



STATE TRAILS OFFICE UPDATES

Dr. Torsha Bhattacharya

TJPDC Land Use and Environmental
Planning Friday, March 15, 2024

AGENDA

- Background
- Statewide Trails Plan
 - Fall Engagement Activities
 - Survey, Town Halls, Focus Groups
 - State of Trails System
 - Thematic mapping
 - Resource Hub



*The Virginia Creeper Trail,
Southwest Virginia*

Background

- **General Fund dollars were provided in the State Budgets approved in June 2022 for the planning, development, and construction of multi-use trails throughout the Commonwealth**
- **The CTB to prioritize the funds for:**
 - **New regional trails**
 - **Projects to improve connectivity of existing trail networks**
 - **Provide geographic diversity in the use of such funds**
- **Directs the establishment of a State Trails Office**
 - **Develop a State Trails Plan and State Trails Information Clearinghouse consistent with the January 2022 "Report of Virginia Multi-Use Trails Initiative"**
 - **State Trails Office shall coordinate with the State Trails Advisory Committee and the Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Statewide Trails Plan

Help Build Virginia's Network of Trails

Virginia's Statewide Trails Plan will lay the groundwork for a network of multi-use trails in the Commonwealth. The State Trails Office invites you and your community to participate in the process.

The Statewide Trails Plan will:



Inventory existing and proposed multi-use trails in the Commonwealth



Identify key gaps in Virginia's network of multi-use trails



Outline next steps and best practices in multi-use trail development



Provide opportunities for community visioning and engagement

The Statewide Trails Plan will focus on multi-use trails.

Multiuse Trails definition

MULTIMODAL

Serving those who walk, bike, or roll



SAFE

Preferably separated from motor vehicle traffic



ACCESSIBLE

Preferably have a hard surface and strive for a grade of less than 5%



REGIONALLY CONNECTED

Strive for regional connectivity by linking people to places & other trail facilities



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Engagement activities –Survey

Survey Intent

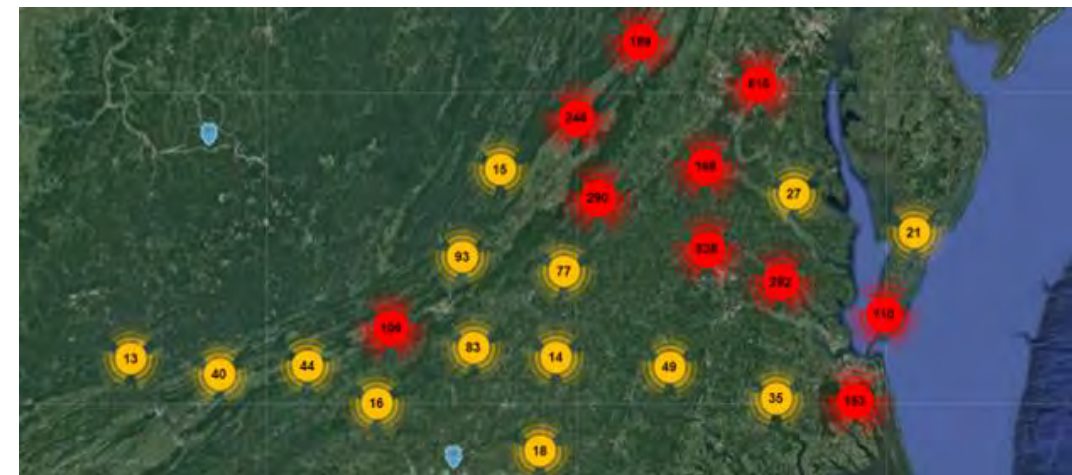
- Collect input from a diverse group of trail users and non-users
- Understand existing uses and challenges of multi-use trails
- Gather information related to desired uses of multi-use trails
- Develop a contact list to continue participation in the plan development



