



Carolina Thread Trail - Proposed Connections Catawba County, NC



This Master Plan outlines a means for long-term coordination of greenway and trail development within the county and cities and towns in Catawba County in an effort to promote the preservation and improvement of residents' quality of life. It presents a first-ever plan to coordinate all existing and proposed municipal and county trails and supplement them with additional greenway/trail segments, to create a comprehensive multi-use network connecting people, places and destinations to one another and to surrounding counties.



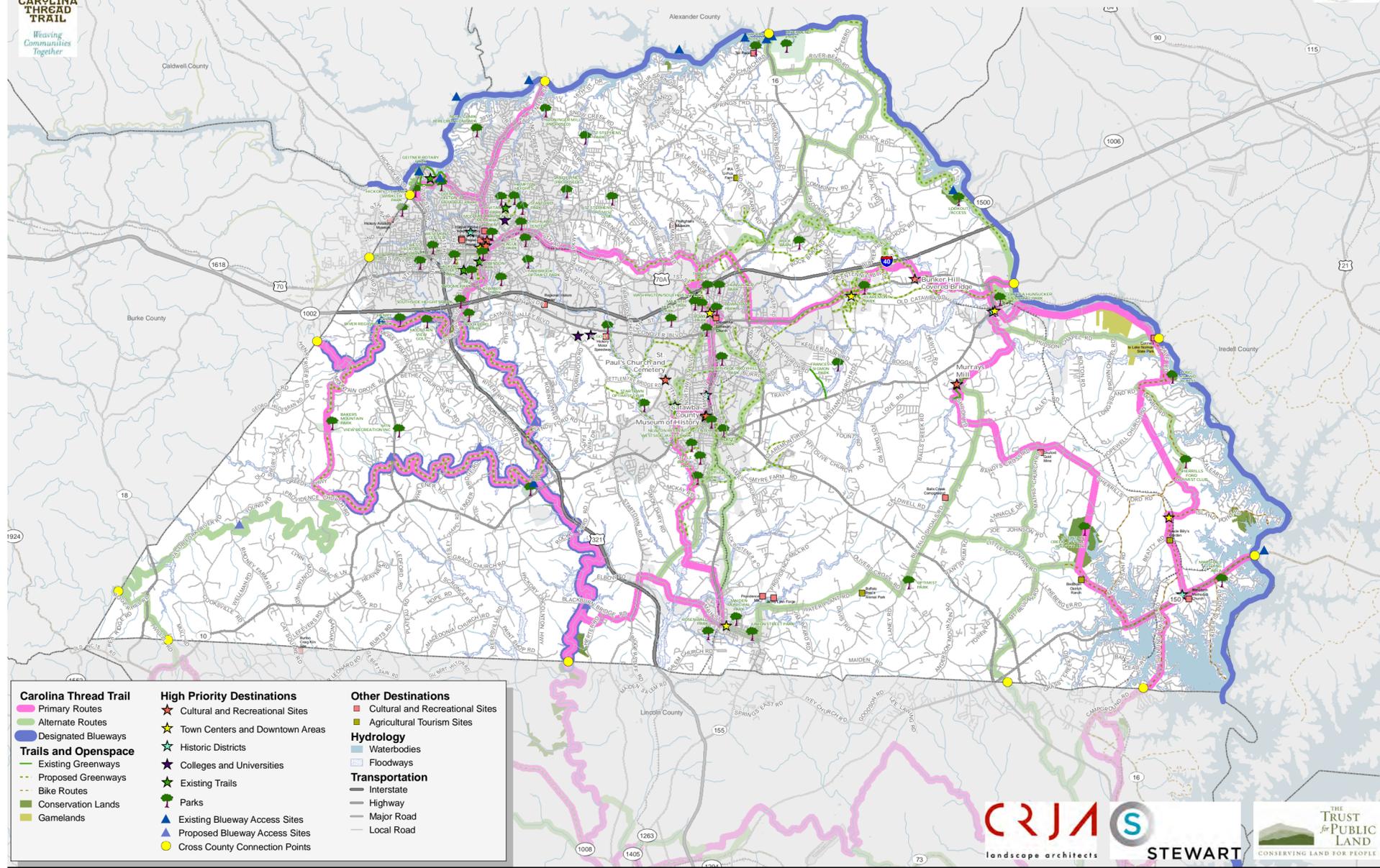
This Plan is the outcome of a year-long public process spearheaded by the Carolina Thread Trail initiative and supervised by a Steering Committee of representatives from municipal and county governments, interested organizations, businesses and individuals. The Carolina Thread Trail's mission is to bring resources to the 15 county region in the south-central piedmont of North Carolina and the north-central portion of South Carolina to create an interconnected trail system, with major regional trails designated as the Carolina Thread Trail.



