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# Long-Term Management of Fall Line

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Central Virginia Transportation Authority

Fall Line Working Group

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## Introduction

The Richmond region is on a transformative journey towards becoming a beacon of bicycle and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure. The area showcases an ever-growing array of bike lanes, shared-use paths, and streets designed with cyclists and pedestrians in mind, spanning and connecting diverse neighborhoods. Initiatives such as the Virginia Capital Trail – a 52-mile trail connecting Richmond to Jamestown – and adherence to Complete Streets policies underscore the region's commitment to enhancing walkability and bikeability across its urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. The strategic position of Richmond as a pivotal hub for regional transit and active transportation is crucial, particularly considering its connectivity to adjacent counties and regions.

The Fall Line is a regional spine trail planned to traverse seven localities – including five localities in the PlanRVA MPO – for an estimated 43 miles from the Town of Ashland to the City of Petersburg. It will be the north-south spine for the region that will meet with the east-west spine, Virginia Capital Trail, in downtown Richmond. Named for its unique geography along the trail corridor, the Fall Line denotes the area where the Piedmont Plateau and Atlantic Coastal Plain meet, resulting in several rapids and waterfalls. The Fall Line courses through Ashland, Hanover, Henrico, Richmond, Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, and Petersburg.

The purpose of this study is to help inform the process of identifying a long-term management plan for the Fall Line. The options listed in the study are outlined below with examples provided of each as they have been implemented in their respective localities, regions, and states.

### 1) **Foundation/Non-Profit**

- a) Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (Richmond)
- b) Sports Backers (Richmond)
- c) Maymont Foundation (Richmond)
- d) PATH Foundation (Atlanta)

### 2) **Authority**

- a) Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks, Northern Virginia)

### 3) **Coalition**

- a) Circuit Trails Coalition (Philadelphia)
- b) Great Trails State Coalition (North Carolina)

### 4) **Conservancy**

- a) Great Allegheny Passage (GAP)

### 5) **Department of Transportation**

- a) Florida Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program

## Background

The [National Recreation Trails Program](#) defines a trails as: "A trail is a travel way established either through construction or use and is passable by at least one or more of the following, including but not limited to: foot traffic, stock, watercraft, bicycles, in-line skates, wheelchairs, cross-country skis, off-road recreation vehicles such as motorcycles, snowmobiles, ATVs and 4-wheel drive vehicles."

Fall Line trail will be an active transportation route and recreational trail for the Richmond region including many of the previously mentioned non-motorized modes of travel (e-bikes should be permitted). The following sections will help define the five options selected for this study and provide selected examples of each.

## Foundation/Non-Profit

"Organizations that meet the [requirements of Internal Revenue Code section 501\(c\)\(3\)](#) are exempt from federal income tax as **charitable organizations**. In addition, contributions made to charitable organizations by individuals and corporations are deductible under Code section 170," according to the [Internal Revenue Service](#).

"Every exempt charitable organization is classified as either a public charity or a private foundation. Generally, organizations that are classified as public charities are those that (i) are churches, hospitals, qualified medical research organizations affiliated with hospitals, schools, colleges and universities, (ii) have an active program of fundraising and receive contributions from many sources, including the general public, governmental agencies, corporations, private foundations or other public charities, (iii) receive income from the conduct of activities in furtherance of the organization's exempt purposes, or (iv) actively function in a supporting relationship to one or more existing public charities. Private foundations, in contrast, typically have a single major source of funding (usually gifts from one family or corporation rather than funding from many sources) and most have as their primary activity the making of grants to other charitable organizations and to individuals, rather than the direct operation of charitable programs."

**Virginia Capital Trail Foundation** <https://www.virginiacapitaltrail.org/>

Non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

*All information below is quoted from the Virginia Capital Trail website.*

"The Virginia Capital Trail is a 51.7 multi-use, fully-paved trail that runs through four jurisdictions (City of Richmond, Henrico County, Charles City County, and James City County) with dozens of attractions along the way.

“In September 2004, the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF) was formed as a nonpartisan advocacy partner to provide trail expertise, to raise public awareness of the trail, and to seek funding and contributions to enhance and promote the trail.

“Serves as the unified voice of the trail. When the Capital Trail was being built, its supporters realized there was a need for an organization to communicate with all the jurisdictions, government offices, supporters, partners, and Trail users. From this idea the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation was born. Continue the mission to protect, promote, and enhance the Virginia Capital Trail, and to serve as a resource, community builder, and connector to other trails throughout the Commonwealth.”

