

Implementation Concerns & Strategies



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Overview

In order to determine the feasibility of converting the inactive Norfolk Southern rail corridor into the Ecusta Rail Trail, a wide range of contributors have been involved in the planning process for years before this study began. Project proponents and opponents have become visionaries of the ultimate use of this corridor of land, and they have provided a number of issues to explore and resolve.

to know which financial resources will be available for implementing the Ecusta Rail Trail. However, there are still important actions that could take place in advance of major investments, including key organizational steps and the development of lower-cost, priority trail projects. Following through on these priorities will allow the key stakeholders to be prepared for trail development over time, while taking advantage of strategic opportunities, both now and as they arise.

Action Steps

The design recommendations in the previous section provide the framework for the plan, while the following action steps provide a guide for the identified agencies and jurisdictions to further refine. It is important for positive, successful action to take place in order to build momentum and gain support on a regional level. Most importantly, the local governments within the region need not accomplish the recommendations of this Plan by acting alone; success will be realized through collaboration with state and federal agencies, the private sector, and non-profit organizations.

Step 1: Adopt the Ecusta Rail Trail Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis.

Through adoption, the *Ecusta Rail Trail Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis* becomes an official planning document of the City of Hendersonville and other jurisdictions. The adoption procedures will vary from community to community, depending on existing plans and policies. The plan should be reviewed and adopted by the appropriate approving body. The managing agency can then use this document to apply for funding.

Given the present day economic challenges faced by local governments (as well as their state, federal, and private sector partners), it is difficult

Step 2: Schedule a Public Open House to Roll Out the Adopted Planning Study and Economic Impact Analysis.

An important element of success in obtaining support is to involve the public in the trail project. Before proceeding with negotiations with Norfolk Southern, it will be necessary to build grass roots support and a broad constituency for construction and operation of the future trail and the other necessary facilities, such as access points. Public support regarding the benefits of the trail should also be developed within the local business community, among any local environmental or recreational groups, and with any groups related to travel or tourism. It may be necessary to meet with individual landowners and local business owners in addition to holding community meetings. These meetings can serve to publicize the broad benefits of trails as well as the specific local benefits. They also serve as a forum to address potential concerns and issues. Additional ways to involve the public and systematically garner support for the project include:

- Encourage existing non-profit groups to support the mission of creating the project
- Seek positive media stories that illustrate the benefits of the trail project to the wider community
- Present the project at community meetings, civic group meetings, and committee meetings
- Organize a trail event to get the public excited about what the trail will become
- Identify a high-profile local champion such as an elected official or community leader

This work has already been commenced by the Friends of the Ecusta Trail, an organization that was established to bring together support for

this trail project. This is an important element of involving the public, as it has established a group of steadfast supporters of the project who can provide invaluable assistance in supporting these aspects of the project.

Step 3: Develop a Regional Parks and Trails Management Consortium

The proposed Ecusta Rail Trail will be a multi-jurisdictional project traversing two counties and three municipalities. One centralized authority is needed to plan, develop, and maintain facilities, as well as interface with the general public.

For successful implementation and operations, the Ecusta Rail Trail will require regional management. The careful creation of a Western North Carolina Regional Parks and Trails Authority would include a cooperative effort with the Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments.

The proposed concept for a Regional Parks and Trails Authority is to start small, with one model project – the Ecusta Rail Trail – and establish good working relationships between various jurisdictions with regard to this pilot project. The following proposal outlines the structure for a Regional Parks and Trails Authority that would handle the day-to-day operations of the Ecusta Rail Trail only. The proposed structure and responsibilities could be expanded over time to include other jurisdictions within the western NC region, as well as other parks, trails, and open space projects. The proposal is modeled after the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority¹, which has successfully managed a number of parks and recreational facilities for more than 50 years.

Establishing a Board

To initially implement this concept in the western NC region, it is recommended to create a Western North Carolina Regional Parks and Trails Consortium Board. This Board would provide a mechanism for regional communication with regard to multi-jurisdictional projects, specifically the Ecusta Rail Trail.

The initial Board would be comprised of two representatives from each jurisdiction affected by the Ecusta Rail Trail project, as well as one liaison from each key state agency. Citizen representation on the Board is deemed necessary. In addition, each jurisdiction would retain its own parks and recreation department, and would name a staff liaison to serve on the Board. Each member would be appointed by their local governing body to serve a 4-year term.

