

The logo graphic consists of three overlapping parallelogram shapes. The top-left shape is light green, the middle-right shape is light blue, and the bottom-right shape is a darker blue.

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Think  Forward

Multi-use Trails Policy Workgroup

Understanding, Background, Recommendations

presented to

Commonwealth Transportation Board

presented by

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Understanding – Multi-use Trails Workgroup

- In 2021, the Appropriations Act directed the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) to coordinate a policy working group comprised of representatives from –
 - Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT)
 - Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT)
 - Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
 - Statewide Trails Advisory Committee (STAC)
 - Senate Finance
 - House Appropriations

Understanding – Multi-use Trails Workgroup

- The working group shall evaluate and recommend –
 - (i) a prioritization process for the identification of new multi-use trail opportunities
 - (ii) master planning process, and
 - (iii) funding needs assessment
- **OIPI to report on the recommendations of the workgroup to the Chairs of House Appropriations and Senate Finance**
- OIPI also engaged –
 - Consultant team, led by Cambridge Systematics
 - Stakeholders (including national, statewide, regional, and local)
 - Peer states

Background – Multi-Use Trails Definition

➤ The workgroup defined multi-use trails as:

» **Serving non-motorized users**

- Primarily people on foot, bicycle, wheelchair, or horseback

» **Falling predominately in their own rights-of-way**

- Utility corridor or former rail line
- Located within road ROW, alongside or on the roadway (separated from vehicle traffic)

» **Meeting VDOT design standards for accessibility and “shared use paths”**

- Includes hard surface, stone, asphalt or concrete
- Minimum width for safe two-way operation

Background – Example Multi-Use Trails



Franklin Street, Richmond
Source: East Coast Greenway Alliance



W&OD Trail, Falls Church
Source: Toole Design Group



Virginia Creeper Trail, Washington County
Source: Toole Design Group

Background – Multiple Agencies Manage Trails

➔ No single agency oversees or manages trails

VDOT

- Manages over 450 miles of shared-use paths, mostly along VDOT roads
- Administers construction of paved paths meeting design standards
- Focuses on pedestrian and bicycle transportation infrastructure
- Bike/Pedestrian Program and bicycle facility inventory

DCR

- Manages trails within state parks
- Administers trails conforming to Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Outdoor Developed Area Guidelines
- Focuses on recreational trails with ecological, scenic and historic value

DRPT

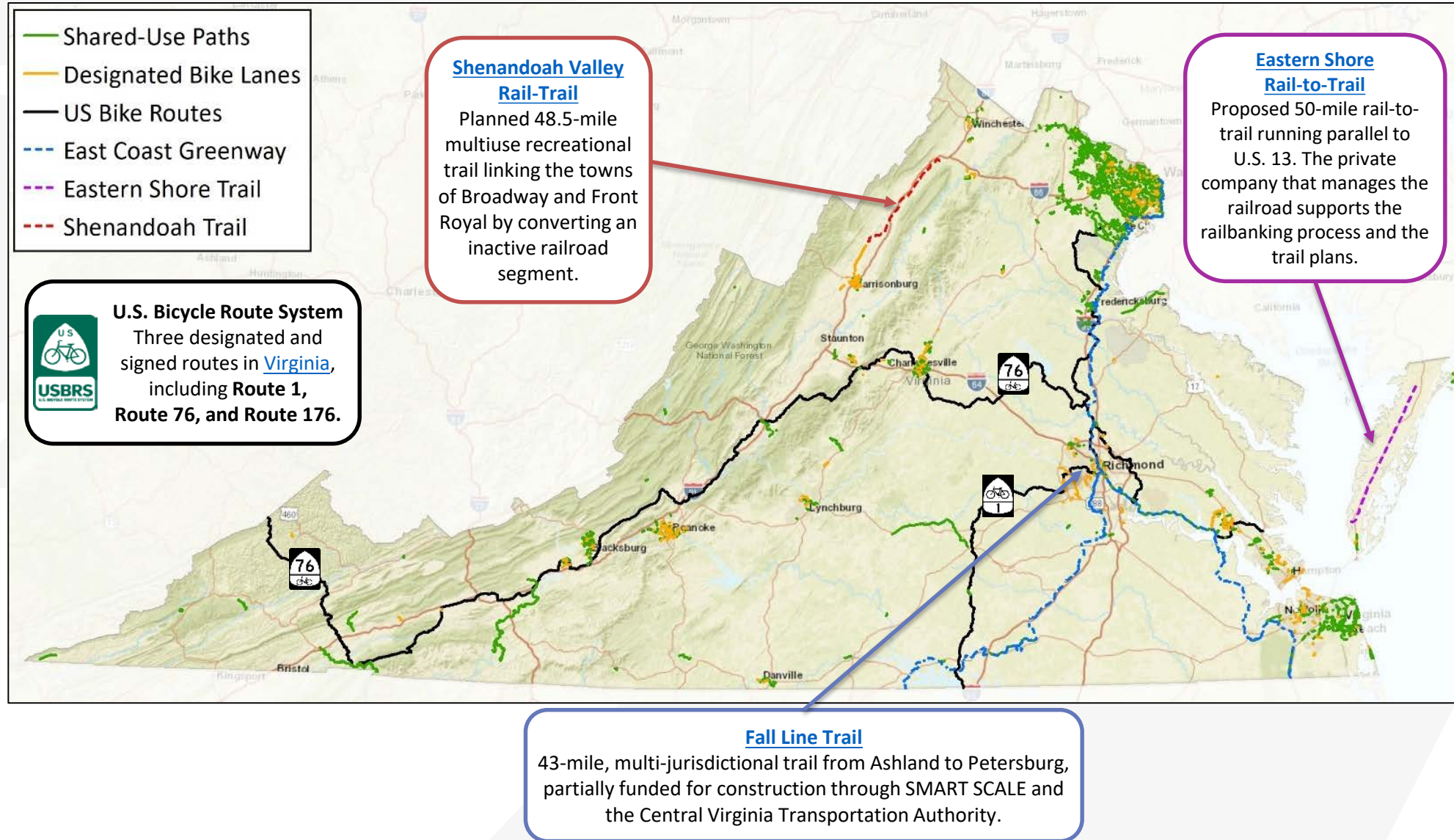
- Facilitates coordination with railroads and other stakeholders for Rails to Trail projects

