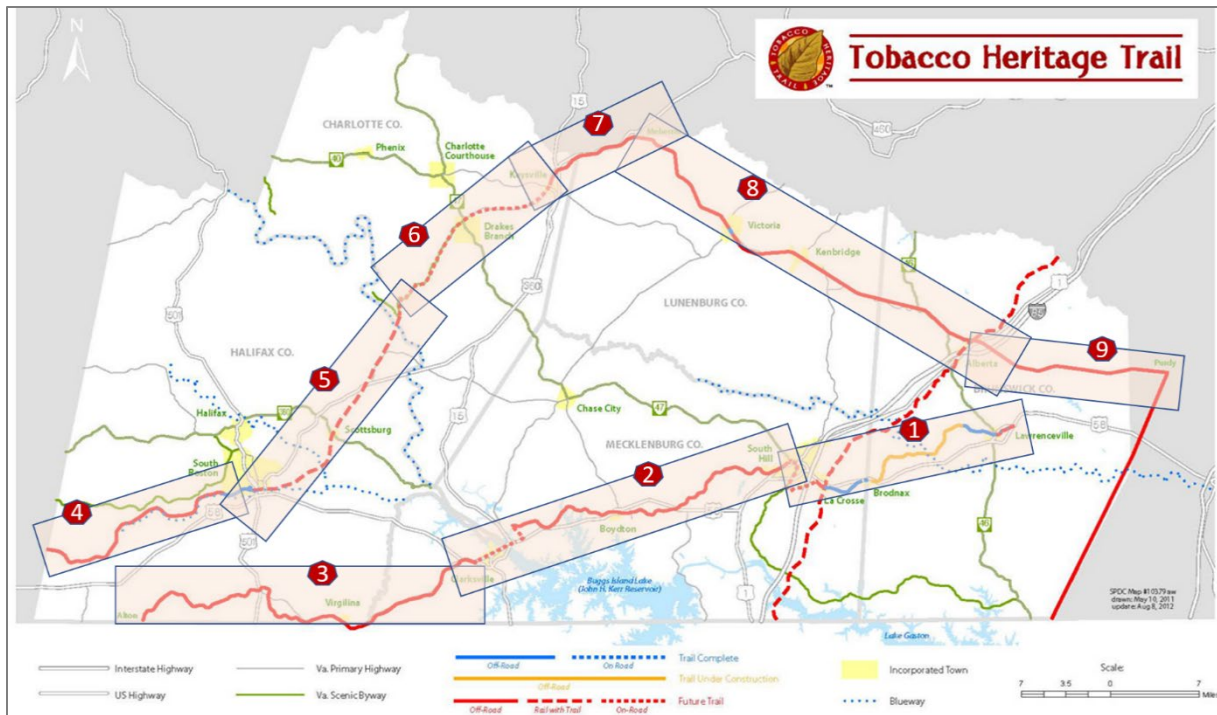


Figure 6. Tobacco Heritage Trail Network

Tobacco Heritage Trail

The 2008 Tobacco Heritage Master Plan segmented the trail into nine regions for planning purposes.¹² The plan also identified pilot projects to demonstrate success. Although most of the trail development has been in Region 1, there is trail on the ground in smaller segments throughout the system. The Trail Regions and miles completed are as follows:

Region	Location	Total Miles	Miles Open	Miles Remaining
1	Lawrenceville to South Hill	26.8	25.1	1.7
2	South Hill to Clarksville	30.0	1.1	28.9
3	Clarksville to Boyd’s Store	46.5		46.5
4	Sutherlin to South Boston	44.45	4.1	40.35
5	South Boston to Randolph	69.65		69.65
6	Randolph to Keysville	19.0		19.0
7	Keysville to Meherrin	8.0		8.0
8	Meherrin to Alberta	33.6	4.5	29.1
9	Alberta to VB Pipeline/Purdy	20.5	.5	20
TOTAL		298.5	35.3	263.2

¹² Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan, 2008, regions introduced on p.31

Proposed Tobacco Heritage Trail System

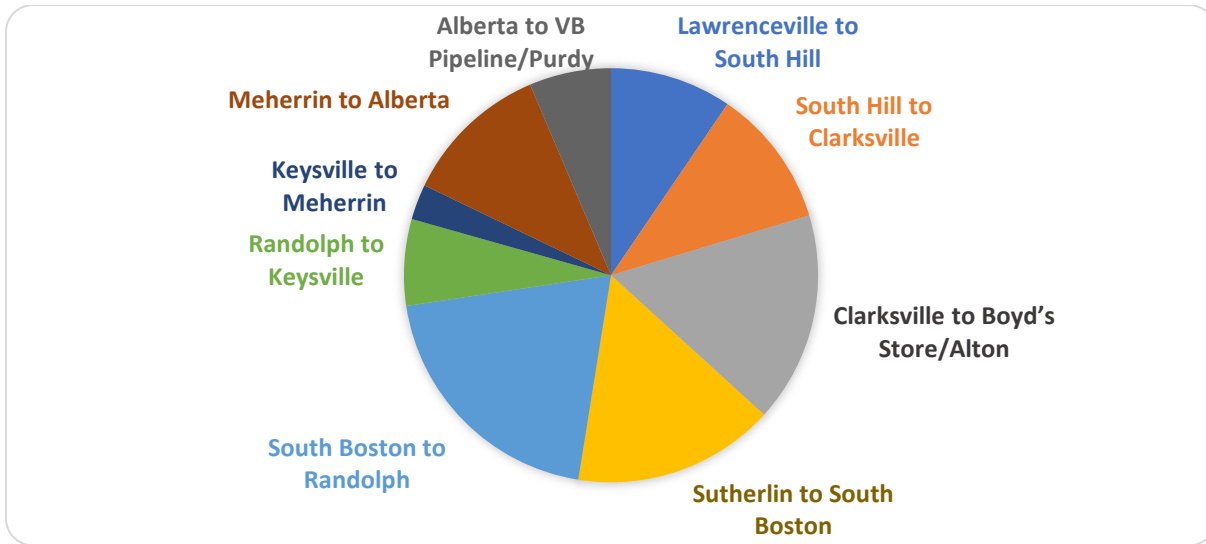


Figure 7. Percentage trail miles by region

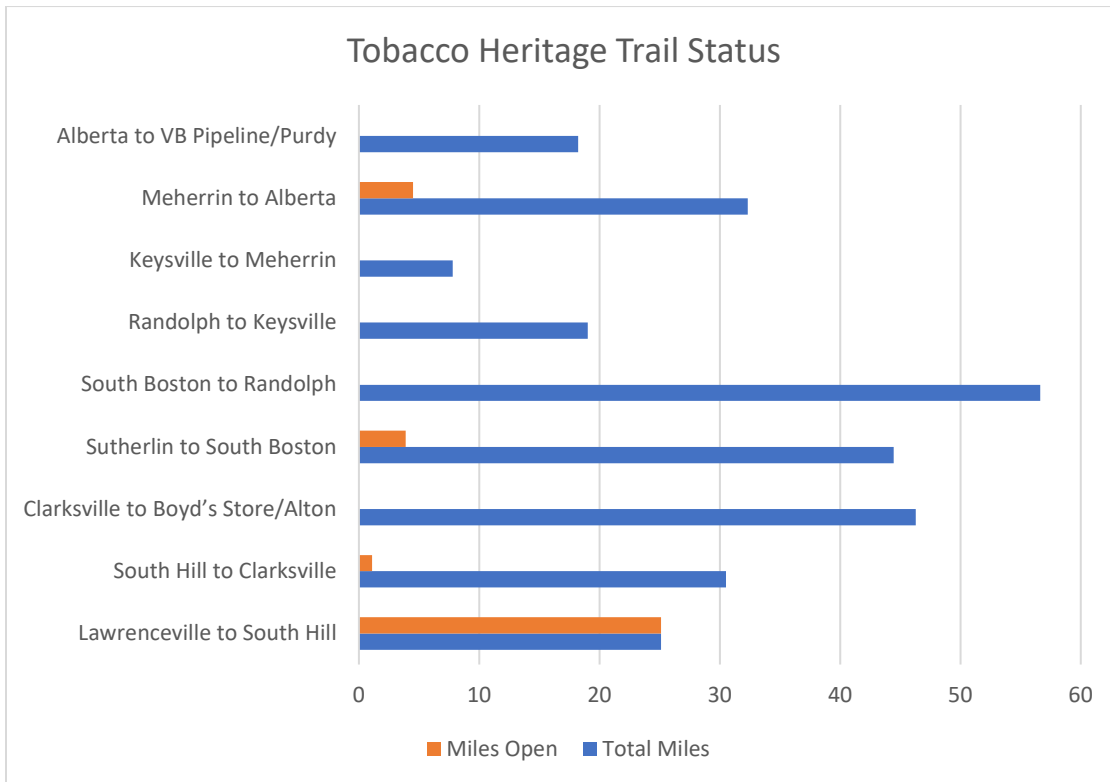


Figure 8. Total trail miles and completed trail miles by region

Regional and Statewide Trails

East Coast Greenway (ECG)

One of Virginia's Statewide Trails, the East Coast Greenway (ECG) is envisioned as a long-distance trail and bike route connecting 15 states and 450 cities and towns from Maine to Florida. Information on the 3,000-mile route is available on the [East Coast Greenway Alliance website](#). In Southside Virginia, the ECG is designed to follow the THT from Lawrenceville to Clarksville and south where it enters into North Carolina. Currently, a large part of the route is on-road.

Beaches to Bluegrass (B2B)

The Beaches to Bluegrass is a second Virginia Statewide Trail that traverses Southside. The B2B is a planned shared-use path and multi-use trail that will extend from the Virginia Beach oceanfront to Cumberland Gap. A concept plan was completed by Virginia DCR in 2014. Many of the segments are currently on-road, and unlike the Tobacco Heritage Trail, the B2B allows for motorized uses. Additional information can be found on [DCR's Beaches to Bluegrass website](#).

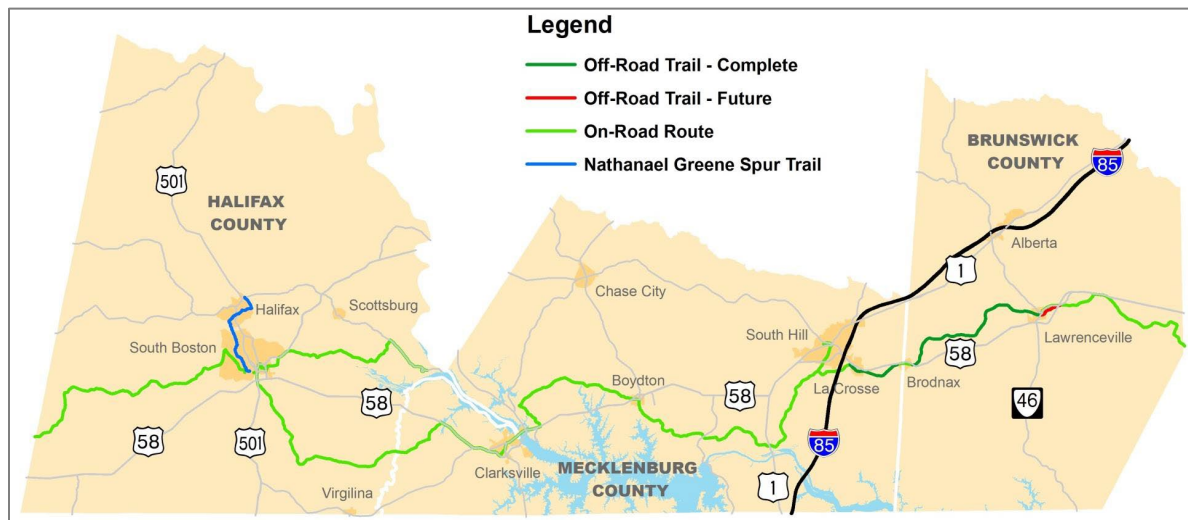
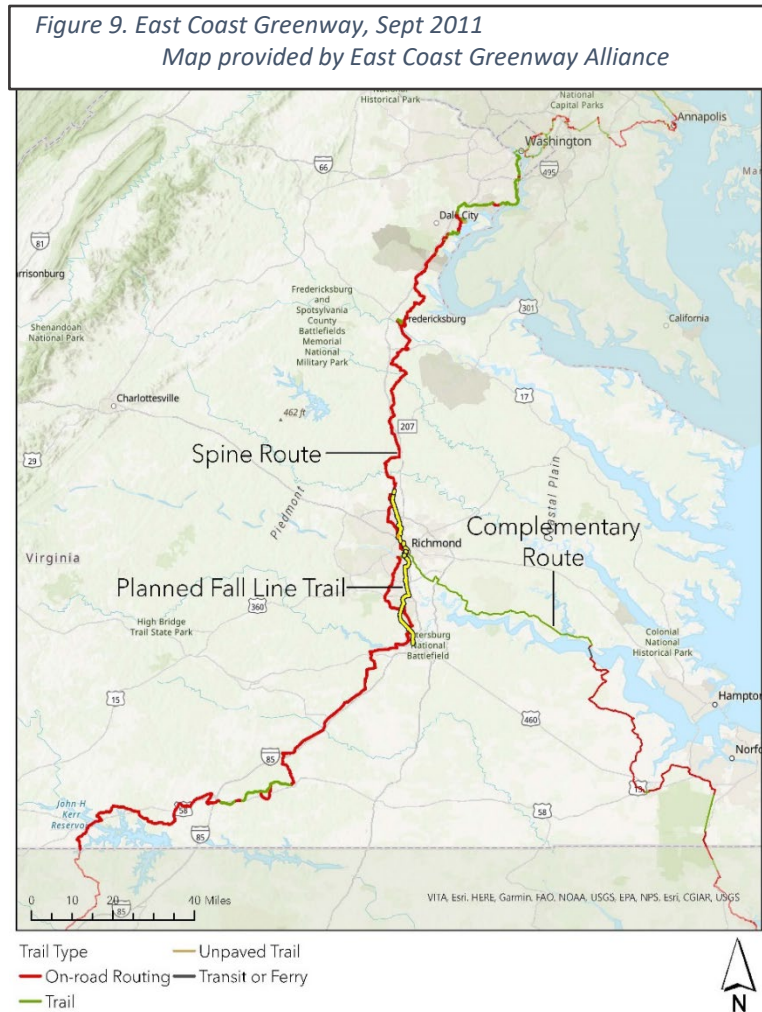


