



Beaches-to-Bluegrass

TRAIL MASTER PLAN

Executive Summary



Trail Characteristics

- » Multiple uses, multiple surfaces
- » Suitable for out-of-state tourists
- » Easy to navigate
- » Safe, year-round attraction
- » Each region stands on its own and begins and ends in a state park or gateway city

Trail Regions

1. Virginia Beach to Emporia
2. Emporia to Danville
3. Danville to Galax/Radford
4. Galax/Radford to Bristol
5. Bristol to Cumberland Gap

Gateways & Anchors

Since one goal is to promote trail towns and places that serve trail users, "gateways" have been identified along the corridor to provide long-term parking and orientation kiosks at trailheads. "Anchors" are places between the gateways that will provide food, lodging and other amenities for trail users at reasonable intervals. Seven state parks and other public lands along the corridor also provide services for trail users.

Gateways

- » Virginia Beach
- » Emporia
- » Danville
- » Radford
- » Galax
- » Bristol
- » Cumberland Gap (TN)

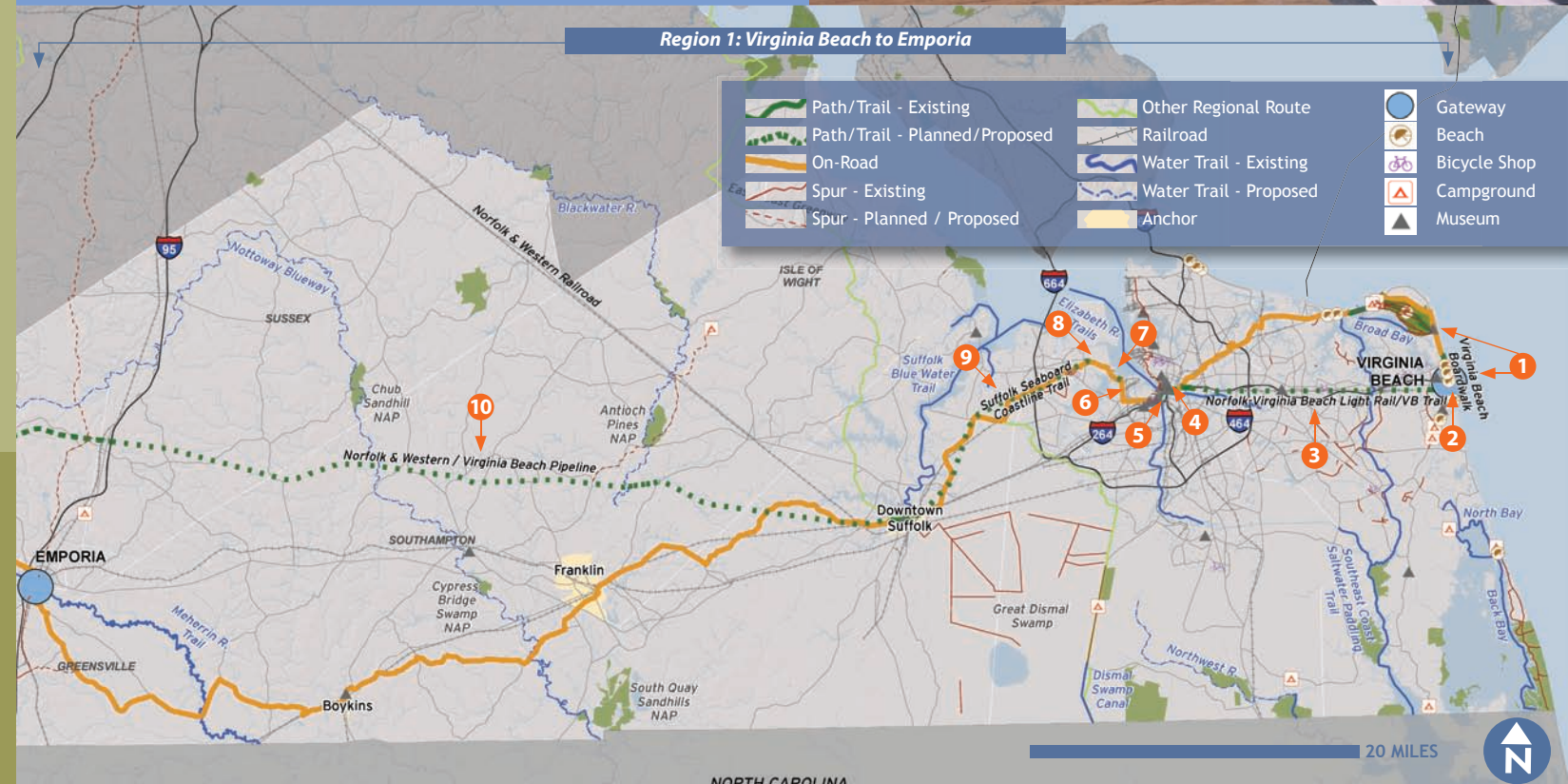
Anchors

- » Abingdon
- » Big Stone Gap
- » Boykins
- » Clarksville
- » Damascus
- » Downtown Suffolk
- » Duffield
- » Dungannon
- » Fancy Gap
- » Franklin

- » Lawrenceville
- » Martinsville
- » Meadows of Dan
- » Norfolk-Portsmouth waterfronts
- » Norton
- » Pennington Gap
- » South Boston
- » South Hill
- » Stuart
- » Sugar Grove



VisionThis statewide shared-use path and multi-use trail connects communities between the Virginia Beach Oceanfront and Cumberland Gap, providing residents and visitors in southern Virginia with increased opportunities for walking, bicycling, and horseback riding.



The Beaches to Bluegrass Master Trail Plan was developed in 2013 and 2014 through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Statewide Trails Program and the Virginia Department of Transportation's (VDOT) Transportation and Mobility Planning Division's Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Program. HNTB and Alta Planning + Design were contracted by VDOT to develop the trail master plan in cooperation with DCR. Cover photo and top photo above are from the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau; middle photo from Virginia.org; bottom photo from Alta Planning + Design.



Project Background

