

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A decorative footer graphic consisting of a horizontal row of six colored rectangular blocks. From left to right, the colors are: light beige, medium beige, light blue, medium blue, light green, and medium green. Below these blocks is a white wavy line that curves upwards from left to right, creating a sense of movement and flow.

I. Executive Summary



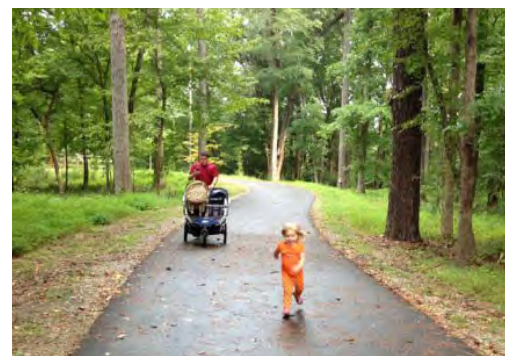
ONE HUNDRED COUNTIES. ONE GREAT TRAILS STATE.

The Great Trails State Plan will connect communities to the great outdoors while creating opportunities for active transportation, conservation, recreation, health, tourism and economic prosperity. This plan draws upon existing plans and new recommendations to identify a network of shared-use paths that will connect every county in North Carolina.

PLAN GOALS

The Great Trails State Plan and network seeks to connect all counties and key destinations throughout the state to a growing network of strategic greenways. Other principal goals of the plan include:

- Foster connections between urban and rural areas in all 100 counties
- Provide transportation options between where people live, work and play for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities
- Create opportunities for conservation, recreation, education, physical health, environmental health, tourism, and economic prosperity
- Identify resources needed to plan, design, construct and connect the system
- Facilitate multi-jurisdictional partnerships to support, develop, manage, and maintain the system



KEY INPUTS

- Existing Trails
- Existing Trail Plans
- Key Destinations/State Parks
- Steering Committee Kick-Off Meeting
- Bicycle Level of Service Network
- Green Infrastructure Network

PRELIMINARY NETWORK

- 14 Division-Level Stakeholder Meetings
- Confirmation of Network
- Identification of Gaps and Alternatives
- Connecting Across Divisions

DRAFT PLAN NETWORK

- Review of Gaps and Alternatives by Steering Committee & Stakeholders
- Rail Division Meetings
- Public Input

GTS NETWORK (see following pages)

PLANNING PROCESS



40 STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS provided direction to the process, representing each of NCDOT's 14 Divisions, seven RPOs and MPOs, and relevant statewide departments and organizations.



HUNDREDS OF STAKEHOLDERS

provided detailed reviews of the proposed corridors, including town and county managers, planners, parks directors, land trusts, advocacy organizations, and many others.



THOUSANDS OF NC RESIDENTS

expressed support and shared ideas in public surveys, online input maps and plan review, including thousands of impressions on social media that generated awareness of the plan and process.

A VISIONARY PLAN FOR NORTH CAROLINA

Decades in the making, through hundreds of local plans and initiatives, the Great Trails State (GTS) is ready to become a reality. This plan, *for the first time in the state's history*, identifies a proposed network of trails that would:

