

ELIZABETH RIVER TRAIL

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CITY OF NORFOLK, VIRGINIA



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About Mangum Economics, LLC

Mangum Economics is a Glen Allen, Virginia based firm that was founded in 2003. Since then, we have become known as a leader in industry analysis, economic impact assessment, policy and program evaluation, and economic and workforce strategy development. The Mangum Team specializes in producing objective and actionable quantitative economic research that our clients use for strategic decision making in a variety of industries and environments. We know that our clients are unique, and that one size does not fit all. As a result, we have a well-earned reputation for tailoring our analyses to meet the specific needs of specific clients, with a specific audience.

Most of our research falls into four general categories:

- **Economic Development and Special Projects:** The Mangum Team has performed hundreds of analyses of proposed economic development projects. One recent example was an analysis of the proposed \$2.3 billion Green City “net-zero eco district.” The Mangum Team has also authored multiple economic development plans, including identifying industry recruitment opportunities created by the high-speed MAREA and BRUSA sub-sea cable landings in Virginia Beach.
- **Energy:** The Mangum Team has produced analyses of the economic and fiscal impact of over 28 GW of proposed solar, wind, battery energy storage, and hydro projects spanning twenty-five states. Among those projects was Dominion’s 2.6 GW Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind project off of Virginia Beach. In addition, the Mangum Team has also performed economic and fiscal impact analyses for the natural gas, nuclear, oil, and pipeline industries.
- **Advanced Applied Technology:** The Mangum Team specializes in analyzing how advanced technology developments (like data centers, fiber networks, and advanced manufacturing plants) contribute to the state and local economies. We have worked with local governments, trade associations, developers, and operating firms across the country to show how investments in advanced critical infrastructure transform local economies across the country.
- **Policy Analysis:** The Mangum Team also has extensive experience in identifying and quantifying the intended and unintended economic consequences of proposed legislative and regulatory initiatives.

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Executive Summary

This report assesses the economic and fiscal contribution that the Elizabeth River Trail (ERT) makes to the City of Norfolk, Virginia. The primary findings from that assessment are as follows:

- 1) **The ERT is a 10.5 mile urban riverfront trail that runs along the Elizabeth River in the City of Norfolk. Anchored at one end by Norfolk State University and at the other by Old Dominion University and the Port of Norfolk, the ERT is an urban amenity that serves as the physical spine of the Norfolk Innovation Corridor and connects several important community assets and 28 unique neighborhoods along the city's waterfront.**
- 2) **Urban trails and greenways such as the ERT provide multiple and wide-ranging benefits to their communities, some of which defy the narrow confines of economic evaluation. Among those are:**
 - Urban trails and greenways improve quality of life by providing an opportunity for people to connect, recharge, and enjoy nature close to where they live and work.
 - Urban trails and greenways have been shown to assist in urban renewal. In testimony before Congress in 2002, then Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy expressly credited trail construction for its role in Pittsburgh's successful downtown revitalization.
 - Trails and greenways have been shown to be instrumental in attracting residents and increasing property values.
 - Urban trails and greenways promote tourism, a significant component of Hampton Roads' economy generally and that of the City of Norfolk specifically.
 - By encouraging outdoor exercise, trails and greenways positively impact health and wellbeing and that too can generate tangible results. A 2021 study of the benefits of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail found that regional residents annually benefited from \$55 million in reduced healthcare costs as a result of their use of the trail.
 - Urban trails and greenways are uniquely positioned to provide the health benefits of exercise and recreation to diverse communities. As with the ERT, these facilities are open to the public and thereby provide opportunities for exercise and recreation to communities that may otherwise have limited access due to financial or transportation constraints.
 - By providing options for non-motorized transportation, urban trails reduce traffic congestion and decrease the significant carbon pollution caused by the use of gas-powered automobiles.

3) The ERT makes a significant economic and fiscal contribution to the City of Norfolk:

- After accounting for the economic ripple effects generated by its direct economic impact, the ERT provides an estimated total annual economic impact to the City of Norfolk that supports approximately:
 - 158 jobs.
 - \$5.8 million in associated wages and benefits.
 - \$18.7 million in economic output.
- The estimated annual fiscal impact from that additional economic activity in the City of Norfolk is approximately:
 - \$677,200 in local tax revenue.
 - \$2.2 million in total local, state, and federal tax revenue.

