

French Broad River/Highway 251 Greenway Concept Plan and Feasibility Study Report



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Prepared for
Buncombe County Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Services

Prepared by



**French Broad River/Highway 251 Greenway
Concept Plan and Feasibility Study Report**

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Introduction and Background

This report provides an overview of the planning and analysis conducted in the preparation of the French Broad River/Highway 251 Concept Plan and Feasibility Analysis. When used in conjunction with the plans, details, and graphics prepared for the project, this report provides a complete picture of the conceptual plan and of the feasibility of developing the greenway. The concept plan and feasibility analysis was conducted by the planning team composed of staff of NFocus Planning & Design and Equinox Environmental, working under the direction of Buncombe County Parks, Greenways, and Recreation Services. Partners in the funding of the study have been Buncombe County, the Town of Woodfin, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, RiverLink, and the Blue Ridge Bicycle Club. Stakeholders, including major property owners and public entities, were involved early in the planning process. All property owners along the corridor were informed of the study and provided the opportunity to have input into the plan.

Study Corridor Description and Land Uses

The study corridor consists of the French Broad River corridor from the north corporate limits of the City of Asheville north to the Buncombe/Madison County line, including an area within the Town of Woodfin (see Map 1 in appendix A). Both the east and west of the river were investigated to determine the feasibility of developing a greenway trail. The corridor is approximately 15 miles long. For this study, an area extending approximately 1000 feet on both sides of the French Broad River was evaluated. The major highway paralleling the river, Highway 251 (Riverside Drive/Old Marshall Highway) is located on the east side of the river. Numerous bridges and roads provide access to the west side of the river but there is not a road that provides continuous access from the south to the north end of the study corridor on the west side of the river.

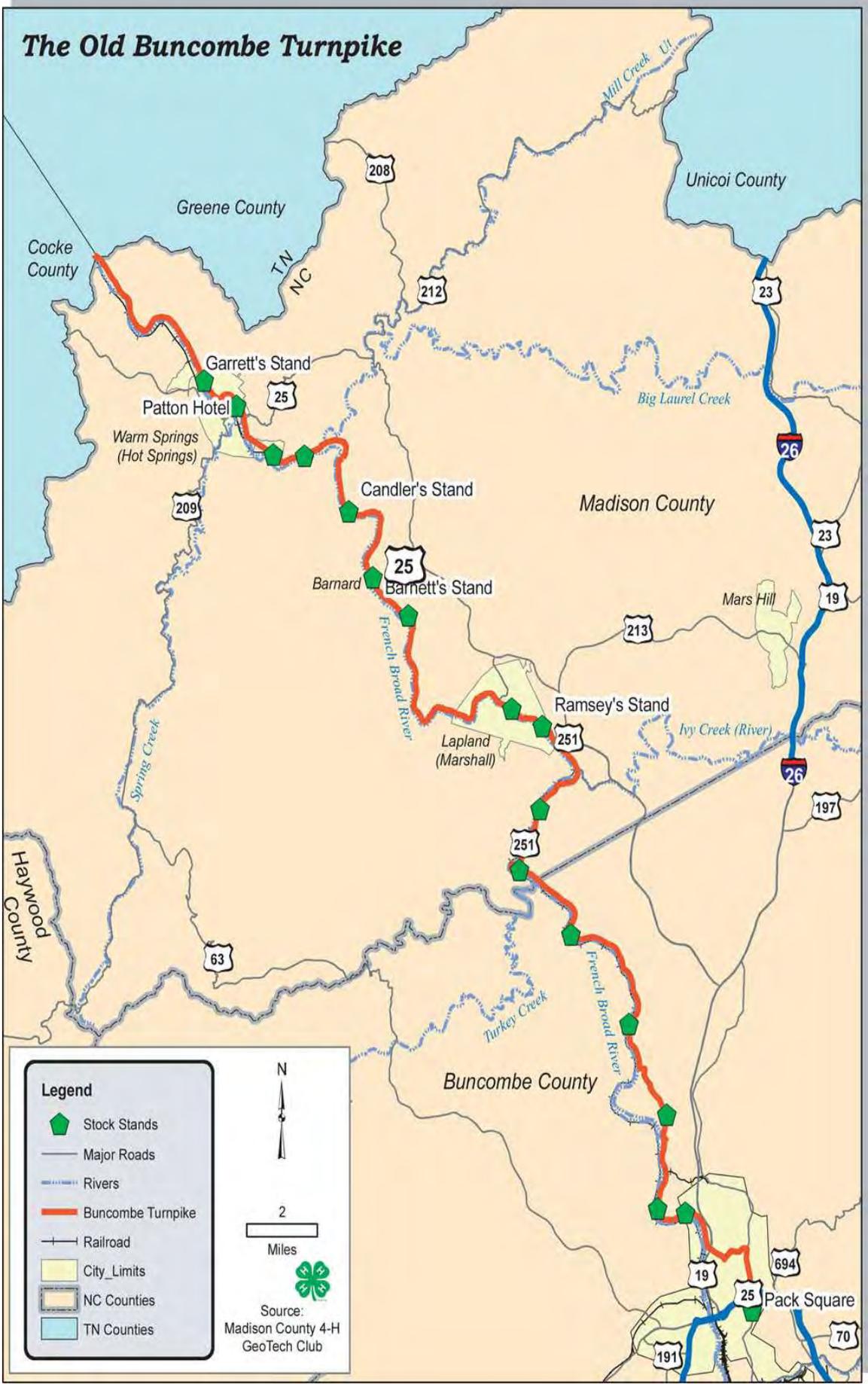
The study corridor is essentially a gorge carved out of the mountain landscape over time by the French Broad River. Bounded by steep terrain on either side, the river has created a narrow corridor that varies slightly in width with the wider section located in the south end of the study corridor. The section through the village of Alexander is slightly wider than abutting sections but structures are located within a few feet of the highway in this area. Along most of the study corridor, the area on the east side of the river is a bit more level than the west side. The east side of the river is the preferred location for the greenway trail at this time. Highway 251 is located on the east side of the river and the Norfolk/Southern railroad tracks are located on the west side. After the first third of the corridor, portions of highway 251 appear to have been constructed by blasting through rock to create a bench on which the road could be located. In most of this section of the corridor, the bench on which the road is located is too narrow to accommodate a pedestrian trail. Often the spoil or blasted rock from the blasting was discarded by pushing it over the road bench to the bank and even into the river. This material will make the development of the greenway trail more challenging in certain locations. Steep terrain and rock on either side of the road, especially after the first five miles, provides additional challenges to the development of a greenway trail.

Land uses within the study corridor include industrial, commercial, institutional, residential, and park/open space. The southern end of the corridor, with its proximity to the City of Asheville and being in the Town of Woodfin, is more developed than the northern end, which has a rural character. Industrial uses are located primarily at the south end of the corridor on the east side of the river, with the larger industrial uses located in the first mile of the study corridor. Other industrial uses are scattered along the first 5 miles of the study corridor, also on the east side of the river, with a small concentration of industrial uses near the Craggy Bridge. A former industrial plant located at the confluence of Beaverdam Creek on the east side of the river has been converted to an office park with businesses ranging from office to small manufacturing operations occupying the space. Located adjacent to the office park is the Metropolitan Sewerage District's office and wastewater treatment plant. Just north of the wastewater treatment plant is the former Buncombe County landfill. Although no longer in operation, there are environmental concerns at the former landfill that limit the location of a greenway trail on the property. Abutting the north side of the former Buncombe County landfill is the Craggy Correctional facility.

The west side of the river is characterized by fewer non-residential uses, with residential uses being the dominant land use on this side of the river. A small concentration of commercial uses is located along the river at Craggy Bridge (Old Leicester Highway). An Asheville City park is located just south of the study corridor on the west side of the river and a large undeveloped tract owned by the North Carolina Division of Forestry is located on the west side of the river at the north end of the study corridor. Properties are generally smaller on the south end of the study corridor and larger on the more rural north end of the corridor.

Historic and Cultural Significance

The study corridor has a great deal of historic and cultural significance, including the route of an early transportation link between Tennessee and South Carolina as well as the location of early industries that brought employment opportunities to area residents. The Buncombe Turnpike through North Carolina's mountains was built between 1824 and 1827 along the Drovers' Road, so called, because drovers used the road to lead herds of animals (droves) to market. The Turnpike was an important road until the 1880s, when a railroad was built along the same route. Upon completion, the Buncombe Turnpike was considered the finest road in North Carolina. The Turnpike led from the Poinsett Road on the South Carolina state line, through the Saluda Gap, by way of Flat Rock and Hendersonville, across the Asheville plateau to the Buncombe County Courthouse in Asheville, down the gorge of the French Broad River to Warm Springs, and north to Paint Rock where it joined the Tennessee Road. The entire road was seventy-five miles in length.



Travel from Kentucky and Tennessee over the Turnpike route to southern markets made it the most used road in Western North Carolina. All the territory within miles of the Turnpike benefited greatly and North Carolina entered upon a period of prosperity. The most immediate change was the massive increase in number of livestock through Asheville. It is estimated that 150,000 to 175,000 hogs passed through each October, November and December on their way to market, forming an almost continuous string of hogs from Tennessee to Asheville. To accommodate the on-going traffic on the Turnpike, enterprising people established stands, or wayside inns with stockyards, every two to eight miles along the road. While long gone, the stands and their owners became synonymous with Buncombe County place names, including James Mitchell Alexander's (Alexander), Hezekiah Barnard's (Barnardsville), and Zachariah Candler's (Candler).

