

**RESOLUTION OF THE
VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF VISITORS**

SUPPORTING REGIONAL TRAILS

WHEREAS, the campus master plan highlights the importance of the Appomattox River to the revitalization of the regional community as a bicycle and pedestrian friendly environment that takes advantage of the area's unique economic development opportunities, history and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia supports this master plan goal in Executive Order 29 establishing the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice that sets the development of community green spaces as a key priority; and

WHEREAS, the Appomattox River Trail will be a 21-mile east/west shared bicycle and pedestrian path; and

WHEREAS, the Ashland-Petersburg Trail will be a 41-mile north/south shared bicycle and pedestrian path; and

WHEREAS, a shared bicycle/pedestrian bridge spanning the Appomattox River connecting the VSU college campus to Petersburg area commercial, retail, and dining locations is a component of both trail systems; and

WHEREAS, regional trails are shown to generate additional jobs, tax revenue, economic activity and improve property values in their proximity; and

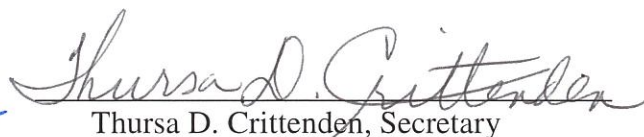
WHEREAS, the Board of Visitors supports the Appomattox River Trail and Ashland-Petersburg Trail and their connection with the VSU campus; and

WHEREAS, the Tri-Cities Area Metropolitan Planning Organization can submit a proposal for Smartscale funding of the Ashland-Petersburg Trail sections located in Chesterfield County, Virginia State University and the City of Petersburg; and

WHEREAS, § 23.1-1016 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that "such improvements or renovations shall be consistent with such institution's master plan approved by its governing board..."; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the Board of Visitors of Virginia State University hereby approves VSU's participation in a Smartscale funding application to construct the Ashland-Petersburg Trail on campus property.


Huron F. Winstead, Rector


Thursa D. Crittenden, Secretary

2.7.20

Date

2.7.20

Date

Support for Regional Trails

**VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY
Petersburg, Virginia**

Date: February 9, 2020	Board Committee: Facilities, Finance and Audit
	Initiating Unit: Finance
Board Action: Approval	Additional Information Included in Board Package: Yes

TOPIC: Support for Regional Trails

BACKGROUND:

Our campus master plan outlines a goal of achieving optimal long-range use of the University's land and building assets. Providing sustainable transportation systems to anticipate growth and creating a walkable, highly connected, and vibrant campus that fosters a sense of safety and security were key components of this plan. The plan highlights the importance of the Appomattox River crossing to the revitalization of the regional community as a new bicycle and pedestrian friendly environment that takes advantage of the area's unique economic development opportunities, rich history and natural resources. The Commonwealth of Virginia supports this master plan goal in Executive Order 29 that establishes the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice that sets the development of community green spaces as a key priority.

The Appomattox River Trail (ART) is an approximate 21-mile bike/pedestrian shared trail system running east/west along the Appomattox River from the dam at Lake Chesdin to City Point in Hopewell. Portions of the trail have been constructed in accordance with the master plan prepared by the Friends of the Lower Appomattox (FOLAR). The Chesterfield County Appomattox River Trail at Ettrick/VSU Trail Head Park was constructed at Randolph Farm in partnership with the University. The ART master plan recommends a trail route that connects Historic Petersburg with the Appomattox River at Patton Park, just south of the VSU campus. Currently, a cost sharing arrangement between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Cameron Foundation and the City of Petersburg is funding improvements to Patton Park.

Many students, faculty and staff reside in Petersburg and walk to campus by way of University Boulevard to the Main Campus across Fleet Street Bridge, a two-lane roadway with narrow sidewalks obstructed with utility poles. Our campus master plan and the ART master plan each envision a shared-use pedestrian and bicycle bridge spanning the Appomattox River. This path will serve to connect the VSU college campus to Petersburg area commercial, retail, and dining locations. The project is an important component of regional plans to expand public access to multi-modal transportation choices and the revitalization of the Petersburg waterfront and downtown area to increase the quality of life for residents and visitors.