Engagement activities - Survey

Summary






- September 20 – October 25, 2023
- More than 5,700 responses
- Responses received from throughout the Commonwealth
- Promoted via:
 - ✓ Members of the Advisory Committee
 - ✓ VDOT website/social media
 - ✓ Email list serves
 - ✓ Outreach pivots (to underrepresented groups)

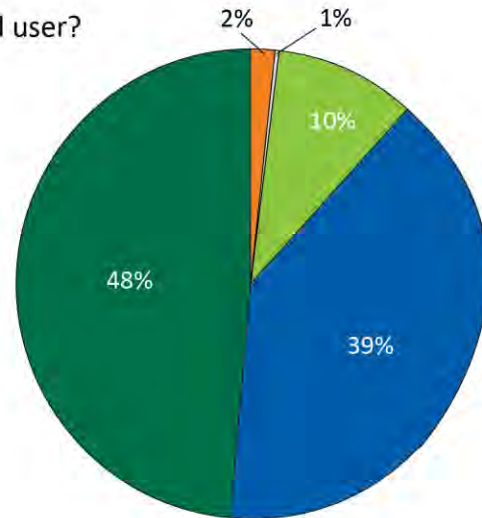


Engagement activities – Survey







Module 1 – Multi-use Trail Usage

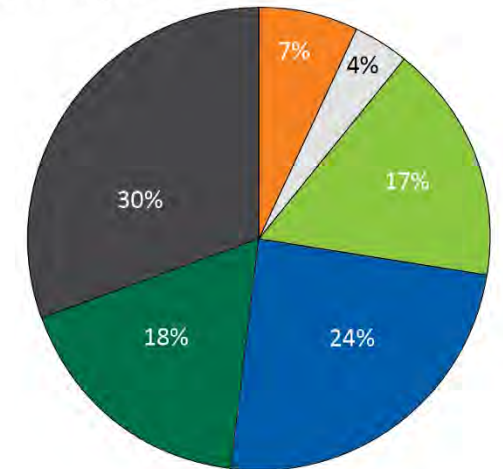
How would you describe yourself as multi-use trail user?

-  a. I am a frequent multi-use trail user.
-  b. I am an occasional multi-use trail user.
-  c. I am curious about using multi-use trails, but I need to know more about them.
-  d. I am hesitant to use multi-use trails, but I won't rule it out yet.
-  e. I have no interest in using multi-use trails.



How frequently do you use multi-use trails in and around your community?





-  a. Multiple times each week
-  b. About once a week
-  c. 1 to 3 times per month
-  d. About once every few months
-  e. About once per year
-  f. Rarely or never

