

# DRAFT Preliminary Findings

Durham Board of County Commissioners
April 7, 2025

Eric Woolridge, AICP
President, Destination by Design







# **Rail Trail Background**

**Historical Significance:** Original rail line fueled regional growth by transporting goods like tobacco and textiles.

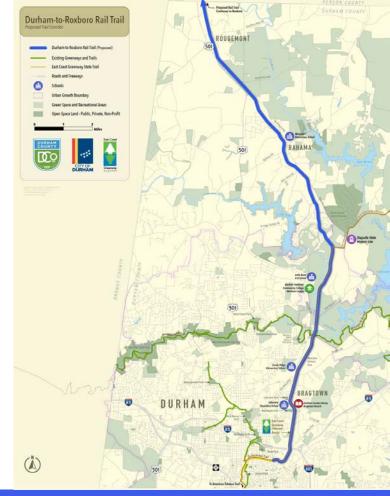
**Durham County Priority:** Project in adopted County open space plans since 1991 and funding in Capital Improvement Program since 2006.

**Rail Corridor Ownership:** Conservation Fund is working to acquire the rail corridor from Norfolk Southern. NCDOT to be the long-term owner. Eminent domain will not be utilized to acquire property.

**Community Initiative:** Transform the 18-mile inactive rail corridor into a multi-use trail utilizing robust community engagement and public input.

**Connecting Areas:** Combined with the Person County section – creates a 26-mile trail that connects downtown Durham to Roxboro.

**Rail Trail Benefits:** Improves physical & mental health for residents, safe bike/pedestrian transportation routes, historical/cultural education, and economic development opportunities along trail. An active trail provides for safety.





# Project Timeline

		Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-23	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25
	Task 1. Direction Setting													
	Task 2. Existing Conditions, Discovery, and Framework Plan Development													
	Task 3. Public Engagement (Phase 1)													
•	Task 4. Draft Plan Development and Po	ublic I	Engaç	gemei	nt (Ph	ase 2	)							
Ť														
	Task 5. Final Plan Development													



# **Project Management Team**

- City of Durham Parks and Recreation
- Durham County Transportation Department
- Triangle West Transportation
   Planning Organization
- East Coast Greenway Alliance
- North Carolina Department of Transportation

















# **Project Management Team**

**Bi-Weekly Meetings** 

October 2024 - March 2025

(11 Meetings to date)

Ellen Beckmann

**Durham County** 

Tom Dawson

City of Durham

**Hart Evans** 

NCDOT

**Andrew Meeker** 

East Coast Greenway

**David Miller** 

**Triangle West** 

**Brooke Roper** 

**Durham County** 

# **Project Advisory Committee**

# **Trail Identity Committee**

December 11, 2024 & March 26, 2025

#### Michelle Burton

**Durham County Commissioner** 

#### **Helena Cragg**

Oxford/Hamlin Community Association

#### Heidi Grable

Bahama Ruritan Club

#### Ricky Hart

Stagville Descendants Council

#### **Angela Hollowell**

Bike Durham

#### **Deborah Luecken & Dave Connelly**

Durham Open Space and Trails Commission

#### Vannessa Mason-Evans & Donna Fredrick

Bragtown Community Association

#### Michelle Pendergrass

**Durham Public Schools** 

#### David Proper

The Conservation Fund

#### **Carl Rist**

City of Durham Council Member

#### Steve Smith & Ronald Schoenfeld

Rougemont Ruritan Club

#### Sallie Vaughn

Person County

January 28 & March 18

#### **Dave Connelly**

Durham Open Space and Trails Commission

#### **Karl Galloway**

City of Durham

#### **Heidi Grable**

Bahama Ruritan Club

#### Ricky Hart

Stagville Historic Site

#### Vannessa Mason-Evans

Bragtown Community Association

#### **Andrew Meeker**

East Coast Greenway

#### **David Miller**

Triangle West

#### Michelle Pendergrass

**Durham Public Schools** 

#### Kim Strickland

**Person County** 

#### **Brooke Roper**

**Durham County** 

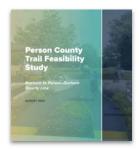
#### Sallie Vaughn

Person County



# **DISCOVERY & ENGAGEMENT**

# **Previous Plan Review**



Person County Trail Feasibility Study (2024)



Durham Comprehensive Plan (2023)



NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Plan (2022) (Amendment #5: Bike, Multi-Use Path)



City of Durham Trails Implementation Program (2021)



City of Durham Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (2018)



The Impact of Greenways in the Triangle (2017)



City of Durham Trail Condition Assessment (2017)



Mountains-to-Sea North Carolina State Trail Master Plan (2015)



City of Durham Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2013)



Durham Trails and Greenways Master Plan (2011)