Figure 10. Beaches to Bluegrass, map provided by Southside Planning District Commission

V. Tobacco Heritage Trail - Segment Analysis

Much has happened since 2008 when the Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan was adopted. The initial plan divided the trail system into nine regions and suggested a region-by-region approach to trail construction. This updated plan suggests a strategy of expanding trail segments in multiple regions for broader geographic distribution. The following section highlights trail miles completed, planned improvements, current challenges and future opportunities for each of the nine regions. Consideration was given to the following:

1. Is the right-of-way owned by RRRT?
2. Is there an adequate trailhead to access the segment?
3. Are there major infrastructure cost and/or environmental constraints (i.e., bridges, wetlands, road crossings, etc.)?
4. Is there local political and landowner support for trail development and management?
5. Is there a strategy for long-term maintenance?
6. What is the segments value in terms of improving network connections, i.e., will it address a barrier that has created a long-standing gap in the system?
7. Are there potential grants, funding sources and/or businesses or entities willing to cost-share trail development?

In addition, each region was divided into smaller segments with rational start/end points and evaluated for their trail development potential. Two evaluations were conducted:

1. an evaluation of project readiness, i.e., a measure of the complexity of the project and the extent of resources needed to activate; and
2. the connectivity value, i.e., the extent to which the project would resolve an existing barrier, that if addressed could open up a large segment to public use, providing significant economic, social, or community wellness benefits.

The results of the project readiness assessment is documented in this chapter.

Each segment was ranked as short, medium or long term based on multiple criteria and provided a color-coded ranking, shown in the last column of the regional tables found in the summaries below. Recommendations for future priorities and phasing is provided in the following section. *For more information see Attachment B: Segment Evaluation Matrix*

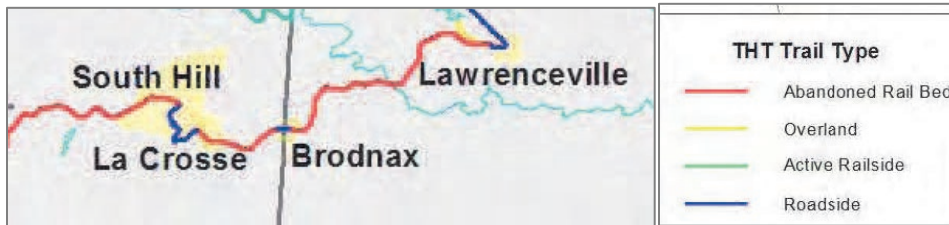
	Completion	Description
Short-term	within 5 years	Segments that are owned by RRRT, have adequate, legal access, there are no major infrastructure costs (i.e., bridges, highway crossings, boardwalks for wetlands areas, etc.), the trail is supported by the locality
Mid-Term	5 to 10 years	Segments that are only partially owned by RRRT and easements would have to be negotiated, there may be some infrastructure costs other than trail surface (i.e., bridges for smaller tributaries, etc.), and locality and community support is mixed or unknown
Long-term	greater than 10 years	Segments where RRRT does not own the right-of-way, major infrastructure investments would be required (i.e., bridges, tunnels, etc.), and there is little or no support from the locality and/or adjacent property owners

Figure 11. Description of Segment Ranking

Trail Segment Status by Region

Region 1: Lawrenceville to South Hill

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
1-A	Brooks Crossing to Roses Creek Trestle	Rail-trail	1.2	RRRT	Mid-term
1-B	Roses Creek Trestle to South Street Access	Rail-trail	.5	RRRT	Short-term
existing	Lawrenceville to La Crosse	Rail-trail	19	RRRT & towns	complete
existing	Brodnax in town	On road	1.1	VDOT, on-road	complete
existing	La Crosse-South Hill	On road	5	VDOT, on-road	complete
		Total	26.8		



Description

Region 1 has the most miles of trail on-the-ground. The existing trail is a mix of rail-trail and on-road connections extending from Lawrenceville to Brodnax to La Crosse to South Hill. Approximately 25 miles have been complete; the remaining 1.7-mile extension to the east will complete the trail to Brooks Crossing. This section is also a designated segment of the East Coast Greenway, and a segment of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.

Challenges

Unfunded cost includes replacement of the trestle over Roses Creek and development of a potential trailhead at the Rt 58 Bypass.

Planned Improvements

Lawrenceville is in the process of improving sidewalk and bike lane connections from the trail to downtown.

Brodnax has funding for trailhead improvements, including construction of a new 30x30 picnic shelter and renovation of the Brodnax Train Station, into a visitor contact station with restrooms, water, and information.



Figure 12. Brodnax Station, 1934. (From William E. Griffin, Jr Collection)

Future Opportunity

The on-road section from La Crosse to South Hill along Rocky Branch Road received much discussion during community outreach meetings. Although the route is the closest grade-separated crossing of I-85 and provides a connection for experienced on-road cyclists, concern was expressed about its suitability for families, less experienced cyclists, and/or walkers due to its steep grades, limited shoulders, and poor sight lines in some locations.

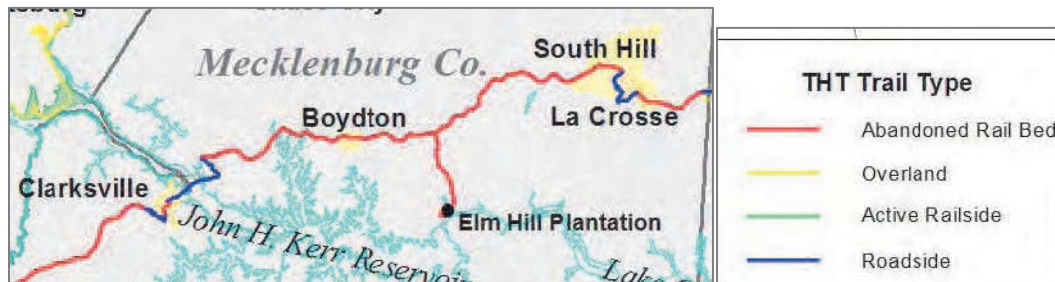
There is also interest in connecting the trail to businesses and services at the highway interchange. The initial rail right-of-way was eliminated during I-85 highway construction, providing few alternatives. Additional engineering will be needed to determine if there are any feasible alternatives for a safe bike-ped connection through this area.



Figure 13. I-85 South Hill interchange, 1980s

Region 2: South Hill to Clarksville

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
2-A	South Hill; Elementary School to Union Level	Rail-trail	4.7	RRRT/private	Mid-term
2-B	Union Level to Baskerville	Rail-trail	3.4	RRRT/private	Mid-term
2-C	Baskerville to Mecklenburg High School	Rail-trail	2.1	RRRT/private	Long-term
2-D	Mecklenburg HS to Boydton-Tapped Branch	Rail-trail	3.2	RRRT/private	Long term
2-E	Boydton-Tapped Branch to Herbert Drive access	Rail-trail	0.7	RRRT	Short-term
existing	Boydton, in town		1.1	RRRT	complete
2-F	Boydton -Washington St to Skipwith Road	Rail-trail	.8	RRRT/VDOT	Mid-term
2-G	Skipwith Road to Rudds Creek	Rail-trail	2	RRRT/private	Mid-term
2-H	Rudds Creek to Jeffress	Rail-trail	7	RRRT/private	Mid-term
2-I	Jeffress to Clarksville	tbd	5	on-road	Long-term?
	Total		30		



Description

One 1.1-mile section is completed in Region 2, within the town of Boydton from Washington Street to Herbert Drive. This segment could be easily extended to the east for approximately .7 miles to the Tapped branch tributary stream crossing.

This region also includes a 22-mile on-road bike route between South Hill and Chase City, along Route 47, a State Scenic Byway, that is partially signed. A second bike route extends south of Boydton to Kerr Reservoir, providing an 18-mile loop, using paved and gravel roads, and natural surface trails.



Figure 14. Historic Boyd Tavern, a Virginia Landmark Register and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Region 2 of the Tobacco Heritage Trail is also the corridor of the East Coast Greenway and a segment of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.

Although RRRT owns a significant amount of the trail corridor in this region, there are still key properties in private ownership in which trail use would have to be negotiated. Other significant challenges include terrain, hydrology, and highway development, described below.

Challenges

Several major challenges exist in this region, including:

- Cost of replacing 2 trestles between Union Level and Baskerville
- Challenge of negotiating for easements on rail corridor in private ownership
- Designing a connection through the Rt 58 underpass in two locations
- Wetlands, floodplains, and habitat issues
- Cost of two Rudds Creek bridge crossings, and numerous smaller stream crossings
- Complex challenges to traverse Kerr Reservoir and connect to Clarksville, including highway crossings, bridges, and private land

Future Opportunities

There are no funded trail projects in this section, although RRRT is working with Southside PDC to assess options. In January 2018, preliminary cost estimates were developed by Land Planning and Design Associates (LPDA), for the Boydton to Clarksville section, including costs to “tunnel” under Route 58, west of Boydton. A Transportation Alternatives grant application was submitted but was screened out during the pre-application process.

Options for the Boydton Rt. 58 underpass include a one-barrel culvert under Rt. 58 via a 100-foot-long galvanized steel plate arch. In the future, detailed engineering study will be needed for a second crossing of 58 east of Boydton, near Antlers. Options being considered for the Antlers Rt. 58 underpass include installation of two trail culverts, i.e., 60 feet long galvanized steel plate arches. The proposed trail culverts would be 14.5 feet wide by 13.5 feet high.

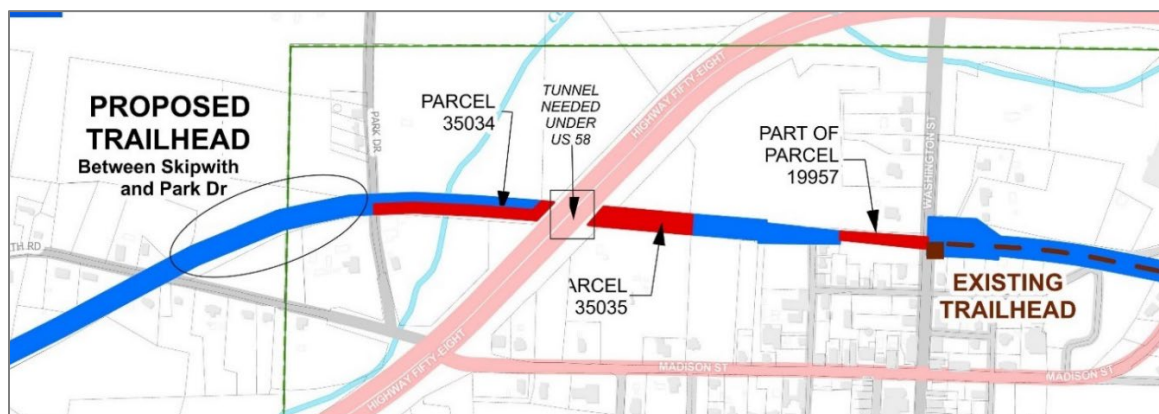


Figure 15. Tobacco Heritage Trail, Boydton to Skipwith Road

Baskerville Depot, Antlers Depot, and Union Level offer opportunities for trailhead locations, but they will need to be negotiated with existing landowners.

