

State Trails Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, November 5, 2025
1:00PM to 2:30PM (virtual)



Housekeeping

- Please sign in in the chat with your name and organization
- There will be a comment period at the end of the meeting
- Until then, please keep microphone muted
- During comments time please put your question in the chat box



Welcome



Agenda

- I. Welcome
- II. Report from VDOT Trails Office
- III. Report on VSP Trails
- IV. Member Reports
 - ❖ Virginia Creeper Trail Update
- V. 2025 STAC report
- VI. Comments
- VII. Spring Meeting Information





STATE TRAILS OFFICE UPDATES



State Trails Advisory Committee Meeting
November 5, 2025

State Trails Office Updates

- **The State Trails Office (STO) has transitioned from a dual-division structure to being fully housed in the Local Assistance Division (LAD)**
- **STO will continue to collaborate and work with the VDOT Transportation and Mobility Planning Division's (TMPD) Active Transportation Section across current and future initiatives**

Local Assistance Division

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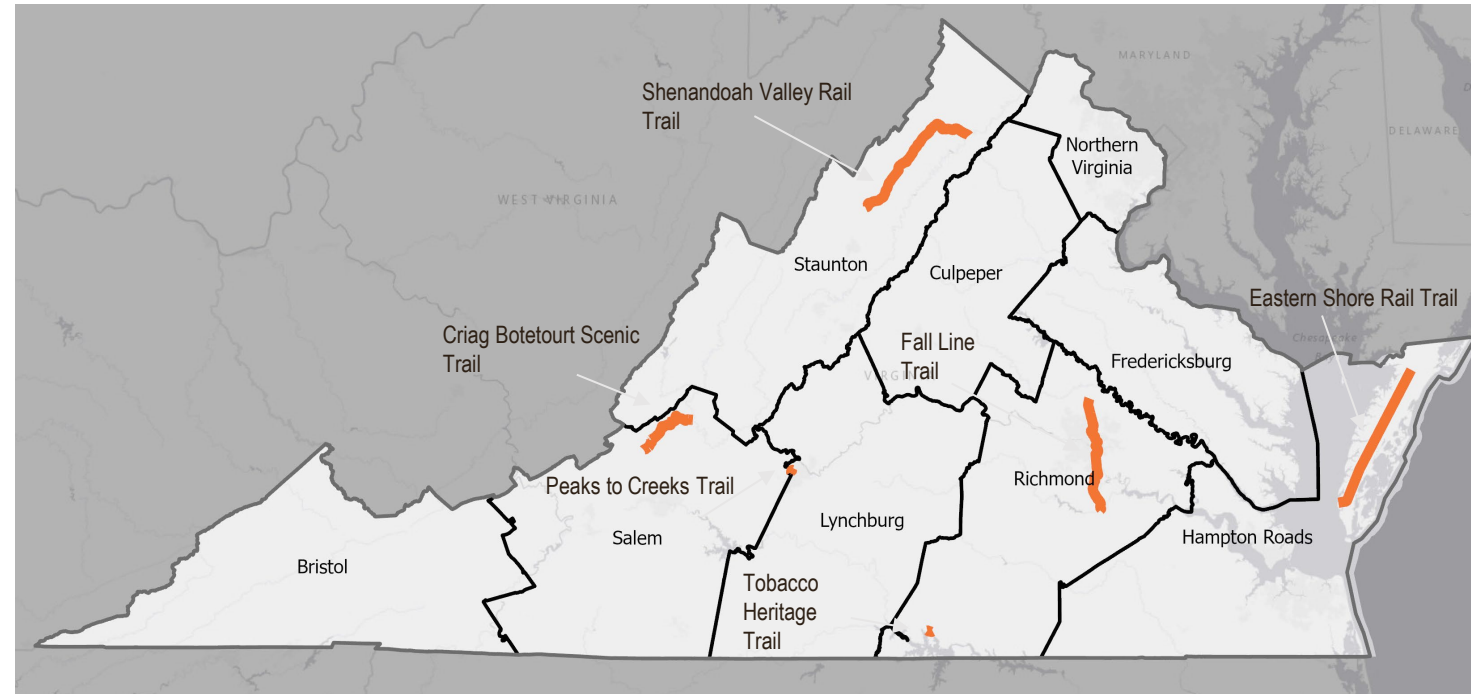
What is the State Trails Office?

- The STO was established in January 2023 through a 2022 General Assembly budget amendment
- Key initiatives include:
 - Develop a State Trails Plan
 - Establish an Information Clearinghouse
 - Create a Trail Type and Surface Selection Guide
- The General Assembly designated funding for priority trails



General Assembly-Identified Trails

- Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail
- Eastern Shore Rail Trail
- Tobacco Heritage Trail
- Peaks to Creeks Trail
- Craig Botetourt Scenic Trail
- Fall Line Trail (2024 General Assembly Session)



General Assembly Priority Trails and VDOT Districts

General Assembly-Identified Trails Dashboard



General Assembly-Identified Trails

State Trails Office

The budget negotiation process for the 2022 Virginia State budget resulted in the General Assembly authorizing the State Trails Office and directing VDOT to staff the office. The negotiations also provided a one-time allocation of general fund monies for the development of trails and identified five trail projects.

In the summer 2024 Special Session, general fund monies were allocated to the Fall Line Trail project, making it the sixth General Assembly-identified Trail.

In total, over \$86M has been allocated to the six projects.

The six General Assembly-identified trails are:

- [Craig Botetourt Scenic Trail](#)
- [Eastern Shore Rail Trail](#)
- [Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail](#)
- [Tobacco Heritage Trail](#)

☒ General Assembly-Identified Trails

Craig Botetourt Scenic Trail

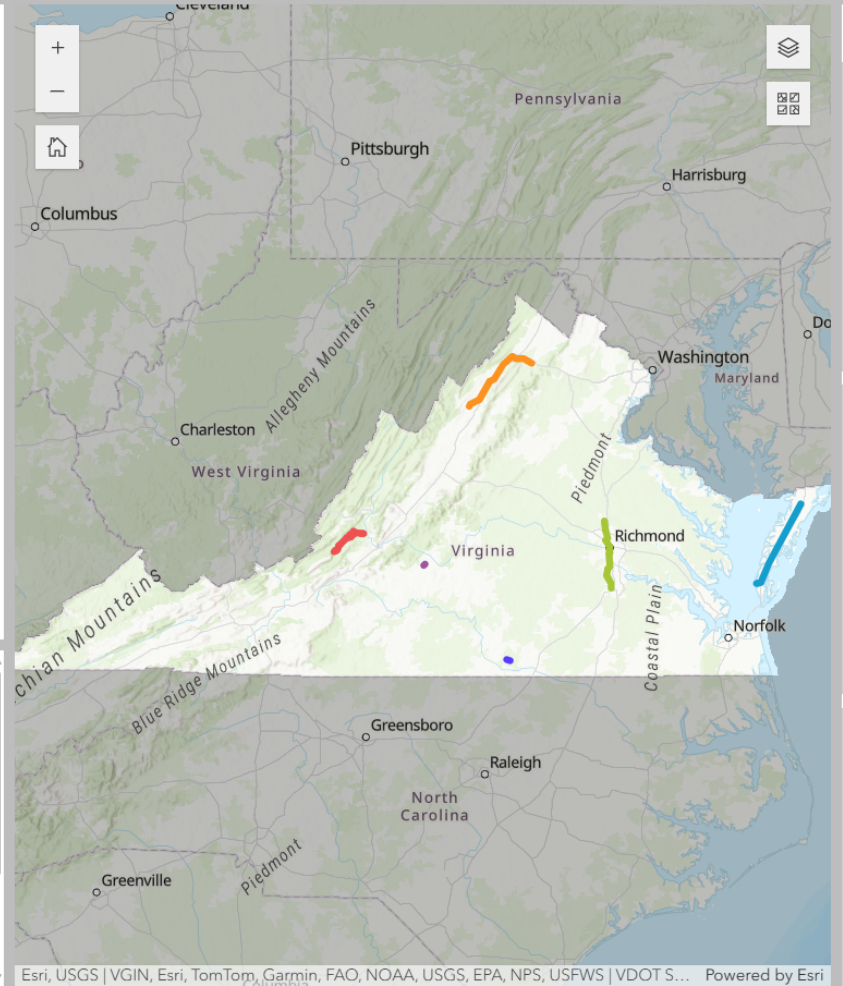
Eastern Shore Rail Trail

Fall Line Trail

Peaks to Creeks Trail

Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail

Tobacco Heritage Trail



Project Name: Eastern Shore Rail Trail

Project Description: A 49.1-mile former railroad corridor stretching from Cape Charles to Hallwood on the Eastern Shore in Northampton and Accomack Counties. The shared-use path will connect twelve towns along US Route 13 on the Eastern Shore, including Cape Charles, Cheriton, Nassawadox, Exmore, Onley, Parksley, and Bloxom.

