



National Capital Trail Network Overview

BACKGROUND

At the direction of the then-TPB Chair Jay Fiset, the original vision for what became National Capital Trail, then called the “Bicycle Beltway” was developed by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee of the TPB Technical Committee from 2014-2016. A high-quality circumferential bicycle and pedestrian route around the core of the region, it was to be suitable for both transportation and recreation, serve people of all ages and abilities, and link activity centers, transit stations, and other attractions.

The National Park Service incorporated the bicycle beltway concept into its 2016 Paved Trails Plan, making some adjustments to the routing, and re-branding it the “National Capital Trail”. The Capital Trails Coalition, an alliance housed at Washington Area Bicyclist Association and Rails to Trails, also adopted the National Capital Trail concept, and made it the core of their regional trails plan, known as the Capital Trails Network, which was completed in Fall 2018. The National Capital Trail was incorporated into the TPB’s long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, as an unfunded initiative. TPB adopted Visualize 2045 in October 2018.

In December 2018, the TPB adopted resolution R20-2019, which directed TPB staff to expand the National Capital Trail into a regional trail network that would include all TPB member jurisdictions, building on previous work done by TPB and others. In accordance with the resolution, from 2019-2020, TPB staff gathered data from the Capital Trails Coalition, and from jurisdictions and areas not included in the coalition’s plan, such as Charles, Frederick, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties, or that have made major recent updates to their planned bicycle network, such as Montgomery County.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL NETWORK

The National Capital Trail Network is intended to be a network of long-distance, off-street facilities. It will be accessible for people of all ages and abilities, designed for non-motorized use, and suitable for both transportation and recreation.

Off-street path width minimums are 10 feet for new construction, 8 feet for existing paths. Paths must be paved or firm surface. On-street facilities must be protected from moving traffic (i.e., parked cars, curbs, or flexposts). All facilities must be directly connected to the network. Short on-street connections on low-volume, low speed streets are permitted to maintain network continuity. Facilities can be existing or planned, but they must be in an approved agency plan.