

# ECUSTA TRAIL MEETING





HENDERSON COUNTY  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
FRIENDS OF THE ECUSTA TRAIL

Chris Burns, District Director for  
Congressman Chuck Edwards

Chris Todd, Business & Community  
Development Director

Janna Bianculli, Senior Planner

Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director

Lee Stevens, Planner III

Liz Hanson, Planner I

Joe Sanders, Friends of the Ecusta Trail

# WELCOME!

## AGENDA

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- Welcome
- Opening Remarks
- Brief History of the Trail
- Where We Are Now
- Ecusta Trail Partners & Supporters Program
- Listening Session
- Closing Remarks



# WELCOME!

- You've been identified as a key stakeholder along the Ecusta Trail Corridor.
- At this time, only commercial and religious entities have been contacted.
- These meetings are 2 sessions of more meetings to come!
  - The County is hopeful to meet with trail stakeholders at least quarterly.
  - Input from stakeholders on these meetings as well as what should be discussed is crucial for an effective relationship.
  - This meeting is the “kick-off” meeting and will focus on an immediate priority but will also address the Ecusta Trail more broadly.
- The following remarks & presentation will be relatively brief, but informative.
- Please save questions for the listening session, but please also feel free to use the questions board near the maps for anything additional.



OPENING  
REMARKS  
CHRIS BURNS



ECUSTA TRAIL  
HISTORY  
CHRIS TODD

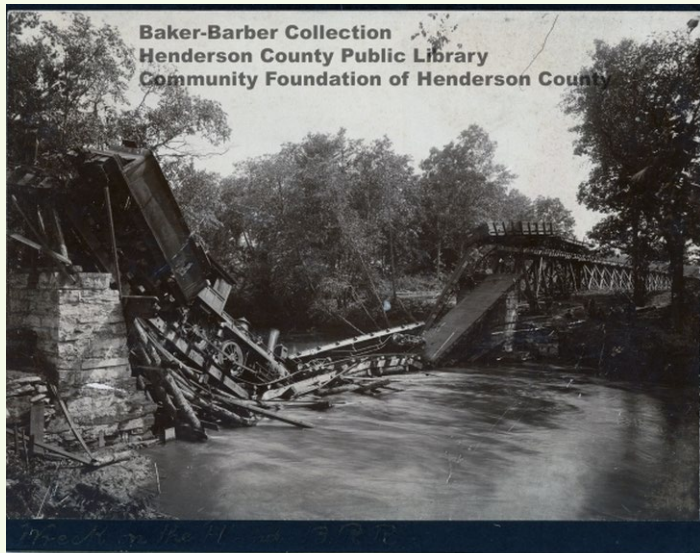


## RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

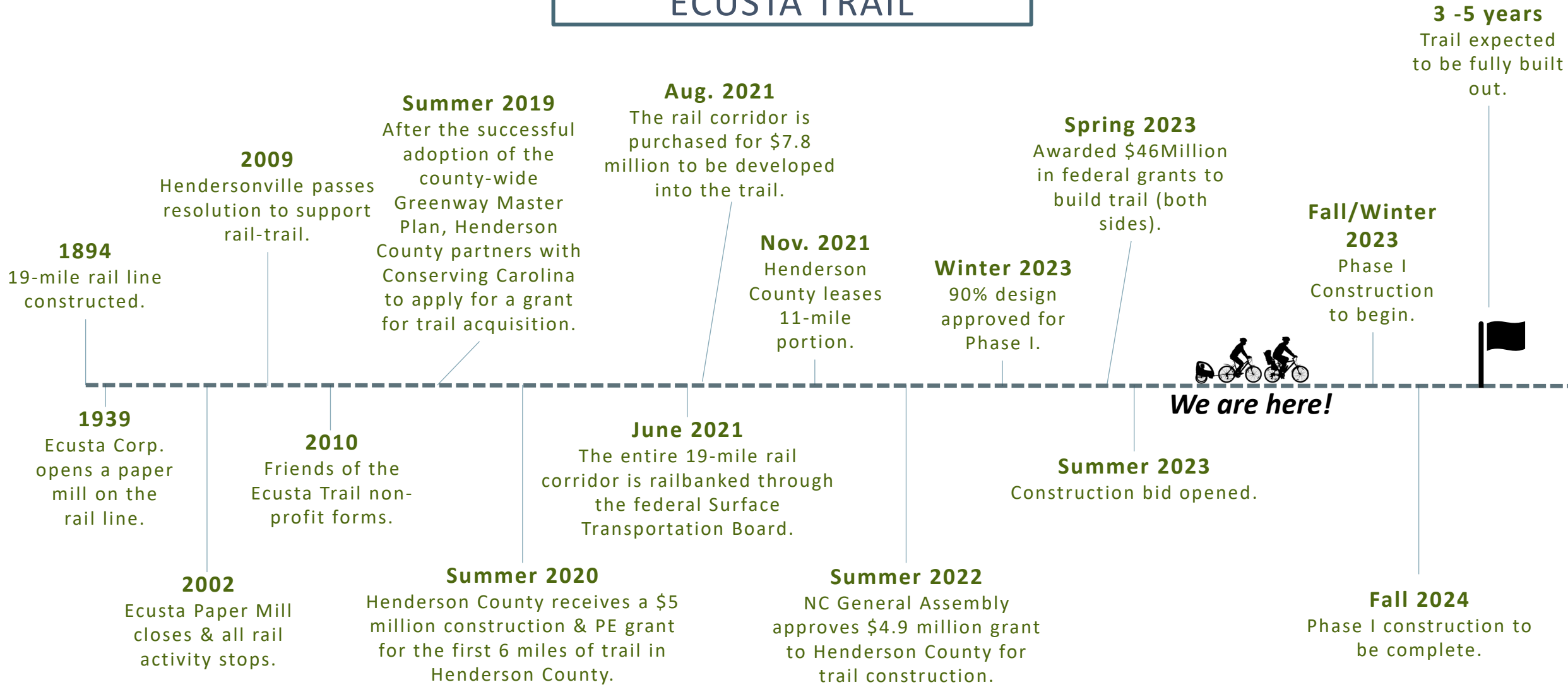
- In the late 1880's a group of businessmen from Henderson County collaborated to form the French Broad Valley Railroad Company and build a line from Hendersonville to Brevard.
- The line wasn't completed until October of 1894 due to financial troubles and engineering woes.

## USAGE

- Freight and passenger traffic grew rapidly on the railroad as sawmills and businesses started up and began to ship products on the line.
- Use of the line dwindled over time especially when passenger rail ceased.
- Line became no longer operational once the Ecusta Paper Mill closed in 2002.



# TIMELINE: MAKING THE ECUSTA TRAIL





A person with a backpack is walking away from the camera on a railway track that stretches into the distance through a dense, green forest. The track is made of wooden ties and metal rails, and the surrounding trees are lush and vibrant. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the track.

WHERE ARE  
WE NOW?

