



# East Coast Greenway North Carolina State Trail

## Request for Project Proposals: Complete the Trails Program

Let's build out the East Coast Greenway State Trail in North Carolina! The Complete the Trails Program is now accepting proposals for trail projects; we invite our partners along the route to apply!

### Background

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The East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA) is developing new trail segments of the East Coast Greenway State Trail (EGST) in North Carolina using a \$4.97 million direct allocation from the Complete the Trails Program (CTP). ECGA is seeking proposals for trail projects that can successfully apply CTP funding towards expanding the EGST.

In June of 2021, the East Coast Greenway (ECG) in North Carolina [became a State Trail](#) with the passage of HB130, making it a unit of the State Parks system. Becoming a State Trail also

[made the ECG eligible for funding opportunities through the historic Complete the Trails Fund](#), passed as a part of [SB105](#) by the NC General Assembly (see page 325, §14.7).

Complete the Trails Fund is a \$29.3 million program of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, administered by the North Carolina Trails Program within the Division of Parks and Recreation, *"for the purpose of planning, construction, promotion, and maintenance of component trails of the North Carolina Trails System."*

### About the East Coast Greenway

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The East Coast Greenway is a walking and biking route stretching 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, connecting our nation's most populated corridor. The East Coast Greenway is designed to transform the 15 states and 450 communities it connects through active and healthy lifestyles, sustainable transportation, community engagement, climate resilience,

tourism, and more. The Greenway offers a safe place for bicyclists, walkers, runners, and more — of all ages and abilities — to commute, exercise, and visit new destinations.

The nonprofit East Coast Greenway Alliance leads the development of the trail network. We work with hundreds of volunteers, partner

organizations, and officials at the local, state, regional and national level to continue moving more of the route onto protected

paths. Together, we are connecting people to nature and communities via a safe, accessible Greenway.

## Overview

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ECGA plans to utilize CTP funding in order to strategically develop the EGST across NC. The program will build off of existing trails, feasibility studies, and plans to develop new trail segments that will be readily implementable, benefit underserved communities, cultivate community support, and leverage other funds beyond CTP to bring greater investment to EGST communities.

CTP includes multiple sub-programs of funding designed to develop North Carolina State Trails. This RFP is focused on the discretionary funding allotted to the ECGA as the State Trail Partner for the EGST from the development funds for land-based trails (§ 14.7.(d)(2)a).

Other sub-programs, such as land or easement acquisition (§ 14.7.(d)(2)b) and funds for connecting trails (§ 14.7.(d)(5)) are eligible for EGST trail segment projects and administered by State Parks as competitive grant programs. If you are interested in pursuing either of those programs, please contact the ECGA [North Carolina Greenway Manager](#) (“NC Manager”).

Proposals will fall into two types: planning and development. Planning includes feasibility studies\*, design, and associated processes like environmental assessment. Development includes construction of new segments and associated costs.

*\* At this time (Spring, 2023), the NC East Coast Greenway State Trail is near capacity with projects in the feasibility study stage of the project pipeline. Therefore, priority will be given to projects using planning funds for design and environmental assessment.*

Using the funds as a match for other funding is eligible within both categories, and especially encouraged if used to leverage a greater amount of federal funding (see Selection Prioritization Criteria below). Similarly, CTP development funds may be used as gap funding for eligible projects.

