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3.0 PURPOSE AND PROCESS FOR THE UPDATE

3.1 Need for Update to the 1995 Conceptual Greenway Plan

The 1995 Plan included a valley-wide map of potential greenway corridors. The corridors were broad-brush routes with minimal study of topography, green infrastructure, public health, private land issues, and economic development. It served the greenway process well in its initial endeavors, but over the years, as routes became better defined, some corridors were deemed unpractical or, at best, low on the respective jurisdiction's priority lists.

As jurisdictions refined their own greenway priorities and other plans such as the Bikeway Plan were developed, the 1995 Plan became more dated. In 1995, greenways were a new concept to many in the valley, and staff from the four localities was still struggling with how greenways would be developed and managed. Today, citizens, governments, businesses, and civic leaders recognize the many benefits of greenways, including transportation, open space protection, flood mitigation, encouragement of healthy lifestyles, conservation, recreation, aesthetic improvement, and quality of life. Many developers are interested in including trails and greenways in residential and industrial developments and seek guidance on how to do this. The Greenway Commission has worked with adjacent counties on blueways, with the City of Roanoke on equestrian and mountain bike opportunities at Carvins Cove, and with the Blue Ridge Parkway to complete a trail plan that allows connections of greenways to Parkway trails. Since the 1995 Plan was completed, many related plans have been updated including comprehensive, neighborhood, and transportation plans. An Update to the 1995 Plan was needed to accurately reflect present conditions and facilitate coordination among the Greenway Commission, local governments, federal and state agencies, and other stakeholders in the future development of a regional greenway network. It was time to re-look at the 1995 Plan maps and better define the routes utilizing the experience of ten years of greenway development and planning.

There were other issues a new plan would need to address. Many in the community felt the process of implementing the greenway program was too slow. Although over 19 miles of trail have been constructed, many felt that there had to be a faster, more efficient means of getting greenways financed and built. While conceptual master plans have been developed for 45 miles of greenway, these plans have not always led subsequently to preliminary engineering, acquisition of right-of-way, and construction, and have seldom been officially adopted by the affected localities. In some cases opportunities for right-of-way donations have been "missed" because master plans were either not completed or not adopted. On occasions grant funding for construction has been received prior to engineering and right-of-way acquisition, making it difficult to meet deadlines. On other occasions grants have been received before matching funds have been secured. The Greenway Commission felt that a comprehensive review of the process was in order. That meant reviewing financial alternatives, engineering methods, procurement for construction, construction management, the role of the Greenway Commission, the role of the Greenway Coordinator, and a host of other issues. This update

was an opportunity for the localities and Greenway Commission to look at the past ten years and create a document that would serve the community for the next decade.

The Update to the 1995 Plan is the product of a collaborative effort among the Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission, local governments, citizens, and other stakeholders. Other objectives of this Update are to harness the synergy among neighborhood and civic leaders, corporations, staff, and elected officials and to identify improvements needed to ensure that our greenway network provides seamless transportation corridors that capitalize on and showcase the green infrastructure and natural character of the Roanoke Valley.

3.2 Description of the Study Area

The Roanoke Valley is located in southwest Virginia, within 500 miles of many of the major population, business, and economic regions of the United States. The valley is bisected by Interstate 81, which generally runs south to north, and the Roanoke River, which generally runs west to east. While some waters in Roanoke County flow to the James River and Chesapeake Bay, most of the valley is in the Upper Roanoke River drainage which flows to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. Nestled between the Blue Ridge and Allegheny Mountain ranges, the Roanoke Valley is surrounded by mountains and benefits from many natural resources and public lands. These public lands are shown in green on the map included in this Update and include the Jefferson and George Washington National Forests, the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Appalachian Trail, Havens Wildlife Management Area, Virginia's Explore Park, Carvins Cove Reserve, Spring Hollow Reservoir, and Poor Mountain Preserve.

The table below shows that the population of the four localities in 2005 was 205,457. While the City of Roanoke has experienced population loss since 1990, it remains the largest locality represented in the Greenway Commission. Overall the valley's growth is limited, with Roanoke County experiencing the most increase in population since 1990.