# TRAIL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OVERVIEW

2023  
2024

## Phase I (Ecusta East)

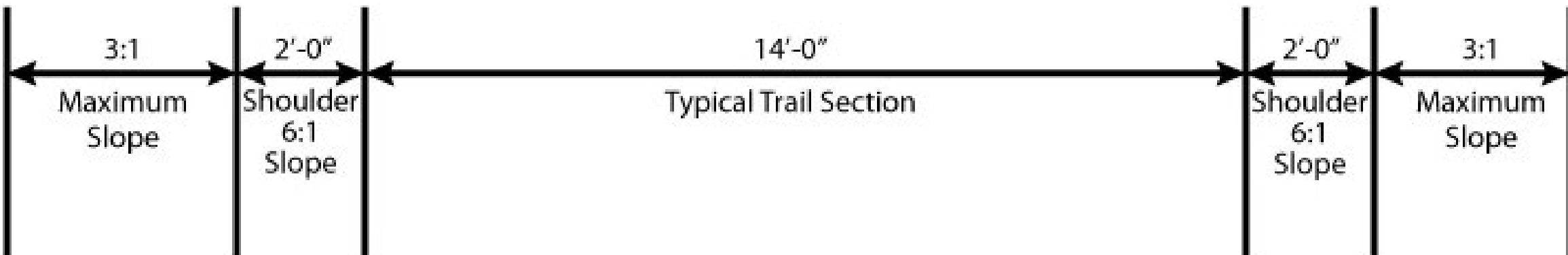
- Henderson County wants to do it the right way the first time! The trail will be constructed to NCDOT standards and will be ADA accessible via a paved path that ranges from 12' to 14' wide.
- Construction on the first six miles of trail, from Main St. to Battle Creek Rd./US64 will begin this fall/winter and will likely take a year and a half to complete.
- Temporary closures of the trail will occur during construction and some road closures may occur at crossings. The County Engineer is working with NCDOT to coordinate these efforts to impact businesses as little as possible. Please feel free to contact him with any questions or concerns during construction.

2025  
2027

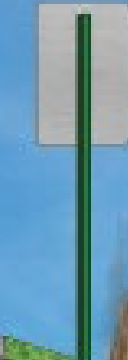
## Phase II (Ecusta West)

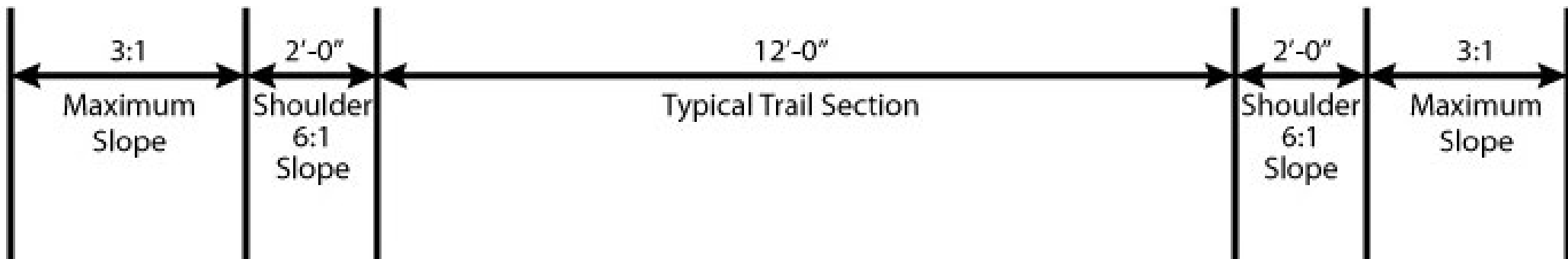
- Design and engineering for the final five miles (US64 to the County line) will also begin this year and will take at least a year to complete.
  - Design of the pedestrian bridge over the French Broad River is included in this phase. This is the only bridge that will be rehabilitated and not fully reconstructed.
- Construction of “Ecusta West” may take 2 years to complete and could start in late 2024 or early 2025.





Signage - offset  
3' Minimum,  
6' Maximum

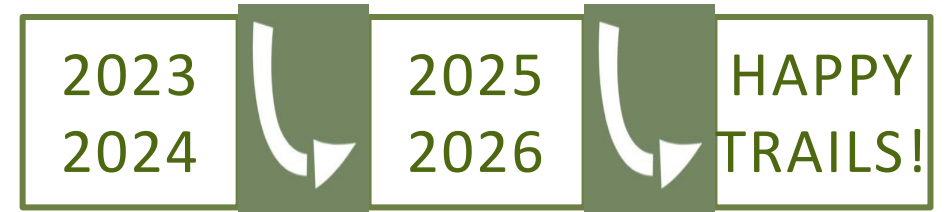




# TRAIL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OVERVIEW

## Transylvania County Side

- The City of Brevard leased the 8 miles of rail corridor from Conserving Carolina on the Transylvania County side of the trail and are responsible for that portion of the trail.
- An engineering firm was selected and scoping for the project is underway. PE is expected to be completed by fall/winter of 2024.
- Construction of this portion of the trail may be a little ahead of the County's Phase II since the engineering is further along currently.
- This side of the trail will connect to the City's existing Estatoe Trail which connects to the Art Loeb Trail in the Pisgah National Forest.
  - When all 19 miles of Ecusta Trail are constructed, you will be able to traverse (by biking, walking, rollerblading, etc.) from Main St. in downtown Hendersonville all the way to the top of Black Balsam Knob!