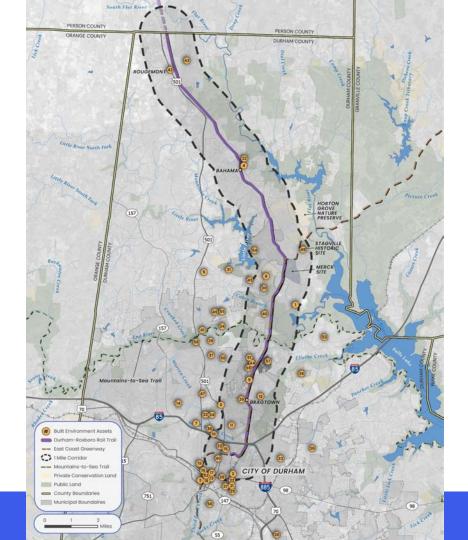
# **Asset Inventory & Analysis**

# **Natural Environment Assets**

21 Public Parks | 6 Nature Preserves | 8 Lakes & Rivers 12 Bike/ Pedestrian Rail & Connector Trails

# **Built Environment Assets**

26 Neighborhoods | 12 Public Schools | 4 Business Districts
2 Recreation Centers | 11 Historical Sites |
4 Art Centers | 3 Trail Towns



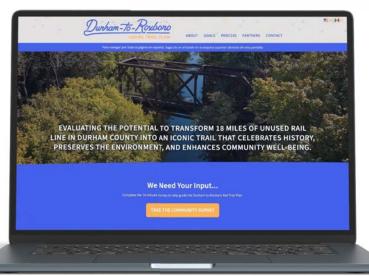




# Tools of Engagement

# January 15 - March 25

- 1. Project Fact Sheet
- 2. Website Portal
- 3. Social Media
- 4. Community Online Survey
- 5. Public Workshops
- 6. Focus Groups
- 7. Pop-Up Events







TRAIL CORRIDOR MAP

# **Community Survey**

OPEN JANUARY 15 -MARCH 25

2,994

62 PAPER RESPONSES 2,932 ONLINE RESPONSES 1,372 EMAILS COLLECTED

88

ZIP CODES REPRESENTED

66%

**Durham County Zip Codes** 

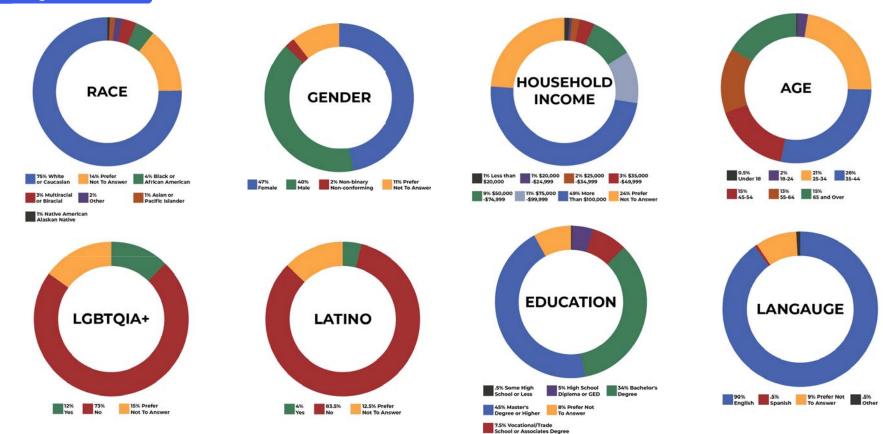
# GENERAL USAGE | IMPROVEMENTS & PRIORITIES COMMUNITY SUPPORT | MAP BASED FEEDBACK | SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



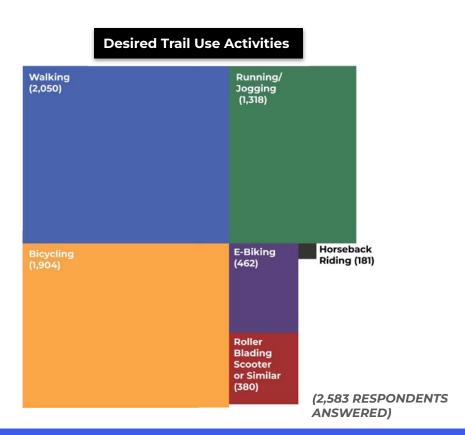
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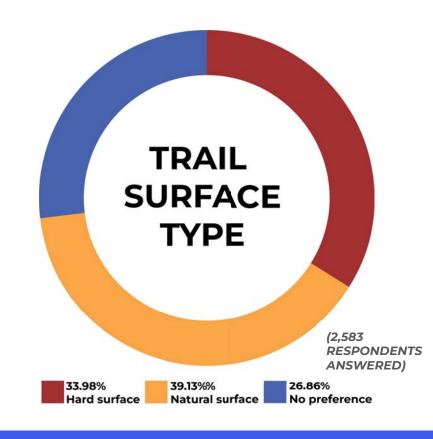




