

OUR MISSION

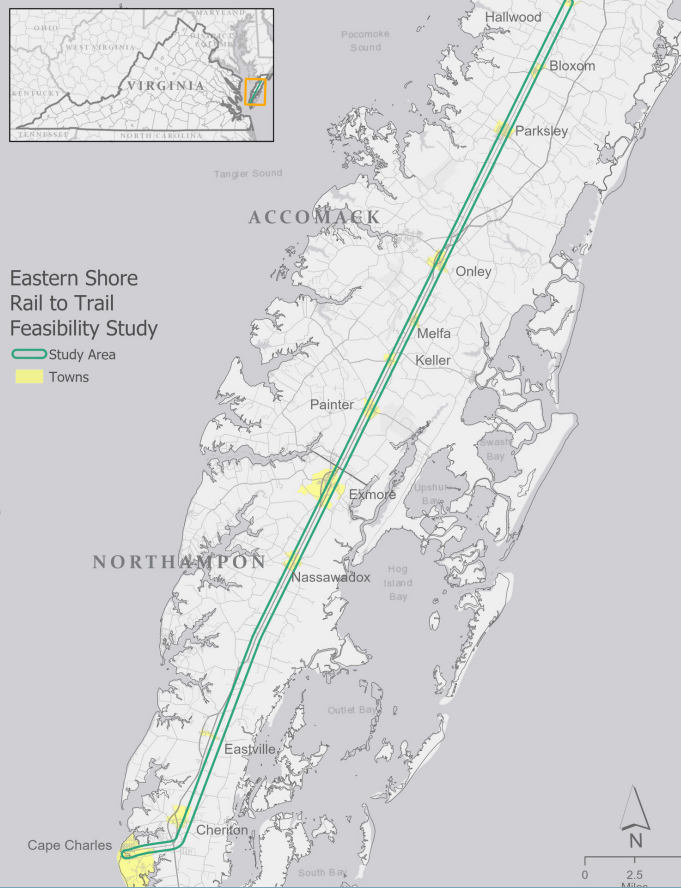
The mission of the Eastern Shore of Virginia Rail Trail Working Group is to promote and support development of a 50-mile regional hike and bike trail along the historic Eastern Shore railroad corridor that connects towns, encourages outdoor recreation and tourism, contributes to economic growth, and supports a healthier and more prosperous community.

WHO WE ARE

The Working Group is an unincorporated coalition of public, private, and non-profit organizations based in Accomack and Northampton counties on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

WHAT'S NEXT

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is completing a feasibility study to assess converting the rail corridor into a hike and bike trail. The Working Group is committed to exploring all options for development and management of the rail trail. And we need your involvement and support! The future rail trail will best serve our community with input from you. With more advocates for this community asset, we have a better chance of seeing the trail become a reality.



Above: Map Courtesy of Virginia Department of Transportation
Front: CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour



PARTNERS

Accomack County - Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission - Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore - Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce - Northampton County Chamber - Northampton County Parks and Recreation - The Nature Conservancy - Town of Onley - Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust

STAY IN TOUCH

info@easternshorerailtrail.com

ESVA RAIL TRAIL WORKING GROUP

IN SUPPORT OF A 50-MILE REGIONAL HIKE AND BIKE TRAIL ON VIRGINIA'S EASTERN SHORE



Photos, left to right: Historic railroad courtesy of Cape Charles Historical Society, CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour, Kiptopeke Elementary School students at the May 2019 Southern Tip Hike and Bike Trail ribbon cutting.

HISTORY

Workers completed construction of the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in 1884. It extended from Pocomoke City, Maryland to the newly founded town of Cape Charles. The rail line, barges, and steam boats crossing the Chesapeake Bay from Cape Charles connected northern cities with Norfolk, Virginia, at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. The railroad was not intended to serve the Eastern Shore. The route bypassed coastal towns and took the most efficient path along the peninsula's spine. As a result, new towns developed along the railway and increased access to markets stimulated economic growth. Exports of seafood and produce boomed. Tourists also flocked to the Eastern Shore by rail to visit the beaches, hunt, and fish. Passenger service ended in 1958, but the railroad continued to carry freight. In 2019, Cassatt Management LLC, filed to abandon the line. A rail trail feasibility study is underway.

TRAIL BENEFITS

COMMUNITY

The trail is for you. Walk, run, and bike safely with your family, friends, and community or religious groups. Enjoy a leisurely walk to breakfast or a longer bike ride to lunch in a neighboring town. You can even commute to work or school.

PRESERVATION

The trail is an opportunity to keep the history of the rail corridor alive and give it new meaning. Although not built for the local community, the railroad changed the pattern of development on the Eastern Shore, brought tourism, and boosted the economy. Instead of a railroad that bypasses the local communities, the trail will connect towns, businesses, and people.

HEALTH

Trails encourage physical activity and social connection, making them critical to public health. A study of a trail, the GreenBelt, in Georgia "... confirmed that the majority of people reported that the GreenBelt makes it easier for them to find time to exercise, allows them to get more exercise than before it was available, increases their enjoyment of doing moderate or vigorous physical activity and leaves them feeling like they are in a better state of health and/or physical ability than they were before they started using the trail."

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We plan to commission an economic impact study to predict how our community will benefit from a regional hike and bike trail. Examples from other parts of Virginia show an increase in revenue. The Virginia Capital Trail from Williamsburg to Richmond has an estimated annual impact of \$5,000,000.

PROPERTY VALUES

Trails increase property values. Homebuyers frequently indicate trails and walkability are desired neighborhood features.

RESOURCES

1. <https://www.railstotrails.org/experience-trails/benefits-of-trails/>
2. <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2016/december/the-health-benefits-of-a-bicycle-pedestrian-trail/>
3. <https://southernspaces.org/2007/countryside-transformed-eastern-shore-virginia-pennsylvania-railroad-and-creation-modern-landscape/>
4. <https://www.hrtpo.org/uploads/docs/EIBF%20Phase%20Two%20Combined%20DRAFT.pdf>