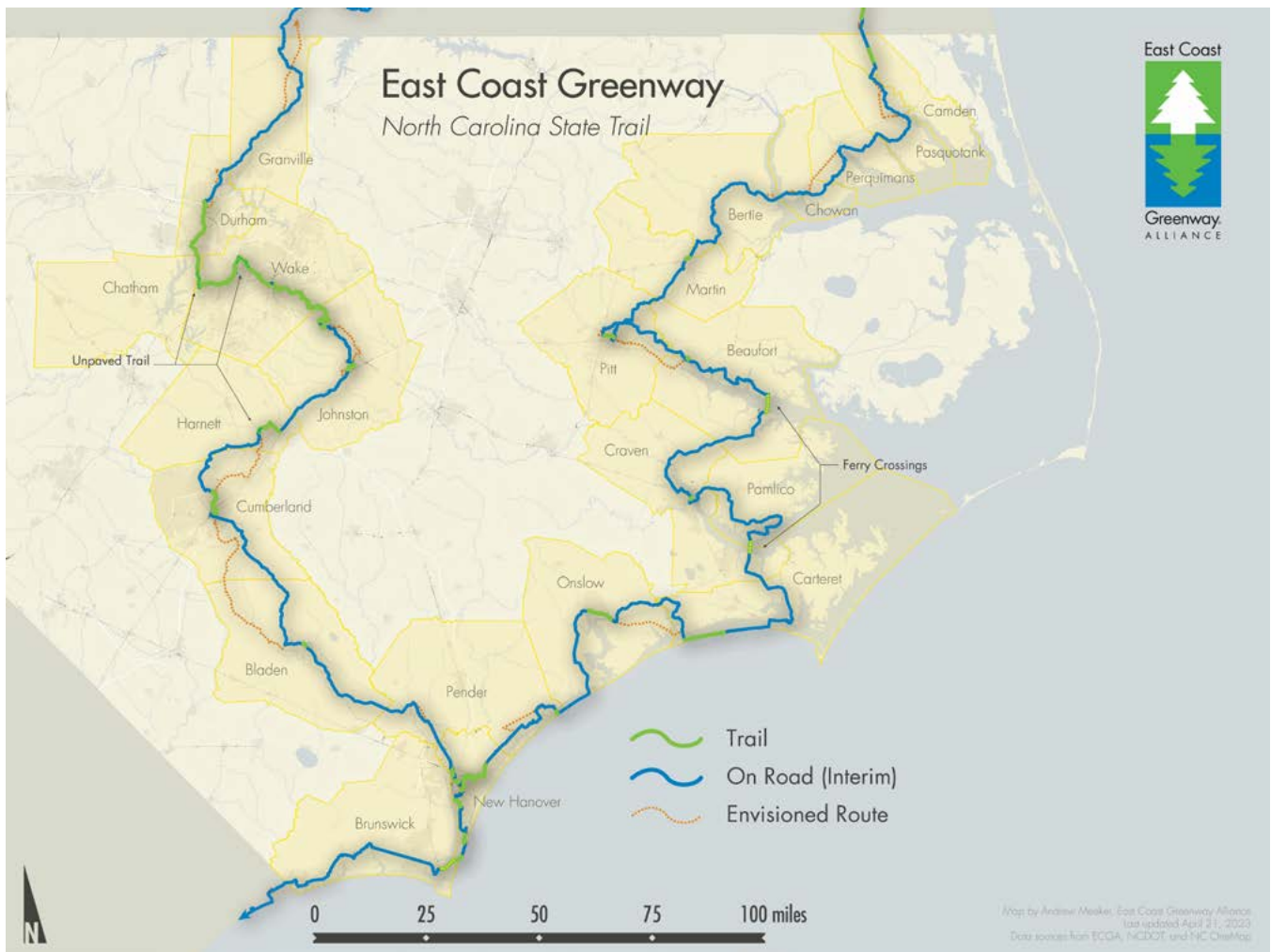
Other eligible projects under the program, including amenities (signage, trailheads, etc.) and maintenance are considered on a case-by-case basis. Land acquisition (including easements/ROW) is also eligible, however due to there being a separate CTP competitive grant funding program specifically for land acquisition, ECGA plans to prioritize trail planning and construction in directing the development funds. If you are interested in applying for land acquisition funding for an EGST segment, please contact the [NC Manager](#).

Projects will be accepted on a rolling basis, with preference given to projects submitted by periodic priority deadlines. Priority deadlines will be announced by email, in order to be notified please contact the [NC Manager](#).

## Eligible Applicants

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North Carolina counties, municipalities (cities, towns and villages), MPO's & RPO's, and land managers (such as land trusts) along the ECG planned route\*.



