



City of Virginia Beach

# 2021 Annual Report to City Council

BIKEWAYS AND TRAILS ADVISORY COMMITTEE



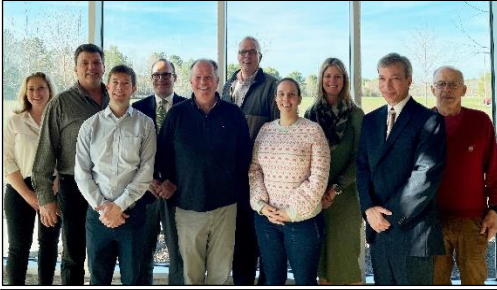
*Future route of the [Virginia Beach Trail](#) within the City-owned former NSRR Corridor, looking East: Town Center to Oceanfront*

VIRGINIA BEACH  
**Parks & Recreation**

VBGOV.COM/PARKS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<b>BTAC Mission Statement</b>	4
<b>2021 Parks &amp; Recreation Citizen Needs Assessment Results</b>	5
<b>BTAC Accomplishments</b>	
Delivered Recommendations:	
Potential Offshore Wind Energy Transmission Line Trail	6
Application for National Recreational Trails Designation at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge	7
Planning	8
Programs	10
<b>Active Transportation Projects</b>	
Overview and City-Wide CIPs	13
Virginia Beach Trail	14
Roadway Project Highlight: I-264 Interchange Improvements	16
Non-Roadway Active Transportation Projects In-Progress	
Thalia Creek Greenway	18
FoxFire Trail	19
Three Oaks Path	20
Violet Bank Trail	21
Bow Creek Stormwater Park	22
<b>Recommendations to City Council</b>	23

**Current BTAC Members:**

Walter T. Camp, Chair  
 Amy Frostick, Vice Chair  
 Bryan Hickman  
 Mark Horton  
 Rachel Kane-McCaskell  
 Andrew Lewis (*not pictured*)  
 David Plum (*not pictured*)  
 James Roberts

**Current BTAC Liaisons:**

John Moss, City Council  
 Dee Oliver, Planning Commission  
 Hugh Tierney, Parks & Recreation  
 Commission  
 William Vaughan, Agricultural  
 Advisory Commission (*not pictured*)

**Administration:**

Patrick Duhaney, City Manager  
 Kenneth Chandler, Deputy City  
 Manager

**Parks & Recreation Staff:**

Michael Kirschman, Director  
 Chad Morris, Planning, Design &  
 Development Administrator  
 Elaine Linn, Senior Planner Active  
 Transportation  
 Trina Harrell, Recording Secretary

**Past Members & Liaisons Serving in 2021:**

William Hart  
 James Raynor  
 Stephen Romine  
 Kim Shuler  
 W. Carter Sinclair  
 Barbara Henley, City Council

**In 2021, BTAC's Members  
 recorded 729 hours of  
 volunteer work, more than  
 three times the hours in 2020!**

April 13, 2022

The Honorable Robert M. Dyer, Mayor  
 Members of City Council

**Subject: Bikeways and Trails Advisory Committee  
 2021 Annual Report on Bikeways and Trails**

Dear Mayor Dyer and City Council Members:

On behalf of the City Council-appointed members of the Bikeways and Trails Advisory Committee, I am pleased to present this report on our efforts, accomplishments and progress achieved by our City to improve its active transportation system for the benefit of the public.

In 2021 BTAC volunteers undertook numerous initiatives, working 3.5 times the hours recorded in 2020. We are extremely grateful to City Council Members, City professional staff, non-profits, businesses and citizens for partnering to achieve major Planning, Program, and Project successes despite the challenges of COVID-19 and turnover of half our committee. Together we all kept rolling, accomplishing:

- Adoption of the 2021 Active Transportation Plan for our City, capping two years of work with a very positive vision for the future
- Virginia Beach Trail: Top regional priority ranking by HRTPO; innovative BTAC outreach revealing regional and local support; an agile \$12M grant application backed unanimously by Council
- Wind Energy Transmission Line Trail opportunity analysis for Council
- Initiation of the City's first mountain biking trail system, under a unique arrangement that overcame a lack of City funding

This report also includes recommendations for City Council's consideration, which are offered with great respect. Two of these involve CIP funding, timely for upcoming reconciliation discussions. I look forward to briefing you on our work and these ideas soon.

If you have questions about this report or the Committee's work, please contact me at 757.576.1006 or [wtclegal-BTAC@yahoo.com](mailto:wtclegal-BTAC@yahoo.com), or Staff Liaison Elaine Linn in the Department of Parks & Recreation at 757.385.4310 or [elinn@vbgov.com](mailto:elinn@vbgov.com).

We appreciate City Council's support and interest in active transportation and BTAC. We look forward to fulfilling our mission and to continued development of our City's network of safe routes.

Respectfully,

Walter T. Camp  
 Chair, Bikeways and Trails Advisory Committee



## MISSION

Trails have existed in our area since before history was recorded, and local government has been coordinating the public's desire to bicycle with other recreation and transportation needs since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Fifty years ago, on March 7, 1972, the young City of Virginia Beach appointed its first committee dedicated to studying the possibility of creating trails for the City's then-estimated 90,000-100,000 bicyclists. On October 12, 2004, the Virginia Beach City Council established the current Bikeways and Trails Advisory Committee for these purposes:

"That the mission of the BTAC shall be to serve in an advisory capacity to City Council with respect to the implementation and coordination of the Bikeways and Trails Plan and to coordinate the timely construction of bikeways and trails in accordance with the priorities established by the Bikeways and Trails Plan, to promote a balanced approach between and among various trail users' interests in the City, and to provide a forum for continued citizen and governmental input in the planning and programming of future bikeways and trails.

Specifically, the BTAC shall be charged with the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. Work with local civic groups and other interested citizens to develop secondary network priorities, linkages, and potential new corridors;
- b. Work with City staff to review road construction projects to ensure that all roads and bridges, where part of the primary or secondary networks, are constructed, improved or maintained in a manner consistent with the Bikeways and Trails Plan;
- c. Work with City staff to review the City's Development Ordinances and recommend revisions in consultation with City staff to encourage bicycle and trail related accommodations;



*Bicyclists & Pedestrians on the Boardwalk, 1936*

- d. Identify potential funding sources for proposed projects through various private, local, state and federal programs;
- e. Provide a forum for direct citizen input in the planning of future bikeways and trails facilities; and
- f. Focus efforts on achieving completion of the priority projects as identified in the Plan."



*Bicyclists & Pedestrians on the Boardwalk Bikepath today*

# PARKS & RECREATION CITIZEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In 2021 the Parks & Recreation Department commissioned the ETC Institute to conduct a needs assessment, examining demand for various facilities/amenities, service gaps, and the importance of such assets to the public. **The study aligned with similar past assessments, finding that Biking Trails, Paved Walking & Jogging Trails, and Unpaved Walking & Jogging Trails are the #1, #2, and #4 investment priorities.** The assessment, and its predecessors, directly influenced BTAC's work.

