



TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

OAKLAND TO HERRINGTON MANOR STATE PARK

Fall 2025



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this feasibility study is to determine the best alignment to connect the trail networks between the town of Oakland, MD (the town) and Herrington Manor State Park (the park). Linking the two trail networks would provide western Maryland with a large, contiguous network. The idea for this connection has been discussed for several decades, as linking the two trail networks would provide western Maryland with a large, contiguous trail network.

Existing Trail  Roadway  Lake, River, or Stream 

Herrington Manor State Park has a network of trails that connect to a larger trail system within the Garrett State Forest and Swallow Falls State Park. These trails are maintained by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and are a mix of wider, asphalt trails, as well as single-track, natural surface trails.

TOWN OF OAKLAND

Garrett County is Maryland's westernmost county and Oakland is the County seat and largest town, with a 2023 population estimated at 2,043 inhabitants, according to the U.S. Census.

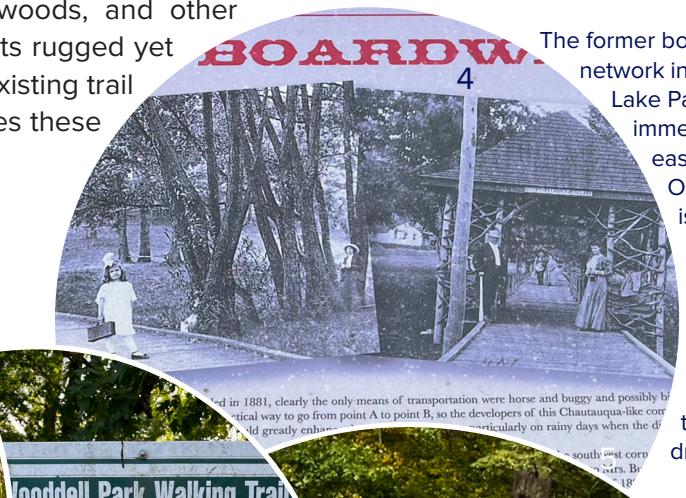
The Town has several transportation and recreational trails connecting to parks, natural areas, and shops.



STUDY PROCESS

EXPLORING TRAILS IN GARRETT COUNTY

Trails are an asset of out-sized importance in Western Maryland and Garrett County. They act as recreation venues for locals and visitors alike, they provide a safe and scenic transportation option to key destinations, and they provide access to the lakes, woods, and other natural areas that give Western Maryland its rugged yet placid identity. This study is rooted in the existing trail network in the area and considers who uses these trails and how they use them.



The former boardwalk network in Mountain Lake Park (4), immediately east of Oakland, is part of Garrett County's long history of trails as a major tourist draw.



Mountain biking is a popular activity on the trails of Garrett County. Broadford Park in Oakland has dedicated mountain biking trails (5), the local high school has a mountain biking team, and there are recreational mountain biking clubs in Garrett County.



Trails in Garrett County serve several different primary purposes. There are boardwalk trails, such as the Loch Lynn Wetland Trail (1), that allow users to experience a sensitive eco-system without disturbing it; there are low-difficulty walking trails in local parks to help residents get exercise, such as the Woodell Park Walking Trail (2); and there are trails like the Fort Alice and Oakland Heritage Trails (3) that connect people to the unique and important history of the region.

PREVIOUS STUDIES AND PLANS

A trail connection between the town and the park has been considered for years, and has been referenced in trail studies and plans at least as far back as 1992 when the Maryland Greenways Atlas cites a potential greenway corridor along the Scenic and Wild River section of the Youghiogheny. A Baltimore Sun article from 1964 cite boy scout troops, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) members, and even early settlers as building and maintaining trails in the study area.

The Garrett County Recreational Trails Plan Update (2003)

This update to the original 1999-2000 Recreational Trails Plan, this plan included extensive desktop analysis and public outreach. As part of a recommended route between Oakland and Friendsville, this document recommends the connection between the town and the park be made via an on-road bicycle facility. This alternative was further defined, analyzed, and presented to the public as part of this feasibility planning effort.

The Eastern Continental Divide Loop Trail Master Plan (2011)

Originally formed in 1999, and formally organized in 2008, Garrett County Trails is a nonprofit, volunteer advocacy organization that is dedicated to the planning, development, and stewardship of trails in Garrett County.

In 2011, Garrett County Trails published a plan for the Eastern Continental Divide Loop (ECDL), which “is envisioned as a 150 mile multi-user trail through the heart of Garrett County that creates a connection between existing trails, and also connects to larger trail networks outside the county.”¹

The idea of the ECDL had been conceptualized as early as 2002 and the connection between Oakland and Herrington Manor State Park is called out as a key segment in the Youghiogheny River Corridor portion of the system, which runs

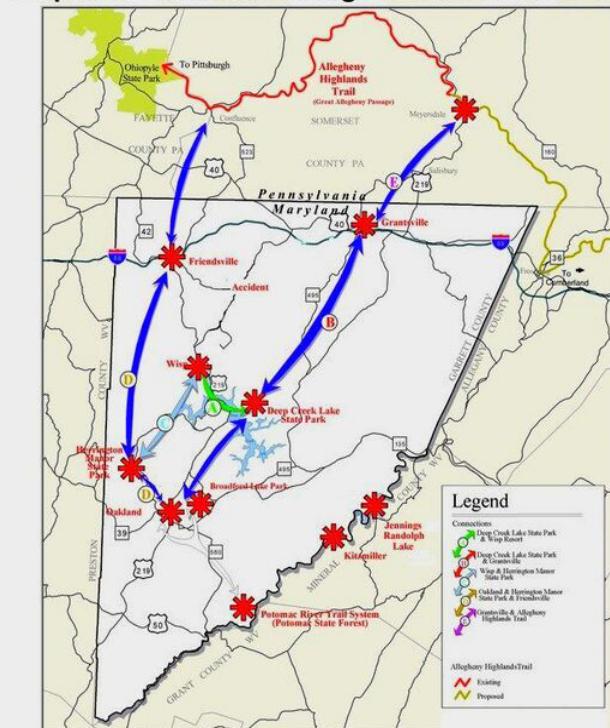
approximately between Oakland and Friendsville, MD. Unlike the 2003 Garrett County Recreational Trails Plan update, this segment is not specified in terms of facility type or specific route - it is only noted as an important segment for the overall regional trail network.

Youghiogheny Scenic River Trail Study (2022)

In 2022, a private study was produced by a local trail advocate to connect Oakland and Herrington Manor State Park - this study analyzed several options and included letters of support to pursue the trail from key stakeholders, which included some of the local land owners and the Mayor of the Town of Oakland.

This study marked several issues pertinent to this study, including environmental, regulatory, and coordination considerations. Additionally, this 2022 study recorded outreach efforts with private landowners in the area, indicating potential reception and attitudes for this feasibility study.

Eastern Continental Divide Loop Proposed Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail



The ECDL map shows the connection between the Park and the Town as a small, but key segment in the overall plan.

Source: Garrett Trails

PUBLIC AND AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

Public and agency input was key to this study to know the positions and constraints of agency partners, and to gauge interests and preferences of the public. The project team had several conversations with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), one of which took place on a DNR-owned parcel, and the rest of which occurred via virtual meeting.

The Garrett County staff and the project team hosted two rounds of public engagement that included both informational and interactive feedback elements. Engagement occurred via attendance at regular town meetings in surrounding communities, a public open house, and via online resources.

Agency Consultation and Feedback

In Fall 2024, representatives from DNR and the project team met on the western bank of the Youghiogheny River, just over the Herrington Manor Road Bridge from Oakland. The group toured the area on the western side of the Youghiogheny, focusing on a parcel of land owned by DNR. DNR representatives provided insights on surrounding land owners, their processes for building and maintaining trails on their property,



Field tours with DNR proved valuable for the feasibility study - knowing the agency's preferences and processes allow the County to propose a trail that can be built and maintained for years to come.

and the agency's capacity for additional facilities.

During the concept development process in the Spring of 2025, DNR provided input on the viability of potential trail alignments, noting overlays of sensitive species and legislatively restricted areas.

Public Outreach and Response

Public engagement occurred in two rounds. The first round took place in Fall 2024 and presented the potential alignment concepts as well as garnered feedback on what the residents of Garrett County would like to see in a potential trail. In-person presentations were given at regular meetings in the towns of Oakland, Loch Lynn Heights, and Mountain Lake Park, as well as directly to relevant cohorts, such as mountain biking groups and clubs. In addition to the in-person outreach, an Esri Storymap was created to provide background and context for the project and hosted an embedded survey to better understand the desires and values of the public in regards to a new trail.

The second round of public engagement occurred in early 2025 and consisted of outlining the concept development process and the unveiling of the refined trail alignment. At this stage, a new Esri Storymap was created to update the public on project progress and a public open house was hosted to present results and garner feedback for the final recommendation.

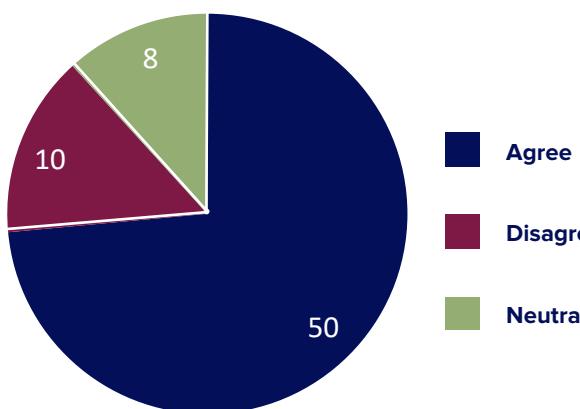


The public workshop was held at the Oakland Volunteer Fire Department and provided a venue for local residents, interest groups, and landowners to provide their input regarding the proposed trail alignment.