*\* Note: the [ECG planned, or envisioned, route](#) roughly follows the [current interim travel route](#), however there are deviations at points that might be significant. Additionally, the envisioned route is continually evolving, and might be subject to change in response to changing circumstances on the ground. Please contact the [NC Manager](#) to discuss specific route questions in your area.*

## Eligible Uses

According to the legislation (SB105, § 14.7.(b)), eligible activities include:

1. *Planning, design, and related environmental assessment or permitting activities for natural surface trails and paddle trail facilities.*
2. *Land and easement acquisition for natural surface and paddle trails.*
3. *Construction or rehabilitation of natural surface trails, bridges and boardwalks,*
4. *Trail signage.*
5. *Maintenance activities, including ... activities that will mitigate or prevent future erosion or deterioration of trails.*
6. *Matching funds for federal grants provided to a local government or nonprofit organization for any of the purposes set forth in this subsection.*

## Requirements

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- Trail segment must be a part of the EGST corridor, with either direct connections to the [existing travel route](#) or part of a planned route with feasible connections within a planned sequence/timeline.
- Trail segment must be designed in accordance with ECG [Design Guidelines](#), as well as according to local, state and federal requirements and design parameters (including ADA).
- Applicant lead must have capacity, and corresponding work plan, to act as Project Manager (or identify someone else fit for this role) to effectively deliver the project according to the timeline detailed in the Scope of Work. The Project Manager will work in collaboration with North Carolina Greenway Manager, who will act as the Program Administrator.
- Grant application amounts should range from a minimum of \$50,000 and a maximum of \$500,000. Total project costs may be greater than the maximum if using other funding sources, such as applying CTP funds as a match to another grant. Grant minimum and maximum are guidelines and projects outside of these amounts will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Trail segment must be developed on a corridor with a granted or acquired right-of-way, easement, or ownership.
- Trail segments must be established in perpetuity\*.

*\* In some limited instances, such as 99-year leases and railbanking, trail segments may be considered for long term use.*

## Grant Process

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1. Contact the [NC Manager](#) with an intent to apply and a brief initial project idea in advance of submitting an application. If you didn't attend a program informational session, please schedule to have a brief initial conversation with the NC Manager about the project.
2. Submit an application using [this form](#).
  - a. NC Manager may follow up with a conversation to clarify application questions.
3. Applications will be reviewed by the EGST Council on a regular basis. Applicants will be notified of a decision within 60 days of submission, but likely sooner.
4. If approved, applicant will work with ECGA and State Parks to define a Scope of Work that meets the requirements of the CTP.
  - b. After an agreement is signed between State Parks and ECGA to encumber the funds, a corresponding agreement will be signed between ECGA and the applicant's local agency.
5. Applicant will be responsible for contracting work in accordance with local and state guidelines.

6. ECGA and the NC Manager will serve as the “Program Administrator” for the project and the applicant will serve as the “Project Manager”. The Program Administrator will work regularly with the Project Manager to be updated on project implementation, support where able and appropriate, address issues, evaluate progress, etc. The Project Manager is expected to provide timely and accurate information to the Program Administrator in order to respond to all CTP requirements, including quarterly reporting, requests for payments, and scope changes.
7. When the project is complete, a final report will be due.
  - a. Applicant is expected to support in celebrating the completed project via media and publicity, ribbon-cutting events, engaging with elected officials, etc.
  - b. Local agency is expected to establish a maintenance plan for the trail segment.
  - c. Local agency is expected to work with ECGA and State Parks to officially designate the trail segment as a part of both the ECG and EGST, respectively.