The Arnold property along Plank Road, just west of South Hill may provide an opportunity in the future as part of a residential development project, that could connect the elementary school, high school, and new residential development. Options for various trail access and alignment options are under discussion with Mr. Arnold.

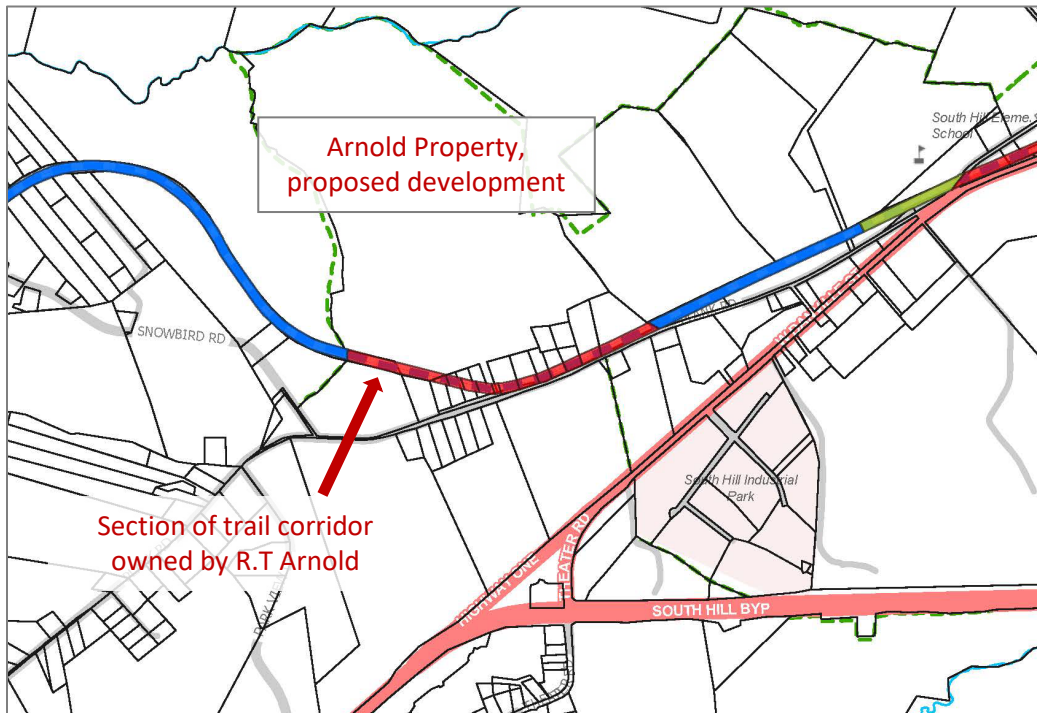


Figure 16. Tobacco Heritage Trail, Arnold Property

A detailed study will also be needed to assess various options to connect Jeffers, Occoneechee State Park, Kerr Reservoir and Clarksville.

Figure 17. Bridge at Kerr Reservoir, Clarksville



Region 3: Clarksville to Boyd's Store/Alton

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
3-A	Clarksville to Virgilina	tbd	12.24	private	Long-term
3-B	Virgilina in town	tbd	0.8	private	Long-term
3-C	Virgilina to Alton/Boyd's Store	tbd	33.46	private	Long-term
	Total		46.5		



Description

Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails does not own any of the rail right-of-way in Region 3, and most of it has reverted to adjacent property owners. The Town of Virgilina is located between Clarksville and Alton and has approximately .8 miles of abandoned right-of-way within its borders. The town of Clarksville is interested in expanding bike and pedestrian facilities within the town, which may offer opportunities for the THT if the issue of how to cross over Kerr Reservoir is resolved.

Challenges

Obstacles facing trail development in Region 3 include acquiring easements and/or purchasing rail right-of-way and determining how to address the missing bridges at Aarons Creek, Craddock Branch, and smaller tributaries between Clarksville and Virgilina and the deteriorated sections west of Virgilina. If off-road trail easements cannot be obtained, RRRT would need to work with VDOT to determine how to integrate an on-road bike lane or parallel trail into the existing road corridor.

Future Opportunity

Clarksville is interested in improving pedestrian and bike connectivity, including traffic calming measures, new crosswalks, and/or bike lanes. The town plans to construct a 4.5-mile trail extending from East Street to the Route 58 Bypass, and are looking at options to improve connections between the Town Dock and Virginia Avenue, and a potential connection to the THT in downtown Clarksville. Various options are also being considered to connect downtown Clarksville to Oconechee State Park, including dock improvements and a pontoon boat/ferry to shuttle people between the two sites.

Region 3 Special Planning Area: The Sappony Tribe and the Christie Community

In 1892, Christie, Virginia was founded as a small hamlet of merchants and mills, that emerged around the Atlantic & Danville Railway depot. A significant portion of the population was Native American, of the Sappony Tribe, and the neighborhood was known locally as the “Indian Settlement.” The Sappony’s traditional homelands, are the High Plains of the Piedmont and they have inhabited the NC-VA border since the early 1700’s, primarily in Person County, North Carolina, and Halifax County, Virginia.¹³

The old Atlantic & Danville Railway right-of-way crossed through Christie and the Indian Settlement, but by the 1960s, the train service was discontinued, and the railway tracks removed, and over time, most businesses in Christie declined. The Christie General Store [VDHR 041-5281] is the only remaining historic mercantile structure on the Virginia side of the state line; the Sappony Tribal Center, a more recent structure, is adjacent to the old mercantile store property. Also in the area are the remains of Christ Church at Mayo Chapel and the tribe’s associated graveyard (circa.1880). Several other historic family cemeteries and homes are owned by individual tribal members and families. In July 2017, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, published [The High Plains Sappony of Person County, North Carolina and Halifax County](#) that documented the sites significant to the Christie Indian Settlement (see image below).¹⁴



Figure 18. The Christie Indian Settlement: 1) Sappony Tribal Center, 2) Christie General Store, 3) Christ Church at Mayo Chapel and cemetery, 4) Epps home site and cemetery, 5) The High Plains Indian School, 6) Calvary Baptist Church and cemetery. Source:

¹³ From Sappony website: <https://www.sappony.org/>

¹⁴ [The High Plains Sappony of Person County, North Carolina and Halifax County](#), Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and College of William and Mary, July 2017 (Google Map from Woodard Field Notes 2015).

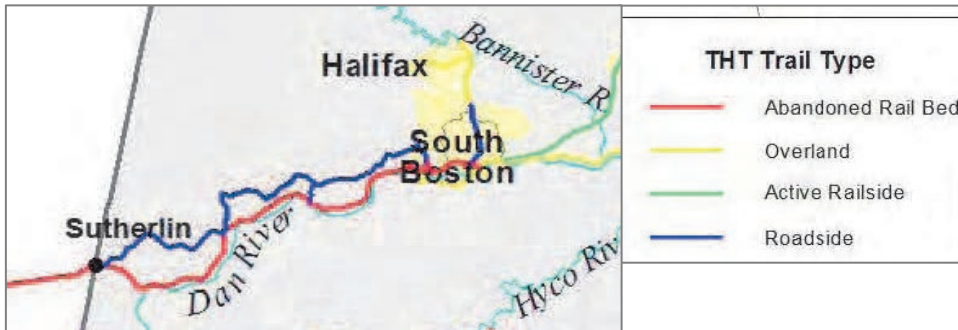
Future Opportunity

Additional outreach is needed to expand the dialogue with the Sappony and potential interest in trail connections to the Christie Community. In 2008, Halifax County was pursuing a Master Plan for the Christie Community, but there has been no further discussion regarding potential bike-ped or trail connections.

The Sappony were legislatively recognized by the state of North Carolina in 1911 and by the state of Virginia in 1913. The Tribe is governed by a tribal council consisting of one elected representative from each of the tribe's seven families. A tribal chair and chief lead the council. An executive committee helps with the daily business of the tribe. They currently have about 850 tribal members (as of 2011).

Region 4: South Boston to Sutherlin

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
existing	South Boston, Cotton Mill Park to Miry Creek	Rail-trail	4.1	RRRT	complete
4-A	Miry Creek to Pittsylvania Co	Rail-trail	16.35	RRRT/private	Long-term
4-B	South Boston to Pittsylvania Co	On road	24	VDOT	Mid-term
Total			44.45		



Description

A 4-mile segment has been completed in Region 4, extending from the Town of South Boston trailhead at Railroad Street/Cotton Mill Park, to just short of Miry Creek. The South Boston segment of the THT is a designated National Recreation Trail (NRT), and also recognized as a segment of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail. An on-road route has also been identified, on River Road, which is a State Scenic Byway, but it has not yet been signed.

Planning for spur trails is underway, to connect the trail to downtown South Boston, including:

- Connect Constitution Square to the THT, through a combination of sidewalk and bike lanes
- Construct a nature trail with a natural surface to connect Constitution Square and Nathanael Greene Landing.

Challenges

Extending the trail west from Miry Creek Bridge Road to Sutherlin/Pittsylvania County provides the opportunity to connect the THT to the Ringgold Trail and the Danville Riverwalk. However, most of the corridor west of Miry Creek remains in private ownership, which in the past has not been supportive of trail development. Further study is needed to determine feasibility and property owner interest. This segment will need to be coordinated with Pittsylvania County.



Figure 19. Tobacco Heritage Trail, South Boston trailhead

Future Opportunity

Planning is underway for the Nathanael Greene Spur Trail, to be located along a water/sewer line easement that would connect South Boston to Halifax and the Banister River at Kings Bridge Landing. The Town of Halifax is coordinating with Halifax County Service Authority and other partners. Easements will need to be updated/renegotiated to allow for recreation use in addition to utility use.

South Boston has also worked with Berry Hill Plantation to formalize the trail connection between the Berry Hill property and the rail-trail. Historic research is underway to interpret the history of the area, especially Revolutionary War history and Nathanael Greene's [*Crossing of the Dan*](#). Interpretive signage or other elements are being considered. The bigger vision is a more comprehensive plan to connect several Halifax Revolutionary War sites of significance with other sites in Virginia and the Carolinas.

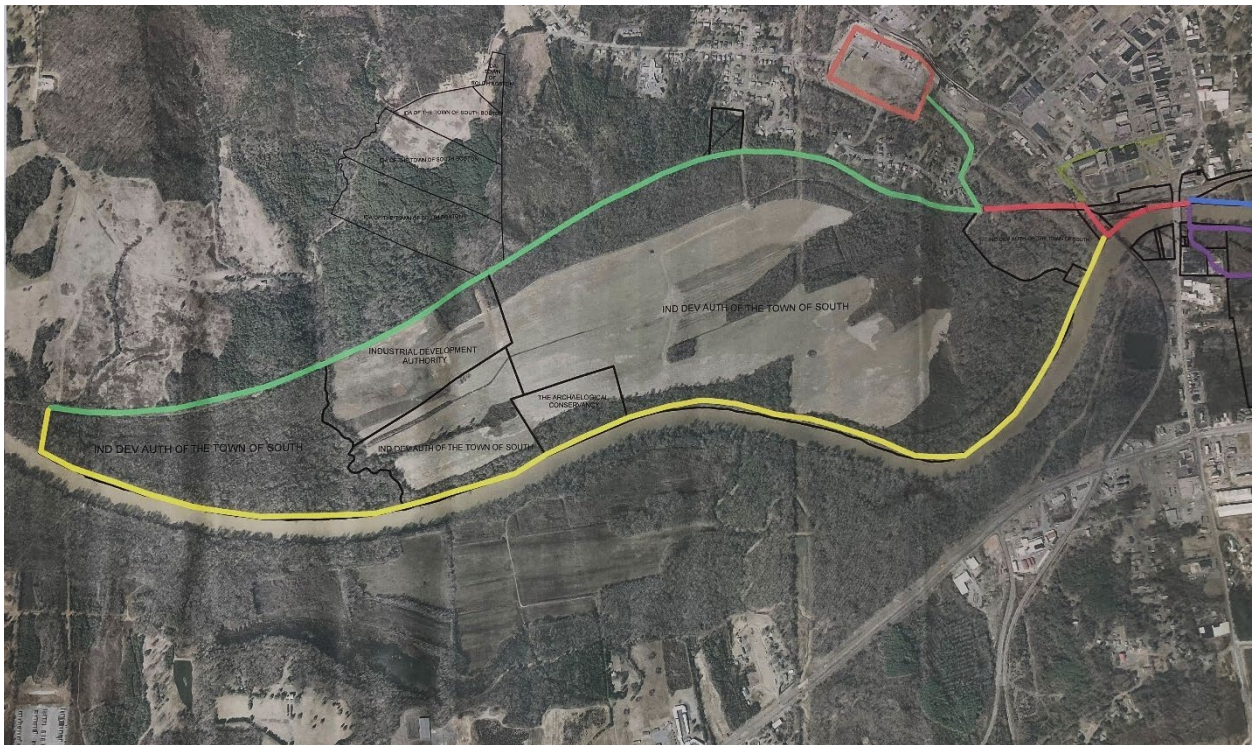
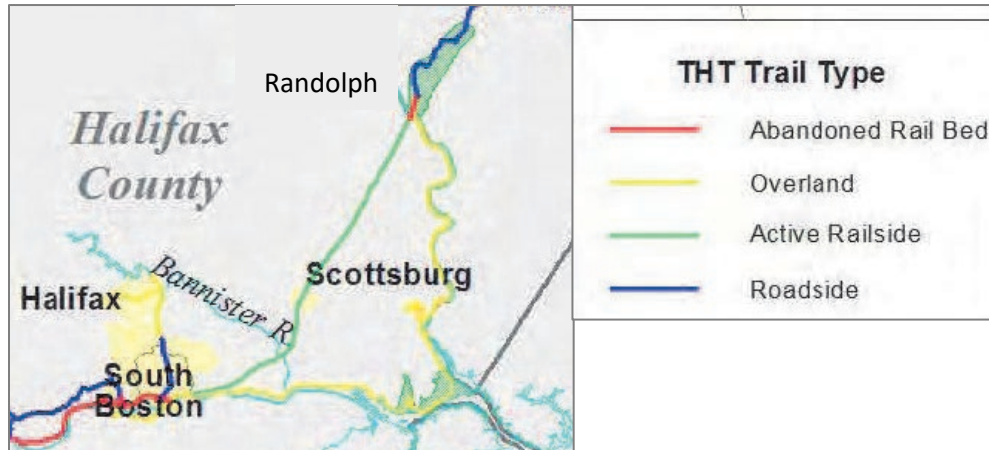


