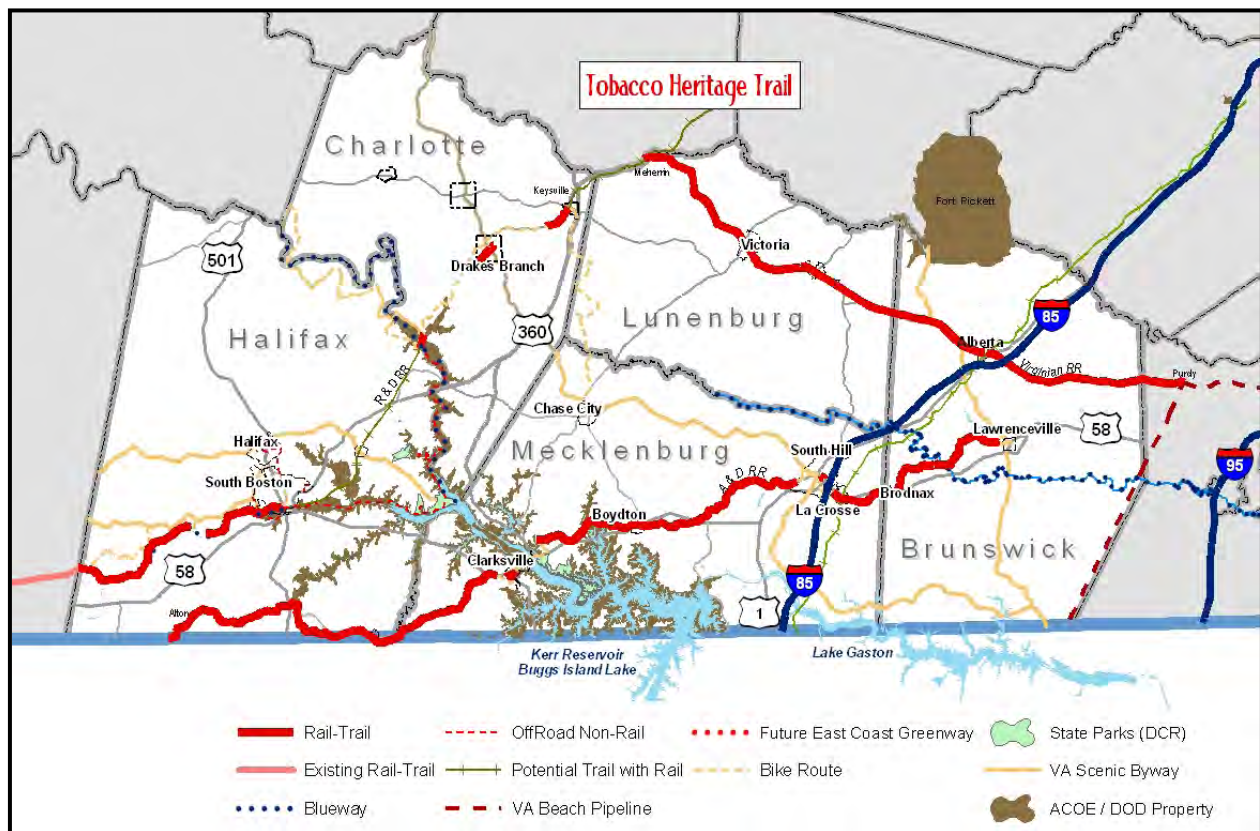




Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails, Inc. 2009 Annual Report

The ***Tobacco Heritage Trail*** is a network of long distance recreational non-motorized trails. The trail will be an important community asset by preserving a greenway, offering an attractive venue for exercise and enjoying nature, as well as, providing economic benefits. As the route winds through the Southern Virginia countryside, users will be exposed to the area's farming heritage and current agrarian and forestry practices. The trail will be a key economic development component as both a community amenity—which is attractive to businesses—and through the dollars trail users will generate. Roanoke River Rails to Trails, Inc., a Virginia non-profit charitable corporation is coordinating the Trail development.



..... **2009 Tobacco Heritage Trail Highlights**

- In January 2009, a meeting was convened with RRRT, Halifax County, Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Staunton River State Park staff, to discuss the potential for developing a 20+ mile multi-use trail along the Staunton River, connecting Staunton River State Park and Staunton River Battlefield Park. The concept was first introduced several years ago, but stalled in 2004 due to a variety of reasons. The intent of the meeting was to discuss actions needed to gain authority and permissions to develop the Trail, and gain consensus on a revised project work plan including next steps, target dates, and roles/responsibilities.