Board Responsibilities

The Board would be a multi-jurisdictional agency formed to carry out a plan of action for the continued development and operations of the Ecusta Rail Trail.

Board members would be responsible for making policy decisions and establishing a line of two-way communication. They would convey to other Western North Carolina Regional Parks and Trails Consortium members the interests of their jurisdiction, and convey activities of the Board back to their localities. Members would work together on a voluntary, cooperative basis and would meet monthly. Heading the Board would be a full-time Western North Carolina Regional Parks and Trails Consortium staff member.

Monthly meetings would be open to the public, providing local land owners and trail users a forum to address issues and concerns regarding cross-

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AND TRAILS CONSORTIUM



access, vegetation control, illegal corridor use, and daily operations. Individuals and organizations wishing to use the Ecusta Rail Trail for special events would also require the approval of the Regional Parks and Trails Authority.

Staff Responsibilities

Initially, the only staff members needed would be an Executive Director and/or full-time Trail Ranger. These two positions shall have authority to perform supervisory and managerial functions similar to those of a State Park Superintendent.

The staff would need a centrally located office, preferably within the Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments or a location situated along the rail-trail corridor. This office would be a centralized location for all regional citizens to address questions, concerns, and complaints about the project, regardless of their jurisdiction.

The Trail Rangers would be in charge of the daily management, operations, and maintenance of the Ecusta Rail Trail. Administratively, they would answer telephone calls, conduct meetings, dispense information, coordinate with the jurisdictions, and manage seasonal and part-time staff.

On-site, full-time staff would be responsible for collecting trash, cutting grass, opening and closing the entrance gates daily, leading group outings, and performing necessary maintenance tasks. These duties would be performed in conjunction with trail security, enforcement of regulations, and routine patrol of the Ecusta Rail Trail.

Part-time/ seasonal staff may be needed to assist the Trail Rangers in the summer months. College students seeking work experience to supplement studies in the fields of recreational planning, environmental sciences, and governmental affairs

could fill these positions at minimal cost.

Long Term

Expanded, long-term responsibilities of the management authority, with respect to this project, should include land acquisition either by purchase or solicitation of donations and easements for conservation purposes. They should also include facility development, on-going management, and maintenance.

Ideally, the Regional Parks and Trails Authority would be set up as an autonomous regional government body, organized to receive and administer lands for conservation purposes, and qualified to receive charitable contributions pursuant to G.S. 105-130.9. This structure would allow interested private property owners to dedicate additional lands to the program and receive tax credits and deductions for their donations.

The Regional Parks and Trails Authority Board should encourage corporate and inter-governmental cooperation; the active pursuit of local, state, federal, and private grant funding sources; the use of volunteers; and the ratification of local legislation for the Ecusta Rail Trail.

Recommendations

The following actions are recommended to accomplish this step:

CREATE A REGIONAL MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

- The Boards of Commissioners in each of the affected counties shall hold public hearings, publish articles of incorporation, and pass resolutions to create this new Regional Parks and Trails Authority.
- The Regional Authority shall be developed

pursuant to the “Recreation Enabling Law” – North Carolina General Statute Article 18, Chapter 160A, which authorizes local recreation and park enabling legislation, and Article 20, Chapter 160A, which permits the joint exercise of power of any one or more units of government to undertake an allowable public function.

Step 4: Develop partnerships with project stakeholders.

Meet with existing and potential project partners, such as Friends of the Ecusta Trail, Carolina Mountain Lands Conservancy, NC Department of Parks and Recreation (NCDPR), and NC Rail-Trails, to determine strategic interests and funding opportunities for the rail trail project. Project partners can assist with public outreach, acquisition, management, and other operational items for the proposed Ecusta Rail Trail. Non-profit organizations can serve a variety of purposes as they are already doing across the region. For example, The Friends of the Ecusta Trail actively promotes the Ecusta Rail Trail and encourages the development of a network of multi-use trails in Henderson and Transylvania Counties.

North Carolina Rail-Trails works with communities across North Carolina to create trails for public use on active and abandoned rail corridors.

The Carolina Mountains Land Conservancy (CMLC) partners with landowners and organizations to protect land and water resources. CMLC works to conserve and actively care for an ever-growing regional network of locally and nationally significant farms, forests, parks and natural lands.

