

ITEM 8 – Information

November 16, 2018

Recommendations from Subject Matter Experts on Projects, Programs, and Policies to Advance the TPB's Aspirational Initiatives

Staff Recommendation: Briefing on Recommendations from Subject Matter Experts on Projects, Programs, and Policies to Advance the TPB's Aspirational Initiatives

Issues: None

Background: Since January, the Commuter Connections Subcommittee, the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee have held facilitated discussions among the region's subject matter experts on what projects, programs, and policies advance the TPB's aspirational initiatives. A recap of the 10:30 A.M. work session will be provided and the TPB will be asked to comment on the recommendations presented at the earlier work session.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Kanti Srikanth, TPB Staff Director
SUBJECT: Subcommittee Recommendations for the TPB Endorsed Initiatives
DATE: November 8, 2018

This memo summarizes TPB subcommittee activities to advance efforts to implement projects, programs, and policies that promote the aspirational initiatives endorsed by the TPB as part of Visualize 2045. The memo identifies five initiatives that were discussed at the TPB subcommittee level and summarizes subcommittee recommendations for the advancement of those initiatives. On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the following recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In December of 2017 and January of 2018, the TPB endorsed a set of seven aspirational initiatives (see Visualize 2045 Chapter 4 pages 25-31) to improve our regional transportation system. These initiatives were the outcome of a two-year effort by the TPB's Long-Range Plan Task Force, which undertook a methodical evaluation of what projects, programs, and policies the region could pursue to substantively improve the unsatisfactory performance outcomes that were forecast during the development of the 2016 Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP).

With its endorsement of the aspirational initiatives, the board issued a call to action for its member jurisdictions and agencies to commit to fully explore the concepts contained in the initiatives and to take action to implement projects, programs, and policies to fully realize potential improvements in the transportation system's performance. Chairman Allen advised staff to work with the appropriate subject-matter experts to identify specific implementation actions that TPB members could take—individually and collectively—to make such projects, programs, and policies part of the financially constrained element of future updates of the TPB's long-range plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM RELEVANT TPB SUBCOMMITTEES

During the course of this year, staff have engaged subject-matter experts serving on subcommittees at the TPB and COG seeking their ideas about ways to effectively realize the TPB's aspirational initiatives. These ideas were then explored during subcommittee meetings.

In discussing options and developing recommendations for implementation, the subcommittees generally sought to specify key challenges embedded in the initiatives that need to be overcome. In some cases, the recommendations represent specific products or regional planning activities that should be pursued at the local, state, or federal levels. In other cases, the recommendations suggest broader regional tasks that must be tackled at TPB level.

Five of the seven aspirational initiatives were determined to be directly germane to the work of the TPB's subcommittees:

- Expand bus rapid transit and transitways
- Move more people on Metrorail
- Increase telecommuting and other options for commuting
- Improve walk and bike access to transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail

The initiative "Bring jobs and housing closer together" will be pursued through COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee. The initiative "Expand the express highway network" is being actively pursued by the TPB member jurisdictions. Staff notes that express lanes that are currently operational in the region and the constrained element of Visualize 2045 include additional projects that would expand this network.

The subcommittee recommendations for the five initiatives are summarized below. In general, these recommendations should be considered a starting point for further discussions, as appropriate, on specific implementation actions that the region or TPB member jurisdictions could take to realize the aspirational initiatives.

EXPAND BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT) AND TRANSITWAYS

This initiative was the subject of extensive discussions at Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee meetings. The initiative has a focus of expanding BRT, transitway, and streetcar systems throughout the region, implementing routes that are in jurisdictions' plans but not yet in the TPB's long-range plan. This initiative would also improve pedestrian access to transit stations and increase the amount of jobs and housing around the transit stations.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend that the region work together to:

- **Define density standards for BRT service.** The region should identify a set of preferred density measures related to transit service, ridership, and land use in the region as a standard for BRT systems.

This recommendation would develop standards to aid in mapping out the feasibility of BRT systems in a corridor based on land-use, transit ridership, and other metrics and would also assist in measuring the progress being made towards the development and implementation of BRT on these corridors, as well as supportive transit actions such as transit signal priority, rush-hour bus lanes, and other bus transit improvements.

MOVE MORE PEOPLE ON METRORAIL

This initiative focuses on actions that would move more people and enhance the customer experience on Metrorail. This initiative calls for running eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines at all times; adding a second Rosslyn station; and adding a new rail line across the Potomac River

connecting the District and Virginia through Georgetown to Union Station towards the Waterfront. It also would improve bicycle and pedestrian access to rail stations. These actions will increase ridership.

