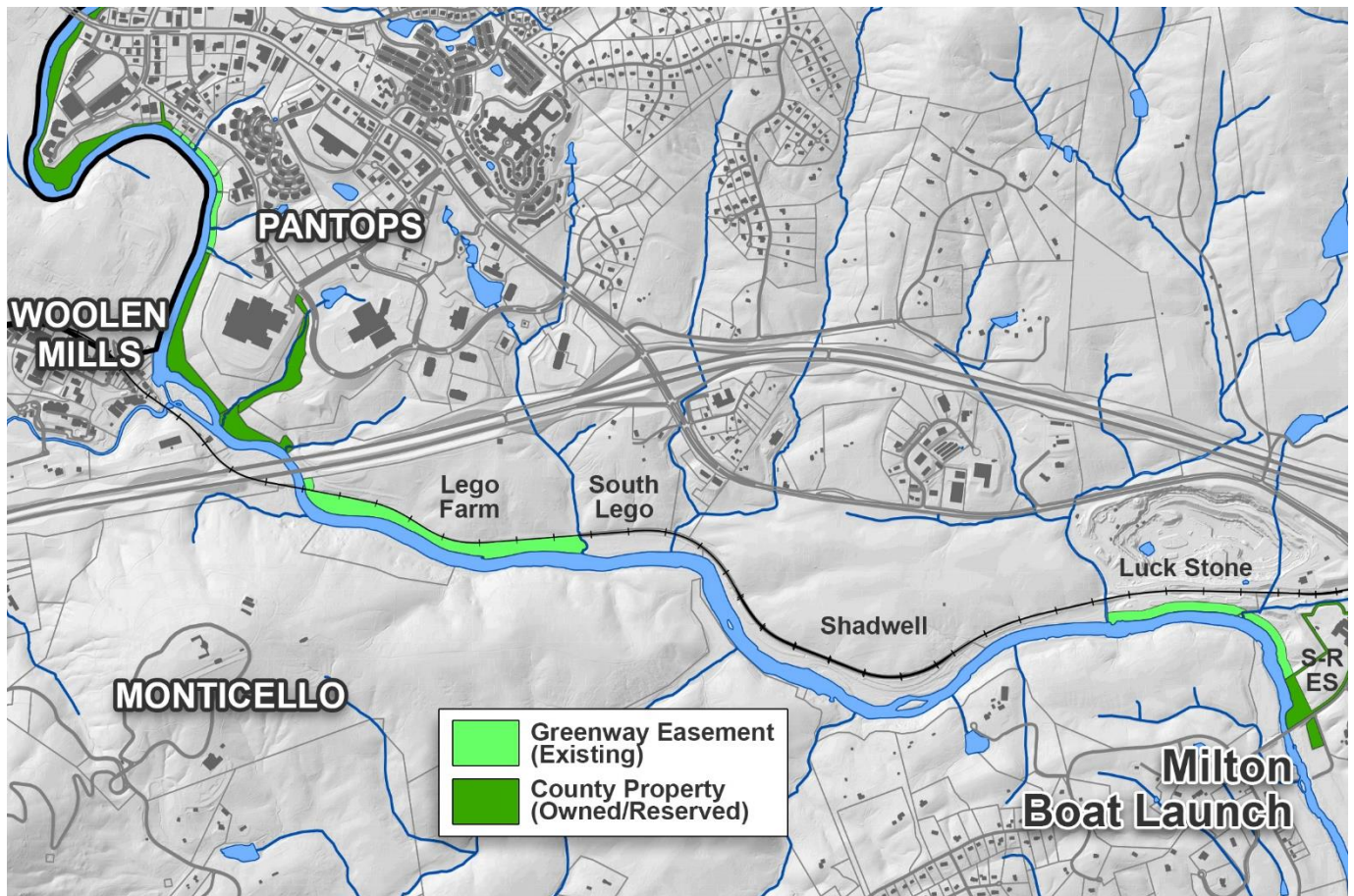


**Project Update Report:
Attachment D to "Rivanna Greenway Project Study Update (Old Mills Trail Extension)"**

BOS Agenda Date 6/2/2021 | Granicus File ID #21-305

Tim Padalino, AICP, Chief of Parks Planning | Albemarle County Parks & Recreation | May 12, 2021



Introduction:

The purpose of this informational Project Update Report (which is provided as Attachment D to the Executive Summary in the June 2, 2021 Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Consent Agenda / Granicus File ID #21-305) is to provide more in-depth information regarding the planned Rivanna Greenway. This report specifically focuses on the planned downstream extension of the existing Old Mills Trail portion of the Rivanna Greenway, from the Pantops Development Area to the Milton Boat Launch in the Rural Area – a section of the Rivanna River containing remarkable natural heritage, cultural landscapes and historic resources, and outdoor recreation potential.

This report is generally organized around two interrelated elements of Old Mills Trail Extension implementation:

- the necessary acquisition of easements and similar approvals from property owners; and
- the conceptual plans for development of recreation infrastructure (including multi-use greenway trails, blueway river access improvements, and potentially an improved, expanded public access trailhead).

