

Public space, trails gain momentum

Whether driven by the public's desire for exercise or alternative transportation, linear public space in the form of trails and greenways is a growing trend, both in North Carolina and across the nation.

Examples are the Triangle Region's new open space and greenways plan, the first in the state. Such long-range planning is not limited to dense metro areas. The Unifour, a four-county region centered on Hickory, is a year into a similar blueprint. Even individual counties and communities are beginning to address public space and land use.

These public initiatives are increasingly government sponsored or sanctioned, a sign that elected officials are being tuned into the subject by constituents. Even developers are hearing the same message from the market.

Trails help sell houses, according to an annual survey by the National Association of Home Builders and the National Association of Realtors.

When 2,000 recent home buyers were asked about the importance of 18 community amenities, the highest ranking features were: highway access, 44 percent; jogging/bike trails, 36 percent; sidewalks, 28 percent; parks, 26 percent; playgrounds, 21 percent, and shops within walking area, 19 percent.

The number two ranking of trails in the survey was consistent across all regions and demographics.

The number one preference, 44 percent favoring highway access, is the sobering reality. Living near public transportation was sixth at 15 percent.

For news updates
stop by the Info Depot:
<http://www.NCRail-Trails.org>



Cutting the ribbon to open ATT Phases C and D, from left, Congressman David Price, Durham Co. Commissioner Ellen Reckow, Chapel Hill Councilman Ed Harrison, Durham Mayor Bill Bell, youthful supporter Patrick Connelly, NC DOT Bike/Ped Coordinator Tom Norman, TRTC Pres. Bill Bussey and Durham Parks and Recreation Director Tim Grant. (photo by Dave Connelly)

Durham completes two ATT sections

Durham's portion of the American Tobacco Trail more than doubled when another 4.5 miles were opened Sept. 21. Phase C construction brought the ATT south to NC 54 and Phase D opened the Riddle Road Spur to the northeast.

Plans are being drawn up to bridge I-40 in south Durham, the next major development milestone. Developers already have a section of paved trail awaiting south of the interstate.

Meanwhile, Wake County has started construction from the south. Wake Phase A is from New Hill Rd. to Wimberly Rd.

The volunteer Friends of the ATT continue to clear remaining corridor sections of trees, brush and trash in anticipation of follow-on construction.



Dr. John Stratton, NCRT treasurer and one of the earliest advocates, enjoys a test ride on the newly-opened ATT Phase C in south Durham.

Volunteers out in front of development

This article on Friends of the American Tobacco Trail first appeared in the Earth Share of North Carolina newsletter. Thad Howard is the volunteer group's trail boss.

At 9 am, on the first and third Saturday of every month, you'll find Thad Howard standing at the end of Scott King Road in southern Durham County, tools and work gloves in hand. Together with a crew of volunteers, Howard will spend the day trimming trees, cleaning up trash, planting azaleas, putting up signs and building fences.

Howard coordinates these workdays because he's passionate about developing greenways for recreation and alternative transportation uses.

A North Carolina native who moved to the Triangle 15 years ago, Howard started promoting alternative transportation while serving as chair of the Durham chapter of the Sierra Club.

Three years ago he joined the board of the Triangle Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a NCRT affiliate. He then started working on the American Tobacco Trail, a 23-mile rail-trail that when completed will run from downtown Durham to New Hill Road in western Wake County.

For Howard, rail-trails like this one make good sense for the community. "Lots of people are willing to walk two

miles or bike five miles to work. We should seriously consider greenways as viable alternative transportation corridors. It saves businesses money because they don't have to build parking lots. It saves the state money because it doesn't have to build more roads. And it's healthy."

In his eyes, the ATT has the potential to be much more than a paved pathway for cyclists and pedestrians. He sees it as a community asset, a greenway that will connect neighborhoods, reduce traffic congestion, improve public health and in general make the Triangle a better place to live.

