

Brevard/Transylvania County  
Ecusta Trail Advisory Board

Date: August 31, 2022

Location: City Hall Council Chambers

**Members:**

- ✓ Maureen Copelof, Mayor  
Mac Morrow, Council Member (absent)
- ✓ Larry Chapman, County Commissioner
- ✓ Addison Bradley, NC Cooperative Extension Dir (via Zoom)
- ✓ Clark Lovelace, Tourism Development Authority
- ✓ Mark Tooley, Conserving Carolina
- ✓ John Ditillo, Friends of Ecusta Trail
- ✓ Billy Parrish, Blue Zones Project  
Lauren Wise, At-Large Member (absent)  
Chuck McGrady, Henderson County Advisory Board Chair, Ex Officio (absent)
- ✓ Larry Faison, Interim City Manager, Ex Officio
- ✓ Paul Ray, Planning Director, Ex Officio (left at 3:55pm)  
Meredith Carli, At-Large Member (absent)

**Staff:**

- ✓ Katherine Buzby, City Planner

**Guests:**

- ✓ Vicki Eastland, Land of Sky
- ✓ Rebekah Robinson, Conserving Carolina (via Zoom)
- ✓ Jonathan Rich, Transylvania Times
- ✓ Matt Revis, Ecusta Trail Talk Newsletter
- ✓ Tad Fogel, Friends of Ecusta Trail

**A. Welcome & Call to Order**

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

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Quorum was certified by Committee Co-Chair Maureen Copelof.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

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

**D. Approval of Minutes from July 27, 2022 Meeting**

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

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## E. Updates

**Conserving Carolina:** They just had their Conservation Celebration last Saturday and had good support for the Ecusta Trail. They have a contract signed with Vaughn & Melton to begin the permitting process to get to get the railroad trestles over Davidson River Rd and the river removed (everything will be removed except the large vertical supports right on the banks). The actual start of removal won't be for several months; once work is started, they are estimating completion within 3-4 weeks. The road will be closed from now (a truck hit the bridge) until completion of work. They are also looking at programs that would partner with businesses along the trail that would provide things like parking, bathrooms, etc.

**Planning Dept:** The Nationally Significant Federal Lands and Tribal Projects (NSFLTP) grant program is available for \$125 million; half of the funding is for tribal lands so \$62 million would be eligible towards Ecusta Trail with a 10% local match. We believe the forest service will support our application for the grant. NCDOT will partner with the City to fund a grant writing team with Alta Planning & Design which will allow us to use the previous work done by them for the RAISE grant application. The application is due October 24, 2022. The City has spoken to Henderson Co. and is working out details if partnering with them but Transylvania needs \$20 million and they need \$10 million so there is concern about combining the amounts and asking for \$30 million (half the total available for the entire nation). The application may have 2 options, option A and option B, with funding just the Transylvania Co. side or funding both counties. Planning Dept will take resolution to City Council Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> which will authorize the City manager to go forward with forming appropriate partnerships and applying for this grant opportunity. A facts sheet was distributed to each board member that has more details of the grant.

**Transylvania Co:** Railroad tracks in Pisgah Forest- the school buses are required by law to stop even though the tracks are not in service; NC DOT will look into if they can be removed or paved over.

**Tourism Development Authority:** They want to continue to support and fund projects but need specific "asks" (requests) submitted to them through Clark Lovelace. Their funding sources are distributed over a period of time. The TDA can support events/projects in 3 ways: 1-marketing grant, 2-destination infrastructure, or 3-Transylvania Always and have funded about \$160,000 for about 20 projects this year. Key application requirements are: Is it shovel ready? and does it have someone ready to do the project?

**Henderson Co:** They have 30% design completion (5 miles of trail) but no cost estimates have come in yet; when they do, they will be shared with this board. They contracted with a road construction firm but Transylvania Co is looking to contract with a trail construction firm.

**NCDOT (via Land of Sky):** The NSFLTP grant award amount may be reduced and if that happens US DOT will reach out to the applicant and request a reduction of the scope of work. The minimum application amount is \$12.5 million and the maximum application length is 10 pages and reviewed by US DOT. More points are given to applications that have more than 10% local match. The state budget has a new source of funding for transportation from the taxes collected in the general fund. 2% this year, 4% next year, and 6% the third year will go to the Highway Trust Fund for new projects or rehab projects and the Highway Fund for maintenance. Many projects scheduled in Transylvania Co. have been pushed up to sooner start dates due to this change in budget.

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City: Letters of Support will need to be collected for the NSFLTP application. We had the adjoining property owner's meeting and many ideas were collected and will be considered during design.

Friends of Ecusta Trail: They attended the Conserving Carolina Celebration and the answered questions and received enormous support for the Ecusta Trail. They have volunteers ready to go (for the right-of-way sections of the proposed trail) and they just need word from the City when to start picking up trash. They will be visiting different existing trails to take pictures of signage and infrastructure.

Blue Zones Project: They are close to completing their analysis of access points or trailheads for the Ecusta Trail and hope to wrap up the project by Friday and may present it to the Built Environment Committee for comments.

Citizens/Public: Suggestions/questions about possible funding for the railroad track removal on Ecusta Rd was presented and the Mayor explained the different options/processes.

**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 September 28, 2022 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 4:27 pm.

Minutes Approved- 9/28/22

x Maureen Copelof

Maureen Copelof, Chair, Mayor

x Katherine Buzby

Katherine Buzby, City Planner