The North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation (NCDPR) were contacted during the

planning study to determine their level of interest in the project. NCDPR's statement is as follows:

“A substantial portion of the proposed Ecusta Rail Trail would be parallel to the French Broad River, which has been designated as a State Trail. The French Broad River State Trail at present is a paddle trail, but the NC Division of Parks and Recreation may be interested in participating as a project stakeholder to enhance the uses and values of the State Trail. The intent of a State Trail is to create an area jointly planned, acquired, developed and managed by the NC Division of Parks and Recreation, other state and federal agencies, local governments and nonprofit organizations. The proposed Regional Parks and Trail Management Consortium would be highly compatible with the State Trail concept.”

Specific tasks for potential stakeholders related to this Plan include:

- Participate as members of the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium.
- Advocate, promote, and encourage development of trails throughout the region.
- Educate citizens as to benefits of trails and greenways.
- Assist the Land-of-Sky Regional Council of Governments and its counties and municipalities in raising funds and securing ROW for implementation.
- Organize volunteers to assist with implementation and management.
- Sponsor or co-sponsor trail events.

Step 5: Enter discussions with Norfolk Southern to gain support for railbanking.

Before entering into negotiations with Norfolk

Southern Railway it will be necessary to notify them of the interest in railbanking the corridor. It will also be necessary to know of any restrictions on the use of the corridor property.

Not all rail operators are aware of the benefits the railbanking process provides to the rail corporation. Rail banking relieves the rail company/agency of the financial burden associated with an inactive or otherwise unprofitable line. It allows the rail operator to redirect assets to more profitable lines.

A trail proponent must make a request to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to use the rail corridor for recreational purposes. While the rail right-of-way is banked, the trail proponent provides financial responsibility for trail management and property taxes, while accepting liability for use occurring on the corridor. The trail proponent also acknowledges the possibility of future reactivation of rail service.

Trail development could reduce the cost of rail service restoration. In the event that significant expense will be required to re-establish freight service, including replacement of ballast, track, ties, some bridges and crossing infrastructure, trail construction is likely to reduce the costs of rail service return by performing some of the required infrastructure improvements. In addition, with the greater implementation readiness of a trail system, it is likely that funding will be easier to find for trail development than rail service restoration until there is a solid plan for rail service re-establishment that can attract funding. Development of a rail-to-trail in the near future does not preclude, and may even improve the possibility of, rail-with-trail in the future.

In discussions with the rail authority, distinguish your agency from other potential buyers. Two important distinctions make negotiation with a public agency favorable for the rail:

1. Your agency wants to acquire the entire corridor (or at least a significant portion of it) intact; and
2. Your agency or organization can access large funding sources that are unavailable to other potential buyers, which allows you to commit to paying cash upon signing.

Understand the rail operator's concerns and develop alternatives. Provide Norfolk Southern with planning documents and studies as they become available and invite comments.

To obtain information from the Northern Southern Railway Real Estate Department, contact: http://realestate.nscorp.com/nscreealestate/RealEstate/Real_Estate_Services/Property_Sales/. The real estate contact for North Carolina is Bill Gorby, Senior Real Estate Manager: bill.gorby@nscorp.com, (540) 981-5992. An additional suggestion received from the Surface Transportation Board is to contact Rush Bailey, Assistant Vice president of Customer Service, at 404.529.1730

Step 6: Initiate the Railbanking Request

To begin the trail use process, a trail proponent must file a trail use request in the proceeding initiated by the railroad to abandon the line. One must send a letter to both the Surface Transportation Board (STB) and the Legal Department of the railroad applying for abandonment authorization. Timing is important. The public use proponent must file the request within 45 days of the filing of the rail authority's application for abandonment. The trail use request must include:

1. A map which clearly identifies the rail corridor

(including mileposts) which is proposed for trail use,

2. A statement of willingness to accept financial responsibility which indicates the proponent's willingness to manage the trail, pay property taxes on the trail and accept responsibility for any liability arising from the use of the rail corridor as a trail, and
3. An acknowledgment that trail use is subject to the user's continuing to meet the above obligations, and the possibility of future reactivation of rail service on the corridor.
4. A "Certificate of Service" indicating that a copy of the trails use request has been served on the carrier seeking abandonment at its address of record. A sample letter is provided in the appendix of this document.

