



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board Technical Committee
FROM: Michael Farrell, TPB Senior Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: National Capital Regional Trail Network Update
DATE: October 27, 2023

This memo will provide a status report on the update of the National Capital Trail Network, one of the TPB initiatives of Visualize 2045.

BACKGROUND

In July 2020 TPB adopted Resolution R5-2021, approving the [National Capital Trail Network](#). This 1400-mile network of existing and proposed shared-use paths covers the entire region. It includes both existing and planned facilities.

Completing the National Capital Trail Network is one of the TPB's regional priorities. As such, any project that helps complete the network receives priority consideration for funds that the TPB administers, such as Transportation-Land Use Connections and Transportation Alternatives funds.

The TPB developed the National Capital Trail Network in consultation with the TPB member jurisdictions, and with the advice of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee of the TPB Technical Committee. Periodic (biennial) progress reports and updates (modest changes as necessary) were anticipated. Existing and proposed facilities are required to meet certain selection criteria, meant to ensure a high-quality user experience. Facilities in the network are required to be continuously connected, separated from traffic wherever possible, paved or firm surface, and at least 8' wide for existing trails or 10' for new construction. Planned facilities on the network must come from adopted jurisdictional or agency plans. Facility density on the regional network should be roughly proportional to density of people and jobs, with rural areas having a sparser network than urban areas.

The goal is to provide **access for people of all ages and abilities**. People will be able to get on these trails and be confident that they can go as far as they like, from one end of the region to the other, without encountering dangerous or stressful conditions. The National Capital Trail Network will connect people to jobs, school, shopping, nature, and entertainment.

UPDATE PROCESS

The existing and planned facilities defined to be included on the National Capital Trail Network were not envisioned to change frequently, but changes are sometimes necessary. Conditions that may necessitate adding or removing facilities from the National Capital Trail Network would include the adoption of a new agency or jurisdiction plan, a change in priorities, or a particular route proving infeasible and needing to be re-routed.

Since the purpose is to prioritize certain long-range facilities, most of the projects in an agency's bicycle or pedestrian plan would likely not be included in the National Capital Trail Network, but may be included in the separate [Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for the National Capital Region](#).

The main purpose of this update is to measure progress, in miles built, toward the completion of the National Capital Trail Network since its adoption in 2020. Other purposes include adjusting routes where the existing route has proven infeasible or undesirable, addition of new routes where a new plan or new development justifies it, and correction of errors or omissions in the network.

STATUS

TPB staff have worked with the jurisdictions and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee to produce a revised National Capital Trail Network. Staff have vetted the new projects for eligibility and density, and linked them to the Project Infotrak database. Duplicate projects covering the same geography and other errors were corrected.

Revised network maps were presented to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee at their September and October meetings. Comments received are reflected in the updated map.

The updated map may be viewed in ArcGIS at ([link](#)). Staff is analyzing the updated National Capital Trail Network and will present results of this analysis at the November 3 meeting. Metrics examined will include miles completed since 2020, as well as updated information on proximity/service to Regional Activity Centers, Equity Emphasis Areas, High Capacity Transit Stations, and Transit Access Focus Areas.

NEXT STEPS

At the November 3 TPB Technical Committee meeting, staff will summarize the changes to the National Capital Trail Network since 2020, highlighting some notable projects that have been completed, as well as presenting the results of the updated network analysis. Comments received will be addressed before a future presentation to the TPB, as the TPB schedule allows.

We propose that the network map be updated again in 2024, in tandem with Visualize 2050, and thereafter every two years.

The larger Bicycle and Pedestrian Project database in Project Infotrak will also be updated in 2024, including the mapping and information on which projects are part of the NCTN.