

Brevard/Transylvania County  
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: March 29, 2023

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

**Members:**

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor  
Mac Morrow, Council Member (absent)
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner  
Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (absent)
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail  
Billy Parrish, Blue Zones Project (absent)  
Lauren Wise, At-Large Member (absent)
- ✓ Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio  
Wilson Cooper, City Manager, Ex Officio (absent)  
Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio (absent)  
Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (absent)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority

**Staff:**

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

**Guests:**

- ✓ Steve Williams, NCDOT (via Zoom)
- ✓ Jonathan Rich, Transylvania Times
- ✓ Matt Revis, Ecusta Trail Talk Newsletter
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Kristen Cozza, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Vicki Eastland, Land of Sky
- ✓ Lonnie Watkins, Volkert Inc.
- ✓ Craig Wilson, Citizen

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**A. Welcome & Call to Order**

Committee Chair Maureen Copelof welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:32 pm.

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Quorum was certified by Committee Chair Maureen Copelof.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Mr. Lovelace, seconded by Mr. Chapman to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

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**D. Approval of Minutes from February 22, 2023 Meeting**

Motion by Mr. Tooley, seconded by Mr. Lovelace to approve the meeting minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**E. Updates**

1. **Conserving Carolina-** Hendersonville was awarded a grant from NCDOT to do a feasibility study to connect the future Ecusta Trail to the Oklawaha Trail. They are in the process of hiring a contractor who will be conducting a feasibility and economic study of the Saluda Grade Trail and one part of that will hopefully be linking the Ecusta Trail to the Saluda Grade Trail. The hope to have the contractor selected this week and will be working on that study, the goal is having them start in April or May but are working on getting the funding together.
2. **Planning Department-** TPD has been in discussions with the planning dept but are waiting on the DOT FLAP grant funding to be released by the Federal Highway Administration.
3. **Transylvania County-** They have been receiving emails from citizens that are opposed to the Ecusta Trail. Anything over \$50,000 from the TDA must go to the Commissioners so they have asked the County Attorney on what they can or cannot do as they have received conflicting information.
4. **Tourism Development Authority-** The TDA is open to hearing requests for funding for small shovel-ready projects that relate to the Ecusta Trail. Explore Brevard has many articles and things focused on the Year of the Trail on their website.
5. **Henderson County-** Advisory Board met earlier this month and the Mayor attended; they are still on schedule and are getting various regulatory approvals/permits and expect to wrap this phase up in April. The next step will be County Commission will take action to provide for the bidding process to do the work provided in the plans. Estimated time frames are starting construction in July and be done in December. This does not include the amenities- trail signs, parking, etc. They are also are developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for trail maintenance and will share the draft with governmental partners and nonprofit partners to see if they have created some operational standards that can be used across the entire trail. They are looking at options to continue the work on the trail after December so they do not have to stop construction and thus save money down the road and build the trail more fiscally responsible. They have some grants coming down the road and are looking to make a deal with a City/County that has the funding but is not ready to proceed with the work. A pitch has been made in the Legislature for the "Year of the Trail" to have specific funding on trail projects on both the Saluda Grade and Ecusta Trails.
6. **NCDOT-** The location survey was conducted via the DOT in the first week of March and they are in the process of developing the mapping needed for the design (so progress is moving forward even though the FLAP grant money has not been released yet). TPD is getting ready to submit their design plans to DOT so then they can develop a fee and develop a scope of

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work and will give them a Notice to Proceed once it is all finalized. The agreement between DOT and the City has been received by the City Planning Dept.

7. City of Brevard- The Mayor will talk to anybody the County has contacting them about the Ecusta Trail. The Mayor has the handout from the Henderson Co Advisory Board and will leverage on what they have done and use their model and have the trail be a seamless transition between the two counties. The City is planning on moving ahead with the Trail in phases, despite the opposition or if they do not receive the grants. They are in talks with TPD to see how this will look with the "match" money if the grants fall through. We are putting up more "No Trespassing" signs along the trail route once they come in.
8. Friends of Ecusta Trail- They will reach out to the new legislators to get them informed of the Ecusta Trail. They supported the Asheville Marathon with about 20 volunteers and were made a charitable partner so will get a take of that money. They are partnering with the AOTC this weekend as well and will be having a raffle for an ebike. They will accompany the Mayor at the Connetsee Fire Dept on May 16<sup>th</sup> and invite larger donors in that area.
9. Blue Zones Project- N/A
10. Public or Citizen Input- A citizen is concerned that the timelines the City is putting out is not feasible; he states all the steps involved will take more time than projected.

**F. Next Steps**

Continue working on ongoing progress as discussed.

**G. Set Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Brevard/Transylvania County Ecusta Trail Advisory Board is scheduled for April 26, 2023 at 3:30 pm. (last Wednesday of the month at 3:30 pm)

**H. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:18 pm.

Minutes Approved-

4/21/23

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner