

**Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 13, 2022**

The RTAC held a regularly scheduled meeting on July 13, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. in the King Street Meeting Room.

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

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

Call to Order

Chair Chuck McGrady called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Public Comment

Cindy Ruzak, writer with the Friends of the Ecusta Trail newsletter, introduced herself to the committee.

Approval of May and June Meeting Summaries

The committee approved the May and June meeting summaries.

Updates

Conserving Carolina

Representatives announced that Conserving Carolina is continuing to work with the Friends of the Ecusta Trail on fundraising. They are also advocating for the City of Brevard's RAISE grant application that would construct the 8 mile portion of trail within Transylvania County.

Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET)

Representatives updated that the FOET are continuing to fundraise money for the required grant match and that volunteers have attended the Rhythm and Brews events this summer to fundraise and raise awareness of the trail. The FOET are also supporting the City of Brevard's RAISE grant application and have connected with the Governor's Office and Senate representatives for their support. Brevard is expecting to receive approval or denial of the RAISE grant application sometime in August.

HC Staff

County staff announced that they will have updates to provide the RTAC in August including the 30% design plans. Information will be sent to the committee. The RTAC will make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. Staff stated that the next step is to analyze the cost estimates and the scope for the Phase 2 design. The Chair stated that the FOET trail can use these estimates to raise funds for the required match that may be needed.

A question was asked about trail width and ROW constraints. Staff stated that trail width goal is 12-14ft with a 2 ft shoulder. The trail alignment can shift from the ballast but must remain in the railbanked ROW.

Discussion

User Groups Identification

Chris Todd, BCD Director, stated that trail “etiquette” is being developed, but the RTAC needs to consider the allowed users. The County has an ordinance for park usage, but per the County Attorney, some clarifications are needed. The proposed amendment would allow the use of pedestrian scale motorized vehicles, and the types of vehicles allowed would be at the discretion of the Parks and Recreation Director. Committee members added the stipulation that the Director would provide the RTAC updates on any changes to the policy and request their recommendation. The committee was in favor of this change to the proposed language.

Mr. Todd also mentioned that the County received complaints concerning other gas-powered vehicles on the trail. He stated that the County has an existing ordinance that does not allow motorized vehicles off road in parks except as designated on a case-by-case basis. Staff will work with the Sheriff’s Department to investigate complaints as these are Class 3 Misdemeanors. Vice Chair Chris Burns stated that the Swamp Rabbit Trail had the same issue until the trail was completed. The increased usage of the trail for its intended use will deter folks from breaking the County’s policies. The committee was in favor of including a clause that would modify the existing language to accommodate non-gas powered motorized, pedestrian scale vehicles.

Additional Public Comment

Cindy Ruzak suggested that the RTAC include noise, odor, and environmental concerns such as emissions in future trail use discussions. Mark Tooley, President of the FOET, stated that City of Brevard has signed a lease agreement with Conserving Carolina and plan to police the entire trail within Transylvania County. He also stated that they plan to work with NCDOT on removing and repaving a couple of the trail crossings that are creating hazardous situations within Transylvania County.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m.