Key Findings

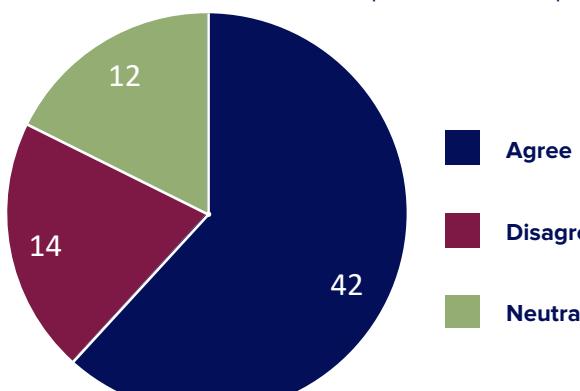
Garrett County built an initial survey to better understand the priorities and preferences of the trail-using public. The survey was embedded within the storymap, shared online, and presented at in-person community meetings.

The initial public survey prompted the public with 11 questions asking about their background and preferred trail experience. The survey received **76 total responses** in addition to longer-form feedback at the public presentations at the town council meetings. The main takeaways from the first round of engagement was the desire for a natural trail experience that connects to regional destinations, provides an easily accessible trailhead with placemaking, and has as few interactions with vehicles as possible.



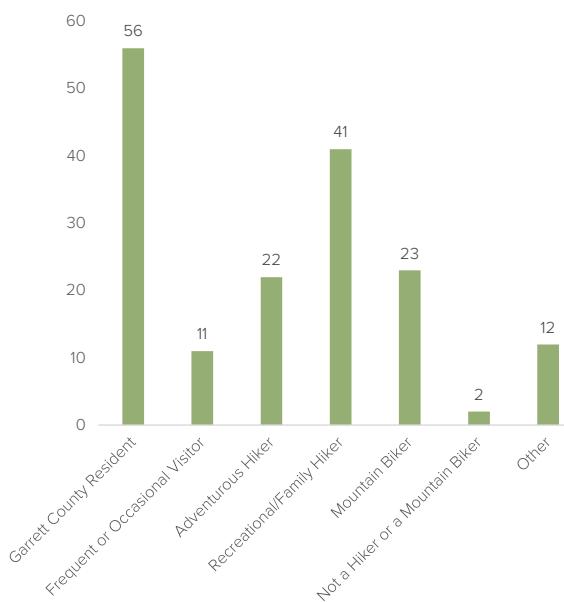
In a trail, I value access to native and natural features.

Over two-thirds of survey respondents and about three-quarters of question respondents said they valued access to native and natural features as part of the trail experience.



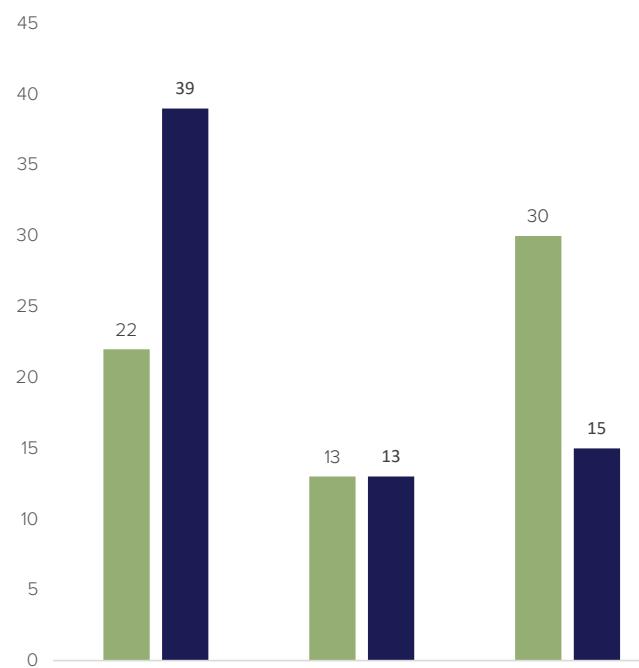
In a trail, I value connectivity to regional destinations.

The majority of respondents stated that they valued regional connectivity, showing general support for the impetus of the project - to connect to other trail networks in the region.



I am a...

Among respondents, over three-quarters identified as Garrett County residents, while close to 15% identified as a frequent or occasional visitor to Garrett County. About one-third of respondents reported being a mountain biker and over half said they were a recreational and/or family hiker.



In a trail, I value adventure and challenge.

In a trail, I value comfortable slopes & easy grade changes.

Respondents showed general support for both adventurous and challenging trails, as well as easier slopes and grade changes. With careful consideration, both elements can be incorporated into a trail.

CREATING THE CONNECTION

WHERE AND HOW TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES

When beginning to develop all of the possible trail concepts, the County and the project team considered key factors for where to begin siting alignments. While the next stages of consideration require more factors, when first beginning to look at where this connection might exist, the following factors are considered starting places.

Open Spaces, Forests, and Vacant Land

Trails can be sited in forests with relatively low levels of disturbance as compared to any other type of development. Other open space and vacant plots are also a good starting place as they are likely to offer lower impedance than parcels with buildings or other facilities present.

Publicly-Owned Parcels

Publicly-owned parcels can be pieces of land owned by a town, city, county, or state or federal agency. These parcels can be a great place to look to site a trail as there is less need for land acquisition required. Public parcels also tend to be larger than private ones, which reduces the amount of stakeholder negotiation required.

Supportive Land Owners

Supportive land owners in the study area can be another place to begin looking to plan a trail alignment to reduce soft costs and negotiation efforts. Thanks to the previous study in 2022 and conversations surrounding this segment on the ECDL, some supportive land owners were identified early in the study process.

Utility Corridors

Utility corridors can be a great place to begin looking to site a trail as they tend to be clear-cut, relatively even and linear, long, and not suited for other types of development.

Right-of-Way

Surplus right-of-way alongside roads and railroads can be used to create trail facilities. These facilities have the advantage of already existing as connections and are likely graded and aligned to be as flat and straight as possible in the landscape.



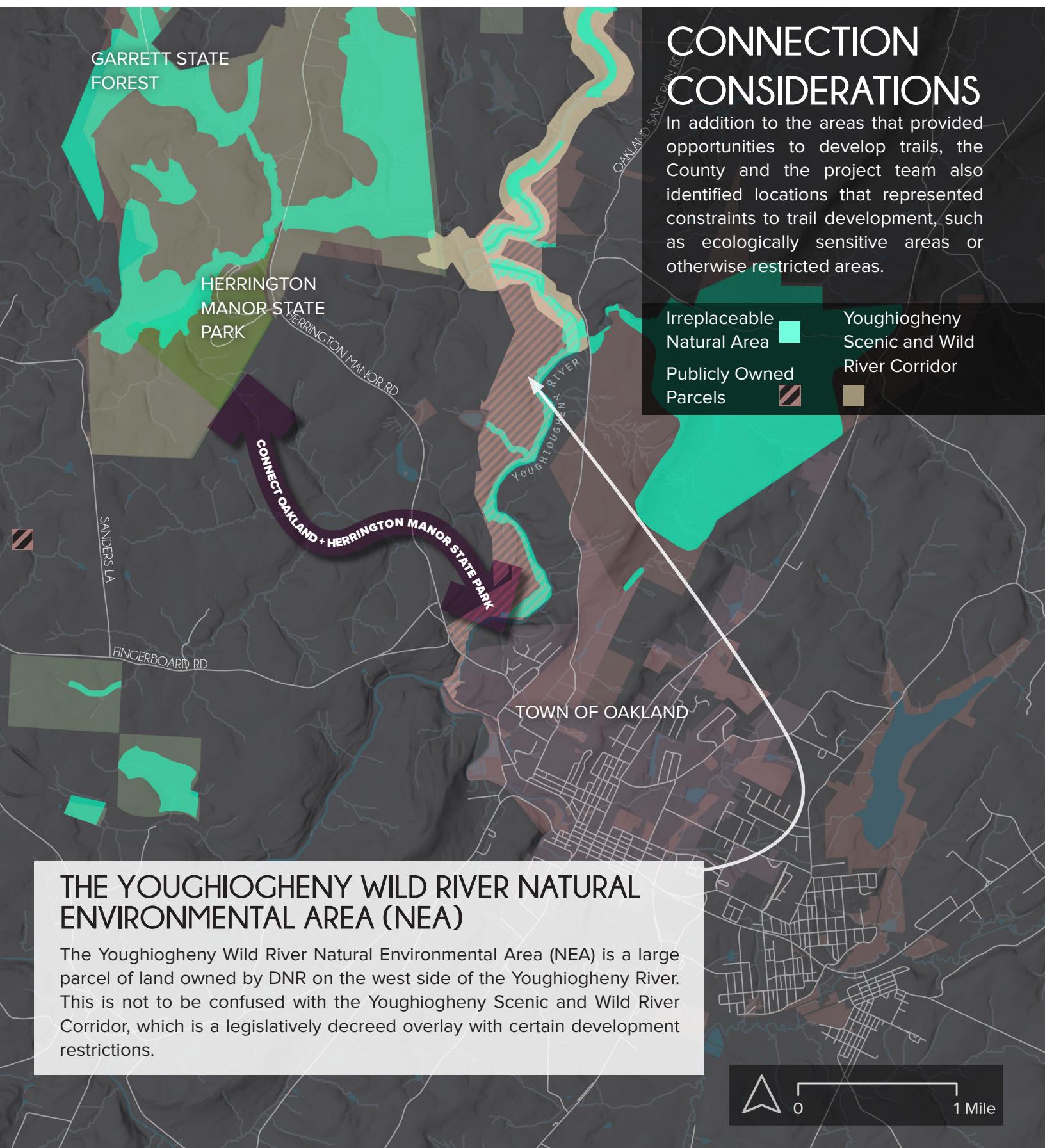
CONNECTION CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the areas that provided opportunities to develop trails, the County and the project team also identified locations that represented constraints to trail development, such as ecologically sensitive areas or otherwise restricted areas.

Irreplaceable Natural Area

Publicly Owned Parcels

Youghiogheny Scenic and Wild River Corridor



EVALUATING CONNECTIONS: POTENTIAL TRAIL ALIGNMENTS

Each of the potential connections crosses through privately-owned parcels. For the acquisition or use of private property, an agreement would need to be reached with each private land owner for use of their parcels. The Roadside Trail and the Forest Spine cross through property owned by the Town of Oakland.