Length: 49.10 miles

VDOT District: Hampton Roads

Project Name: Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail

Project Description: Norfolk Southern owned rail corridor that traverses the Shenandoah Valley between the Town of Broadway in Rockingham County, and the Town of Front Royal in Warren County. Through the 2020-2022 budget negotiation, the General Assembly stipulated that "Up to \$35.0 million shall be allocated to the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail for the purposes of land acquisition, initial planning, and site development. Any land acquisition by the Commonwealth as part of this trail's development shall not preclude the consideration of options to maintain rail transportation in the corridor." To address the last clause of the budget language, VDOT is assessing the constraints, considerations, and costs for constructing a trail

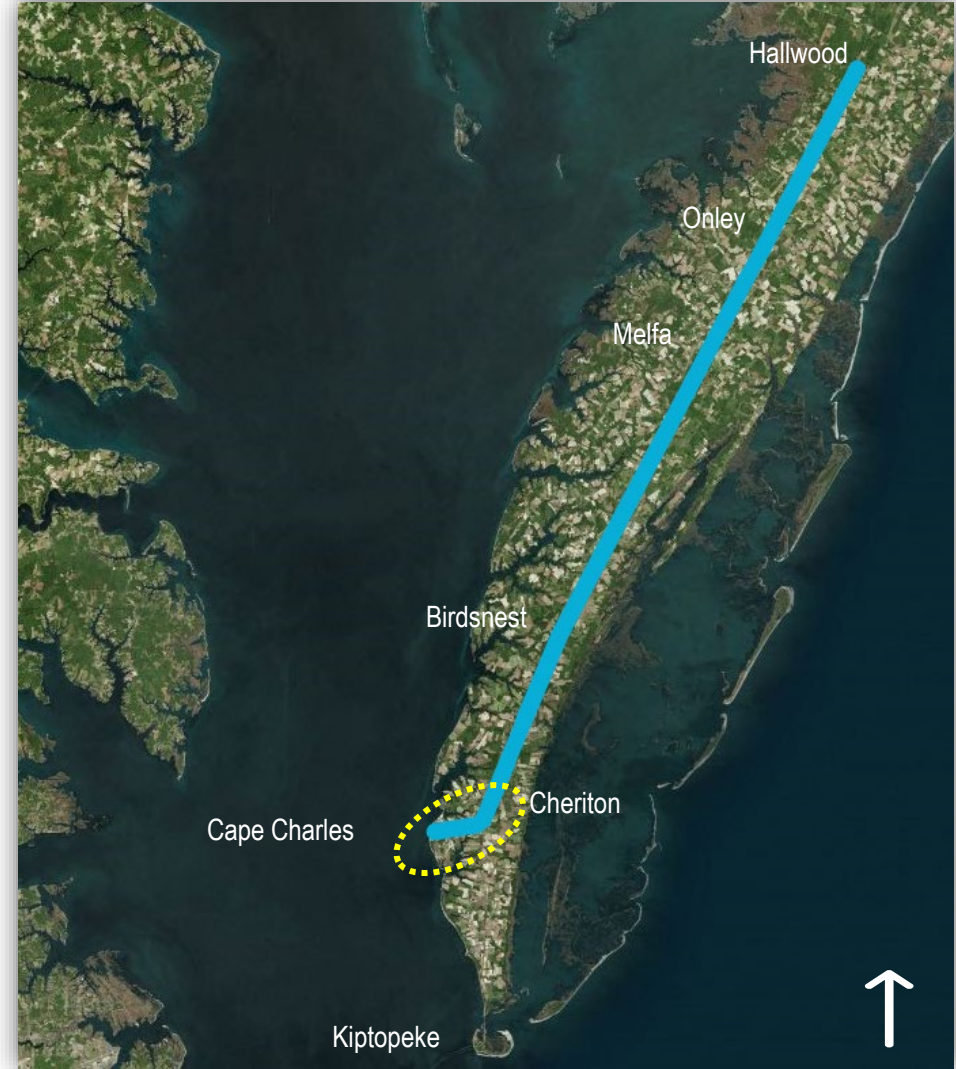
Project Name: Tobacco Heritage Trail

Project Description: Will build 2 miles of trail from Skipwith Road to the John H. Kerr Reservoir on the west side of Boydton. To the east, the existing Tobacco Heritage Trail (THT) extends 1 mile from Washington Street to Prison Road. The project is a part of the larger THT corridor which hopes to span over 160 miles between Brunswick, Charlotte, Halifax, Lunenburg, and Mecklenburg counties in southern Virginia.

Length: 2.00 miles

VDOT District: Richmond

Eastern Shore Rail Trail (Cape Charles to Cheriton)

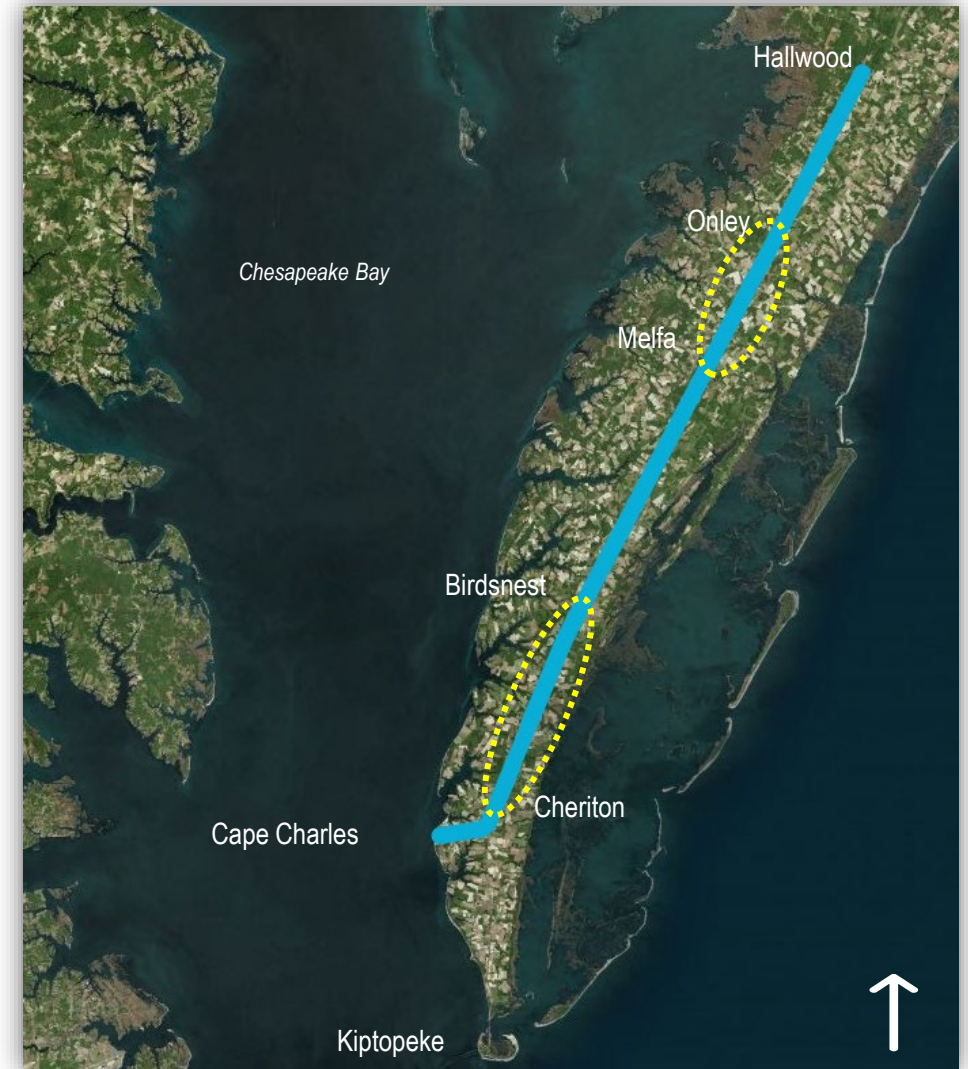


Eastern Shore Rail Trail (Cape Charles to Cheriton)