Introduction

This report assesses the economic and fiscal contribution that the Elizabeth River Trail (ERT) makes to the City of Norfolk, Virginia. This report was commissioned by the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation and produced by Mangum Economics.

Background

The Elizabeth River Trail (ERT)

The ERT is a 10.5 mile urban riverfront trail that runs along the Elizabeth River in the City of Norfolk. Anchored at one end by Norfolk State University and at the other by Old Dominion University and the Port of Norfolk, the ERT is an urban amenity that serves as the physical spine of the Norfolk Innovation Corridor, and connects important community assets such as Harbor Park, Waterside, Nauticus and the USS Wisconsin, Riverside Park, the Hague, Fort Norfolk, Plum Point Park, Weyanoke Bird and Wildlife Sanctuary, Jeff Robertson Park, and 28 unique neighborhoods along the city's waterfront. In this way, the ERT provides a healthy and inviting way for residents and visitors to explore the city as well as the many shops, restaurants, and breweries that are within a 5-minute walk of the trail.

The ERT came into being in 1999, when Norfolk Southern agreed to donate 3,500 feet of its Atlantic City Spur to the City of Norfolk to create the first segment of the trail. That donation paved the way for a \$151,000 federal transportation grant in 2000, construction was initiated soon after, and the first segment of the ERT opened in 2003. The ERT has since gradually expanded to its current length of 10.5 miles and now includes twelve individual trailheads or access points. Approximately 624,000 residents and visitors use the trail each year. The ERT also routinely hosts group rides such as the Tour de ORF, botanical tours, history tours, the Elizabeth River Run, and other community events. Between 2018 and 2022 the ERT hosted 364 community events and those events drew approximately 12,100 participants to the City.

To better accommodate the ERT's growth in size and mission, the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, was formed in 2016. The Foundation's mission is to provide the planning, fundraising, programming, and marketing required to ensure that the ERT remains a vibrant, healthy, and valuable asset to the diverse communities it serves. The Elizabeth River Trail Foundation relies entirely on the support of volunteers, community partners, corporate and campaign sponsors, donations, and grants. In the eight years since its creation the Foundation has enhanced the trail with over 500 wayfinding signs, bike repair and hydration stations, kayak launches, picnic tables, play structures, pollinator gardens, public art, rain gardens, and other amenities. Future plans for the ERT include expanding the trail to 22.5 miles, and significantly increasing its value as a community asset by connecting it to the City of Virginia Beach and to regional trails such as the Virginia Capital Trail, the Birthplace of America Trail, and the East Coast Greenway.

The Benefits of Urban Trails and Greenways

Urban trails and greenways provide multiple and wide-ranging benefits to their communities. As has been said elsewhere, urban trails are more than just strips of asphalt or gravel, they are social spaces that tempt residents outside, provide recreational opportunities that are readily accessible to all, and generally improve quality of life.

Whereas in the next section of this report we will provide an estimate of the quantifiable economic benefits that the ERT provides to the City of Norfolk, in this section we first illuminate those that sometimes defy the narrow confines of economic evaluation. It is the general recognition of these broader benefits, however, that first brought about the creation of the ERT, has led to the commissioning of multiple studies of urban bicycle and pedestrian trails in the City of Norfolk and Hampton Roads,¹ and is also why the City of Norfolk's current General Plan highlights "a desire to become a more bikeable and walkable city as part of the more balanced total transportation plan."²

More broadly, those benefits are the reason that a recent statewide report on the Virginia Multi-Use Trails Initiative found that, "continued trail investment -- driven by a resurgence in outdoor recreation -- creates direct, sustainable public health, economic, environmental and quality of life benefits for Virginia residents, communities and visitors."³ And also the reason that statewide initiative and others have caused Virginia to be ranked as the 7th most bicycle friendly state in the nation by the League of American Bicyclists.⁴

Quality of Life

First and foremost, urban trails and greenways improve quality of life by providing an opportunity for people to connect, recharge, and enjoy nature close to where they live and work. Importantly, that intangible benefit can also generate tangible results. Quality of life is a crucial element in attracting skilled and especially professional and technical services workers, and because of that, it is also a crucial element in attracting the high-wage and high-growth industries that depend on those workers. For that reason, it is important to note that the ERT quite literally serves as the spine of the Norfolk Innovation Corridor, a state-designated technology zone that is intended to attract new technology startups to the City of Norfolk.