Forest Spine

This north-south pathway concept is in the property of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), just west of the Youghiogheny River. This spine connects to the Fort Alice and Oakland Town Trail system in the south and has multiple offshoot options (Southern, Middle, and Northern) to connect to the trail system within Herrington Manor State Park and Town of Oakland-owned property.

Forest Trail - Northern Connection

The Northern Connection to Herrington Manor State Park connects to the main Forest spine via the Garrett State Forest and two privately-owned parcels. The only roadway crossing would be in the State Forest. This alignment would likely necessitate at least one, and possibly several stream crossings.

Forest Trail - Middle Connection

The Middle Connection connects to the spine via private parcels on the western edge of the DNR parcel and then follows a power line easement into the southern edge of Herrington Manor State Park. The crossing at Herrington Manor Road would require further study to make it safe for trail users.

Forest Trail - Southern Connection

The Southern Connection is the longest of the three Forest Trail connection options, at just shy of three miles. This alignment would cross several private parcels and would enter Herrington Manor State Park via the trail network in Garrett State Forest. Just like the other two Forest Trail connections, the Southern Connection would have to include a safe crossing of Herrington Manor Road.

Kindness Trail Extension

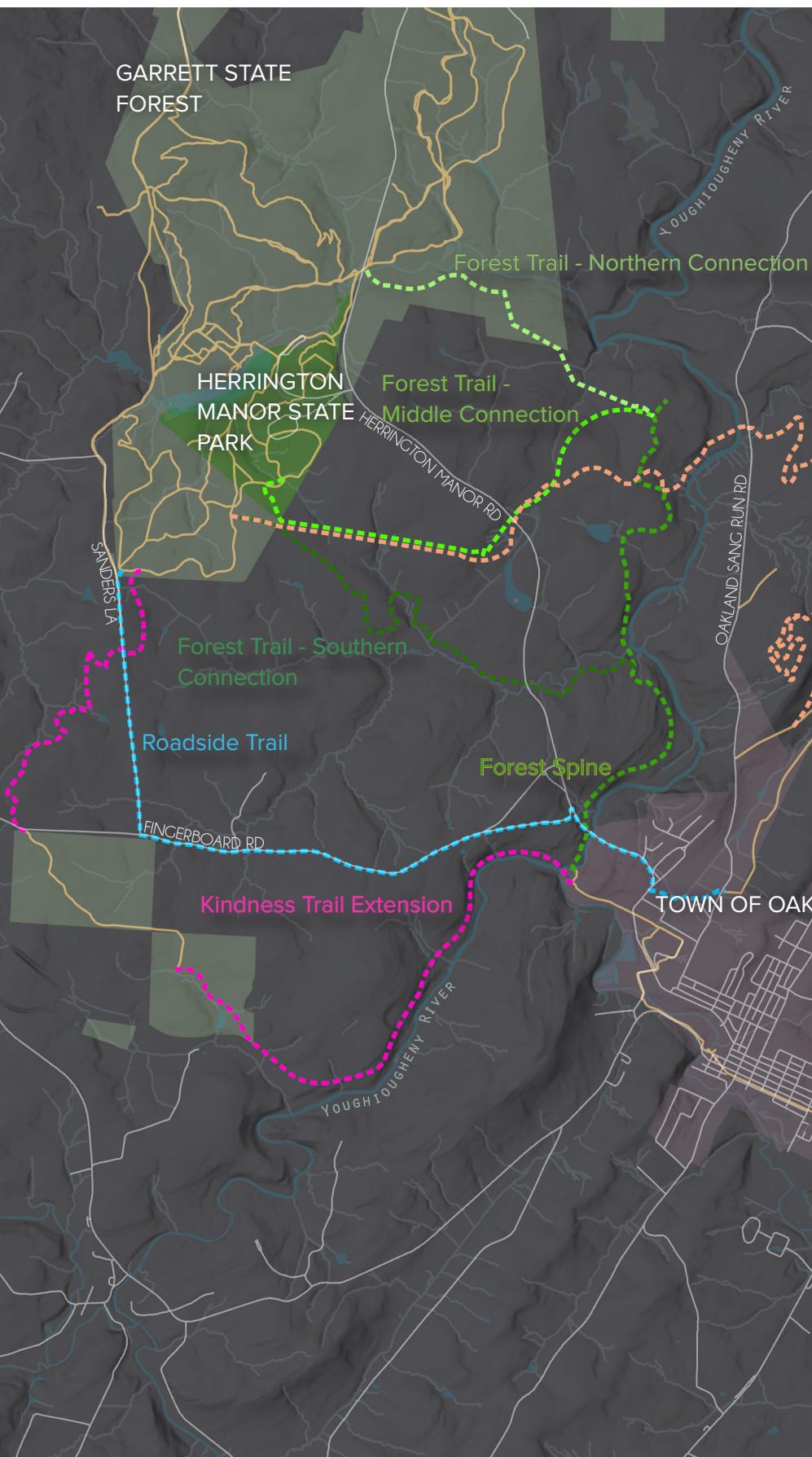
The plots of land that host the Kindness Demonstration Trail are the oldest in the State's Forest Department, with the trail that cuts through them following an old logging road. The proposed extension would connect the southern end of the trail to Oakland via space by the railroad tracks and to the State Park via a private conservation easement and private parcels. Additionally, this alignment may conflict with irreplaceable natural resources in the southeastern parcel.

Mt. Nebo Trail

This alignment is designed to largely run on the eastern side of the Youghiogheny River, in the Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area. This is the longest proposed alignment and it includes several spurs to secondary destinations and other natural points of interest. It should be noted that this alignment crosses the Youghiogheny Wild River Scenic Corridor, which would likely necessitate a cumbersome permitting process and building a low impact trail; and it also potentially conflicts with designated irreplaceable natural resources.

Roadside Trail

This alignment is designed to run along Sanders Lane and Fingerboard Road, connecting to the sidewalks in the Town of Oakland and the trail network in the southern portion of the Garrett State Forest. Where sufficient right-of-way exists, these roadways may be realigned to accommodate a trail, with overlap with adjoining parcels necessary at pinch points. Where sufficient right-of-way doesn't exist, small, roadside portions of private parcels may need to be acquired to provide space for a trail.



CLOSING THE GAP

These alignments were posited as ways to connect the trail network in the Town of Oakland and the trails in Herrington Manor State Park and beyond. Out of these options, a preferred alignment was selected via the criteria on the following page.

Existing Trails Lake, River, or Stream Roadways

CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Several factors help determine the alignment option to pursue for further refinement, design, and implementation. The method for choosing the best route is a blend of quantitative information and qualitative inputs - all of which are measured against past experiences planning and building comparable trails. Once a preferred alternative is selected, many of these factors will continue to shape the trail concept and design through each stage of refinement and development.



Topography and Crossings

Topography plays an essential role in determining feasibility in western Maryland's mountainous terrain, where hillside gullies, and sheer cliff faces can make building navigable trails impossible. Beyond outright impediments, topography can determine a trail's levels of difficulty - or adventure depending on the perspective of a given user. For this study, topography was considered in terms of areas of extreme or impassable slope and contiguous lengths of difficult slopes, not the overall elevation gain and loss accumulated along a given line.

Additionally, the length and amount of water crossings have an impact on the feasibility of an alignment. Smaller crossings can be spanned with NPS standard designs, but larger crossings will require a bridge design and will likely constitute a major cost.

Vistas, Views, and Attractions

An essential part of the trail experience is what you see along the way. This includes the overall setting, i.e. forested vs urban, as well as what points of interest are made accessible via the trail. Such attractions could include scenic overlooks, notable natural features (large boulders, old trees, etc.), culturally significant or historical sites, or existing trail amenities.

Garrett County's storied history, lush biome, and dramatic geography provide a variety of possible views and attractions for trail users.



Access and Connectivity

Trails can provide many uses, some folks use them to reconnect with nature, others use them as a venue for exercise, and still others view them as purely utilitarian - a way to get from one place to another. However the trail is used, it will always prove to be more valuable the more it is connected into surrounding transportation networks. For those that use the trail for transportation, this provides greater access to more places, and for those looking to experience the trail itself, greater connectivity means more ways to access to trail. Access and connectivity can refer to other multimodal networks, as well as trailheads and opportunities for parking.



Public Support and Private Parcel Impacts

The primary purpose for building a trail is to create a facility that the public, both residents and visitors alike, will use. When deciding an alignment, it is important to not only gauge which alignments receive public favor and which don't, but also *why* those preferences are being expressed. One of the most common reasons for support or opposition to a given alignment is from a nearby or affected landowner desiring the benefits of the trail near their land, or wary of the activity it will bring.



User Experience

Different alignments will provide fundamentally different user experiences due to the existing environments, possible trail materials, and what other uses are allowed on the trail. A winding natural surface trail through the woods provides a different experience than a concrete or asphalt path alongside a busy roadway or railroad. A trail that only allows hiking will provide a different experience than one that also allows mountain biking or equestrian use. User experience also factors in user safety and interaction with motor vehicles.

The selected alignment will likely dictate material and user type, and will affect the typical user profile, the experience, and the allowable activities.

Environmental Impacts

Environmental impacts and the costs associated with mitigation are important considerations when choosing an preferred alignment.

Some potential environmental impacts are too significant to be mitigated, disqualifying alignments which incur them. Other potential impacts can be moderated or abated, but at too high a cost.

Environmental overlays provided by DNR were analyzed for potential effects on local animal and plant species, as well as legislatively-protected areas, such as the Youghiogheny Wild River Scenic Corridor.

A full natural resource inventory (NRI) will be conducted at the next stage of development, after the alignment has been fully refined and the limits of disturbance (LOD) has been established.



The Youghiogheny Scenic and Wild River Corridor designation makes trail development with any kind of amenities extremely challenging within its borders, including but not limited to, benches, rest areas, and bathrooms.



The Allegheny Woodrat is currently listed as "Near Threatened" by the International Union of Conservation of Nature and maintains a habitat in the woodland areas of Garrett County.

Photo Credit: Wildlife Center of Virginia

COMPARING THE ALIGNMENTS

Using the aforementioned criteria, the project team compared each of the alternatives to identify a single preferred alignment that can be further refined into a trail concept. The approximate concept lengths listed below are for comparison purposes only and were created using high-level, rough estimates of contours. The refined versions of any of these alignments would likely have a greater total length due to requiring extra distance to account for grade changes.