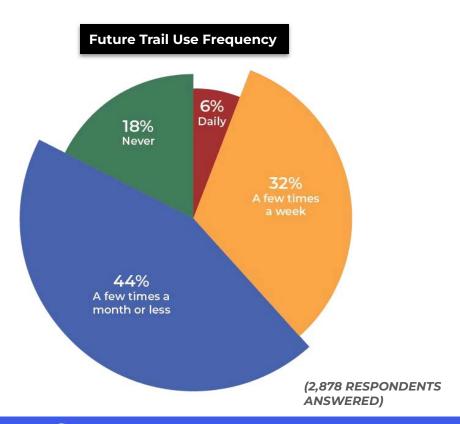


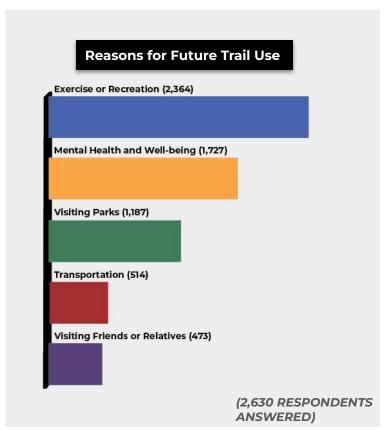




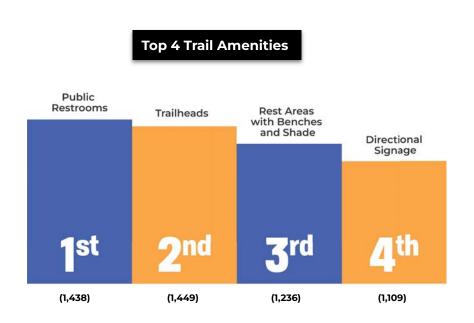


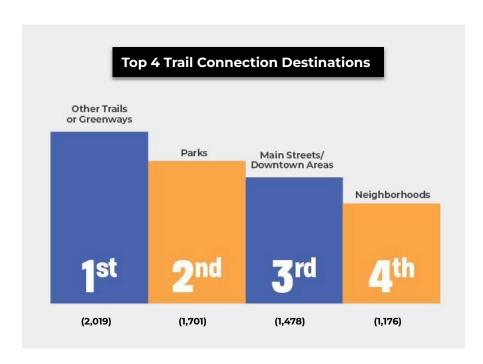










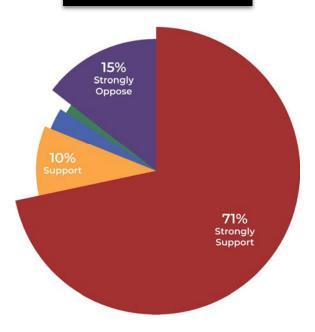


(2,605 RESPONDENTS ANSWERED)

(2,563 RESPONDENTS ANSWERED)



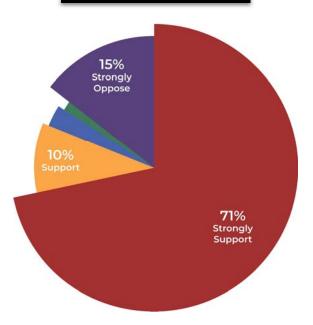
# **Overall Level of Support**



(2,713 RESPONDENTS ANSWERED)



## **Overall Level of Support**



(2,713 RESPONDENTS ANSWERED THIS QUESTION)

## **Responses from North Durham County Residents**

# N. Durham (zip 27712)

- 296 respondents
  - 38 strongly oppose
  - o 5 oppose
  - 11 unsure/ neutral
  - o 29 support
  - 213 strongly support

# **Bahama** (zip 27503)

- 194 respondents
  - o 108 strongly oppose
  - o 8 oppose
  - o 10 unsure/ neutral
  - o 3 support
  - 64 strongly support

# Rougemont (zip 27572)

- 133 respondents
  - 51 strongly oppose
  - 4 oppose
  - 4 unsure/ neutral
  - o 14 support
  - 60 strongly support

# **Survey Interactive Map**

**2,994** Survey Respondents

**578** Map Respondents

1,917 Map Comments



## **OPPORTUNITIES (1,220)**

#### Connections

- Neighborhoods
- Trails in the area
- Schools
- Recreation + cultural assets

## **Outdoor Recreation Development**

- Hiker/ biker campsites + other trail-oriented development
- Kayak put-in
- Fishing accesses
- Plenty of parking
- Safe pedestrian/ bicycle route + bike commuting

#### **Education**

- Wildlife viewing areas
- Nature museum along trail
- Highlight history

## Safety

- Pedestrian crossings with proper signals
- Speeding cars + high traffic
- Crime
- Proximity to hunting area
- Adequate lighting

