

**Henderson County
RAIL-TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Monthly Meeting
Wednesday, January 10, 2024**

The RTAC held a regularly called meeting on January 10, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the King Street Meeting Room and via Microsoft Teams. Voting members that were present virtually, online are denoted with the letter “O”.

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

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

Call to Order

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

Public Comment

The RTAC heard from Marilyn Bailey with Advocates for the Arts. She stated that they have money available to purchase a sculpture but would ask for assistance with the fee for the pad. The Chair stated that there were also conversations about some art that UNCA owns at the Kellogg Center that is not easily accessible and could be moved to a location along the trail. He stated that this was something the RTAC could continue to discuss.

Approval Meeting Summary

Ken Shelton and Mike Egan had a few adjustments to the minute’s exclusive of content. Minutes were approved noting the subsequent corrections.

Updates

Conserving Carolina

Kristin Cozza announced that Conserving Carolina has an AmeriCorps Volunteer who can assist the RTAC or County with any needed research.

Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET)

Mark Tooley reported that FOET was in the final determinations of the signage and branding. He said that FOET met to discuss the direction of the organization and still plans to hire an Executive Director. He stated that they are working on transitioning the fundraising responsibilities from Conserving Carolina to FOET. Mr. Tooley stated that they are looking at a possibility of an Economic Study of the trail (before and after) with NC State’s ITRE and will be meeting with Brevard and HC staff to discuss if this could be a project of interest to them.

Henderson County

Chris Todd stated that the County had a kickoff meeting of the business community with the trail partners program last fall and plan to schedule a follow up meeting in the next month. He encouraged anyone on the trail, business owners or residents, that if they have concerns or issues to reach out to the County so it can be addressed.

MOU

Chris Todd stated that the County is continuing to move forward with the MOU. The County is working with the other jurisdictions on some specific comments and questions, including terms of the MOU and if it will include a sunset clause. Chris Burns stated that he felt it is not a sunset date but an opportunity to re-review the MOU if needed in the future. Mr. Todd stated that the conversations have been positive. Once these comments have been addressed, a final MOU will be presented. Mr. McGrady stated that he anticipated that the MOU will be extended to the City of Brevard and Transylvania County.

Construction of Phase I (Ecusta East from S. Main to US 64 – 6 miles)

Mr. Marcus Jones provided an update on the construction progress. He stated that the contractor has been grading for the past month and had to remove some of the vegetation and trees. All removal activity has been in the ROW and not on private property. The removal is only for the purposes of site distance, safety, and drainage. Trees too close to the trail can uproot the asphalt creating a safety hazard for users and an ongoing maintenance issue. He said that both the contractor and the County is working with the property owners that have concerns or questions and stakes have been installed to mark the ROW location. Mr. Jones said that erosion control measures have also been installed. Mr. Jones showed several photos on the current trail construction.

Encroachment Crossings

There was some discussion on encroachments and crossings. It was noted that the Thermal Belt Trail had some information on their website with encroachments and how they handle them. Mr. McGrady encouraged the committee to look online with the County and the Thermal Belt Trail. He also stated that if there are any comments on encroachments to send those to Marcus.

Other Items of Discussion

Mr. McGrady announced that he has resigned from the RTAC but will continue to serve on the NCDOT Board of Transportation and be engaged with the Ecusta in a community-setting. He commented on how he has seen the Ecusta Trail go from a pipe dream and planning for the potential, to getting funding for the acquisition and then design and construction. He stated that it has been a delight to work with Chris and the whole staff and he hopes that the governments will continue to partner together for the trail's success. The RTAC expressed appreciation for Chuck and all his work.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

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