Forest Trail - North

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 5.0 MILES

The Northern Connection to Herrington Manor State Park connects to the main Forest spine via the Garrett State Forest and three privately-owned parcels. The wooded environment of this alignment provides a tranquil user experience and would start and end at existing trailheads. This option is the most closely analogous to the recommended alignment in the 2022 Youghiogheny Scenic River Trail Study.



Forest Trail - Middle

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 5.7 MILES

The Middle Connection connects to the spine via private parcels on the western edge of the Youghiogheny Wild River NEA and then follows a power line easement into the southern edge of Herrington Manor State Park. The crossing at Herrington Manor Road would require further study to make it safe for trail users. This alignment crosses several private parcels - in order for this option to be feasible, an amenable agreement would need to be reached with each land owner.



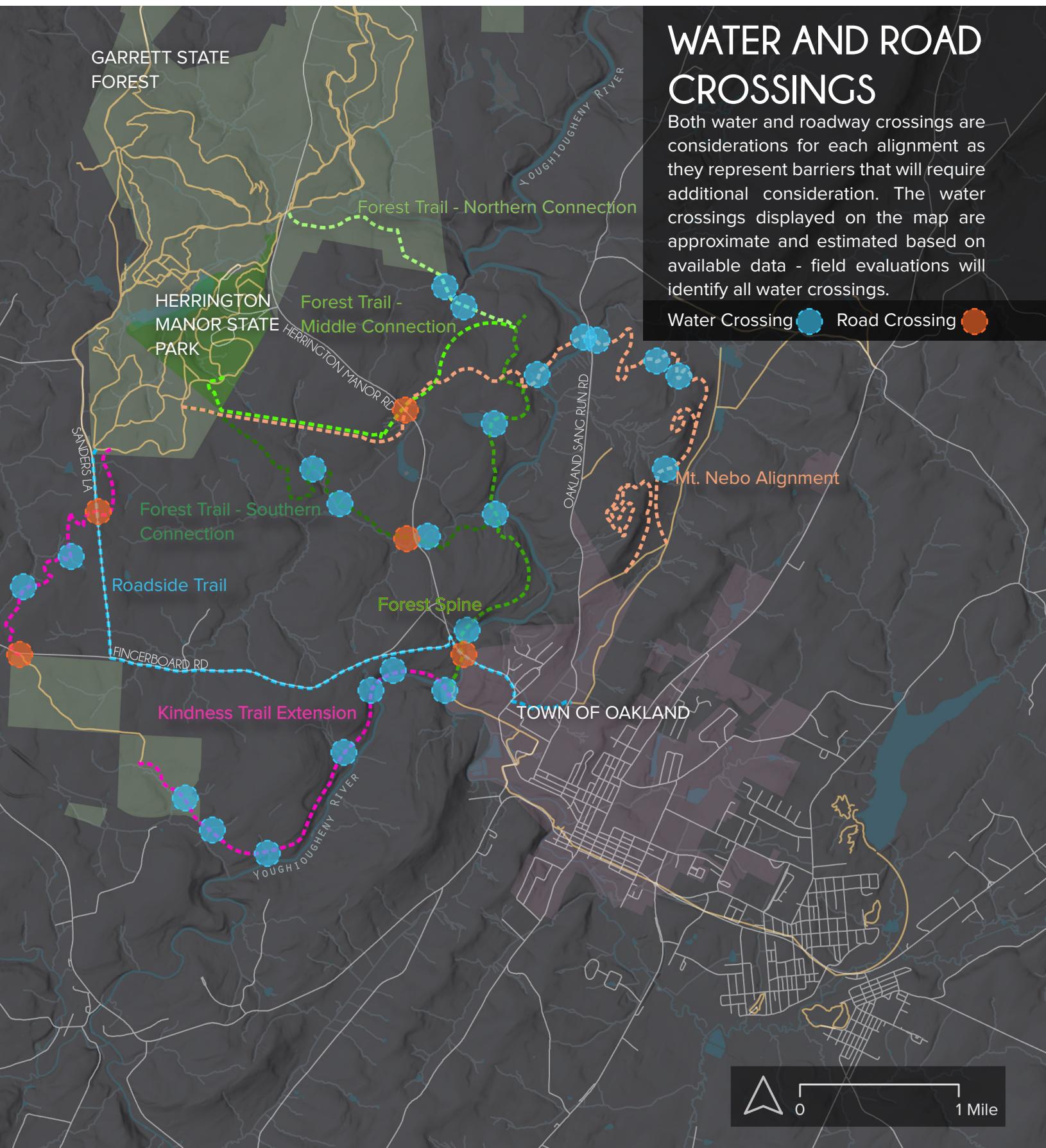
Forest Trail - South

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 6.0 MILES

The Southern Connection is the longest of the three Forest Trail connection options, at just shy of three miles from the spine to the Park. This alignment would cross several private parcels, Herrington Manor Drive, and would enter Herrington Manor State Park via the trail network in Garrett State Forest.

In order for this option to be feasible, an amenable agreement would need to be reached with each private land owner for use of their parcels.





COMPARING THE ALIGNMENTS, CONT.

All of the trail options share the need to cross the Youghiogheny River. Creating this crossing is likely the largest challenge and cost, regardless of the selected alignment, as no crossing currently exists that can accommodate space for a trail.

Overall, the preferred alignment concept is the Forest Trail - North, with the Roadside Trail placing in second place. Beyond these two options, the other alignments faced significant challenges to implementation.

Kindness Trail Extension

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 5.0 MILES

The plots of land that host the Kindness Demonstration Trail are the oldest in the State's Forest Department, with the trail that cuts through them following an old logging road. The proposed extension would connect the southern end of the trail to Oakland via space by the railroad tracks and to the State Park via a private conservation easement and private parcels - coordination with land owners and CSX are paramount to the feasibility of this concept. Additionally, this alignment has heightened concerns with irreplaceable natural resources in the southeastern portion of the existing trail.



Mt. Nebo Trail

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 8.2 MILES

This alignment is designed to largely run on the eastern side of the Youghiogheny River, in the Mt. Nebo Wildlife Management Area. This is the longest proposed alignment and it includes several spurs to secondary destinations and other natural points of interest. It should be noted that this alignment crosses the Youghiogheny Wild River Scenic Corridor, which would likely necessitate a cumbersome permitting process and building a low impact trail; and it also potentially conflicts with designated irreplaceable natural resources.

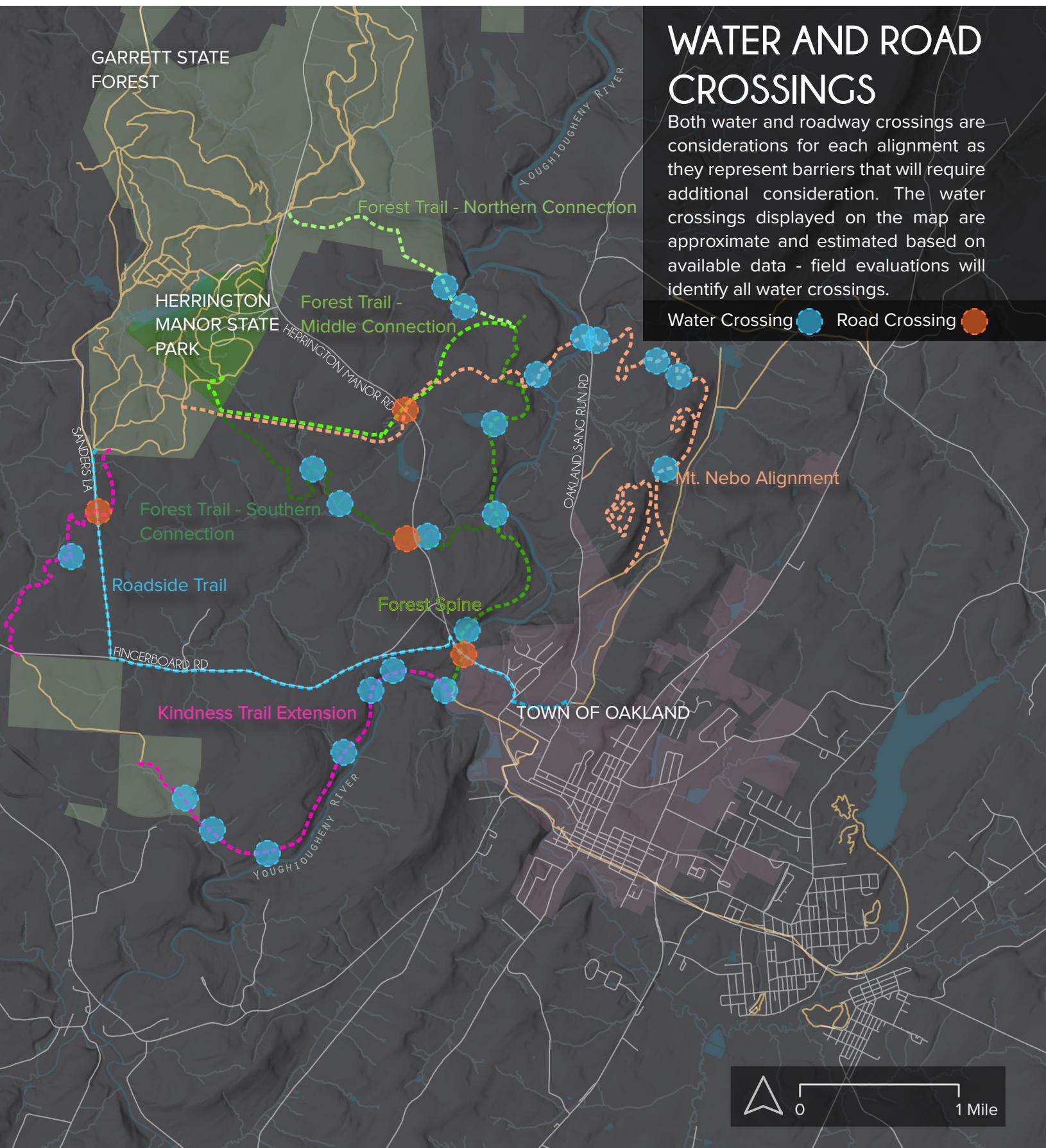


Roadside Trail

APPROXIMATE CONCEPT LENGTH: 4.6 MILES

This alignment is designed to run along Sanders Lane and Fingerboard Road, connecting to the sidewalks in the Town of Oakland and the trail network in the southern portion of the Garrett State Forest. Where sufficient right-of-way exists, these roadways may be realigned to accommodate a trail, with overlap with adjoining parcels necessary at pinch points.