The Ashland/Petersburg Trail (APT) is an approximate 41 mile North/South Trail System to be constructed largely along abandoned rail lines. A study was conducted by VDOT to identify a preferred corridor that will connect people and places within the counties of Chesterfield, Hanover,

I
S
S
U
E

P
A
P
E
R



and Henrico, cities of Colonial Heights, Petersburg, and Richmond, and the Town of Ashland. An Environmental Agency Working Group (EAWG) and Stakeholder Technical Advisory Group (STAG) worked with the VDOT staff to refine a preferred trail corridor that represents the least impactful options to environmental resources, with consideration given to cost, feasibility of implementation and eligibility for funding options. Several public meetings and online interactive meetings were conducted to allow for adequate public comment and endorsement of the trail route.

The preferred route runs through the campus from the Gateway Complex to Patton Park. The continuous trail requires a new pedestrian/bike bridge across Fleets Branch near the future MT Carter Annex, an elevated walkway to the VSU Appomattox River Overlook, and a river crossing to Patton Park similar to the bridge proposed by the VSU and ART master plans.

A similar trail system, the Virginia Capital Trail, was constructed in 2015. A study by the Institute for Service Research was conducted to determine the economic and fiscal impacts for 2018-2019. The study indicates that recreationists attracted to the Virginia Capital Trail during Fiscal Year 2018-2019 stimulated a sizable amount of economic activity in the trail region and around the Commonwealth. Key findings include:

- In FY2018-19, visitors to the Virginia Capital Trail spent an estimated \$6.1M throughout the state. More than 90 percent of this money was spent within a 50-mile radius of the trail.
- The total economic activity stimulated by the Virginia Capital Trail in the state during FY2018-19 was approximately \$8.9M. Roughly 95% [\$8.5M] of this economic activity occurred within a 50-mile radius of the trail.
- Regarding employment, the economic activity supported by visitation to the Virginia Capital Trail supported approximately 99.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in the state in FY2018-19.
- In terms of wages and income, the economic activity spawned by the Virginia Capital Trail was responsible for roughly \$3.6M in wage and salary income in the Commonwealth during FY2018-19.
- Economic activity created by the Virginia Capital Trail was associated with approximately \$5.3M in value-added effects which is a measure of the trail system's contribution to the gross domestic product of the Commonwealth.
- Economic activity stimulated by the Virginia Capital Trail generated approximately \$613K in state and local tax revenues in Virginia during FY2018-19.
- Between 2014-2016, properties that bordered the trail increased in assessed value, an average of 3.7 percent more than similar properties not adjacent to the trail.

Regional partners, including VSU, can participate in a funding opportunity administered by VDOT called Smartscale if eligibility requirements and technical criteria are satisfied. Smartscale funding applications must be submitted by regional planning authorities or localities with scoring and approval by the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CBT). The Tri-Cities Area Metropolitan Planning

Organization (MPO) has agreed to prepare an application submission on behalf of Chesterfield County, VSU and the City of Petersburg for construction of the Ashland-Petersburg Trail sections located in their jurisdictions. The University has developed schematic design concepts and budget estimates for the portion of the Ashland-Petersburg trail proposed for VSU and the Appomattox River Bridge linking the University to Patton Park. A statement of support from the Board supporting regional trails and approval to participate in the application for Smartscale grant funding is requested. Further approval for the President or his designee to deliver and execute all documents necessary is further requested.

AUTHORITY: Code of Virginia § 23.1-1016

CONSEQUENCE OF NON-APPROVAL: The Ashland-Petersburg Trail will not be constructed on University property, VSU will not be eligible for Smartscale funding to construct a north/south trail on campus and the potential economic activity generated by a continuous trail will not be realized.