Urban trails and greenways have also been shown to assist in urban renewal. Cities such as Providence, Rhode Island, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and others have employed urban riverfront trails to turn their waterfronts into community assets that contribute to economic revitalization by drawing people and

¹ For example, see "City of Norfolk Bicycle and Pedestrian Strategic Plan," *City of Norfolk*, September 2014; and "Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads – Phase One: Literature Review, Benchmarking, and Analysis of Existing Data," *Hampton Roads Transportation and Planning Organization*, April 2019.

² "Plan Norfolk 2030: The General Plan of the City of Norfolk," *Norfolk City Council*, August 2022.

³ "Virginia Multi-Use Trails Initiative: A Report on Multi-Use Trail Master Planning, Prioritization and Funding," *Virginia Department of Transportation, Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment*, January 2022.

⁴ [Bicycle Friendly StateSM Ranking | League of American Bicyclists \(bikeleague.org\)](https://www.bikeleague.org/ranking), last accessed April 21, 2024.

businesses back to their downtown areas. In testimony before Congress in 2002, then Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy expressly credited trail construction for its role in Pittsburgh's successful downtown revitalization.⁵

Trails and greenways have also been shown to be instrumental in attracting residents. A 2002 survey by the National Association of Realtors and National Association of Homebuilders found that access to walking, jogging, and bike trails was the second most important amenity listed by respondents in their decision to choose a new residence.⁶ And numerous empirical studies have also found that proximity to trails and greenways is a desirable amenity that has a positive impact on property values.⁷

Tourism

Another benefit of urban trails and greenways is that they promote tourism, a significant component of Hampton Roads' economy generally and that of the City of Norfolk specifically. According to the Virginia Tourism Corporation, in 2022 visitor spending directly contributed \$6.6 billion to the economy of Hampton Roads and \$1.3 billion to the economy of the City of Norfolk.⁸ It is also worthy of note that in 2022, Leisure and Hospitality, the major industry sector most closely associated with the tourism industry, ranked as the City of Norfolk's 4th largest employment sector and also is the sector that experienced the 3rd largest employment growth between 2021 and 2022.⁹

Numerous studies have quantified the economic impact that trails and greenways generate for their host communities by drawing out-of-area visitors to those communities. A literature review conducted as part of the "Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads" report found that in the studies they reviewed that value varied from \$1.8 million to \$42.6 million.¹⁰ That impact occurs because out-of-area visitors spend dollars in the host community and those out-of-area dollars expand the host community's economy. In that regard, it is important to know that the same study found that 59 percent of ERT trail users were not Norfolk residents and therefore visitors from outside of the City.

⁵ Testimony before the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. House of Representatives, June 20, 2002, as cited in "The Economic Benefits of Trails," *Rails to Trails Conservancy*, undated.

⁶ "Consumer's Survey on Smart Choices for Home Buyers," *National Association of Realtors and National Association of Homebuilders*, April 2002, as cited in "The Economic Benefits of Trails," *Rails to Trails Conservancy*, undated, and "The Business of Trails: A Compilation of Economic Benefits," Terry Eastin, undated.

⁷ For example, see "The Effect of a Large Urban Park on Real Estate Value," Thomas R. Hammer, Robert E. Coughlin, and Edward T. Horn, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol.40, issue 4, 1974; and "The Determinants of Neighborhood Transformation in Philadelphia – Identification and Analysis: The Kensington Plot Study," Jessica A. Wachter, *The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania*, July 12, 2004; as cited in "The Potential Economic Impacts of the Proposed Carolina Thread Trail," *Econsult*, March 2007.

⁸ Data Source: Virginia Tourism Corporation.

⁹ Data Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

¹⁰ "Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads – Phase One: Literature Review, Benchmarking, and Analysis of Existing Data," *Hampton Roads Transportation and Planning Organization*, April 2019.

