

East Coast Greenway Alliance Pilot Trail Designation Criteria And Procedure

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Comment to user: This document was discussed and adopted by the ECGA Board on 9/20/95. We welcome your comments and suggestions as you apply this process and criteria to a real situation. It is the ECGA's intention to review and revise this periodically, based upon experience.

A. Introduction

1. Purpose of this document This document defines the procedure and criteria which guide the designation of the East Coast Greenway Trail system.

2. The Project The East Coast Greenway (ECG) trail network is the nation's first long-distance, inter-urban, multi-user transportation and recreation trail network, connecting the major urban centers along the East Coast of North America. It consists of a series of locally owned and managed trails, linked to form a continuous trail network, and easily identified by the public through signage, maps and user guides. The ECG strives to be an off-road transportation and recreation route serving both local and long distance users. It aims to accommodate all non-motorized modes of travel and be accessible to the physically challenged.

3. Grass roots nature of the project The ECG is a grass roots project in which locally developed and managed trails are linked to form a continuous long distance trail. The ECG Alliance will not own, develop or manage any part of the ECG, but will work closely with local organizations to define the route, advance its development and promote its use.

4. Incentives for ECG Membership Becoming officially designated as part of the ECG Trail network brings a variety of benefits including: Use of the ECG logo to mark the trail , support from the Alliance in seeking funding from foundations, state and federal transportation funds, and other sources; technical assistance and sharing of information from other successful trail segments along the route in such areas as trail construction and maintenance, organizational development, trail design, community involvement; being included in a sophisticated GIS database/mapping system to be developed by the Alliance for the entire trail; national publicity; and perhaps most important, the value gained from being part of a continuous national trail which will bring increasing tourism to the area.

B. The Route Designation Process

1. Definition of Designation Designation is the action by which the Alliance ratifies a State Committee nomination of a trail segment to become part of the ECG long distance trail system and thereby selects a local trail manager to become a "trail member" of the East Coast Greenway.

2. Roles and Responsibilities Official designation of an ECG trail segment is the joint responsibility of the Alliance national organization and of the ECG State Committees. The Alliance national organization sets the overall selection criteria, offers ECG State Committees

technical assistance with regard to route selection, and makes certain that trails meet at state borders. State Committees ensure that it fits into a state route plan, and that state and local support exists for designation of a given trail segment.

3. Incremental nature of designation process The ECG will come into existence as an officially designated long distance route through an incremental process of designations, paralleling the incremental physical development of constituent trail segments.

4. Classes of ECG Trail Designations Three official classes of East Coast Greenway trail status are established. In addition, a potential corridor category is also established to facilitate the planning process:

Class A: Designated Route applies to a completed and in-use trail segment which meets the minimum criteria established for the ECG as defined in Section D of this document and has been officially designated. Designation involves issuing by the Alliance of a Designation Certificate, signing of a joint memorandum of agreement between the Alliance and the trail manager, and marking the route with signage. It also allows the segment to be displayed on the official ECG designation map as designated East Coast Greenway route.

Class B: Provisional Routes are trail segments which, while not fully developed, are publicly accessible, usually to walkers and mountain bikes, and meet all the criteria of full permanent designations except some physical conditions associated with being fully developed to touring bicycle level. They must be judged to hold clear promise of being developed and achieving all minimum criteria within five years. Provisional Routes are represented on the official ECGA designation map as provisional East Coast Greenway route. Signage denoting that the segment is a provisional segment of the ECG trail may also be posted along the trail.

Class C: Connecting Routes are on-road or other below standard connecting routes which provide needed links between two Class A or B segments in order to achieve a continuous route. In many cases, off road routes will eventually be found to replace these links but in some instances they may be the only feasible link and continue to serve indefinitely as part of the ECG. Connecting Routes are represented on the official ECGA designation map as East Coast Greenway connector routes. Signage may be placed to identify the route for through-users and should note their interim nature (as appropriate) and inform users about conditions they may encounter that fall below standard ECG trail conditions (e.g. motor traffic.)

Planning Category: Potential Corridor and Potential Trail are routes which appear on the official East Coast Greenway Planning map to show either the broad corridor connecting two urban centers in which a specific trail is being sought; or the best current specific routing option or options in an area where a Class A, B, or C trail has not yet been designated. It is used to help move the routing discussion ahead by defining the desired general location of the route and putting forth possible specific route options.

5. Responsibility for trail designation Trail designation is a joint responsibility of the East Coast Greenway Alliance national organization and of the respective East Coast Greenway State Committee. The State Committee initiates the designation process and ensures appropriate state

and local input by consulting with the broad complement of parties involved in a given trail segment. Endorsement by the local trail managing entity is a pre-requisite to designation. The Alliance reviews every proposed trail designation against its established criteria and overall goals for the trail and ratifies nominations by the state committees which meet its standards.

Potential routes shown on the planning map are informally determined by the Alliance in consultation with its state committees and other trail participants and are not to be viewed as officially part of the East Coast Greenway Trail.