## Amenity, Facility, and Park Needs and Priorities

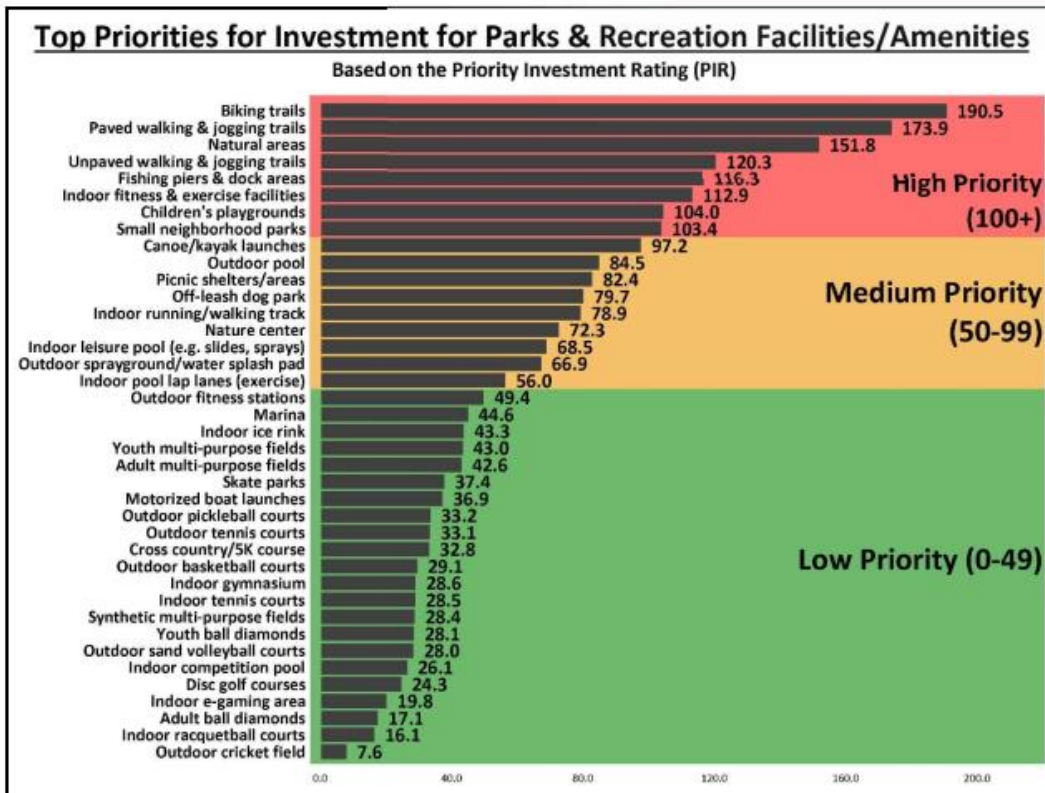


**Priorities for Facility/Amenity Investments.** The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) equally weighs (1) the importance that households place on each facility/amenity/program and (2) how many households have unmet needs for the facility/amenity/program. Details regarding the methodology for this analysis are provided in Section 4 of the Findings Report. Based on the Priority Investment Rating (PIR), the eight facilities/amenities that were rated as **high priorities** for investment are listed to the right.

### High Priorities for Facility/Amenity Investments:

1. Biking trails (PIR=190.6)
2. Paved walking & jogging trails (PIR=173.9)
3. Natural areas (PIR=151.81)
4. Unpaved walking & jogging trails (PIR=120.35)
5. Fishing piers & dock areas (PIR=116.3)
6. Indoor fitness & exercise facilities (PIR=112.9)
7. Children's playgrounds (PIR=104.0)
8. Small neighborhood parks (PIR=103.39)

The Priority Investment Ratings for each facility/amenity is shown in Figure 3 below.





# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## DELIVERED RECOMMENDATIONS

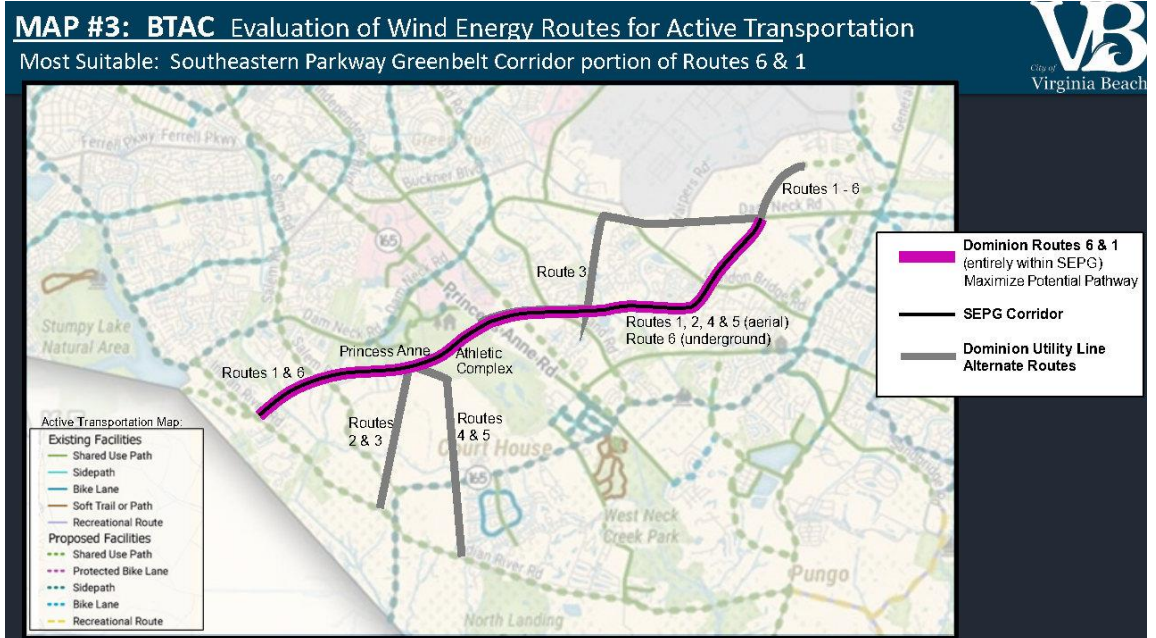
During 2021 BTAC studied and delivered recommendations on two matters at the request or suggestion of City Council Members. Additional copies of those letters are available if desired.

### Potential Wind Energy Transmission Line Trail

At the request of then-City Council Liaison Henley, BTAC evaluated the potential for a shared-use path crossing the City south of Dam Neck

Road alongside Dominion Energy's proposed offshore wind energy transmission lines. Such a path could be utilized for both maintenance of the facility and for public recreation. BTAC performed a detailed study of Dominion's six route options along corridors from NAS Oceana to Indian River Road, attended Dominion's Open House, and discussed the concept with Dominion personnel.

The greatest potential was identified on a 6.5 mile segment of land owned by the City in the former Southeastern Parkway Greenbelt right-of-way, which was also previously identified in the City's Active Transportation Plan for such a path. Dominion later selected this same alignment as their preferred route. Such a trail would provide the public with a continuous, traffic-separated walking and biking facility less than a mile from over 9,000 homes, 30,000 residents and the VABeachBio Corridor including TCC. Funded CIPs to improve Elbow Road and Indian River Road will extend safe



side paths from the western end of such a trail to Stumpy Lake, providing another desirable destination and easy access for thousands more residents. Existing parking and restrooms at the Princess Anne Athletic Complex (PAAC) could support the adjacent new trail.

BTAC submitted a ten-page report to Council on July 27, 2021. Dominion Energy's application to the SCC filed on November 5, 2021, included a provision permitting public-use trails in the transmission line right of way, subject to the terms of the easement negotiated with the City, safety standards and future flexibility.

At the request of BTAC and Council Members, the City Manager's office has since contacted Dominion Energy about this proposal. Pursuit of this opportunity to benefit the public with dual-use of City-owned land is among BTAC's recommendations to Council.

**Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge Application for National Recreational Trail Designation**

The City of Virginia Beach's active transportation network is fortunate to include public trails within federal and state facilities in addition to municipal routes. Back Bay NWR manages the most extensive public trails system on protected lands in our City and connects to 3,573 acres with additional trails in False Cape State Park.