**CONCERNS (697)** 

- Residential disturbance/ trespassing
- Patrolling/emergency phones along route

## **Long-Term Sustainability**

- Drainage in flood-prone areas
- Wetland + wildlife protection
- Litter + stream pollution
- Gentrification

#### **Amenities**

 Sufficient parking + bathrooms



## Public Workshops (174 participants)

- 1. North Regional Library (65)
- 2. Edison Johnson Recreation Center (40)
- 3. Durham County Library (69)

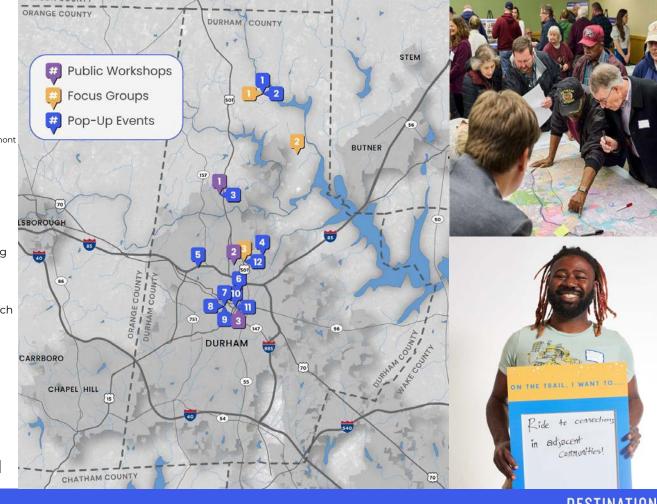
### Focus Groups (43 participants)

- 1. North Durham Community (20) Bahama + Rougemont
- 2. Stagville Descendants Council (3)
- 3. Bragtown Community Association (20)

### Pop-Up Events (455 participants)

- 1. Bahama & Rougemont Ruritan Clubs (40)
- 2. Bahama & Rougemont Public Information Meeting (210)
- 3. North Regional Library (15)
- 4. Bragtown Branch Durham Public Library (10)
- 5. LEAP Program Preschool St Luke's Episcopal Church (10)
- 6. Durham Farmers Winter Market (25)
- 7. Go Durham Bus Station (15)
- 8. Go Durham Bus Station(15)
- 9. Go Durham Bus Station (30)
- 10. BPAC Monthly Meeting (Virtual) (20)
- 11. DOST Monthly Meeting (20)
- 12. Bragtown Baptist Church (15)
- 13. Sembrando Raices (30)

**672** Total Participants Engaged



















MAP EXERCISE | TRAIL IDENTITY | TRAIL SURFACE | AMENITIES | CROSSINGS | PHOTOBOOTH



**"Connectivity** to walking and hiking trails, along with protected bike lane networks, would make the trail orders of magnitude more useful. Either way, I'm very excited for this project and to explore more of the area not in a car."

"My primary concern is **safety** on the trails. It's not a community resource if half the community does not feel safe."

"It seems like there are a lot of projects of this type that are planned, studied, and focus grouped forever and are **never actually built.** How long will this take?"

"This could be a really cool chance to build a bigger community."

"We need a safe way for folks to bike to this greenway. **We don't want to encourage folks to drive there just to bike there.**"







"My kids are just looking for a **safe place to ride** their bikes."

"I truly hope this idea becomes a reality. North Durham is greatly deprived of parks, sidewalks, and areenways,"

"Please reconsider this plan. Strongly believe this is a waste of money."

"The trail sounds nice, but any funds used for this trail could be better spent fighting crime and improving education in Durham."

"This is a fantastic project. I hope everyone can pull it off. I would get it going ASAP, even if everything isn't done. The sooner people can get on the trail, the **more momentum.**"

"The region needs a more connected network of bicycle infrastructure. This trail would do a great job of connecting Durham to points north, and go through core neighborhoods."