The outcome of the planning process is a map that includes all trails recommended to local governments for inclusion in their trail and greenway plans. Trails displayed in pink are those recommended for the Carolina Thread Trail designation and trails in green are presented for consideration by local communities wishing to connect further the people and destinations of Catawba County. This map includes approximately 126 miles of potential Carolina Thread Trail and 112 miles of secondary greenway routes. The routes featured on these maps are 1/4 mile wide because actual trail alignment will depend upon existing conditions, availability of land, rights-of-way, landowner interest and future opportunities.



It is well understood that building a trail system of this scale is no small undertaking. Segments will likely appear one-by-one, and adjustments will be made to the proposed routes as circumstances change or more information becomes available. Similarly, trail development will follow through various arrangements with multiple funding partners. Nevertheless, the following actions are recommended to take this plan from concept to reality in an intentional, coordinated, fair and transparent way, consistent with the planning process to date.



Carolina Thread Trail	High Priority Destinations	Other Destinations
Primary Routes	Cultural and Recreational Sites	Cultural and Recreational Sites
Alternate Routes	Town Centers and Downtown Areas	Agricultural Tourism Sites
Designated Blueways	Historic Districts	Hydrology
Trails and Openspace	Colleges and Universities	Waterbodies
Existing Greenways	Existing Trails	Floodways
Proposed Greenways	Parks	Transportation
Bike Routes	Existing Blueway Access Sites	Interstate
Conservation Lands	Proposed Blueway Access Sites	Highway
Gamelands	Cross County Connection Points	Major Road
		Local Road

Recommended Actions for Implementation

Adopt the plan

Local governments can adopt this plan which will serve as a guideline for developing future proposed connections; doing so does not commit them to funding plan implementations. The adoption procedures vary from community to community depending on existing plans and policies in each jurisdiction.



The planning or recreation advisory board (as applicable) should review and recommend the plan to its governing body, which in turn must consider it, make additional adjustments as needed, and officially incorporate it into its land-use plans. It is recommended that local regulations be amended to require developers to set aside land for trails whenever a development proposal overlaps with the proposed routes, as adopted.

Build public support for trail implementation

Advocacy from individuals with a personal and professional interest in these topics is essential. It is recommended that a Trail Advisory Committee be formed for these leaders to discuss and celebrate progress through public events, share resources/tools, and otherwise coordinate trail planning and development activities. Other organizations can assist in identifying viable trail opportunities and working with willing landowners

to build support and interest in trails and greenways. For example, early collaboration with the arts community, as well as county schools and colleges, will encourage more partners to become vested in local greenways and the Carolina Thread Trail project. Local public art councils should be made aware of the opportunities inherent in the community trail system and encouraged to initiate public / private partnerships for support.

Gain support from a variety of public and private resources

Trail networks are generally financed by piecing together funding from multiple sources, creating a "funding quilt." This Plan lists local, state, federal and other funding sources, many of which local communities will use to acquire land, construct trails, and operate and maintain these facilities and amenities. The Carolina Thread Trail organization, housed within the Catawba Lands Conservancy, can provide assistance with funding strategies, as well as potential catalytic seed funding for planning and implementation from its private capital campaign.

Evaluate land or right-of-way acquisition options

Where public land is not already available or private developers are not already building trails along the planned trail route, conversations with private landowners are recommended to



assess their interest in trails through their communities. This will assist with route feasibility and alignment. It is imperative that planners of all trail efforts work with willing land owners on design, construction, and maintenance to ensure a successful trail project that benefits everyone involved.

Design, construct and maintain trails

Communities should work through a public process to determine intended use of the particular segment at issue and design with attention to use, safety and affordable maintenance.



Conclusion

The University of North Carolina Charlotte Urban Institute recently found that the 15-county region surrounding Charlotte, which includes Catawba County, is losing open space at a rate of forty-one acres per day. There is not only a risk but also a reality of losing public open space and recreational opportunities. The time is now to create trails that will provide recreational, educational and economic development opportunities, promote healthy lifestyles, and increase the community's connection to the region's vital natural resources, while engaging citizens of Catawba County through public access.