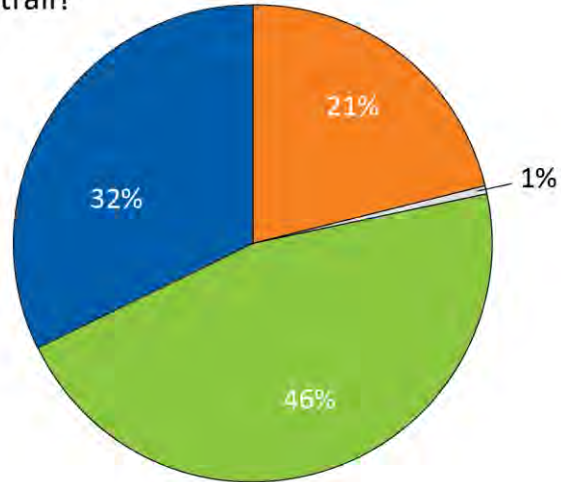


Engagement activities – Survey

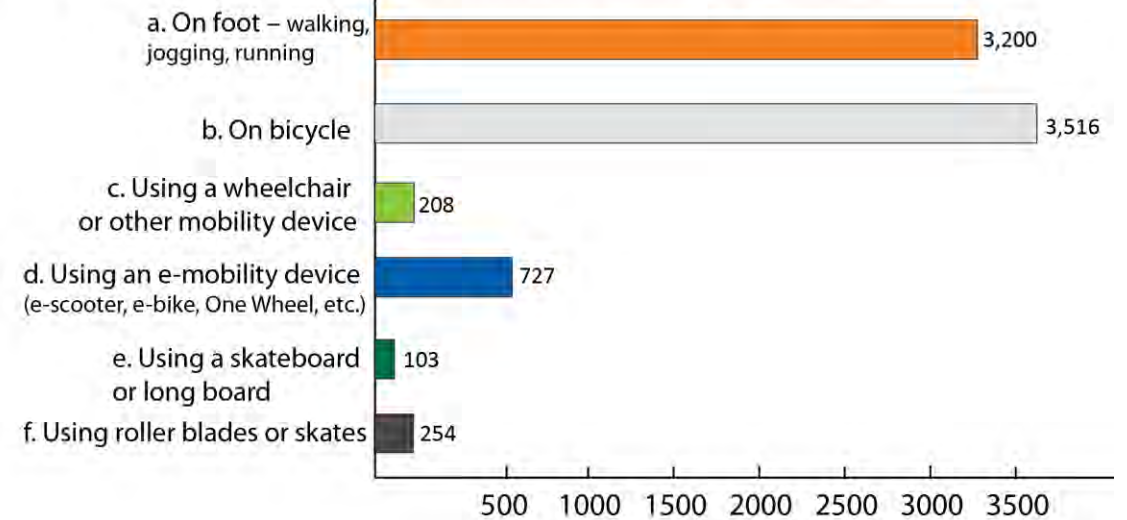
Module 2 – Frequent Multi-use Trail Users

How do you typically travel to a multi-use trail?

-  a. I walk, bike, or roll to the trail.
-  b. I drive to the trail.
-  c. I take public transit to the trail.
-  d. I drive to the trail, but I'd prefer to walk, run, or bike to the trail.



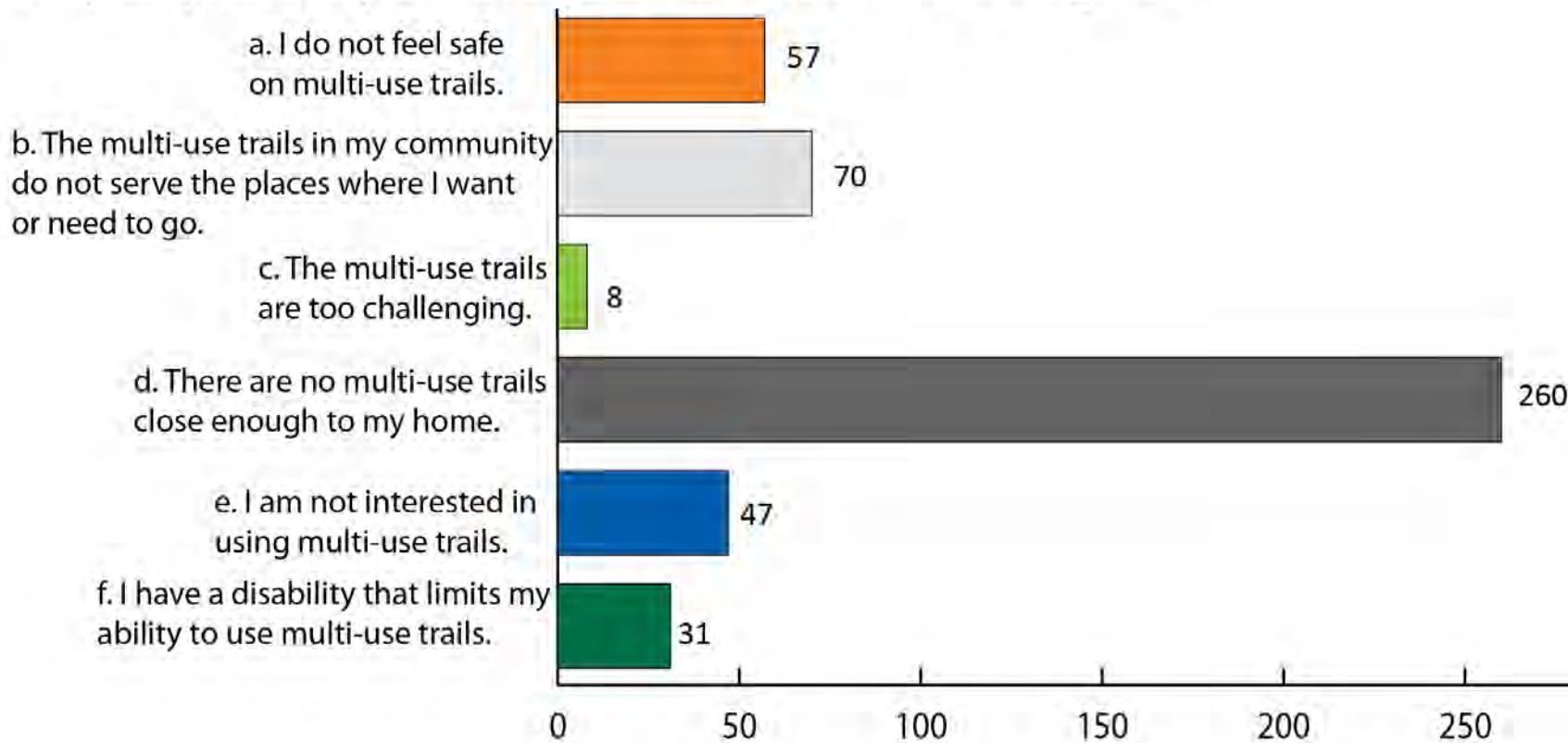
How would you like to travel on multi-use trails in the future?