In addition, ask the STB to establish a "Public Use Condition" (PUC). A PUC prevents the railroad from selling or otherwise disposing of any property or trail-related structures, including bridges, tunnels, or culverts for a 180 day period from the effective date of abandonment. Since a railroad may not agree to a railbanking negotiation, requesting a PUC may buy additional time to convince the railroad to negotiate.

Once the railroad has received the written request, it will notify the STB as to whether they are interested in entering into railbanking negotiations. If the railroad agrees, the STB will issue either a "Certificate of Interim Trail Use" (CITU) or a "Notice of Interim Trail Use" (NITU), depending on the nature of the abandonment. Although NITUs are issued during the exempt abandonment process, while CITUs are issued during the regulated process, these documents are

otherwise identical. From the date the Certificate or Notice is issued, 180 days are given to reach an agreement with the railroad. As this is a non-binding negotiation, the railroad has the option to end negotiations at any point and dispose of the property however it wishes. On the other hand, if both sides are pleased with the progress, you can request an extension of the negotiating period from the STB.

If the line has not been used in two or more years, or if the STB finds there is no vital interest in continuing rail service on the line, the railroad may follow a less stringent "exemption" procedure.

Step 7: Negotiation and Agreement with Norfolk Southern

Enter formal negotiations with Norfolk Southern for ownership of the corridor. The "corridor" consists of the actual rail ballast and land on either side that forms the Norfolk-Southern right-of-way. The right-of-way width varies; typically it is 100 feet wide with the tracks and/ or ballast located down the center, but it narrows to as little as 25 feet in some locations. The Legal Ownership Evaluation section of this study provides a more in-depth summary of the ownership along the Ecusta rail corridor. Appendix A provides greater detail on items to consider in negotiations and the corridor assessment that should be completed before beginning.

Using information gathered from the corridor assessment, create a list of items to be included in the agreement with the railroad. Consider these issues in developing the negotiation priorities:

- What property rights are needed to create the rail-trail?
- Is it necessary to acquire the entire length of

the corridor, or only in a specific section?

- Who is responsible for salvaging the corridor?
- What happens to the improvements along the corridor? What additional structures are needed for the trail? What structures should the railroad remove?
- How much time is needed to complete due diligence requirements?
- Are there any environmental issues that need to be remediated? Who will be responsible?
- If financing is not yet in place, when will it be in place?
- If the rail company wants to resume rail operation at some point, under what terms would this occur?
- What else needs to happen before ownership is accepted of the corridor from the railroad?

The written agreement with the railroad should address both contingencies and payment. Some common contingencies include:

- Securing financing;
- Clean environmental assessment;
- Acceptable title report; and
- Securing an appraisal.

The due diligence process may reveal situations which require further negotiation with the railroad. Once the terms of an agreement are reached, move quickly to formalize the agreement. Circumstances may change at any time including: newly elected officials could change public policies or budgets; new railroad employees may be hired;

or a natural disaster could change the priorities of a public agency, the local community or the railroad. Once the trail agency and the railroad have signed the agreement to transfer ownership of the property, the centralized authority should hire an attorney, escrow agent, or experienced real estate agent to oversee the closing.

The City of Hendersonville and City of Brevard may consider partnering with the NCDOT Rail Division to purchase the inactive line. Such a partnership may widen potential funding sources available for the acquisition cost. However, recent legislation requires that the land forming a rail corridor must be owned in fee simple title in order to develop a trail on that land that is part of the Department of Transportation rail corridor preservation program. If such a partnership is desired, further study is recommended to verify the ownership breakdown described in the Legal Ownership Evaluation.

To implement the Ecusta Rail Trail project, the DOT would need to purchase the right-of-way forming the rail corridor, then lease the property they purchased to the agency who will be managing the interim trail. The final results of the ownership evaluation along the corridor will determine which sections of the corridor are held in fee simple and can therefore be leased for this use.

Ultimately, the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium to be formed for the project will be the agency responsible for land preservation. This consortium can negotiate with or without additional partners, such as the NCDOT Rail Division.

Step 8: Meet with Adjacent Property Owners.

The issue of privacy and personal property rights has traditionally been a primary concern in rail trail and greenway projects. For the Ecusta Rail Trail, these concerns have been expressed by existing landowners wanting to protect themselves from unwanted encroachment. Some landowners who presently live along the Norfolk Southern Railway corridor view the proposed rail trail as an encroachment on their rights as landowners.