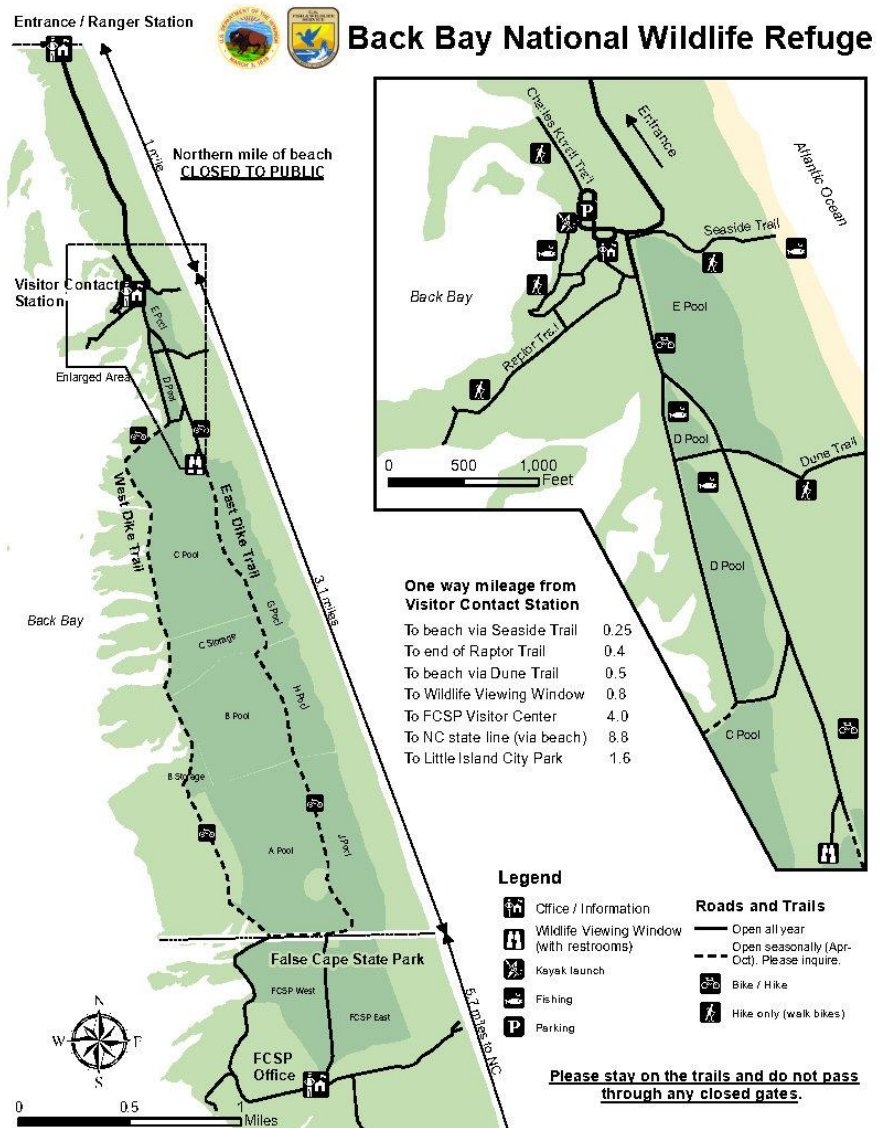


variety of active transportation opportunities to explore by hiking, bicycling and paddling. One of the purposes of the NRT program is to provide economic benefits through increased tourism, and BTAC agreed that NRT status could raise awareness of this outstanding asset among residents and domestic as well as international tourists. BTAC was delighted to communicate its findings in a support letter dated August 16, 2021.

If the U. S. Secretary of the Interior awards the NRT designation, a local ceremony will be held on National Trails Day, June 4, 2022.

During the summer of 2021 Council Member Henley suggested representatives of BBNWR seek a letter from BTAC supporting elevation of eight Refuge trails to National Recreational Trail (NRT) status. Federal NRT designation is reserved for trails providing the public with national-caliber recreational experiences, significant diversity of wildlife and habitat demonstrative of the region, and a high standard of facility maintenance. Only one other NRT exists in our region of Virginia: the trail system at First Landing State Park. If granted, Back Bay's would be the very first NRT in a National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia.

BTAC examined the nominated routes, found they aligned with the NRT criteria, and recognized BBNWR's commitment to year-round access for visitors of all ages and abilities, including ADA accessibility on several of the trails. BTAC noted the quality of interpretive educational programming for visitors and the



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### PLANNING

A significant portion of BTAC's mission involves planning and review, which is accomplished both during and increasingly outside of standard committee meetings. In partnership with Senior Active Transportation Planner Elaine Linn, during 2021 BTAC was again involved in many City and regional planning projects. BTAC's contributions included reviewing project proposals and funding applications, drafting original content, developing strategies, offering tactical goals, participating in commenting opportunities, and encouraging public input.



#### **The City of Virginia Beach Active Transportation Plan (ATP)**

In February 2021 City Council adopted the Active Transportation Plan as the bikeways and trails component of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, capping off more than two years of work by staff and BTAC. This signature achievement provides a vision for the coming ten years, has guided all of BTAC's other work, and contains BTAC's long term recommendations to Council.

Key elements of the ATP include:

- Increase the City's low Walkability and Bikeability scores, which are City Budget Office Performance Measures

- Address the public's desire for more complete, convenient, low stress routes to safely walk, bike, and use other mobility devices for recreation and transportation
- Sets five goals: Connectivity, Safety, Economic Vitality, Technology and Health
- Includes a vision for Blueways water paddling trails serving residents & tourists
- Top six priority projects, some long-term:
  - "Transformational"
    - #1 = Virginia Beach Trail
    - #2 = Constitution Dr. Bike Lane
    - #3 = Mt. Trashmore I-264 Flyover
  - "Major Impact Moves"
    - #1 = Shore Dr Protected Bike Lane along 1<sup>st</sup> Landing State Park
    - #2 = Atlantic Ave Bike Lanes
    - #3 = Seaboard Rd Shared Use Path

#### **Safety for Vulnerable Road Users**

In August 2021 BTAC hosted Public Works Traffic Engineering for the annual Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety report. The Resort District & Town Center area had the most collisions 2016-20. Detailed accident analysis and solutions were discussed, including separating vehicles from vulnerable road users, enforcing laws, and education.

#### **Legislative Awareness**

2021 was a very busy year for legislation funding and regulating active transportation. On a volunteer basis BTAC researched, monitored and discussed numerous state and federal bills, providing information to City staff including the City's Legislative Liaison. Key bills included:

- VA HB 2262 -- Bike Safety Bill
- VA HB 1903 – local 15 mph option
- VA State Budget regional trail earmarks
- VA State Budget Item 447, new evaluation process for long trails
- US HR 3684 Infrastructure Invest/Jobs Act
- US HR 2991/S 684 Connecting America's Active Transportation System Act



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS PLANNING Cont.



### **ATP Implementation – Resort Area**

BTAC continued its participation in the Resort Area Mobility Plan's (RAMP) development during 2021 and was delighted to see numerous elements of the ATP incorporated directly into the process. The prompt application of ideas from the ATP toward improving conditions at the Oceanfront validated the extensive work and collaboration that went into the ATP and its great value as a resource for future projects.

In September 2021 it was extremely exciting to see this vision actually move from the planning realm into the street, when "The AVE," a better block pilot project, completely transformed Atlantic Avenue from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Streets. Redefined lanes were painted bold colors, elegant traffic separation barriers were erected, sidewalks were re-envisioned, and the public was invited to enjoy, experience and comment on the experimental concepts being tested. Safer and more fun, The AVE generated positive reactions, constructive feedback, and a great deal of attention on Virginia Beach as a forward-thinking locality.



### **HRTPO 2045 Long Range Plan**

In summer 2021 the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization released its 2045 Long Range Plan, which City staff had contributed to the prior year. BTAC was extremely pleased to see the Virginia Beach Trail ranked as the #2, #3, and #4 highest priority active transportation projects for the entire region (alone and as part of larger projects). Other priority projects from the ATP also ranked very well, increasing their potential for eventual funding from external sources.

### **Regional Plans and Coordination**

Throughout the year BTAC examined plans and projects from other localities for impacts, ideas and opportunities, including:

- Chesapeake's 2050 Trails Plan
- City of Norfolk Granby St Improvements
- HRT's study for light rail extension from Newtown Road to Military Circle
- VDOT Eastern Shore Rail to Trail Study

Late in 2021 BTAC and staff were contacted by Norfolk advocates for extending the Elizabeth River Trail to Newtown Road. This led to more formalized discussions led by HRTPO among all cities along the South Hampton Roads Trail.

### **BMX and Action Sports Facility Discussions**

Also late in 2021, City Council Member Berlucchi convened leaders from City organizations, the BMX community, and the public to discuss potential creation of the first formal public BMX facility in Virginia Beach. BTAC Chair Walter Camp was invited to participate. The group was subsequently joined by City Council Member Branch, who advocated investigation of a major action sports tourism venue -- including BMX -- by the Sports Marketing team at the Visitors & Convention Bureau. At year-end the BMX community was becoming more organized and further discussions were planned.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS PROGRAMS



## Ride with the Mayor on Bike to Work Day

In a welcome surprise break from the isolation and lack of activities involving large groups during the pandemic, BTAC and the Parks & Recreation staff were able to safely bring back this popular event on May 21, 2021, after a hiatus of many years. Mayor Dyer's enthusiasm and his willingness to ride three miles to City Hall with the crowd were greatly appreciated.

Prior to the ride then-BTAC Chair Amy Frostick and Parks and Recreation Director Michael Kirschman spoke about recent bicycling accomplishments including new trails in development, adoption of the Active Transportation Plan, and plans to seek federal

funding for the Virginia Beach Trail. The Mayor extolled the health benefits of exercise, noted the many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors in Virginia Beach, and read a Proclamation commemorating the importance of bicycling in our City.

After escorting the Mayor to work, the assembled bicyclists rode the three miles back to their starting point at the Princess Anne Athletic Complex. BTAC extended, and now reiterates, thanks to all who were involved in making this event successful, including Parks & Recreation staff, Sheriff Ken Stolle, Deputy Chief of Police Shannon Wichtendahl, and local law enforcement officers who directed traffic and participated in the ride.



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS PROGRAMS Cont.