Figure 20. South Boston, Proposed Nature Trail Loop

Region 5: South Boston to Randolph

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
5-A	South Boston to Randolph via State Park	Trail	55.65	State Park/Private	Long-term
5-B	South Boston to Randolph via rail corridor	Rail-trail or rail-with trail	14	Norfolk Southern	Long-term
Total			69.65		



Description

Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails does not own the right-of-way in this region, it's currently owned by Norfolk Southern, and used for active rail service. Two separate route alternatives have been identified: 1) a rail-with-trail concept or on-road route that follows the active rail line, and 2) an off-road trail that would be developed through Staunton River State Park and skirt the Dan and Staunton Rivers. This section also presents the opportunity to connection Staunton River Battlefield State Park, Mulberry Hill, and Charlotte County.

Future Opportunity

Local partners have stated that the coal plant in Randolph is the only operator on the rail line from South Boston, and that there are plans to shut down the plant in the next few years. Although Halifax County has not expressed an interest in negotiating for use of the right-of-way, it does present an opportunity for future recreational use if the line is abandoned, and a purchaser can be identified.

Challenges

The primary limitation to trail development in this section is the active rail line, and the fact that RRRT does not own the corridor. This could change in the future if the coal plant in Randolph closes. In terms of the river route within Staunton River State Park, challenges include funding design, permitting, construction, and long-term maintenance of a new trail facility. In addition, the concept would require coordination and support from the Army COE.

Region 5 and 6: Special Planning Area, State Managed Lands

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages the Staunton River Battlefield State Park and Staunton River State Park. Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) manages the newly created Charlotte State Forest.

In 2021, DCR acquired Falkland Farms, a nearly 7,400-acre site in Halifax County that was donated to the commonwealth for permanent conservation. The tract, adjoins Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve and Staunton River State Park, thereby creating the largest DCR-owned property to date.

The property contains vast wetlands and 40 miles of streams and is incredibly significant for biodiversity conservation in the Virginia Piedmont and beyond. DCR plans to restore much of the property to its pre-European settlement condition. In the future, they plan to offer public recreation opportunities on portions of the property.

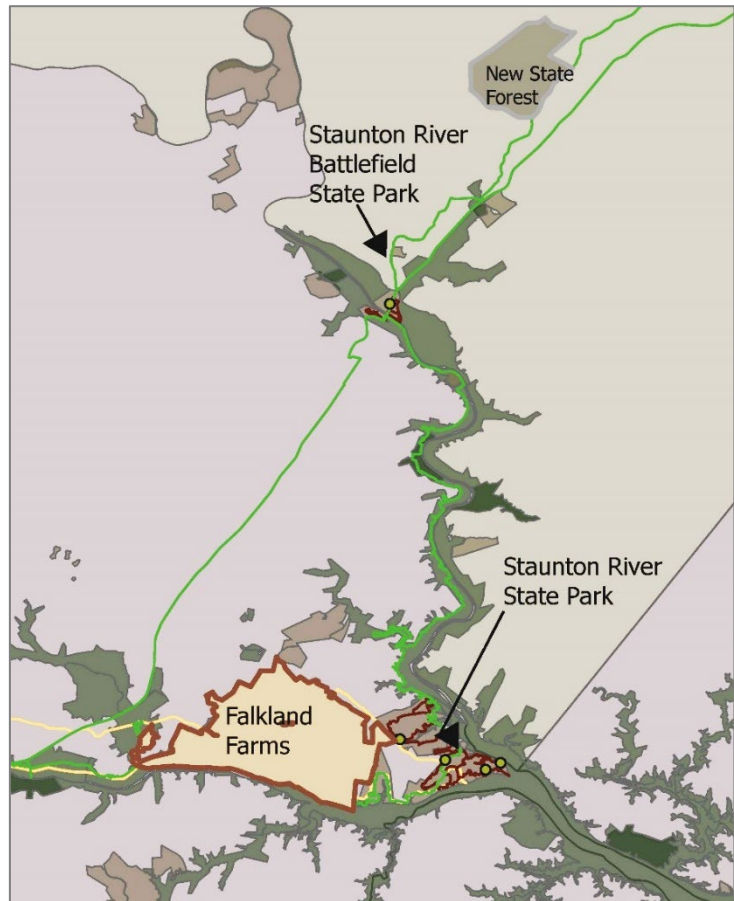
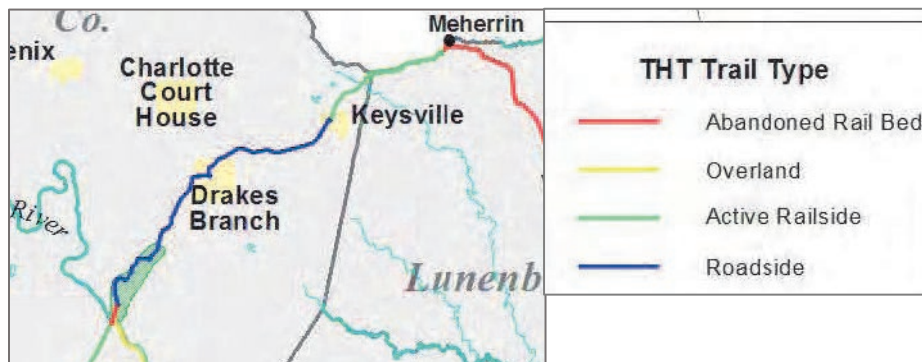


Figure 21. Virginia State Lands in Region 5 & 6
(map provided by DCR)

Further discussion is needed with DCR and DOF to explore opportunities for trail connection and potentially partnership opportunities for cooperative management of the South Boston to Randolph and Randolph to Drakes Branch sections (Regions 5 and 6).

Region 6: Randolph to Drakes Branch to Keysville

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
existing	Staunton River Battlefield State Park	Rail-trail	1.2	DCR	complete
6-A	Randolph to Saxe	Rail-trail	3.15	private	Long-term
6-B	Saxe to Mossingford Rd	Rail-trail	2.8	private	Long-term
6-C	Mossingford Rd to Drakes Branch (Rt 47)	Rail-trail	2.85	private	Long-term
6-D	Drakes Branch to Keysville	Rail-trail or On road	9	private	Long-term
		Total	19		



Description

This section extends approximately 19 miles from the Staunton River to Keysville and is almost entirely in private ownership. In 1993, the former Drakes Branch Depot site and 4.5 acres was transferred to the Town of Drakes Branch. In 1995 the Randolph Depot and 1.2 miles of former rail bed was acquired by Department of Conservation and Recreation and later become Staunton River Battlefield State Park. In 1996, Norfolk Southern sold the remainder of the rail line south of Keysville to Landowners Right of Way LLC, who then resold the segments to 12 landowners. RRRT does not own any of the rail corridor in this section.

Challenges

A major constraint in Region 6 is that most of the corridor is in private ownership, and in the past property owners have not been interested in allowing public access for trail use. Charlotte County is currently updating their Comprehensive Plan and the issue of expanding bike and pedestrian opportunities has been raised in community meetings, but to-date there has not been any negotiation for rail-trail use of the former rail right-of-way.

Figure 22. Privately owned rail corridor south of Keysville, off Hill Avenue (Photo: P.K. Pettus)



Future Opportunity

Recently, the VA Dept of Forestry, working with The Conservation Fund, acquired over 5000 acres located adjacent to the abandoned rail right-of-way in Saxe. The site was opened to the public as Charlotte State Forest, and managed for sustainable timber production, forest research, wildlife habitat, and passive outdoor recreation. Parking and access are from Saxkey Road, approximately 3 miles from Drakes Branch.

Recreational uses of Charlotte State Forest include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, mountain biking, trail running, horseback riding, and wildlife watching. One of the highlights of Charlotte State Forest is Roanoke Creek, which is a navigable waterway bordered by a large wetlands area with abundant wildlife, and suitable for fishing, hunting, canoeing, and wildlife viewing.

The abandoned rail line, if acquired has the potential to connect Staunton River Battlefield State Park, Charlotte State Forest, and other historic and natural assets in the area. Further discussion is needed with DCR and DOF to explore opportunities for trail connection and potentially partnership opportunities for the Randolph to Drakes Branch section.



Figure 23. Charlotte State Forest (Photo credit: Virginia Department of Forestry)



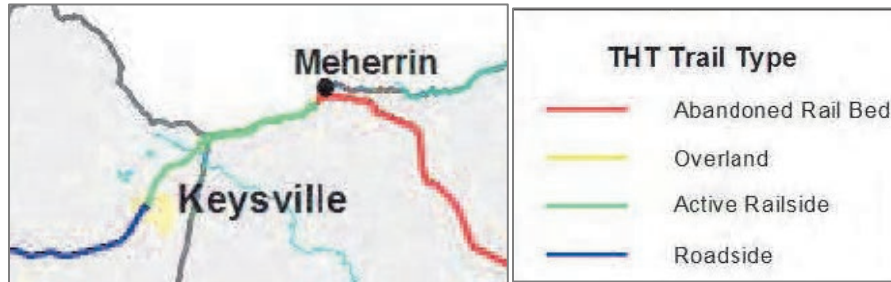
Figure 24. Drakes Branch, Virginia

Another potential location for a trailhead is in Drakes Branch, near the existing picnic shelter.



Region 7: Keysville to Meherrin

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
7-A	Keysville to Meherrin	Rail-with-trail or On-road	8	Norfolk Southern	Long-term



Description

The rail corridor in Region 7 is currently used for active rail service. There is currently no abandoned right-of-way in this trail segment. Future options include negotiation with Norfolk Southern for a rail-with-trail design, or work with VDOT and local planners to develop an alternate route along road right-of-way.

Challenges

Obstacles facing construction include the need to negotiate with Norfolk Southern to allow for trail development along an active rail line and the cost associated with design and safety features for a rail-with-trail.

Future Opportunity

Efforts are underway by the Friends of Fort Mitchell and the Keysville Depots to rehabilitate the two historic railroad depots, which may provide an opportunity for cooperative planning, marketing, and partnership development in the future.

