

ITEM 9 – Information

June 17, 2020

National Capital Trail Network

Background:

At its December 2018 meeting, the TPB approved a resolution to begin work on implementing the aspirational initiatives from Visualize 2045, including expanding the National Capital Trail into a network that extends to all TPB member jurisdictions. The board will be briefed on the new draft map of the National Capital Trail Network, with action anticipated at a subsequent meeting.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Michael Farrell, TPB Senior Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: National Capital Trail Network
DATE: June 11, 2020

This memorandum will discuss the process leading to the development of the National Capital Trail Network (NCTN), review recent network development activities, and discuss the criteria used for designation of an existing or planned trail to be in the network. A draft map is attached for TPB review, with potential action at a future TPB meeting.

BACKGROUND

At the direction of the then-Chair Jay Fissette and the TPB, the original vision for what became National Capital Trail, then called the “Bicycle Beltway”, was identified 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 Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee supported the suggested routing and name changes.

The Capital Trails Coalition, an alliance housed at the 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. National Park Service and TPB staff were closely involved in the development of this plan.

RECENT NETWORK DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The National Capital Trail was incorporated into the TPB’s Long Range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, as an aspirational initiative. TPB adopted Visualize 2045 in October 2018.

In December 2018, the TPB adopted resolution R20-2019, which directed TPB staff to expand 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, as well as from jurisdictions/areas not included in the Coalition’s plan, such as Charles, Frederick, Loudoun, and Prince William Counties, or from those that have made major recent updates to their planned bicycle network, such as Montgomery County.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee endorsed use of the Capital Trails Coalition's data in March 2019, the trail selection criteria in May 2019, and the initial draft map January 2020. The TPB Technical Committee reviewed the draft map and suggested changes in February 2020. On June 5 the Technical Committee endorsed the revised map for today's TPB review.

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.

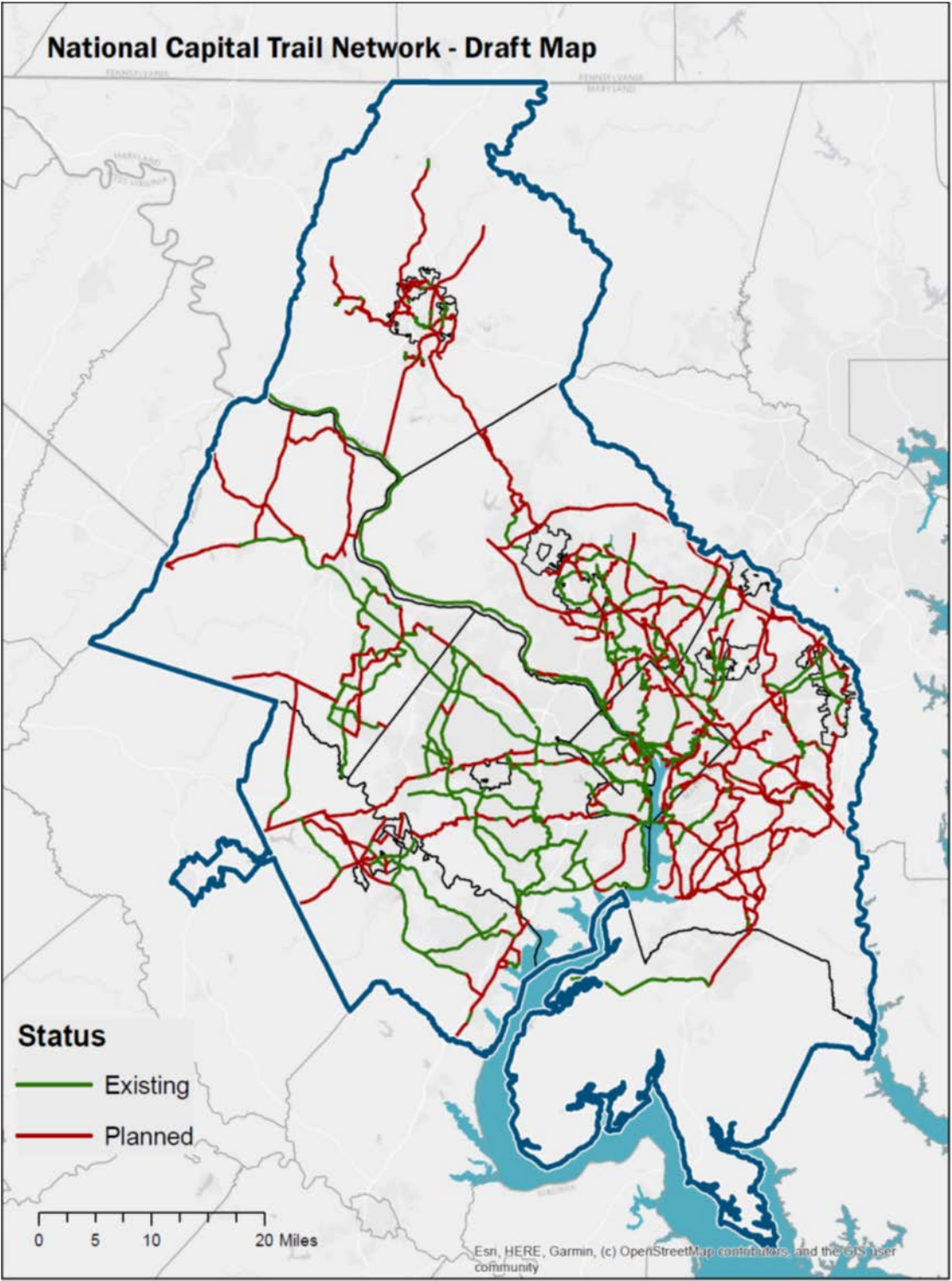
Off-street path width minimums are 10 feet for new construction, 8 feet for existing paths. Paths must be paved or firm surface. On-street facilities must be protected from moving traffic (i.e. parked cars, curbs, or flexposts). All facilities must be directly connected to the network. Short on-street 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 plan.