### **Bike Buddies Program**

[Bike Buddies](#) is BTAC's partnership program with the Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation Foundation (VBPRF) to install privately-funded leaf-shaped bike racks at high-need sites on City property, especially along the Oceanfront bike path. The program's second year was significantly hampered by the pandemic: the rack manufacturer was unable to operate for an extended period, and many members of the public reduced discretionary spending. Despite these challenges generous donors continued to sponsor new racks even knowing their installations could be delayed six months or longer. A year-end campaign was initiated to complete Phase II early in 2022, with a goal of 50 of these racks, total, in place prior to summer.



### **COVID-19 Pandemic Impacts and Responses**

As the pandemic extended into 2021 BTAC recognized the public's increased participation in walking, bicycling, and outdoor mobility was continuing. A significant number of residents were home during the day working, studying, providing childcare, or displaced from employment. Being home, more flexible hours, diminished commuting time, and the quest for health benefits inspired many to engage in more active transportation, often with family. BTAC worked through the pandemic to make free, safe, and convenient outdoor facilities better-known and accessible to all.

- BTAC held all nine of its scheduled meetings in 2021: the first five virtually, and the latter four on a hybrid basis involving both in-person and remote participation options.
- BTAC revised its Remote Participation Policy effective July 1, 2021, to incorporate changes in State law facilitating Member attendance when caring for ill family.
- Support staff struggled at times to enable hybrid meetings, but the public's interest in engaging and positive feedback have led BTAC to continue the practice. Hybrid meetings also allow City transportation staff to participate without taking time to travel.
- BTAC and staff fielded a significantly increased number of citizen inquiries about active transportation, and facility improvement suggestions in particular
- To better inform the public of outdoor opportunities, BTAC continued assisting Parks & Recreation professional staff with improvements to City web pages related to bike routes, trails, projects & programs, and by providing marketing staff with content for use in multiple distribution channels.
- BTAC invested substantial time planning additional May 2021 Bike Month events that unfortunately had to be cancelled.



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## PROGRAMS Cont.

### Marshview Park Programs

After many years of planning, construction was completed in 2021 on Phase I improvements at [Marshview Park](#), a 100-acre wooded reserve bisected by a paved shared use path between the Seatack and Shadowlawn neighborhoods, near the South Beach Trail leg of the future Virginia Beach Trail. BTAC took a keen interest in future plans to add and improve 4-5 miles of soft trails suitable for mountain biking as well as walking, a first within the City's park system. Although unfunded, such trails would fulfill demand for a highly desired public amenity lacking in South Hampton Roads. BTAC engaged in several efforts to support creation of this new asset despite the lack of City funding:

- A presentation about the park was featured at BTAC's February 2021 meeting, raising awareness among constituent groups
  - On April 3, 2021, BTAC Members and bicycling community volunteers joined the VB Clean Community Commission, the Eastern Virginia Mountain Bike Association (EVMA), and others in the Great American Cleanup at Marshview. In just three hours these thirty volunteers removed 6,040 pounds of litter and old illegally dumped material from the park, including the trails area. The event also achieved its secondary goal of encouraging fellowship and stewardship of the park by mountain biking enthusiasts.
  - BTAC applauded a partnership MOU for **EVMA volunteers to design, build and maintain 4-5 miles of public mountain biking trails to IBMA standards for the City at no cost for labor**, as EVMA does in other localities.
  - On July 1, 2021, [WAVY TV-10 broadcast a story BTAC pitched and Parks & Rec marketing supported, informing the region of the new mountain biking trails and the EVMA-City partnership. The Pilot followed August 13.](#)
- The new trails with varying lengths and difficulties should be completed for the public in 2022.



*ADA compliant paved path through Marshview Park*

### BTAC Self-Assessment and Recommendations

Throughout 2021 BTAC dedicated time at and between its meetings to consider ways to remain current and become more effective. Factors influencing this work included:

- City Council's adoption of the Active Transportation Plan
- Turnover, vacancies and recruiting to backfill 50% of BTAC's Member seats
- Ideas from the City's Commission on Boards & Commissions and other agencies, such as adding student members to broaden input
- Pandemic-driven staffing challenges within the Parks & Recreation Department

Recommendations pertaining to BTAC's composition, mission statement, and name were approved for City Council to consider, and are presented later in this report.

### VolunTrail Club

BTAC strongly supported this new Parks & Recreation Department stewardship program which organizes volunteers for monthly City trail maintenance and cleanup projects.



## PROJECTS

The chart below shows the active transportation infrastructure added within the City in 2021. This year's gains consist entirely of wide outside lanes (WOLs) created when existing roadway segments were repaved and restriped by Public Works. Bicycles and motor vehicle traffic share WOLs. Used by confident bicyclists, WOLs are an improvement over the prior roadway configuration and may provide connections where the right-of-way limits alternatives. However, many riders do not consider them safe, and the performance measure used by the City's Budget Office to determine "Bikeability" for its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure Goal give WOLs only 1/3 the value of traffic-separated facilities. The Active Transportation Plan and assessments of Virginia Beach's Bike Friendliness by the League of American Bicyclists also favor separation of bicycling facilities from motor vehicle traffic.

Bicycle / Pedestrian Facility	Total Miles, end of 2020	Total Miles, end of 2021	2021 Gains
Bike Lanes	21	21	0
Shared Use Path	64	64	0
Wide Outside Lanes (WOLs)	69	84	15
<b>Total Network</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>15 miles</b>

### Bikeways/Trails Repairs and Renovations CIP

Since 2014-15 the City has allocated \$280,000 per year to this CIP (100040). In 2021 the funds were expended on two major projects to mill and overlay paths with fresh asphalt.



The first project was the shared use path along Bayville Park and First Court Road. This path is very popular with Bayfront community residents and visitors traveling to Bayville Park and the Bayside Recreation Center from neighborhoods. This was the second phase of a two-phase project that now completes the renovation of this 0.3-mile trail segment.

The second project renovated a segment just over one-mile in length of the much loved and

utilized Little Neck Trail. This is the third trail section to be milled and overlaid within the past three years to address dangerous heaving of the existing pavement by roots of surrounding trees.

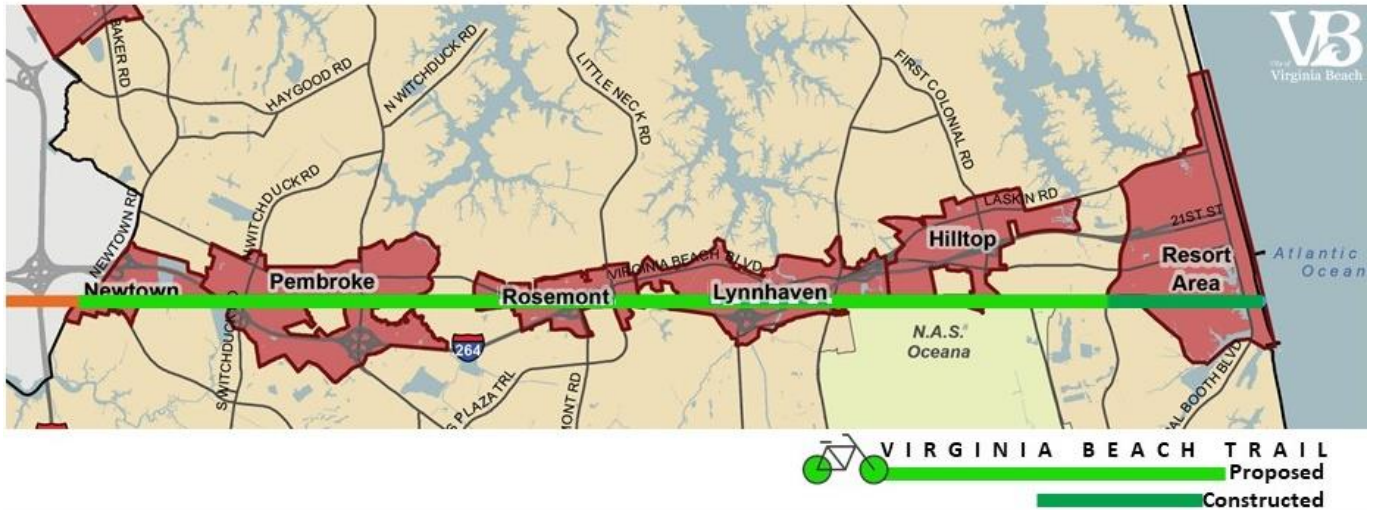
### Bikeways and Trails Plan Implementation CIP

\$475,000 per year is allocated to this CIP (100119) for additions and improvements to the network of routes, as identified within the Council-adopted Active Transportation Plan. All funds through FY25 are committed to existing projects (see pages 18-21) and an anticipated FY24 VDOT TAP Grant application to construct the Greenwich Road Shared Use Path (page 17).