Regional organizations and local governments

- Examples include the Capital Trails Coalition and Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission
- Facilitate planning and coordinate with localities and non-profits to implement and maintain

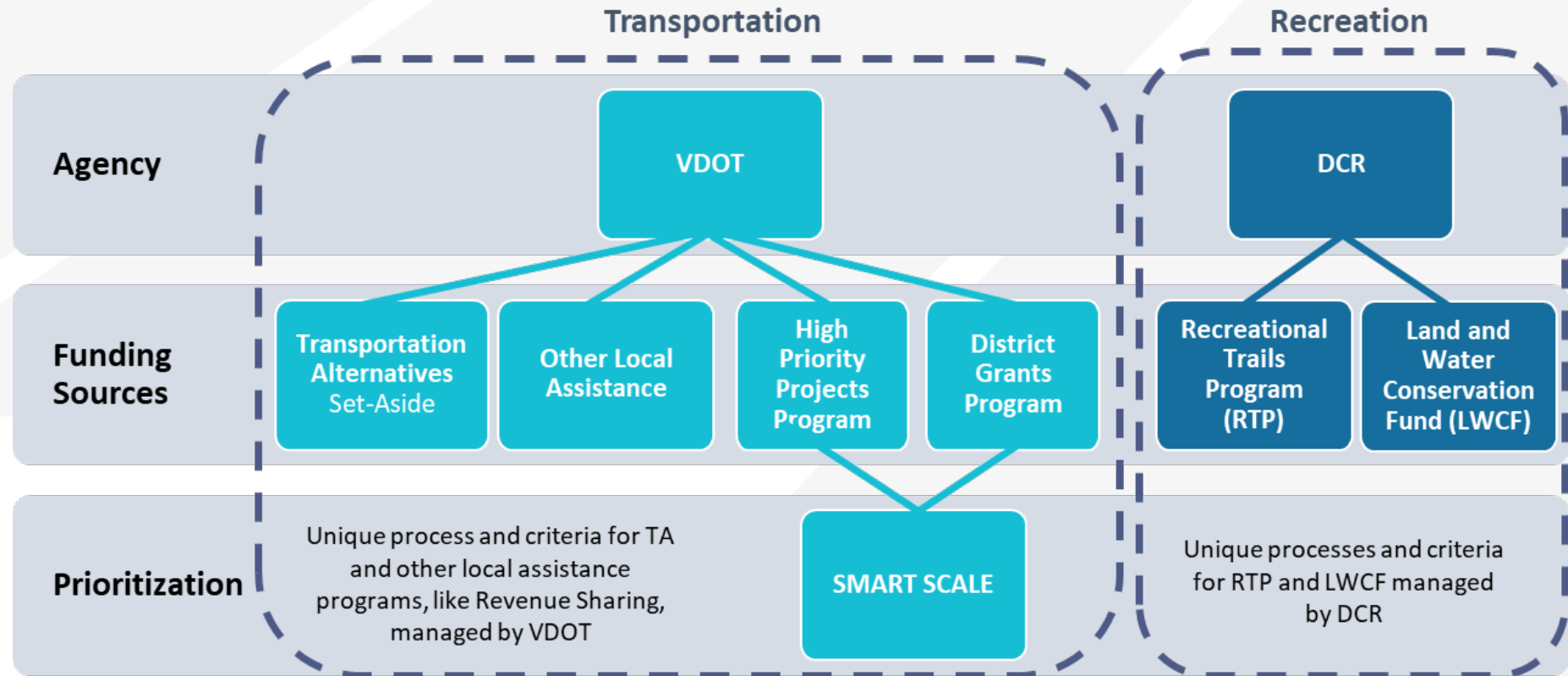
VDOT's Statewide Bicycle Facility Inventory