NEXT STEPS/FUTURE ACTIONS

TPB will be asked to adopt the National Capital Trail Network at a future meeting. The network will be used to prioritize funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Transportation – Land Use Connections Program. There will be periodic updates to the network (likely annually) to reflect new facilities and new information. The National Capital Trail Network will be included in the update of the overall Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, anticipated to be completed in FY 2021.

Attachment: Draft National Capital Trail Network Map



<https://www.mwcog.org//maps/map-listing/national-capital-trail/>

NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL NETWORK

Presentation of New Draft Map

Michael Farrell
TPB Transportation Planner

Transportation Planning Board
June 17, 2020 - DRAFT



Overview of Today's Presentation

- Background leading to the development of the National Capital Trail Network (NCTN)
- Review of trail development activities
- Criteria used for designation of an existing or planned trail to be on the network
- The draft map, presented for TPB review, with potential action at a future TPB meeting
- Next/future steps



Mount Vernon Trail (BeyondDC, flickr.com)

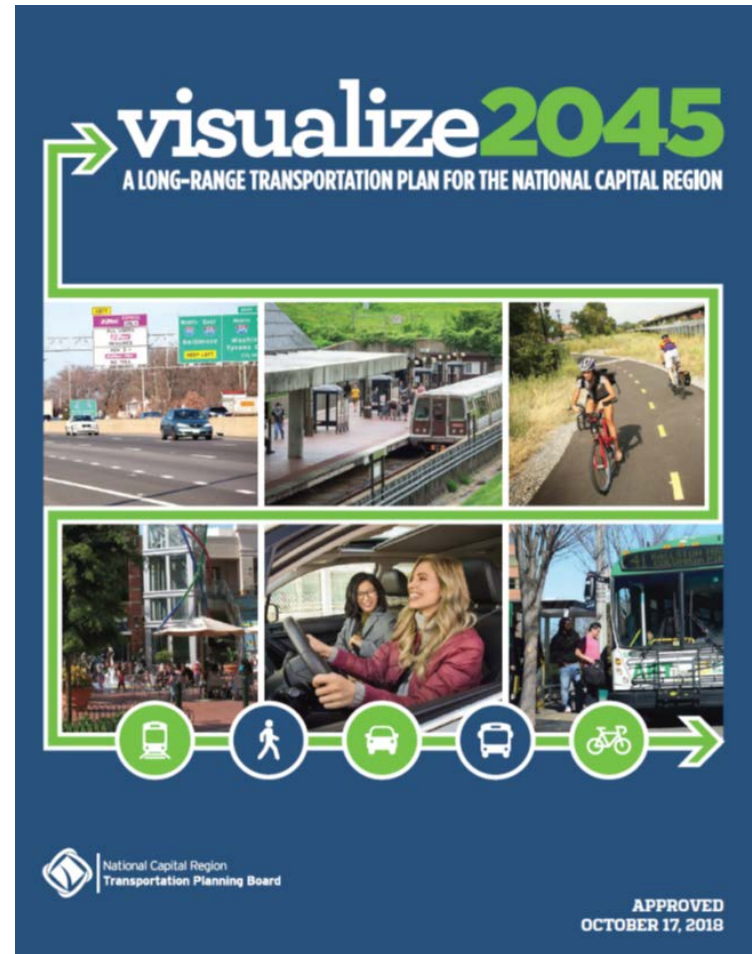
Background

- 2014-2016 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee worked with the National Park Service and other partners to define the National Capital Trail, a 60-mile circumferential trail in the region’s central jurisdictions
- 2016-2018 – The Capital Trails Coalition (housed at WABA and Rails to Trails) expands the National Capital Trail route into trails plan covering the core of the Washington Region