Engagement activities – Survey

Module 3 – Infrequent Multi-use Trail Users

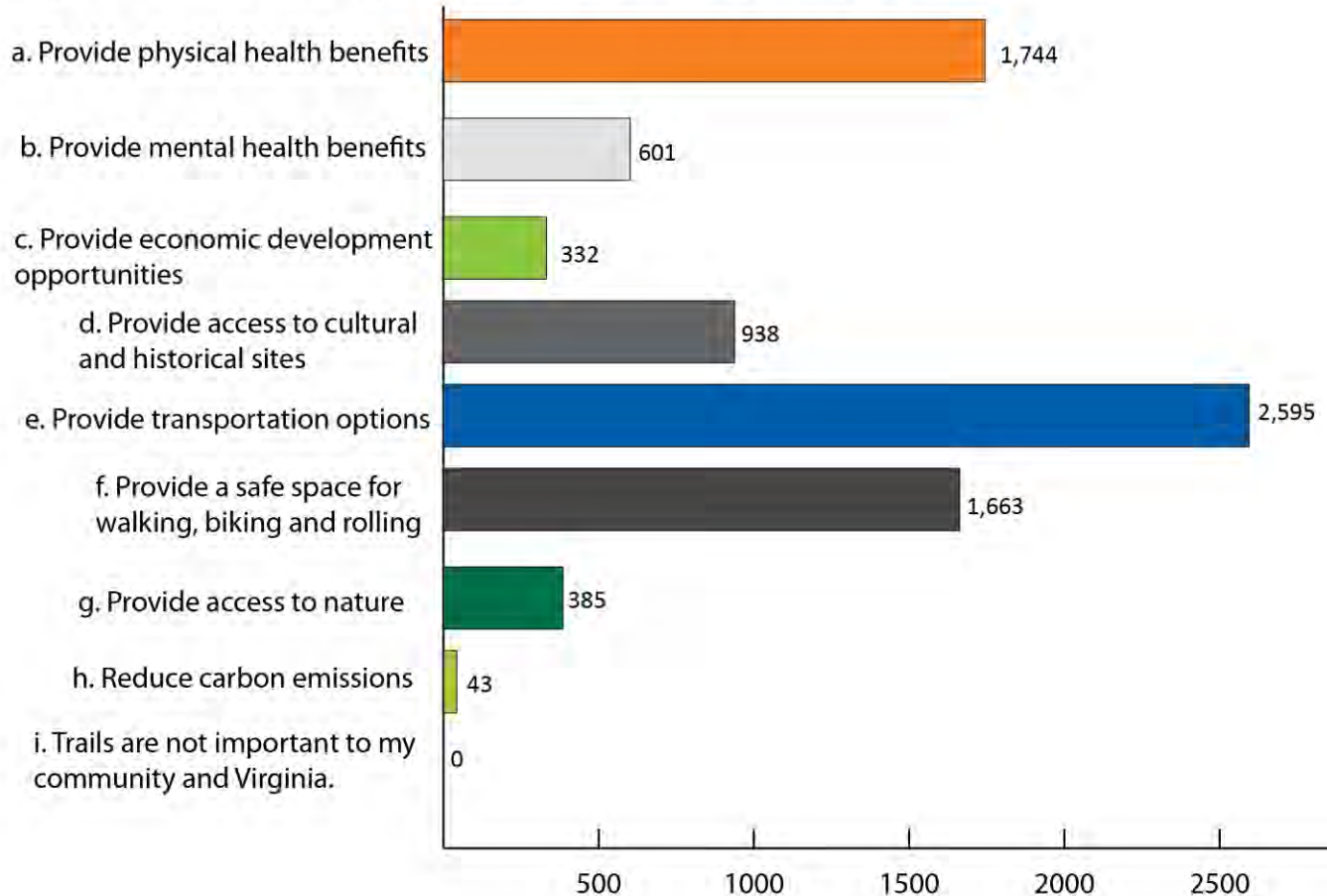
Why do you rarely or never use multi-use trails in Virginia?