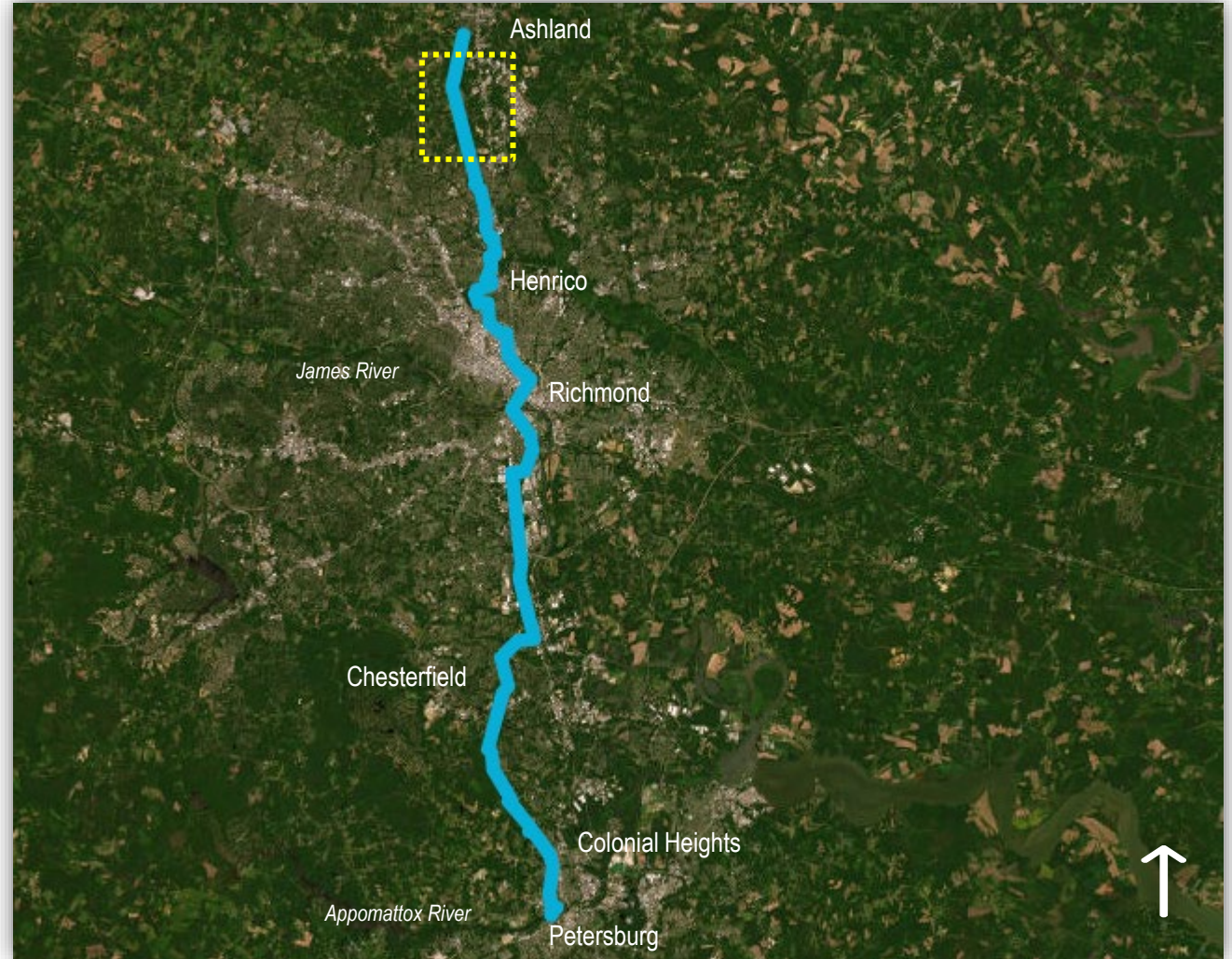


Eastern Shore Rail Trail cont. (segments under design)