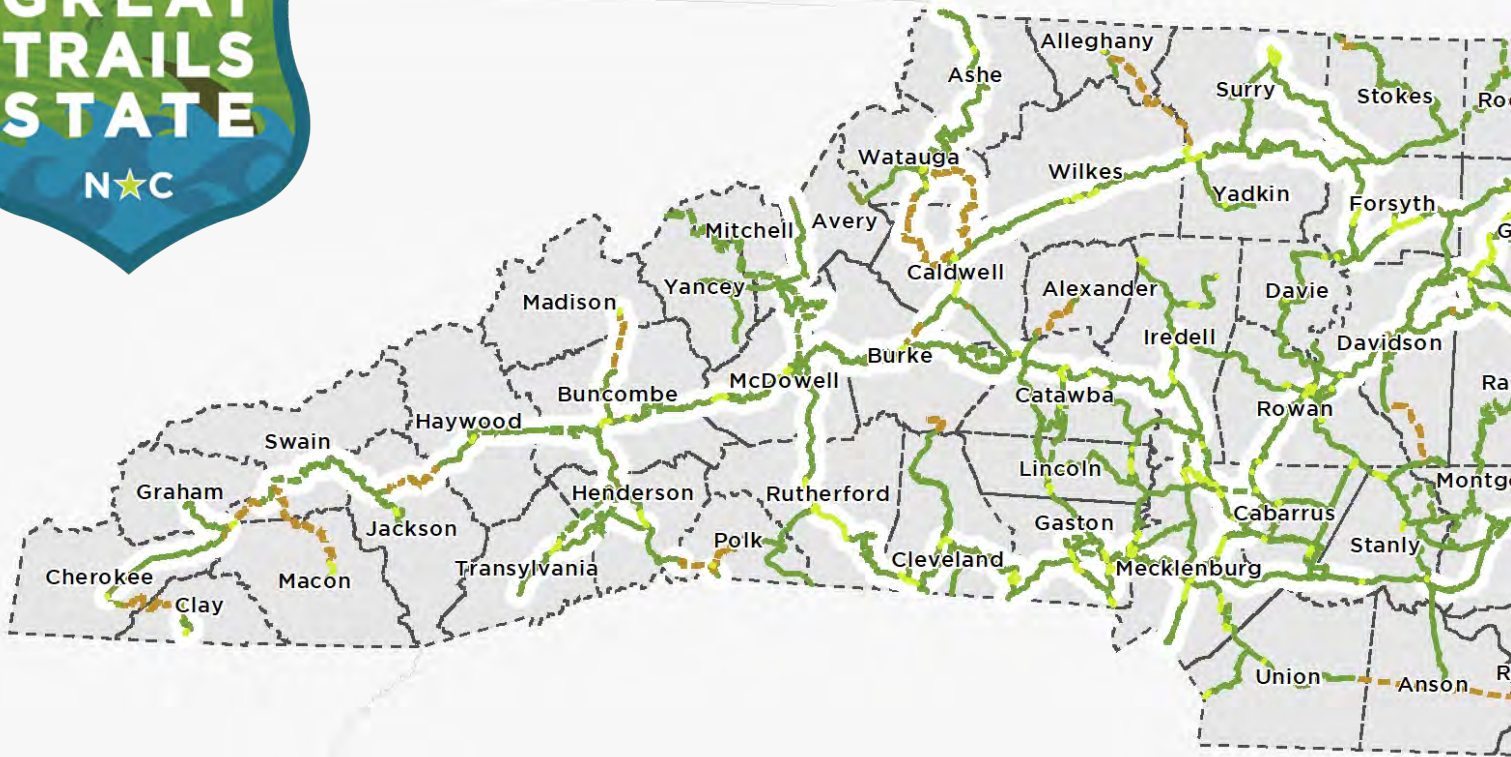
- Connect all 100 counties throughout the state;
- Create lasting investments in rural and urban areas;
- Provide a return on investment of \$1.72 annually, for every \$1 of initial trail construction, from sales revenue at local businesses, sales tax revenue, and benefits related to health and transportation (source: NCDOT and ITRE, <https://itre.ncsu.edu/focus/bike-ped/sup-economic-impacts>);
- Provide opportunities for healthy, active transportation (responding to a surge in trail use during the COVID-19 pandemic);
- Provide infrastructure to support North Carolina's \$28 billion outdoor recreation industry; and
- Improve health, safety, mobility, recreation, environment, and economic development, benefiting North Carolinians for generations.

Building A Great Trails State

Building a Great Trails State will take time and a coordinated effort to plan, design, fund, construct and maintain greenways across the state. However, demand for trails is on the rise. Long-distance regional trails are already taking shape. The Great Trails State map shown below represents a long-term network of trails reaching every county in North Carolina. The Great Trails State Report describes how this map was developed, the goals of the network, key connections and implementation strategies.



GREAT TRAILS STATE NETWORK MAP



Implementation Highlights

The GTS Plan recommends additional planning, feasibility studies, right-of-way acquisition, design, and construction to advance efforts to expand trails in North Carolina. A GTS Advisory Committee will be led by the N. C. Department of Transportation and North Carolina State Parks to implement the plan. Individual strategies described in Chapter V and VI include:

- Refine and Design Connections
- Trail Designation, Branding and Wayfinding
- Policy Updates
- Coordinate with Implementation Partners
- Create Accountability
- Evaluate and Update the GTS Plan
- Tourism and Engagement