While drovers used the Turnpike and stands during the fall and winter, stagecoaches began using the road shortly after the Turnpike opened. Stagecoaches ran on a regular schedule from Charleston to Greenville, South Carolina and from there to Asheville. These stagecoaches brought Asheville regular mail delivery, new fashions for local stores, and visitors from Charleston. One visitor wrote, "The turnpike road is excellent, the river beautiful, and the scenery on both sides wild and grand. The public houses too are good." Another wrote, "Our road, an excellent one for the mountains, is cut out along the very margin of the river. Occasionally there is no ledge to protect you from the steep. You wind along the precipice with a perpetual sense of danger, which increases the sublimity of the scene. The river, meanwhile, boils, and bounds, and rages at your feet..." Despite the risks of travel, Asheville quickly gained a reputation as a health resort, attracting summer residents from Charleston and Augusta who enjoyed the cool mountain air.

The Drovers' Road was not only the key to economic and social growth in the mountain section of North Carolina, but it also played a role in the Civil War. The network of roads provided easy travel for Union troops seeking food and shelter and provided former slaves and others passage to Tennessee to join the Union army. General George Stoneman's Raiders were able to gain entry to Asheville through the drovers' roads at Hickory Nut Gap in April of 1863. These Raiders included Colonel Isaac Kirby and 900 infantrymen of the Hundred and First Ohio Infantry who engaged volunteer Confederate troops from Asheville during the five-hour Battle of Asheville that resulted in a Union retreat.

Despite this victory, the Civil War drained Buncombe County of its resources. During the war, traffic on the Turnpike had dwindled to a trickle and the great drives of livestock had halted. During the war, many of Western North Carolina's drovers and farmers were killed or crippled. The railroads that met the old roads had been destroyed. In addition, the war had reduced the herds of animals and decimated the markets in South Carolina and Georgia. To pay debts, plantations were divided into smaller farms, many to be sharecropped. Western North Carolina, like most of the South, entered into an economic depression under the occupation of Federal troops.

While the Turnpike continued to transport people and livestock, its usage never regained its pre-war numbers. In 1869, the Turnpike along the French Broad River was turned over to the Western North Carolina Railroad Company for stock in that corporation. The railroad line was completed to Marion in 1870 and to Old Fort in 1873. The railroad reached Asheville in 1880 and was then extended to Tennessee. Because the railroad allowed animals to be transported quicker and without losing as much weight, it quickly

replaced the Drovers' Road as the main mode of transportation. On September 5, 1881, the Buncombe Turnpike Company surrendered its last stretch of road from the Henderson County line to Asheville. Today, Western North Carolina's roads, including NC Highway 251, still follow the patterns developed during the era of drovers and the great Drovers' Road.

With the coming of the railroad, industries began locating in western North Carolina to take advantage of local resources, primarily water and hard-working, relatively cheap labor. The mountain topography made the area less attractive for large industries than the piedmont, but some factories did locate in Buncombe County. One of them was the Martel Mill, a textile mill that located on the French Broad River in what is now Woodfin. A large factory was built, which was converted a few years ago to the Riverside Business Park. As with many large factories, a mill village developed around it to provide housing for the workers. Martel Village, located adjacent to the Martel Mill, enabled workers to live close to work. The mill provided employment opportunities for area residents, providing a consistent source of income in exchange for a more restrictive life style than the small farms they left to work in the factory. The route of the French Broad River/Highway 251 greenway will pass the former Martel Mill and Martel Village.

In recognition of the scenic quality of the study corridor, a portion of NC Highway 251 has been designated as a scenic byway through both the state and federal scenic byway programs. The section of the highway receiving this designation is the portion from Alexander to Marshal, which includes approximately half of the study corridor. This designation offers some protection along the highway (billboards are prohibited) but more importantly, promotes the route as an alternative for people who want to see and experience the scenic beauty of the region.

In 2004 the non-profit organization RiverLink created a THE Wilma Dykeman RiverWay Plan for the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers. Although the focus area of the plan is the "River District" within the City of Asheville, the plan and its design guidelines were created as a model for and to be replicated all along the French Broad and Swannanoa Rivers.

Property Ownership

Property ownership within the study corridor is varied, with public, semi-public, and private ownership of parcels. Parcel sizes range from small tracts of less than an acre to tracts comprising hundreds of acres. Map 2 (see appendix A) identifies public and private ownership of properties along the corridor, with residential uses ranging from small lots on the more urban south end of the corridor to large tracts on the more rural north end. As shown on the map, publicly owned properties are scattered along the corridor from the south end to the north end. The significant amount of property owned by public and semi-public entities may make development of a greenway more feasible as obtaining use of this land for the greenway may be easier than obtaining use of private properties. Public entities owning property within the study corridor include the Town of Woodfin, Buncombe County, and the State of North Carolina. State owned properties within the corridor are used by the University of North Carolina-Asheville, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Transportation, and the Division of Forestry. County owned properties include parks and the former landfill. The Metropolitan Sewerage District, a semi-public agency, owns property within the first segment of the study corridor. Private owners include individuals, businesses, and

corporate entities. The diverse ownership of the properties in the corridor is mirrored by the variety of land uses and reflects the uniqueness of the corridor.

Challenge Areas

During the investigation of the corridor, several areas were identified as challenge areas. This identification was based primarily upon the difficulty of constructing a greenway trail along the identified section. It was determined that these areas would require further study in order to provide options for the construction of a greenway trail, or other pedestrian linkage, within the area. A couple areas were included in the list of challenge areas not because they present a challenge to the construction of a greenway trail but because they provide an opportunity for a connection to an existing facility such as a park. The identified challenge areas are:

1. Transition from shoulder section in front of GDS to Craggy Railroad/NC DOT right-of-way
2. Section adjacent to auto salvage yard
3. Wyatt Waste Services site
4. Transition from shoulder section across from MSD plant to old landfill property
5. Difficult terrain in curve across from Goodman Road intersection
6. Section immediately north of Kuykendall Branch Rd. (narrow corridor and adjacent stream limit opportunity)
7. Connection to Ledges Park (opportunity) & transition from the bench along the river's edge up to the road shoulder. This is typical of the several areas where a transition from the bench up to the road shoulder will have to be made
8. Transition from road shoulder to bench along river's edge north of Ledges Park (in vicinity of Goldview Road) This is typical of several areas where a transition will have to be made from the road shoulder down to a bench along the river's edge.
9. Bridge at Monticello Road (Reems Creek)
10. The rural village design through Alexander
11. Intersection of Riverside Drive and Fletcher Martin Road and the Fletcher Martin bridge
12. The Flat Creek bridge
13. Alexander Park (transitions to and from)
14. Panther Branch bridge and adjacent area
15. Connection to Walnut Island Park (opportunity)

The locations of the challenge areas are shown on Map 3. (See Appendix A)

For each challenge area, alternatives were identified for the construction of a greenway trail or other pedestrian connection. The identified alternatives were reviewed by the planning team and a preferred alternative was selected for each area. More detailed sketch plans were prepared for some of the areas, such as ones that represented a typical section of the greenway or a challenge that would be encountered several times along the corridor (see Appendix B).

Analysis of the West Bank of the French Broad River for Greenway Location

This section provides a summary of an analysis conducted to determine the feasibility of developing a greenway on the west bank of the French Broad River from the Asheville/Woodfin corporate limits to the Buncombe/Madison County line (the study corridor). Several factors were reviewed in evaluating the feasibility of developing a greenway on the west bank of the river along the study corridor. Among the factors evaluated were:

- Property ownership
- Location of Norfolk-Southern Railway tracks
- Topography
- Access
- Proximity to publicly owned land

Based upon the analysis of these factors, it is recommended that development of a greenway on the west bank of the French Broad River within the study corridor not be pursued at this time, although this option should be retained for exploration and implementation in the future. This determination is based upon the following:

- Property ownership – The property ownership pattern is mixed on the west bank of the French Broad River within the study corridor. Based upon the Buncombe County tax records, ownership of the property adjacent to the river appears to be split between private owners and the Norfolk-Southern Railroad. The State of North Carolina owns a significant section of riverfront property on the north end of the corridor, although the tracks of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad limit access to the river from this property also. Most of the privately owned land is in residential use. The south end of the corridor is characterized by small parcels, with larger residential parcels located in the northern portion of the corridor. The City of Asheville owns property on which a park (Richmond Hill Park) is located near the southern terminus of the corridor. This park could provide an excellent amenity/focal point for a greenway located on the west side of the river. Riverfront property is divided between that owned by Norfolk-Southern Railroad and that owned by others. Given the large numbers of property owners on the west bank of the river, acquisition of easements required for the development of a greenway would be a very time-consuming and possibly expensive undertaking. On the east side of the river, Buncombe County owns a significant amount of riverfront property near the north end of the corridor. The State of North Carolina owns riverfront property in the southern section of the corridor and the Town of Woodfin owns a small section of riverfront property on the east side of the river. MSD (Metropolitan Sewerage District) owns a section of riverfront property on the east side of the river in the middle section of the corridor and has agreed to work with the County and the Town of Woodfin in the development of the greenway along the river. On the southern end of the corridor, an industrial use owns approximately 40 acres of riverfront property; this property owner has agreed to the location of a greenway trail adjacent to the river on their property. Given the pattern of property ownership and the agreements for the greenway already reached, the east side of the river is the preferred location for the initial development of the greenway.
- Location of railroad – The tracks of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad are located adjacent to the west bank of the French Broad River the entire length of the study corridor. Along approximately half the corridor, the Norfolk-Southern tracks are located close to the river and the railroad right-of-way extends to the river's edge. In the rest of the study corridor private property owners own land of varying width, but typically narrow, between the railroad tracks and the river. This is an active rail line with several trains per day using the tracks. Norfolk-Southern is very reluctant to allow use of its active rights-of-way for pedestrian trails and is also reluctant to permit pedestrian crossing of its tracks. Obtaining permission

for a greenway within a Norfolk-Southern right-of-way and/or for pedestrian crossings could be difficult and time-consuming.