With an average cost to construct one mile of new paved path now \$2M, the CIP must accumulate funds for years to build even a short new path. Winning competitive grants is key but constrained because of 20% to 50% local funding match requirements, and awards likelier for higher matches. **Absent additional funds, the pipeline of such projects under construction from this CIP will empty in 2024, have a 1-2 year gap, and likely deliver 1 more finished trail by 2028.**

## PROJECTS

### Virginia Beach Trail (VB Trail)



The [Virginia Beach Trail](#) is a proposed paved shared-use path spanning the City's entire 12-mile width. A signature asset that would help redefine our City, HRTPO ranks it as the entire region's #2, #3 and #4 priority for active transportation (alone and as part of longer trails).

The VB Trail would occupy a narrow 10'-wide strip within the 66'-wide City-owned former Norfolk Southern right-of-way, leaving room and flexibility for other future uses. The eastern-most 1.5 mile trail segment is already built and well-utilized by residents and tourists between Birdneck Rd and Pacific Ave. 15%-level engineering is finished on the unbuilt 10.5-miles.

For 41 years the Virginia Beach Trail has been part of Council-adopted Bikeways & Trails plans. It would be the spine of a true City network, linking the Newtown Road HRT hub, Opportunity Zones, Town Center, SGAs, the Resort Area and the City's North-South active transportation routes with a low-stress, traffic-separated path.

The VB Trail is also the future last leg of the regional South Hampton Roads Trail, the Virginia state trail system already connecting Richmond to Williamsburg with plans to reach the Atlantic, and national bike tourism trail routes currently ending prematurely in Yorktown or in Maryland.

The 2021 Active Transportation Plan identifies the VB Trail as the highest priority, transformational bikeways and trails project for the City of Virginia Beach, with the greatest potential to provide significant public benefits in all five goal areas: Connectivity, Safety, Economic Vitality, Technology, and Health.

Two years ago a major effort was mounted to obtain a federal BUILD grant for several miles of the trail and its costliest segment, a bridge over 9-lanes of traffic at Independence Boulevard. Unfortunately, the USDOT made no awards for projects in Virginia that year, but the process yielded re-usable work products and tremendous public interest. Letters of support from the business community, Sentara, tourism interests, nonprofits of all types, trail users and elected leaders were received and included.

In January of 2021 [WAVY TV-10 broadcast a story on the Virginia Beach Trail](#) that included interviews with then-BTAC Vice Chair Walter Camp and Elaine Linn. It included numerous still photos, maps, and data supplied by BTAC and Parks & Recreation, attracted significant interest, and served to inform the public. The video continues to be posted on the City's website, and a transcription accompanies the video on WAVY-10's website.



## PROJECTS

### Virginia Beach Trail Cont.

On May 11, 2021, the Virginian Pilot published an unsolicited editorial in favor of the trail. It said, “Now, after we've all struggled through a pandemic that's upended our lives for more than a year, a trail for bicycling and walking that would stretch from the Virginia Beach Oceanfront to Richmond sounds even better – downright terrific, in fact. This project deserves the full support of political leaders, government agencies, volunteers and individuals.”

Also in May 2021 work began on the next USDOT funding application under what was retitled the RAISE grant program. Through extensive outreach BTAC and others were able to increase the portfolio of support letters to more than 80, this time also garnering backing from the HRTPO, the 757/RVA Connects Mega-Region leadership, the Vice Admiral commanding the U.S. Navy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Fleet, and other powerful voices from beyond our City as well as within Virginia Beach.

This effort was then suspended due to lack of committed local matching funds. Ms. Linn made a presentation to City Council on June 8th, and BTAC members spoke to Council Members. At BTAC's request and with then-Council Member Jessica Abbott's leadership, a unanimously sponsored motion was adopted on June 15th, approving \$3M in local match funds for the grant. Work resumed with mere weeks left; and BTAC contributed written content and over 150 hours of volunteer time to the total effort.

While awaiting word on the grant, BTAC and Ms. Linn began working on a long-discussed effort to make the value of the Virginia Beach Trail more readily understandable. With the assistance of the City Communications Office and Parks & Recreation Director and marketing staff, drone footage was taken of the trail right-of-way and surrounding areas. Interviews were scripted and



London Bridge Creek, from the Virginia Beach Trail

filmed, and by Fall [a video educating viewers about the Trail's potential](#) was created and posted on the City's website and on YouTube.

In November 2021 USDOT advised the City the RAISE grant was not awarded. A later debrief revealed the application received very high marks and made the semi-finalist round (top 200 proposals nationwide). The 90 projects funded (\$983M) had significant political support in addition to their technical merits, leading to a recommendation later in this report. In early 2022 USDOT encouraged the City to reapply due to the project's strength, but with a very short deadline, no funding commitment, and new requirements doing so was deemed impractical.

BTAC supported Parks & Recreation's FY 2022-23 CIP request for funds facilitating agile future grant applications. **However no local funding has been allocated to this project through 2028.**

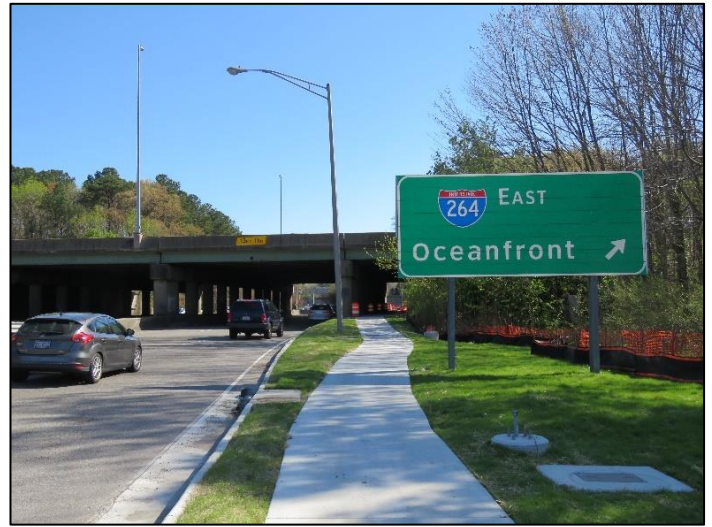
BTAC's mission asks us to “focus efforts on achieving completion of the priority projects as identified in the Plan.” The Virginia Beach Trail is the Plan's top priority project. We are committed to continued work on identifying funding opportunities, refining the project, and raising awareness within our City and the region.

## PROJECTS: ROADWAY HIGHLIGHT

### I-264 Interchange Improvements



*Before: Southbound Independence, November 2020*



*After: Southbound Independence, April 2022*

For bicyclists and pedestrians, Interstate 264 is a tremendous barrier to North-South mobility, dividing Virginia Beach into two separate areas. Across a span of ten miles from Newtown Road to Birdneck Road there are only ten underpasses, unevenly spaced and in some cases far apart. Several of these have lacked any provisions for non-automotive travelers to get to the other side, forcing bicyclists and motorists into white-knuckle lane-sharing in some of our busiest interchanges. Those on foot have been relegated to climbing embankments and guardrails, and walking alongside high-speed traffic on their way to work and other destinations. This situation has particularly impacted residents who walk or bike out of need, rather than by choice, including youth.

VDOT's massive, multi-year improvement projects along the City's Western segment of Interstate 264, and the associated City of Virginia Beach street upgrading projects, have begun to deliver long-needed solutions to these high priority problem areas. Even though completion is not scheduled until 2022, the new facilities are

already being heavily utilized, clearly contributing to improved safety and reduced stress for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists traveling through those congested locations.

BTAC commends the City and VDOT for the planning and investment of time and resources required for projects of this scale. Safe passage along each road crossing the I-264 barrier dividing our City is essential to the eventual creation of a traversable network of active transportation routes for vulnerable road users.

This series of major improvements is described below, from East to West.

#### **Independence Boulevard Underpass:**

Work began in 2021 on a safe non-automotive passage facility under I-264 at Independence Boulevard, one of the busiest interchanges in the entire City. The key improvement is a wide sidewalk with ramped ADA crossings on the West side of Independence, extending from the existing sidewalk by Best Buy on the North to Baxter Road on the South. The photos above illustrate the magnitude of change.