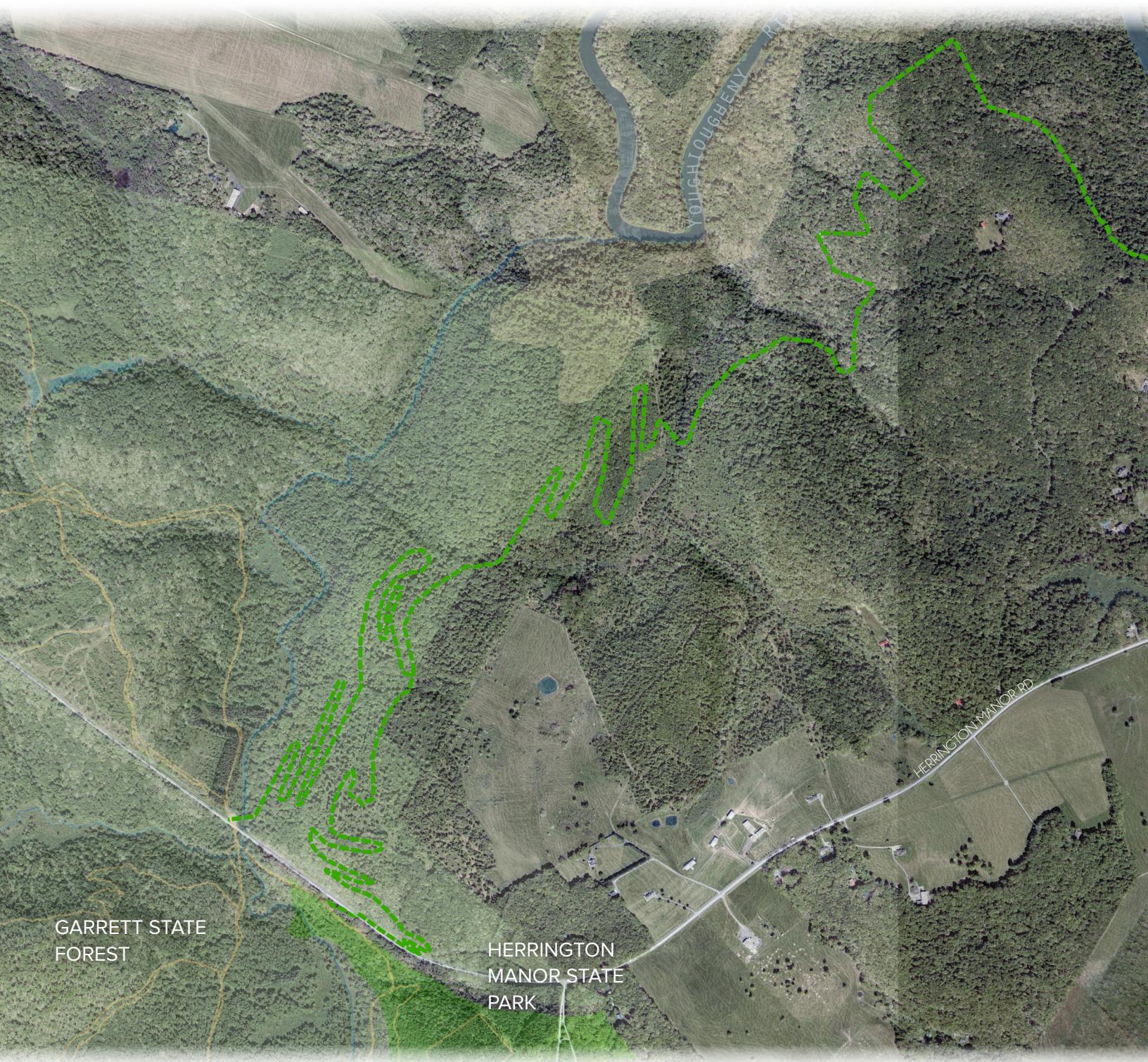
WATER AND ROAD CROSSINGS

Both water and roadway crossings are considerations for each alignment as they represent barriers that will require additional consideration. The water crossings displayed on the map are approximate and estimated based on available data - field evaluations will identify all water crossings.

Water Crossing Road Crossing

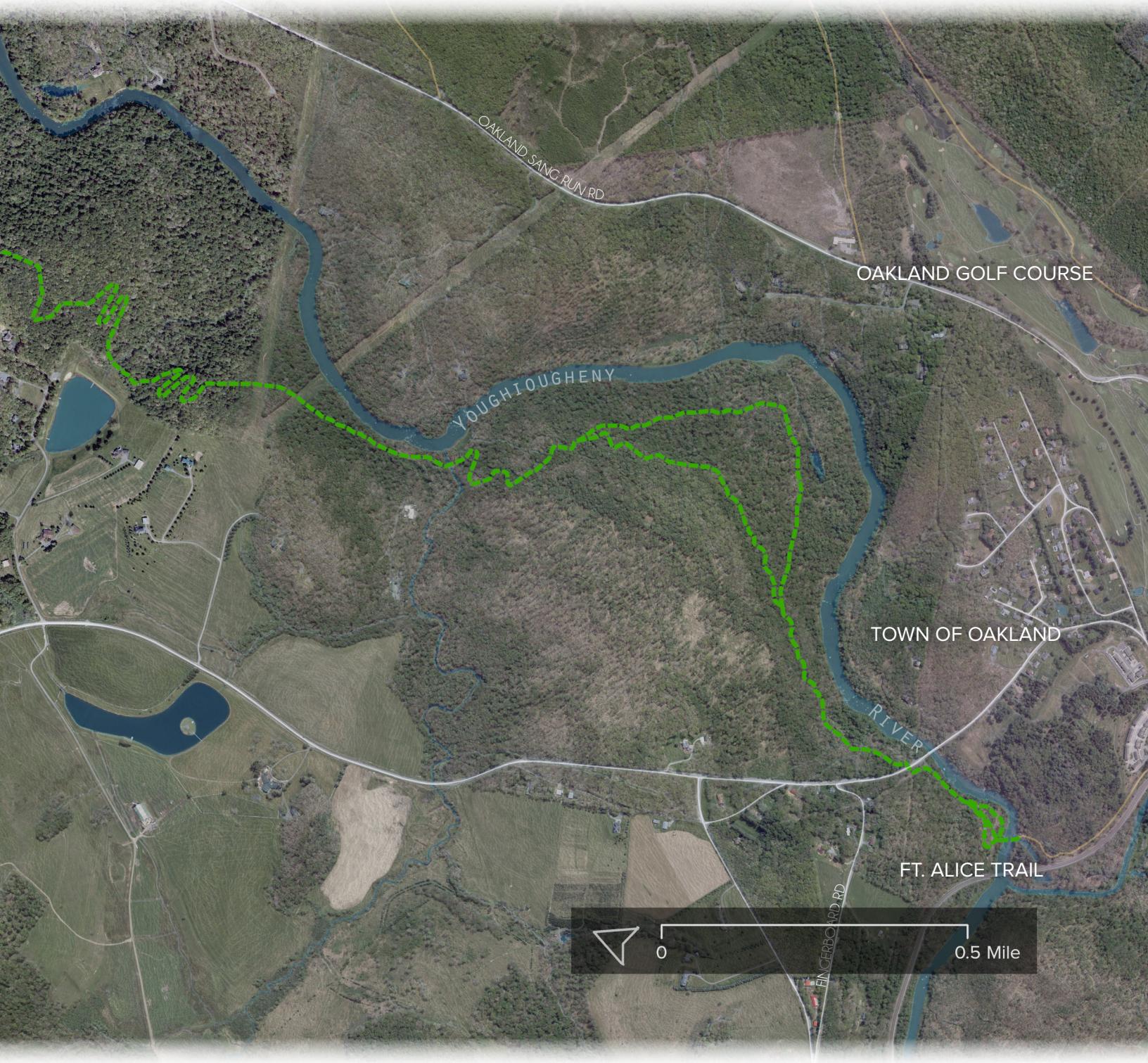
RECOMMENDED CONNECTION

The recommended connection is a slightly modified version of the Forest Trail - North concept. The trail connects to the western terminus of the Ft. Alice Trail on its southern end, crosses the Youghiogheny River and continues roughly parallel to the western bank of the river through the DNR parcel, before turning



west just south of the Youghiogheny Scenic Wild River Corridor overlay boundary, and then connecting into existing trails that lead into Herrington Manor State Park.

This iteration of the trail alignment was developed while considering the contour and slope data derived from the State of Maryland's digital elevation model (DEM). A desktop review indicates this is a feasible path - future phases of design will include thorough field investigations that will more precisely site every segment, curve, and switchback to optimize the constructability and trail user experience.