A scenic landscape of a grassy mountain ridge. In the foreground, two hikers with backpacks are walking away from the camera. In the middle ground, several cows are grazing on the grass. The background features rolling mountains under a clear blue sky with a few clouds. The text is overlaid on the image, enclosed in a yellow rectangular border.

# TRAIL PARTNERS & SUPPORTERS JANNA BIANCULLI

# TRAIL BUSINESS SUCCESS STORIES

Trails are the foundation of North Carolina's \$28 billion dollar outdoor recreation economy and by promoting and investing in trail infrastructure, we are positioning local businesses of Henderson County to get in on the action.



## SWAMP RABBIT

Spurred new local business. Trail-oriented businesses support and are supported by the trail. 22-miles long, generating 500k trail users and generates \$6.7 million.



## VIRGINIA CREEPER

The 34-mile trail brings 106k visitors that spend \$2.5 million at local businesses each year.



## GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE, PA

The trail had \$121 million total economic impact, with \$74.7 million of that in direct spending by tourists. In 2019, the trail had an estimated 990k visitors with 7.6% over-night or thru-riders.



## FONTA FLORA

This newly built trail is projected to bring in \$3 million in direct economic impact this year alone.



# SPOTLIGHT: SWAMP RABBIT TRAIL GREENVILLE, SC

- "We've seen a massive change almost immediately. We've definitely seen an uptick of probably around 15 percent."  
– *Josh Williams of Cohesive Coffee commenting on the first month of operations after the new extension of the Swamp Rabbit Trail opened.*
- "There won't be negative impacts." At least he hasn't seen any from the Swamp Rabbit Trail, which flanks his four-acre factory site. "It hasn't been linked to a single theft, blocked access, or interfered with my operation in any way. It has sparked explosive economic development. **Everybody wins, nobody loses.**" - *Randy Mathena, owner of Paper Cutters Inc.*



## PROGRAMS IN DEVELOPMENT

- Due to grant funding restrictions, the County is unable to fund expected trail amenities.
- By becoming a Trail Partner or Trail Supporter, you can help the County deliver the expected amenities needed to create a prosperous trail while fundraising efforts are on-going.

## ELIGIBILITY & TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS

### TRAIL PARTNER

- Adjacent to the trail or within a safe walkable distance
- Commercial entity or religious institution – no residential properties
- Committed to the success of the trail
- Willing to partner with the County by volunteering amenities
- May or may not wish to be advertised on maps and marketing materials

### TRAIL SUPPORTER

- Adjacent, non-residential entities or trail-oriented businesses
- Committed to the success of the trail
- Desire to be involved in trail conversations
- Unable to offer amenities or not a good fit for situation
- Can offer time, financial support, or resources
- May be listed on other trail resources as a designated Trail Supporter



# TRAIL PARTNERS

- A trail partner is a business (or other entity), located adjacent to the Ecusta Trail, that volunteers' amenities to trail users. Providing parking, bike racks, and/or restrooms in exchange for increased business traffic and marketing, via the trail website and other materials.

## ABOUT



### PARKING

Trail Partners can volunteer parking for trail users. This can be done in a multitude of ways. For example, a doctor's office may not be able to offer parking during the week, but they could on the weekend.

### RESTROOMS

Although most trail users will plan their trail use accordingly, things happen, especially with children tagging along for the ride! Advertising a business as a place to use the restroom will also likely result in patronage.

### WATER

Water is an important resource for trail users and their pets. Partners could allow fill-ups at water fountains, outdoor spickets, or even free fills at a restaurant.