Howard is willing to dedicate time and hard work to make his vision a reality. He spends countless hours securing funding for trail projects, planning for landscaping and signs and meeting with neighborhoods and local schools to get them involved in the project. When he's not working as a molecular biologist at Duke University, he serves on two Durham commissions: the Open Space and Trails Commission and the newly created Bicycle and Commission. Recently he organized Friends of the ATT, a volunteer corps committed to building the rail-trail one workday at a time.

Howard is upbeat about the greenway's future and proud to report that groups like the Sierra Club, the Carolina Tarwheels



Thad Howard, Friends of the ATT trail boss, reclears the way in southern Durham county after an early ice storm downed trees across the rail bed.

and Triangle Horse Council all are committing time and energy to the project. "Once the trail is longer and connected to other trails, greenways and parks, I think we'll be surprised at how many people use it."

Others in the Triangle share his enthusiasm. Jim Goodmon, President and CEO of Capitol Broadcasting, pledged to donate thousands of azaleas and \$50,000 over five years to the ATT project.

Howard says the project is gaining momentum with the help of local governments and community groups. Too modest to take any personal credit for this success, he's glad to see his efforts to get people working together toward a common goal have produced results, adding "After all those workdays, I have some nice shoveling muscles, too."



Taking out the trash, junk and garbage is one of the ways Friends of the ATT is clearing the way for on-going development of the Triangle Region rail-trail.





Contractor Jerry Carpenter smooths crushed gravel surface of Lansing's new rail-trail on the former Virginia-Carolina rail bed in Ashe County. A town park is next.

Lansing builds a bit of Creeper for its own

Lansing's got trail. Not the 14 miles of Carolina Creeper envisioned two years ago, but the town now does have one-half mile of rail-trail on the former Virginia-Carolina rail bed. The project includes a quarter-mile return loop and a bridge over Big Horse Creek to a five-acre park with shelter building. The first stage of grading and applying crushed gravel was completed in September.

The Lansing park and trail was a holdover from an aborted 2000 attempt to extend the Virginia Creeper from the state line to Lansing. It was envisaged as an Ashe County trailhead for an extended Creeper. That Creeper extension was dashed when reversionary property owners along Big Horse Creek organized opposition to the long-wanted North

Carolina extension.

The trailhead project was continued as a town park under direction of the Blue Ridge Resource Conservation and Development Council, which purchased property and easements on behalf of Lansing.

The rail-trail portion of the project was financed by NC Adopt-A-Trail and National Recreation Trail Program grants. Vannoy Construction Co. of Ashe County contributed crushed gravel for trail surfacing.



Trail Fable

A mild fall weekday and the your Ol' Ed thought he had the rail-trail to himself when another trail user appeared. A quarter mile ahead a four-footed critter was trotting along in the same direction.

As Ol' Ed drew closer, the animal looked over its shoulder several times without breaking stride. What was it? It didn't have the gait of a dog or cat. Too fast for a possum. Possibly a raccoon? No, too dark. It didn't have the facial markings.

The separation was now down to 100 feet. "On the left," warned Ol' Ed. The furry creature moved to the center of the trail without looking back or breaking stride.

Whatever it was, it showed absolutely no regard. Could the animal be rabid? Better stop. With that in mind, the animal suddenly turned and reversed direction. Its teeth were showing and its tail high in the air.

A spotted skunk!!!

Startled, Ol' Ed still astride his bike, tried a hasty 180-degree turnabout . . . got his feet tangled up . . . and toppled to the ground.

No time for dignity. Just get up and run in the opposite direction. During a sprint, it was Ol' Ed's turn to look back over his shoulder.

The skunk was sniffing the fallen bike and taking its own sweet time about it. Deciding that there was nothing to eat, the skunk finally turned and continued in its original direction. Last seen, it was rounding a curve far down the trail.

Moral: *A bird in the bush is better than a skunk at hand.*



JOIN THE NORTH CAROLINA RAIL-TRAILS INITIATIVE. NOW!