### **Sports Backers** <https://www.sportsbackers.org/>

Non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

NOTE: While the Richmond Sports Backers do not currently manage a trail, the organization has been a leader in active and healthy living in the Richmond region for more than three decades.

*All information below is quoted from the Sports Backers website.*

“Sports Backers has developed programs and events that are designed to inspire people from all corners of our community to live actively. We achieve this work by focusing on a network of collaborative partnerships with other organizations, businesses, local governments and faith-based institutions. In order to have transformational change, we realize we can’t do it all alone, but rather we work to build a movement of change in our community to make active living the easy choice.

“Sports Backers, through our Bike Walk RVA Program, is the lead organization advocating for the completion of Fall Line, this backbone of biking and walking in the Richmond Region and beyond.

“Sports Backers owns and produces many events throughout the year, to include some of the largest and most successful of their kind in the country. In 2023, the Sports Backers supported 25 other sports tourism events owned and operated by nonprofit organizations in the Richmond region.”

### **Maymont Foundation** <https://maymont.org/>

Non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

*All information below is quoted from the Maymont website.*

NOTE: Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico contribute to Maymont Foundation annual budget – 13% public support budget

“Maymont is a 100-acre historic estate and park, located in Richmond, Virginia, with many unique experiences for all to enjoy. Stroll through the gardens and arboretum, see native wildlife habitats, feed friendly goats, and explore The Robins Nature Center.

“The foundation of the Foundation—then and now—is the desire to keep Maymont beautiful and accessible for every generation to come.”

“The Maymont Foundation is committed to creating experiences that delight, educate and inspire. As the organization entrusted with caring for this important public space, we believe in:

- Remaining true to the Dooleys’ vision of Maymont as a park and museum for everyone, in this and future generations.
- Serving as an exceptional asset to the City of Richmond and its citizens to help establish Richmond among the great cities of this nation.
- Fostering community engagement, citizen leadership and private philanthropy – the three keys to ensuring Maymont’s purpose endures.

## **PATH Foundation (Atlanta) <https://www.pathfoundation.org/> (Trails ATL)**

Non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

*All information below is quoted from the PATH Foundation website.*

“Since its founding in 1991, the PATH Foundation has been reshaping urban areas of the greater metropolitan Atlanta. Through a combination of philanthropic contributions, public funding, and diverse financial support, PATH has creatively repurposed abandoned railroad corridors into picturesque linear green spaces that seamlessly merge neighborhoods to vibrant commercial centers, offering varied transportation alternatives for commuters, joggers, walkers, cyclists, and individuals of all age groups. To date, more than 325 miles of multi-use PATH trails have been built, making an immeasurable difference in Atlanta’s quality of life.

“PATH forms partnerships with local governments to build greenway trails. PATH provides knowledgeable staff and consultants to plan, design, and build trail projects. In some cases, PATH provides matching funds to finance the development of trails. Local governments provide access to state and federal funding, rights-of-way for trails, and in-kind services during trail development.

“As a non-profit organization dependent upon donations, gifts, and support from multiple resources, the PATH Foundation is committed to maintaining a clear record of financial statements and documents. <https://www.pathfoundation.org/financials>

## **Authority**

Virginia Law: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodepopularnames/park-authorities-act/>

### **§ 15.2-5702. Creation of authorities**

A. A locality may by ordinance or resolution, or two or more localities may by concurrent ordinances or resolutions, signify their intention to create a park authority, under an appropriate name and title, containing the word "authority" which shall be a body politic and corporate.

Whenever an authority has been incorporated by two or more localities, any one or more of the localities may withdraw therefrom, but no locality shall be permitted to withdraw from any authority that has outstanding obligations unless United States securities have been deposited for their payment or without unanimous consent of all holders of the outstanding obligations.

B. Each ordinance or resolution shall include articles of incorporation setting forth:

1. The name of the authority and the address of its principal office.
2. The name of each incorporating locality, together with the names, addresses and terms of office of the first members of the board of the authority.
3. The purpose or purposes for which the authority is created.

