

Executive Summary

This Region 2000 Greenways and Blueways Plan serves several functions. It presents a snapshot of present conditions in the region, details a vision for the development of a network of greenways and blueways that criss-cross the region, and acts as a reference document that can inform discussions throughout the implementation steps.

In the end, the fundamental goal of this document is to provide Region 2000 with a guide for developing a Regional Greenways and Blueways System that helps meet a number of community goals related to connectivity, economic development, natural resource protection, alternative transportation, flood hazard mitigation, and recreational and educational opportunities.

From this set of general goals, four primary principles were extracted from public input and from the guidance of the Greenways and Blueways Steering Committee. These four principles are the driving force behind the design of the system. They are the creation of:

- Connectivity among all the jurisdictions within the region
- Linkages between noteworthy destinations such as residential areas, parks, schools, and cultural sites
- Opportunities for protecting and appreciating natural areas
- Increased access to recreation and exercise opportunities close to neighborhoods

Implementation of this plan starts with the creation of a permanent Greenways and Blueways program within the Region 2000 Regional Commission and with the adoption of the plan by the local governments. Other steps towards making this plan and vision a reality involve developing governance and funding strategies, acquiring the rights to land and finally, constructing the system.

Further detail on each of these actions is offered throughout the plan, with the primary action plan laid out in Chapter 4 (Implementation Program). Chapter 3 (Greenways and Blueways System Recommendations) presents a complete description of the proposed regional system, broken up into 4 phases of implementation.

Phase 1 involves completion of 1 to 2 pilot projects in each of the counties and in the cities of Lynchburg and Bedford. Phase 2 includes 3 to 4 additional projects in each of these communities. These secondary projects go one step further in tying together major regional destinations as well as providing additional natural resource protection and increased recreational opportunities. Phases 3 and 4 complete the system of a primary loop trail, secondary spokes and connectors, and alternative transportation routes along roadways and stream channels.

Following the 4 primary chapters (Introduction, Existing Conditions, System Recommendations, and Implementation Strategies), there is a set of appendices that serve as reference chapters covering financing options, design guidelines, protection and management procedures, and other important topics. A description of the public surveys and breakdowns of the public input can also be found there.

Completion of this Greenways and Blueways system is expected to take many years and is not an easy task. Continued support and leadership among the business community, elected officials, and private citizens' groups will be essential for success, as will the development of a dedicated funding source for system development, management, and administration.

The benefits, however, will be worth the investment of time and money. It is anticipated that the Region 2000 Greenways and Blueways system will become an important component of the vitality of the region - helping citizens lead healthy and active lives, maintaining the natural and aesthetic qualities of the region, providing tourists with additional sightseeing and travelling opportunities, protecting residents from the potential damage that can come from incompatible floodplain development, and positively affecting the value of land resources across the region.