Total Population and Percent Change

Locality	Population 1990	Population 2000	Population 2005	Percent Population Change 1990-2005
City of Roanoke	96,487	94,911	92,631	-4.0
City of Salem	23,835	24,747	24,654	3.4
Roanoke County*	79,278	85,778	88,172	11.2
Total Population	199,600	205,436	205,457	2.9

* Includes the Town of Vinton. In 2000, the population of the Town of Vinton was 7,782.
Source: US Census Bureau

Given the 2005 population and the total number of completed greenway miles (205,457 population ÷ 19.95 miles), the current mileage per capita is one mile of greenway for every 10,300 people. One of the case studies completed by LandDesign shows that Knoxville, TN has one mile per 6,600 people. Based on national standards, Pros Consulting has

recommended to the City of Roanoke that it strive for one mile of greenway per 3,300 people. Because obesity is one of the largest health issues in the Roanoke Valley, active living, walk ability, and proximity to greenways and parks have become increasingly important aspects of addressing health issues.

The table below provides the total land area and population density for Roanoke Valley localities. The Town of Vinton has the highest population density with approximately 2,432 persons per square mile. Roanoke County is the least densely populated locality in the study area, with approximately 315 persons per square mile. Much of the County's population is in areas adjacent to the cities of Roanoke and Salem.

Land Area and Population Density, 2000

Locality	Land Area (Square Miles, 2000)	Persons per Square Mile, 2000
City of Roanoke	43.0	2207
City of Salem	14.0	1768
Roanoke County*	247.8	315
Town of Vinton	3.2	2432
Total	308.0	

* Does not include the Town of Vinton.
Source: US Census Bureau

The table below lists population projections for the four localities, through 2030. The combined population is expected to be over 218,000 by 2030. This represents a 6.2 percent increase over the 2005 population. The populations of the cities of Roanoke and Salem are projected to remain relatively stable over this period while Roanoke County is expected to account for the vast majority of growth. Population increases may translate into greater demand for an expanded Greenway system in the Roanoke Valley.

Population Projections - 2010, 2020, and 2030

Locality	2010	2020	2030
City of Roanoke	93,400	92,398	92,399
City of Salem	25,401	25,898	26,299
Roanoke County*	90,500	95,000	99,499
Total Population	209,301	213,296	218,197

* Includes the Town of Vinton
Source: Virginia Employment Commission

3.3 Funding of the Update

In the winter of 2005 the Virginia Department of Transportation announced that it would provide grant funding under the Pilot Transportation Planning Grant Program to address planning for special transportation needs. The Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional

Commission, partnering with the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission, applied for one of these grants to fund an update to the regional greenway plan.

In July 2005 the Regional Commission received \$73,000 in grant funding to update the greenway plan. Funding from the grant program was used to contract with the Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission and a private consultant for assistance in the update process. The Regional Commission also contributed transportation planning funding, staff hours, and a cash match to the project. Funded through transportation based monies, the Update does focus, as did the 1995 Plan, on those corridors which will include a trail, but the Update also considers the broad range of benefits of greenways as linear parks, as cited in Section 1.3.

3.4 Establishment of a Steering Committee

A Steering Committee was formed to guide the update process. Steering Committee members included:

- Liz Belcher (Roanoke Valley Greenway Coordinator)
- Cristina Finch (City of Roanoke, Planning Division)
- Michael Gray (Virginia Department of Transportation)
- Bill Gordge (Pathfinders for Greenways)
- Anita McMillan (Town of Vinton, Department of Planning and Zoning)
- Linda Oberlender (Pathfinders for Greenways)
- Shane Sawyer (Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission)
- Janet Scheid (Roanoke County, Department of Community Development)
- Ian Shaw (City of Roanoke, Planning Division)
- Benjamin Tripp (City of Salem, Department of Planning and Development)
- Donnie Underwood (City of Roanoke, Department of Parks and Recreation)
- Lon Williams (Roanoke County, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism)
- Donald Witt (Roanoke Valley Greenway Commission)

3.5 Procurement of Professional Greenway Planning Services

In August 2005 the Regional Commission advertised for professional assistance with the update. A consultant was sought to complete a management analysis, develop alternative funding strategies, provide comparisons with other communities, and recommend implementation strategies. LandDesign Inc., based in Charlotte, North Carolina, was selected to assist in the update process.

3.6 Community Involvement

The Steering Committee and consultant designed a variety of methods for involving the public, staff, and elected officials in the update to the greenway plan. Because the greenway program requires large outlays of capital funds to get greenways built and then operational funds to maintain them, political support is crucial. Greenway users and citizens can support the localities' allocation of funds and provide backing to staff and elected officials on issues such as right-of-way acquisition. Greenway users often know routes and opportunities better than staff and thus provide important input on routes. The methods for obtaining community input and the various comments are summarized in Section 4 and Appendix C.