## PROJECTS: ROADWAY HIGHLIGHT

### I-264 Interchange Improvements Cont.

#### Witchduck Road Underpass:



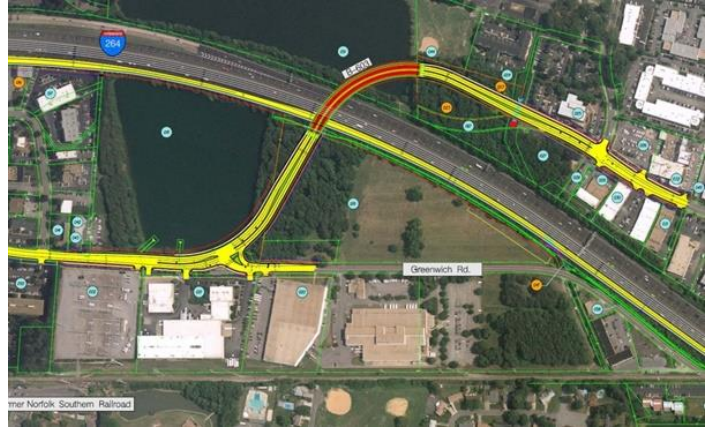
*Witchduck embankment path under construction*

Construction is progressing on a traffic-separated wide sidewalk notched into the east embankment of the underpass. Connecting sidewalks with ADA ramps, refuge traffic islands, and improved lighting will link this new facility with existing shared-use paths to the South, and to sidewalks near the Housing Resource Center and the future Virginia Beach Trail to the North.

#### Future Greenwich Road Shared Use Path:

The abandoned Greenwich Road right-of-way from the new terminating cul-de-sac east to Witchduck Road has been partially redeployed for construction of the new I-264 exit ramp. However, sufficient land remains along the lakeside and screening to provide for a future shared-use path. This relatively short connector would link the existing sidepaths along Witchduck to Greenwich, creating multiple walking and bicycling route options in this area of the City. Funding for this project will be proposed for a future VDOT TAP grant.

#### Greenwich-Cleveland Flyover:



*VDOT graphic illustrating new route and improvements*

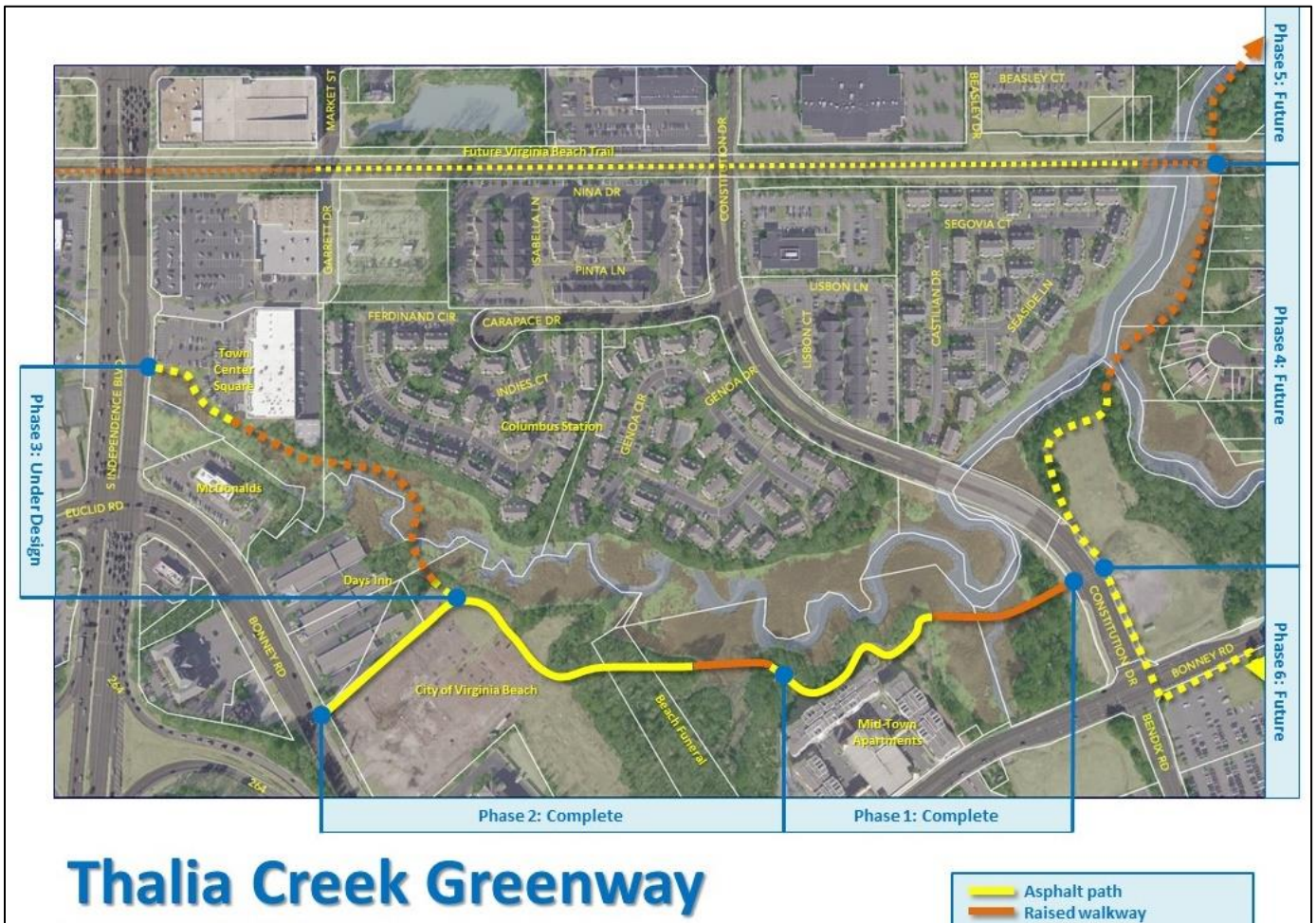
An entirely new bridged flyover (red section in photo above) has been built, taking Greenwich Road up and over I-264 from the South near Top Golf and joining it to Cleveland Street on the north side. This project includes 10-foot wide sidewalks on the flyover and approaches, and significantly improved sidewalks along Greenwich and Cleveland. Opened to automotive traffic in 2021, work on the remaining phases will be completed in 2022. City plans for additional improvements along Cleveland Street heading east beyond Witchduck will eventually further extend the benefits of this project.

**Newtown Road Underpass:** The sidewalk through the underpass along the Norfolk-Virginia Beach border was repaved, and although it is neither wide nor traffic-separated, it now connects smoothly to adjoining segments on both sides of the interchange. This is a well-utilized route for pedestrians and bicyclists, with major employers, HRT facilities, ECPI, and residential areas nearby.



# PROJECTS: NON-ROADWAY

## Thalia Creek Greenway (Town Center-District 4)



Thalia Creek, a Lynnhaven River tributary, forms a beautiful, natural buffer between Town Center and nearby residential neighborhoods. A long-term six-phase project first envisioned in the 1990s is gradually transforming this drainage alignment into an accessible, signature linear park for the public's enjoyment. This greenway will eventually connect to the Virginia Beach Trail.