Albemarle County Parks & Recreation (ACPR) staff are providing the Board with this project update at this time, prior to a number of public-facing activities relating to the Rivanna Greenway, including:

- ACPR's planned work with Communications and Public Engagement (CAPE) and Community Development (CDD) to conduct public outreach efforts in the month of June, including informational meetings with the Pantops Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Places29-Rio CAC, and communicating with local non-profit and advocacy organizations such as the Rivanna Trails Foundation (RTF), the Charlottesville Albemarle Mountain Biking Club (CAMBC), and the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC);
- ACPR's anticipated coordination with Monticello regarding their intended dedication(s) of greenway easements on their properties along the Rivanna River (as described in the Background section); and
- Any potential public hearings for The Clifton & Collina Farm's special use permit application (SP202100004) and zoning map amendment application (ZMA202100003).

Rivanna Greenway (Old Mills Trail Section) – Existing Conditions and Background Information:



This section of the planned Rivanna Greenway is referred to as the Old Mills Trail due to the area's history of commercial and industrial infrastructure and improvements, and the remnant historic resources and cultural landscape (including dams, locks, canals, walls, and mill ruins). The historic resources include the ruins of Jefferson's Mill (built around 1807) as well as the Thomas Jefferson birthplace archaeological site at Shadwell Quarter Farm (TMP #78-28B and 79-7A). Shadwell is currently protected by a conservation easement held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and by a historic easement held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The Old Mills Trail section of the (future) Rivanna Greenway is primarily undeveloped, and is bound by the Rivanna River on one side and an active railroad line (owned by CSX) on the other. There is an existing narrow trail that is receiving unauthorized use for hiking, trail running, mountain biking, fishing, and wildlife observation. This section of the Rivanna River is also used for water recreation between Riverview Park and the Milton Boat Launch, and is noted for numerous riffles and rapids, natural scenery, and wildlife. It is also formally designated as a Virginia Scenic River.

Certain portions of the planned Old Mills Trail extension are currently under County-held easement for public use. Other portions of the planned greenway extension are privately-owned and easements still need to be dedicated/acquired. The remaining portions of this corridor not currently under County-held easement are now owned by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation / Monticello, following their recent acquisition of the last remaining privately-owned riverfront parcel in this planned greenway corridor.

Accordingly, based on preliminary coordination with Ms. Liz Russell, Monticello's Assistant Director for Safety + Sustainability, Monticello is positioned to begin formally engaging with the County on the planning and coordination process for the dedication of the remaining necessary greenway easements. These anticipated dedications are largely pursuant to the terms and obligations established in Monticello's Proffer Statement for ZMA200400005 (ZMA-04-05) for the "Monticello Historic District" that was approved by the Board on June 8, 2005. The Approval Letter and Proffer Statement for ZMA-04-05 are provided as (Attachment B).

Please note that these intended dedications are time-sensitive, relative to the terms of ZMA-04-05 Proffer 1.o, which stipulates that "o. If the County has not commenced construction of the greenway trail within the Lego Quarter Farm [TMP #78-31A] within 20 years of the Foundation's conveyance of the easement thereon [or by August 16, 2027], and completed such trail within 22 years of the conveyance [or by August 16, 2029], upon request by the Foundation, the County shall release all of its interest in the easement, at no expense to the Foundation, unless the Foundation and the County shall agree to another permissible use by the County for the Easement Area."

Therefore, in consideration of this timeline, there is an element of urgency to this upcoming coordination between Monticello and Albemarle County, and to the County's planning, funding, and construction of the Old Mills Trail Extension.

Rivanna Greenway – Existing Plans and Current Implementation Status:

The vision for the Rivanna Greenway (in general) and the Old Mills Trail (in particular) have long been a part of local and regional plans. This includes the *Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan*, the *Jefferson Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*, and the *Virginia Outdoors Plan*.

Please refer to Attachment A ("Comprehensive Plan Excerpts") for narrative and graphic Comp Plan content that illustrates the relevance and importance of this planned greenway project, and how it would help to significantly advance numerous County policies, plans, objectives, and strategies contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Approximately 2.5 miles of this planned Rivanna Greenway network are currently in place as the Old Mills Trail, which is located between Darden Towe Park and the I-64 highway bridges across the Rivanna River, at the edge of the Pantops Development Area. An additional section of the Rivanna Greenway, approximately 2.25 miles in length, also currently exists in the Glenmore community in the Village of Rivanna Development Area. There is currently no general public access to this County-owned, County-maintained section of the Rivanna Greenway.

Overview of Old Mills Trail Extension Feasibility Study:

Albemarle County Parks & Rec recently received technical assistance from Land Planning and Design Associates (LPDA) to complete feasibility studies for two separate but related greenway projects (identified below). This summary overview focuses on the Feasibility Study for the Old Mills Trail Extension, completed in June 2020 (Attachment C).