The TPB's Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee received presentations from state, regional, and local transit agencies, as well as from other transit planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. WMATA's plans to run eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines and ongoing discussions regarding enhancement to the Rosslyn stations were noted.

Of the actions that the region could take in the immediate term, members recommended, as the preferred action, that the region work together to:

- **Eliminate the transfer cost** between Metrorail and the region's bus services.

This recommendation would encourage more people to use Metrorail by lowering total transit fare costs for riders using both Metrorail and bus services. Currently, transfers between most buses are free within two hours, but transfers between Metrorail and bus services are not. Transfers to and from rail only provide a fare discount of \$0.50. Reducing the transfer cost to zero would attract more people to use buses to get to and from Metrorail, which would make the region's transit system more attractive by treating transit as a single mode and would not penalize transit users that need to use buses to get to Metrorail.

As an alternative, members also proposed:

- **Cap total fares charged for transit trips per day.** This recommendation would be adopted by every jurisdiction that operates bus service, as well as by WMATA.

Putting a cap on total fares for a day would make additional transit use more attractive for transit-choice or transit-lifestyle riders and reduce costs for transit-reliant riders or those who have to make several connections, sometimes across multiple services, to get to their destinations.

PROVIDE MORE TELECOMMUTING AND OTHER OPTIONS FOR COMMUTING

The purpose of this initiative is to develop and examine new policies that would reduce single occupant vehicular trips, increase teleworking regionwide, increase the number of employees receiving transit and carpool subsidies, and reduce parking incentives in regional Activity Centers.

The TPB's Commuter Connections Subcommittee has subject-matter experts representing state, regional, local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and other commuter assistance entities together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative.

Of the various actions that the region could take, the following represents the proactive programmatic and policy-oriented recommendations:

- **Leverage technology to enhance TDM programs.** Technological advancements are creating new ways to influence behavior change. Enhancing existing apps (e.g. CarpoolNow, incenTrip) and programs (e.g. Flextime Rewards) with gamification modules that consider behavioral economics concepts may further encourage mode shift while also generating valuable travel choice and travel behavior data for better planning and programming.
- **Collaborate with WMATA to promote SmartBenefits.** The SmartBenefits program provides employers the opportunity to pay employees tax free for all or part of their transit commute expense or let their employees set aside their own funds pre-tax. Reducing transit commute cost is a proven strategy to increase transit usage. The region should implement a campaign to enroll more employers in the program by providing incentives, including limited and tiered financial incentive designed to offset SmartBenefits' start-up costs; offering training and outreach efforts to help reduce perceived administrative burden. Such a campaign now would be taking advantage of WMATA's investment of over \$1.5M to upgrade and simplify its on-line SmartBenefits portal.
- **Flextime & telework resources for mid-size employers.** Telework continues to grow in popularity, particularly among large employers, but logistical and perception barriers remain, especially among small and mid-sized employers. The region should develop policy templates for small and mid-size employers to adopt and implement these trip reduction strategies at their work places.
- **Regional commuter tax benefits.** Existing employer tax benefits at the state level such as the Maryland Commuter Tax Credit and Telework VA! Tax credit exist to incentivize employers to offer commuter benefits and provide varying degrees of tax incentives. Standardizing the types of alternative commute programs eligible for tax benefits for employers and making them consistent throughout the region would encourage more employer participation. Such a regional policy would ease implementation for employers through collaborative education and marketing and would assist those employers with multiple office locations throughout the region to take advantage of the tax benefits in a universal manner.
- **Develop a regional framework for parking cashout policy.** Offering employees who receive free parking cash value of the parking to use transit has been found to be effective in increasing transit usage. A 2016 FHWA research project found that Washington D.C. employers who offer a cash-out policy in addition to pre-tax transit options can reduce VMT by 11%. The region should pilot test this program with customized cash-out policies to fit the various needs of diverse worksites in the region. The result of the pilot program can be used to inform the development and implementation of the program regionwide.
- **Price parking appropriately.** Advocate for codification of "fair-value commuting" within local codes, which would mean higher parking costs at activity centers and especially those that are served by transit and/or HOV lanes. Pricing parking spaces – perhaps in a dynamic fashion – is expected to deter single occupant trips and promote ridesharing or transit usage. Ongoing marketing and outreach activities of Commuter Connections could market free or reduced-cost carpool parking spots and other non-SOV alternatives.