The Beaches to Bluegrass Trail concept first appeared in the 1979 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* as the 'Trans-Virginia Trail' and the 'Southside Virginia Trail'. Initial planning was spurred by needs surfacing across the corridor: demand for more non-motorized connections to destinations, a lack of recreational amenities in rural areas, and a loss of industry leaving many out of work. The concurrent abandonment of significant stretches of railroad corridor provided the opportunity to encourage trail development and ecotourism to begin to address these needs. Various entities worked independently to plan and complete sections of trail, such as the popular Virginia Creeper Trail and New River Trail State Park. This plan recommends a route that connects completed trails, documents the level of support for those routes, and sets a framework for the completion of trail projects throughout the corridor at the regional and local level.

Plan Goals

- 1 Establish a coalition of regional stakeholders and advocates** to develop, promote and manage a connected, sustainable trail system across the southern length of Virginia. Use these partnerships to leverage and pursue funding to construct sections of trail and plan for closing the gaps.
- 2 Map a route that links existing trails** to form a long-distance network across the length of southern Virginia. For gap areas, provide a connected off-road corridor for hikers, equestrians and bicyclists; braided trail segments and road routes may be utilized for interim and alternate connections.
- 3 Provide consistency along the route** through design standards and encourage future branding and universal development and management guidelines.
- 4 Support the development of infrastructure to provide essential services** at reasonable intervals through cooperative efforts and promote trail towns, places and organizations that serve trail users.
- 5 Provide baseline conditions that can be used to measure performance and return on investment** and encourage land managers to track trail usage, volunteer hours and miles of trail development each year.

Plan Development

Key tasks that guided development of the plan included:

- » Collecting data on existing trails related to their location, length, principal and restricted uses, terrain, vegetation, unique features, estimated visitation, and management framework.
- » Collecting input from stakeholders through webinars, email, and targeted outreach.
- » Conducting on-the-ground reviews of existing and proposed corridors, with a focus on potential alignments.
- » Analyzing heat maps that depict routes currently used by cyclists.
- » Inventorying tourism-related amenities along the route, including beaches, water trails, campgrounds, museums, artisan venues, bluegrass venues, and stops along the Crooked Road Heritage Music Trail.