Health and Wellbeing

By encouraging outdoor exercise, trails and greenways also positively impact health and wellbeing and that too can generate tangible results. In 2021, a study was conducted for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission on the benefits of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, a 900 mile network of trails in Virginia, D.C., Maryland, and Pennsylvania.¹¹ Using ridership data from the trail, and data from the U.S. Department of Health’s Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and the American Heart Association, that study determined that regional residents annually benefited from \$55 million in reduced healthcare costs as a result of their use of the trail. Other studies have reported similar findings.

In addition, as pointed out by the National Park Service and others, urban trails and greenways are also uniquely positioned to provide the health benefits of exercise and recreation to diverse communities.¹² The use of urban trails and greenways does not require a gym membership. As with the ERT, these facilities are open to the public and thereby provide opportunities for exercise and recreation to communities that may otherwise have limited access due to financial or transportation constraints. Or as the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation succinctly states in its most recent Foundation Impact Report, the ERT and urban trails and greenways like it, provide “something for everyone.”

Environmental

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, by providing options for non-motorized transportation, urban trails and greenways also have a positive impact on the environment. An often-cited statistic is that one-fourth of all residential trips are one mile or less and three-fourths of those are by car. Urban trails and greenways provide opportunities for non-motorized commuting and running errands that can reduce traffic congestion and decrease the significant carbon pollution caused by the use of gas-powered automobiles. And in fact, a 2020 survey of ERT users by Old Dominion University found that 39 percent used the trail for commuting, visiting local attractions or businesses, or visiting friends, all trips that could, and perhaps otherwise would, have been done by automobile.¹³

¹¹ “Health, Social Equity, and Economic Impact of the Potomac Heritage Scenic Trail in Northern Virginia,” *Northern Virginia Regional Commission*, November 15, 2021.

¹² “Benefits of Trails and Greenways,” *U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service*, 2008.

¹³ “Elizabeth River Trail Survey,” *Old Dominion University*, Spring 2020.

Economic and Fiscal Impact

In this section we quantify the economic and fiscal contribution that the ERT makes to the City of Norfolk.

Method

To empirically evaluate the economic and fiscal impact attributable to the ERT, we employ a regional economic impact model called IMPLAN.¹⁴ The IMPLAN model is one of the most commonly used economic impact simulation models in the U.S., and in Virginia is used by UVA's Weldon Cooper Center, the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, the Virginia Employment Commission, and other state agencies and research institutes. Like all economic impact models, the IMPLAN model uses economic multipliers to quantify economic impact.

Economic multipliers measure the ripple effects that an expenditure generates as it makes its way through the economy. For example, when out-of-area visitors to the ERT dine at restaurants, spend money in shops, or stay overnight in hotels that spending generates income for someone else, which is in turn spent, thereby becoming income for yet someone else, and so on, and so on. Through this process, one dollar in expenditures generates multiple dollars of income. The mathematical relationship between the initial expenditure and the total income generated is the economic multiplier.

One of the primary advantages of the IMPLAN model is that it uses regional and national production and trade flow data to construct region-specific and industry-specific economic multipliers, which are then further adjusted to reflect anticipated actual spending patterns within the specific geographic study area that is being evaluated. As a result, the economic impact estimates produced by IMPLAN are not generic. They reflect as precisely as possible the economic realities of the specific industry, and the specific study area, being evaluated.

In the analysis that follows, these impact estimates are divided into three categories. First round direct impact measures the direct economic contribution of the entity being evaluated (e.g., out-of-area spending by visitors to the ERT). Second round indirect and induced impact measures the economic ripple effects of this direct impact in terms of business to business, and household (employee) to business, transactions. Total impact is simply the sum of the preceding two. These categories of impact are then further defined in terms of employment (the jobs that are created), labor income (the wages and benefits associated with those jobs), and economic output (the total amount of economic activity that is created in the economy).

¹⁴ IMPLAN is produced by IMPLAN Group, LLC.

