

Using Data to Evaluate Trail Alignment Alternatives

Creative ways to utilize GIS and design data to predict trail use

Many people, including government agencies, the public, developers, granting agencies, and neighborhoods, often question how many visitors are expected to use a trail. However, one of the most significant challenges is projecting usage and visitor demand for bicycles and pedestrians. Projecting trail usage can answer and offer valuable insight to guide development, trail related design, and guide trail maintenance projections for adjacent communities of the trails.

This presentation will demonstrate how accessibility analysis can estimate potential visitors on the trails based on existing and future land use development and transportation plans. This evaluation helps to understand the value of the trail system and interconnected network of trails to the Thread Trail towns. Trail count data reflects current trail users, but accessibility analysis can create a picture of potential visitors (hikers and trail bikers) based on scenarios of the design of the trail and town master planning. In this forum, we will show how accessibility analysis for biking and walking on the trails can help inform decision-making for town master plans and trail routes.

Tapestries to Trails – Implementing a Transformation Vision for Gaston County

Come join us to hear about the incredible vision and partnerships that have created tremendous momentum in support of a nineteen-mile Carolina Thread Trail corridor in Gaston County, NC! The South Fork Corridor will connect the iconic landmark of Spencer Mountain to the highly visited Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, near the South Carolina state line, in Gaston County. This session will provide an opportunity for attendees to hear directly from the panel on the formation of the partnerships, acquisition of funding, and creation of the vision that is advancing the ongoing success of additional mileage of trail to the South Fork Corridor.

North Carolina Great Trails State Coalition: Trail Groups Working Together to Successfully Influence Policy

This session will share the recent formation of the North Carolina Great Trails State Coalition, a broad-based group of diverse trails organizations, agencies and supporters advocating for increased state investment in all types of trails statewide – hiking, paddle, mountain bike, equestrian, and paved greenways. We believe North Carolina is the Great Trails State, where each of our 100 counties enjoys the proven benefits of trails, including health, safety, economic development, tourism, transportation, and environment. The presentation will include highlights from the 2021 NC Legislative Session, including state funding updates and the success in getting 2023 designated as North Carolina Year of the Trail. The session will cover also federal updates through infrastructure, stimulus and transportation reauthorization efforts. We will end the session with local strategies communities can use to engage elected officials and ideas for planning Year of the Trail activities.

Connecting with Nature to Enhance Personal and Community Well-Being

Individuals and the community at large are currently experiencing heightened levels of stress, anxiety, grief and a variety of social tensions. Let us explore the following:

- How connecting with nature promotes emotional and physical wellbeing for the individual.
- Doing our part to help all people have access to nature.
- Understand our responsibility to create opportunities and programs that bring our communities together to realize we are connected to nature and each other.

Triangle Bikeway – Public Input Innovation, Bringing More Voices to Regional Trail Planning

The Triangle Bikeway is an audacious vision to connect the Triangle with a bicycle and pedestrian facility along the I-40 corridor. This session will focus on both the innovative ways planners connected with residents across five jurisdictions during the pandemic and the how the physical challenges along the corridor will be met to connect the region.

Triangle area agencies are working together to plan a regional, 17-mile, shared-use path linking Raleigh, Cary, Morrisville, Research Triangle Park (RTP), Durham, and Chapel Hill following the I-40 and NC54 corridor. The path will connect Triangle residents and visitors to jobs, popular destinations, trail networks, transit, and more, across the region. While the project is called a bikeway, it will

be a shared-use path suitable for users of all ages and abilities both on foot and by bike. The project schedule coincided with the pandemic, which transformed the way planners connected with the five communities along the corridor. The switch to an entirely virtual public input approach revealed valuable insights into how best to welcome more and diverse voices into planning projects. Session learning objectives will include:

- What we can learn from pandemic virtual outreach to bring more voices into regional planning projects
- How a hybrid approach to outreach may best serve future planning projects
- Importance of case studies to quickly help stakeholders, residents and partners understand your projects
- When and how best to involve elected officials in regional projects
- How to engage stakeholders during planning to become future project partners
- Review some tough equity and diversity challenges that expose entrenched problems with how planning projects consistently fail to connect with Black, Hispanic and Asian communities

Public Private Partnerships for Trail Development

What is the process and key lessons learned for integrating active transportation with private development?