The proposed Ecusta Rail Trail does not challenge the rights of land ownership. Rather, the trail promotes continued economic progress, protection of a vital transportation and infrastructure corridor, and the conservation of valuable open space for western North Carolina.

All private property owners who live adjacent to the corridor are, by North Carolina Legislation, given opportunities to participate in the development of a rail trail, and they are thereby provided with options for resolving personal concerns generated by the development of this trail.

The importance of privacy is commonly expressed by adjacent property owners. A related issue of concern is the effect that development of a trail will have on the property values in the area. Although it is fairly difficult to attribute the worth of a property based on a single factor, real estate agents typically rate the proximity of a parcel to quality parklands and open space as a factor that increases property value. Some landowners, however, are not convinced of this and fear decreased values.

Through proper planning, design, on-going maintenance, and enforcement of established

rules and regulations, rail trail projects across the country have demonstrated increases in surrounding property values. The results of studies to this effect are included in Section 5: Economic Impact Analysis.

To demonstrate to local property owners that the Ecusta Rail Trail is not a project to be forced upon the citizens of the region, the following steps need to be taken:

WORK WITH INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNERS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS

- Members of the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium should meet with adjacent property owners who have expressed concerns regarding the proposed project. Ideally, one-on-one meetings will occur on site, at each residence, to assess firsthand the relationship between the home and the corridor.
- Representatives should listen to the individual concerns of each landowner.
- Together, representatives and property owners should develop alternatives for resolving site-specific problems.

LIMIT PUBLIC ACCESS TO PRIVATE LAND

- Trail users must be educated to respect the rights of private property owners. Trail signage and literature must prominently read: "Stay on the trail. Do not trespass."
- Trail users who do not follow this rule should be fined.
- As part of the project, accommodations - such as fencing and vegetative screening - should be provided, wherever necessary and feasible to deter trail users from leaving the trail.

ALLOW FOR PRIVATE CROSS ACCESS OF THE CORRIDOR

- Private property owners should be provided access across the trail as needed. All existing drives that cross the corridor should be allowed to remain. For new access, landowners must make a formal encroachment request to the trail management authority before constructing paths or driveways. All reasonable requests should be honored.
- Uniform standards should be developed for all trail route signing. The signage package should include a “Private Property: Do Not Enter” sign for use where private drives intersect with the trail.

PROVIDE TRAIL AMENITIES

- Adequate public parking, restrooms, water facilities, and other amenities should be provided along the corridor route for trail users.
- Privacy buffers should be installed as necessary to screen views onto private properties. Combinations of fencing and landscaping should be considered to meet the needs of adjacent property owners.

INCREASING PROPERTY VALUES

- Develop and maintain a high-quality facility that will increase property values in the area.
- An Adopt-a-Trail program should be established to keep the corridor free of litter and trash. Under this program, volunteer groups may undertake other efforts to improve the aesthetic quality of the corridor, by planting wildflowers for example.
- Not permitting motorized use, closing the trail at dusk, and enforcement of these regulations will stop the noise disturbances caused by

existing illegal uses of the corridor.

- Implementation of the recommendations set forth in this Planning Study and on-going public input into all decisions made with regard to the project will ensure that the quality of the Ecusta Rail Trail is not compromised.

WORK SLOWLY AND BUILD SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT

- The underlying principle for acquiring the corridor – to preserve the land for long-term public use – should remain the primary reason for undertaking the Ecusta Rail Trail project. It must be well known that development of a trail is a compatible interim use that helps to fulfill the existing need for recreation and alternative transportation facilities within the region.
- Phased project implementation should begin where reaction to the proposed project has been the most positive and the need for a recreation and transportation trail facility is the strongest – on the eastern end within the City of Hendersonville and on the western end in the City of Brevard. As support for the Ecusta Rail Trail grows, opening of the corridor to the public and extension of a developed trail should continue toward the borderline between Henderson and Transylvania Counties. However, measures to control access, improve security and safety, and minimize liability must occur on all sections as soon as the corridor is acquired.
- Progress of trail development should be monitored. Records should be kept by the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium of any and all complaints and criminal activities associated with the project. All problems

should be addressed immediately as outlined in the Operations and Management Plan for the trail, and solutions should be developed to prevent problems from occurring again.