# **SWOT Analysis**

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<b>S1.</b> Existing Rail Corridor	<b>W1.</b> Corridor Acquisition Not Complete	<b>O1.</b> Connection to Neighborhoods, Parks/Trails &	<b>T1.</b> Cost to Build/ Federal Uncertainty
<b>S2.</b> Strong Community	·	Schools	, and the second
Support in City of Durham	<b>W2.</b> Some Community		<b>T2.</b> Road Crossings/
<b>S3.</b> Success of Other Trails in	Opposition in N. Durham County	<b>O2.</b> Highlight Historic, Cultural, & Env. Features	Pedestrian Safety
the Region		·	<b>T3.</b> Ongoing Maintenance of
<b>S4.</b> Multiple Agencies	<b>W3.</b> Lack of One Agency/Person as Trail	<b>03.</b> Small Business Creation	Trail & Facilities
Advocating for Trail	Champion	<b>04.</b> Outdoor Rec.	<b>T4.</b> Conflict with Hunting
, ta. v = ca. ti. 1.g . c a		Development Along Trail	10 0011111011111111111111111111111111
<b>S5.</b> Completed Person County	<b>W4.</b> Need to Develop Phased		<b>T5.</b> Perceived Crime on/near
Study	Implementation Strategy and Identify Funding for Trail	<b>O5.</b> Support Physical & Mental Health	Trail
<b>S6.</b> Regional 26-Mile Trail (with	Development		<b>T6.</b> Reduction of Privacy,
Person County)	·	<b>O6.</b> Alt. Transportation (Bike/Ped)	particularly for Rural Areas
<b>S7.</b> Connect Urban to Rural		, ,	<b>T7.</b> Potential Gentrification
Historic Towns		<b>O7.</b> Educational/ Interpretive Signage	
		<b>O8.</b> Trail ambassadors/Security	

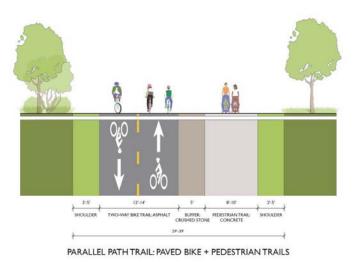


# DRAFT PLAN FRAMEWORK

# Draft Rail Trail - Trail Types (Analysis Ongoing)

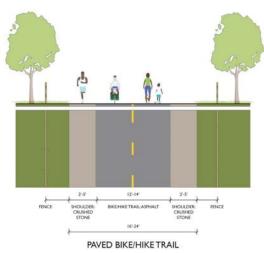
# **Parallel Path Trail**

Durham Rail Trail to Bragtown (Dearborn Dr) 2.6 Miles



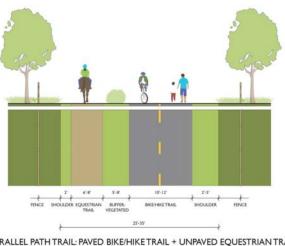
# **Paved Bike Hike Trail**

Bragtown to Bahama 9.6 Miles



# **Horse Parallel Path Trail**

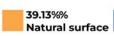
**Bahama to County Line** 6 Miles



PARALLEL PATH TRAIL: PAVED BIKE/HIKE TRAIL + UNPAVED EQUESTRIAN TRAIL









26.86% No preference

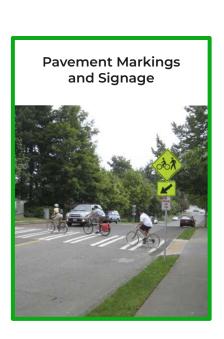


# **Road Crossings**

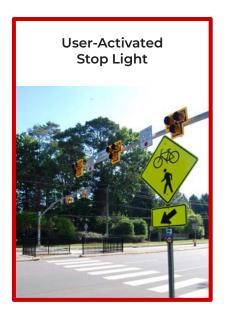
# Interventions



## **Most Intervention**







Grade Separated

High-visibility Crosswalks and Signage

User-activated Lights (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon) with Advance Signage
User-activated Stoplight (Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon) with Advance Signage



# DRAFT Feature Typologies & Preliminary Findings by the Numbers...



#### Trail Towns (3)

- Educational, historical, and cultural wayside exhibits & trail access
- Small business support services for trail users
  - Food + Beverage
  - Cultural Experience
  - Equipment rental and repair



#### Local Parks (0)

- Parking
- Restrooms
- Informational signage
- Recreational features
- Vehicular and trail access



### Pocket Parks (2)

- Informational signage
- Limited recreational features
- Trail access ONLY



## **Trail Connectors (14)**

- 4 Park connections
- 3 School connections
- 5 Connections to other trails
- 1 Library connection
- 1 Nature preserve connection



## **Major Trailhead (1)**

- Parking
- Restrooms
- Informational signage



## Minor Trailheads (2)

- Small parking area
- Informational signage



## **Road Crossings (21)**

- 2 Grade Separated
- 4 High visibility crosswalks & signage
- 12 User activated flashing lights
- 3 User activated stop lights



