

**November 15, 2022 Presentation to MWCOG Bike
Pedestrian Subcommittee on the**

Northern Virginia Recreational Trails Summit

**A regional meeting to create trail partnerships
for healthy and vibrant communities.**

October 20, 2022

10 AM - 2:30 PM

3040 Williams Drive Ste #200, Fairfax, VA

Planning Partners and Objectives

Planning partners:

Virginia DCR, Greater Prince William Trails and Streams, National Park Service, East Coast Greenways, WABA Capital Trails Coalition, NVRC

Objective:

to explore regionwide priorities and needs for greater access and connectivity between parks, communities, and trails in Northern Virginia.

Goals:

1. Gauge interest in the creation of a regional trails coalition/alliance for Northern Virginia.
2. Identify funding sources and ways to move potential projects forward.
3. Determine regional priorities for trail gaps, including data and mapping needs.
4. Collect best practices, including community engagement strategies and mechanisms.

Agenda

10 - 10:30 AM | **Opening Remarks & Presentation: Partnering to Improve Trail Access & Impact**

10:30 - 11:30 AM | **Status of Northern Virginia Trails: Lightning Talks**

11:30 - 11:45 AM | **Break with Map and Project Walkthrough**

11:45 AM - 12:20 PM | **Roundtables Part 1**

12:20 - 1:20 PM | **Lunch Break and Roundtable 1 Debrief**

1:20- 1:55 PM | **Roundtables Part 2**

1:55 - 2:25 PM | **Facilitated Discussion of Roundtables**

2:25 - 2:30 PM | **Wrap-Up & Closing Remarks**

An aerial photograph of a park featuring a winding river, a wooden boardwalk, and a paved trail. The river flows through a green landscape, and the boardwalk crosses it. A paved trail winds through the park, and a small town is visible in the background.

Partnering to Improve Trail Access and Impact

Northern Virginia Recreational Trails Summit

Jennifer Wampler, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Melicent R. Miller, DrPH, Virginia Department of Health

Introductions



Jennifer Wampler
Trails Coordinator

Virginia Dept of Recreation and Conservation



Melicent R. Miller, DrPH, MSPH
Health Equity Consultant

Virginia Dept of Health

Speakers

Today, we will cover...

Improving Trail Connectivity to:

- Improve Population Health
- Mitigate Effects of Climate Change
- Improve Economy
- Reduce Disparities

Partnerships

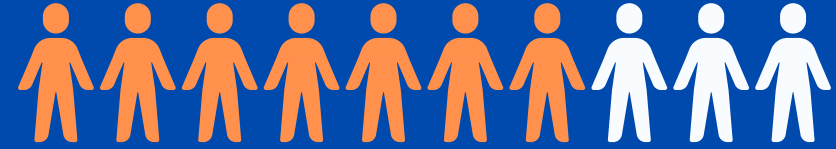
- State-level
 - Trails Funding
 - New trails office
 - Prioritizing Active Transportation, Safety, and Health in Virginia (PATHS)
- Other Opportunities and Best Practices



Improving Trail Connectivity to Improve Population Health



Adults with No Physical Activity



Adults are Overweight/Obese



Adults with High Cholesterol



Adults with Hypertension

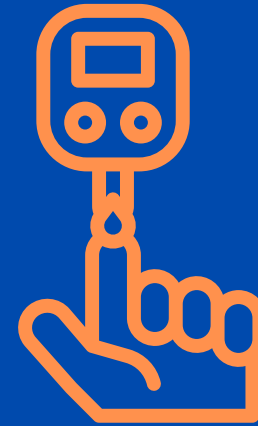


Adults with Diabetes



Increase in Self-harm ED Visits

Improving Trail Connectivity to Improve Population Health



Ecosystem Benefits of Trails

- Biodiversity
- Provide for sustainable ecosystems
- Climate-positive outcomes
- Stormwater management
- Wildlife migration
- Resilient and multi-functional spaces
- Increase stewardship
- Buffer other land uses