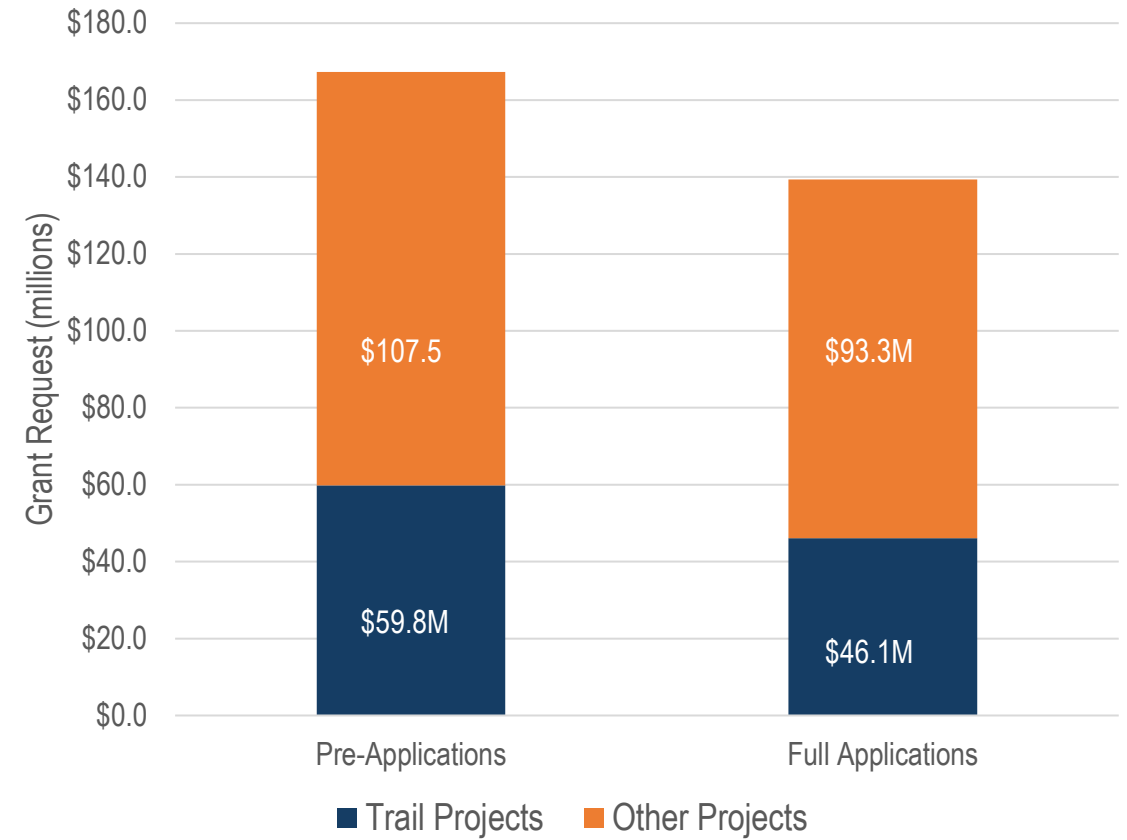
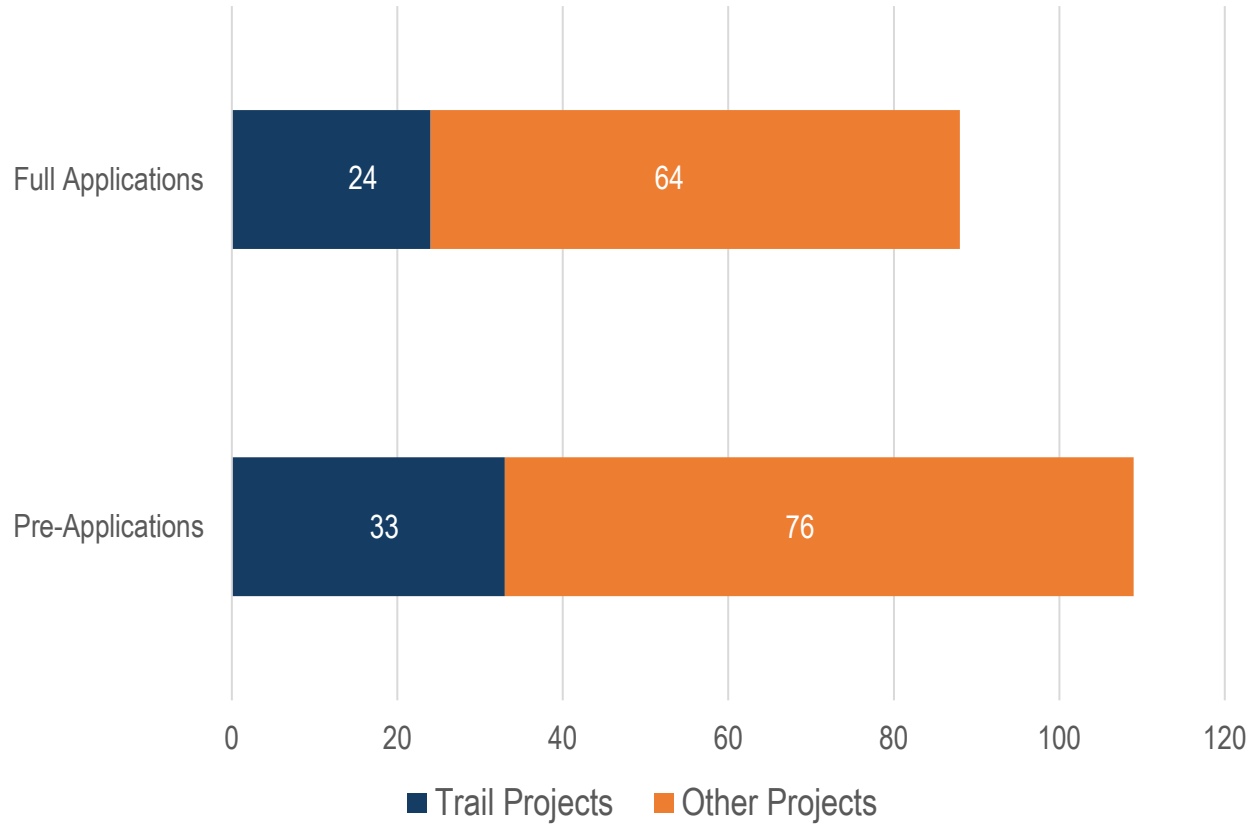
- Cheriton to Birdsnest
 - 11 miles
 - Smart Scale Round 6
 - Northampton County
 - VDOT administered
- Melfa to Onley
 - 4.2 miles
 - Smart Scale Round 5
 - Accomack County
 - VDOT administered



Fall Line Trail Update – 9/24 ribbon cutting



Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) 2025 Highlights



Virginia Trail Type and Surface Selection Guide

- New content for VDOT Road Design Manual
 - Trail users overview
 - Trail contexts
 - Trail surface types
- Suitability of various surface treatments
 - E.g., Paved versus compacted crushed stone
- Overview of additional considerations
 - Maintenance needs and accessibility



Statewide Multiuse Trails Plan Phase I Recap

- **Analyses Completed**
 - Population
 - Employment
 - Underserved communities
 - Safety priority corridors
- **Themes**
 - Connected
 - Accessible
 - Contrasting Geography
 - Safe

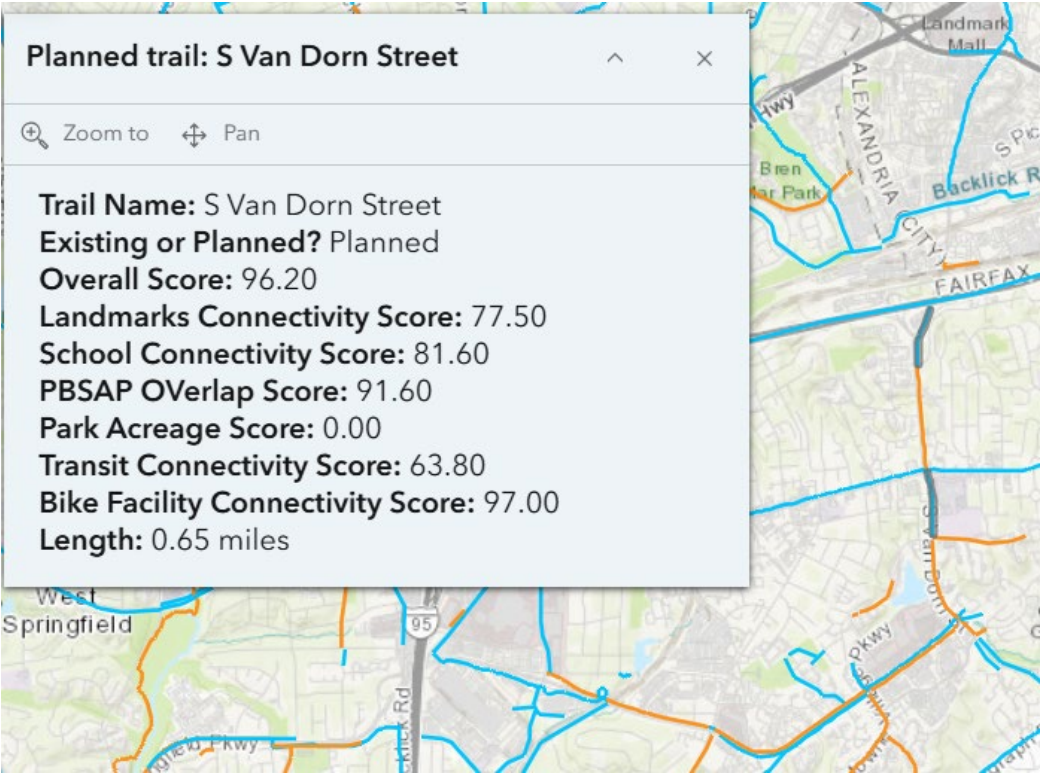
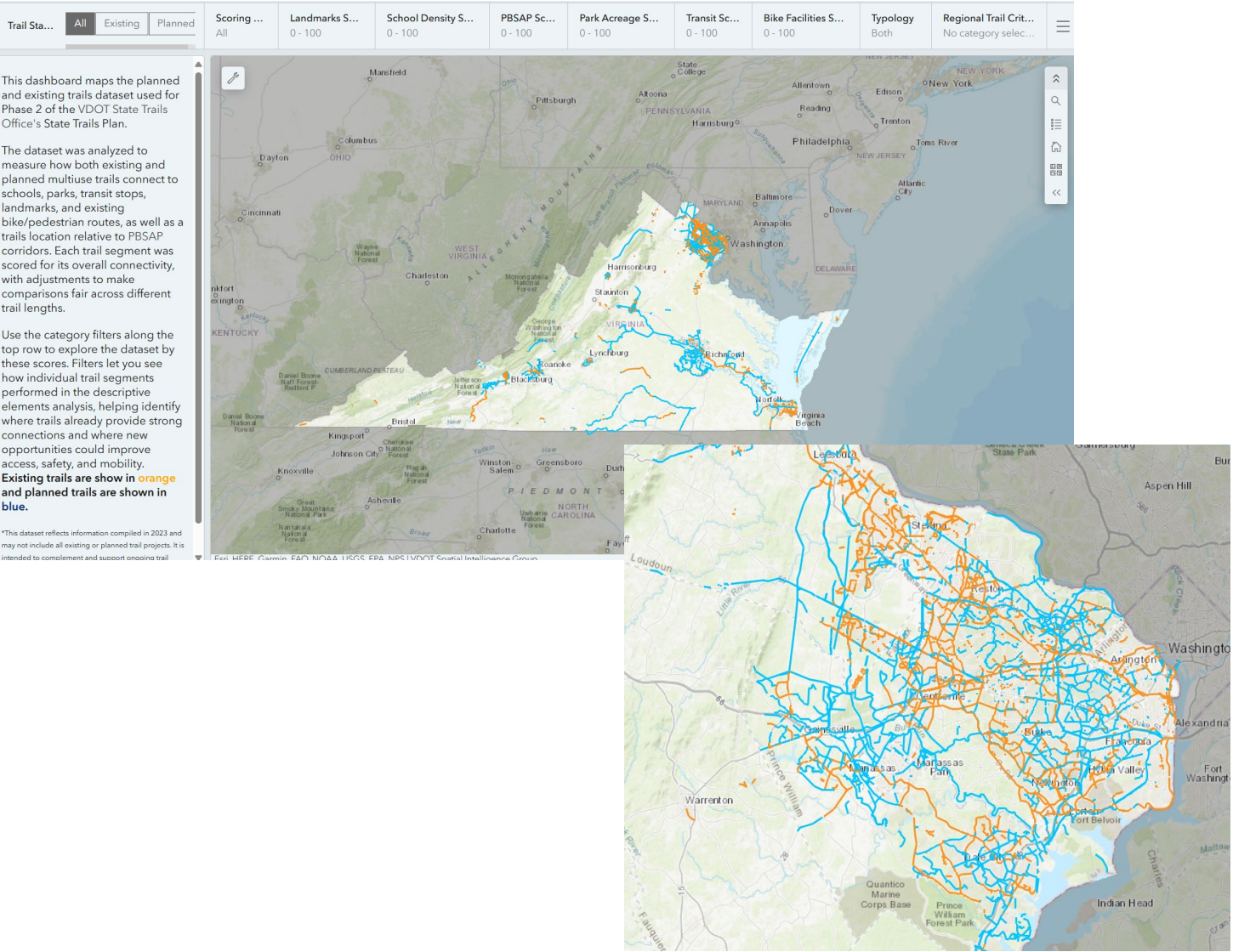
Multiuse Trails