- 1,322 miles of shared-use paths
- 3 designated U.S. Bike Routes and the East Coast Greenway
- 140 miles of planned priority regional trails



Background – Trail Funding

VDOT and DCR fund trails through dedicated federal and state programs that also leverage regional and local sources



Note: DRPT does not explicitly fund trails, but does coordinate with railroads to facilitate rail to trail projects and support railbanking efforts.

Background – Assessment Findings

➤ **Lack of single agency oversight**

- » Missing a single vision and structure of a comprehensive plan

➤ **No sustained trail funding**

- » Full potential constrained by resource limitations, agency roles and responsibilities
- » Missed partnership opportunities with localities, federal partners and private entities

➤ **Longer regional trails are challenging to fund**

- » Existing programs support shorter trail segments

➤ **Incomplete data**

- » No single map or database identifying and tracking the complete trail network that includes both recreation and transportation

Recommendations – Three primary implementation actions

➤ Establish a State Trails Office or staff the Office of Outdoor Recreation

Recommend ramping-up to 5 FTEs during FY 2023

➤ Develop a State Trails Plan

Initiate plan in 2022, led by the State Trails Office in coordination with VDOT, DCR, and the State Trails Advisory Committee

➤ Implement the State Trails Program

Commit an additional \$20 million annually to implement three grant programs managed by the State Trails Office



All funding recommendations are in addition to existing resources committed to VDOT and DCR and programmed capital investments through existing transportation and recreation funding sources.

Recommendation – Establish State Trails Office

The State Trails Office develops the State Trails Plan, coordinates a State Trails Program, and works with trail partners and stakeholders to strategically support the development of trails throughout the Commonwealth.

- Establishes strategic direction
- Institutes implementation policy
- Leverages VDOT and DCR resources
- Coordinates investment and project priorities
- Markets multi-use trails and works with partners
- Reports on progress



Next Step: Set aside funding to staff and provide resources to the State Trails Office as soon as possible

Resources: 5 FTEs starting in FY 2023

Note – the location of this office is not recommended in the Report

Recommendation – Develop State Trails Plan

The most critical step in identifying and prioritizing a multi-use trail network in Virginia is to establish a comprehensive, interagency, State Trails Plan.

- Unified vision and goals
- Defines multi-use trail system
- Clarifies responsibilities
- Initiates a trails master planning process
- Establishes standards and data
- Prioritize needs and investments
- Engages stakeholders and public
- Creates a state trails database



Next Step: Set aside funding to develop the inaugural State Trails Plan starting in CY 2022

Resources: Additional \$2 million to support plan development, marketing, and outreach by the State Trails Office in 2022 – 2023

Recommendation – Implement a State Trails Program

Funding recommendations operationalize a State Trails Program to enhance planning practice, develop consistent standards and leverage resources to advance projects at different stages of development and delivery.

- Organizes the funding approach
- Maximizes potential of new funding sources
- Leverages existing sources
- Develops and implements grant strategy
- Distributes new state funding

Next Step: Assign new funding in FY 2023 to establish grant programs and technical assistance opportunities

Resources: Additional \$20 million annually to implement three grant programs: planning, construction, maintenance

Recommendation – Other Considerations



New initiatives and funding

represent a surge in federal, state, and local funding opportunities and partnerships

- » Governor's introduced budget earmarks \$207M for Fall Line Trails, Shenandoah Valley and Eastern Shore Rail Trails
- » Transportation Alternatives funding increase – recommend CTB to retain additional \$55M for regional trails for discreet investments plus \$10 million from 2021 Transportation Initiative



Reinforce the importance

of report recommendations and urgency to implement



Creates opportunities

to position to compete for discretionary grants, build new partnerships, and market the economic and public health value of trails