Data Sources

The data for this analysis come principally from three sources:

- Data on ERT use from trail counters and data on Elizabeth River Trail Foundation annual operating and capital expenditures in fiscal year 2024 provided by the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation.
- Data on the locality of residence of ERT users were taken from the 2019 “Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads – Phase One: Literature Review, Benchmarking, and Analysis of Existing Data,” report.¹⁵ These data were derived from StreetLight – a commercially available data service that uses data from smart phones and GPS units to provide information on individuals identified in a specific geospatial location.
- Data on the local expenditure profile of ERT users were taken from the 2020 “Elizabeth River Trail Survey” report.¹⁶ These data were collected through a survey conducted of trail users through on-site intercepts, the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation email listserve, and social media. Responses were collected over the period from February 28, 2020 through April 7., 2020. Importantly, although the sampling period partially overlapped the implementation of lockdowns in response to the Covid19 pandemic, an analysis of other economic impact studies shows that the user expenditure profiles obtained in the 2020 survey are comparable to those reported in multiple pre-pandemic reports.

Assumptions

In conducting our analysis, we employ the following assumptions:

- Approximately 624,000 people use the ERT annually.¹⁷
- Forty-one percent of ERT users are City of Norfolk residents. The remaining 59 percent of ERT users are out-of-area residents either from other localities in Hampton Roads, elsewhere in Virginia, or out of state.¹⁸ Only expenditures by out-of-area residents were used in the analysis. Expenditures by City of Norfolk residents were excluded to account for the fact that those expenditures likely would have occurred even in the absence of the ERT.
- On average, ERT users spend \$35.45 locally per visit. This figure is an average across all ERT users, including day-trippers, overnight visitors, and those who reported no local spending.¹⁹

¹⁵ Data Source: “Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads – Phase One: Literature Review, Benchmarking, and Analysis of Existing Data,” *Hampton Roads Transportation and Planning Organization*, April 2019.

¹⁶ Data Source: “Elizabeth River Trail Survey,” *Old Dominion University*, Spring 2020.

¹⁷ Data Source: Elizabeth River Trail Foundation.

¹⁸ Data Source: “Economic Impact of Bicycle Facilities in Hampton Roads – Phase One: Literature Review, Benchmarking, and Analysis of Existing Data,” *Hampton Roads Transportation and Planning Organization*, April 2019.

¹⁹ Data Source: “Elizabeth River Trail Survey,” *Old Dominion University*, Spring 2020.

- The total annual operating budget for the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation was \$250,827 in fiscal year 2024 and the Foundation’s capital improvement budget was \$361,807 that year.²⁰

Results

By feeding these assumptions into the IMPLAN model, we obtain the following estimates of the annual economic and fiscal contribution that the ERT makes to the City of Norfolk.

Visitor Spending

As shown in Table 1, spending by out-of-area residents who are visiting the City of Norfolk to use the ERT directly supports approximately: 1) 123 jobs, 2) \$3.9 million in labor income, and 3) \$11.5 million in economic output to the City of Norfolk annually.

Taking into account the economic ripple effects that direct impact would generate, we estimate that the total annual impact on the City of Norfolk is approximately: 1) 153 jobs, 2) \$5.5 million in labor income, and 3) \$17.9 million in economic output.

Table 1: Estimated Annual Economic Impact on the City of Norfolk from Spending by Out of-Area Users of the ERT (2024 Dollars)

Economic Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Output
1st Round Direct Economic Activity	123	\$3,874,210	\$11,524,901
2nd Round Indirect and Induced Economic Activity	30	\$1,629,540	\$6,391,469
Total Economic Activity	153	\$5,503,750	\$17,916,371

Operating and Capital Expenditures by the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation

As shown in Table 2, operating and capital improvement expenditures by the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation in fiscal year 2024 directly supported approximately: 1) 4 jobs,²¹ 2) \$212,900 in labor income, and 3) \$566,300 in economic output to the City of Norfolk annually.

Taking into account the economic ripple effects that direct impact would generate, we estimate that the total annual impact on the City of Norfolk was approximately: 1) 5 jobs, 2) \$275,000 in labor income, and 3) \$777,600 in economic output.

²⁰ Data Source: Elizabeth River Trail Foundation.

²¹ It should be noted that only two of these four jobs are direct employees of the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation. The remaining two are direct jobs supported by the Foundation’s expenditures on capital improvements.