### Stream/River Crossings (9)

- 3 Trestle bridges
- 6 Culverts

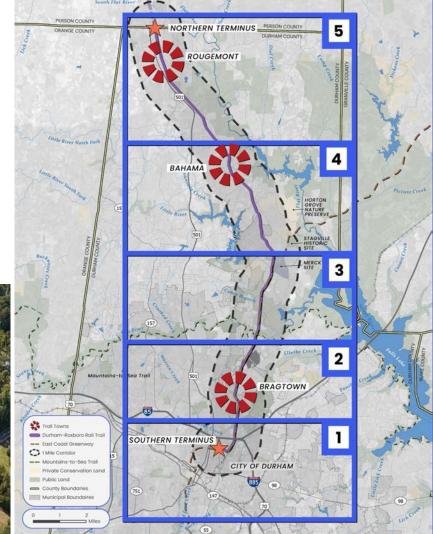


# **DRAFT Plan Framework Planning Sections**

- 1 Downtown Durham
- 2 Bragtown
- **3** Two Rivers
- 4 Bahama
- **5** Rougemont







## **Quick Facts**

### Section Extent: Avondale Road Overpass - East Club Blvd

Segment Length: 1.7 Miles

**Key Features:** Downtown Durham, East Coast Greenway, American Tobacco Trail, East End Park, Duke Park, North Gate Park, Sherwood Park, Southern Terminus, GoDurham Route 9

Recommended Trail Type: Parallel Path Trail

#### **Draft Project Opportunities**

1.1 Norfolk & Western

1.2 NC DOT Parcel

1.3 City of Durham Parcel

#### **Proposed Trail Connectors**

1.1 R. Kelly Bryant Trail Connector/ East End Park

1.2 Sherwood Park Connector (Goose Creek Trail East)

1.3 Northgate Park Connector (North Ellerbee Creek Trail)

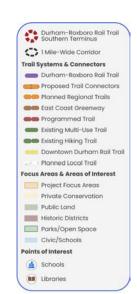
1.4 Downtown Rail Trail

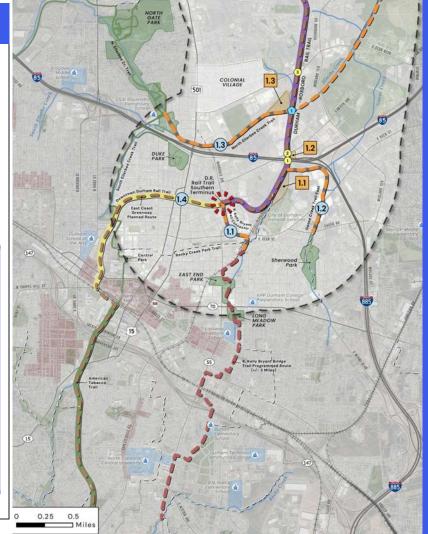
#### **Road Crossings**

- 1. I-85 (Underpass)
- 2. Camden Ave (Underpass)
  - 3. East Club Blvd (At-grade)

#### **Stream Crossings**

1. Ellerbe Creek (Trestle)





# **Project Opportunity 1.1 - Norfolk & Western Parcel**

# **Draft Concept**

Project Type: Pocket Park

**Acreage:** 13.19

Key Features: Water restoration, bike playground, picnic

tables, and public art

Location: Trail Access Only

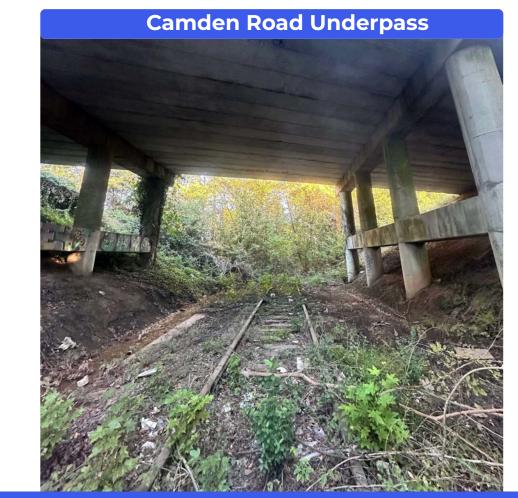




Suggested features for a conceptual park plan. The City of Durham will review to determine the final recommendation for the site.









## **Project Opportunity 1.2 - NCDOT**

# **Project Opportunity 1.3 - City of Durham Parcel**

## **Draft Concept**

**Project Type:** Trail Access

Acreage: 0.36

**Key Features:** Kiosk, parking **Location:** Camden Avenue





## **Draft Concept**

**Project Type:** Pocket Park

**Acreage:** 16.53

**Key Features:** Wetland educational boardwalk

**Location:** Trail Access Only



Suggested features for conceptual plans. NC DOT and City of Durham will review to determine the final recommendations for these sites.

