

Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, July 9, 2025

The RTAC held a regularly scheduled meeting on August 13, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the King Street Meeting Room and via Microsoft Teams. Voting members present online are denoted with the letter “O”.

Voting Member	Present	Not in Attendance
Chris Burns, Chair	X	
Selena Einwechter, Vice Chair	X	
Douglas Moon, at-large	X	
Patrick Kennedy, at-large	X	
Bart Salvaggio, at-large	X	
Ken Shelton, at-large	X	
Brent Detwiler, City of Hendersonville		X
Nancy McKinley, Town of Laurel Park	O	
Mike Egan, Conserving Carolina	X	

Also present: Autumn Radcliff, Planning Director; Janna Bianculli, Assistant Planning Director; Chris Todd, Assistant County Manager; and Bruce Gilliam, Parks and Recreation Director; Jason Kilgore, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director; Wilson Hooper, City of Brevard Manager. Joining remotely was City of Brevard Mayor, Maureen Copelof.

Call to Order

Chairman Chris Burns called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Public Comment

The committee heard from one member of the public related to construction and safety concerns, specifically at the Sprint Street intersection noting that sidewalks were need also needed.

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Ken Shelton moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Bart Salvaggio seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Meeting Summary Approval

Mr. Doug Moon made a motion to approve the meeting summary. Mr. Ken Shelton made a motion. Mr. Shelton seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Updates

City of Brevard

City of Brevard Manager, Wilson Hooper, stated he rode the trail on opening day. He said that Brevard is looking for lessons learned to include in the design of its section. Brevard is completing the design of the trail in its jurisdiction which will be finished next year and will then bid out the construction in December 2026 or January 2027. The city plans to bid on the amenities separately to make sure the trail is constructed first with funding. The trail ends at Oscar Blues and the city is working on making improvements to the trail connections to main street on the existing Estatoe Trail, which will be renamed and make the Ecusta Trail closer to 21 miles total from Hendersonville to Brevard. Mayor Maureen Copelof stated that she had received positive feedback on the quality of the trail and that everyone was excited.

Henderson County

Mr. Chris Todd thanked everyone for their participation, including FOET at the ribbon cutting event. He stated that approximately 6800 people were on the trail over the grand opening weekend. Mr. Todd reminded the RTAC that NHM is working on completing the remaining punch list items. He also stated that the county hired a full-time Park Tech. 1 in Parks and Recreation to oversee the Ecusta Trail. Mr. Buce Gilliam stated that the new hire is Mike McKay, and his focus will be removal of leaves, mowing, safety, tree and overall trail maintenance, and act as a trail liaison and interact with trail users. This position will work, M-F. Mr. Todd also noted to the RTAC that the next phase will be part of a design build process that NCDOT will oversee and we plan to have the construction on the next section complete in late 2027.

Friends of Ecusta Trail Update

Mr. Mark Tooley with FOET provided the RTAC and an update on its activities. He stated that FOET has its monthly newsletter with over 5300 people on the distribution list and over 700 volunteers signed up. He stated they had met with Parks and Recreation staff to incorporate the FOET trail ambassador program and expect they will work closely with Mike McKay. FOET has a new website that is up, and they finished their interactive trail map just before the ribbon cutting. He said they are also working with NC State on a study which will develop a tool for other trails. FOET is working with Watermark on station signs and will work with Brevard and Henderson County on naming of donors on the trail for the specific donor levels. FOET raised 2.7 million in donations and fund raising. He stated that the FOET Board will meet and vote on a new executive director who will be announced and will start after labor day.

Mr. Chris Burns requested that the FOET provide a monthly update on its volunteers and on its funding, particularly related to the state grant funding.

Amenities Cost Estimates

Mr. Chris Todd stated that the County had received a cost estimate on the amenities for the first six miles from Watermark. The amenities for the first 6 miles were not funded and could be paid for by FOET if their Board agrees. The RTAC requested that the County make a formal request to FOET. It was discussed if the amenities could be prioritized. Mr. Todd said that the amenities could be identified, but it would be bid out in one contract. Watermark stated that they are continuing to work with NCDOT on some design revisions and hope to have that complete in 2-3 weeks. FOET stated that some items like the trash cans, dog waste stations and benches need to be installed sooner than others.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

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