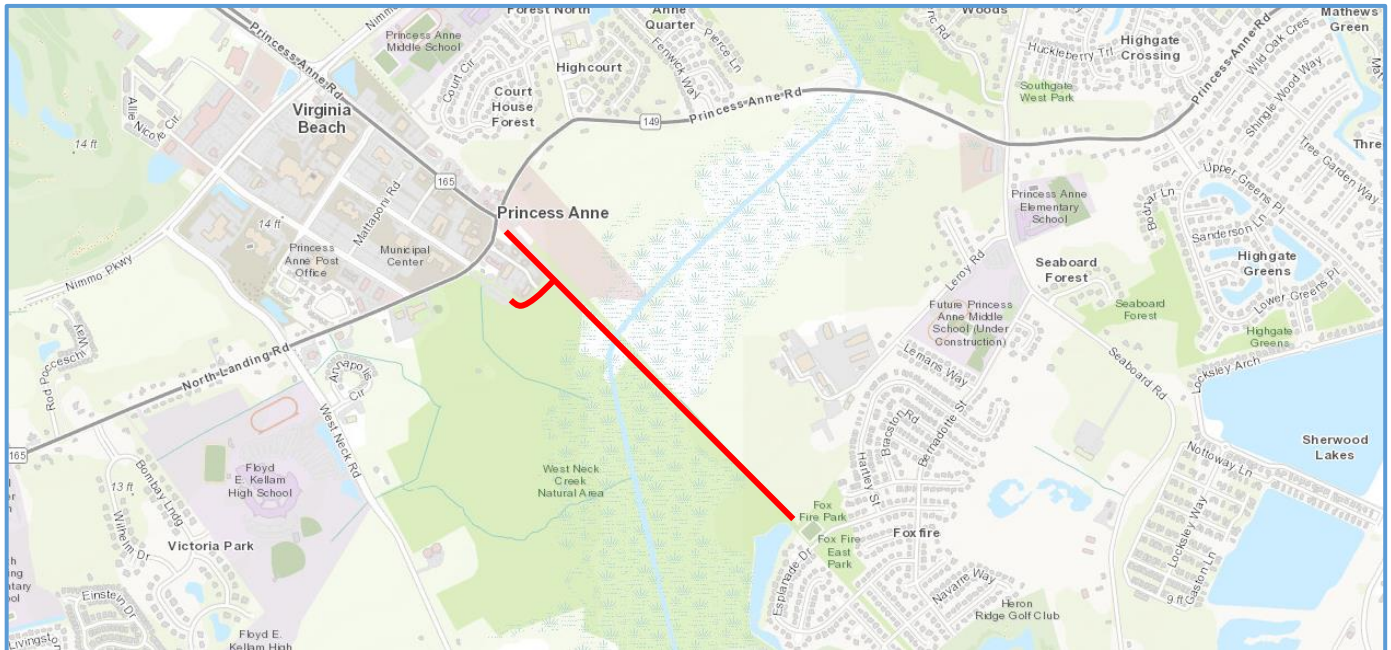
The [Thalia Creek Greenway](#) (TCGW) is now three-quarters of a mile long and includes boardwalks overlooking the scenic views of the marsh and creek with Town Center in the background. TCGW was master planned with community involvement 2006-07. Phase I was built from 2009-11.

Phase II began in 2012 with a VDOT grant of \$640,000 and culminated after 8 years of work with a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in December 2020 attended by City leaders, BTAC, the Parks & Recreation Foundation, Parks and Recreation staff, media representatives and the public.

The design for TCGW Phase III is now complete, and easements and permits are underway. Phase III will predominantly consist of elevated boardwalk, meandering along and crossing the creek and extending the trail West to Independence Boulevard. Construction is anticipated to begin next Winter with project completion by Summer 2024. **No funding is allocated through 2028 for Phases IV-VI.**

## PROJECTS: NON-ROADWAY

### Foxfire Trail (District 2)



The [Foxfire Trail](#) will be a one-mile paved asphalt path through a former railroad corridor. It will include a pedestrian bridge crossing some of Virginia Beach's scenic wetlands along the West Neck Creek Natural Area. The Foxfire Trail connects to the trails in the natural area, creating a new and complete continuous route out to the new shared use path along West Neck Road. The longest segment of the trail heads south and terminates at Foxfire Park.

The project will enhance the City's overall active transportation network in this portion of the City by providing a traffic-separated connection from the Foxfire residential neighborhood out to Princess Anne Road at the Municipal Center. From that point existing shared use paths connect all the way north to Landstown Commons and the Princess Anne Athletic Complex.

Eastbound trail users will be able to travel all the way to the Red Mill neighborhoods and commerce center on the shared use paths of

Sherwood Lakes, with only a short disconnect remaining on Seaboard Road. Addressing the Seaboard Road gap is identified in the Active Transportation Plan as a priority future project.

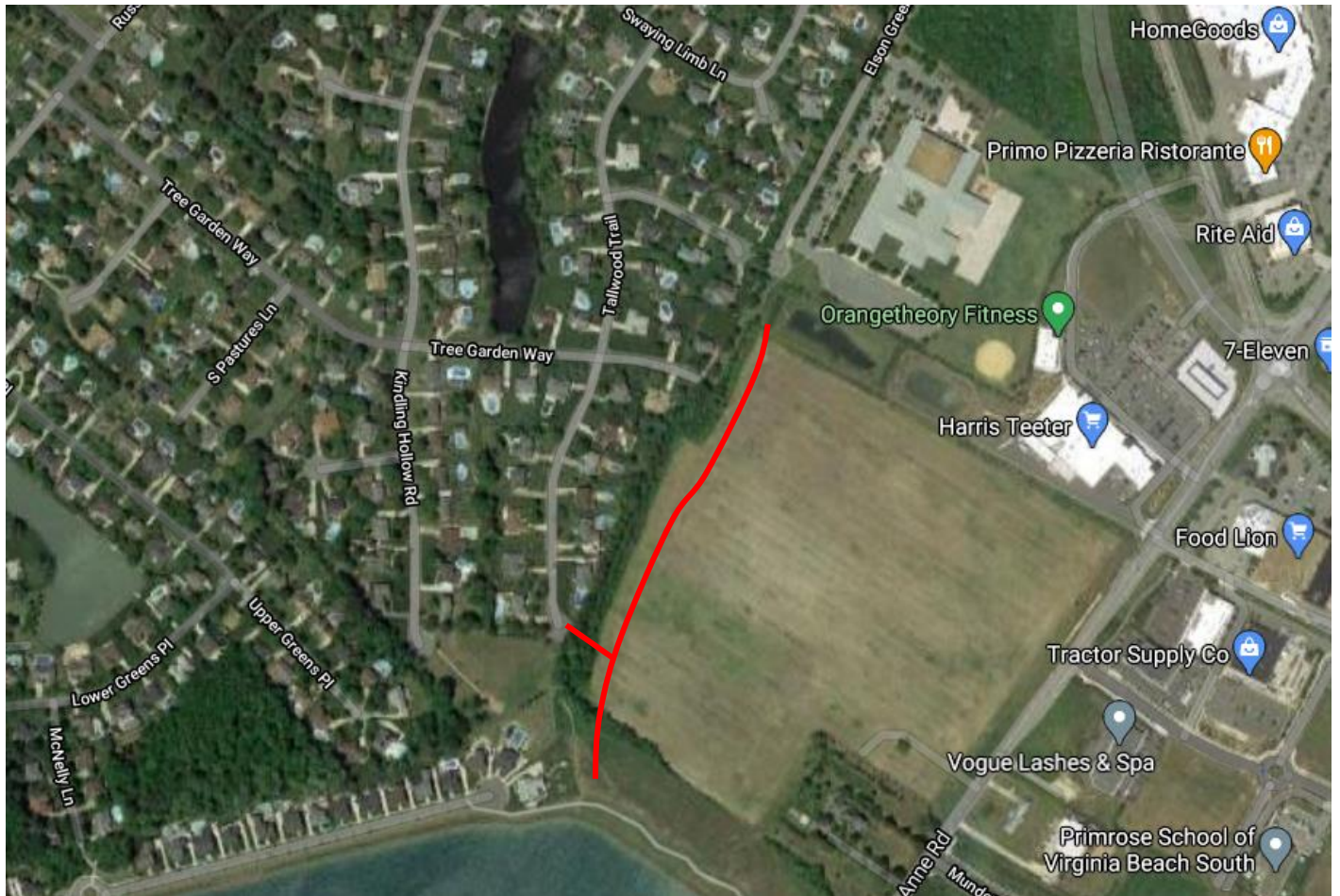
The project earned a 2016 VDOT Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant Award, with authorization to proceed granted in 2017. The design of the project is now complete. A land-swap between the City and a private developer near the trail-head at Princess Anne Road has been approved with the planned trail intact. Construction is anticipated to begin Fall 2022 and be completed Fall 2023.

The project's budget is \$1.3M, of which \$1M has been appropriated. The proposed FY 2022-23 CIP budget provides the remaining \$300,000 through a transfer of unexpended funds previously appropriated for another Parks & Recreation project.



## PROJECTS: NON-ROADWAY

### Three Oaks Path (District 2, Adjoining District 5)



The [Three Oaks Path](#) project will create a shared use path through the undeveloped City-owned Three Oaks Park, in the Red Mill area on Princess Anne Road near the Sandbridge Road intersection. It will connect the surrounding residential neighborhoods including the Sherwood Lakes shared use path network to Three Oaks Elementary School and the Red Mill commerce center.

The project will fill a gap in the City's active transportation network of safe, low-stress routes linking this area to the Municipal Center and destinations beyond.