Step 9: Conduct a Comprehensive Survey of the Ecusta Rail Corridor.

To ascertain exactly what infrastructure is along the railroad corridor, a licensed surveyor should perform a ground survey of the railroad right-of-way prior to trail design. Additionally, right-of-way limits shown on the valuation maps should be compared with tax maps and other graphic public records to be shown on the survey. A current survey of the corridor will provide the necessary information to begin trail design.

Step 10: Seek Multiple Funding Sources.

Achieving the vision that is defined within this plan will require a stable and recurring source of funding. Communities across the county that have successfully engaged in trail programs have relied on multiple funding sources to achieve their goals. No single source of funding will meet the recommendations identified in this Plan. Instead, stakeholders will need to work cooperatively with all the municipalities and state and federal partners to generate funds sufficient to implement the program.

A stable and recurring source of revenue is needed to generate funding that can then be used to leverage grants dollars from state, federal and private, sources. The ability of the local agencies to generate a source of funding for trails depends on a variety of factors, such as taxing capacity, budgetary resources, voter preferences, and political will. It is very important that these local agencies explore the ability to establish a stable and recurring source of revenue for trails.

Federal and state grants should be pursued - along with local funds - to pay for trail ROW acquisition, design, construction, and maintenance. “Shovel-ready” projects should be prepared in the event that future federal stimulus funding occurs. Recommended funding sources may be found in Appendix I.

Step 11: Begin Top Priority Project Design.

Once a trail segment is selected and land acquired, trail design typically follows. Develop construction contract documents for Phase I of the Ecusta Rail Trail. Work closely with a design consultant to ensure the contract documents are being developed according to this plan’s recommendations; state, local, and federal permitting issues; design specifications; and budget costs. It will be essential for the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium to manage this very important step.

Trail construction costs will vary at the time of construction. Until a project is put out for competitive bid, there is no way to accurately project local prices or determine when priority projects will be “shovel-ready.”

Preliminary site plans should be reviewed by multiple stakeholders - including the Regional Parks and Trails Consortium and emergency service personnel - so they can offer suggestions, and guidance. It is important to have their voices heard from the very beginning. It is also imperative that cost saving measures be a part of any design, with a thorough review of the plans to identify such measures while they are still in a preliminary stage.

Security starts in the design phase as well, as there is much that can be done in designing a trail system that greatly reduces the risk of crime.

Security experts - such as local police chiefs or representatives from Pisgah National Forest - should be consulted early on, both to seek their advice and to alert them that the trail will be built. Well placed lights, wide open spaces along the trail, removal of underbrush, and easily accessible trailheads all add to the security matrix. More information on trail security and safety can be found in Appendix H.

Step 12: Begin Top Priority Project Construction.

With existing available funds, award a construction contract for Phase I of the Ecusta Rail Trail. Develop a predetermined timeline for construction completion. The design consultant can provide assistance to the city by helping to facilitate the bidding process. Depending on funding sources, the contractor may need to be selected through a formal bidding process in which the project scope and parameters are publicly defined.

CONCLUSION

The Ecusta Rail Trail is a concept for revitalizing the inactive Norfolk Southern rail line from Hendersonville to Brevard, North Carolina. The purpose of this proposed project is to convert 20 miles of railroad right-of-way into a paved trail for bicycling, walking, and similar uses.

The conclusion of this nine-month study is that it is feasible to convert the Norfolk Southern corridor into the Ecusta Rail Trail, and it is necessary to preserve this vital corridor for long-term public use as an alternative transportation route. The corridor has the opportunity to transform into a public amenity that will increase adjacent property values, fulfill a need for outdoor recreation opportunities, offer a safe route for

bicycle commuting as an alternate to driving, raise recreational revenue, revitalize local communities, and improve the overall quality of life in western North Carolina, as described in the Economic Impact Analysis.

There are obstacles to overcome before these benefits can be realized. Using the action steps outlined above, objectives can be achieved with the patience and cooperative effort of regional jurisdictions and project partners. A foundation of local leaders, trail advocates, and citizen support will contribute to the successful planning, design, and consequent construction of the Ecusta Rail Trail that will be enjoyed by generations to come.

Notes

1. See <http://www.nvrpa.org/> for more information.

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