C. Each participating locality shall cause to be published at least one time in a newspaper of general circulation in its locality, a copy of the ordinance or resolution together with a notice stating that on a day certain, not less than seven days after publication of the notice, a public hearing will be held on such ordinance or resolution. If at the hearing substantial opposition to the proposed park authority is heard, the members of the participating localities' governing bodies may in their discretion call for a referendum on the question of establishing such an authority. The request for a referendum shall be initiated by resolution of the governing body and filed with the clerk of the circuit court for the locality. The court shall order the referendum as provided for in § [24.2-681](#) et seq. Where two or more localities are participating in the formation of an authority the referendum, if any be ordered, shall be held on the same date in all such localities so participating. In any event if ten percent of the registered voters in such locality file a petition with the governing body at the hearing calling for a referendum such governing body shall request a referendum as herein provided.

D. Having specified the initial plan of organization of the authority, and having initiated the program, the localities organizing such authority may, from time to time, by subsequent ordinance or resolution, after public hearing, and with or without referendum, specify further parks to be acquired and maintained by the authority, and no other parks shall be acquired or maintained by the authority than those so specified. However, if the governing bodies of the

localities fail to specify any project or projects to be undertaken, and if the governing bodies do not disapprove any project or projects proposed by the authority, then the authority shall be deemed to have all the powers granted by this chapter.

## **Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks, W&OD Trail)**

<https://www.novaparks.com/>

Established by Virginia law: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodepopularnames/park-authorities-act/>

### **§ 15.2-5704.1. Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority**

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority is authorized to acquire, either by gift or purchase, any real property or interests therein that the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority considers necessary or desirable to provide public use areas as identified in the Goose Creek Scenic River Report published in 1975.

*All information below is quoted from the NOVA Parks website.*

- Organized by the Virginia Park Authorities Act in 1959 as the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA). Changed to NOVA Parks in 2014. Represents counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, and Fairfax.
- NOVA Parks staff, volunteer board members appointed from each jurisdiction and many friends of the regional parks working together have preserved over 12,000 acres of the rolling and wooded Virginia countryside for you and created a priceless legacy for future generations.
- Serves approximately two million citizens. By pooling their funds, these local governments find that each dollar they contribute to NOVA Parks is multiplied by contributions from other member jurisdictions and sometimes augmented even more by state and federal grants and private donations.
- W&OD (dev. 1974-1988): Often called the “skinniest park in Virginia,” Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad Regional Park is a paved trail between Shirlington and Purcellville, Virginia. 45-mile route along the former roadbed of the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad, which runs through the urban heartland and into the Virginia countryside. Equestrians can ride the adjacent 32-mile gravel horse trail. The W&OD trail has multiple parking areas, enabling you to jump on and off the trail at various points.
- “Regional parks may cross the jurisdictional boundaries of two or more localities, may be too costly to be undertaken by any one jurisdiction alone or may have special characteristics which appeal to the broad-based population of the entire region.”

## **Coalition**

According to a guidance document written by [American Trails](#), “A trails coalition is a private collaboration of diverse trail organizations/interests that work together to find common ground and primarily address an array of local, regional, statewide, and/or federal trail programs, issues, needs, and solutions. Typically, a coalition may work with local governments, their state legislature, and federal legislators either in a lobbying capacity or sharing of information with local, state, or federal decision makers. A coalition is a network of organizations, and sometimes just regular people that work together to achieve a common greater goal.”

### **Circuit Trails Coalition (Philadelphia) <https://circuittrails.org/>**

*All information below is quoted from the Circuit Trails website.*

“The Circuit Trails Coalition is a collaboration of non-profit organizations, foundations, and agencies working to advance completion of a connected network of trails – the Circuit Trails – in the Greater Philadelphia region. Their goal is to raise the profile of bicycle and pedestrian trails and their public benefits so that building the Circuit Trails becomes a significant regional priority.

“The Circuit Coalition (renamed the Circuit Trails Coalition in 2016) was created in 2012 to coordinate and advocate for the completion of the Circuit (renamed the Circuit Trails in 2016), Greater Philadelphia’s Regional Trail Network in nine counties, including five in Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) and four in New Jersey (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer).

“The Coalition was created to follow up on successful collaborative efforts amongst multiple organizations, which working closely were able to secure a \$23 million USDOT TIGER grant in 2009 and create the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Regional Trail Fund in late 2010. Because of the success of these efforts, a need for an ongoing collaboration was identified (instead of the previous haphazard or opportunistic collaborative efforts).

“The Circuit Coalition partners worked together for over a year to coordinate the official creation of the Circuit, which was defined as 750 miles of multi-county, multi-state, connected trails; and of the Circuit Trails Coalition, which was composed of over 35 member organizations in 2012.”