As a follow-up to the meeting, two specific tasks were undertaken. In April 2009, as requested by the Corps, the Planning District staff with trail volunteer John Fulton located and mapped the Staunton River Trail route along Corps properties adjacent to the river. This information was provided to the Corps in May 2009. The second task was development of a lease agreement between Halifax County and the Corps for use

of the property as a hiking, equestrian, and mountain biking trail. The lease is to be modeled after an agreement between Mecklenburg County and the Corps for a water skiing course on John H. Kerr Reservoir, and similar agreements between the Corps and IMBA (International Mountain Biking Association). Halifax County is serving as lead on this task. The trail will connect the two state parks in Halifax County and will be an important link in the Tobacco Heritage Trail. The Halifax Saddle Club originally initiated this trail effort.



- During February 2009, public meetings to kick off the current phase of the environmental study for the SEHSR were held. The Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) study team was seeking input regarding the inclusion of a parallel trail concept into the SEHSR project. The trail concept will be a separate project, parallel to and outside the rail right of way, but within the SEHSR study corridor. All environmental work being conducted for the rail component is available for evaluation for the trail concept, thereby “clearing” it environmentally for future federal or other public funds. It is expected to become part of the East Coast Greenway, running from Maine to Florida, and could provide additional “value added” to the communities along the rail corridor.



- **Construction of Phase I of the Tobacco Heritage Trail** was completed in December 2009. With a winning low bid of \$759,852 Keith Barber Construction was awarded the contract in May 2009. After contract amendments, the final contract cost was \$810,486/78.

Phase I includes the segment in Mecklenburg County between La Crosse and Brodnax, as well as, the segment on the west side of Lawrenceville which includes the rehabilitation of three (3) bridges.



VDOT staff provided invaluable advice and expertise to bring this project to fruition. Thanks, Guys!



Tobacco Heritage Trail near Lawrenceville, Brunswick County

- The Town of South Boston was awarded a \$125,000 Recreational Trails Program grant to assist with construction of the Tobacco Heritage Trail in the town. This funding will supplement previously awarded Enhancement funds.
- VDOT announced an award of \$6,000,000 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA a.k.a. “Stimulus”) grant funds to construct trail to connect the two Phase I trail segments, which will result in seventeen miles of multi-use trail. It is estimated that 30-40 jobs may result from construction and from the completed trail.
- To facilitate construction of trail near Boydton in Mecklenburg County an application for \$724,000 was made to the Tobacco Commission, of which \$159,000 was awarded toward this project. An Enhancement grant request for \$535,451 was submitted in November 2009 toward this trail segment development.
- The Virginia Department of Forestry approved \$12,000 in funding for a Trails Volunteers Coordinator position. In September, Sara Fulks was hired to assist in the Trails effort. She is employed through the Southside Planning District Commission and divides her time between Trails and Housing projects.
- Volunteer efforts and maps displays enabled a Tobacco Heritage Trail presence at the Taste of Brunswick Festival, La Crosse Festival, Boydton Day, and Victoria's Centennial Celebration.

- Trail Engineering Consultants**—Anderson & Associates has been hired to perform design and construction administration for the next phases of the Tobacco Heritage Trail. Subcontractors for this project are B&B Consultants, Inc., and Schnabel Engineering.

Scope of Work: A&A will perform surveying and geotechnical engineering, perform preliminary and final engineering, prepare construction documents, prepare water quality permits, assist in environmental clearances, provide bidding and construction contract administration services, and provide resident project representative services for the trail segments as follows:



*Trail Corridor near Berry Hill,
Halifax County*

Phase 2 – Contract Amount: \$167,309. Includes 2.4 miles in South Boston/Halifax County from Cotton Mill Park, then along a former spur track rail bed to the former Richmond and Danville Railroad corridor, and then terminating in the railroad corridor near the western boundary of the Berry Hill Plantation Site.



*Meherrin River Bridge remains,
Brunswick County*

Phase 3— Contract Amount: \$406,499. Includes approximately 10.5 miles of trail in Brunswick County from Brodnax to Lawrenceville along the former Atlantic & Danville Railroad corridor (a.k.a. NF&D Railroad) connecting the two Phase 1 segments.