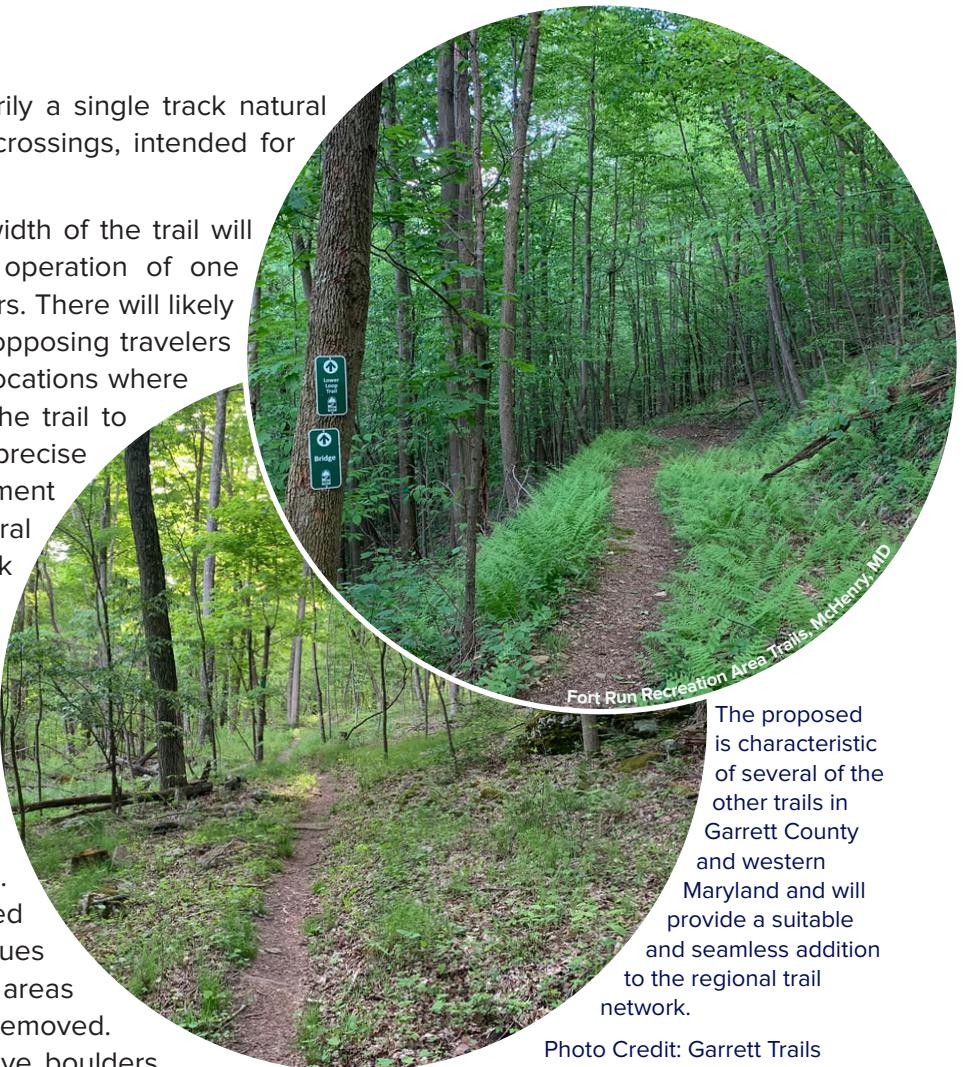


TRAIL TYPE

The proposed facility is a primarily a single track natural surface trail with several water crossings, intended for hikers and mountain bikers.

Single track indicates that the width of the trail will generally be intended for the operation of one mountain bike or one to two hikers. There will likely be places along the trail where opposing travelers can pass each other, and other locations where one party will have to step off the trail to allow the other to pass. The precise width of the trail at any given segment will be dictated by the natural circumstances, such as rock outcroppings, topography, tree inventory, overlay boundaries, etc.

Natural surface trails are those that make use of the existing surface and do not add additional material, such as asphalt, concrete, or crushed stone. Natural surface trails are tamped and compacted, after drainage issues are identified and fixed, eroded areas are shored up, and vegetation is removed. Natural surface trails can still have boulders, tree roots, and other forest features as part of the trail.



The proposed is characteristic of several of the other trails in Garrett County and western Maryland and will provide a suitable and seamless addition to the regional trail network.

Photo Credit: Garrett Trails

QUICK FACTS AND APPROXIMATE DIMENSIONS

LENGTH 10 MILES

MAXIMUM SLOPE 35%

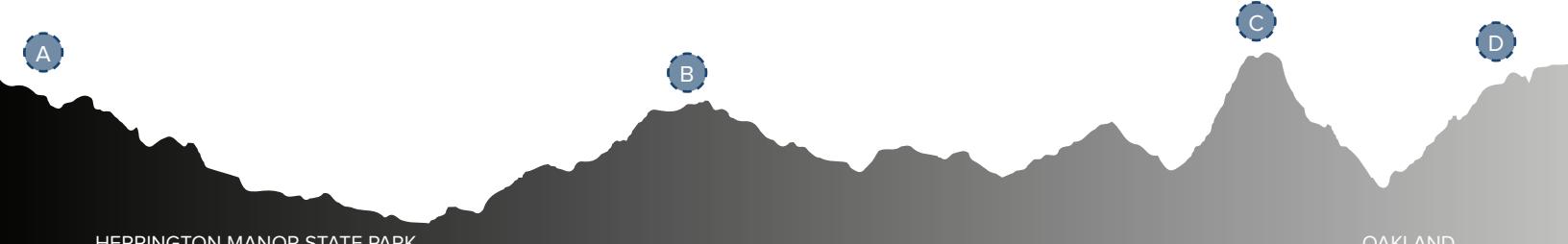
This is not a sustained slope, it represents a point along the trail.

AVERAGE SLOPE 3.5%

TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN 874 FEET

TOTAL ELEVATION LOSS 864 FEET

MAXIMUM ELEVATION 2,557 FEET



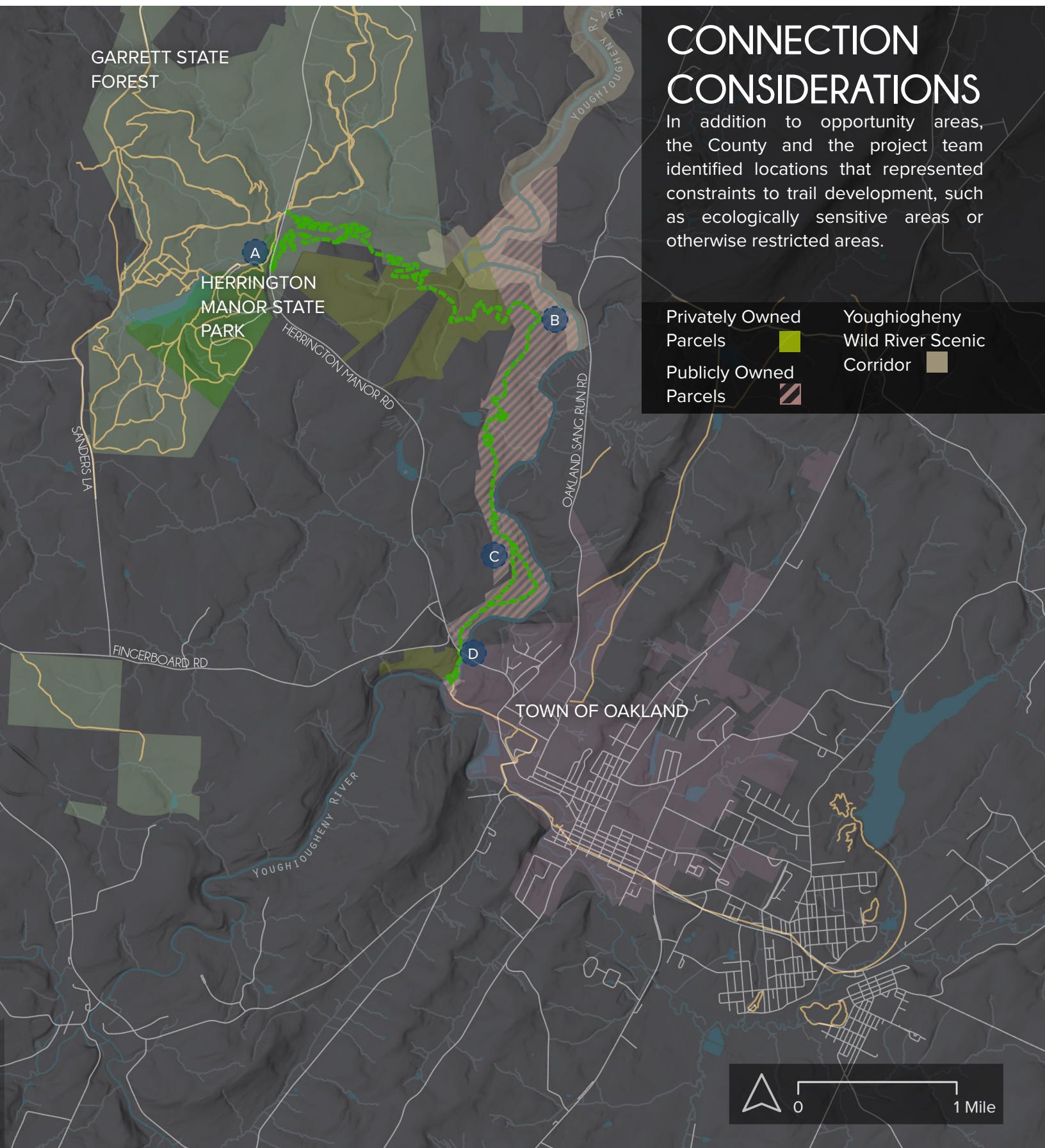
CONNECTION CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to opportunity areas, the County and the project team identified locations that represented constraints to trail development, such as ecologically sensitive areas or otherwise restricted areas.

Privately Owned
Parcels

Publicly Owned
Parcels

Youghiogheny
Wild River Scenic
Corridor



WATER CROSSINGS

Youghiogheny Pedestrian Bridge

Crossing the Youghiogheny with a new pedestrian bridge is an unavoidable requirement to realizing this trail connection. The nearby railroad and roadway crossings do not have the available right-of-way to dedicate to trail users. However, if the current bridge owned by Garrett County needed to be refurbished, trail user facilities could likely be added.