### **Great Trails State Coalition (North Carolina) <https://greattrailsstatecoalition.org/>**

*All information below is quoted from the Great Trails State website.*

“A broad-based group of diverse organizations, including nonprofits, local government, industry partners, and other supporters advocating for increased state investment in all types of muscle-powered trails statewide including hiking, paddle, mountain bike, equestrian, and paved.



“The Coalition’s goal is to secure sustained state investment in trail projects across the state, through appropriations for trail programs and projects. There are more than 70 members as of 2023. They were first successful in convincing the state’s General Assembly to designate 2023 as North Carolina Year of the Trail. They also convinced their General Assembly to appropriate \$29.5 million for 12 authorized State Trails.

“[NCDOT’s Great Trails State Plan](#), published in 2021, is a plan to connect all 100 NC counties by trails. State funding will provide matching dollars for significant federal funds and accelerate investment-ready projects to completion, benefiting citizens and the outdoor recreation economy.

## **Conservancy**

*“Nonprofit conservation organization” - non-governmental nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is conservation of open space or natural resources.*

### **Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) <http://www.gaptrail.org/>**

*All information below is quoted from the Great Allegheny Passage website.*

“The Great Allegheny Passage is a 150-mile rail-trail between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Cumberland, Maryland. Together with the C&O Canal towpath, the GAP is part of a 335-mile route between Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C. GAP is owned by a mix of public and nonprofit entities, including Allegany County, Somerset County, Ohio State Park, the Regional Trail Corporation, Allegheny County, the City of Pittsburgh, and Point State Park, each of which appoints a member to the [GAP Conservancy](#)’s board of directors. Also see more about the conservancy’s [partner organizations](#).

## **Department of Transportation**

Another long-term management option for trails in Virginia could be handled by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). An example of a state DOT managing a trail network is the Florida Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program in the state of Florida.

### **Florida Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program**

**<http://floridasuntrail.com>**

*All information below is quoted from the Sun Trail Program website or FDOT documents.*

“The Florida Shared-Use Non-motorized (SUN) Trail Program was established in 2015 pursuant to [Section 339.81](#), Florida Statutes (F.S.) in 2015. Section 335.065, F.S., bicycle and pedestrian ways along state roads and transportation facilities, authorizes FDOT to use the State

Transportation Trust Fund (STTF) to support the establishment of a statewide system of interconnected multi-use trails for bicyclists and pedestrians in coordination with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP). FDOT receives an annual allocation from the redistribution of new vehicle tag revenues pursuant to Section 320.072, F.S., Motor Vehicle Licenses.

“[FDOT’s primary statutory responsibility](#) is to coordinate the planning and development of a safe, viable, and balanced state transportation system serving all regions of the state, and to assure the compatibility of all components, including multimodal facilities.

“The SUN Trail network includes a combination of existing and conceptual trails. As envisioned, portions of the SUN Trail network are within the FDOT right-of-way (on-system), other portions are on other lands (off-system). FDOT Design Manual Topic 625-000-002 (FDM) [Chapter 224] defines on-system SUP. FDOT Office of Design Topic 625-000-015 – Manual of Uniform Minimum Standards for Design, Construction and Maintenance for Streets and Highways (Florida Greenbook) [Chapter 9] defines off-system SUP. Not all trails are within the SUN Trail network. Implementing projects in the SUN Trail network increases the reliability of Florida’s transportation system.

“The department is committed to building a transportation system that not only fits the current needs of Florida’s residents and visitors but also enhances mobility throughout the state to accommodate its consistent and rapid growth.”

Components funded through the SUN Trail program [will not include](#):

- Sidewalks, nature trails, or loop trails wholly within a single park or natural area; or
- On-road facilities (such as bicycle lanes of routes other than on-road facilities that are no longer than one-half mile connecting two or more nonmotorized trails) if the provision of non-road facilities is infeasible and if such on-road facilities are signed and marked for nonmotorized use.

SUN Trail funds are for the transportation element of the standard trail. Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Benches, trail furniture, seating areas, or tables;
- Bicycle racks or lockers, bicycle air or repair stations;
- Buildings or enclosed structures, restrooms, bathhouses, comfort stations, wayside structures, shade structures, concession stands, overlooks, fishing platforms, boat ramps or launches, transit or ride share facilities, shelters, gazebos, or picnic pavilions;
- Kiosks, interpretive panels, or placemaking signs (safety controls are an allowable cost);
- Landscaping (trail stabilization is an allowable cost);
- Litter or recycle receptacles, or doggie bag dispensers;
- Parking areas, trailheads, or camping areas;
- Playgrounds or playing fields, fitness equipment, or fitness structures;
- Promotional, marketing, or educational materials;
- Sculptures, monuments, or art; and

- Water fountains, splash zones, spigots, showers, water features, or irrigation equipment.