The Beaches to Bluegrass Trail System

This Plan recommends an ideal off-road alignment (long-term goal) as well as an interim on-road route. The interim trail is a braided system intended for both transportation and recreation by non-motorized users, principally walkers, joggers, hikers, bicyclists and equestrians. The ideal route (long-term goal) is to provide a shared-use path and multi-use trail along the entire corridor, from the Virginia Beach Oceanfront to Cumberland Gap. Until the ideal, long-term shared-use path and multi use trail is completed, the route will split to accommodate different uses. Subsequent planning will address gaps in the trail and potential trail extensions. Below is a list of the existing, planned, and gap (corridor study needed) sections of the long-term route, from east to west, with numbers corresponding to the maps on each page of this executive summary.

Existing trails are listed in **bold** and asterisks (*) denote trails that currently accommodate horseback riding. (+) Denotes seasonal motorized use

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|---|--|
| 1. Virginia Beach Boardwalk (2.7 mi.) & Cape Henry Trail (6.1 mi.) | 20. Smith River Trail (8 mi.)* |
| 2. Norfolk Avenue Trail (1.4 mi.) | 21. Philpott Lake Recreation Area to Fairy Stone State Park (6 mi. gap) |
| 3. Norfolk-Virginia Beach Transit Corridor (11 mi.; 4.1 mi. gap) | 22. Fairy Stone State Park Trails (2 mi.)* |
| 4. Elizabeth River Trail (1.5 mi.) | 23. Fairy Stone State Park to the Blue Ridge Mountains (17 mi. gap) |
| 5. Elizabeth River Ferry (0.5 mi.) | 24. Blue Ridge Parkway (alternative route) |
| 6. Mount Vernon Avenue Bicycle Lanes (1 mi.) | 25. Blue Ridge Parkway to Galax/Radford (9 mi. gap) |
| 7. West Norfolk Bridge (0.5 mi.) | 26. New River Trail (51.5 mi.)* |
| 8. Commonwealth Railway Trail (5 mi.) | 27. Virginia Highlands Horse Trail (50 mi.)*+ |
| 9. Seaboard Coastline Trail (10.5 mi.; 1.25 existing)* | 28. Iron Mountain Trail (16 mi.)*+ |
| 10. Virginia Beach Pipeline/Norfolk and Western Railroad (51 mi.)* | 29. Virginia Creeper Trail (19.5 mi.)* |
| 11a. Tobacco Heritage Trail (19 mi.)* | 30. Abingdon Urban Path (1.5 mi.) |
| 11b. Tobacco Heritage Trail (88 mi.; 16 mi. gap)* | 31. Abingdon to Bristol (16 mi.; 3 mi. gap) |
| 12. Ringgold Trail (6 mi.)* | 32. Mendota Trail (14 mi.)* |
| 13. Ringgold to the Danville Riverwalk (5 mi.) | 33. Mendota to George Washington and Jefferson (GWJ) National Forest (22 mi. gap) |
| 14. Danville Riverwalk (7 mi.) | 34. GWJ National Forest Trails toward Big Stone Gap or Dryden (18.7 mi.)* |
| 15. Danville Riverwalk (3 mi.) | 35. Big Stone Gap to the Stone Mountain Trail (12 mi. gap) |
| 16. Danville to Martinsville (40 mi. gap) | 36. Stone Mountain Trail - GWJ National Forest (14.32 mi.)* |
| 17. Dick and Willie Passage (4.5 mi.) | 37. Stone Mountain Trail to the Wilderness Road Trail (42 mi. gap) |
| 18. Dick and Willie Passage Extension (1 mi.) | 38. Wilderness Road Trail to Cumberland Gap National Historic Park (8 mi.)* |
| 19. Fieldale Trail (2.6mi.)* | 39. Cumberland Gap National Historic Park Trails (3 mi.)* |

Trail lengths reflect Beaches to Bluegrass portion