- Topography – Much of the study corridor on the west side of the river is characterized by steep topography extending to the river's edge. The corridor is essentially a river gorge, with the major north-south road (Highway 251) located on the east side of the river, which has a bit gentler topography. Although the topography on both sides of the river is challenging, the terrain on the east side is more amenable to the construction of greenway trails, especially on the north end of the corridor.
- Access – The presence of Riverside Drive and Old Marshall Highway (NC 251) on the east side of the French Broad River within the study corridor makes this side of the river more accessible than the west side. While there are some residential roads on the west side of the river, they are scattered along the corridor. None of these roads provide the continuity of access along the entire study corridor that Riverside Drive and Old Marshall Highway provide on the east side of the river. On the north end of the study corridor, there are no public roads within close proximity to the river on the west side, making vehicular access particularly difficult. Vehicular access to the proposed greenway is important for a variety of reasons including construction and maintenance of the trail and the need for users who may not have the ability or desire to travel the entire corridor to be able to access sections of it.
- Proximity to publicly owned land – The study corridor is bookended by publicly owned land on the west bank of the French Broad River. On the south end of the corridor is the City of Asheville's Richmond Hill Park. On the north end of the corridor the State of North Carolina owns approximately 850 acres of undeveloped property. These publicly owned lands could serve as trail heads, amenity areas and/or focal points for a greenway located on the west side of the river. Richmond Hill Park is easily accessible via Richmond Hill Road, but access from the park to the river is difficult due to the steep terrain and the presence of the Norfolk-Southern Railway tracks between the park property and the river. The State owned land on the north end of the corridor is accessed via Cedar Hill Road, but access from this road to the river is made challenging by the distance (approximately ¼ mile) between the road and the river, the topography, and the need to cross the railroad tracks to access the river. As noted previously in this report, there is a good deal of publicly owned land on the east bank of the French Broad River in the study corridor as well. Starting at the south end of the study corridor and going north, the publicly owned properties are:
 - The NC DOT property located across Riverside Drive from the old Craggy Prison (south of Craggy Bridge);
 - The property owned by the State of North Carolina and used by UNCA located adjacent to the NC DOT property south of Craggy Bridge;
 - Woodfin Riverside Park, located north of Craggy Bridge;
 - The MSD property extending from the intersection of Elk Mountain Road and Riverside Drive to the intersection of Goodman Road. MSD is a semi-public agency and is working with local governments throughout Buncombe County in the development of greenways;

- The former Buncombe County landfill, which abuts the French Broad River and extends along Riverside Drive from the north end of the MSD property at Goodman Road to the intersection of Old Marshall Highway. Due to the environmental issues associated with the use of this property as a landfill, the location of greenway trails is regulated but the trails can be located on the property;
- Walnut Island Park, located along the river north of the intersection of NC 251 and Lower Flat Creek Road; and
- Alexander Park, including the property between NC 251 and the river from Lower Flat Creek Road to Panther Branch.

In addition to these publicly owned properties, the Ledges Park is leased by Buncombe County and is developed as recreational facility with picnic areas and river access. The numerous publicly owned properties on the east side of the river within the study corridor provide opportunities for development of greenway trails, existing access to the river, and the shared use of facilities such as parking, picnic facilities, and bathroom facilities.

Based upon this analysis, it is recommended that development of a greenway on the west side of the French Broad River within the study corridor not be pursued at this time. Opportunities for connections to the west side of the river, such as at Craggy Bridge and Fletcher Martin Road, should be identified and future opportunities for the extension of the greenway system to the areas west of the river should be explored as they become available. The challenges to development of a greenway trail on the west side of the French Broad River within the study corridor make the location of the greenway on the east side of the river more attractive at this time. Development of a greenway on the west side of the French Broad River should be maintained as an option to be explored and implemented in the future.

Connections

As plans for greenways along the French Broad/Highway 251 corridor are prepared and implemented, connections to proposed and potential greenways and activity areas should be identified. These connections will result in the increased use of the greenway and assure that is part of a connected system of trails and bikeways. By identifying these connections now, accommodations can be made for the required linkages and the vision of the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway as part of a regional system can be acknowledged. The potential connections identified during this process, shown on Map 2, are:

- [Connection to the Reed Creek Greenway](#) – This greenway is being developed by the City of Asheville along Reed Creek, which parallels Broadway at the southern terminus of the study corridor. A substantial portion of this greenway has been constructed with additional sections proposed for construction in the near future. A connection to this greenway would provide a linkage to downtown Asheville, several residential neighborhoods, and UNCA (via the Glenn's Creek Greenway).
- [Connection to the Wilma Dykeman Greenway](#) – The City of Asheville has plans for a greenway roughly paralleling Riverside Drive from the Biltmore Village area to the southern terminus of the study corridor (at the Asheville City Limits). Although there is no timetable for the development of this greenway and a feasibility study of the corridor currently underway stops a mile short of the end of the French Broad/Highway 251 study corridor, the potential for a connection to this greenway should be acknowledged and included in the plans for the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway. This connection would provide a link to south

- Asheville, Carrier Park, and the Hominy Creek greenway, providing the spine for a regional greenway system.
- [Connection at Lookout Road](#) – A connection to the French Broad greenway at Lookout Road would provide pedestrian access to the river for a large residential area. In addition, Lookout Road abuts the UNCA campus and a pedestrian link along this street would connect to UNCA's sidewalk system.
 - [Connection at Craggy Bridge](#) – This bridge connecting Old Leicester Highway to Riverside Drive has a sidewalk on it, providing the first step in a connection from the proposed French Broad/Highway 251 greenway to the growing Erwin and Leicester communities. The narrow road corridor along Old Leicester Highway and the pattern of development will make location of a greenway challenging but this linkage will be of significant benefit to the residents of these areas, providing a pedestrian connection to the river.
 - [Connection at Elk Mountain Road](#) – The Town of Woodfin is preparing to construct a sidewalk along Elk Mountain Road that will provide a pedestrian connection from Riverside Drive to Woodfin Elementary School, Woodfin Town Hall, and several residential neighborhoods. Providing a connection from the sidewalk to the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway will enable Woodfin residents to walk safely to the river.
 - [Connection at Goodman Road](#) – A connection at Goodman Road provides the initial link for a pedestrian connection to Weaverville Highway in the Town of Woodfin. The greenway trail would roughly follow Goodman Road, then follow a new road through a partially developed property, and then parallel existing roads in the Audubon Park development before connecting to Weaverville Highway.
 - [Connection to the former Buncombe County Landfill](#) – The former landfill consists of a large tract of land overlooking the French Broad River with the potential for development that incorporates trails providing access to the river. Connections to the former landfill property at one or more locations should be planned to ensure that any future development of the landfill property provides these pedestrian amenities. The landfill property has environmental constraints and issues, which will require careful planning for the future development of the site.
 - [Connection to Craggy Prison property](#) – Craggy Prison is located on a bluff overlooking the river, with the prison facilities located above the river and buffered from it by topography, distance, and vegetation. Due to the need for security, access across the property will be restricted. The preferred location for the greenway is along the river at the base of the bluff. Locating the greenway here will permit users to access the river while keeping the trail away from the prison facilities. If the preferred alternative is not possible due to the prison's security concerns, a future connection to the prison property should be planned.
 - [Connection to Old Marshall Highway at Riverside Drive](#) – The intersection of Old Marshall Highway and Riverside Drive provides an opportunity for a future connection that will provide a pedestrian link to Woodfin and Weaverville. A sidewalk along Old Marshall Highway from its intersection with Riverside Drive to Weaverville Highway is identified as a phase 3 project in the Town of Woodfin's Greenways, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Master Plan.
 - [Connection at Reems Creek \(Monticello Road\)](#) – A link connecting the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway to the Town of Weaverville is important to provide Town residents a means of pedestrian access to the river and the greenway trail. Planning for a connection at Reems Creek (Monticello Road) would provide the opportunity to create this link at some future date.

- [Connection at Fletcher Martin Road](#) – Providing the opportunity for a future connection at Fletcher Martin Road would allow another link to the west side of the river. A future greenway or bikeway at Fletcher Martin Road would provide an opportunity for safe pedestrian and/or bicycle access to a scenic, rural section of Buncombe County. Due to the limited road rights-of-way and possible challenges in obtaining easements for a greenway, the first step here may be signing the existing roads for bicycles, with greenway development occurring as public support increases.
- [Connections to Buncombe County Parks](#) – There are three Buncombe County parks located on the east side of the French Broad River along the corridor: Ledges, Walnut Island, and Alexander. As proposed in this plan, each of these parks would be connected to the greenway. The parks can serve as trailheads for sections of the greenway, providing parking, picnicking, and other amenities for greenway users.
- [Connection to future Madison County Greenway](#) – Some initial planning has begun for the development of a greenway along the French Broad River in Madison County from the Buncombe County line to Marshall. Construction of the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway in Buncombe County should be coordinated with the greenway planning efforts in Madison County to ensure that the proposed greenways are compatible.