## Proposed solution

Fall Line needs a long-term maintenance plan. The trail corridor connects seven different localities, but an organization should be at the heart of the plan to bring them all together and keep them all together. Five different management options were presented in this study.

- Foundation/Non-Profit
- Authority
- Coalition
- Conservancy
- Department of Transportation

The option most familiar to the Richmond region is the Foundation/Non-Profit option, embodied locally by the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF). The VCTF was founded in 2004, 11 years before the official completion of the trail. Because of the success of the Virginia Capital Trail, using the VCTF as a good example of leadership and advocacy is warranted. From the inception of the foundation, the board helped advocate for the trail; seek funding; work with the Commonwealth of Virginia; VDOT; the counties of James City, Charles City, and Henrico, and the City of Richmond to help establish the right of way for the trail and the promotion of the process publicly. The foundation was essential in helping curate the successful trail we have today. Since the trail was dedicated in October 2015 the VCTF has continued to advocate for the trail, continue the promotion, steer the maintenance and further the development of necessities along the trail corridor. Those necessities include trail signage, restrooms & water, trailheads, repair stations, and more. The foundation also brings events to the Capital Trail, large volunteer efforts to clean along the trail, and encourages residents to participate in making the trail a great place to visit for everyone.

It cannot be ignored that while VCTF has experience managing the Capital Trail, the Richmond Sports Backers have been the advocacy leaders for the Fall Line from its inception. Sports Backers took the lead regionally to think beyond the former Ashland Trolley Line corridor – Ashland to Richmond – and pushed regional localities to consider a much longer trail that roughly followed the Route 1 corridor. This envisioned route would connect Ashland and Petersburg. Sports Backer and their board helped lobby the office of then-Governor Ralph Northam for the funding of the Ashland to Petersburg Trail Study. Sports Backers also developed a plan for naming Fall Line; built a website ([falllineva.org](http://falllineva.org)); created a branding and marketing plan for the trail; organized multiple visits to other trails to inspire the vision for Fall Line; founded a Friends of Fall Line working group; and eventually developed a [Vision Plan for Fall Line](#). Managing a trail would be a new endeavor for Sports Backers, but the organization's success leadership to this point also merits great consideration.

The NOVA Parks example of a regional authority would be something new for the Richmond region. It should merit some consideration as a long-term maintenance option. The need to establish such an authority under Virginia law may, however, present an obstacle and perhaps complicate and even delay the process to provide a long-term maintenance solution. The W&OD Trail is a major active transportation route for Northern Virginia and the authority, while it is founded as a recreational entity, manages the trail for the region.

Consideration of a coalition for the long-term management of Fall Line does not seem to be a realistic option. Same can be said for a conservancy. Both options appear to be more appropriate approach for managing a collection of trail organizations as a unifying umbrella group. While there are advantages for unified advocacy and partnerships with both options, guidance for maintenance does not appear to be as strong.

Lastly, having a Department of Transportation take the long-term maintenance role for an active transportation network does seem worthy of consideration. Just like with the authority option, it would likely take legislation to establish VDOT as the proper authority to manage the trails and to dedicate a larger budget. While VDOT currently does maintain the Virginia Capital Trail and many other shared use trails in Virginia, the overall enhancement of those trails lies largely with the localities in which the trails have been established and the variety of ways those localities have chosen to provide upkeep beyond the basics provided by VDOT.

## **Conclusion**

Five different management options were presented in this study as a long-term solution for the overall maintenance and management of Fall Line. Of the five options, the most viable and potentially most expedient option would be to select a foundation or non-profit to take on that role. The two current viable non-profit candidates with known interest in managing Fall Line are the Richmond Sports Backers and the Virginia Capital Trail Foundations. Both of those entities would likely need to bring in more funding and also hire more staff and expand the services of their organizations to take on more leadership responsibility for the trail. The leaders of the seven localities that are a part of the Fall Line corridor should be the ones tasked with selecting and deciding on a solution for the long-term maintenance of the trail.