

NC 280 Multi-Use Path – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the 280 Multi-Use Path?

A proposed 15-mile paved pathway, parallel but separate from NC 280 and extending from Westfeldt Park (near the Asheville Airport) to Pisgah Forest at the Davidson River entrance to the National Forest where it will connect with Brevard's Shared-Use Path. This multi-use path would provide bicyclists, runners, walkers and people with strollers and in wheelchairs an alternative and safe route to work, school and shopping and for exercising and recreation. Multi-use paths are also called shared-use paths.

2. How did this idea get started?

A joint study was commissioned for the Town of Mills River and Transylvania County in 2013 to investigate the feasibility of providing active transportation facilities (walking / biking pathways) along NC 280 from Ferncliff Park Drive to Pisgah Forest. The French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Organization, Land of Sky Rural Planning Organization, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy, Town of Mills River and private donors provided funding for the study.

A consultant team examined the corridor; interviewed residents, land and business owners; held public meetings; and gathered other information to complete this study. The Mills River Town Council passed a resolution supporting the study and its recommendations in June 2014. Transylvania County passed a resolution in March 2017 to support engaging the community about this potential path and to identify funding for engineering analysis to refine the costs and potential location alternatives for the multi-use path.



3. What are some good examples of multi-use paths along highways?

Many examples exist across NC and the U.S. The Brevard Shared-Use Path parallels US 64 for some of its length. Many communities along the North Carolina coast have multi-use paths along with other bicycle and pedestrian facilities. A few examples of places with multi-use paths along highways are Emerald Isle (11 miles), Corolla (6 miles) and the Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach area. The Swamp Rabbit Trail that connects Travelers Rest with Greenville in

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South Carolina is another example of a multi-use path that runs alongside a major road for some of its length.

4. How will the trail impact safety?

Installing pedestrian and bicycle facilities directly improves safety by reducing the risk of pedestrian-automobile and bicycle-automobile crashes, and related injuries and fatalities. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities enable more people to walk and bike because they feel safer on these dedicated facilities. It is especially important for non-drivers (children, teens, low-income residents, etc.) to have safe and reliable places to walk and bike. (WalkBikeNC Plan, 2013, www.walkbikenc.com)



SOME FACTS:

Almost 200 people are killed each year in NC by being struck by an automobile. NC is ranked 42nd and 46th for pedestrian and bicyclist fatality rates per capita. (*Alliance for Biking and Walking, 2014 Benchmarking Report*)

5. Will the 280 Multi-Use Path provide economic benefits to our communities?

There are many potential economic benefits of investing in and developing this multi-use path. This public pathway will benefit existing businesses by providing more ways for customers and employees to access the businesses. New businesses may also be attracted to the area, in part because of the community amenities and transportation options. The 280 Multi-Use Path is an important part of the quality of life “package” that Henderson and Transylvania County economic developers present to new industries.

Longer trails/paths in other nearby localities, like the Swamp Rabbit Trail that connects Travelers Rest to Greenville and the Virginia Creeper Trail that connects Abingdon, Virginia to the national forest, have demonstrated significant economic benefits to their communities. A multi-year study is currently underway looking at the Brevard shared-use path, to look at who is using the path, how they are using the path and how much money they spend on goods and services while they are using the path.

Economic Impact of the Swamp

Rabbit Trail: Over 500,000 people used the Swamp Rabbit Trail in 2013, with an estimated economic impact of \$6.7 million from just the tourists who used the trail (25% of total users). A majority of the retail businesses along or near the trail reported increases in sales and revenue from 10% to as high as 75%. (http://greenvillerec.com/swamp_rabbit/)

6. How else will the 280 Multi-Use Path benefit my community?

North Carolina is currently ranked 5th worst in the nation for childhood obesity and 65% of adults are either overweight or obese. Communities with safe facilities for walking and bicycling provide more opportunities for people to be active, exercise and maintain a healthy weight. The 280 Multi-Use Path will provide safe places for families to walk and bike which will help us keep our children and grandchildren in our community. Other benefits include increased

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options for mobility, potentially less vehicle traffic and improved air quality as more people use the multi-use path.