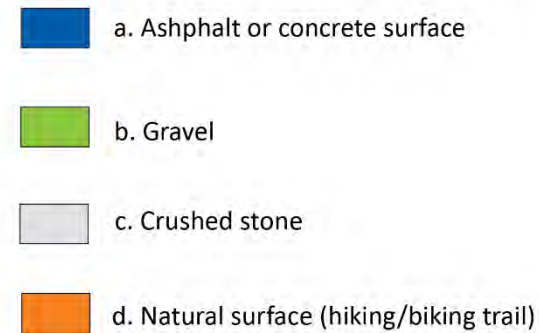
Engagement activities – Survey

Module 4 – Priorities for Multi-use Trail Users

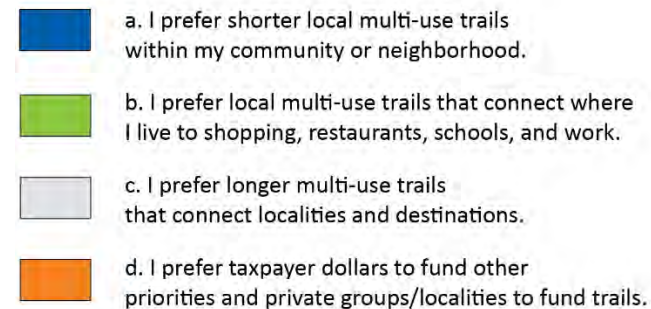
Why are multi-use trails important to your community and Virginia?



What type of surface do you prefer for multi-use trails?



While there are many great ideas and opportunities to improve multi-use trails across Virginia, the Commonwealth operates on a limited budget, limiting the number of projects that may be implemented. Which of these statements best describes your preference?