Funding Sources for Greenways, Sidewalks, and Bikeways

The relatively high cost of pedestrian and bicycle facility construction, and limited County funds, means that financial assistance from all sources is needed to make Buncombe County's dream of a comprehensive pedestrian and bicycle system a reality. There are a variety of funding sources, primarily governmental, that provide funding for the planning and development of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Brief descriptions of these potential funding sources are provided below. Due to the current economic conditions and the impact upon governmental budgets, the status of funding sources is constantly changing. Potential funding sources should be investigated as plans are being prepared for construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to identify the ability of the funding source to provide financial assistance for the project.

Public Funding Sources

[Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century \(TEA21\)](#)

The primary source of federal funding for greenways is through the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA21), formerly the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA provided millions of dollars in funding for bicycle and pedestrian transportation projects across the country and TEA21 will provide millions more. There are many sections of TEA21 that support the development of bicycle and pedestrian transportation corridors. NCDOT can utilize funding from any of these subsets of TEA21. Those sections that apply to the creation of greenways, sidewalks and bikeways include:

[Surface Transportation Program \(STP\) funds](#)

These funds can be used for bicycle and pedestrian facility construction or non-construction projects such as brochures, public service announcements, and route maps. The projects must be related to bicycle and pedestrian transportation and must be part of the Long Range Transportation Plan. These funds are programmed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the Transportation Improvement Program.

[Transportation Enhancements Program](#)

Ten percent of North Carolina's annual STP funds are available for Transportation Enhancements, which include projects such as trails, greenways, sidewalks, signage, bikeways, safety education and wildlife undercrossings. There is usually a 20 percent

local match required (some states will accept donations of services, materials or land in lieu of cash). Projects must also comply with various federal laws and regulations in order to receive these funds. The North Carolina DOT administers TEA21 funding and should be contacted for further details.

National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRTFA or Symms Act)

A component of TEA21, the NRTFA is a funding source to assist with the development of non-motorized and motorized trails. The Act uses funds paid into the Highway Trust Fund from fees on non-highway recreation fuel used by off-road vehicles and camping equipment. This money can be spent on the acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property, trail development, construction and maintenance. Through state agencies, "Symms Act" grants are available to private and public sector organizations. NRTFA projects are 80 percent federally funded, and grant recipients must provide a 20 percent match. Federal agency project sponsors or other federal programs may provide additional federal share up to 95 percent. Local matches can be in the form of donations of services, materials or land. Projects funded must be consistent with the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*.

Powell Bill Funds

The State of North Carolina, through the Department of Transportation, provides funds to cities and towns to assist with the cost of maintaining local streets under the Powell Bill program. Monies for these funds are generated through the state gasoline tax. The use of these funds for the construction and maintenance of sidewalks, bikeways, and trails is permitted if the facility is located within the right-of-way of a street or road approved for Powell Bill Funding.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants

This federal funding source was established in 1965 to provide park and recreation opportunities to residents throughout the United States. Money for the fund comes from the sale or lease of nonrenewable resources, primarily federal offshore oil and gas leases and surplus federal land sales. LWCF funds are used by federal agencies to acquire additions to National Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Refuges. In the past, Congress has also appropriated LWCF monies for so called "state-side" projects. These "state-side" LWCF grants can be used by communities to acquire and build a variety of park and recreation facilities, including trails and greenways. "State-side" LWCF funds are annually distributed by the National Park Service through the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). Communities must match LWCF grants with 50 percent of the local project costs through in-kind services or cash. All projects funded by LWCF grants must be used exclusively for recreation purposes, in perpetuity.

North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF)

This relatively new funding source provides more than \$5 million in matching funds annually for local recreation land acquisition, development and renovation to communities across the state. The funding source, which comes from a real estate transfer tax, requires a 50-50 match from local government and no more than \$250,000 can be requested. The Recreation Resources Service should be contacted for additional information (919-515-7118).

NC Trails Adopt a Trail Program

The NC Adopt a Trail Program awards \$108,000 annually to local governments, nonprofits, and private trail groups. These funds can be used for trail maintenance and upkeep, trail signage, trail brochures and maps, and trail development. This grant program requires no matching funds or In-Kind resources by the grantee.

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

This program provides \$1.3 million in funding annually. It is a program that is funded by Congress with money gathered from taxes that U.S. citizens pay on gas. All grant applicants must be able to contribute 20% of the total cost of the project. The maximum grant amount is \$75,000.

Clean Water Management Trust Fund

In 1996, the General Assembly established the Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) to provide grants to local governments, state agencies, and nonprofit conservation organizations for projects that address water pollution problems. Six and a half percent of the unreserved credit balance in the state's general fund, or a minimum of \$30 million annually, is allocated to the CWMTF. In its first year of operations, the CWMTF received \$39 million. CWMTF grants are selected by an independent 18-member Board of Trustees for projects that: 1) enhance or restore degraded waters; 2) protect unpolluted waters; and/or 3) contribute towards a network of riparian buffers and greenways for environmental, educational, and recreational benefits. Projects range from land acquisition for greenways and riparian buffers to sewage treatment plant upgrades to planning and mapping for water quality protection. From 1997-2007, 53% of allocated funds went to land acquisition costs.

Scenic Byway and Historical Organization Funding

The designation of a portion of Highway 251 as a Scenic Byway provides potential opportunities for funding of the greenway trail. Funds allocated by NC DOT for scenic highway improvements should be pursued for financing of greenway and amenity construction. The history of the French Broad/Highway 251 corridor offers the potential for funding from organizations and agencies promoting historic events and locations. The NC State Historic Preservation Office and the US Department of the Interior are potential sources of funding for features related to the history of the corridor.

Local Capital Improvements Program

Some local governments have initiated a yearly appropriation for sidewalk, greenway, and trail development in the capital improvements program. Even a relatively small amount of dedicated funding per year can fund a significant amount of sidewalk, greenway, and trail construction over a number of years. Local funds set aside for this purpose can provide the local match required for state and federal programs identified above, greatly increasing Buncombe County's ability to construct pedestrian facilities.

Private Funding Sources

Many communities have solicited greenway funding from a variety of private foundations, corporations, and other conservation-minded benefactors. As a general rule, local foundations and businesses will have a greater interest in and be more likely to fund local projects. These local sources should be approached first, before seeking funds outside the community.

Local Foundations

Several local philanthropic foundations in Buncombe County have among their priorities funding for community projects like greenway and an interest in environmental and conservation issues. All local foundations have differing eligibility requirements, application procedures and funding guidelines. Foundations which may fund greenway activities should be carefully researched. An initial letter of inquiry is usually the best way to determine if a foundation will consider an application for funding a greenway project.

Local Businesses

Local governments should seek funding from inside the community before soliciting funding from outside of the community. It is important to educate members of the public and community businesses on projects seeking funding in order to encourage local

donations. Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for development of greenways through:

- Donations of cash to a specific greenway segment;
- Donations of services by corporations to reduce the cost of greenway implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a trail;
- Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support greenway implementation and can supply essential products for facility development.

This method of raising funds requires a great deal of staff coordination and time, making a commitment of staff time necessary in order for such a program to be successful in Buncombe County.

Trail Sponsors

A sponsorship program for greenway and sidewalk amenities allows for smaller donations to be received both from individuals and businesses. The program must be well planned and organized, with design standards and associated costs established for each amenity. Project elements which may be funded can include wayside exhibits, benches, trash receptacles, entry signage, and picnic areas. Usually, plaques recognizing the individual contributors are placed on the constructed amenities or at a prominent entry point to the greenway.

Volunteer Work

Community volunteers may help with trail construction, as well as fund raising. Potential sources of volunteer labor in Buncombe County could include college students (since some local colleges require community service), local bicyclists, local historical groups, neighborhood associations, local churches, conservation groups, school groups, and local civic clubs such as Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions Clubs. As with several of the sources mentioned in this section, the establishment and coordination of volunteer work programs can require a good deal of time.

Coordination with Other Greenway Plans

Other greenway planning efforts are underway in Buncombe and Madison Counties with which the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway planning effort should be coordinated. Greenway planning in Asheville, Woodfin, and Madison County should be coordinated with this effort to achieve a regional greenway system.

With approximately 1/3 of the corridor for the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway located within the Town of Woodfin, it is essential that the planning effort be coordinated with Woodfin's plans. The Town has helped fund this plan, has participated on the steering committee for this plan, and has taken an active role in all parts of the planning effort. Woodfin's greenway plan identifies the French Broad greenway as an important element and the Town has taken steps to secure funding for property owner outreach and to finance the construction of the first segment of the greenway. The Town of Woodfin will begin construction in late 2010 on the Elk Mountain Road sidewalk, which will provide an important link from residential and institutional areas in the Town to the French Broad River.

greenway system. The Town of Marshall is working with Madison County on the plans for a greenway system to serve the county. Madison County staff and citizens have met with Buncombe County staff and citizens to discuss the coordination of the planning efforts for the French Broad River greenway.

Design Options

In order to accommodate a greenway that serves multi-uses, we are recommending a 10 foot wide hardened surface trail on a compacted gravel base. A trail of this design will be wide enough to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. Additionally, the trail surface selected and trail design would have to meet ADA standards for materials and maximum slope to ensure accessibility. A construction easement of approximately 30 feet in width will be required to construct the standard design. In addition to the standard design option for the trail, uniform design should be used for signs, benches, lighting, shelters, and other amenities associated with the greenway. It is recommended that natural materials common to the area, such as rock and wood, be used for these features and amenities. A logo or symbol for the greenway should be developed to provide it with a unique brand. Buncombe County is known for the artists and craftspeople who live and work here; they should be encouraged to design and fabricate the amenities and features.