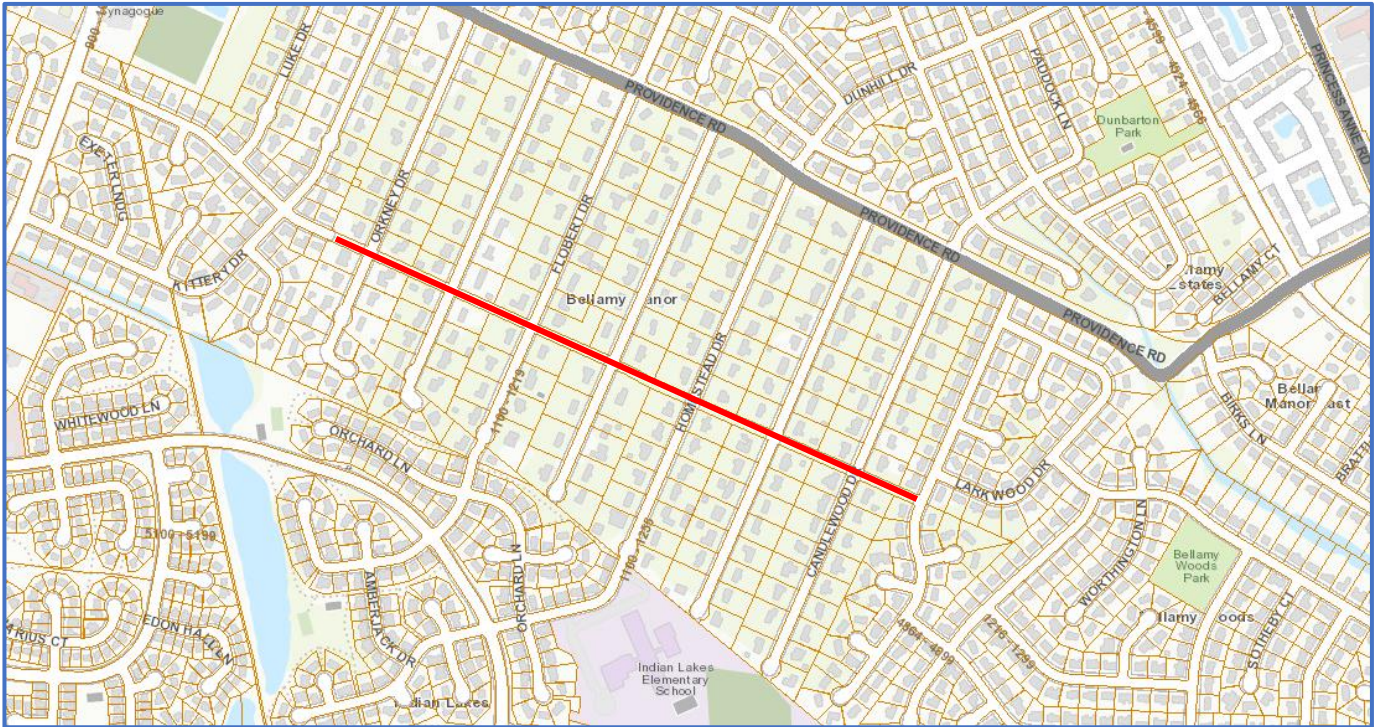
The Three Oaks Path won a VDOT Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) Grant Award late in 2018, and authorization to proceed was granted in 2019.

The project is currently under design and nearing 100% construction drawing completion. Stormwater mitigation is one of the primary issues still under development. Construction is anticipated to start in January 2023 with project completion in the Fall of 2023.



## PROJECTS: NON-ROADWAY

### Violet Bank Trail (District 1)



The [Violet Bank Trail](#) will create a shared-use path two-thirds of a mile long in the City-owned “paper street” right-of-way from Kittery Drive to Selwood Drive in the Kempsville area.

The project will provide the public with a safe, traffic-separated low stress alternative to bicycling and walking on the edge of nearby Providence Road, which lacks shoulders or sidewalks and carries a high traffic volume.

The public has heavily used the unmaintained right-of-way as an informal trail for more than thirty years since it is the only safe East-West connection between the residential neighborhoods of Bellamy Woods, Old Bellamy Manor, and Stratford Chase, and for residents to reach local schools, Kempsville Recreation Center, the Kempsville Library and destinations beyond on foot or by bicycle.

The project's scope was increased to improve the adjacent drainage ditch feeding into Salem Creek, in addition to creating the paved path.

The project received a VDOT TAP Grant awarded late in 2018, with authorization to proceed granted in 2019. The project is at 30% design completion and a public input virtual open house is scheduled for May 2022. Design completion of the path and stormwater project components are anticipated by February 2023. Construction is expected to occur from July 2023 through April 2024.

This project requires \$300,000 in additional funding due to cost escalations and scope changes. The proposed FY 2022-23 CIP budget provides this amount through transfers of unexpended funds previously appropriated to other, completed projects.



## PROJECTS: NON-ROADWAY

### Bow Creek Stormwater Park (Districts 3 & 10)



The [Bow Creek Stormwater Park](#) is an innovative 121-acre golf course conversion project epitomizing dual public benefits. While serving as a significant stormwater holding site, it will also provide numerous recreational features such as a walking path designed to accommodate a 5K race, a mountain bike course/pump track, and possible lake usage (semi-enclosed blueway). The facility is physically located in the Princess Anne Plaza Section of District 3, but it will also directly serve the adjacent neighborhoods of Windsor Woods and The Lakes in District 10.

In the November 2021 referendum a majority of Virginia Beach voters approved the issuance of bonds to fund the Phase I stormwater mitigation program, which greatly accelerated the previous ten-year estimate for funding and constructing this project. Implementation of the bond-funded program will begin in 2022, including an updated project-specific timeline for creation of the Park.

Buffer plantings began in early 2021, and later in the year the project reached the 60% design level. This project was selected for inclusion in the \$567.5 million dollar Phase I City-wide Flood Protection Program.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Respectfully Submitted

for Consideration by City Council

## Administration

1. **Committee Composition & Liaisons**
  - a. Add seats for two students to improve public input: high school age, 1-year terms July-June, non-voting/quorum
  - b. Add one voting member seat (bringing total to nine) to assist in our work & representation without a higher quorum
  - c. Sunset the appointed Agricultural Advisory Commission Liaison seat: position attended 1/35 meetings past 5 years, equestrian interests don't require AAC Liaison, can coordinate as needed
  - d. Designate an ongoing staff contact in Economic Development or with the Convention & Visitors Bureau, to assist us with tourism interests & asset awareness
2. **Modify quorum definition to be "a majority of then-appointed members, but no less than three,"** enabling ongoing work when seats are vacant between appointments
3. **Revise BTAC's mission to align with Council's adopted 2021 Active Transportation Plan**
  - a. Change obsolete reference to 2011 Plan
  - b. Change wording from "Bikeways and Trails" to "Active Transportation"
  - c. Add "non-profit and private sector entities" to groups we work with, reflecting our long record of successful partnerships with businesses & 501(c)3s
4. **Change the committee's name to the Active Transportation Advisory Committee**
  - a. Align with U.S., Virginia, and HRTPO usage, and the 2021 VB Active Transportation Plan
  - b. BTAC's work has long involved many users' interests: bicyclists, pedestrians, the fitness & wheeled-sports communities (such as runners & rollerbladers), those with mobility challenges, blueways paddlers, equestrians, & personal micro-transit modes riders (such as scooters).
  - c. Our work involves transportation, as well as recreation.

## Policies

1. **In future Virginia legislative agendas, continue seeking FOIA changes allowing more virtual participation by local advisory boards and appointees** to allow better engagement by those working, studying, traveling, and/or mobility-challenged
2. **Educate Federal and State delegations and staff about the Virginia Beach Trail**, to facilitate rapid and effective support, essential for future funding applications.
3. **Encourage strong interdepartmental coordination and collaboration between Planning, Public Works, and Parks & Recreation on active transportation matters**, including priority-setting, mutual grant assistance, and design standards.

## Resources and Projects

1. **Reconcile the proposed FY2023 CIP to align funding with the Parks & Rec. Citizen Needs Assessment (see p5).** Traffic-separated bikeways and trails are the public's top priorities for P&R facility investment, but the #1 project is unfunded 2022-2028 and inflation has eroded the Bikeways CIP's funding to ¼ mile per year of new paths
  - a. Fund a local match CIP for top priority Virginia Beach Trail, so very large grants can be pursued promptly, with higher success potential, regional coordination
  - b. Increase annual funding of Bikeways & Trails CIP 100119, raising eligibility & success odds for grant awards and avoiding construction gap years.
2. **Wind Energy Trail - Incorporate a provision for a public recreation/facility maintenance shared use path into the easement** across public lands for Dominion Energy's offshore wind energy transmission line right of way.
3. **Equip rooms for BTAC (and others) to easily hold hybrid meetings**, enabling increased, more effective, and more efficient participation by elected officials, appointees, the public, and City staff