Historically, trail planning has focused on using undevelopable land, such as floodplains and sewer easements, for trail alignments. While there are many benefits to this approach, the trail system will struggle to attract large numbers of trail users unless it is connected to a diversity of destinations on developable land. Successful partnerships between private developers and public agencies can extend the trail system to make these connections, increasing active transportation's modal share, increasing connectivity to open space, and creating vibrant places for people to live, work and play.

This session will outline a model of public/private engagement that includes a palette of tools for trail system development, including the rezoning process for new development, funding partnerships, and construction agreements. Discussion will focus on how trail connections can benefit both private development and general public, and best practices for making these partnerships successful.

The Ballantyne Reimagined and River District projects will be presented as case studies of private development projects that include private/public partnerships for trail system development. Information on the Ballantyne Reimagined and River District projects can be found on their websites:

<https://reimagined.projectballantyne.com/>

<https://www.riverdistrict.com/>

Trail-Oriented Development – Lessons Learned from the Perspectives of Regional Developers, Designers and Local Government Planners

A panel discussion with brief presentations on experience and lessons learned re: trail-oriented development in the Charlotte region from a local developer, consulting urban designers/site planners, and local government planner. Following short presentations from each panelist, a moderated discussion with prepared questions and questions from the audience will follow.

Keynote: The Future of Parks, Trails, and Open Space – What's Next?

Parks and public spaces are vital to the livability of communities. As the country urbanizes and demographics of the American population shifts, parks, trails and public spaces are gaining greater importance as places for physical health, mental health and social interaction. The global pandemic and the social unrest have exposed inequities into our communities that have existed for generations. As we plan and design for the future, how can we create more equitable, inclusive and accessible places?

Thermal Belt Rail Trail: History, Successes, Lessons Learned

The Thermal Belt Rail Trail is a 13.5 mile long converted rail corridor in Rutherford County, NC fully opened in 2019. The trail connects five communities and sees 135,000 trips a year. The presentation will cover how the trail came to be one of the area's best assets, how the various communities and partners worked together throughout the planning and development of the trail and lessons learned along the way.

Guide to Trail Planning, Design and Construction

Does it feel like our world is changing faster than ever? Sometimes if we just stop for a minute, hit the pause button, and look around; we will see some things. If you have not noticed, trails have become an essential element in **thriving** communities. Next

generation leaders will need to guide trail development in their communities. If you are looking to advance the development of high quality inclusive trails this **informative** session is for you. Participants of this session will learn practical best practices regarding trail planning, design, and construction.

Interactive: Divide people into groups of 7-8, provide maps, have each group route a trail, and then have a spokes- person explain their thought process on routing the trail.

- Location of Trail: Guide to routing public trails
- Trail Dimensions: How wide should a trail be? How long?
- Crossing types:
- Materials Selection:
- Trail Support Facilities:
- Points of Access:
- How to design a trail for all people (Universal and Inclusive design)
- Environmentally Sensitive Construction: Protecting the environment, nature
- Gaining support for your trail: Getting the word out about trails.
- Paying for your trail: How much will my trail cost?

East Coast Greenway Becomes a State Trail

In June of 2021, Governor Cooper signed House Bill 130, designating the East Coast Greenway as an official State Trail and unit of the NC State Parks system. Sarah Sanford, NC Manager for the East Coast Greenway Alliance, will tell the story of the ECG's State Trail designation. She will describe the process of building support, passing legislation, and working with new stakeholders. This presentation will also include general updates on ECG development in NC. The presentation itself and the Q&A afterwards will be a good opportunity for trail planners and advocates to learn about the State Trail designation system and the policy side of trail development.