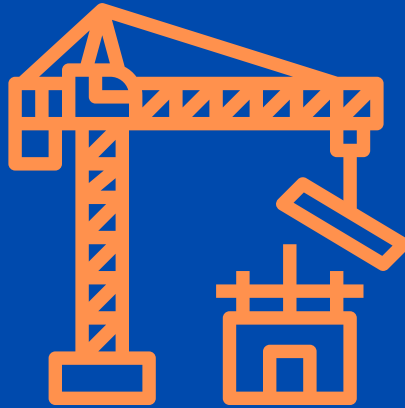
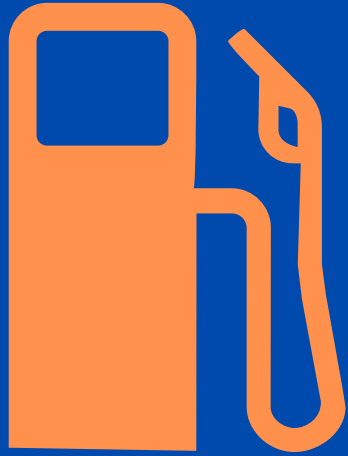
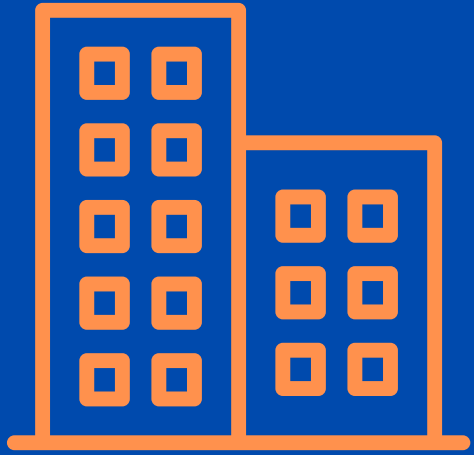
University of Richmond Gambles Mill Eco-Corridor

Improving Trail Connectivity to Mitigate Effects of Climate Change

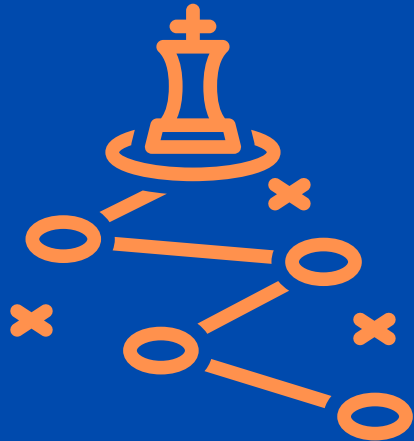
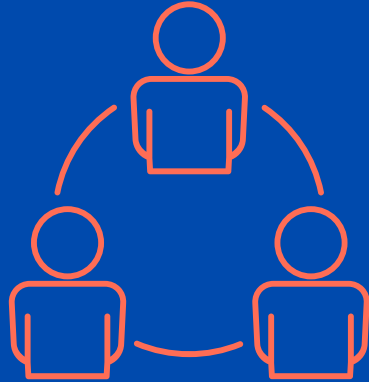
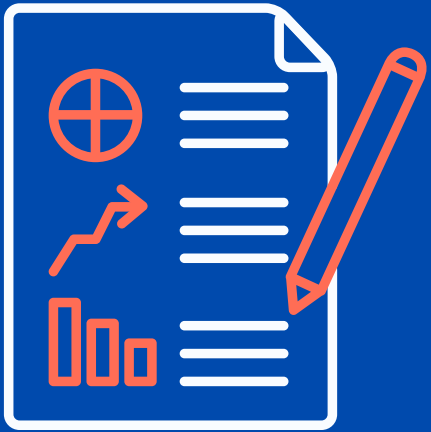


- Reduces risk for acute respiratory issues
- Reduces risk for heat stroke
- Reduces risk for cardiac effects
- Reduces risk for skin sun damage and skin cancer
- Reduces risk of injury, illness and displacement