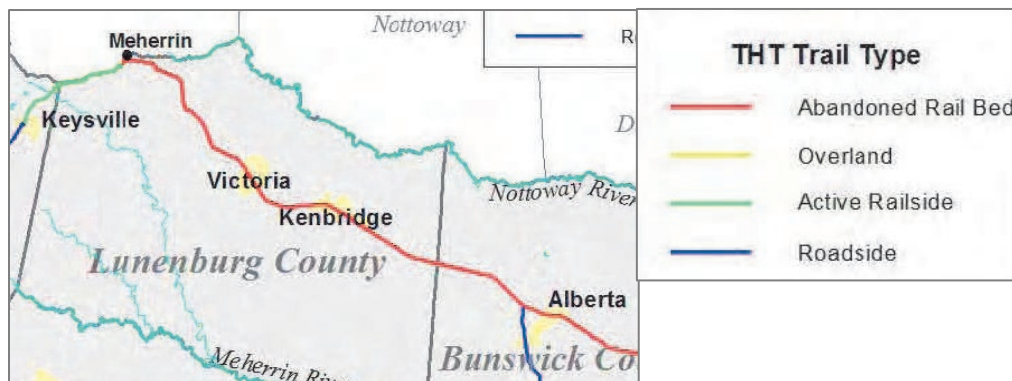


Figure 25. South Railway 4501 and Keysville Depot, 1973

Source: [Virginia Tech Archive, Drake Railroad Photograph Collection](#)

Region 8: Meherrin to Alberta

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
8-A	Meherrin to Lunenburg Lake parcel/trailhead	Rail-trail	9.2	private	Long-term
8-B	Lunenburg Lake parcel /trailhead to Victoria	Rail-trail	2.5	private or on-road	Short-term
existing	Victoria; town section	Rail-trail	4	Victoria	complete
8-C	Victoria/Airport Rd to Tinkling Rd	Rail-trail	2	private	Mid-term
8-D	Tinkling Rd to Kenbridge/Pine St access	Rail-trail	1.4	private	Mid-term
existing	Kenbridge; town section	Rail-trail	.5	Kenbridge	complete
8-E	Kenbridge/Barnes access to Dundas/Brunswick Co	Rail-trail	6.2	private	Long-term
8-F	Dundas/Brunswick Co to Danielstown	Rail-trail	2.8	private	Long-term
8-G	Danielstown to Alberta <i>Design complete</i>	Rail-trail	5	RRRT	Short-term
		Total	33.6		



Description

Region 8 will consist entirely of off-road trail, located on abandoned right-of-way. While some privately-owned parcels still remain, a significant portion was purchased by RRRT in 2008 from the former Virginian Railway. Two segments are on the ground, in the towns of Victoria and Kenbridge. The Victoria segment extends 4 miles from 10th Street east to the Lunenburg County Airport. The Kenbridge segments is .56 miles and does not have a trailhead parking area; visitors to the THT, use the parking lot of an adjacent business. Both segments have been popular with walkers.

Planned Improvements and Spur Trails

Victoria-Kenbridge Connection: A high priority for both Victoria and Kenbridge is to connect the two towns, a distance of approximately 3 miles. There are approximately 30 adjacent property

owners along this section. The trail is fairly passable due to existing ATV use. Other uses on this section include hunting and farm use to access fields.

The segment could be developed in 2 segments:

- Kenbridge Pine St access to Tinkling Rd: The Town of Victoria has been exploring options with businesses along Main Street.
- Tinkling Rd to Airport Rd (east end of the Victoria section): this segment may need to route around private property using VDOT and Dominion Energy right-of-way.

Airport Loop: Victoria maintains the 3-mile segment from Railroad Park to the airport. A loop around the airport would provide an extension for those biking the route, as well as a loop for walkers. Amenities include restrooms, water, vending machines, and picnic tables.

Victoria Western Trail Extension: The Town of Victoria recently purchased a parcel approximately 3 miles west of the town to be developed as a trailhead. From the new trailhead, a spur trail could be developed to Lunenburg Lake (approximately 2 miles north) via a Dominion Energy utility line right-of-way.

Challenges

1. Since Lunenburg County is not located within the Southside Planning District, additional discussion is needed between the two PDCs to develop an integrated strategy for development of the trail system.
2. Trailhead signage is needed to help with branding and expand awareness that the trail is a segment of the Tobacco Heritage Trail. These trail segments were developed by Victoria and Kenbridge using their own funds, unlike Region 1 that used VDOT grants. (VDOT grants included signage as part of the grant package.)
3. The Kenbridge/Pine Street trailhead needs a permanent solution so that trail users do not have to park at the adjacent commercial property.
4. Victoria and Kenbridge own their segments of the rail right-of-way and are maintaining their trails with town funds. It would be helpful to have agreements in place with RRRT to clarify roles and expectations.
5. Development of the trail between Victoria and Kenbridge and extensions to the east and west will require outreach to property owners who have historically used the right-of-way for ATV use. If the trail is developed, this would change local use of the corridor.

Future Opportunity

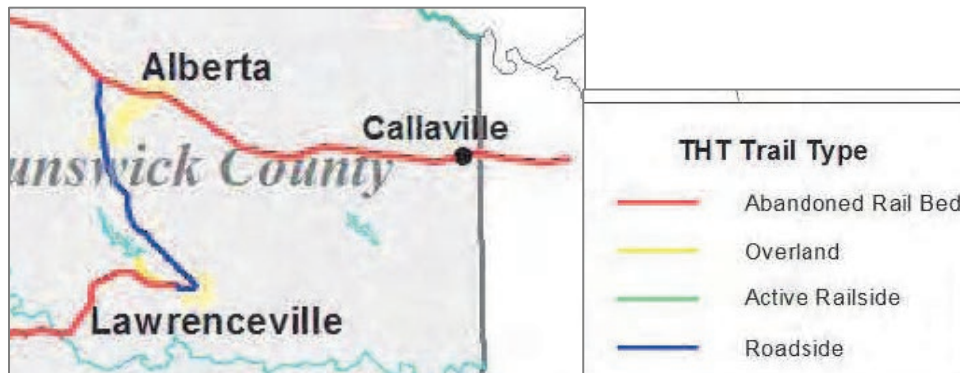
A high priority for this region is to connect Victoria and Kenbridge through a 10 to 12 mile trail. The ultimately goal to connect to Alberta for a longer 20+ mile trail that could help support both community recreation and wellness, as well as contribute to economic and tourism opportunities that support downtown businesses.



Figure 26. Downtown Victoria

Region 9: Alberta to Virginia Beach Pipeline to Purdy

Segment#	Start-End	Type	Length(mi)	Owner	Phasing
existing	Alberta, town section	Rail-trail	.5	RRRT	complete
9-A	Alberta to Greenville Co line	Rail-trail	12.2	RRRT/private	Long-term
9-B	Greenville Co line to Virginia Beach Pipeline	Rail-trail	3.5	RRRT/private	Long-term
9-C	Virginia Beach Pipeline to Purdy	Rail-trail	4.3	private	Long-term
		Total	20.5		



Description

The Town of Alberta has worked with RRRT to complete a .5-mile trail segment in the town, with a trailhead located at Alberta Park, off Main Street. The 2008 Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan recommends extending the trail from Alberta east into Greenville County to the intersection with the Virginia Beach Pipeline, and then on to Purdy for its eastern terminus. Although RRRT owns some of the right-of-way, there are large sections in private ownerships, where in the past, residents did not support trail development.

Challenges

Accommodations would need to be made for a grade-separated trail crossing where the THT will pass over the future Southeast High-Speed Rail as it travels through Alberta. Additional research will also be needed to determine alternatives for bypassing privately property to create a continuous trail to Purdy.

Future Opportunity

Christanna Highway (Route 46) provides an opportunity for an on-road north-south connection between Alberta and Lawrenceville, linking the two former rail lines. The Virginia Beach Pipeline easement, and possibly the High-Speed Rail corridor could provide future opportunities for a trail easement along the utility or rail right-of-way. Future trail planning should be coordinated with these efforts. In addition, RRRT will need to coordinate with recreation and trail planners in Greenville County for the section from the Brunswick County line to Purdy.

Spur Trails and On-Road Connecting Routes

Local connections to the THT could be either off-road (i.e., trails along utility easements, etc.) or on-road such as bike lanes or shared roadways. The 2008 THT Master Plan identifies seven potential network “links” as follows.

PROPOSED “LINKS” IN 2008 THT MASTER PLAN				
Region	Name	Description/Location	Type	Status
2	Chase City Link-East	South Hill to Chase City; Route 47 (<i>Mecklenburg Co.</i>)	On-road	Designated as official on-road THT segment by the RRRT Board
2/7	Chase City Link-North	Chase City to Keysville (<i>Charlotte, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg Counties</i>)	On-road	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan
2	Elm Hill Link	Antler to John H Kerr Dam and Reservoir; and Dick Cross (formerly Elm Hill) Wildlife Management Area	Off-road, abandoned rail line to dam site	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan
5/6	Red Hill Link	Randolph to Red Hill (<i>Halifax and Charlotte Counties</i>)	On-road	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan
4	South Boston Link A	Dan River Loop (<i>IDA property, South Boston</i>)	Off-road natural surface trail	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan
5	South Boston Link B	South Boston to Halifax and Banister River (<i>utility easement, South Boston & Halifax</i>)	Combined off-road/sewer easement and on-road route	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan; preliminary assessment underway
1/9	Dinwiddie Link	Bracey to Rawlings (<i>Brunswick and Mecklenburg counties and extends both north and south</i>)	Southeast High Speed Rail corridor, rail-with-trail	Proposed in 2008 THT Master Plan

In Winter 2021, the RRRT Board identified additional connecting routes and spur trails that connect the THT to town centers, visitor services or other amenities to enhance the trail experience. The THT Management Plan does not provide specific guidance for these types of facilities, as they are developed and managed by local jurisdictions.

SPUR TRAILS AND CONNECTING ROUTES, 2022 ADDITIONS				
Region	Location	Description	Type	Status
1	Lawrenceville	Loop trail/sidewalk improvements to downtown	On-road shared vehicle lane and sidewalk.	In planning stage
2	Boydton area	Bike loop: On-road bike route south of town to Mumford Trail/COE	Signed on-road bike route, gravel road, and natural surface trail.	Completed 2022
2	Rudd Creek spur, west of Boydton	Spur from THT at Route 58 to COE Rudd Creek Campground	Off-road trail, discussion initiated with COE	In planning stage
5	South Boston	Spur - downtown connector on road/sidewalk	On-road, shared vehicle lane and sidewalk	Proposed
8	Victoria	Loop around the airport	Off-road shared use trail	Proposed
8	Victoria	Spur trail from THT to Lunenburg Lake	Off road shared use trail	Proposed

VI. Action Plan: 2023 - 2033

The following section provides an action strategy and recommendations for future trail development. It synthesizes the information collected for the region-by region updates and evaluates segments through the lens of connectivity value, i.e., the benefit of trail connections to the local community as well as the broader Southside region.

Segment Prioritization and Phasing

Trail segments were evaluated based on the following:

- The trail segment provides significant economic, social, or community wellness benefits, connecting communities to open space, services, and each other.
- The segment extends an existing on-the-ground segment with adequate access from a roadway or existing trailhead.
- The project resolves a complex, long-standing barrier, that if addressed could open up a large segment to public use.

Segments that addressed the above conditions were viewed as “high value” and listed below as priority projects.

High Priority Trail Connectivity Projects			
Brunswick and Lunenburg Counties	Victoria to Kenbridge to Alberta	Would connect three towns, recreation assets and visitor services	Region 8
Halifax County	South Boston/Miry Creek to Sutherlin/Pittsylvania County	Would connect South Boston to the existing Ringgold Trail and the Danville Riverwalk	Region 4
Mecklenburg County	South Hill to Boydton	Would connect schools, employment centers/industrial sites, and visitor services	Region 2
Mecklenburg County	Boydton to Occoneechee State Park and Clarksville	Would connect two town and visitor services to regionally significant recreation assets including state parkland and Kerr Reservoir	Region 2

The above projects will require additional engineering, and in some cases easement negotiation with private property owners to secure public access for trail development. Some of the segments will have moderately high infrastructure costs associated with bridges and/or road crossings. Funding available through the Virginia Statewide Trails Office will serve as a first step in addressing these issues. Specific recommendations are documented below.

Recommendations

The following tasks should be undertaken by Roanoke River Rails to Trails over the next 5 years, from 2023 to 2027, working collaboratively with partners. Specific actions with target dates should be established and an annual review conducted to track progress. As tasks are complete, additional targets should be set for future years, 2028-2033.

Trail Development

#1: Victoria to Alberta: Work with Virginia State Trail office and VDOT to complete a Detailed Study for the Victoria to Danielstown section, including environmental review, preliminary cost analysis, trail phasing, and a funding strategy for design and construction. Develop final construction drawing and funding to complete the Danielstown to Alberta segment.

#2: South Boston to Sutherlin: Work with Virginia State Trail office and VDOT to complete a Detailed Study for the section from South Boston to the Ringold Trail in Pittsylvania County, including environmental review, preliminary cost analysis, ownership, and a funding strategy for design and construction.

#3: South Hill to Clarksville: Work with the Virginia State Trail office and VDOT to complete a Detailed Study for the South Hill to Clarksville segment including environmental review, preliminary cost, trail phasing, and a funding strategy for design and construction. The Study should update the 2018 LPR Study for the Boydton to Clarksville section and confirm legal ownership of the rail right-of-way for parcels not owned by RRRT.

#4: Wayfinding and Signage Plan: Develop consistent sign guidelines to support safety and branding the trail as a regional network. The planning process should include an inventory of signage types currently used on both the trail and on-road connecting routes, including wayfinding, informational, interpretive, and trailhead kiosks.

#5: State Park-State Forest Trail Connection Study: Work with state agencies (DCR and DOF) managing Staunton River State Park, Staunton River Battlefield, Falkland Farm, and Charlotte State Forest, to assess potential connections between state managed lands that could also serve as segments of the Tobacco Heritage Trail.