IMPROVE WALK AND BIKE ACCESS TO TRANSIT

The goal of this initiative is to increase non-motorized access to high capacity transit stations through improved first- and last-mile connections on foot or by bike.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee held a series of discussions on actions that would help the region implement this initiative. In addition, the Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee also discussed functionality improvements to transit stations, particularly for bus access and reliability.

Of the actions that the region could take, members recommend:

- **Identify specific stations that are priority locations for access improvements:** Develop a limited list of transit station areas that are regionally prioritized for pedestrian/ bicycle investments. These prioritized locations will be places where critical gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure currently exist and where demand is great for walking and biking to transit. Improvements in these areas will also improve safety in and around the stations, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Prioritize the efficiency of stations for all modes:** Prioritize physical and operational improvements to the transportation efficiency of high capacity transit stations for all modes, including traffic signal timing, turn lanes, crosswalk locations, and transit priority on roadways surrounding transit stations, to improve safety for non-motorized users and improve the reliability of buses.
- **Expanding the TPB's Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) Program,** which currently provides technical assistance to TPB members for short-term planning activities for the development of communities that are multi-modal and mixed-use. Members believe that the TLC program has been highly cost-effective and enhancing the program would assist in having more non-motorized projects ready for funding and implementation.

COMPLETE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TRAIL

The purpose of this initiative is to complete a network of bicycle/pedestrian trails encircling the region's core. This endorsed initiative was originally conceived of as a "bicycle beltway" and the TPB had directed staff to work with local jurisdictions to identify the basic alignment for this facility.

The TPB's Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee includes subject-matter experts representing state, regional, and local jurisdictions, transit agencies, federal agencies, and non-profit entities, together with other transportation planning professionals. The subcommittee notes that the National Park Service (NPS) worked with the TPB Subcommittee to adopt the National Capital Trail (NCT) into its Trail Master Plan. With some of the missing segments of the NCT located within National Park property, this action by the NPS is a significant step towards completing the trail.

One of the basic recommendations related to this initiative is for all appropriate regional jurisdictions and agencies to:

- **Integrate the missing segments** of the National Capital Trail into other highway, transit and other infrastructure projects so that the trail can be completed.

The Subcommittee also noted that, thanks to numerous projects that have been built or funded in recent years, the National Capital Trail is well on its way to completion. Therefore, the Subcommittee also recommends that the TPB:

- **Expand the National Capital Trail** to the entire TPB region (National Capital Regional Trail), thereby extending the trail to all TPB member jurisdictions.

There has been great interest among the region's jurisdictions, agencies, and advocacy entities to build on the National Capital Trail, as endorsed by the TPB and adopted by the NPS. The Capital Trails Coalition was established through a public-private partnership to work on this idea. The TPB Subcommittee worked with the coalition to develop a framework through which trails from other jurisdictions that are not included in the NCT would be strategically incorporated to form a true regional trail system (National Capital Regional Trail). This work activity is not complete and is in need of a regional sponsor to take on responsibility for finalization. Once complete, this National Capital Regional Trail could represent the region's prioritized trail network to be considered for local, regional, and state level funding.

OPTIONS FOR INITIATIVES THAT ARE NOT LINKED TO TPB SUBCOMMITTEES

As noted above, two of the seven initiatives were determined to be outside the purview of TPB subcommittees. Options for moving forward on actions related to those two initiatives are summarized below.

BRING JOBS AND HOUSING CLOSER TOGETHER

This initiative would optimize the balance of jobs and housing region-wide and provide additional housing in the region to match employment projections. The initiative specifically: seeks to provide more housing within the region for regional workers to meet demand for future job growth; focuses future household growth within a jurisdiction in Regional Activity Centers and/or in areas with high-capacity transit; and seeks to achieve better balanced distribution of future growth in jobs in housing between the eastern and western portions of the region.

TPB staff requested COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee (PDTAC) to examine and advise the TPB on how the region can best advance the components of this initiative. Similarly, at its September 12, 2018 meeting, the COG Board of Directors, which provides oversight to the PDTAC, directed the PDTAC to work jointly with the Housing Directors Committee to assess the region's ability to accommodate the estimated need for slightly more than 100,000 housing units beyond those currently anticipated in the Round 9.1 Cooperative Forecasts.

In response to this direction, the PDTAC, in conjunction with the Housing Directors, is developing a workplan to address the region's housing needs. This workplan will include activities such as:

- Synthesizing local housing and land use plans and housing targets;
- Determining how much housing is already approved but not built in the region;
- Reviewing local comprehensive plans and zoning to evaluate whether sufficient development capacity exists;
- Quantifying additional growth likely to occur in Activity Centers and High Capacity Transit areas; and
- Considering whether any revisions to the Cooperative Forecasts are merited.