6. The Process

a. Class A: Permanent Designations A trail segment may be proposed for addition as a Class A trail in the ECG system only if it meets the criteria for designation as defined in this document.

1) As a first step toward route designation, all State Committees working with the Alliance will strive to define a continuous trail within the state which meets Alliance criteria including the connecting of chief urban centers. This proposed route will appear on the official ECGA map and be published in the State of the Trail Report. It will be subject to modification over time.

2) Subsequently, a trail managing entity and its trail segment (s) may be adopted as designated, provisional or connecting East Coast Greenway route.

a) The State ECG Committee proposes a trail segment within its state for designation as part of the East Coast Greenway. It may consider any trail segment which is presented to it or which it determines through its own investigation, to be eligible for inclusion into the system. Proposal involves completing a form providing basic information to the ECGA. This will include securing input from the trail managing entity, state and local officials, and other interested parties in the region.

b) Upon receipt of a designation proposal, the Alliance staff, working with the ECGA Route Designation Committee will conduct a review, including, as appropriate, a site visit, and the gathering of other information to ascertain adherence to designation criteria. A designation report will be prepared by Alliance staff which assesses the qualifications of the route and makes a designation recommendation to the full Alliance board.

c) Before designation can take effect, an MOU or cooperative agreement is prepared by the Alliance and signed by the Alliance and the local trail manager, defining the minimum standards which must be maintained in order for this trail segment to remain part of the East Coast Greenway and sets out other conditions of East Coast Greenway trail membership.

d) The ECG Alliance board then reviews the proposed designation. A majority vote in favor is required for designation. The designation report, modified to reflect board input, will be kept on permanent file at the ECGA national office as part of an official record of all ECG trail designations.

e) Upon permanent designation, a certificate is issued to the trail manager verifying that the trail is officially part of the East Coast Greenway. The trail will also be marked as part of the ECG. There may also be an event at the trail site celebrating the designation.

b. Class B: Provisional Routes

Provisional designations may occur if a trail segment is deemed to be potentially capable of meeting minimum criteria within the coming five year period. It requires both Alliance and state committee support and the endorsement of the local trail manager. All trail segments designated provisionally are represented as provisional designations on the official designation map, in the annual State of the Trails Report and on planning maps. Special signage denoting that this segment is provisionally part of the ECG may be installed.

c. Class C: Connecting Trail Routes

Connecting trail designations of on-road sections will need, in addition to the above approvals, the endorsement of the state or local agency with jurisdiction over the roadway. Modified signage will be placed allowing the public to follow this route as part of the ECG but making clear that it does not meet ECGA standards and exactly where and how it falls short.

7. Un-designations

The Alliance automatically reviews each designated trail segment once every five years to ensure adherence to standards. Trail users and others can also alert the Alliance if a trail segment falls below standard. If a fully designated trail segment fails to maintain standards, the Alliance will encourage the local trail manager to bring it up to standard, providing whatever guidance and assistance it can. If ECGA standards cannot be met, the Alliance may un-designate that segment by a majority vote of the ECG governing board. The Alliance board may also choose to un-designate provisional segments if they fail to achieve full designation standards within a five year time frame. And, the board may un-designate connecting trail segments when superior segments become available.

8. Route Modification

If a trail segment which more closely meets Alliance criteria becomes available, it may be substituted for an earlier designated link, subject to the same designation review process. The earlier link may then serve as an alternate route and be so designated; or in rare cases it may be un-designated as part of the ECG system.

C. Guideline Criteria for Trail Designation

The ECG Alliance has established the following broad set of objectives as "aspirational goals" for the kind of trail which we expect the East Coast Greenway to be. It is accepted that all of these objectives may not always be met on every mile of trail, especially in the early years of its existence.

These guidelines will aid the State Committees in their efforts to plan the ECG route through their states and in their nominations of trail segments for official designation as part of the East Coast Greenway Trail System. However, full designation will hinge on meeting minimum criteria as defined in the next section of this document.

1. City to city connection The ECG seeks to become a long distance, Maine to Florida arterial trail connecting the major cities along the Eastern Seaboard. It strives to go through the heart of these cities, namely their downtowns.
2. Directness The ECG will be a spine route which strives for the most direct inter-city connection feasible.

It is expected that in some locations, where a direct connection is difficult, a less than direct route segment may be initially designated and later replaced by a more direct route as that becomes feasible. But, the intent of the Alliance is to make the most direct route the chief or primary route. In certain instances, a less than direct alternate route or routes may be permanently designated as part of the ECG in addition to the primary route, to allow the accessing of urban centers off the main spine route, or to provide access to other vital destinations or landscapes within the region. In such cases the primary route will be the most direct route and will be designated as The East Coast Greenway and the alternate will be designated as Alternate A or B etc. This is a parallel arrangement to Coastal Highway Route 1 and alternate routes 1A or 1B, scenic spurs and urban by-passes.

In some cases, where the chief trail route does not allow access to all user types, an alternate route providing for these users can be identified and designated. For example, if the main route excludes equestrians, there may be a viable alternative within reasonable range of the main route. Signage could be developed which informs the trail user at critical points at which they must move onto different trails, depending on their mode of travel, by providing on each trail a sign with symbols of the users permitted.