## **Section 2: Bragtown - Quick Facts**

# Section Extent: East Club Blvd - Sandy Ridge Elementary School (Hebron Road)

Segment Length: 2.5 Miles

**Key Features:** Bragtown, Lake View Park, Lake View Secondary School, Bragtown Branch Library, Red Maple Park, Welcome Venture Industrial Park, Sandy Ridge Elementary School, Hebron Road Plant Conservation Preserve, Go Durham Bus Route

Recommended Trail Type(s): Parallel Path Trail, Paved Bike Hike Trail

#### **Draft Project Opportunities**

2.1 East Club Blvd Trailhead - Major Trailhead

2.2 Bragtown Market (and connectors) - Trail Town
2.3 Old Oxford/ Hamlin Area

#### **Proposed Trail Connectors**

2.1 Bragtown Connectors (school, park, library & bus stops)
2.2 Hebron Road Connector (Cub Creek Trail)

#### **Road Crossings**

- 1. Roanoke St
- 2. Dearborn Dr
- 3. Thompson Rd
  - 4. East Carver St/ Hamlin Rd
- 5. Old Oxford Rd

#### **Stream Crossings**

None







# **Project Opportunity 2.1 - E. Club Blvd Trailhead**

# **Draft Concept**

**Project Type:** Trailhead - City Owned

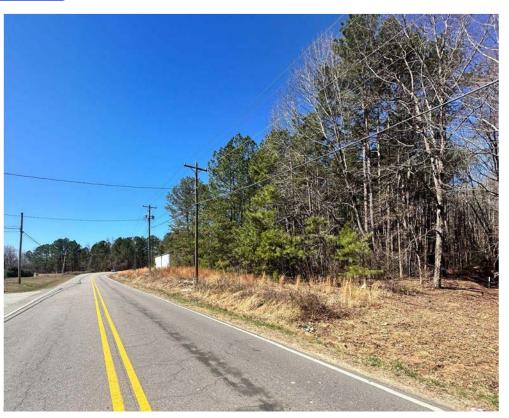
Acreage: 1.54

Key Features: Parking, kiosk,

restrooms, etc.

Location: East Club Blvd





Suggested features for a conceptual trailhead. The City of Durham will review to determine the final recommendation for this site.



## **Project Opportunity 2.2 - Bragtown Market**

# **Draft Concept**

**Project Type:** Trail Town Enhancement

Key Features: Commercial Node, Lakeview Park,

Lakeview Secondary School, and Bragtown Branch Library, GoDurham Route 9 bus stop

Location: Dearborn Drive











Suggested features for a conceptual plan for this site. The City of Durham will work with property owners to determine the final recommendation for the site.



# Project Opportunity 2.2 - Bragtown Market













## **Quick Facts**

# Section Extent: Sandy Ridge Elementary School (Hebron Road) East Coast Greenway

**Segment Length: 4 Miles** 

**Key Features:** Mountains to Sea Trail, Penny's Bend, Falls Lake, Eno River, Little River Elementary School, Treyburn Corporate Park, Lucas Middle School, Historical Great Trading Path, Durham Tech North Campus, Stagville Historic Site

Recommended Trail Type: Paved Bike Hike Trail

#### **Draft Project Opportunities**

3.1 Penny's Bend Trailhead Enhancements - Minor Trailhead

3.2 Integrate history & culture into the trail including Stagville Historic Site &

Historic Great Trading Path

#### **Proposed Trail Connectors**

3.1 MST Connector Realignment

3.2 Stagville Connector (ECG) & Old Oxford Rd

3.3 Little River Connector/ Little River Elementary School/ Lucas Middle School

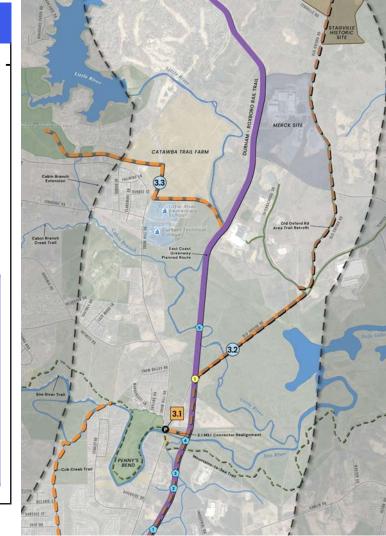
#### **Road Crossings**

1. Old Oxford Rd

#### **Stream Crossings**

- 1. Eno River tributary
- 2. Eno River tributary
- 3. Eno River tributary
- 4. Eno River (Trestle)
- 5. Little River (Trestle)





## **Project Opportunity 3.1 - Penny's Bend**

## **Draft Concept**

Project Type: Trailhead

**Enhancements** 

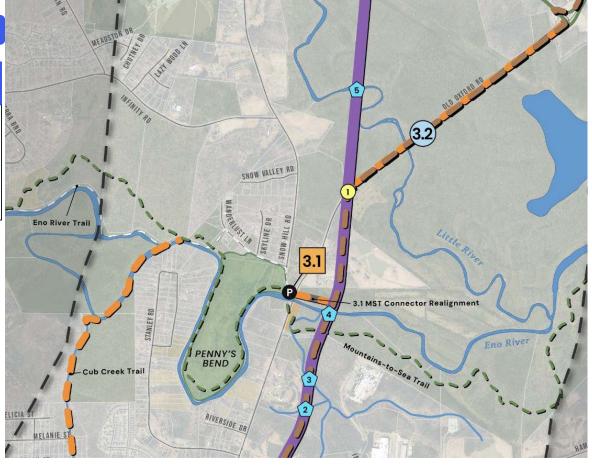
**Key Features:** Improved Trailhead,

MST Realignment

Location: Old Oxford Road







Suggested features for a conceptual trailhead on this site. Durham County will work with property owners to determine the final recommendation.