Although the standard design option will be the goal for the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway, existing conditions along the corridor will make the construction of this design impossible in locations. Among the challenges for the construction of the standard design option are:

- Existing development patterns resulting in narrow corridors between buildings and the river, between buildings and roads, and similar situations.
- Existing topography, particularly changes in elevation between the shoulder of Highway 251 and the river's edge. Sections of the trail that would be located in areas with a steep cross slope will require special consideration such as benching to provide a base for the trail or a cantilevered trail.
- Existing natural features such as rock outcroppings.
- Sensitive areas such as streams and wetlands in which boardwalks, bridges, or other design treatments will need to be utilized, resulting in less impact.

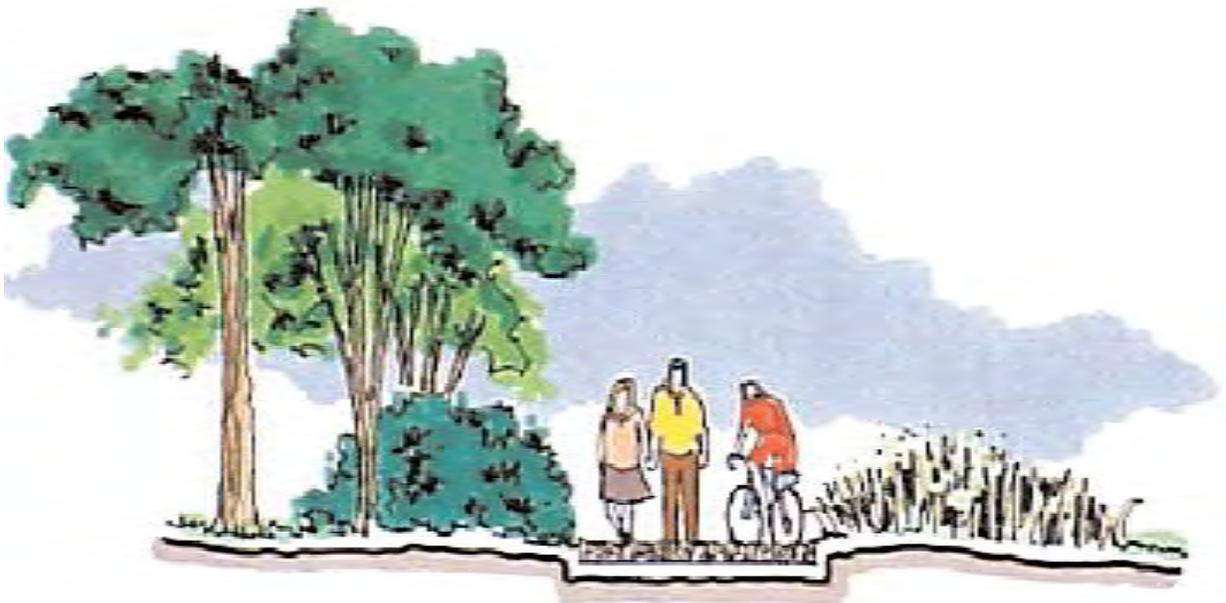
In order to address the varying conditions within the study corridor, design options for the greenway trail have been provided. The design options include designs prepared for the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan (City of Asheville), the Woodfin Greenways, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Master Plan (Town of Woodfin), and preliminary designs prepared for this plan. Schematics of the design options follow and/or are included as attachments to this plan narrative. The following four (4) graphics are from the Wilma Dykeman Riverway Plan and are indicative of the design options provided in that plan that can be replicated along the entire French Broad River corridor.



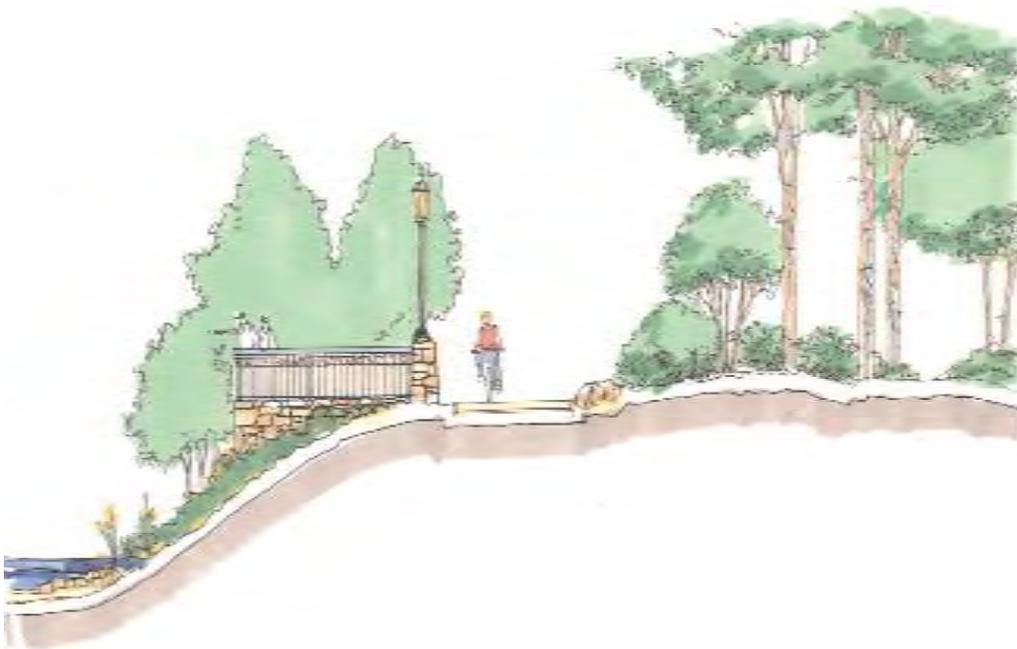
Gateway elements, such as vertical markers, piers, poles, plazas, low walls, signage, special lighting and landscaping, will provide a consistent palette of design elements which will help to build a unique identity for the French Broad greenway.



Typical greenway adjacent to street in urban area



MULTI-USE RECREATIONAL TRAILS Soft, porous paving materials (for use in passive settings) – may not meet ADA standards



River overlooks at scenic vista points will enhance the enjoyment of the greenway and of the river.

Implementation Segments

The greenway identified for implementation by the French Broad River/Highway 251 Greenway Plan (Map 4, see Appendix A) traverses a 15-mile corridor that varies from developed urban areas to undeveloped rural areas with topography ranging from level and grassy to steep and rocky. Given the challenges of working with the varying natural and anthropogenic characteristics of the corridor, and with the different property owners, it is readily apparent that implementation of this plan will require time, money, and persistence. Acknowledging that the entire greenway cannot be constructed at one time, the identification of trail segments that will permit the efficient use of resources is essential. The construction of the greenway in segments will assure that the goal of constructing the entire greenway is met. Recognizing that opportunities may arise that are not identified, the segments listed should serve as focus segments and be constructed as funds, easements, and support for the segments become available. The identified segments of the French Broad River/Highway 251 greenway are:

- Woodfin Riverside Park to Beaverdam Creek – The construction of this short segment of the greenway has the potential to serve not only as an initial project but also as a model for intergovernmental cooperation. Located within the Town of Woodfin, this segment would provide a safe pedestrian route to Woodfin Riverside Park that could be used by Woodfin residents and employees of MSD and Riverside Business Park. The town has received preliminary approval for a Recreation Trails Program grant to assist with the cost of the greenway segment. Cooperation and financial support from Buncombe County could serve as a model for intergovernmental cooperation in the construction and maintenance of greenways throughout the County.
- Alexander Park – Buncombe County has developed a small park on land across NC Highway 251 from the current landfill. A greenway trail on this property is scheduled for construction in the near future. The design and construction of the greenway trail should be coordinated with this plan to assure compatibility. Plans for Alexander Park should anticipate its function as a trailhead for the greenway and appropriate amenities and facilities should be planned.
- Ledges Park – A section of the trail north and south of Ledges Park should be developed as an accessible section of the greenway. A rough trail currently exists along the river; the route of this trail should be followed with the new trail. An accessible parking space can be developed in the current parking lot in the location currently used for access by maintenance equipment. The route used by the equipment can be upgraded to provide an accessible route to the trail. The trail should be developed north and south of the park on a bench along the river to the extent possible. While the plans for the French Broad/Highway 251 Greenway may not follow the entire route of the Ledges trail, this trail will serve a valuable role as an accessible section and in building support for the larger greenway.
- Southern terminus to GDS property – Two of the property owners within this section, one of whom owns over ½ mile of river frontage, have verbally agreed to provide an easement for the greenway. A significant segment of this section of the greenway can be constructed on the top of an existing dike, possibly resulting in lower construction costs. Providing access to a currently inaccessible section of the river will heighten awareness of the river and of the importance of developing the entire greenway. Construction of this segment of the greenway should be coordinated with the Town of Woodfin, with opportunities for sharing the cost of construction and maintenance explored.