Table 2: Estimated Annual Economic Impact on the City of Norfolk from Operating and Capital Expenditures by the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation (2024 Dollars)

Economic Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Output
1st Round Direct Economic Activity	4	\$212,888	\$566,327
2nd Round Indirect and Induced Economic Activity	1	\$62,165	\$211,265
Total Economic Activity	5	\$275,053	\$777,592

Total Impact

Table 3 combines the estimates from Tables 1 and 2 to show the total annual economic contribution that the ERT makes to the City of Norfolk. As these data indicate, ERT’s total direct impact is estimated to support approximately: 1) 127 jobs, 2) \$4.1 million in labor income, and 3) \$12.1 million in economic output to the City of Norfolk annually.

Taking into account the economic ripple effects that direct impact would generate, we estimate that the total annual impact on the City of Norfolk is approximately: 1) 158 jobs, 2) \$5.8 million in labor income, and 3) \$18.7 million in economic output.

Table 3: Estimated Total Annual Economic Impact on the City of Norfolk from the ERT (2024 Dollars)

Economic Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Output
1st Round Direct Economic Activity	127	\$4,087,098	\$12,091,228
2nd Round Indirect and Induced Economic Activity	31	\$1,691,705	\$6,602,734
Total Economic Activity	158	\$5,778,803	\$18,693,963

Table 4 details the top six industries in the City of Norfolk that benefit from the total economic impact shown in Table 3.

Table 4: Top Ten Industries in the City of Norfolk affected by the Total Economic Impact of the ERT (2024 dollars)

Industry	Revenue
Full-service restaurants	\$7,258,652.19
Hotels and motels, including casino hotels	\$1,937,819.32
Other real estate (e.g., Airbnb)	\$1,032,495.50
Limited-service restaurants	\$921,454.46
Management of companies and enterprises	\$768,605.98
Retail - Food and beverage stores	\$717,440.03

Finally, Table 5 provides estimates of the total annual fiscal impact, or tax revenue, generated by the economic activity shown in Table 3. As these data indicate, total annual local fiscal impact is estimated to be \$677,000, while total annual local, state, and federal fiscal impact is estimated to be \$2.2 million

Table 5: Estimated Total Annual Fiscal Impact on the City of Norfolk from the ERT (2024 Dollars)

Fiscal Impact	Local	State	Federal	Total
Tax Revenue Generated	\$677,164	\$540,619	\$1,024,881	\$2,242,664

Appendix A: Potential Funding Mechanisms and Sources

In this appendix to the economic and fiscal impact assessment, pursuant to a request from the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation we also provide recommendations on strategic considerations and a listing of potential funding mechanisms and sources that could be used to enhance the economic contribution that the ERT makes to the City of Norfolk and the Hampton Roads region generally.

Strategic Considerations

Partnerships

- To pursue available state and federal capital improvement grants for the trail, develop formal partnerships with the City of Norfolk and the departments assigned Elizabeth River Trail-related responsibilities, including city management, finance, city planning, transportation, parks and recreation, economic development, public works, and other departments or city-supported organizations to assist ERTF with grant application development and submission, award contracting, project implementation, and post-award management.
- Engage regional organizations such as the Hampton Road Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Hampton Road Planning District Commission to support the ERTF's and the City of Norfolk's pursuit of state and federal capital improvement grants from state and federal transportation funders.
- Coordinate with other non-profit organizations, local governments, and allied stakeholders in Hampton Roads that operate, maintain, or support trail development to establish a regional trail collaborative similar to other regional infrastructure-related and advocacy organizations.

Planning and Engineering

- Commission a comprehensive report detailing an inventory and evaluation of trail property ownership and outlining strategies to acquire fee-simple interest, long-term exclusive use interest, or other appropriate arrangements necessary to qualify for state and federal capital improvement grants.
- Develop a master trail design plan with a comprehensive preliminary engineering report to include construction cost estimates, annual trail operation and maintenance cost estimates, capital improvement phasing, and other supporting documentation to give context and support to the development and submission of state and federal grant applications.

Economic and Community Development

- Formulate and implement a strategy leveraging quantitative and qualitative data to position the Elizabeth River Trail as an indispensable component of Norfolk's infrastructure supporting economic growth and community well-being, and thereby enhancing the overall quality of life.
- Identify and promote the direct and indirect economic and community development advantages of a fully developed and interconnected ERT, fostering enthusiasm for the trail's place-making potential as a landmark asset within the city and the region.