For more than 31 years, **Walking Trails and Paths have been #1 amenity** preferred by people seeking a new home in the Carolinas (*CarolinaLiving.com lifestyle surveys*).

7. Who owns the property where the pathway is planned?

For most of its length, the pathway would be built within the existing NC 280 right-of-way, which is owned by North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT). The right-of-way width varies throughout the corridor, and further engineering analysis needs to be done to determine the exact location of the path. The path will be designed to fit into the right-of-way to the greatest extent possible.

8. How much will it cost to build the Multi-Use Path?

The cost depends on the terrain, width of the trail and amenities. The 2014 study for the NC 280 Multi-Use Path recommends a 10-foot wide asphalt pathway with two-foot shoulders suitable for bicycle and pedestrian use. The study estimates the path will cost an average of \$500,000 per mile to construct. It also recommends safety and crossing improvements at three intersections at a cost of \$50,000 each and streetscape improvements at the north and south ends and in the center of Mills River.

9. Who will pay for the Multi-Use Path?

Funding would likely come from a multitude of private, nonprofit and public sources. Typically, construction costs are paid with 80% federal monies (controlled and provided by NC DOT) and a 20% local match representing a mixture of private, business, nonprofit and local governmental monies.

10. Who would operate and provide security for the pathway?

Local governments typically provide for maintenance and security along multi-use paths. Some communities form “friends” groups who provide volunteers and donated materials and/or funds to assist with maintenance and beautification.

11. How will this pathway affect property values?

Numerous studies have been conducted looking at new trails in different locations around the U.S., suggesting that the property value impact of new trails on nearby residential properties is something on the order of an additional 4 to 7 percent. (WalkBikeNC Plan, Economic Impact Analysis, Section 9.5, pages 31-32)

12. What is my liability if someone comes onto my property?

Anyone who crosses onto your property is trespassing and you are not held liable for unintentional injuries. In addition, trail use rules will be posted and will include statements that violators will be prosecuted.

13. If my driveway crosses the multi-use path, do I have to stop before crossing the path?

Just like with a sidewalk, you need to look and see if anyone is on the path and is approaching your driveway. If so, stop and let them pass before moving on.

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14. Where would the first phase begin?

There are active efforts to start at both ends – in the north, Henderson County is working on connecting Westfeldt Park across the French Broad River to the future Kunz Farm Park by a separate bike/pedestrian bridge; in the south, a redesign is planned for the intersection of Highways 64, 280 and 276 in Pisgah Forest. Other phases will fill in sections between these ends, and eventually form a complete, connected pathway.



A rendering of what the intersection of NC280 and Fanning Bridge Rd. at Westfeldt Park might look like.

15. How does this project fit into other efforts to connect local greenways/paths?

Henderson County is planning to conduct a feasibility study to look at connecting the existing Oklawaha Greenway (Hendersonville to Berkeley Mills) to Westfeldt Park. In Transylvania County, Brevard has plans to continue developing the City's bicycle network that currently goes into Pisgah Forest and will connect to this project. Transylvania County has just started developing a Bicycle Plan.

16. Where can I learn more?

You can read the study and other informational materials and look at conceptual maps at planning.transylvaniacounty.org and www.millsriver.org. Public meetings and events related to the NC 280 Multi-Use Path will be posted on these websites. You can also call the Town of Mills River at 828-890-2901 or Transylvania County's Planning Department at 828-884-3205 if you have questions.

There are many other resources that provide general information about walking/biking paths as well as case studies. The American Trails organization probably has the most comprehensive list on their website – www.americantrails.org – on their Resources pages. The NC statewide plan for Walking and Bicycling Facilities, *WalkBikeNC*, has a wealth of information and resources – <https://www.ncdot.gov/bikeped/walkbikenc/>.

You can read about the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville County, SC and about the economic and other impacts it has had on the surrounding communities here - <http://greenvillerec.com/swamprabbit/>. Reports from the study currently being conducted on the shared use-path in Brevard are available here – <https://itre.ncsu.edu/focus/bike-ped/SUP-Economic-Impacts/>. (NCDOT project "Evaluating the Economic Contribution of Shared Use Paths in NC")