- Beaverdam Creek to intersection of Riverside Drive and Highway 251 – This section of the greenway will go through publicly owned lands; MSD, the former Buncombe County landfill, and Craggy Correctional facility. The preferred route on these properties is along the highway at the south end, then crossing MSD property to access the river and then following the river to appoint where the trail would come up to the highway. As mentioned earlier in this narrative there are environmental concerns on the former landfill and security issues with the correctional facility that may hinder the ability to develop the trail along the preferred route. If that is the case, the alternative route takes the trail along the same initial route but then has it following existing haul roads located near the highway on the landfill property. Opportunities should be explored for working with the Town of Woodfin on the construction and maintenance of this segment of the greenway.
- GDS Property to Silvers Auto Salvage Yard – The portion of this segment at the GDS property will have to be located on the road shoulder due to the intensity of use on this property. The trail will share the right-of-way of the Craggy Mountain Railroad line before crossing state owned property used by NC DOT and UNCA. There is a potential to provide amenities (picnic tables and benches) on the property used by UNCA.
- Alexander to Fletcher Martin Road Bridge – The greenway is proposed as a sidewalk adjacent to the west side of the road through the “village” of Alexander. This design will require the widening of the road corridor and the shifting of the road to the east, a challenging project due to the presence of rock on the east side of the road. The benefits are worth the challenges, as this section will provide a critical link in the greenway, will increase the safety of residents and visitors in Alexander, and has the potential to be heavily used. Outside the “village” of Alexander the trail can be widened to 10’, with a potential for parking and a trailhead near the Fletcher Martin Road bridge.
- Intersection of Riverside Drive and Old Marshall Highway to Ledges Park – The narrow road corridor created by the topography and existing land uses in this area will make construction of this segment of the greenway challenging. The preferred option is to route the greenway along the river from the Craggy Correctional facility to Ledges Park. Existing land uses and property ownership patterns may make this option unrealistic. The alternative route is on the east side of the highway, at a higher elevation above the road and the river.
- Alexander Park to the Madison County line – The location of structures near the highway and the shallow lot depths will require portions of this section of the greenway to be constructed as a sidewalk or trail adjacent to the road. Where possible, the concept plan calls for the greenway trail to be located near the river. This trail segment will create a link to Madison County, setting the stage for a greenway connection to Marshall.
- Silvers Auto Salvage Yard to Woodfin Riverside Park – This segment could be one of the more interesting ones to design and build due to the intense use made of the properties by the existing land uses. Very little room is available for the trail on the properties, there are topographical challenges, and little to no road right-of-way, which combine to make this a challenging segment. A potential exists for locating the greenway on the Craggy Mountain Railroad right-of-way.
- Fletcher Martin Bridge to Alexander Park – This section of the greenway is envisioned as a trail transitioning from a bench along the edge of the river to the

shoulder of the highway as conditions dictate. This section of trail will provide a connection to Walnut Island Park, which could serve as a trailhead for this segment of the greenway.

The construction of the greenway in segments as identified above represents a long term commitment of time, money, and resources to the development of the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway. Completion of the greenway will require support from greenway advocates, property owners, the citizens of Buncombe County, and local government staff and officials. This breakdown of the greenway into segments can be used as a guide for the construction but should not be viewed as an absolute. As money, easements, or other factors influencing greenway construction become available for construction of any segment(s) of the greenway, these opportunities should be taken with the goal of constructing the entire greenway as soon as possible.

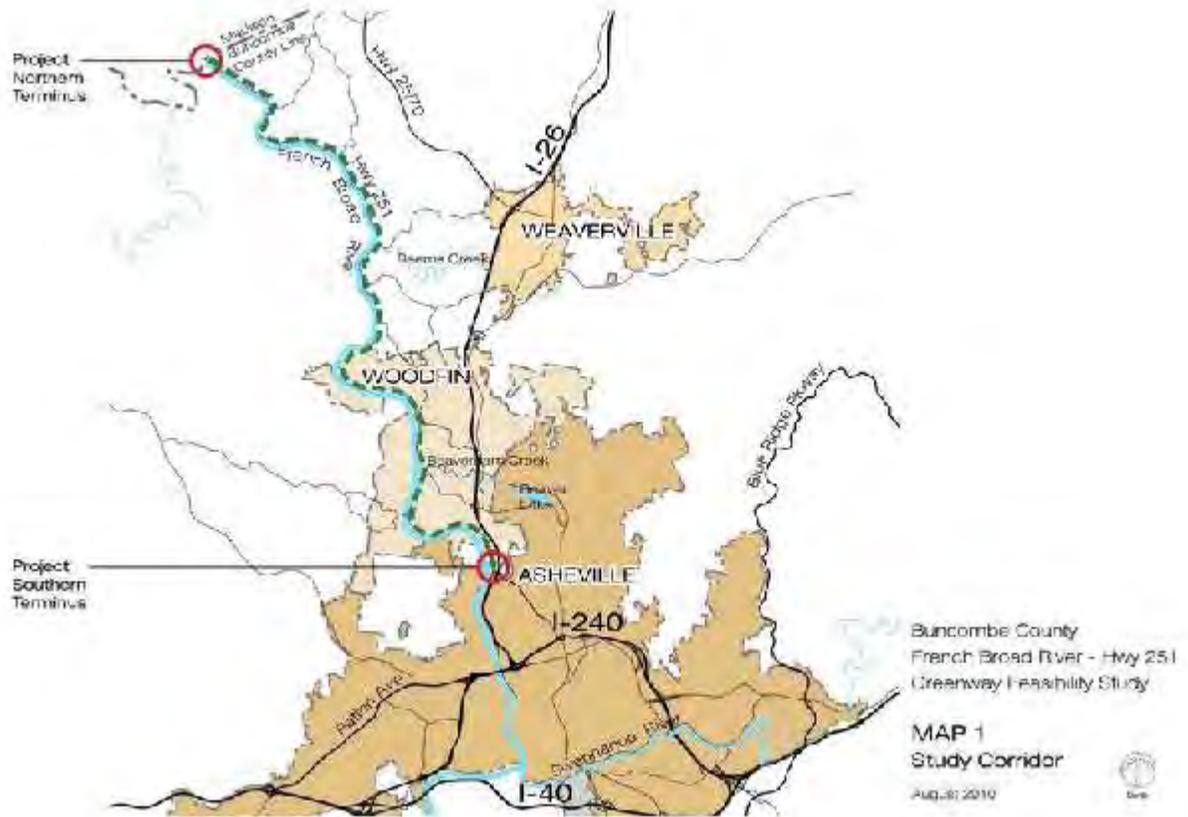
Next Steps

Construction of the French Broad/Highway 251 will provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the beauty of the French Broad River as it makes its way from Asheville to Madison County. The history and beauty of the river corridor will be available to walkers, runners, bicyclists, and anyone who wants to enjoy the tranquility of the river. Completion of the greenway will be the realization of a dream for the many persons who have advocated for the greenway. The French Broad/Highway 251 Greenway will provide the spine for a greenway system that can connect to communities throughout north Buncombe County and beyond. Bringing this dream to reality will require effort on the part of private citizens, civic organizations, and local governments. A number of steps must be taken on this journey, including the following:

- Continue to work with property owners along the corridor to refine the location of the trail and to obtain easements required for the construction and maintenance of the greenway.
- Develop detailed plans for construction of greenway segments as easements and funding become available for the segments.
- Develop tentative cooperative agreement(s) with the Town of Woodfin for the construction and maintenance of the segments of the French Broad/Highway 251 greenway located within the Town.
- Work with RiverLink, The Buncombe County Greenways and Trails Commission, the French Broad Greenway Committee, and others to promote and publicize the development of greenways throughout the County.
- Identify and pursue funding opportunities for construction of segments of the greenway, remembering that no section of the trail is too small to ignore and no amount of funding is too little to refuse.