Improving Trail Connectivity to Improve the Economy



Improving Trail Connectivity to Reduce Disparities



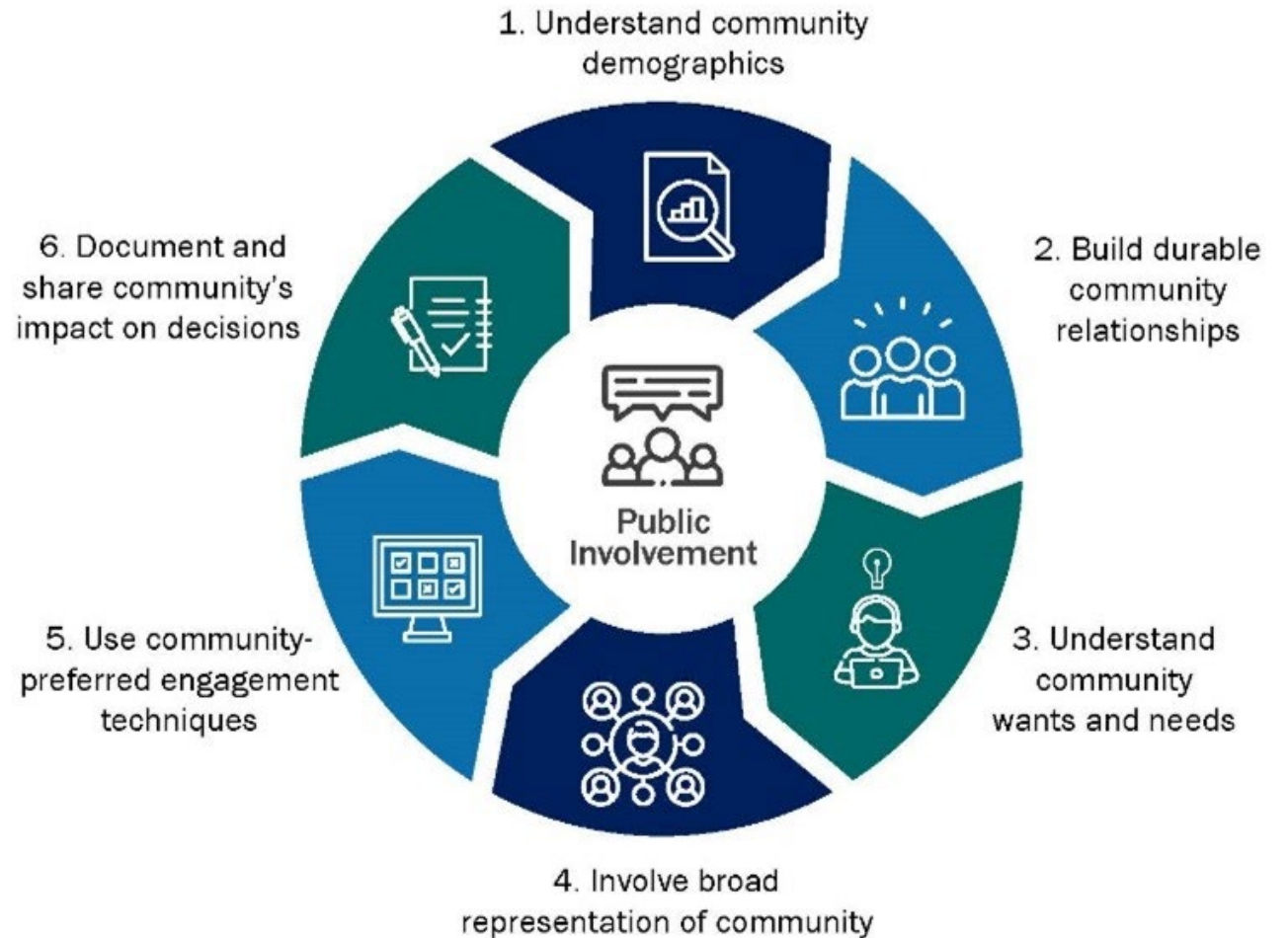
Partnerships at the State Level



Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

Partnerships in General

Five Conditions for Collective Impact



Funding at the State Level



- SMART SCALE
- Revenue Sharing
- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Regional Surface Transportation Program
- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program
- Transportation Alternatives Program
- Regional Funding
- State of Good Repair

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Recreational Trails Program
- Trails Access Grants

Special Project Funding

State Trails Office

- Housed at VDOT
 - staff in both Transportation and Mobility Planning Division
 - Local Assistance Division
- Annual budget: \$800,000 in FY23
 - staff
 - perform trail analysis
 - conduct outreach
 - develop a State Trails Plan and State Trails Information Clearinghouse