# **Project Opportunity 3.2 - Integrate History & Culture**

## **FOCUS GROUP FEEDBACK - Stagville Descendants Council**

**Significance of the Land**: The Historic Great Trading Path crossed through the region and much of the rail was built on the former Stagville Plantation land; descendants of people who were enslaved on the plantation still live in the area.

**Honor History**: Share the true stories (good & bad) of the communities along the rail corridor.

**Trail Safety & Accessibility** 

**Interpretive Elements** 

**Feature Local Artisans and Materials** 

All photos from the Stagville















## **Quick Facts**

### Section Extent: East Coast Greenway - Ball Road

#### **Segment Length: 4.5 Miles**

**Key Features:** Stagville Historic Site, Horton Grove Nature Preserve, Lake Michie, Bahama, Mangum Elementary School

Recommended Trail Type: Paved Bike Hike Trail, Horse Parallel Path Trail

#### **Draft Project Opportunities**

41 Rahama Trail To

4.1 Bahama Trail Town - Trail Town (with parking)

#### **Proposed Trail Connectors**

4.1 Horton Grove Nature Preserve

4.2 Lake Michie Trail Connector

#### **Road Crossings**

- 1. Rhododendron Dr
- 2. Orange Factory Rd
- 3. Stagville Rd



- 4. Joe Ellis Rd
- 5. John Jones Rd
- 6. Bahama Rd
- 7. Ball Rd

#### **Stream Crossings**

- 1. Buffalo Creek
- 2. Flat River
- 3. Lake Michie tributary





# **Connector 4.2 Lake Michie Trail Connector**

# **Draft Concept**

Project Type: Trail connector

Acreage: N/A

**Key Features:** Potential trail connector to Lake Michie trail system and Mangum Elementary School, potential trailhead

parking

Location: Ball Rd. - Mangum Elementary School





Suggested features for a conceptual connector on this site. Durham County, Durham Public Schools, and City of Durham will review to determine the final recommendation.



## **Quick Facts**

Section Extent: Ball Road - Durham/Person County Line

Segment Length: 5.5 Miles

**Key Features:** NCSU Hill Forest, County Convenience Center Property, Rougemont, Rougemont Depot

Recommended Trail Type: Horse Parallel Path Trail

#### **Draft Project Opportunities**

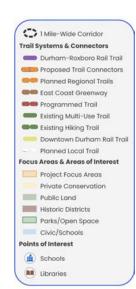
5.1 County Convenience Site

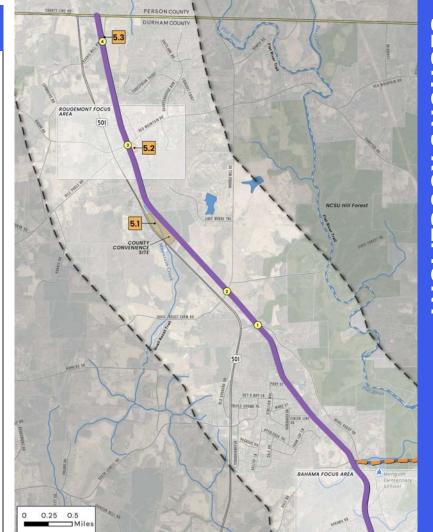
5.2 Rougemont Market - Trail Town

5.3 Harris Mill Road (200' +/- ROW)

#### **Road Crossings**

- 1. Quail Roost Rd
- 2. Quail Roost Farm Rd
- 3. Red Mountain Rd
- 4. Harris Mill Rd





# **Project Opportunity 5.3 Rougemont Market**

# **Draft Concept**

Project Type: Public-Private

Acreage: 3.7 (private tract) and 175' +/- ROW

Key Features: Commercial node, parking, restroom, picnic

area, stage, yard games

Location: Red Mountain Road







Suggested features for a conceptual development of this site. Durham County will work with property owners to determine the final recommendation.



# **NEXT STEPS**

- 1. Plan Development April June
- 2. Public Engagement (Round #2) July September
- 3. Final Plan Report August October

# **Upcoming Meetings**

- Durham Open Space (DOST) April 16
- Project Advisory Committee June/July





# DRAFT Preliminary Findings

Durham Board of County Commissioners
April 7, 2025

Eric Woolridge, AICP
President, Destination by Design