Minor Water Crossings

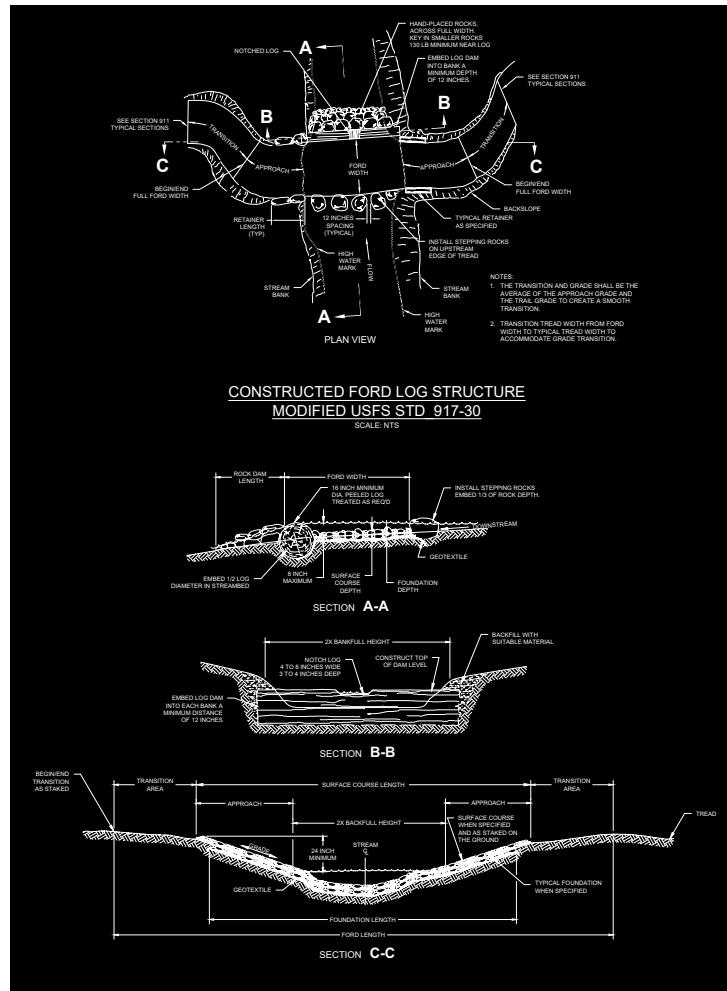
Aside from the pedestrian bridge that will need to be built to cross the Youghiogheny, most of the water crossings for this trail will likely be under twenty feet in length and will use the DNR's standard specifications for minor water crossings on trails. Based on the data reviewed, there are approximately four additional, minor water crossings. Field work and flagging the alignment will be required to confirm this count.

RECREATIONAL CRUSHED STONE LOOP

During the second period of public engagement, several community members expressed a desire for a portion of the trail to be more accessible and a lower difficulty compared to the rest of the proposed alignment. From this feedback, the opportunity to add a roughly quarter-mile loop on the north/west side of the Youghiogheny River was identified.

The loop has minimal slope gain and loss compared to the rest of the trail and the crushed stone material would allow for a more uniform hiking and biking experience. This loop would not have a dedicated Trail Head and would likely be accessed via the Ft. Alice Trail to the south (also crushed stone), for a roughly .7 mile total round trip walk to the existing trailhead on W. Liberty St.

Garrett County has other crushed stone, recreational trails, like this portion of the Loch Lynn Heights Wetlands Trail.



DNR Standard Trail Water Crossing Specifications (Span under 20 ft)



SOUTHERN TERMINUS

This part of the trail is dense with obstacles. Shortly after connecting to the Ft. Alice Trail, the proposed alignment will have to cross the mighty Youghiogheny and Herrington Manor Rd, before continuing into the Yough Wild River NEA lands.

The trail is portrayed as veering into a small corner of a privately-owned parcel to gain lateral distance from the bridge and allow for a crossing with safer sight distances from both directions of traffic. If need be, the alignment can likely be rearranged to not impact the private parcel.

The trail crossing will need to be coordinated with applicable agencies and design will likely include enhancements such as a high-visibility crosswalk, pedestrian signage, enhanced lighting, pedestrian hybrid beacons, and possibly a slight reconfiguration of the roadway to provide advanced warning and slow vehicular speeds approaching the trail crossing. SHA's Context-Driven Countermeasure Toolkit can be referenced for applicable safety features in a concept-level design.

Natural Surface 
Crushed Stone 
Existing Trails 

Privately Owned Parcels 
Publicly Owned Parcels 

The crushed stone loop will connect to the main proposed alignment and offers a significant departure in trail character and user experience,

The exact location of the Yough crossing will be determined through future analysis and design of the bridge and be done in coordination with surrounding land owners and applicable agencies.

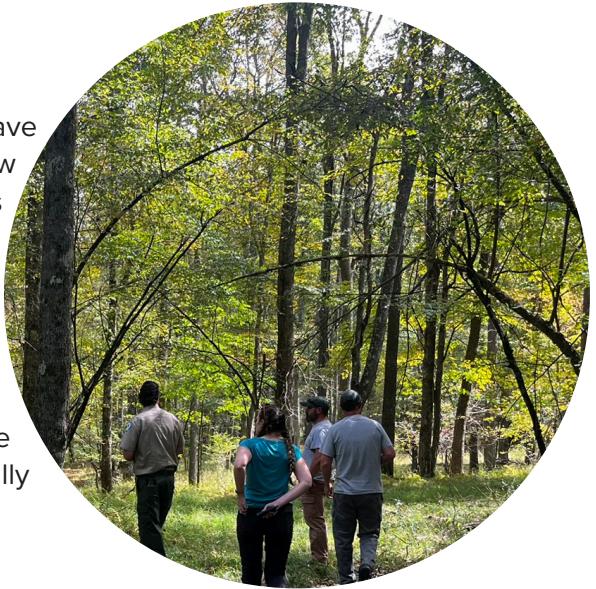


200 Feet

TRAIL EXPERIENCE

The single track, natural surface trail was selected in part to have minimal impact on the existing wooded environment to allow trail users to connect with the flora and biota of mountainous Western Maryland. This hilly trail will benefit from medium to heavy canopy cover, providing shade throughout the warm months of the year.

While the DNR parcels are open to the public, they are currently inaccessible, i.e. The Trail will give visitors direction and orientation, providing an enhanced visiting experience while concentrating the human activity on the land, potentially condensing negative externalities.



Trail Users

Akin to many other DNR trails in the area, the plan for this trail is to exclusively allow hikers and mountain bikers. Motorized vehicles and equestrians contribute too much wear-and-tear on a natural surface trail and a single track is too narrow to comfortably accommodate them.



Image Credit: campgroundsigns.com

Access and Amenities

One of the major considerations of this trail was minimizing the capital and maintenance costs as much as possible. This meant reducing trail amenities, and excluding things such as seating, educational signage, and watering stations.

Similarly, no new trailheads or parking lots are planned to be part of this trail project, it is expected that trail users will utilize existing facilities associated with connected trails.

There appears to be ample parking capacity at existing trailheads, such as Mountain Fresh Parking, that will connect to the recommended connection.

Hunting

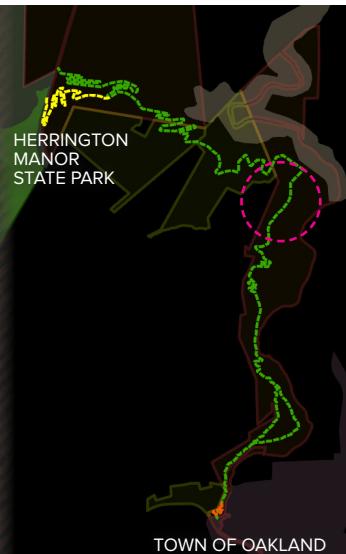
The DNR parcels allow seasonal public long gun hunting. There is no proposed change to the current hunting policy on this land but DNR typically posts signage along its trails in the area during hunting season, alerting trail users of the possibility of hunting in the area.

Benches, trash cans, and educational signage are provided at other trails in the area, such as the Oakland Heritage Trail, but are not included as part of the recommended connection.



WILD RIVER NEA

The trail will serve as a key regional connection to other trails but will also be a wonderful recreational experience in and of itself, providing users access to the restored woodland



Natural Surface

Privately
Owned Parcels

Publicly Owned
Parcels

The trail is designed to not overlap the Youghiogheny Scenic River Area to limit the permitting requirements for trail implementation. The exact boundaries will need to be defined and marked when the extents of the trail are flagged in the field.



While the trail may appear close to abutting properties on a map - the alignment is about 250 linear feet from this private lake - it will feel much further in person due to the significant grade difference and dense woods. The trail will provide orientation and designation for visitors, further discouraging accidental trespassing.



500 Feet

NORTHERN SEGMENT OPTIONS

The alignment includes two options to connect to the trail networks in Herrington Manor State Park and beyond. Further input from project stakeholders and partner agencies as the design progresses will help to select one option for implementation.

Option A

Option A would switchback down the side of the hill to the north and connect into an existing trailhead with parking that currently serves the Herrington Manor/Swallow Falls Trail. This option would necessitate an additional water crossing at Herrington Run, around 60 ft.

One potential issue with Option A is that it falls within the State of Maryland's Irreplaceable Natural Areas overlay and would be subject to an additional review process and possible preclusion if its impacts are deemed too deleterious to the sensitive flora and fauna in the area.



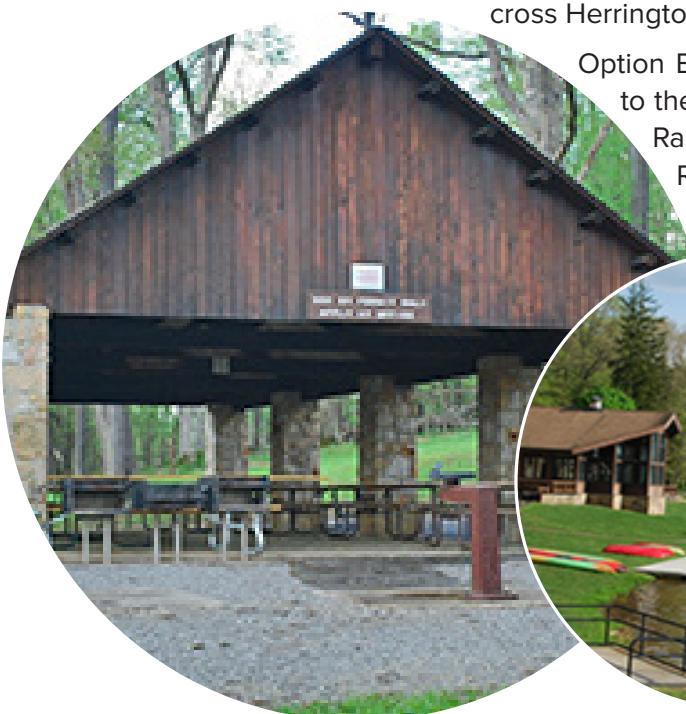
Option A would provide a more direct route to Swallow Falls State Park

Photo Credit: Dan "Tags" Richardson, alltrails.com

Option B

Option B would also include a series of switchbacks, similar to Option A, to reach the trail network on the north end of the recommended connection. Option B would run further south of the Irreplaceable Natural Areas overlay, thus avoiding barriers to implementation.