3. Off road The East Coast Greenway Alliance sets as a fundamental goal achieving a continuous traffic-free pathway, even if this means that directness must be somewhat compromised.

On-road segments are viewed as necessary components, at least on an interim basis, in order to achieve continuity. While the ideal is to establish a 100% traffic-free corridor, the Alliance has set as a realistic goal an 80% traffic-free route and understands that it is likely that a number of on-road sections will remain a part of the system indefinitely.

4. High quality engineering All segments of the ECG trail should be designed and built to safely and comfortably accommodate the various users which it is intended to serve.

The Alliance realizes that each trail segment is first and foremost a local trail and that trail design is thus largely a locally-defined matter. However, we expect local trail managers to consider the use it will receive as a national long distance trail and to apply well-thought out standards in designing and building their trail. They are encouraged to draw from such sources as American Society of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Americans for

Disabilities Act design guidelines and should stay abreast of the rapid evolution in trail design, such as the recently published "Trails for the Twenty-First Century, Planning Design and Management Manual for Multi-use Trails" from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The Alliance will assist by sharing with local trail managers good examples of existing trails that set a high standard for design and management, such as the Baltimore and Annapolis (B&A) Trail in Maryland.

5. Full public access The ECG seeks to serve the broad public of non-motorized trail users.

Each segment of the ECG must be in the "public domain," either by direct public ownership or by agreement with the owner. Any restrictions on use must not work to frustrate the segment's primary purpose as a non-motorized transportation and recreation trail. Trail easements should be sought for non-public holdings.

6. Serves a wide range of non-motorized trail users The ECG strives to accommodate the full range of non-motorized modes of travel including walkers, all-terrain cyclists, touring cyclists, cross country skiers, snow shoers, in-line skaters, equestrians, and wheel chairs. However, in heavily populated areas where use levels will be high, combining all of these users may not be practical.

To maximize access for all users, the trail may need to split in some areas, where shared trail use is not feasible.

The ECG does not seek to serve motorized recreational users, and it is our goal, where feasible, to find a route which does not permit such motorized users on the trail, including snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and motorized bikes.

7. Aesthetics The trail should be aesthetically pleasing in terms of its location and design.

8. Variety in experiences along the route The ECG strives to offer variety in the experiences it affords to both short- and long-distance users (e.g., different landscapes: urban, suburban, rural; variety in natural settings, e.g. seaside, riverfront, wooded areas, meadows, marshes; different surrounding land uses, e.g., industrial, commercial, agricultural, residential, conservation; and differing socio-economic and ethnic areas.

9. Provision of amenities along the route The ECG route will seek to ensure the provision of amenities required by day and long-distance users including: drinking water, public rest rooms, telephones, food and convenience stores, restaurants and snack bars, emergency assistance (police and hospitalization), modestly priced overnight accommodations (hostels, camping, B&B's); bicycle shops and repair facilities, etc.

10. Provision of clear signage The ECG route seeks to provide clear signage which:

identifies the route as the ECG

identifies connector routes which link existing segments of the ECG

directs users to route amenities and points of interest

provides information on mileage to various destinations

provides clear user rules

11. Maximizes access to multiple destinations The ECG strives to be a transportation and recreation route serving both local and long distance users. Priority in route selection is given to trail segments which serve multiple local destinations, connecting people to work, school, shopping, cultural institutions and recreational sites; or to routes which access important regional or national sites or destinations.

Since the vast majority of users of the ECG will be local, the ECG will support the creation of loop trails connecting with adjacent trails to better serve these local users.

12. Good Management Practices The ECG will be adequately managed to allow it to meet the above criteria of safety, full access, environmental quality, and aesthetics.

D. Minimum Criteria for Full Trail Designation

1. For Class A full designation, the following five criteria must be met:

a. A trail must be off-road although well marked at-grade street crossings are permitted when necessary.

b. A trail segment must be fully accessible by walkers and touring bicycles, that is, offer a firm and relatively smooth surface.

c. The trail sponsor must sign an agreement with the ECG prior to designation committing itself to maintaining good management practices. All permanently designated segments should be managed by an established governmental agency, not-for-profit, or private corporation or owner which is capable of providing a reasonable level of care to the trail and safety to its users.

d. The local trail manager must allow minimum signage to be posted to identify the route as the ECG.

2. For Class B provisional route status, minimum criteria are the same as for full designation, except that they represent intent rather than actuality. That is, a trail segment must be off-road, should already be publicly accessible for walkers, but may not meet touring bicycle standards; however, it must be expeditiously moving toward development for touring cyclists, and must show clear intent to provide full public access, to be managed and maintained adequately, and the managing agency must demonstrate a willingness to post ECG signage.

3. For Class C connecting trail status, criteria include a low traffic route which provides a relatively direct connection, is in good physical condition, and that does not pose undue difficulty including steep grades, difficult intersections and other hazards or problem spots. A parallel walking route which might include sidewalks or foot paths should also be defined as part of the connecting trail.