Phase 2 Analysis

Element	Data Source	Question Being Answered
Key destinations	Virginia Landmarks Dataset (VGIN)	How can these facilities provide access to key destinations (schools, libraries, emergency services, hospitals, Commonwealth facilities) ?
Transit stops	Open-source transit data (GTFS)	
Dedicated bicycle facilities	VDOT Bicycle Facilities Inventory	How can these facilities connect to other travel modes and facilities for non-motorized users?
Pedestrian facilities	Open-source data	
State and local parks	ESRI, DCR, ParkScore	
Safety and Health Opportunity Index	PBSAP 4.0 and HOI	How does this network provide access to recreation facilities?
		How can these facilities help improve safety and health initiatives?

State Trails Office: State Trails Plan Phase 2 Analysis



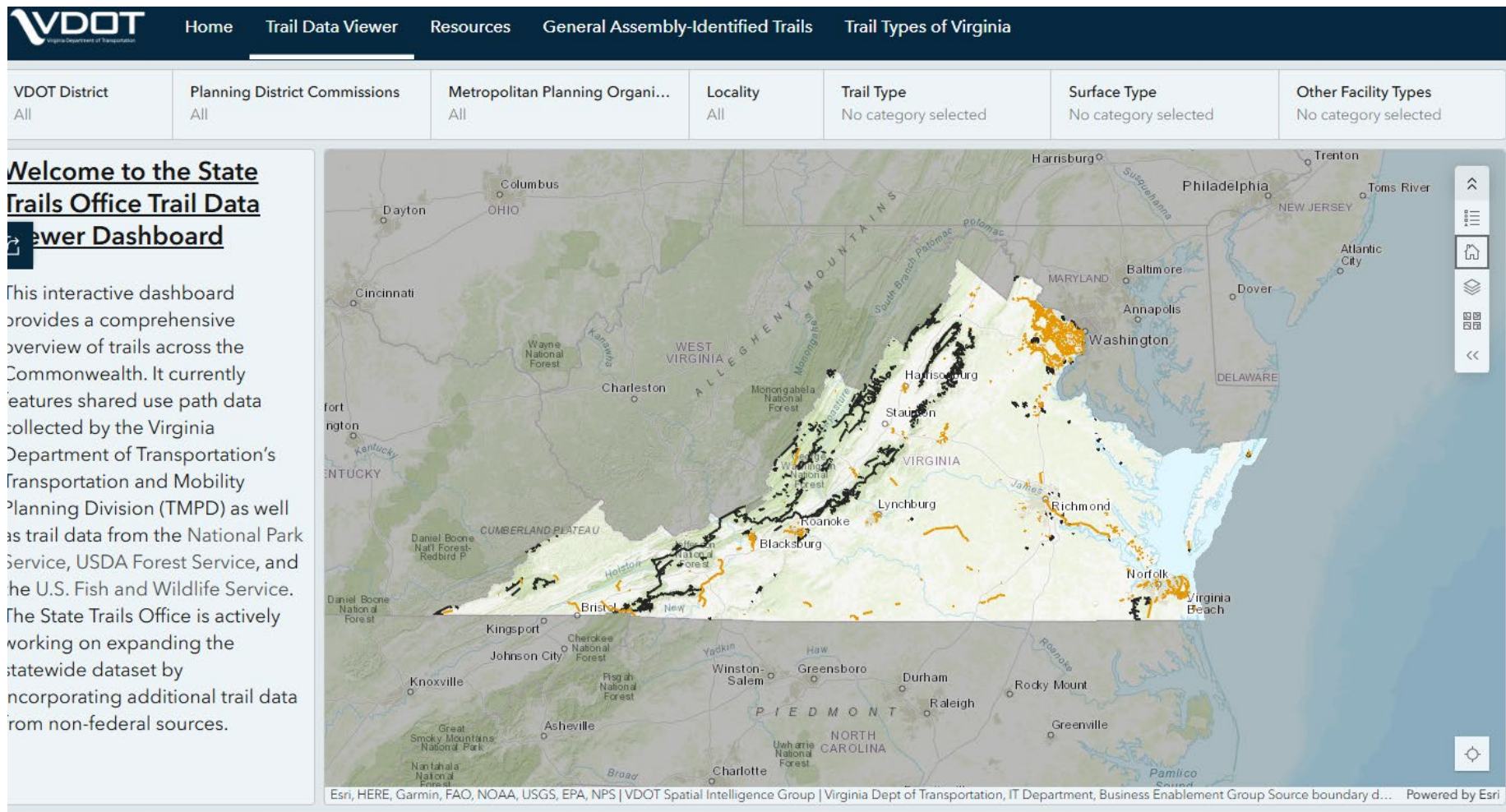
Welcome to the Virginia State Trails Office Resource Hub



The Resource Hub serves as a central location for trail-related information to support planning and design efforts across the Commonwealth. Resources have been gathered from various state and federal agencies, as well as nationally recognized trail organizations.

This is a living resource and that will be updated regularly as new trail-related data and guidance becomes available.

At this time, the Trail Data Viewer Dashboard is still under development as the State Trails Office works to compile accurate and comprehensive route and attribute data.