### TERMS FOR AMENITIES

Ecusta Trail Partners have the flexibility to offer amenities in the way that suits their needs best. The Partnership is voluntary. It is meant to be mutually beneficial and, if at anytime, that no longer seems to be the case, the agreement can be nullified. As the County builds amenities, the need will dwindle, and roles can shift to Trail Supporter if so chosen.



# WHY BECOME A PARTNER?

## MARKETING

All Ecusta Trail Partners will be identified on an interactive map on the trail website. Additionally, Trail Partners may be exhibited on marketing materials and in a directory.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Engaging with trail users and stakeholders is engaging with your community. This signals to patrons that your business exhibits traditional values and is part of the fabric of the HC community.

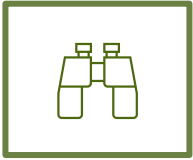
## FOSTER ECONOMIC BENEFITS

By being advertised on the trail website, you are in turn fostering economic development as the advertisement is enticing users to add a stop to a restaurant, bike shop, or a clothing store. This multiplies the economic effect of the trail itself.

## ENSURE TRAIL SUCCESS

If the trail succeeds, we all succeed. Partnering with the County ensures that trail users will have an enjoyable experience and return.

## BUSINESS CALL OUTS ON MAPS



**Increased recognition:** for businesses that may be farther from town centers, trails bring abundant foot traffic and offer a new customer base.



**Free marketing:** via the Ecusta Trail website may display recommended rides or walks that may include stops at Trail Partners or Supporters and hyperlinks to those websites.



### TO WHISTLE STOP CLAYWORKS

Very close. You could even just walk. This ride is on streets.

**Directions:** Before or after your ride walk over to [Loveland Sweets](#) for a Sweet Shop trip back in time.

Then: Ride East on Loveland Avenue from the Bike Trail across the Railroad Tracks. At the first traffic light turn left on Second Street/SR 48. [Whistle Stop Clayworks](#) is 100 feet on the right.