Other Opportunities and Best Practices

Grant Submission/Funding Tips



- Shovel ready
- Local match
- Demonstrated need
- Unmet need
- Innovation
- Serves all users



- Data-driven and performance based
- Public engagement and decision-making
- Address underlying issue



- VWAI Non-infrastructure funding

Resources

The climate change mitigation effects of daily active travel in cities

www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1361920921000687?via%3Dihub#b0365

FHWA Bike Ped Funding Opportunities Matrix

www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.pdf?u=092922

VDOT's Local Assistance Division and workshops

<https://www.viriniadot.org/business/local-assistance.asp>

DCR Grants

dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants

Office of Intermobility Planning and Investment InteractVTRANS Map Explorer

vtrans.org/interactvtrans/map-explorer

Prioritizing Active Transportation, Health, and Safety in Virginia (PATHS)

<https://viriniapaths.org>

Virginia Walkability Action Institute

<https://viriniapaths.org/virginia-walkability-action-institute/>



An aerial photograph of a lush green landscape featuring a winding river. A long wooden bridge spans across the river in the lower half of the image. In the background, a train is visible on a track, and there are some industrial buildings and a forested area under a clear sky.

Thank You!

Jennifer Wampler

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Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail



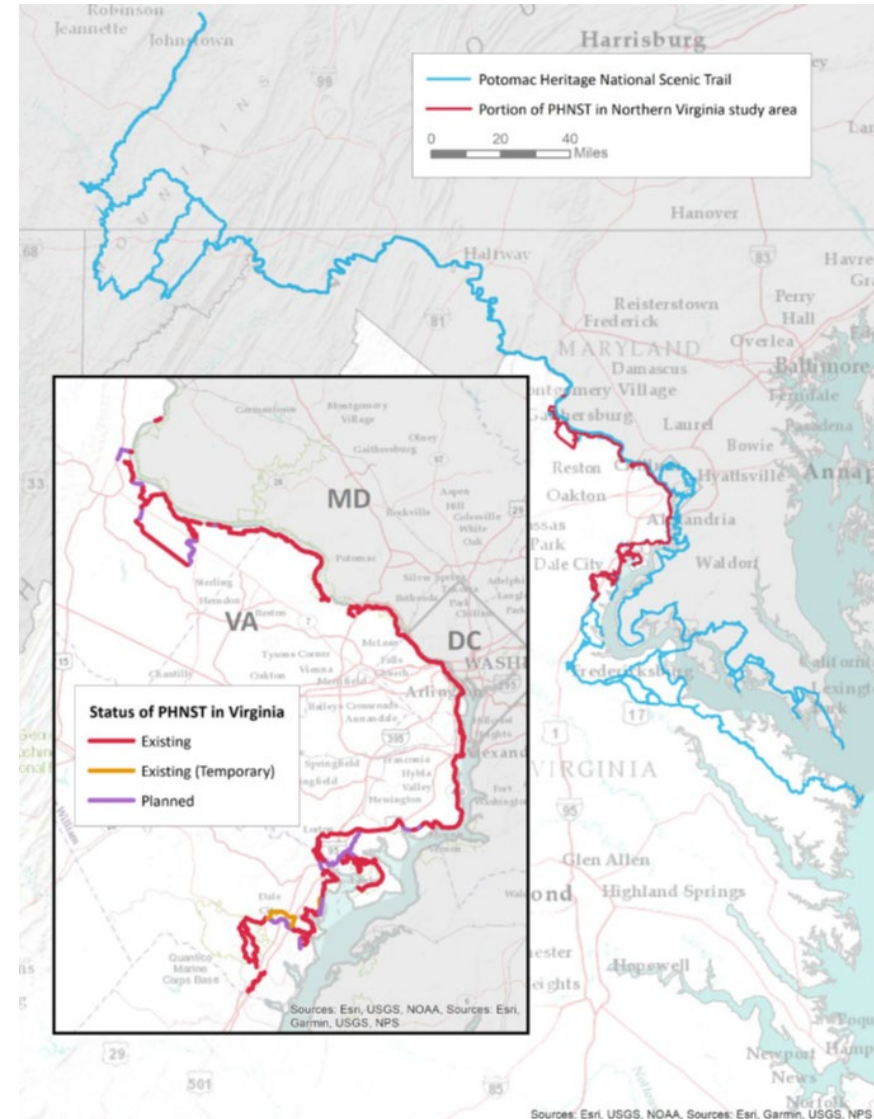
Congressionally designated
NPS Trail

Braided trail network from
Western Pennsylvania to the
Chesapeake Bay

Scenic trail – 1 of 11 nationally
designated
Historic trail – 1 of 19
nationally designated

Nearly 900 miles existing
and planned – Including
the Great Allegheny
Passage, the C&O Canal
Trail, the Mount Vernon
Trail

Not fully completed -
Sections missing, including
several missing sections in
Northern Virginia



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NORTHERN VIRGINIA POTOMAC HERITAGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL:

Benefits of the Existing Trail

BENEFITS OF THE EXISTING TRAIL

Trails provide a wide range of recreational values, services, and protection of natural and cultural features and contribute to social and economic wellbeing. The study found that the trail's benefits total \$494 million annually for the existing segments.



\$404 million
in health benefits



\$86 million
of direct economic impacts



\$4 million
in avoided transportation costs



Social Equity Analysis



Socially vulnerable communities along PHNST had

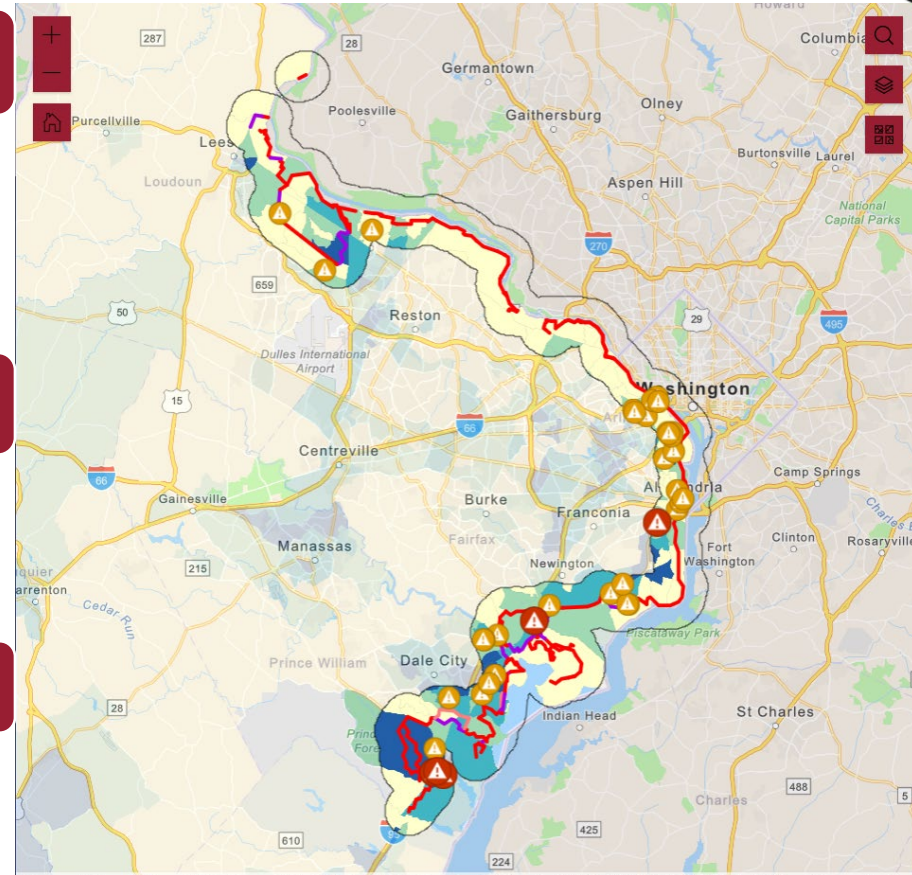
- Fewer trail access points
- More trail gaps and unplanned route segments
- Higher Traffic Crashes of pedestrian/cyclists
- Less access to transit