 [Home](#) [Trail Data Viewer](#) [Resources](#) [General Assembly-Identified Trails](#) [Trail Types of Virginia](#)



This page is your one-stop hub for all things related to trail development, planning, and promotion in Virginia. Organized into key categories, it includes drop-down lists with links to resources from state and federal agencies as well as established trail organizations. Whether you're working on planning, funding, accessibility, or coordination, these resources are here to guide you in making smart decisions for your trail projects.



[ADA & Accessibility](#)



[Planning Resources](#)



[Design & Safety Guidance](#)



[Rails-to-Trails & Rails-with-Trails](#)



[Legislation & Policy](#)



[Grants & Funding](#)

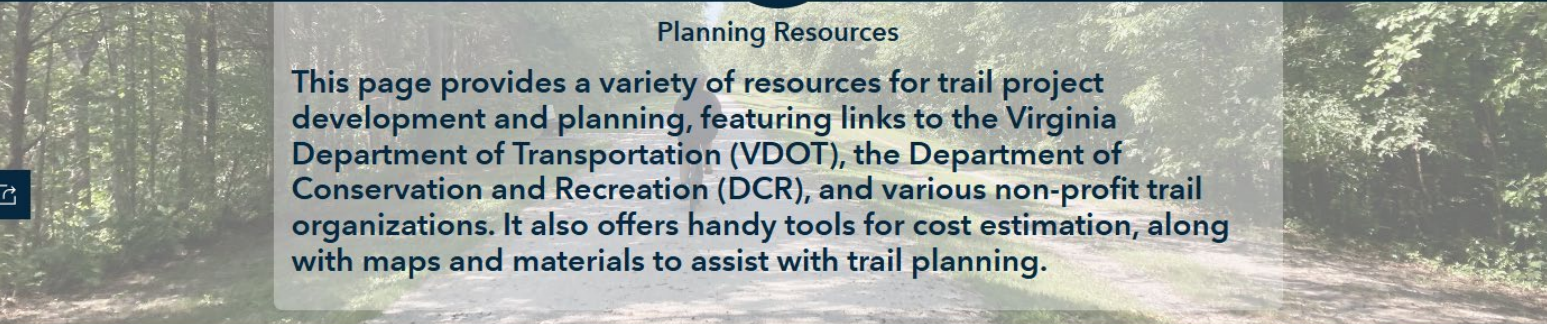


[Tourism & Economic Impacts](#)



[Trail Groups & Trail Organizations](#)

[Home](#)[Trail Data Viewer](#)[Resources](#)[General Assembly-Identified Trails](#)[Trail Types of Virginia](#)



Planning Resources

This page provides a variety of resources for trail project development and planning, featuring links to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and various non-profit trail organizations. It also offers handy tools for cost estimation, along with maps and materials to assist with trail planning.

^ Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)

- [VDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Program](#)
- [VDOT Community Trail Development Guide](#)
- [Pathways for Planning](#)
- [Ready, Set, Go! & Safe Routes to School \(SRTS\)](#)

v Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

v Project Cost Estimating Tools (VDOT Cost Estimation Office)

v National Organizations

^ Maps & Tools

Primary Trail Types of Virginia

This page provides an overview of the primary types of trails found throughout Virginia. Trails across the state vary in design, surface type, and intended use. The two major types included here are Shared Use Paths and Native Surface Trails.* Trails that do not fit within these types have been denoted as Other Trails within the [Trail Data Viewer](#). Click below to learn more about each trail type.

*Details on the use of surface treatment types in VDOT-funded programs can be found in [Appendix A\(1\) of the VDOT Road Design Manual](#).



Shared Use Paths

Explore



Native Surface Trails

Explore



Other Trails

Explore

Shared Use Paths



Shared use paths are facilities physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space (buffer) or barrier and either within the roadway right of way or within an independent right of way. Users are non-motorized and may include bicyclists, in line skaters, roller skaters, wheelchair users (both non-motorized and motorized) and pedestrians including walkers and runners. Shared use paths are most commonly designed for two-way travel and 10 feet wide. *

**For VDOT shared use path design guidelines, please see the VDOT Road Design Manual Appendix A(1) [here](#).*



Virginia Capital Trail



- Typical Width: 10 feet or more (8 feet in exceptional conditions)
- Typical Surface: Paved or other hard surfaces

Native Surface Trails



The US Forest Services defines a trail with a native surface as one where the surface is composed of soil, rock or other naturally occurring materials found on or near the trail. These trails are commonly used by non-motorized users like hikers, horseback riders, and mountain bikers. They are usually found in state and national parks, forestry lands, or local and regional parks. These may also be called bare earth or dirt trails*.

*Native surface trails may not meet accessibility standards. Surfaces can be rough, uneven, or soft, and routes may traverse steep terrain.



Douthat State Park

Unimproved or native surface trails come in many forms, but they may often be categorized as a singletrack trail. These are found in various settings, such as state and local parks, national forests, national parks, nature preserves, and wildlife refuges.

Other Trails and Paths

Across the state, many trails don't fit into the shared use path or native surface trail categories. Often found in local or regional parks, these trails typically feature improved or semi-improved surfaces designed primarily for pedestrians. The surface materials can vary widely. Commonly referred to as walking paths, these trails are usually limited to a single property, with permitted uses set by the managing authority.

Due to limited attribute data, many trails labeled as "Other" within the [Trail Data Viewer](#) have an unknown surface type.

Similar to native surface trails, the accessibility of these paths can vary greatly.



Maymont, Richmond, VA

Provide Feedback:

- Website: vdot.virginia.gov/trails
-
- Contact the State Trails Office: statetrailsoffice@vdot.virginia.gov



