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# 1

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Impetus for Updating the Plan

The 1995 *Conceptual Greenway Plan, Roanoke Valley, Virginia* (1995 Plan) was developed and adopted by the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, City of Salem, and Town of Vinton. That plan launched development of a regional greenway network and establishment of the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission (Greenway Commission).

In 2005 the Greenway Commission decided it was time to update the 1995 Plan and sought assistance from the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission (Regional Commission) to do so. There were numerous reasons to update the document, but the driving force was a desire to look at how the process of getting greenways built might be improved. The Greenway Commission and Regional Commission decided that the update should include two components:

- 1) an update and prioritization of routes included in the 1995 Plan, and
- 2) an organizational assessment examining roles and responsibilities of various partners.

A Steering Committee of local staff and partners was formed to address the first task, to update and prioritize the routes. This document, the 2007 Update to the Roanoke Valley Conceptual Greenway Plan (the Update), is the result of the Steering Committee's work. It describes the accomplishments since 1995, the process of developing the update, public input and issues, routes, and recommendations for implementation.

A consultant, LandDesign, Inc., was hired to address the second task of assessing the organization and recommending improvements to the way in which the Greenway Commission operated and the partners interacted. That assessment was considered in development of the Update and in the implementation strategies presented in Section 6.

**greenway** (*grĕn'-wā*) *n.* 1. A linear open space established along either a natural corridor, such as a riverfront, stream valley, or ridgeline, or overland along a railroad right-of-way converted to recreational use, a canal, a scenic road, or other route. 2. Any natural or landscaped course for pedestrian or bicycle passage. 3. An open-space connector linking parks, nature reserves, cultural features, or historic sites with each other and with populated areas. 4. Locally, certain strip or linear parks designated as a parkway or greenbelt. [American neologism: green + way; origin obscure.]

*Greenways for America*  
Charles E. Little

### 1.2 Terminology: What is a Greenway?

In his 1990 book *Greenways for America* Charles Little recounts the origins of the greenway idea and traces a century of development of the greenway movement. He recognizes that any group of greenway advocates will undoubtedly have multiple definitions of a greenway or even different words for the concepts. Common themes in the greenway movement are green

space, connections, conservation, non-motorized transportation, linear trails, ecology, and sustainable development.

While the terminology of this movement varies from one state or country to another, the Roanoke Valley's development of the 1995 Plan included a strong focus on the "trail" within the greenway corridor. Since development of the 1995 Plan, the Regional Commission and four local governments have each developed other plans, many of which incorporate the ideas of open space, green space, blueways, and green infrastructure. Many of these recent plans recognize the importance of green space for environmental protection, wildlife habitat, and stormwater management. Each locality has refined its preferences and the degree to which its greenways focus on pedestrian/bicycle facilities and green infrastructure elements.

The Greenway Commission encourages and supports each locality's efforts to develop greenways, trails, and green infrastructure. Because citizens typically equate greenways with trails, the focus in this regional Update to the 1995 Plan is on those corridors that will include a public trail. Thus, the definition that is used encompasses the transportation, recreation, and green infrastructure elements and mirrors the terminology of citizens:

*Greenways are linear parks, corridors of natural or open space:*

- *following land or water features such as streams, rivers, canals, utility corridors, ridgelines, or rail lines and*
- *managed for conservation, recreation, and/or alternative transportation and*
- *including trails for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other trail users.*



### 1.3 Benefits of Greenways

The benefits of greenways are well documented in a variety of publications on greenways and trails listed in the Bibliography (Appendix A) and in the 1995 Plan. The 1995 Plan included objectives and strategies for meeting goals associated with these benefits, and the progress on those is included in Section 2.4.7 of this Update. The benefits of greenways include:

Transportation	Greenway trails provide corridors for moving from one location to another without an automobile.
Economic Opportunities	Greenways strengthen the local economy by increasing property values, enticing businesses concerned with quality of life for employees, stimulating community revitalization, and creating jobs related to recreation and tourism.

Health and Recreation

Greenways provide free facilities for exercising, and most of the valley's greenway trails are handicapped accessible. Obesity is one of the biggest health issues in the region. Greenways encourage "active living by design" which can help improve citizens' health, as well as providing a location close to home to enjoy the outdoors. Good health among citizens translates into an economic benefit for businesses.

Cultural and Educational Amenities

Greenways provide a facility for events, such as walks and parades, and an avenue for groups to join forces for service projects. Many Roanoke Valley greenways follow historic corridors and provide an opportunity for protecting and interpreting historic resources. While several of the existing greenways connect to area schools, there is significant opportunity to increase environmental education along greenways.

Preservation of Natural Resources

Greenways are linear parks, designed to provide and connect the green infrastructure of the valley. Greenways preserve existing natural resources and enhance the environment through expansion of tree canopy, protection of riparian buffers that reduce stormwater runoff, and provision of continuous habitat for plants, birds, and animals.



The Potential of Greenways