**Distance:** A block or so!

**Time:** About 10 minutes out and 10 minutes back plus however long you visit.

**Other info:** This is all on streets. It is close enough you could walk it on sidewalks no problem.

# Plan Your Trip



ADD STOPS



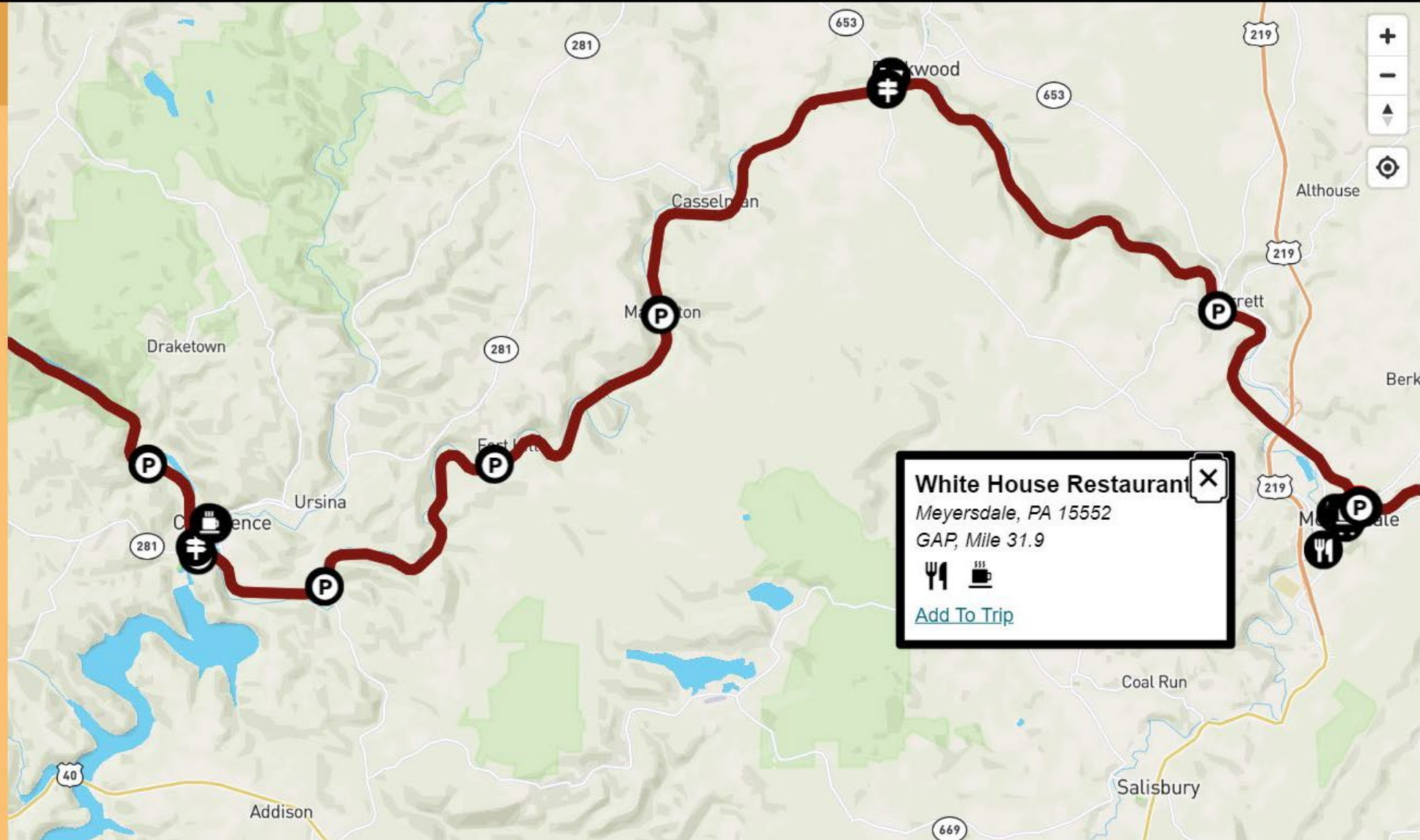
MY TRIP

## Add Stops

### Search By Name

### Search By Type

163 Results [Select All](#) | [Deselect All](#)



**Legend**

**Parking**

Number of features

- > 3
- 2.75
- 2.5
- 2.25
- < 2

**Restrooms**

- 

**Water Fountains**

- 

**Trails**

CLASS

- Swamp Rabbit Trail - Green Line
- Swamp Rabbit Trail - Blue Line
- Swamp Rabbit Trail - Orange Line
- Trail Spur
- Natural Surface Trail

**Street Bike Facilities**





## ADDITIONAL MEETINGS

### COMMUNITY OF AFFECTED PROPERTY OWNERS

Meet other property owners and business owners who are undergoing the same, new experience with you.

### DIVE INTO HIGHER LEVEL TOPICS

The County's Greenway Master Plan is four years old and is slated for an update. This group will be very helpful in participating as stakeholders to provide input on things like trail spurs, bike/ped safety, land use, and more.

### DEVELOP THE TRAIL PARTNER & SUPPORTER PROGRAM

This program is new to us too! We want to check-in and make sure it is working as intended and work together to find solutions for any issues.

### CREATE LINE OF COMMUNICATION; BOTH WAYS

The County wants to make this trail experience positive for everyone. Communicating is the first step in making that possible.

## NEXT STEPS

- Take the survey! Even if you are not interested, it is helpful for us to know that and note that in our database.
- Let staff know if you are interested in participating in either program and we will follow up to discuss further.
- Sign up to receive emails from the County regarding progress of the trail.
- Sign up for the Friends of the Ecusta Trail newsletter and follow them on social media.
- Celebrate Great Trails State Day on Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>!



# LISTENING SESSION



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

For additional resources, please visit:

[www.hendersoncountync.gov/greenway-network](http://www.hendersoncountync.gov/greenway-network)

[www.ecustatrail.org](http://www.ecustatrail.org)