**VIRGINIA
STATE PARKS**

Fall 2025 STAC

Virginia State Parks and Trails

VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

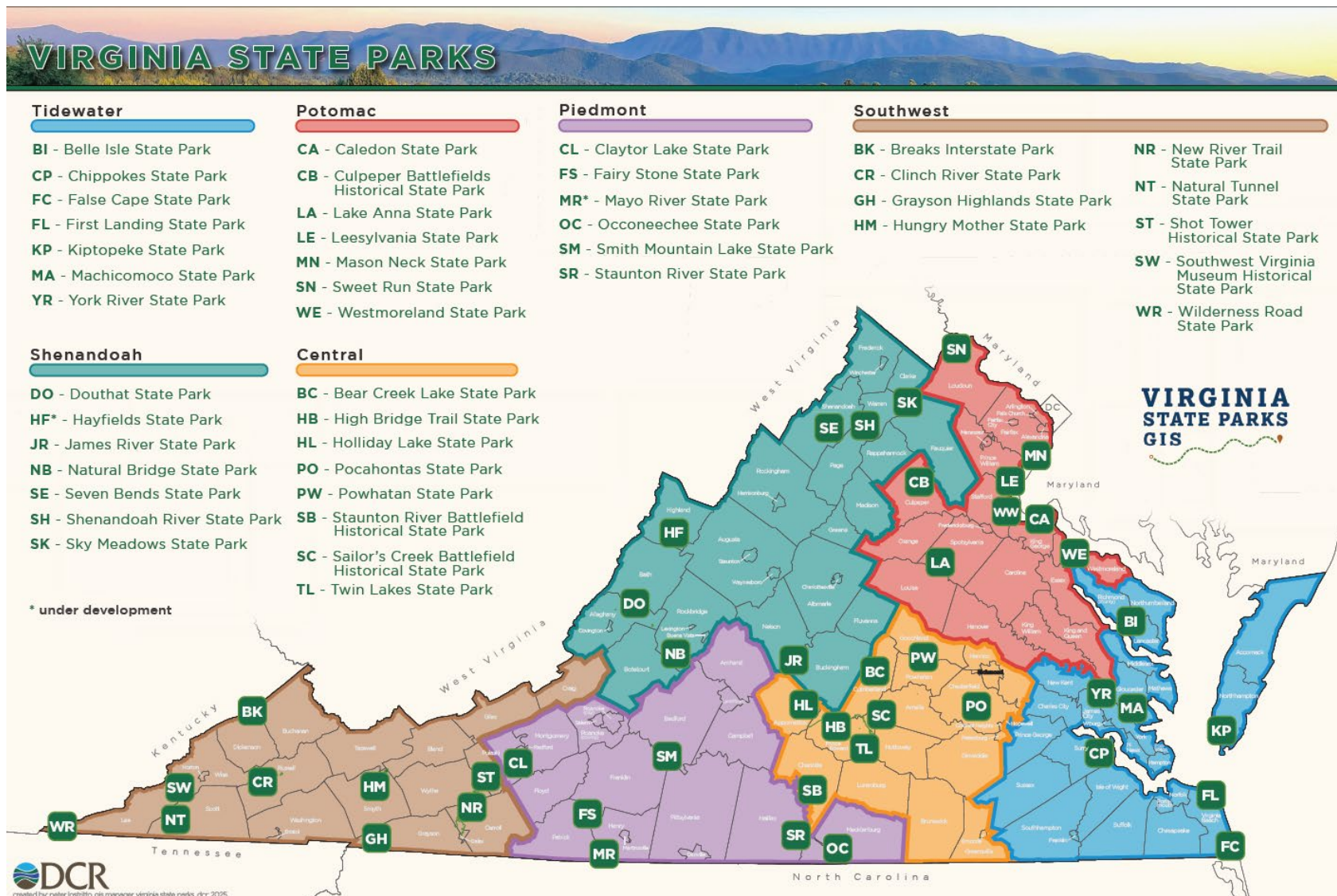
- 44 State Parks

*Hayfields State Park
Grand Opening Oct 20th*

- 81,427 Acres

- 730 Miles of Trail

Hike Only 147 miles
Bike Only 73 miles
Multiple Use 510 miles



Trail Construction Training

- Trails 101 – Sustainable Trails
- Trails 201 – Specialty Topics
- Mechanized Trail Training



Sustainable Trails - Importance

- Trails built without good planning and design, or user input, can be problematic.
- Older trail systems retrofitted for sustainability may not best serve the user.
- Desired experiences left out by narrow focus.
- Trail users are ever changing and diversifying.

Maintenance Sustainability and Beyond

- Traditional sustainability looks at physical sustainability/
 - Ecological Sustainability
 - Managerial Sustainability
 - Social Sustainability



Ecological Sustainability

- Does the trail fit into the landscape
- Right trail and user for the area
- Level of impact during development
- Long term impact on the landscape



Managerial Sustainability

- How does a new trail fit into overall management strategy for staff and/or interest groups
- Can volunteers fill the gaps?
- Inspections and assessments
- Trail decisions including temporary closures
- Risk Management



- Navigability



- Virginia Outdoors Plan Data
- Internal Review of Proposed Trail Actions
- Your Comments Count Surveys
- Staff Observations
- Feedback During Master Plan Process
- Trail Management Manual (Currently Under Revision)

High Bridge Trail State Park New River Trail State Park

Trail Improvements

November 5, 2025

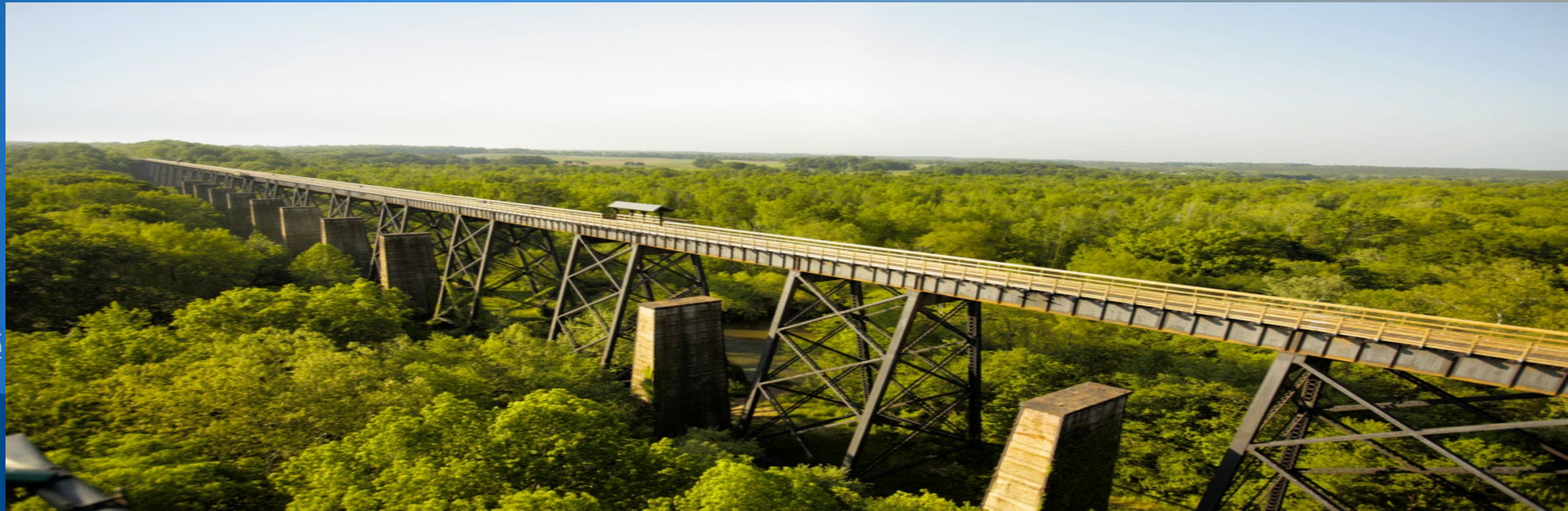
High Bridge Trail Park Background

32.2-mile corridor gifted by Norfolk Southern

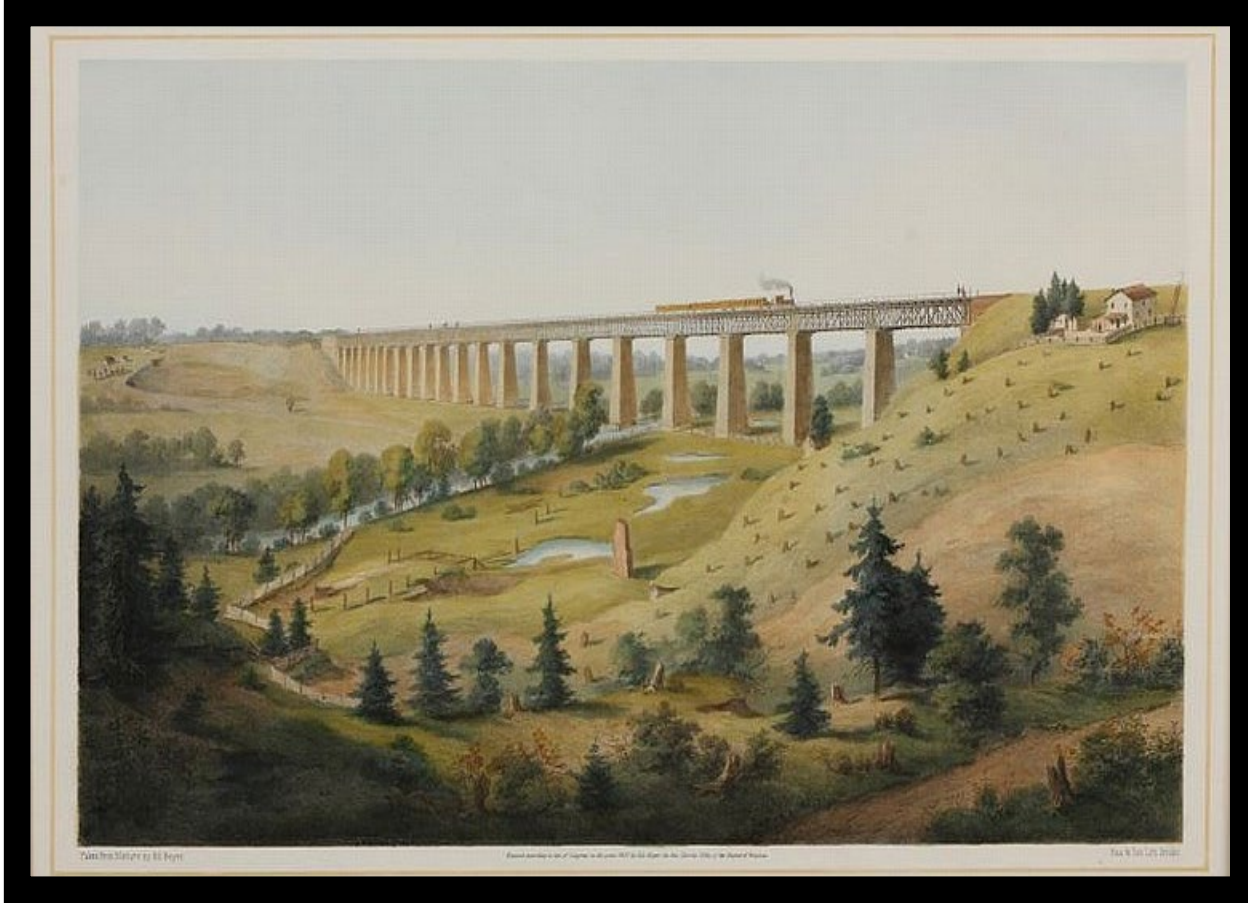
Cumberland, Nottoway and Prince Edward Counties