- The proposed Old Mills Trail Extension of the Rivanna Greenway, downstream from the existing Old Mills Trail (between Pantops and the Milton Boat Launch); and
- The proposed Free State/River North section of the Rivanna Greenway, downstream from Brook Hill River Park and upstream from Pen Park in the City of Charlottesville.

Summary overview of opportunities and constraints:

- Acquisition of necessary easements and similar authorizations:
 - Land Use Permit from Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
 - Easement/authorization from CSX and approval of railroad underpass design
 - Greenway easement(s) from Thomas Jefferson Foundation/Monticello
- Protection of sensitive historic resources and cultural landscape in coordination with Monticello (including installation of fencing along certain sections of the trail)
- Coordination with Luck Stone on necessary access control and associated safety protocols (including installation of fencing and gates)
- Establishing temporary construction access and perpetual maintenance and emergency access
- Resolution of trail development obstacles and challenges (particularly stream crossings)
- Addressing and resolving inadequate water recreation facilities at Milton
- Addressing and resolving inadequate public access and trailhead amenities/services at Milton

Summary overview of proposed improvements:

- Construct approximately 5.5 miles of 6' wide crushed stone trail
- Construct 7 bridges
- Construct 1 railroad underpass
- Install signage throughout corridor and kiosk at access point
- Install fencing along trail in the vicinity of the Jefferson Mill ruins (in coordination with Monticello)
- Install fencing and 2 sets of gates at Luck Stone (at upstream boundary and downstream boundary)
- Improve blueway facilities at Milton to provide better, safer access for water recreation activities
- Improve trailhead facilities at Milton (subject to project management/project scope decisions – see below)

Summary overview of conceptual planning-level cost estimates:

- LPDA identified a conceptual planning-level cost estimate of \$1,370,627.50 (October 2019).
- This is a conservative estimate based on conceptual planning and design.
- This project cost estimate is subject to revisions, based on project management decisions (including whether or not trailhead development and water access improvements at Milton are included in the project scope).
- Critical next steps for this planned project include the development of schematic designs to identify more accurate project cost estimates based on site-specific factors (as opposed to planning-level estimates based predominantly on unit costs).

Summary overview of implementation strategy:

- Regulatory Permitting and Other Approvals/Authorizations:
 - VDOT/FHWA: Land Use Permits at I-64 and VA-729 (North Milton Road)
 - CSX: railroad underpass approval
- Partnerships and Community Stakeholders:
 - Thomas Jefferson Foundation / Monticello
 - Monticello's easement holders (Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VA Dept. of Historic Resources)
 - Luck Stone
 - Albemarle County Public Schools / Stone-Robinson Elementary School
 - The Clifton & Collina Farm
- Major Project Management Decisions:
 - Determining if the project scope will include provision of the planned public trailhead access and upgraded blueway facilities at Milton (see Comprehensive Plan Excerpts – Attachment A)
- Identifying and securing project funding
 - Development of a funding strategy is critically important, and is to be evaluated and determined only after receiving Board input and in close coordination with internal and external stakeholders.

Rivanna Greenway (Old Mills Trail Section) – Project Purpose(s) and Value(s):

Albemarle County's Greenways + Blueways Program is a highly important, multi-faceted network of community assets that generates a multitude of public benefits. These public benefits are multi-faceted, and help advance and implement the following Strategic Plan Goals (*with brief project-specific explanations following each*):

- **Infrastructure Investment:** Prioritize, plan, and invest in critical infrastructure that responds to past and future changes and improves the capacity to serve community needs.
 - (*Supporting increased access to high-profile, high-quality outdoor recreation amenities and infrastructure during a time of unprecedented growth in visitation to and use of County parks and greenways*)
- **Natural Resources Stewardship:** Thoughtfully protect and manage Albemarle County's ecosystems and natural resources in both the rural and development areas to safeguard the quality of life of current and future generations.
 - (*Supporting long-term environmental sustainability of the Scenic Rivanna River corridor through greenway protection of the riparian area and through utilization of local volunteer groups for land management best practices such as invasive species management*)
- **Rural Area Character:** Preserve the character of rural life with thriving farms and forests, traditional crossroad communities, and protected scenic areas, historic sites, and biodiversity.
 - (*Supporting the protection of the Scenic Rivanna River corridor's sense of place, cultural landscape, and historic resources*)
- **Thriving Development Areas:** Attract quality employment, commercial, and high density residential uses into development areas by providing services and infrastructure that encourage redevelopment and private investment while protecting the quality of neighborhoods.
 - (*Supporting increased resident and visitor access to outdoor recreation amenities and natural landscapes adjacent to the Pantops Development Area, and establishing greenway connectivity between the Pantops Development Area and the Village of Rivanna Development Area*)
- **Economic Prosperity:** Foster an environment that stimulates diversified job creation, capital investments, and tax revenues that support community goals.
 - (*Supporting outdoor recreation tourism and heritage tourism*)
- **Educational Opportunities:** Provide lifelong learning opportunities for all our citizens.
 - (*Supporting on-site opportunities for historic interpretation and education relating to colonial-era and early-American cultural landscapes and Jeffersonian historic resources*)