Appendix A Maps

Map 1 - Study Corridor

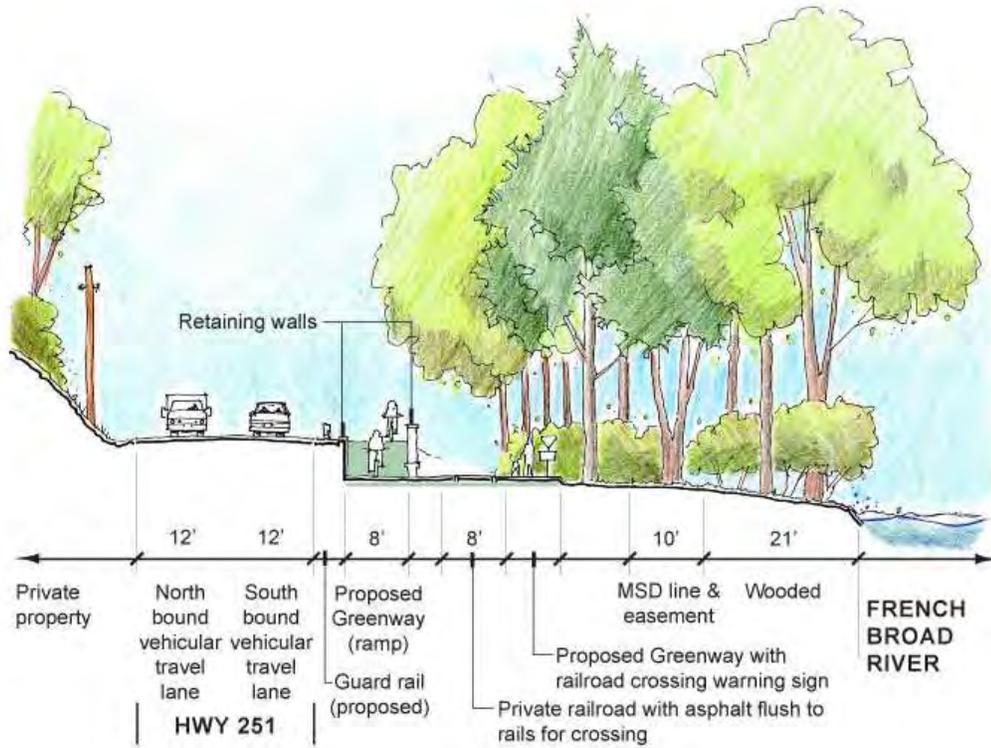


Map 4 – Greenway Route Identified for Implementation

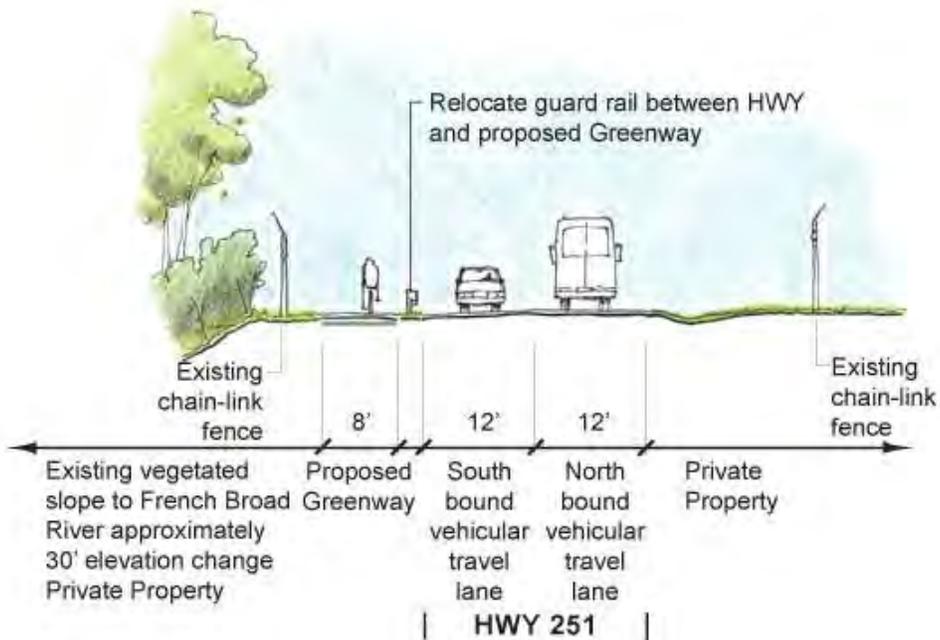


Appendix B Challenge Area Details

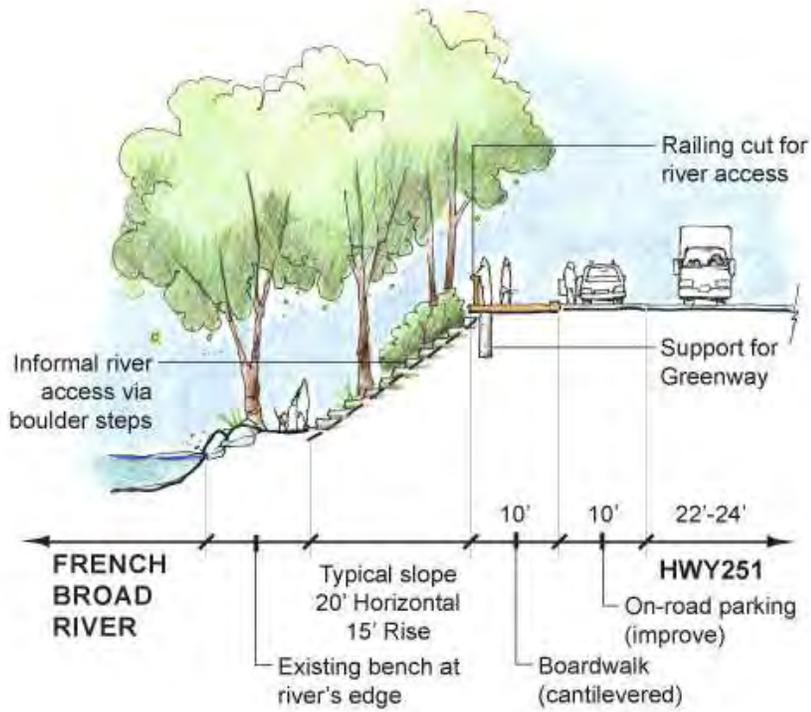
Typical Section Area 1



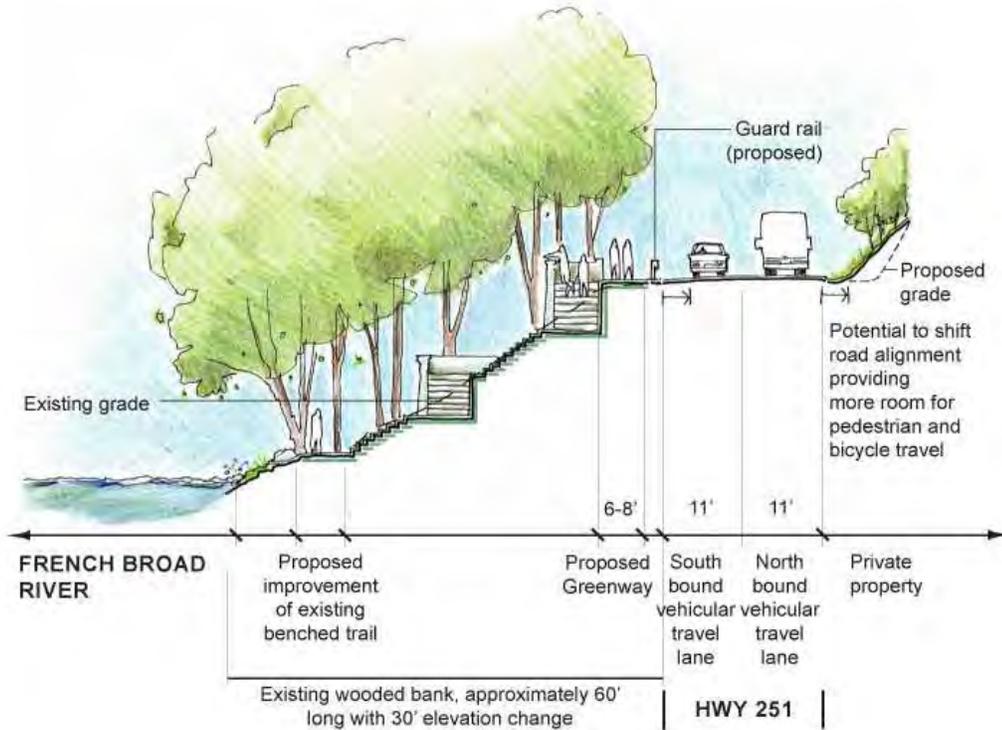
Typical Section Area 4



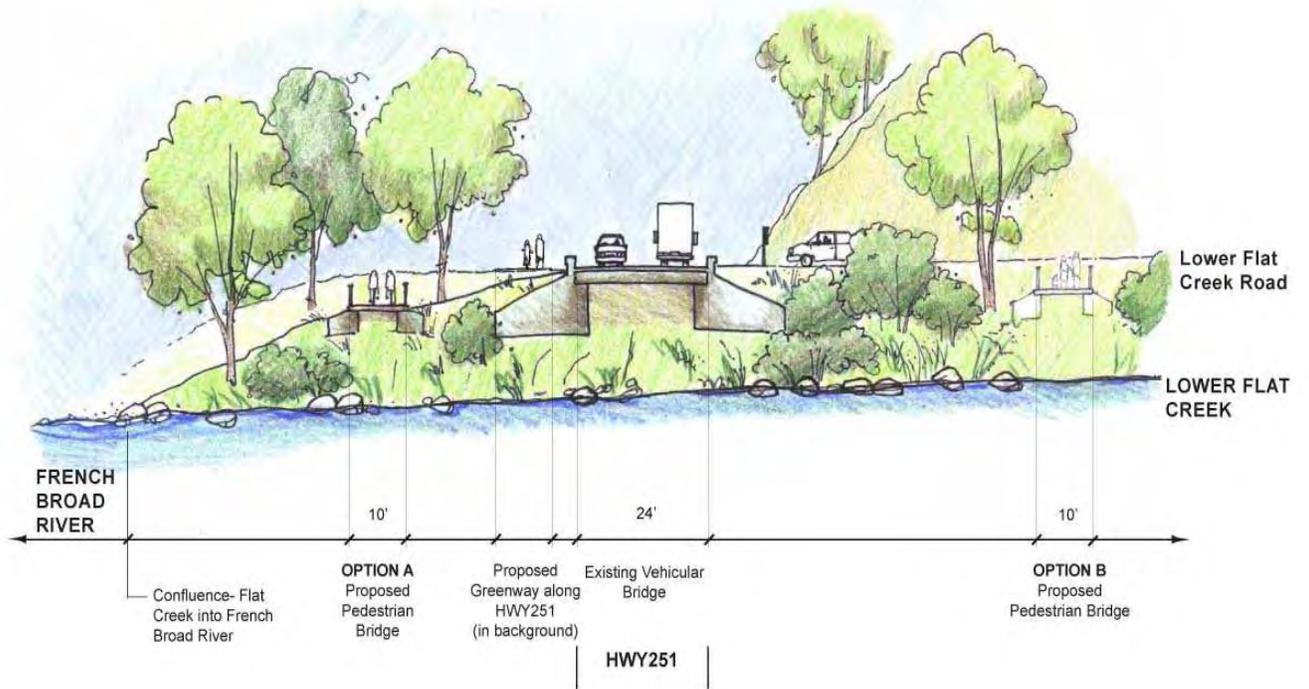
Typical Section Area 5



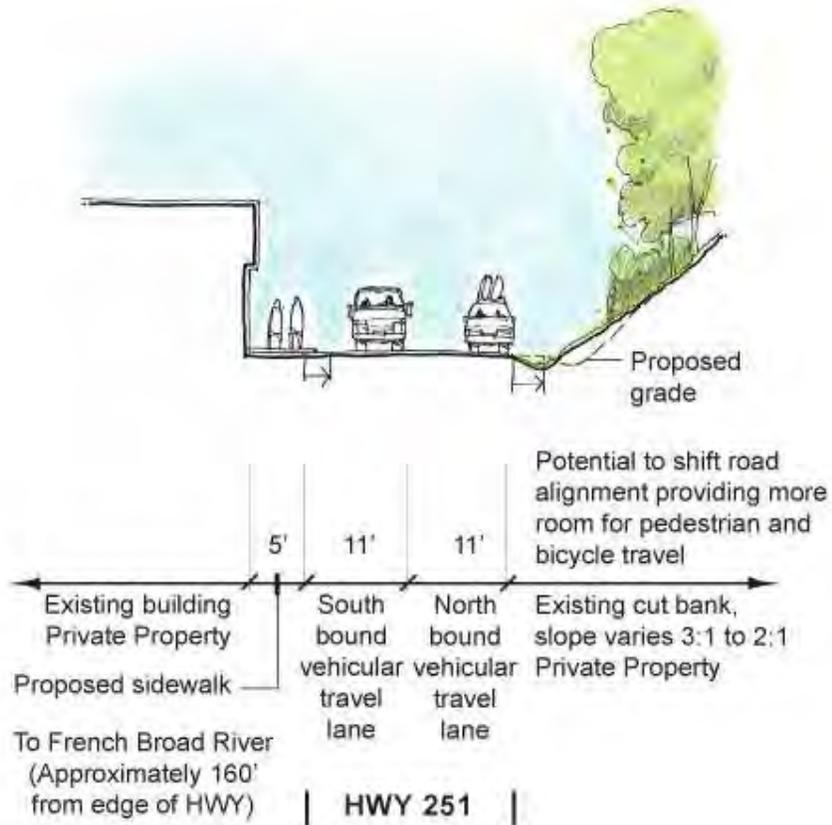
Typical Section Area 7



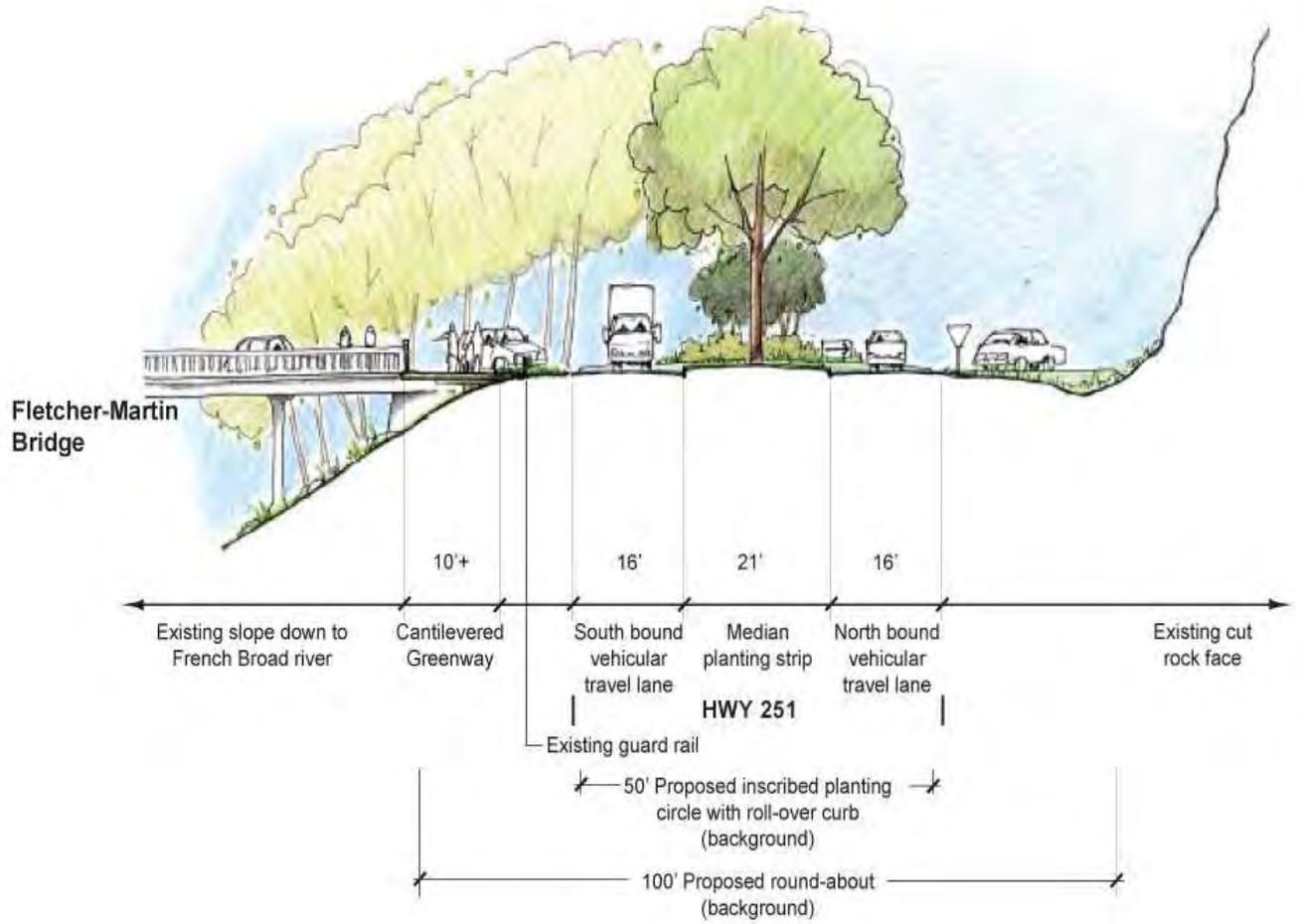
Typical Section Area 8



Typical Section Area 9



Typical Section Area 11



Appendix C Public Meeting Comments

A public meeting to receive comments and input regarding the planning effort for the French Broad River/Highway 251 greenway held on the afternoon and evening of September --, 2010. All owners of property along the corridor received notice of the meeting. In addition the meeting was advertised in local media, on the Buncombe County website, and through various email listserves. A list of questions was provided to all attendees. The following identifies the questions and the responses:

Question Number	Question	Options	Responses/Comments
1	Are there any additional connection along the US 251/French Broad River Greenway corridor you would like to see made that have not been show?		One comment: "How do you get around the bridges?"
2	If the trail was built as shown on the Feasibility Study, how would you use the US 251/French Broad River corridor?	walk	3
		exercise	3
		biking	6
		kayaking	3
		strolling	3
		transitioning to points north	3
		drive every day	1

Question Number	Question	Options	Responses/Comments
3	Do you support the US 251/French Broad River Greenway Feasibility Study that you have seen today?	yes	9
		no	2 "No. But maybe only to Craggy. Cost, impractical, more important things to do with the money." "No. I don't believe it's really feasible in many areas. The cost in many areas would be enormous and negative environmental impact also negative."
		other	1 "Yes, only if it does not jeopardize my rights to develop my property"
		no answer	1
4	Access Areas such as trailheads provide features for greenways such as parking, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, restrooms, and kiosks. Based on the proposed number and location of access areas shown on the Map, please select the following:	I would like to see fewer access areas	0
		I am happy with the amount of proposed access areas	11
		I would like to see more access areas	0
		none of the above	7

Question Number	Question	Options	Responses/Comments