Potential Funding Mechanisms and Sources

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Virginia Recreational Trails Program	
Description	building and rehabilitating trails and trail-related facilities
Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments
Availability	annual funding rounds
Competitive environment	-competitive -2023 round_9 awards_ (\$52k - \$435k)
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-2024 round_ \$1.9MM available -80%/20% matching reimbursement program
Strengths	-30% of available funds designated for non-motorized trails -construction and maintenance projects eligible
Weaknesses	-matching requirement -competitive
Other considerations	-even years_ new trail construction -odd years_ trail maintenance (can submit even years but not as competitive) -public lands by legal agreement and private lands with a 20-year right-of-way agreement -involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management
Land and Water Conservation Fund	
Description	acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation areas
Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments
Availability	annual funding rounds
Competitive environment	competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-2024 round_ \$12+MM awarded -\$250k min._ no maximum request -50%/50% matching reimbursement program



Strengths	-no project funding cap -property acquisition eligible for trails -potential development of trail support facilities -acquisition of land combined with development projects are eligible
Weaknesses	-matching requirement -competitive -lengthy land acquisition process
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management

Trails Access Grant Program

Description	increase access for people with disabilities to existing land and water trails and trail features
Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments
Availability	FY2026 (accumulated contributions to VA Open Space Conservation and Recreation Fund)
Competitive environment	competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-2021 round_ \$128k -range \$20k - \$50k -100% reimbursement_no match -limited to four projects (tactile signage/audio description; trailhead project; water trail project; land trail project
Strengths	-exclusively applied to support trail access by people with disabilities -no match requirement
Weaknesses	-limited funding amounts may constrain certain eligible projects -2026 delay
Other considerations	-could supplement other types of development projects

Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program

Description	-projects serve disadvantaged communities in urban areas lacking access to walkable outdoor recreation -communities federally designated
Organization eligibility	-only cities and towns having at least 30k population (2020 Census) -Norfolk City eligible_ 18 total VA localities

Availability	-2023-2024 round
Competitive environment	-limited state-wide competition, but national in scope
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	\$224MM (nationally) -\$300k min. _\$15MM max. request -50%/50% matching reimbursement program
Strengths	-large transformational projects -limited competition in Virginia -targeted towards acquisition and development, and rehabilitation projects
Weaknesses	-National Park Service reviews and awards grants -nationally focused
Other considerations	-nature based projects given a higher ranking -involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management

Virginia Department of Transportation

Transportation Alternatives Program	
Description	program focuses on providing pedestrian and bicycle facilities and community improvement
Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments
Availability	FY2023-2024 _\$55,680,654 statewide_82 projects at avg. \$679,032 award
Competitive environment	competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered or VDOT
Funding	- ~ \$134k to \$2MM award range -80%/20% match; reimbursement
Strengths	-large grant pool -incorporates bikeways as part of the transportation planning and development process through VDOT's State Improvement Plan -involves regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations
Weaknesses	-none noted
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management
Bicycle and Pedestrian Program	

Description	policy provides a framework for VDOT to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of Virginia’s transportation network
Organization eligibility	not applicable
Availability	
Competitive environment	
Project administrative requirements	
Funding	
Strengths	requires VDOT to incorporate bike and pedestrian improvement for most state-funded construction projects
Weaknesses	none
Other considerations	none
<u>Safe Routes to School</u>	
Description	infrastructure to help individual schools and the neighboring communities make walking and biking to school a safe, convenient, natural activity.
Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments
Availability	FY2025
Competitive environment	undetermined
Project administrative requirements	self-administered or VDOT
Funding	undetermined and match undetermined
Strengths	-funding pool set aside in the Transportation Alternatives Program
Weaknesses	undetermined
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management

Philanthropic

<u>Get Outdoors Program</u>	
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -funds projects that increase access to safe open space in Virginia’s communities, especially those that are underserved -eligible activities include planning, capacity building, programming, and shovel-ready with tangible, measurable results -started 2020

