MINUTES
ECUSTA TRAIL ADVISORY BOARD 2.0
Wednesday, September 30, 2026 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Co-Chair, Council Member Dean Lytle, Co-Chair, Council Member Maureen Copelof, Mayor, Ex-Officio Larry Chapman, Transylvania County Commissioner Dee Dee Perkins, Transylvania Development Authority Mark Tooley, Friends of Ecusta Trail Shelia Carland, Transylvania Economic Alliance Doug Miller, Heart of Brevard Kathy Klepfer, Conserving Carolina Meredith Carli, At-Large Appointment Joe Moore, At Large Appointment
Absent:	Chris Burns, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager David Todd, Assistant City Manager Paul Ray, Planning Director Aaron Bland, Assistant Planning Director Edievith Gass, Board Clerk
Guests:	Tad Fogel, Friends of the Ecusta Trail Laura Rice, Director, Friends of the Ecusta Trail Christy Staudt, McAdams Lonnie Watkins, NCDOT John Ditillo John Janier Karl Klepfer Harvey Sankey Debbie Tellman

I. Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Aaron Baker at 3:31 PM, following a brief welcome to all attendees.

II. Certification of Quorum

A quorum was established and certified by Board Clerk Edievith Gass.

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III. Approval of Agenda

Upon a motion by D. Perkins and a second by D. Lytle, the agenda was approved.

IV. Approval of Minutes

A. Draft Minutes – May 27, 2026 (Amended)
B. Draft Minutes – July 29, 2026

Chair A. Baker called for corrections or alterations to the minutes of the two previous meetings. There being none, D. Miller moved and D. Perkins seconded to approve the minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

V. Public Comment

None

VI. Unfinished Business

None.

VII. New Business

A. Introducing New ETAB At-Large Member

Joe Moore was welcomed as a new committee member following City Council approval. A. Baker noted that Mr. Moore is a former city manager for Brevard with significant local infrastructure expertise.

J. Moore shared his appreciation for returning to the board and serving the community. He noted that this specific project marks the realization of a concept he initially presented to the board in 2012, which aimed to transition the local infrastructure from a traditional mill culture toward an economy oriented around woods and water. He thanked the board for the opportunity to contribute his expertise to seeing this vision come to fruition.

Committee members introduced themselves, including representatives from the City of Brevard, City Council, Henderson County, Conserving Carolina, Friends of the Ecusta Trail, and planning staff to welcome Moore to the group.

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B. Ecusta Trail: 65% Design Phase Cost Estimate

The committee reviewed the financial and design status of the Ecusta Trail project, confirmed it remains within budget, and discussed construction timing, amenities, maintenance, and future policy issues.

The City Manager, W. Hooper, presented the latest constructions cost projections for the Ecusta Trail, which is currently estimated at $26,220,000. This figure includes recent scope changes such as transitioning from timber to concrete bridge decking, installing new stormwater pipes, and a bridge replacement near Enon Church Road.

W. Hooper confirmed that while the project remains within budget, restrooms and parking facilities are currently excluded. He proposed a strategy to utilize the approximately $2.4 million surplus to fund these amenities after the main contract is finalized, thereby avoiding complications with grant requirements.

Furthermore, Hooper recommended that any strategy to incorporate bathrooms or parking should be executed only after the main project is out for bid in early 2024 to protect against inflation and cost escalation. Potential sites identified for these amenities include Crab Creek and Pisgah Labs.

W. Hooper concluded his presentation by acknowledging the patience shown by ETAB, City Council, trail stakeholders, and the public during the project's recent quiet phase. He reported that the quiet phase is concluding and expressed strong confidence in the project's forward momentum. He noted that the project would become increasingly visible in the months ahead and welcomed excitement from the community.

Finally, W. Hooper opened the floor for board discussion, introducing City staff and project experts to answer questions and gather feedback.

Design Progress and Timeline:

L. Watkins and C. Staudt provided technical details regarding the 65% design plans:

- The estimate includes built-in contingencies (5% for structures/utilities and 20% for roadway).
- Current revenues show a surplus that could potentially fund amenities if managed correctly.
- The project is currently expected to be let in July of next year, with construction potentially beginning in August; staff are working to accelerate the schedule.
- Design is expected to progress from 65% to 90% and then 100%, with permits and final plans targeted for completion by the end of the year or February, depending on the letting schedule.

- Cost estimates remain subject to changes in wetland mitigation, geotechnical work, utility relocations, protected-bat requirements, asphalt, steel, and other market conditions.

W. Hooper outlined the strategy to address the $536,849 project funding gap previously raised by Aaron. The proposed plan includes allocating $450,000 from the Friends of Ecusta Trail (FOET), leaving an $86,000 balance. Hooper advised D. Perkins that he will request a second tranche of funding from the Tourism Development Authority (TDA) the following week to address the remainder.

Future Planning:

J. Moore raised concerns regarding long-term maintenance responsibilities between the City of Brevard and NCDOT, and emergency response coordination for such significant infrastructure.

It was clarified that while the City manages most maintenance, NCDOT will remain responsible for specific items like traffic signals on pavement surfaces.

D. Miller requested to reserve time at a future meeting to review the project numbers in greater detail and provide updated budget figures as design documents and estimates are refined.

M. Tooley suggested discussing the e-bike regulations and enforcement to address emerging trends in trails usage safety.

Before adjournment, the board was notified of Meredith Carli's resignation. She will be temporarily relocating to Vermont for a new job opportunity.

VIII. Next Meeting

A. Baker confirmed that the committee will reconvene for its next monthly regular meeting on Wednesday, October 28th, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

IX. Adjourn

On a motion by D. Lytle, seconded by D. Perkins and carried unanimously, A. Baker adjourned the meeting at 4:14 p.m.

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Aaron Baker, Chair

Minutes Approved Date-_____

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Edievith Gass, Board Secretary

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