These activities will be carried out over several months and the TPB will be briefed throughout 2019.

EXPAND EXPRESS HIGHWAY NETWORK

The TPB has endorsed a network of express travel lanes in the region, with specific characteristics that would help move more people and reduce congestion. The specific characteristics of such a network include: the use of dynamic tolls to maintain desired travel speeds; making the lanes free to carpoolers and transit vehicles; and implementation of new express bus services connecting Activity Centers.

- Staff notes that express lanes that are currently operational in the region and the constrained element of Visualize 2045 include additional projects that would expand this network. Opportunities remain for the region to develop projects and policies to more fully realize this aspirational initiative – especially components such as making the lanes free to carpoolers and transit vehicles, and implementation of new express bus services on the express lanes.

FUTURE ACTIONS

On November 16, 2018, a work session is scheduled to brief TPB members on the above recommendations. The work session will include an open panel discussion. Following the work session, TPB members at the monthly board meeting will be encouraged to provide additional feedback and comments on the proposed recommendations. The TPB could consider formally accepting the recommendations as part of an action plan to help implement its aspirational initiatives and realize the potential improvement in the performance of the region's transportation system. Such a formal acceptance could be in the form a TPB resolution adopted at its December meeting. The TPB could also advise staff to periodically report on the progress being made towards the implementation of the adopted recommendations.

Visualize 2045

TPB Subcommittee reports on aspirational initiatives

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Transportation Planning Board Work Session
November 16, 2018



The aspirational initiatives



Background

- The TPB adopted seven aspirational initiatives as part of Visualize 2045
- The TPB solicited input on project, program, and policy actions to realize its aspirational initiatives
- TPB and COG committees have discussed what actions can be taken – individually or collectively
- These recommendations are being presented to the TPB



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Subcommittee focus

TPB subcommittees focused on these 5 initiatives

- Provide more telecommuting and other options for commuting
- Expand bus rapid transit and transitways regionwide
- Move more people on Metrorail
- Improve walk and bike access to transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail



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Provide more telecommuting & other options for commuting

- Develop policies to increase teleworking and the number of employees receiving transit and carpool subsidies
- Increase the price for most of the parking for work trips

(Marco Verch/flickr)



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Recommendation: Leverage Technology

Leverage Technology to Enhance Local and Regional Travel Demand Management Programs

- Convenient Access to Information and Services
 - Mobile Apps with “gaming” features
- Enhanced Service offerings
 - Non commute and/or ad-hoc ridesharing (CarpoolNow)
 - Reward programs (Flex Time Rewards)
 - Private sector partnership (Mobility service firms)



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Recommendation: Promote SmartBenefits

Collaborate with WMATA to Promote SmartBenefits

- Leverage \$1.5M investment by WMATA
 - Entice employer participation with a tiered financial incentive
 - Spearhead training and outreach efforts
- Potential opportunity to expand SmartBenefits to other TDM initiatives



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Recommendation: Mid-size firms

Flextime & Telework Resources for Mid-Size Employers

- Opportunity to grow upon efforts started in the late -1990s
- New program(s) that encourage employers to expand participation in telework programs
 - Local network members can replicate throughout region



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Recommendation: Regional commuter benefits

Regional Commuter Tax Benefits

Vastly different approaches/policies towards employers

- Regionally uniform approach/policy will provide consistency
 - Easier to implement than fragmented, localized policies
 - Allows for clear and synchronized channels of communication/education
- Create simple yet enticing incentives for employers who offer commuter benefits
 - Simple is key: Low barriers to entry will lead to more participation



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Recommendation: Parking strategies

- **Develop model employer parking cash-out policies**
 - Proven to be effective in 2016 FHWA study
- **Price parking appropriately**
 - Advocate for codification of “fair-value commuting” within local zoning codes
 - Dynamic fees that adjust with parking demand



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Expand Bus Rapid Transit & Transit Ways regionwide

- BRT, transitways, streetcar routes at various locations throughout the region
- Local circulation
- Connecting activity centers

(BeyondDC/flickr)



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Recommendation: Standards for BRT

Density standards for BRT service

- The region should identify a set of preferred density measures related to transit service, ridership, and land use in the region as a standard for BRT systems
 - Creating such a regional standard enables the ability to measure progress in the development and implementation of BRT corridors
 - This regional standard allows for a mapping out of potential BRT corridors for future planning and implementation



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Move more people on Metrorail