This alternative would preclude the need for the additional water crossing but would necessitate an additional roadway crossing with challenging sight distance at Herrington Manor Rd (the first crossing happens immediately west of the Youghiogheny River). For trail users connecting from the Oakland to Herrington Manor Trail to the Herrington Manor/Swallow Falls Trail to the north, this would mean having to cross Herrington Manor Rd twice in short order.



Option B does connect into the trail network at a point closer to the amenities of the State Park, including the Park Office/Ranger Station, the Herrington Manor Recreation Area Reservoir, and rest of the trail network within the Park.



Option B would provide direct access to Herrington Manor State Park and its facilities.

Photo Credit: Maryland DNR

NORTHERN TERMINUS

The northern portion of the trail will connect into the network that provides access to Herrington State Park, Garrett State Forest, and Swallow Falls State Park to close this gap in the Eastern Continental Divide Loop.



Option A

Option B

Privately
Owned Parcels
Publicly
Owned
Parcels

HERRINGTON MANOR RD



0

500 Feet

WHAT'S NEXT

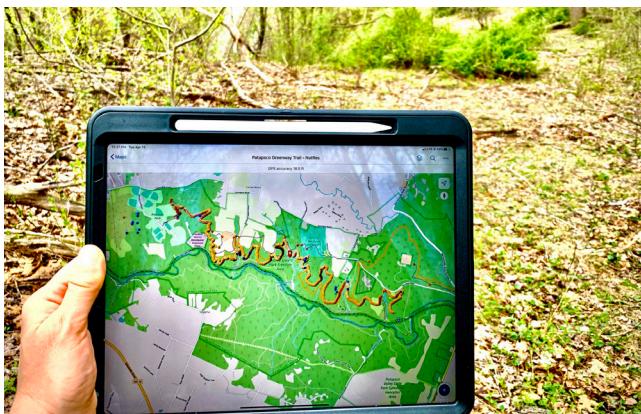
IMPLEMENTATION

Siting the Trail

The single-track, natural surface trail requires a thorough field investigation to finalize the precise planned alignment of the trail. It is important to note the alignment presented herein demonstrates the *feasibility* of the trail alignment between Oakland and Herrington Manor State Park, based on contours, waterways, regulatory overlays, etc. - the precise alignment is expected to evolve as the project continues to progress to the design phase.

Garrett County and DNR officials will need to walk the approximate alignment and the surrounding area to determine the best route for the trail to be constructed. While siting the trail, participants should be attentive to:

- Avoiding old logging roads through the woods due to drainage and washout concerns
- Results of any additional rare species surveys that identify sensitive natural habitats
- Clear, flat areas where the trail may widen to provide a space for pausing and passing
- Additional water crossings and previously unidentified wetlands that would merit installing a crossing or section of boardwalk
- Identify suitable locations for trail markers and other wayfinding signage



Combining physical trail marking and flagging with digital documentation will define the constructible alignment and be a component of the bid package.



Much of the Youghiogheny Wild River NEA was once utilized by the logging industry before the forest had a chance to regrow, starting at the beginning of the 20th century. At first glance, the logging roads may seem like a natural place to site a trail, but these scars on the land frequently wash out and add to the overall maintenance burden as compared to a newly constructed single track trail.

In addition, trail builders and stakeholders should look for destination and placemaking opportunities along the trail, such as:

- Ridges that allow for long view sheds and vistas
- Potential spurs for technical trail segments, including very steep climbs and/or scrambles

Once the alignment is flagged and marked, as well as recorded digitally via GPS waymarking, a bid package for trail builders will need to be prepared. The bid package will include the alignment, all relevant specifications, construction practice requirements, and proposed construction schedule. Due to the remote and naturally sensitive environs of the trail, it is anticipated that trail construction will include limited use of heavy machinery and the trail will be built mostly by hand.

Siting the Youghiogheny Crossing

Deciding the precise location to build a pedestrian bridge across the Youghiogheny River will require further analysis and will hinge on geologic, hydrological, topographic, and environmental investigations.

The siting and design of the bridge can and should occur independently from the siting of the rest of trail - designing and building the pedestrian bridge is the largest and most expensive aspect of creating this connection and the trail can be sited with more flexibility than the bridge.

Private Parcel Owners and Public Engagement

This feasibility study represents the beginning of conversations with the public, overlapping land owners, and adjacent land owners. As the project progresses, regular updates to the public can bolster support for the project and demonstrate political will for potential funding sources and partner agencies. As the trail is being sited in the private parcels, the owners of those parcels need to be involved to secure their partnership and support for the project. Without an amenable agreement between private property owners and Garrett County, the trail cannot be built. Land parcels cited in this study may be used for the trail, but the land owners may desire a different alignment across their parcels.

Conversations regarding access, maintenance, and other agreements with each land owner will need to be realized ahead of the finalization of the alignment.

Continued Agency Coordination

Close coordination between Garrett County and DNR will be needed at each stage of development of the trail. Most of the trail's alignment will exist on DNR owned parcels and will therefore require their concurrence on those sections. DNR is also the primary regulating agency regarding natural resources in the area, regardless of ownership status.

Additionally, DNR has a lot to offer in terms of experience and expertise as they have built and maintain several trail networks in western Maryland and can provide invaluable acumen and insights throughout the development process.

In addition to continued conversations between Garrett County, MD DNR, and nearby landowners, continued public updates and discourse will be key to the success of further implementation stages.



MAINTENANCE PLANNING

The County and DNR will need to develop a detailed maintenance plan for this trail prior to its construction. DNR does not have excess staff capacity to maintain an additional ten miles of natural surface trail. If it is determined that DNR is to be primarily responsible for trail maintenance, additional resources will need to be marshaled to do so. Garrett County currently does not have a dedicated parks and recreation department or a trails maintenance staff to handle trail maintenance. Prior to the County agreeing to any maintenance responsibilities, the delineation of duties will need to be made clear, capabilities will need be determined, and a proposal for acquiring necessary resources will need to be created.

While full maintenance activities can not likely be assigned to a non-governmental organization, an advocacy and volunteer group such as Garrett County Trails Inc. can assist in the upkeep of the trail via their fallen tree reporting program.

Trail Use Enforcement

In addition to planning for maintenance of the new trail, DNR, Garrett County, Garrett Trails, and other stewards and stakeholder may want to consider a plan for the proper use of the trail, i.e. disallowing dirt bikes, ATVs, and equestrians that will detract from the trail experience for hikers and mountain bikers and cause undue wear and tear.

Illegal Connections

Trail stewards will also need to plan for, and regularly monitor illegal connections to the trail from adjacent parcels and have standard operating procedures to remove potential illegal trail connections.



Crossing the Yough will likely require another round of feasibility analysis prior to design and construction to take care that the crossing is cost-efficient, constructible, and has as few environmental impacts as possible.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Grantor	Program Name	Application Typically Due	Program Description
MDOT SHA	*Recreational Trails Program	April	<p>The RTP provides Federal funds to States to develop and maintain land and water-based recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses.</p> <p>Administered by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA), this program is a reimbursable grant program that matches federal funds with local funds or in-kind contributions to implement these trail projects. Projects can be sponsored by a county, a municipal government, or a non-profit agency.</p> <p><small>*This program will primarily be used for design, construction, and maintenance purposes.</small></p>
MDOT SHA/ NCTRIB	*Transportation Alternatives Program	Spring	<p>Maryland's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) awards grant funding to projects that enhance mobility and accessibility, as well as the cultural, aesthetic, historic, and environmental aspects of Maryland's transportation network.</p> <p>TAP funds projects create bicycle and pedestrian facilities, restore historic transportation buildings, convert abandoned railway corridors to pedestrian trails and mitigate highway runoff.</p> <p><small>*This program will primarily be used for placemaking purposes.</small></p>
MD DNR	*Community Parks and Playgrounds Program	August	<p>The Community Parks and Playground Program provides funding to allow the State to focus on restoring existing and creating new park and green space systems in Maryland's cities and towns.</p> <p>The Community Parks and Playgrounds Program will provide flexible grants to local governments to respond to the unmet need for assistance to rehabilitate, expand or improve existing parks, create new parks, develop environmentally oriented parks and recreation projects, or purchase and install playground equipment in older neighborhoods and intensely developed areas throughout the state.</p> <p><small>*The Town of Oakland is the only eligible candidate for this program.</small></p>
Federal Highway Administration	Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program	July	<p>As part of the program, FHWA will award competitive grants to help communities plan, design, and construct safe and connected active transportation networks such as sidewalks, bikeways, and trails that connect destinations such as schools, workplaces, residences, businesses, recreation areas, and medical facilities within a community or metropolitan region. Grants will also be provided for projects used for trails, pedestrian facilities, bikeways, and other routes that serve as backbones to connect two or more communities, metropolitan regions, or states.</p> <p>ATIIP also provides an opportunity for eligible organizations to enhance their overall transportation network by integrating active transportation facilities with transit services, where available, to improve access to public transportation.</p>
National Parks Service	Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership	Rolling	<p>Established by Congress in 2014 and administered through the National Park Service, the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP) Program is funded by Land and Water Conservation Fund. ORLP is a nationally competitive grant program that delivers funding to local communities – jurisdictions of at least 25,000 people – with priority given to projects located in low-income areas and lacking in outdoor recreation opportunities.</p> <p>These awards help address outdoor recreation deficits by supporting projects in cities and local communities that create new outdoor recreation spaces, reinvigorate existing parks, and form connections between people and the outdoors.</p>