#6: Rail-with-Trail Study: Conduct a rail-with-trail study to assess options for the active rail segments from South Boston to Randolph to Drakes Branch to Keysville and from Keysville to Meherrin (Region 6 and 7), including potential future abandonments. Norfolk Southern currently owns the corridor.

#7: I-85 South Hill Interchange: Work with VDOT and the VA State Trails Office to conduct a Bike-Pedestrian Study for the I-85 interchange at South Hill to assess options to improve safety and connections to lodging, commercial services, recreation, and employment.

Trail Partnerships and Outreach

#8: Marketing Research and Marketing Strategy: Conduct research to learn more about who is currently using the trail, including both individuals and sponsored events, what makes the trail an attraction, how demand could be expanded, and how to better target potential future audiences. Based on the findings, develop a more coordinated, regional approach for marketing and promotion.

#9: Economic Development, Investment, and the Recreation Economy

Work with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, state agencies, foundations, and corporate leaders to expand awareness in Southside regarding the importance of quality of life in business relocation and retention. Develop a regional strategy that encourages entrepreneurship and supports and grows the recreation economy and related trail-related businesses.

#10. Community Health: Expand partnerships with state agencies, foundations, and local health professionals to position the trail and other outdoor assets as “health infrastructure.” Work collaboratively to leverage funding and develop programming to encourage physical activity as a strategy to address regional health disparities, i.e., high rates of cardiovascular disease, obesity, etc.

VII. Trail Designation and Design Standards

The following chapter provides guidelines for trail development, combining policies from previous planning documents and lessons learned from the last 10+ years of trail management. The goal is to assemble previous guidance into one central document that clarifies and simplifies the process to assist the RRRT Board and local jurisdictions in developing new trail.

Interim Trails vs Full Designation

For a trail to be designated as a segment of the THT (either as full or interim status) the following information must be provided to the RRRT Board.

- ___ 1. Ownership: Corridor must be owned by RRRT, a local jurisdiction, or secured through easement.
- ___ 2. Trail Access: Trail must be located adjacent to an opened section, or have adequate access and parking, so as not to impact adjacent property owners.
- ___ 3. Safety and Security: Consultation with local law enforcement and emergency services is required prior to trail opening to ensure any issues related to trail patrol, crime reporting, and/or emergency access have been resolved.
- ___ 4. Trail Signage: The type and location of regulatory signage will be provided, such as stop signs at road crossings, and trail identification signs.
- ___ 5. Maintenance Agreement: A signed agreement will be provided between RRRT and the party responsible for maintaining the trail segment (i.e., local jurisdiction or friends group). In some instances, a three-way agreement may be required, i.e., between RRRT, the local jurisdiction and the trail maintainer.

The standard for trail design (i.e., width, pavement surface, etc.), as well as trail corridor considerations (i.e., access, safety, maintenance, environmental considerations, etc.) differ if the segment is to be fully developed vs opened as an interim trail. Standards for each are provided below:

Trail Design - Comparison of Designated vs Interim Trail Segment		
	Designated Trail Standards (Chapter 4)	Interim Trail Standards (Chapter 5-B)
Vertical Clearance	10 feet	10 feet
Trail Width	10 feet minimum	10 feet minimum
Horizontal clearance beyond the trail	2 feet minimum surface clearance; 3 feet minimum limbs and brush	2 feet minimum surface clearance; 3 feet minimum limbs and brush
Grade	3-5% (max 8-10%)	3-5% (max 8-10%)
Trail Surface	Fine or compacted stone material. Standard construction is 1" surface material (#10 stone) compacted to 95%; over 6" of VDOT #21-A stone. If the railroad ballast is still present, additional sub-base may not be needed.	Stable, natural surface; free of holes, ruts, stubble; cut flush with ground surface

From: Tobacco Heritage Trail Management Plan, 2009

Trail Corridor Design Criteria - Comparison of Designated vs Interim Trail Segment		
	Designated Trail Standards (Chapter 4)	Interim Trail Standards (Chapter 5-B)
Environmental Compliance	Must comply with all environmental regs and permitting requirements	must follow E&S
*Trail Access / Trailheads	At a minimum all trailheads must have identification signage, posted rules, and emergency contact. If a trailhead is located in an area served by garbage pickup, trash receptacles should be provided. Otherwise, the THT should be a "Trash Free Park."	Parking must be available. Identification signage and emergency contact must be posted
Safety and Security	Access must be secured by gates or bollards; local law enforcement and EMS have access	Access must be secured by gates; local law enforcement and EMS have access
Maintenance Agreement	Signed agreement in place between RRRT, local entity, and any partner organizations	Signed agreement in place between RRRT, local entity, and any partner organizations
Inspections	On-site inspections completed on regular schedule as per mgt agreement	On-site completed on regular schedule as per mgt agreement
Signage	Signs to include regulatory, warning, directional, and interpretive. Signs located at primary accesses shall provide phone numbers to report crime, accident, or illegal dumping.	Signs must be installed that identifies the trail as an "interim" segment of the THT.
Trail Mileage Markers	Mileage markers should be placed at intervals of at least ¼ mile along the corridor. The point of origination (mile marker 0) will be located at Lawrenceville (A&D or NF&D railroad), South Boston (R&D), and Purdy (Virginian corridor).	
Amenities - Restrooms	Restroom facilities should be developed at primary trailheads. At secondary trailheads and/or rural areas, SSTs (sweet smelling toilets) should be considered.	
Amenities – Benches	Benches should be provided along the trail at intervals of 1 to 1 ½ miles and located away from the trail edge (6-10' minimum). The bench type should be sturdy, low maintenance and vandal resistant.	
Amenities – water fountains, picnic tables, shelters, etc.	*From THT Master Plan: Provide site furnishings, including bike racks, benches, trash receptacles and equestrian hitching posts and water troughs.	
ADA and Universal Design	Trail and parking areas should comply with ADA guidelines. Braille signage and sensory enhanced trail components such as fragrant plantings may be added and would be encouraged as club or volunteer projects.	Trail should have a firm and stable surface, free of holes, ruts, stubble

*From: Tobacco Heritage Trail Management Plan, 2009; and *THT Master Plan, 2008*

On-Road Connecting Routes

The 2008 THT Master Plan identified six on-road segments, of which two have been designated. In addition, the on-road route from South Hill to Chase City, shown in the 2008 Master Plan as a trail “link” has also been designated by the RRRT Board.

Tobacco Heritage Trail Master Plan 2008, On-Road Segments

Region	Description	Miles	Status
1	Brodnax; In-town segment	1.1	Designated on-road THT segment
1	Lawrenceville to Alberta; Rt 1 bike route	9.5	Proposed
2	La Crosse to South Hill	5	Designated on-road THT segment
2	Jeffress to Clarksville	3.5	Proposed
6	Randolph to Keysville	19	Proposed
4	South Boston to Sutherlin	24	Proposed
2	South Hill to Chase City; Rt 47	21.5	Proposed in 2008 Master Plan as a link Subsequently, designated by the RRRT Board as an on-road THT segment

As noted in the THT Master Plan, all on road segments will be designed consistent with the following guidance¹⁵:

- VDOT Road Design Manual
- AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities
- Manual For Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- Federal Highway Administration Report Selecting Roadway design Treatments to Accommodate Bicycles
- Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines

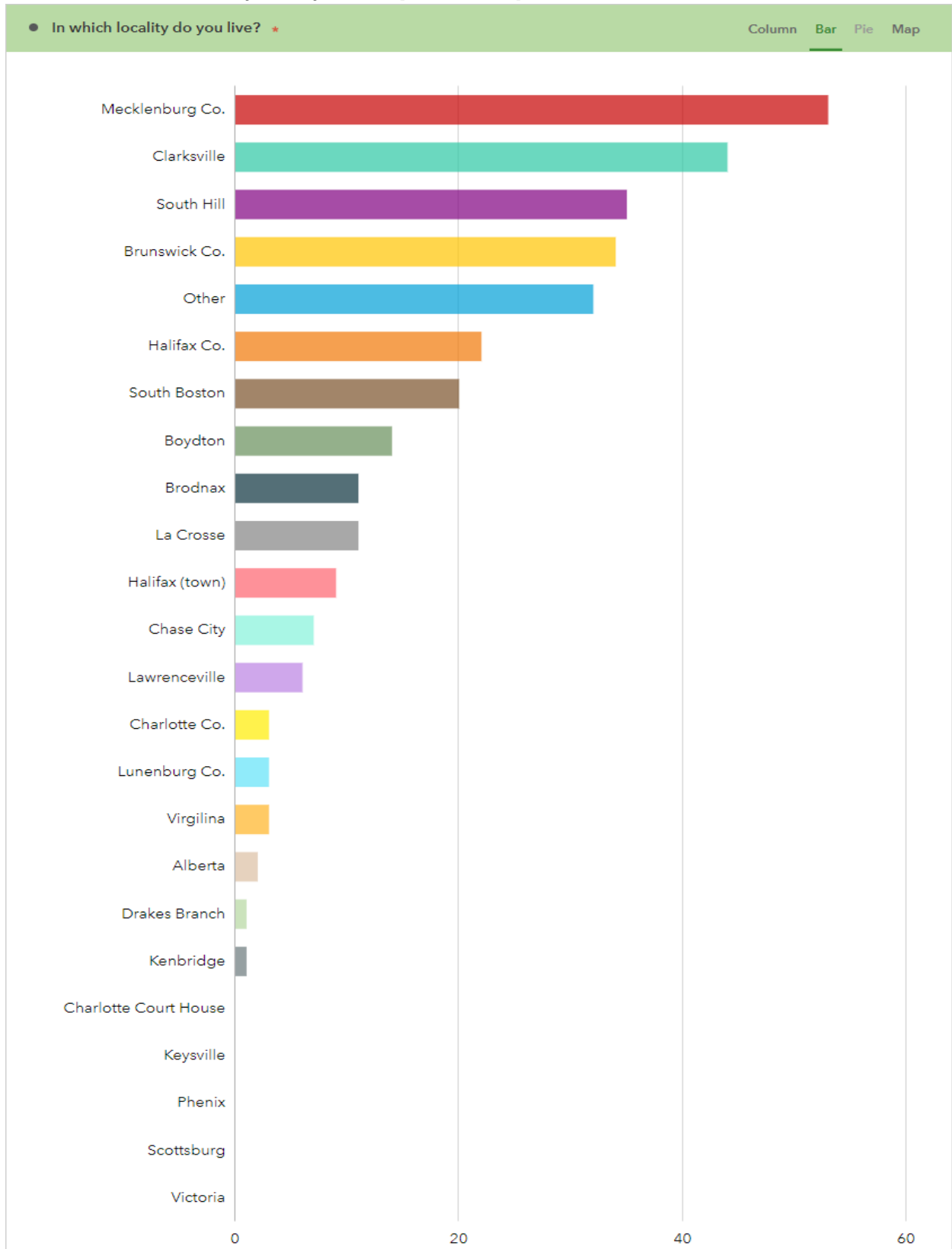
Design of each on-road bike route will incorporate best practices that take into account its unique setting and conditions. As with other bike routes, local and regional planners will work with VDOT staff to determine whether the bike facility should be a Shared Roadway, Signed Shared Roadway, Bike Lane, or Shared Use Path.