*NF&D railroad bed east side of Rudd's Creek,
Mecklenburg County*

Phase 4 is included in the contract as “Additional Services.” Therefore, as funding becomes available, engineering services will be provided for 7.5 miles of trail in Mecklenburg County from Finchley to Boydton along the former A&D Railroad corridor. A&A has done 20% plans for this phase as a part of the TICR grant, which facilitated an Enhancement application. A portion of this trail segment bisects U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property however the trail property is owned by RRRT.

- Phase 2 Acquisition**—At long last in December 2009, the purchase of additional Norfolk Southern-owned abandoned railroad property in Halifax, Lunenburg, Greensville and Brunswick was completed. Closing was held December 17, 2009 and all deeds were recorded by December 18, 2009. This purchase utilized a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund and Virginia Works funds. A trail easement was also recorded which ensures that the corridor will be conserved for use as a trail and recreational purposes. The Department of Conservation and Recreation holds the easement.

The purchase includes:

- Two segments of the former Richmond & Danville in Halifax County. This trail will eventually connect the town of South Boston to the existing Richmond and Danville Rail-Trail in Pittsylvania County, which will ultimately terminate in the City of Danville. The R&D Railroad was constructed in the 1850s and was the route used by Jefferson Davis and his cabinet when the evacuation of Richmond to Danville during the Civil War. Much of this trail in Halifax



Trail Corridor, Halifax County

- County is parallel to the Dan River. (1) South Boston Segment—7+/- miles, beginning at the edge of the former Hilden Mill (Cotton Mill) site to the eastern edge of the McDannald property; (2) Paces to Pittsylvania county line—8 +/- miles, beginning at Melon Road (State Route 658) west to the existing Richmond & Danville Rail Trail at the Pittsylvania county line.
- The remaining interest of Norfolk Southern in the former Virginian Railway from Meherrin to Purdy was also acquired. This purchase is located in Brunswick, Greensville, and Lunenburg counties. The property connects to the Virginia Beach Pipeline, which funnels water from Lake Gaston to Suffolk, Virginia. Several miles of the approximately 50-mile right-of-way that have been sold to a number of adjacent property owners, will necessitate utilizing nearby highways to provide connectivity for bicycle traffic.



*Virginian Railway corridor,
Lunenburg County*



*Virginian Railway corridor,
Brunswick County*

Project History

Roanoke River Rail-to-Trails Inc. formed as the result of community bike planning efforts in 2003. From 2003 to 2004 the corporation organized for the acquisition of abandoned railroad right-of-way and the development of a regional off-road trail system, and obtained tax-exempt status as a 501 (c) 3 corporation. The Board of Directors is made up of representatives from each county and each town desiring to join. At the close of 2009, sixteen localities are represented on the Rails to Trails Board of Directors.

Roanoke River Rails to Trails Mission:

- To enrich Southside Virginia's communities and countryside by creating a regional network of public trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors.
- To develop plans for the establishment and development of recreation, transportation, historic preservation, economic revitalization, open-space conservation and wildlife preservation trails for the enjoyment and use of the general public.

In 2005 Norfolk Southern was contacted to request the opportunity to purchase the abandoned rail right-of-way through a five county area. An inventory of the status of abandoned rail corridor was initiated. RRRT received its first grant from Bikes Belong Coalition and development of the first trail segment from La Crosse to Brodnax commenced. This initial trail construction, which began in earnest in late 2005 when the ribbon was cut by then Governor Mark Warner, was completed in December 2009.



The name "Tobacco Heritage Trail" was selected to acknowledge region's agricultural history. East Coast Greenways organization utilized a portion of the future trail in October of 2004 and announced its intention of marketing the trail as a part of its designated route from Maine to Florida. Furthermore the Tobacco Heritage Trail forms an important link in a statewide effort to create the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail, a multi-use trail that will transverse the state from the Chesapeake Bay to the Cumberland Gap by connecting local trail initiatives.

Trail Impact

According to the Economic Impact Study for the Tobacco Heritage Trail, Chmura Economics & Analytics, 2006, conservatively, the trail could attract over 197,000 visits a year, with direct spending of \$3.5 million in the region. Adding the indirect and induced effect, trail visitor spending can generate \$4.6 million in sales in the region and create 61 jobs. Most of those jobs are in industries providing services for visitors such as restaurants, lodging, and retail. Current tourism resources in the region, such as the three state parks, Buggs Island Lake, Lake Gaston, auto-racing events, and historic and cultural attractions, is expected to boost the visitors to Tobacco Heritage Trail beyond the benchmark estimates of 197,000.