High Bridge centerpiece: 2400 ft long over Appomattox River

Funded in 2008/Opened in 2012



The Historic High Bridge



Summary of Existing Park Amenities

- **High Bridge Station**
 - Visitor Center w/ Comfort Station, Picnic Area, Playground, High Bridge
 - Side Trails to Substructure, Civil War Earthworks, and Appomattox River
- **Trailhead Parking Areas**
 - Pamplin, Prospect, Elam, Tuggle, Farmville, River Rd., Rice, & Moran
- **Rochelle Area**
 - Mountain Biking and Hiking Trails
- **Bridges and Culverts**
 - 3 Additional Bridges: Buffalo Cr., Mill St., & River Rd.
 - 94 Culverts, including Historic Stone Culverts
- **Staff and Service Areas**
 - Ranger Residences
 - Green Bay Rd. Maintenance Facility

Existing Facilities



Summary of Proposed Facilities

Multiple locations along 32.2-mile trail

- Enlarging Parking areas
- Replacing Decking on Bridges
- Adding new lighting
- New Picnic Areas
- New Bathroom facilities
- New Observation Deck
- New Playgrounds
- Creating to trail connections to Farmville parks
- Adding the Final mile of trail

New River Trail State Park Capital Improvements



Park Background

57-Mile corridor built from abandoned railroad

Spanning Grayson, Carroll, Wythe, Pulaski and Galax

39 miles parallels the New River



Capital Improvements

- **Inn at Foster Falls**
- **Renovated 17 Bridges**
- **Prioritized by Condition**
- Construction began: November 2023
- **Construction completion: December 2025**

Inn at Foster Falls: Built In 1888 by Foster Falls Mining and Manufacturing Company

Before



Renovation complete in 2023



Bridge Renovations: 17 bridges

Before Renovation



After Renovation



Virginia Outdoors Survey (2022)

Why are people using trails?

Which activities are most pursued/needed?

Which amenities are most desired?

- Reason for using trails: Pleasure or relaxation (75.4%), enjoyment of scenery and the natural environment (61.6%), and health and physical training (56.0%)
- Trail-based activities ($\geq 10\%$): Current participation versus most needed
 - **Participation $\geq$ Need**: Walking for pleasure, visiting parks, nature-based trails, visiting natural/historic areas, hiking/backpacking, viewing scenery, and jogging/running,
 - **Need $>$ Participation**: Picnicking, [bicycle trails](#), walks/runs/challenge-based events, [mountain biking](#), and [horseback riding](#)
- Trail amenities: Public restrooms (69.4%), trailhead parking (45.0%), drinking water (41.5%), and information kiosks (39.3%)

Reports from Members

- Virginia Creeper Trail Update



Rebuilding the Virginia Creeper Trail

Hurricane Helene:
Recovery and Progress

Lisa Quigley — Virginia Creeper Trail Conservancy



How did we get here?

- 🌿 Hurricane Helene struck August 28, 2025.
Widespread inland flooding
- 🌿 Massive storm impacts included over 140 structures lost in the town of Damascus and thousands of landslides in the area
- 🌿 The USFS owned portion of the trail above Damascus was completely inaccessible...destroyed or heavily damaged
- 🌿 Crews from across the U.S. and Puerto Rico were called in to help clear



Trestle 18

Funding & Approvals

- 🌱 Dec 2024 allocation for hardest-hit TN/VA/NC
- 🌱 Estimated large share for Creeper Trail rebuild
- 🌱 The USFS Decision Memo, released in February 2025, kicked off the rebuilding efforts
- 🌱 Scope: debris removal, trestles rebuilt/repared, stream bank stabilization and trail reconstruction

Early and Intermediate Steps

- 🌱 Public input gathered post decision memo
- 🌱 First RFP posted in May
- 🌱 Beginning in early summer, debris removal -- critical for safety and access – began in earnest
- 🌱 Nearly 50,000 cubic yards of organic and inorganic debris removed to date



Typical debris field in Damascus
resulting from massive water flow,
rushing down from the VCT

Next Step: Contracting the Massive Project

- 🌱 Top 3 contractors identified in late spring
- 🌱 Top design-build firms toured in August
- 🌱 Final proposals due late August
- 🌱 Contractor award initially expected end of Sept
- 🌱 Timeline/deadlines will likely shift beyond September 2016

Other Progress Milestones

- 🌱 US Rt 58 – essential for trail access and public use – reopened May 22 -- 5 months ahead of schedule
- 🌱 Trail segments widened for equipment access
- 🌱 Temporary bridges installed where needed



Over a mile of Route 58 destroyed

Damascus to Abingdon Section Open

 Damascus to Abingdon remained open post-storm

 Section vital to keep bike shops and all other trail dependent businesses open – mostly

 Shops still down significantly

 Optimism focused on 2026/2027

Beyond Engineering -- Lessons Learned

 Trails transform people:

- "...this trail saved me"
- "I am 10 years sober because of the Creeper Trail"
- "...the Creeper Trail left an indelible impression on my children who are now avid cyclists, runners and outdoorsmen and women"

 Relationships and advocacy matter and cannot be underestimated

 How much is accomplished when there is earnest collaboration between state, local and federal government along with nonprofits and our communities at large

 The importance of having the support of the greater trail community, particularly across the Commonwealth. So many of you have offered support, wisdom and kind words, and for these too, we thank you



STAC Report FY 2025

Published October 2025. Summarizes staff initiatives and STAC work for FY 2025

1. The Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) has been released in digital format.
2. Recreational Trails Program Grants for 2025 - \$1.7 million was available and twenty-four applications were received. Next round will be in spring of 2026.
3. VDOT State Trails Office. First phase of the statewide was completed in fall 2024, second phase expected to be completed by fall of 2025.
4. Development of context-sensitive trail design guidelines and specs underway.

STAC Report FY 2025 (cont'd)

5. STAC Progress Report. Fall 2024 meeting included member reports from Virginia Creeper Trail impacts from Hurricane Helene. The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) document was passed as presented.

6. The Spring 2025 included presentation of the Virginia Outdoors Plan as well as updates from VDOT and DCR.

The full report is available online on the Virginia Legislative Information System Website:

<https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2025/RD682/PDF>





Spring 2026 Meeting

- VAULT conference will be April 27-29, 2026 at Newport News Marriott City Center
- Save the date
- Items you'd like to see on Spring agenda? Send to:

PlanningResources@dcr.virginia.gov

Links:

Email: PlanningResources@dcr.virginia.com

STAC Report on LIS:

<https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2025/RD682/PDF>

Meeting Recording and Presentation:

<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/state-trails>



Thank you!