TPB Adopts the National Capital Trail

- October 2018 – TPB adopted the National Capital Trail as an Aspirational Element of Visualize 2045
- December 2018 – TPB Resolution R20-2019 directed TPB staff to build upon the National Capital Trail to create a regional trail network that extends into all TPB member jurisdictions



Review of Activities to Prepare the NCTN Map

- Staff Data Gathering (2019-2020)
 - Reviewed and adapted Capital Trails Coalition information
 - Obtained additional information, especially from jurisdictions/areas not in the original coverage (e.g. Charles, Frederick, Loudoun) or updated since (e.g. Montgomery)
- Subcommittee Review
 - TPB Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee endorsed use of the Capital Trails Coalition's data (March 2019); trail selection criteria (May 2019); initial draft map (January 2020)
 - TPB Technical Committee reviewed map, provided comments for further work (February 2020); endorsed revised map for today's TPB review (June 2020)



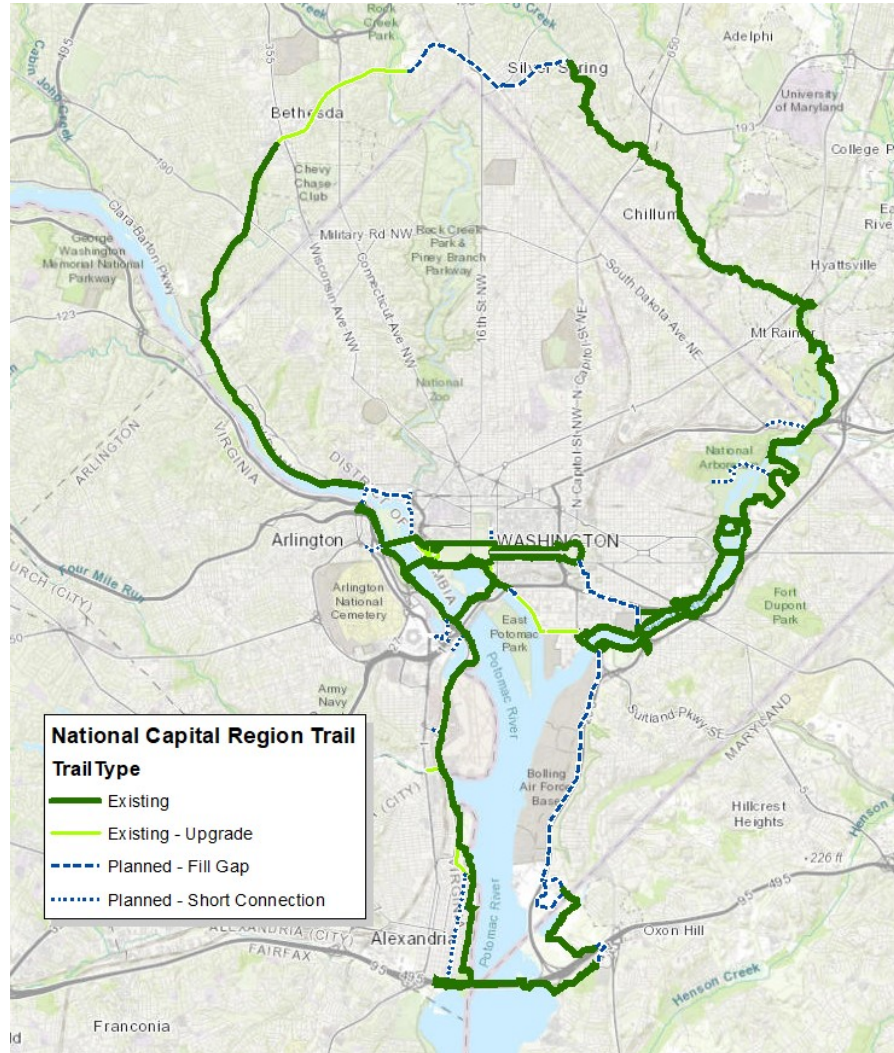
Criteria for NCTN Inclusion

- Long-distance facilities (many local trails not included)
- Accessible for all ages and abilities; designed for non-motorized use; suitable for both transportation and recreation
- Off-street path width minimums (10 feet for new construction, 8 feet for existing paths); must be paved
- On-street facilities must be protected from moving traffic (i.e. parked cars, curbs, flexposts)
- Must have connectivity to the overall regional network (limited exemptions to above criteria allowed to ensure connectivity)
- Can be existing or planned (must be in an approved plan)



Virginia Avenue S.E.

