

# CONCEPT STATEMENT

## ROLE OF A *PRO BONO* PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SQUAD IN ADVANCING THE EAST COAST GREENWAY

September 21, 2005

**BACKGROUND.** The East Coast Greenway (ECG) is an expansive trail concept being implemented through the efforts of the East Coast Greenway Alliance, a non-profit organization. As a small organization, the Alliance depends on the efforts of scores of agencies and organizations at every level—federal, state, county and local—for the success of this ambitious undertaking. Only by creating strategic partnerships can a project of this scale be realized by an organization staffed by a handful of persons.

**“CLOSE THE GAPS” CAMPAIGN: 2005-2010.** An ambitious effort is underway to substantially complete the Greenway by 2010. A detailed assessment of current status of the trail has been completed for each of the 284 segments of the trail route. A five-year plan for advancing each segment will be completed by the end of 2005 and very focussed **2006 Blueprints for Action** prepared for each state. With these clear priorities in hand, the Alliance aims to aggressively advocate for the funding of new projects and to push to advance projects already in the pipeline, engaging a wide range of partners and volunteers in this effort.

We are working to raise an additional \$400,000 a year to fund a staffing increase that will put one staff person in each of our four regions to greatly increase our capacity to manage this “Close the Gaps” program at the state level. We have just been awarded a 3-year grant by the Surdna Foundation that will provide \$100,000 a year. Our major donor program launched this year has already exceeded our goal of raising \$100,000 in larger donations and our annual appeal is also exceeding our goals. We still need to raise over \$100,000 from foundations, but are optimistic that we can do that.

However, that is not all. We need to engage other resources if we are to be successful, including our volunteers and our partners. The engineering and planning firms that have been involved in the planning work for various sections of the ECG route have proven to be among our most effective and generous partners.

**PAST INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ECG BY DESIGN FIRMS.** Firms involved in the planning, design and engineering of local sections of trail that make up the ECG route have been substantial supporters of the ECG for many years. Our state route maps were developed by a group of firms under the overall direction of VHB, Inc. and these maps were incorporated into our 2001 State of the Trail Report. The value of this work exceeded \$50,000. Many firms have also provided financial support for our board and Annual Meetings. Many are now stepping up to join our ECG Chamber of Commerce which provides a place for firms to be listed on our web site—a way to get their names and services out to potential trail building agencies along our corridor.

**ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL DESIGN SQUAD.** These firms bring significant resources in the form of expertise, technical capacity, and funding that could benefit our efforts to advance the trail. In turn, by expediting the ECG we will be creating much new trail design work that these firms will be interested in bidding on. The Design Squad could be set up with each firm assuming responsibility for a single state (or a portion of a larger state) and could do the following for us:

- Develop summary scopes of work and cost estimates for each of the projects to give us a better foundation from which to solicit funding.
- Package state plans into a Comprehensive Trail Development Plan that would aid in marketing our project for support and funding
- Develop our GIS Trail Database and Map for their state/region
- Host meetings related to the ECG within their states
- Revise and maintain our state route maps

### **STEPS TO GET THE SQUAD SET UP AND FUNCTIONING**

1. A steering group should be formed to guide us through this process. Chuck Flink and Jeff Olson have stepped forward to be that group—possibly a couple of others should be added. Suggestions are: Bettina Zimny of the RBA Group and Bill DeSantis of VHB. Karen Votava and John Piazza will also participate.
2. An initial conference call should be conducted to review the concept and process. This memo can serve as a draft to guide that discussion. This call should occur before October 7<sup>th</sup>. ***We need agreement on who will set this call up and who will host the call; who will participate; who will chair the meeting; and whether this document shall serve as the substance of the call. An agenda for that call needs to be crafted, with clear outcomes identified.***
3. A plan for assigning firms to states or portions of states should be drawn up. Staff can prepare an initial list of firms and share them with the rest of the steering group prior to the first call. (Note: I have talked with about a dozen people at various firms who are all very excited about participating in this project.)
4. Once the plan for firm assignments has been made, we will need to approach the firms and apprise them of our strategy and ask for their involvement. Then, a group conference call to orient everyone to the initial tasks can be done. **We might also plan some time in New Haven in November for these firms to gather and for further orientation.**
5. The initial task might be to begin to develop the scopes and cost estimates for projects that are within the **2006 Blueprints for Action** for each state. We should aim to have these completed as early in 2006 as possible so that our advocates can get to work pushing for funding.