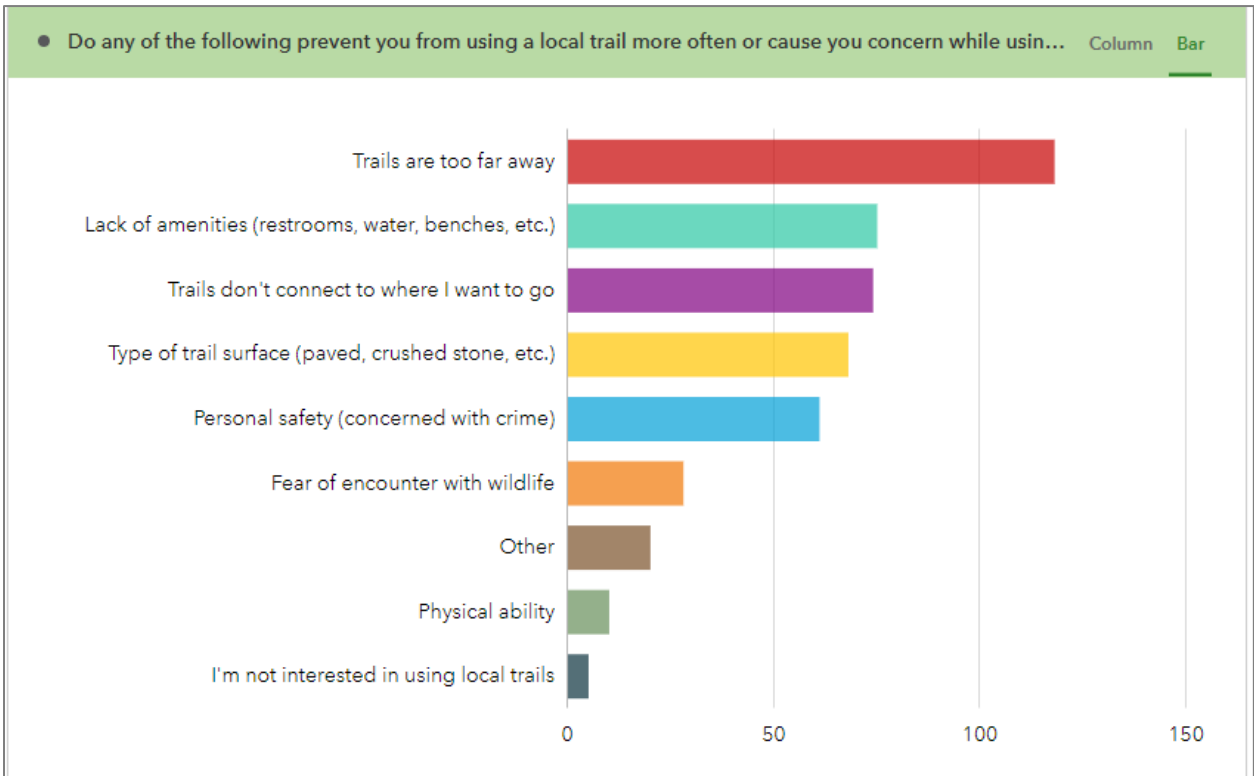
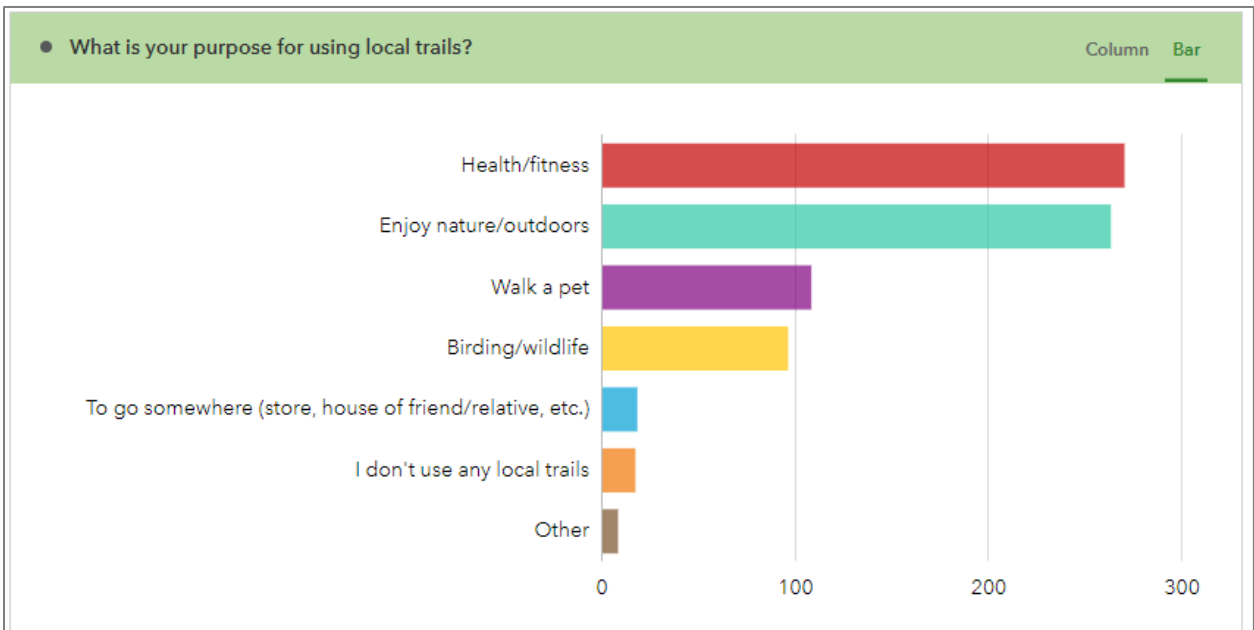
¹⁵ Tobacco Heritage Master Plan, 2008, p50-51



ATTACHMENTS

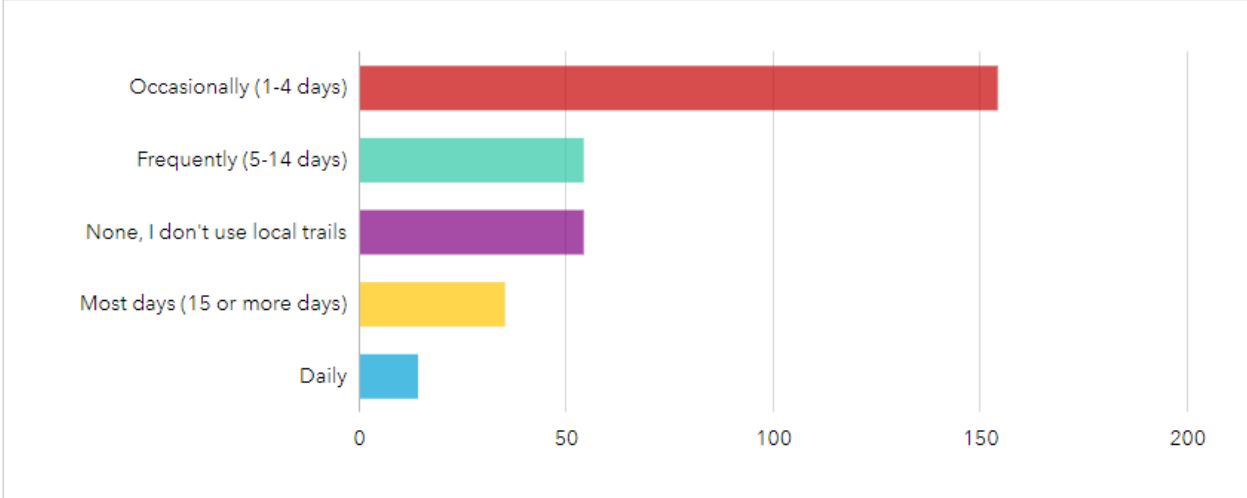
Attachment A. Community Survey Results [Placeholder]





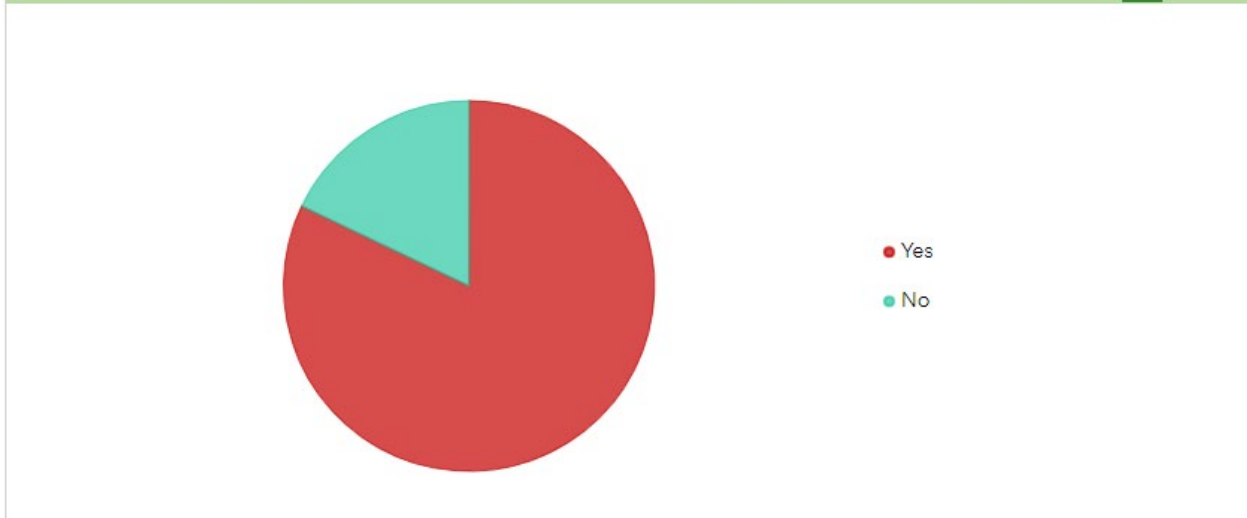
● How many days per month do you use a local trail? *

Column Bar Pie Map



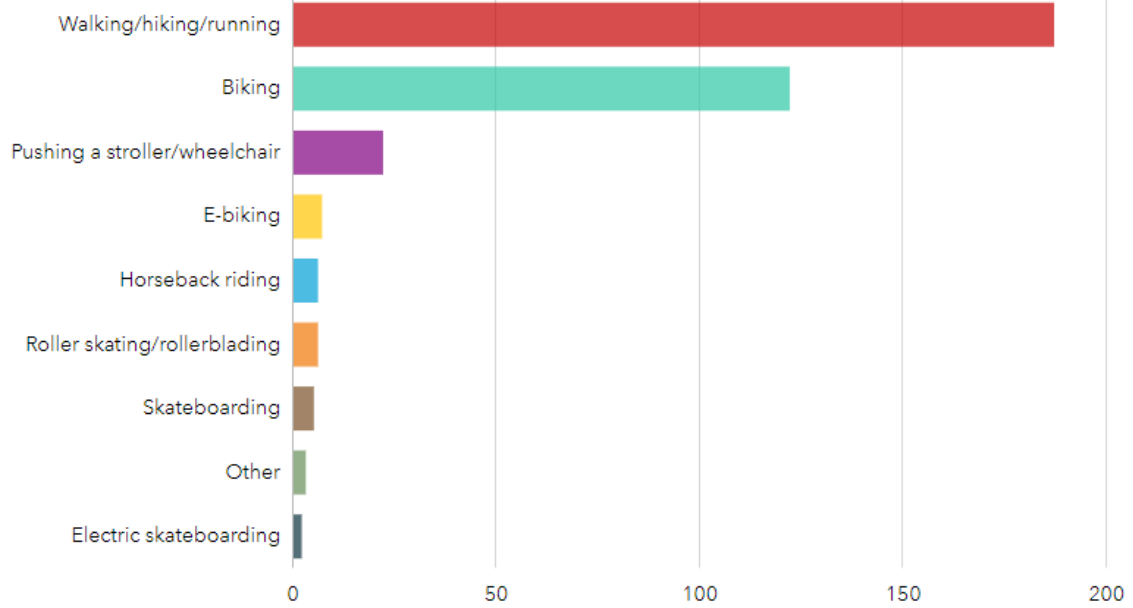
● Do you use the Tobacco Heritage Trail? *

Column Bar Pie Map



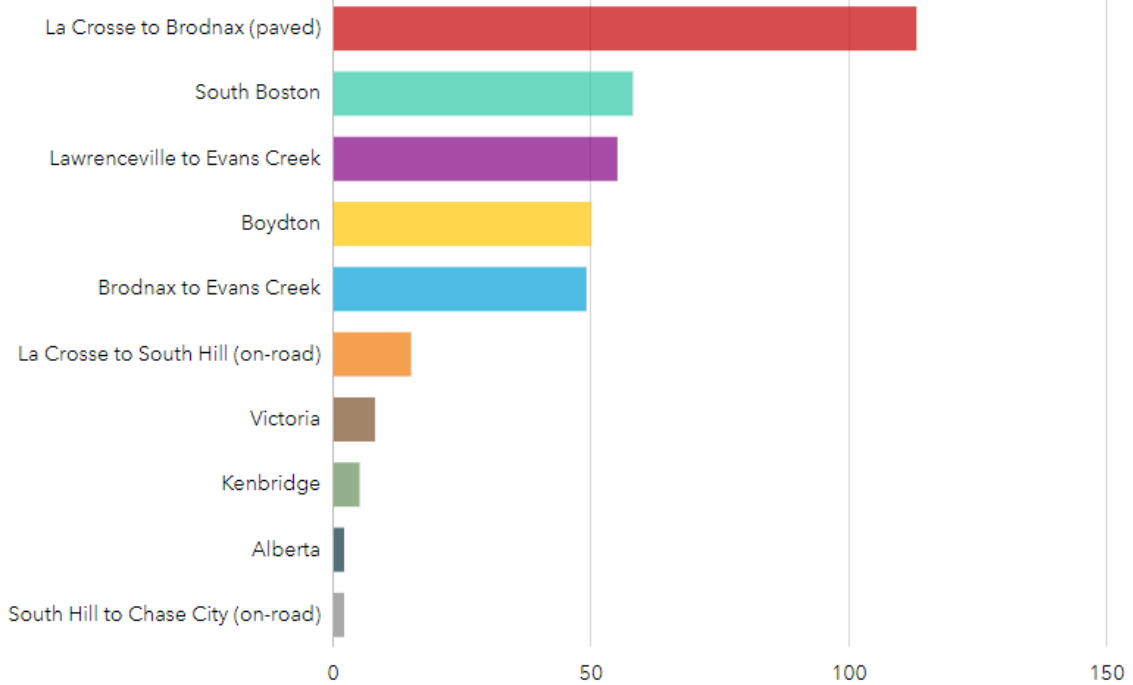
● Which of the following activities do you or your family use the Tobacco Heritage Trail for?