National Capital Trail (2018)



- TPB adopted in October 2018 as an Aspirational Element of Visualize 2045
 - 60 total miles total
 - 21 miles unconstructed
 - 3 miles need upgrading

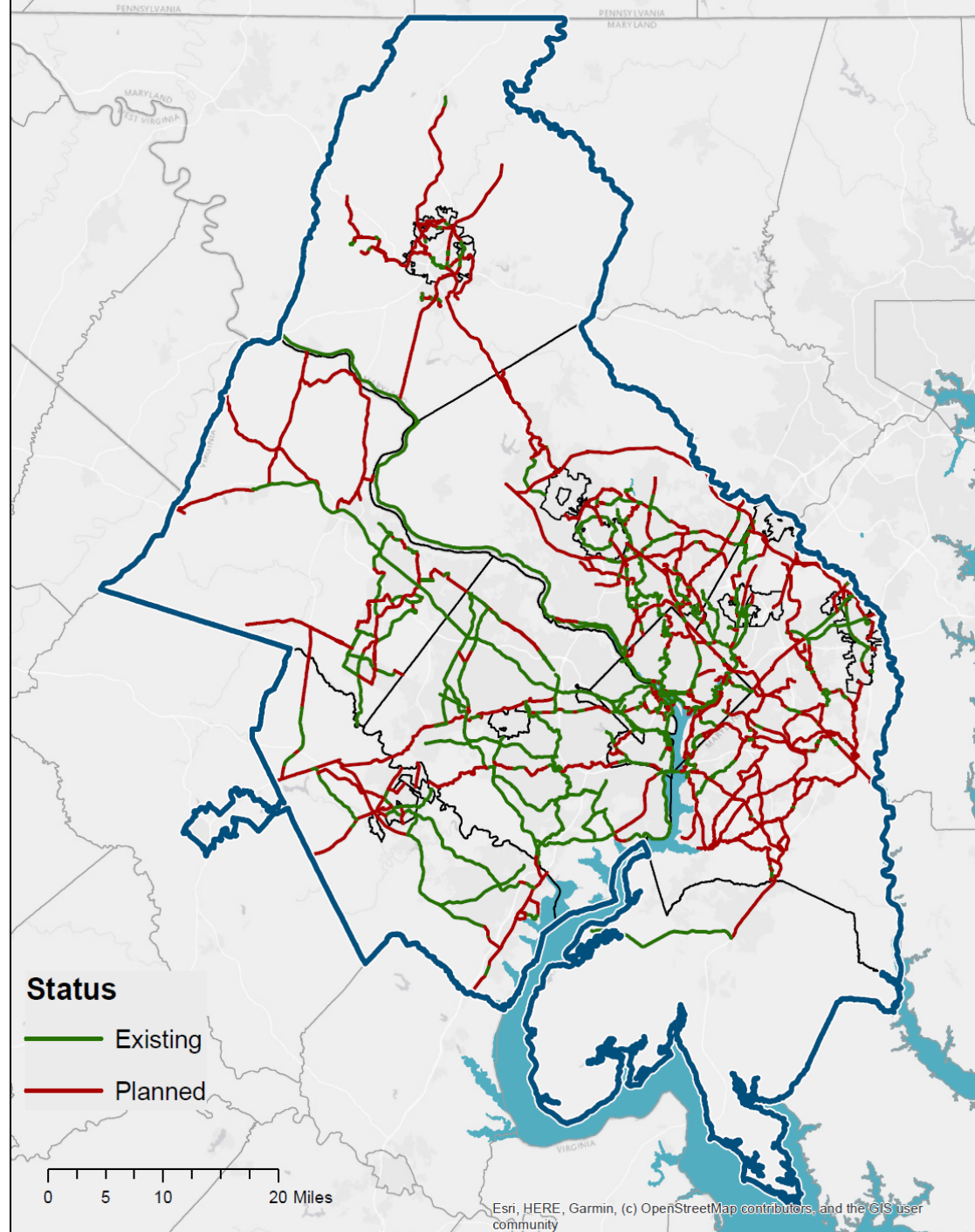


New: National Capital Trail Network – Draft Map (2020)

<https://www.mwcog.org//maps/map-listing/national-capital-trail/>



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Next/Future Steps

- TPB review period; proposed TPB adoption of the NCTN at a future meeting
- Use to help prioritize funding
 - Transportation Alternatives Program
 - Transportation – Land Use Connections Program
- Network updates
 - Periodic updates to the network (likely annually) to reflect new facilities, new information
- Update of the overall Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in FY 2021, with the NCTN included



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