Trail construction influences the economy as well. Chmura estimated that construction of the entire trail could inject a total of \$15.6 million into the regional economy and create 178 jobs over the construction period. Construction of the A&D and NF&D trail segments from Clarksville to Lawrenceville was projected to generate an economic impact of \$7.0 million and create a total of 80 jobs regionally over time.

The proposed Tobacco Heritage Trail is also likely to provide additional benefits that are not easily quantified. Tobacco Heritage Trail is an important addition to the tourism resources of the region. It can be combined with other community festivals and events to support economic development through an enhanced quality of life. In addition, the trail can enhance other types of development such as vacation and retirement communities in Southern Virginia.

Trail Development

The off-road trail is to be limited to non-motorized traffic and for multiple user groups—pedestrians, hikers, bicyclists, and horseback riders—with portions accessible to those with mobility limitations. The trail will traverse the counties of Brunswick, Halifax, Lunenburg and Mecklenburg with segments in Charlotte and Greensville as well, using primarily abandoned rail right-of-way; however, where on-road is the only practical method for connectivity, county roads will be utilized and identified with unified trail signage. Also some connections via utility easements and other off-road easements, such as the flowage easement of the John H. Kerr Reservoir along the Dan and Staunton Rivers, will be needed.



In 2006 Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails made its initial purchase for trail development. RRRT purchased from Norfolk Southern Corporation approximately 40 miles of the former Atlantic & Danville, a.k.a. Norfolk, Franklin and Danville, abandoned railroad right-of-way between Jeffress in Mecklenburg County to Lawrenceville in Brunswick County.

In December 2009, RRRT completed a second phase of acquisition with the purchase of approximately 50 miles of the former Virginian railway and approximately 15 miles of the Richmond & Danville Railroad.

Roanoke River Rails to Trails, Inc. Grant Funding Sources

Funding Approval Date	Amount	Source	Purpose
Dec. 2004	\$5,000	Bikes Belong	Organization
April 2005	\$775,000	VA Works	Acquisition
June 2005 Contract: 7/17/06	\$230,000	VDOT Enhancement Grant	Design & Construction
July 2005	\$49,855	DCR Recreational Trails Grant	Construction
October 2005	\$25,000	Rural Development	Facilities Design & Construction (Signs, etc.)
Nov. 2005 Contract: 3/17/08	\$391,000	VDOT Enhancement Grant	Design & Construction
February 2006	\$386,375	VA Land Conservation Fund	Acquisition
July 2006	\$100,000	Tobacco Commission Special Project	Master Plan & Economic Impact study
2006	\$200,000	General Assembly	Acquisition
July 2007	\$863,891	Tobacco Commission Economic Development	Design & construction
December 2007	\$4,800	Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC)	Support
June 2007	\$139,000	VDOT Enhancement Grant	Design & Construction
June 2008	\$468,000	VDOT Enhancement Grant	Design & Construction
June 2009	\$125,000	Recreational Trails Program	Construction South Boston applicant
	\$159,000	Tobacco Commission Economic Development	Design & Construction
6/2009	\$6,000,000	ARRA (Stimulus)— Enhancement Grant	Construction—Brunswick Co.
	\$125,000 (Victoria)	Recreational Trails Program	Construction--Victoria
Total Grant Funding			
Anticipated:			
Application date 11/08	\$586,102	VDOT Enhancement Grant	Design & Construction

**Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails Board of Directors
2009**

Locality	Date Locality Joined	Name
Alberta	8/21/03	Nancy Quick
Boydton	8/21/03	Jimmy Walters
Brodnax	8/18/03	Eugene A. Pierce
Brunswick County	10/20/03	Charlette T. Woolridge
Chase City	3/18/04	Joseph Epps
Charlotte County	8/18/04	P.K. Pettus
Clarksville	9/5/03	Melinda Moran
Drakes Branch	11/10/03	Roscoe Eubanks
Halifax County	9/15/03	Brad Ballou
Halifax town	12/5/03	Carl Espy
La Crosse	8/21/03	Sandra Tanner
Lawrenceville	8/28/03	C.J. Dean
Lunenburg County	9/1 /06	Dues unpaid 2008 & 2009
Mecklenburg County	12/16/03	Fred Forberg
South Boston	9/2/03	Marcus Hargrave
South Hill	8/13/03	Woodrow Kidd
Victoria	9/15/08	Ronald E. Mattox

"The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet."—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841

"Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride."—John F. Kennedy

"No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle."—Winston Churchill