- Replace six-car trains with eight-car trains on all Metrorail lines
- Add a second Rosslyn station
- A new rail line across the Potomac River connecting the District of Columbia and Virginia through Georgetown to Union Station

(TPB)



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Recommendation: Eliminate transfer costs

- **Eliminate the transfer cost between Metrorail and the region's bus services**
 - Encourage use of Metrorail by lowering total transit fare costs for riders using both Metrorail and bus services. Treats transit system as a single mode and would not penalize transit users that need to use buses to get to Metrorail

As an alternative, members also proposed:

- **Cap total fares charged for transit trips per day**
 - Putting a cap on total fares for a day would make additional transit use more attractive for transit-choice or transit-lifestyle riders and reduce costs for transit-reliant riders or those who have to make several connections, sometimes across multiple services, to get to their destinations



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Improve walk and bike access to transit

- Safe and convenient access to Metrorail, commuter rail, BRT, and streetcar stations

(ArtAround/flickr)



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Recommendation: Identify priority station areas

- Identify a list of transit station areas to be prioritized for walk/bike improvements. Consider:
 - Critical gaps in infrastructure, and corresponding opportunities to increase walking and biking.
 - Equity Emphasis Areas
 - Activity Centers/Density
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety
- Projects at priority station areas receive special consideration in local, state and regional funding programs (e.x. TPB's TLC and TAP programs)



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Recommendation: Prioritize access improvements

- **Prioritize the functionality of high capacity transit stations for better connectivity of all modes**
 - Prioritize physical and operational improvements to the efficiency of transit stations, for all modes but particularly beneficial to pedestrians
 - Provide transit priority on roadways surrounding high capacity transit stations, resulting in improved reliability of buses
 - One component of improving the functionality of high capacity transit stations should be improving safety in and around the station, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists



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Recommendation: Expand TLC program

- **Transportation Land Use Connections (TLC) provides technical assistance to fill gaps in local trail building expertise**
- **TLC funding should be significantly increased**
- 108 highly effective projects in all of the TPB's member jurisdictions to-date
 - Outsized impact relative to cost
 - TPB received about \$1.3m in applications for the FY 2019 TLC program, which had \$500,000 in available funds



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Complete the National Capital trail

- Complete a proposed loop (Bicycle Beltway) of circumferential trail connections circling the core of the Washington region

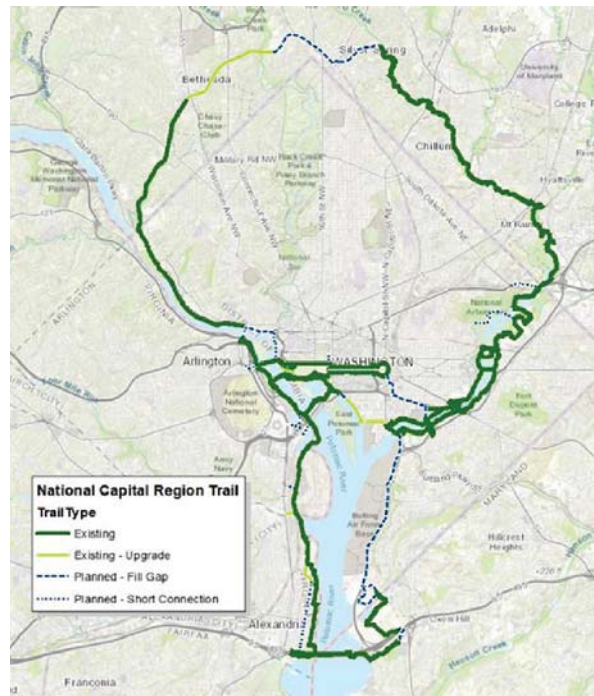
(Chesapeake Bay Foundation/Flickr)



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National Capital Trail (NCT)

- Prioritize and Complete Planned segments
- Prioritize planning and funding missing segments
- Projects integrated to other projects or initiatives as standalone projects



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Recommendation: Expand to a regional network

- National Capital Trail (NCT) currently connects jurisdictions within the regional core
- NCT should provide connectivity to major trails in other TPB jurisdictions
- Build on the work of the Capital Trails Coalition and expand NCT loop into a National Capital Regional Trail network
- Use the goals adopted by the Capital Trails Coalition Network for expanding the NCT
 - Accessible to people of all ages and abilities
 - Healthy and Safe
 - Equitably Distributed across Jurisdictions
 - Reliable for Transportation
 - Accessible to Open Space
 - Built to the highest design standards



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(MrTinDC/flickr)