Community Feedback Conducted

- In-Depth Interviews of Businesses
- Focus Groups of Resident
- Supported by VDH and Equitable Cities

Main Message of Community

- Improve accessibility
- Create more welcoming environment for all users and abilities





Completing the Trail: Full alignment



PLANNED ROUTES

There are currently approximately 21 miles of planned routes to close gaps in the PHNST. Completing these planned trail segments might result in the following annual benefits for the northern Virginia region:

	1.3 million additional miles walked	\$52.4 million in mortality reduction benefits (-5 fatalities/year)
	4.5 million additional miles biked	960,000 miles of avoided commuting
	\$7.9 million in avoided health care costs	\$627,000 in avoided commuting costs

UNROUTED GAPS

Some gaps in the PHNST currently do not have a planned route. BBC worked with NVRC to estimate the potential length of trail required to close those gaps (13.7 miles). Completing these unrouted gaps might result in the following additional annual benefits for the northern Virginia region:

	900,000 additional miles walked	\$34.1 million in mortality reduction benefits
	2.9 million additional miles biked	630,000 miles of avoided commuting
	\$5.2 million in avoided health care costs	\$410,000 in avoided commuting costs

Recommended Actions in Addition to Trail Completion

Design: Create spaces with good lighting, sight lines, and amenities.

Programming: Work with community organizations to encourage trail use by underserved populations (e.g., activities and programs).

Communication: Make the trail welcoming to all users. Provide wayfinding and signage.

Education: Help enforcement and local governments understand the unique needs of the community.

Safety: Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety along the trail and adjacent networks.

Data Collection: Bolster local government efforts to collect pedestrian and bicycle trail usage.

Outreach: Ensure broad input from all stakeholders regarding future infrastructure and amenity investments.

Next Steps for NVRC

1. 2022-2023 Corridor Analysis
 - Gap planning status – local priorities
 - Wayfinding
 - Amenities
 - Communication and Outreach to Public
2. Provide continued coordination and assistance to trail partners



2022-2023 Corridor Analysis

Previous Versions Focus

- Existing and planned route
- Opportunities for completing trail gaps
- Gap funding sources
- Timing for completion

Current Version Focus

- Expand to include collecting existing trail features and trail access GIS data from land managers and assess missing, needed GIS data
- Expand interactive map of the trail with newly collected GIS data
- Create a dashboard to make it easier for users to find trail information

Summit Outcomes

- Attendees recommended a meeting for regional recreational trail planning to take place at least once a year moving forward
- Need to keep forum open to partners that may have not been represented have an opportunity to participate, and that
- The next meeting will likely include a working session to move priorities and projects forward.

Priorities from the Roundtables

- **Mapping & Data Needs:**

- More counters
- Develop criteria and coordinate data regionally
- Identify PHNST volunteers for data collection
- TPB and other MWCOG resources

- **Communication Avenues to Community Members:**

- Trails integration with tourism
- Communicating benefits
- Better maps and wayfinding

- **User Modes and Connectivity :**

- Coordinate between jurisdictions and land, water, interstate barriers
- Leverage development and redevelopment
- Expand connectivity to transit
- Engage different types of users and volunteers
- Retrofit developments for connectivity
- Deepen engagement with all nearby communities

Priorities from the Roundtables

- **Collaborating on Priorities & Moving Forward Together:**

- Future meetings to focus on cross jurisdictional projects and collaboration
- Ensure connectivity for shared use paths between communities esp cross border projects and gap closures
- Move beyond inner core of region and DC

- **Regional Trail Connections**

- PHNST between Fairfax and Occoquan
- Connect Manassas Park to Fairfax
- Loudoun to Fairfax via Rt 7
- Loudoun to Maryland via Whites Ferry, bridge upgrades
- Woodbridge to Occoquan

Resources

Summit materials, details:

<https://www.novaregion.org/1554/2022-Recreational-Trails-Summit>

Benefits and Equity Study and Dashboard:

<https://www.novaregion.org/1533/Equity-and-Economic-Study>

3-minute video and resources for leading walkability audits:

<https://sharevaroads.org/resources>



NVRC Points of Contact

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