Organization eligibility	political subdivisions and governmental entities; tribal governments; education institutions; and non-profit organizations
Availability	-2024 round_ \$175k available
Competitive environment	competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-award range up to \$25k -match undetermined
Strengths	-a wide range of fundable activities -non-profit organizations eligible -easy application process
Weaknesses	-limited funding per project -undetermined competitive environment
Other considerations	-none
<u>Preservation Trust Fund</u>	
Description	-established by VA General Assembly and administered by the administered by the VOF -provides grants for acquisitions, easements, rights of way, and other methods of providing public access to open space including parks, trails, and greenways
Organization eligibility	- any person, organization, or locality with a real estate interest to convey on either public or private land
Availability	FY 2024_ \$1.7MM
Competitive environment	Competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-avg. project in prior rounds ~\$150k -match undetermined
Strengths	-non-profits are eligible -land acquisition for trail expansion and access is eligible
Weaknesses	-title held by VOF -an award not released until due diligence and real estate interest conveyed to VOF
Other considerations	-in most cases, the real estate interest must be conveyed to VOF or a locality -land already under local government ownership may be eligible funding as long as the parcel is not already protected through certain existing deed restrictions
<u>Coastal Resilience & Trees Fund</u>	



Description	-VOF and Wetlands Watch have partnered to offer grant resources to support small-scale resilience projects in Virginia’s Coastal Zone
Organization eligibility	-civic groups, volunteer groups, educational institutions, tribal organizations, local governments, regional planning districts, commissions or regional councils, non-profit organizations, and small businesses -projects must be located in the Coastal Zone (federal designation; Norfolk City eligible)
Availability	-FY2024_indeterminate award pool
Competitive environment	Competitive
Project administrative requirements	self-administered
Funding	-capacity building = \$5k -natural & nature-based infrastructure = \$25k -stewardship = \$10k -no match_advanced funding available
Strengths	-supports green infrastructure improvements -non-profit organizations eligible -straightforward application process -no match requirement and advanced funding available -resilience practices in publicly accessible places eligible
Weaknesses	-limited funding -not directed towards the development of bikeways
Other considerations	-none

US Department of Transportation

<u>Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program</u>	
Description	-connect active transportation networks and spines, accelerating local and regional plans to create safe and convenient walking and biking routes to everyday destinations and to fill gaps in trails between communities.
Organization eligibility	states; local and regional political subdivisions; tribal governments
Availability	~\$45MM currently authorized for the program -application timeline and process not yet released
Competitive environment	competitive (national)
Project administrative requirements	undetermined
Funding	-\$15MM minimum project awards -\$100k for planning and design -match undetermined



Strengths	-targets bike and pedestrian design and construction
Weaknesses	-competition -national in scope -limited funding
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management

**Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program
Regional Partnerships Challenge Notice of Funding Opportunity**

Description	incentivizes partnerships partners to address equitable access and mobility challenges and reduce greenhouse gas emissions reductions
Organization eligibility	two or more political subdivisions, tribal entities, state departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and non-profit, private, and community organizations
Availability	FY2024-2029
Competitive environment	competitive (national)
Project administrative requirements	undetermined
Funding	\$450MM _currently authorized_ 80%/20% match
Strengths	-utilizes a public/private partnership approach -goal of improving access to disadvantaged communities -community engagement
Weaknesses	-competition -national in scope
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management

Safe Streets and Roads for All

Description	-support local initiatives aimed at preventing serious injuries and fatalities -eligible projects include improvements that expand multimodal networks with separated bicycle lanes and improved pedestrian crossing safety features, installing safety enhancements like sidewalks and safer crossings for people walking, biking, or using mobility assistive devices
Organization eligibility	local and regional political subdivisions; tribal governments
Availability	FY2022-2026
Competitive environment	competitive (national)

Project administrative requirements	undetermined
Funding	FY2024_undetermined FY2022, FY2023\$ 1.7B (nationally) -comprehensive safety action plan eligible -planning, design, and development in support of action plan -implement projects and strategies identified in the action plan
Strengths	-integrates roadway safety improvements in conjunction -bikeway/pedestrian trail improvements may be incorporated into design and construction projections
Weaknesses	-competition -national in scope
Other considerations	-involves federal grant regulations and compliance requirements, and financial and risk management