Engagement activities – 3 Virtual Townhalls

Key Takeaways:

1. Representatives from local governments, regional planning bodies, and trails-oriented groups are engaged in the work of the State Trails Office.
2. Safety concerns, right-of-way issues, and funding are barriers to multi-use trail development across the Commonwealth.
3. Potential ways for the State Trails Office to assist:
 - Building consensus with appointed and elected officials
 - Managing a robust data clearinghouse that will help support grant applications and other needs
 - Creating awareness and generating excitement for multi-use trails

Virginia Statewide Trails Plan Virtual Town Halls Summary

As part of the State Trails Office's virtual town hall series regarding the Statewide Trails Plan, participants took part in an interactive polling activity hosted on the Poll Everywhere platform.



Dates: October 30th (Western Region), November 1st (Northern Region), November 2nd (Eastern Region)

Number of Attendees: 139

99% of respondents agreed that multi-use trails help create a transportation system that is safe, enables easy movement of people and goods, enhances the economy and improves quality of life.

What We Heard



The State Trails Office could **support communities** by:

- › Creating awareness of existing trails resources
- › Working with local advocacy groups
- › Coordinating with organizations to help identify new trail projects
- › Assisting with gaining access across rail lines or parallel to rail lines within easements
- › Creating statewide data standards that can be used by localities
- › Collecting predictive usership data
- › Providing information on potential funding sources for multi-use trails
- › Providing budget information
- › Supporting planning, environmental, and right-of-way phases for trail projects
- › Tying together existing trails to create larger systems
- › Engage with communities on local needs



Most important **destinations**:

1. Parks, playgrounds, pools, or other recreational facilities
2. Place of employment
3. The multi-use trail is the destination for my activity.
4. Restaurants and cafes
5. Shopping

Additional destinations for trail connections include:

- › Schools (26)
- › Transit/transportation hubs (11)
- › Historic/cultural sites (7)



Most important **evaluation criteria**:

1. Completing a network
2. Safety
3. Close to people and places
4. Underserved communities
5. Construction readiness

Additional evaluation criteria included:

- › Reducing car trips
- › Overcoming natural and manmade barriers
- › Potential for economic development



Barriers to implementing trails in communities:

- › Funding
- › "NIMBYism"
- › A lack of political will
- › Right-of-way challenges
- › Completing priorities

Engagement activities- Focus Groups

Intent of the focus groups:

- Gather more detailed information from a diverse group of users and non-users of multi-use trails
- Hear organic conversations around multi-use trail topic areas
- Help triangulate results across survey, townhalls and focus groups

Focus Group process:

- Screener questions
- Discussion guide development
- Recruitment
- Pre-group activities
- Focus group meetings