5	To provide multiple uses and handicap accessibility, surfacing on greenways that will accommodate all non-motorized users (including bicycles, wheelchairs, and strollers) is desirable. What types of surfacing do you prefer for the US 251/French Broad River Greenway? (select one) NOTE: Most selected more than one.	Asphalt	6
		Concrete	1
		Recycled Materials	5
		Others	4 "Crushed rock finings like trail around Lake Louis" Cinders, fines such as the Virginia Creeper" None. I believe all will eventually wash away in a flood or suffer major damage." Dirt path in many areas or ground plantings."
6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>Goals of the US 251/French Broad River Greenway project are to investigate the possible locations for a greenway and to determine the feasibility for having over 15 miles of greenways and trails for bicyclists and pedestrians to utilize for non motorized transportation and enjoyment within the US 251/French Broad Corridor. Based on your understanding of the project, are these goals being met? (Select one) NOTE: Some respondents made up their own answers and are shown</p> </div>		
		I don't know	3
		no answer	3
		other	1 "No. there are many areas where project seems incomplete - especially cost & environment."

Question Number	Question	Options	Responses/Comments
7	There is a possibility to have a greenway that is off road and follows the French Broad or a greenway/multiple use pathway/sidewalk along US 251. Which do you prefer? (Select as many as you like). NOTE: Some respondents made up their own answers and are shown.	A greenway along the French Broad River	11
		A multiple use pathway along US 251	6
		A sidewalk along US 251	1
		other	1 "None"
		no answer	2
8	In an effort to communicate effectively within the community, we would like to understand how you heard about the project. How did you hear about this project meeting?	Blue Ridge Bicycle Club	2
		No answer	4
		Letter	6
		Email	2

Question Number	Question	Options	Responses/Comments
9	Do you have any other comments?		"Great Work"
			"Excited about connections to Wilma Dykeman in Asheville and to Madison County Greenways. "
			I think it is FAR more important that River water quality (i.e. ongoing runoff) and lack of public bathrooms be addresses than a Connected" extraordinary rural trail."
			"I would like to see an emphasis on the transportation aspect of the greenway rather than driving to the river then recreate."
			"Great presentation!"
			"A project of this scope will surely trigger the potential for eminent domain."
			"I think it is a great idea."