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: Home _____ Work _____ E-mail _____

Reason for interest in rail-trails _____

NCRT annual memberships: Individual - \$20, Corporate - \$100

Mail to North Carolina Rail Trails, PO Box 61348, Durham NC 27715-1348

(Fall102)

THANK YOU FOR JOINING NCRT

"To Preserve Rail Corridors and Promote Rail - Trails"

NCRT welcomes three new directors

Three changes were made to the NCRT Board at the annual meeting in Durham. New to the board are Bill Causey of Fayetteville, Merlin Perry of Lenoir and Phoebe Cartwright of Damascus, VA.

Causey is a retired U.S. Army officer and presently represents recycling equipment manufacturers.

Merlin Perry is a retired information systems manager and currently chairman of the



Causey

Caldwell County Pathways Committee, which has developed a county-wide master plan for trails, greenways and bike/ped lanes.

Cartwright recently divested herself of the Blue Blaze Bike and Shuttle, the first shuttle to serve the Virginia Creeper. A former Triangle resident, she has been a



Perry

longtime advocate for creating rail-trails in the North Carolina.

Leaving the NCRT board are Shishir Raval formerly of Raleigh, Berry Gray of Greenville and Rhonda Rogers of Jacksonville.

Raval recently left his NCSU School of Design position to return to his native India. He directed NCSU landscape architecture students in developing several rail-trail master plans on behalf of NCRT projects.



Cartwright

NCRT Winter Meeting

10:30 am Saturday, Jan. 11, Washington, NC

Directions from US 264E to Brown Library:
Turn south (Right) on Hwy 17 (Bridge Street)
Left on 3rd St. One block, turn
Right on Van Norden. One block then
Right on 2nd St. and an immediate left into
Brown Library parking lot.

NORTH CAROLINA RAIL TRAILS INC. BOARD

Chair	Carolyn Townsend, RN	* 919-542-5422
Treasurer	John Stratton, MD	919-383-5371
Director & Editor	Daniel Arrasmith	* 828-495-4472
Director	Al Capehart, PhD	* 919-542-0022
Director	Bill Causey	910-488-5785
Director	Phoebe Cartwright	276-475-5714
Director	Harry Clapp, PE	336-697-7499
Director	David Coats, JD	919-828-0731
Director	Phillip Collins, JD	919-828-0731
Director	Michael Domonkos, JD	828-884-7648
Director	Jean Jenkins Middleton	919-286-7583
Director	John Morck, AICP	919-362-9822
Director	Merlin Perry	828-754-7362
Director	Tony Reevy	919-416-0965
Director	Paul Wilson, PhD	910-323-4986

*Primary information contacts: Phone and Fax

LOCAL CONTACTS

Anson County	Myla Warfel	704-851-3891
Ashe County	Priscilla Cox	336-982-9849
Beaufort County	Charles McClure	252-974-2071
Caswell County	Forrest Altman	336-234-8556
Catawba County	Kenyon Kelly	828-465-6511
Chatham County	Margaret Jordan-Ellis	919-898-4814
Cherokee County	Frank Mason	828-835-3812
Cleveland County	Fred Blackley	704-484-1731
Cumberland County	Paul Wilson	910-323-4986
Durham County	Bill Bussey	919-545-9104
Gaston County	Richard Duren	704-822-6113
Guilford County	Joe Best	336-834-8382
Harnett County	Thomas Jernigan	910-892-6260
Lincoln County	Chafin Rhyne	704-735-1746
Martin County	Crystal Baity	252-792-6605
New Hanover County	Chris O'Keefe	910-341-7444
Onslow County	Rhonda Rogers	910-938-5236
Pasquotank County	Dave Copley	252-330-4514
Pender County	Pat Thomas	910-259-9111
Person County	Christy McCoy	336-322-0153
Pitt County	James Rhodes	252-830-6319
Rutherford County	Eric Wells	828-286-9673
Stanly County	Lindsey Dunavent	704-984-9560
Stokes County	David Simpson	336-969-6121
Transylvania County	Mike Domonkos	828-884-7648
Wake County	Leslie Kennedy	919-362-4011
Warren/Halifax County	Howdy Tomlinson	252-586-6270

North Carolina
RAIL-TRAILS

PO Box 61348
Durham, NC 27715-1348

Change Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit NO. 1148
Durham NC 27701