Column **Bar**



● Which sections of the Tobacco Heritage Trail do you use most often?

Column **Bar**



● Please rank the following trail surfaces based on your preference.

Column Bar



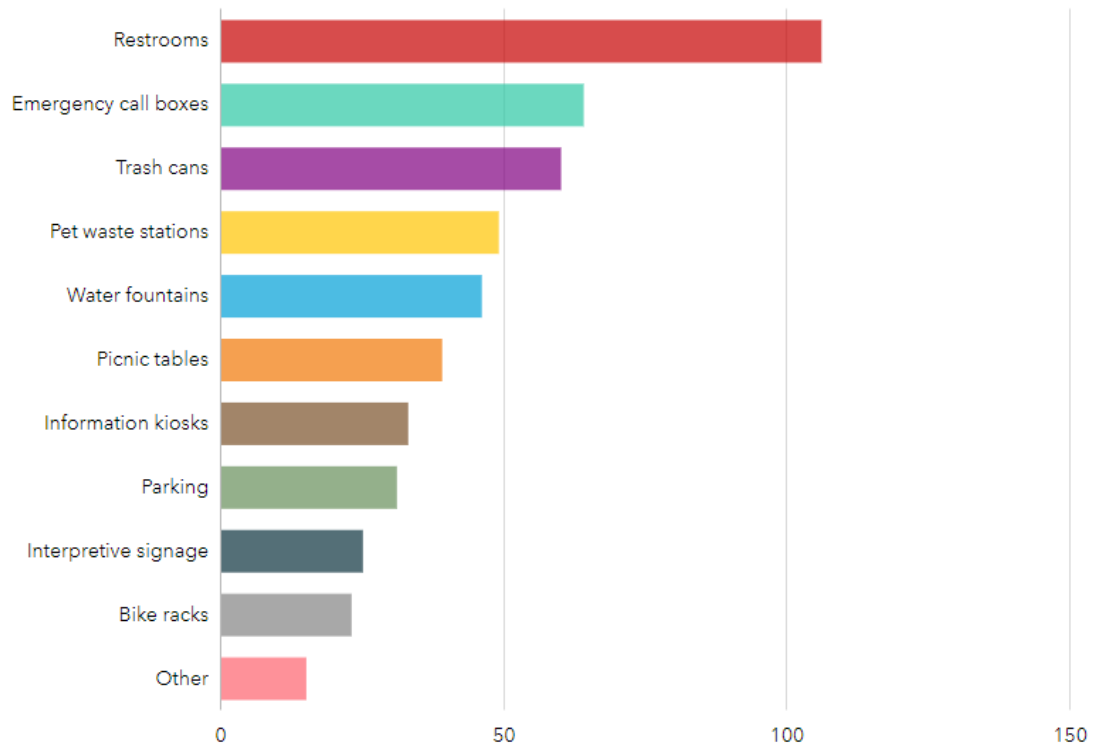
[Hide table](#)

Show/hide choices Sort

Rank	Answers	1	2	3	Average score
1	Paved	59.61% 121	19.21% 39	21.18% 43	2.38
2	Compacted cinders/crushed stone	25.12% 51	54.19% 110	20.69% 42	2.04
3	Natural	15.27% 31	26.6% 54	58.13% 118	1.57

Answered: 203 Skipped: 108

● Which of the following amenities should be installed, or should there be more of, on the Tobacco Herita... Column Bar



[Hide table](#)

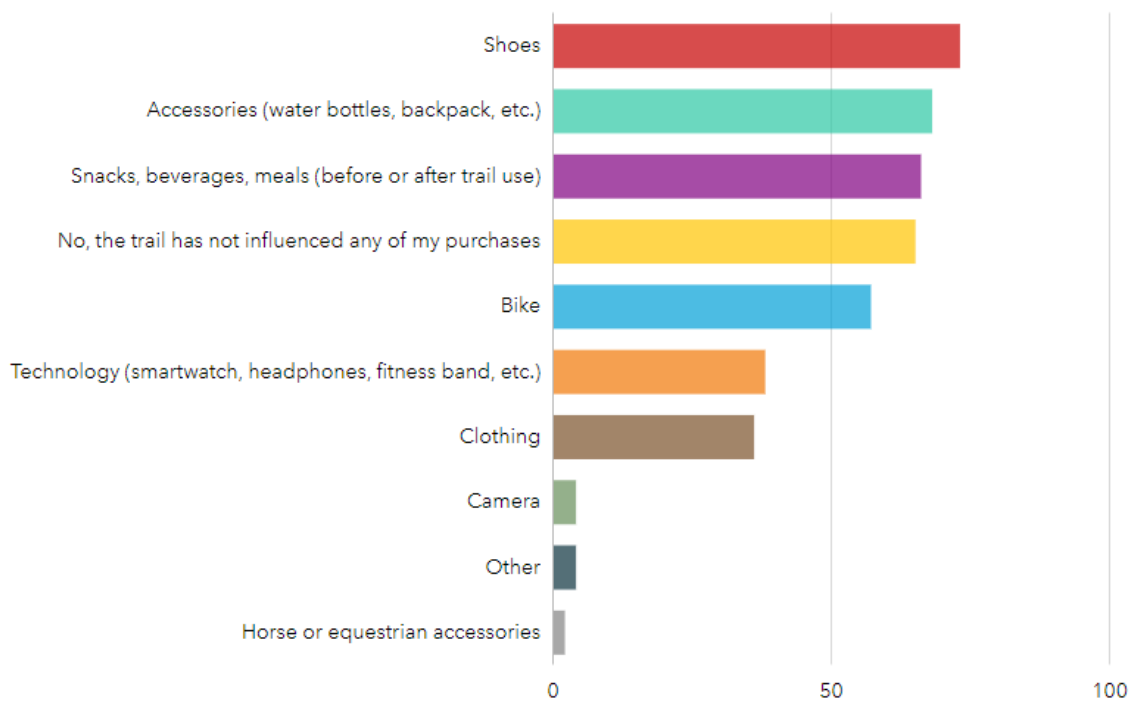
Other response Empty categories

Answers	Count	Percentage
Restrooms	106	34.08%
Emergency call boxes	64	20.58%
Trash cans	60	19.29%
Pet waste stations	49	15.76%
Water fountains	46	14.79%
Picnic tables	39	12.54%
Information kiosks	33	10.61%
Parking	31	9.97%
Interpretive signage	25	8.04%
Bike racks	23	7.4%
Other	15	4.82%

Answered: 175 Skipped: 136

● Has your use of the Tobacco Heritage Trail influenced you to purchase any of the following?

Column Bar



[Hide table](#)

Other response Empty categories

Answers	Count	Percentage
Shoes	73	23.47%
Accessories (water bottles, backpack, etc.)	68	21.86%
Snacks, beverages, meals (before or after trail use)	66	21.22%
No, the trail has not influenced any of my purchases	65	20.9%
Bike	57	18.33%
Technology (smartwatch, headphones, fitness band, etc.)	38	12.22%
Clothing	36	11.58%
Camera	4	1.29%
Other	4	1.29%
Horse or equestrian accessories	2	0.64%

Answered: 198 Skipped: 113

Attachment B. Trail Segment Analysis

Tobacco Heritage Trail Gap Analysis											
	Seg#	Start Point	End Point	Length (mi)	Location	Readiness	Connectivity Impact	Ownership	Easy Access	Cost	*SPDC plan
Region 1	1-A	Brooks Crossing	Roses Creek Trestle	1.2	Lawrenceville	Medium		High	Medium	Medium	p.33
	1-B	Roses Creek Trestle	South Street Access	0.5	Lawrenceville	High		High	High	Low	p.40
	existing	South St./Lawrenceville	LaCrosse	19	Law-Brod-LaCr	complete	complete				
	existing	Brodnox in town, on Railroad Street		1.1	Brodnox	complete	complete				
	existing	LaCrosse	South Hill	5	South Hill	complete	complete				
					26.8						
Region 2	2-A	South Hill;Elem School	Union Level	4.7	South Hill-Mecklenburg	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	High	
	2-B	Union Level	Baskerville	3.4	Mecklenburg Co.	Medium	High	High	Low	High	
	2-C	Baskerville	Mecklenburg High School	2.1	Mecklenburg Co.	Low	High	High	Low	High	
	2-D	Mecklenburg High School	Boydton-Tapped Branch	3.2	Mecklenburg Co.	Low	High	Low	Medium	High	p.41
	2-E	Boydton -Tapped Branch	Prison Rd access	0.7	Mecklenburg Co.	High	High	High	High	Low	p.41
	existing	Boydton, in town		1.1	Boydton	complete	complete				
	2-F	Boydton-Washington St	Skipwith Rd	0.8	Boydton-Mecklenburg Co.	Low		Low	Medium	High	p.41
	2-G	Skipwith Rd	Rudds Creek	2	Mecklenburg Co.	Low		High	Medium	High	p.41
	2-H	Rudds Creek	Jeffress	7	Mecklenburg Co.	Low		Medium	Low	High	p.41
	2-I	Jeffress	Clarksville	5	Mecklenburg Co.	Low	High	Medium	Medium	High	
	spur	Rt 58/Jeffress	Occoneechee SP				High				p.41
				30							
Region 3	3-A	Clarksville	Virgilina	12.24	Halifax-Mecklenburg	Low		Low	Low	High	
	3-B	Virgilina, in town		0.8	Virgilina	Low		Medium	High	Low	
	3-C	Virgilina	Alton/Boyd's Store	33.46	Halifax Co.	Low		Low	Low	High	
					46.5						
Region 4	existing	South Boston/Cotton Mill Park	to Miry Creek	4.1	South Boston	complete	complete				
	4-A	Miry Creek Bridge	Pittsylvania County	16.35	Halifax Co.	Low	High	Low	Low	High	p.38
	4-B	South Boston	Pittsylvania Co (on-road)	24	Halifax Co	Medium		Low	High	Medium	
					44.45						

Region 5	5-A	South Boston	Randolph via Staunton River SP	55.65	Halifax Co	Low		Medium	Low	High	
	5-B	South Boston	Randolph via rail corridor	14	Halifax Co	Low		Low	Medium	High	
				69.65							
Region 6	Existing	Staunton River Battlefield (not signed)		1.2	DCR	complete	complete				
	6-A	Randolph	Saxe	3.15	Charlotte Co.	Low		Low	Medium	High	
	6-B	Saxe	Mossingford Rd	2.8	Charlotte Co.	Low		Low	Medium	High	
	6-C	Mossingford Rd	Drakes Branch (Rt 47)	2.85	Charlotte Co.	Low		Low	Medium	High	
	6-D	Drakes Branch	Keysville	9	Charlotte Co.	Low		Low	Medium	High	
				19							
Region 7	7-A	Keysville	Meherrin	8	Charlotte-Lunenburg	Low		Low	Medium	High	
Region 8	8-A	Meherrin	Lunenburg Lake parcel/trailhead	9.2	Lunenburg Co.	Low		Low	Low	?	
	8-B	Lunenburg Lake parcel/trailhead	Victoria	2.5	Lunenburg Co.	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low	
	existing	Victoria in town segment		4	Victoria	complete	complete				
	8-C	Victoria/Airport Rd	Tinkling Rd	2	Lunenburg Co.	Medium	High	Medium	High	Low	
	8-D	Tinkling Rd	Kenbridge-Pine St access	1.4	Lunenburg Co.	Medium	High	High?	High	Low	
	existing	Kenbridge town segment		0.5	Kenbridge	complete	complete				
	8-E	Kenbridge-Barnes St access	Dundas/Brunswick line	6.2	Lunenburg Co.	Low		Low	Low	?	
	8-F	Dundas/Brunswick line	Danielstown	2.8	Brunswick Co.	Low		Low	Low	?	
	8-G	Danielstown	Alberta	5	Brunswick Co.	High	High	High	Low	Medium	
			33.6								
Region 9	existing	Alberta town segment		0.5	Alberta	complete	complete				
	9-A	Alberta	Greenville Co line	12.2	Brunswick Co.	Low		Medium	Medium	High	
	9-B	Greenville Co line	VB Pipeline	3.5	Greenville Co.	Low		Low	Low	High	
	9-C	VB Pipeline	Purdy	4.3	Greenville Co.	Low		Low	Low	High	
				20.5							
TOTAL				298.5							

*2045 Southside planning District Rural Long-Range Transportation Plan