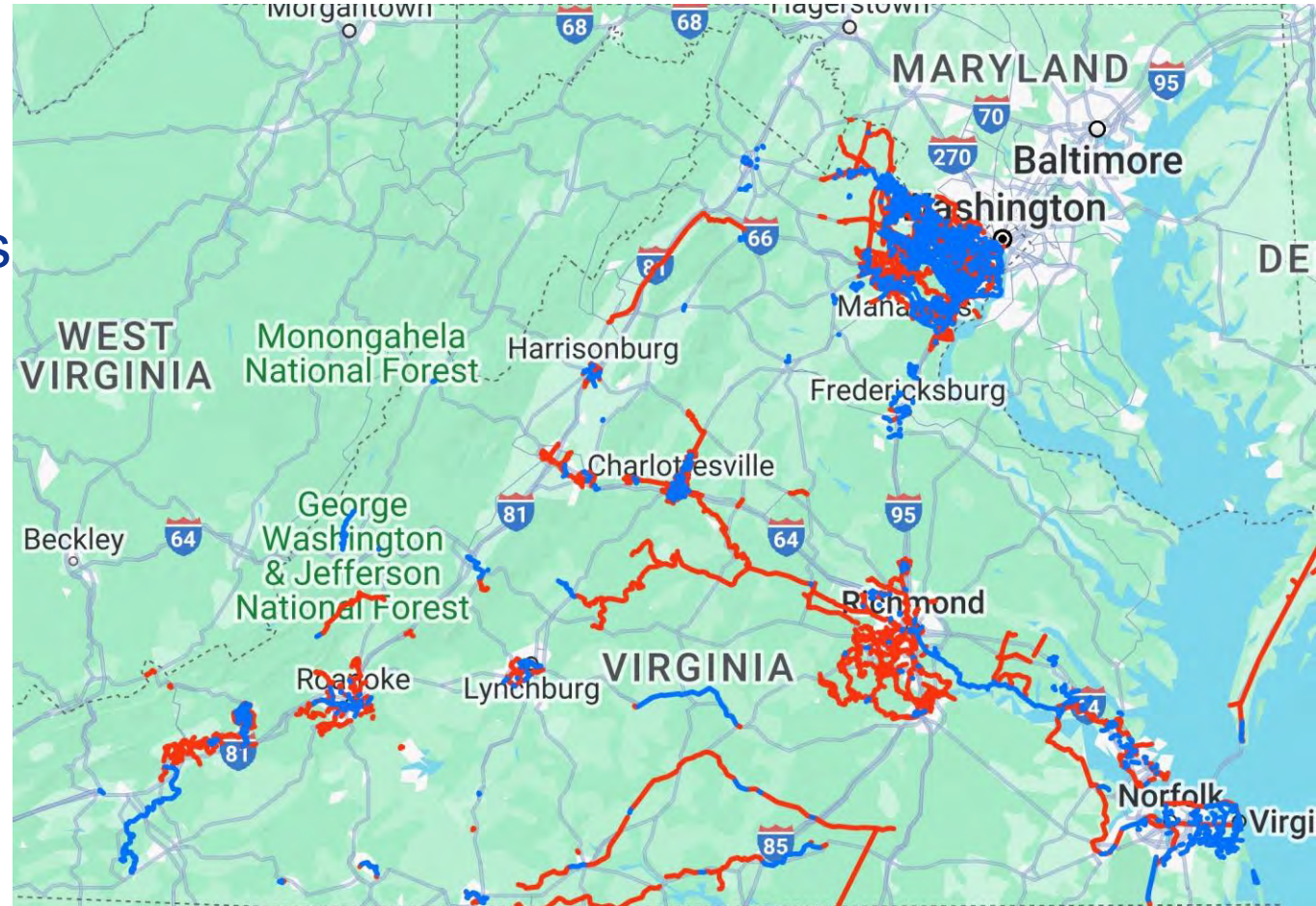
State of Trail System – Overview

- Inventory of current statewide trail network using data from DCR, MPOs, PDCs and local jurisdictions
- Review data quality and attributes
- Identify high-level multi-use trail needs that will inform Statewide Trail Plan
- Initiate development of a statewide Resource Hub for all trails



State of Trail System – Multiuse Trails

- 2900 miles of planned multiuse trails
- 1500 Miles of existing multiuse trails
- Attributes:
 - Trail Name
 - Trail Type
 - Trail Status
 - County/Independent City Name
 - PDC Name
 - Surface Type (if provided)
 - Width in feet (if provided)
 - Segment Length in Miles



Trails Data Inventory – January 2024

Descriptive Elements (Thematic mapping)

- **Underserved Communities** – trail serves or passes through an underserved community.
- **Connections to Regional Destinations** – provides direction connections to key regional destinations (employment/activity/medical/retail center, parks, etc.).
- **Close to People** – trail is accessible within an average 10–15-minute bike ride distance from population center.
- **Safety** – trail helps provides or contributes to safety improvement.



Resource Hub

- **A go-to resource site for all types of trails in Virginia**
- **Collect data on existing and planned multi-use trails/trail networks across the state**
- **Collaborate with others to integrate other trail types**
- **Standardize trail attributes**
- **Spatialize trails data and develop an interactive mapping interface**

Contact us:

Website:

vdot.virginia.gov/trails

Contact the State Trails Office:

statetrailsoffice@vdot.virginia.gov