## Other considerations

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- Funds may be encumbered in advance. After the Scope of Work is signed between State Parks, ECGA and the local agency, funds will be available for the specific costs established in the Scope of Work.
  - Project budgets should include a contingency of up to 10%.
  - Planning grants for feasibility studies will be largely modeled after the [NCDOT IMD Paved-Trail Feasibility Study program](#).
  - For development projects using CTP funds as a match, it is possible for the CTP portion of the funding package to go towards eligible uses and the rest of the funding be applied to a paved-trail portion of the EGST\*. In this case, the scope of work and budget should clearly define the CTP portion so as to transparently account for the differentiation.
- \* For example, a segment that includes a wetland crossing might have paved trail paid for by a federal grant and a section of boardwalk paid for by CTP as the match. Similarly, a segment could have parallel tracks of paved trail to accommodate bicyclists and natural surface trail for runners, with a federal grant paying for the paved trail and CTP paying for the natural surface trail as the match.*
- Project timelines will be determined in partnership with ECGA and State Parks, as outlined in a Scope of Work agreement.
  - Projects can happen in phases, applications can specify future phases when applying for an initial phase.
  - ECGA would like to support as many eligible projects as possible. If a project is not approved for immediate deployment, it may be sequenced for a later prioritization.

## Selection Prioritization Criteria

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The East Coast Greenway Alliance prioritizes the EGST Complete the Trails Program development funds according to the following criteria:

### **Readiness:**

Project is readily implementable, which might include how “shovel-ready” the project is (previous planning, study, design, engineering, environmental permitting and land/ROW acquisition), the capacity of the project team to deliver, lack of potential barriers/pitfalls, etc.

### **Leveraged Value:**

Project is able to use CTP development funds to leverage other sources of funding, with a particular focus on federal USDOT and IJA funding programs.

### **Need:**

- Located in an area that has a high [Transportation Disadvantage Index value, is considered an Environmental Justice community](#), or other indication of community disadvantage (e.g. [Areas of Persistent Poverty & Historically Disadvantaged Communities](#)).
- Located in an area that is underserved with active transportation infrastructure, which might be due to lack of local staff capacity and/or lack of local municipal budget to prioritize/afford active transportation infrastructure without support, where ECGA involvement would be a pivotal value-add.

### **Community Engagement and Support:**

Broad stakeholder support from local staff, community advocates and organizations, elected/appointed leaders, NCDOT, etc. Evidence of public meetings, process, and support.

### **Additional Considerations:**

Other selection considerations include:

- Able to creatively design projects that meet CTP legislative eligibility criteria (e.g. natural surface and/or structure) while developing the ECG In the spirit of its use (accessible, shared-use, connective linear park). Complete exciting and inspiring projects that demonstrate the potential of utilizing CTF.
- Makes connections to other EGST segments, and/or to other community amenities (other trails, parks, schools, etc.). Alternatively, applicant can make a case that development for this initial trail segment will catalyze future EGST segments.
- There is a particular opportunity to implement the project at this time. If so please explain.
- Projects that have already undergone feasibility studies and planning/design, including being adopted in local or regional plans.
- Project uses natural surface trail only in places where it's appropriate, not in areas that are preferred as paved surface.
- Greenway projects (off-road) are given a slight priority over sidepaths, as independent bike/ped facilities can be more challenging to fund in NC. Sidepaths might be possible to develop through road improvement projects by NCDOT.
- Project incorporates user comfort, beauty, shade, signage, bathrooms, water-fountains, art, and other amenities on the trail to create an inviting trail experience.

## Application Questions

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For a fillable application form, please follow [this link](#).

1. Project Working Title
2. Amount of CTP funds requested
3. Project Lead
  - a. Name
  - b. Title
  - c. Affiliation
  - d. Email
  - e. Phone
  - f. Mailing Address
4. Project description (include general overview, location information, project features including amenities (such as signage, art, plantings, etc.), project history, etc.)
  - a. Briefly, please describe how this project is a part of the East Coast Greenway route
  - b. What are the opportunities and challenges for this project?
  - c. Upload/attach a map that shows the project extent and other relevant geographic information
5. Project alignment: please briefly describe how the project meets the prioritization criteria
6. Land
  - a. Owner(s)
  - b. Who manages the corridor and trail facility, if different from owner?
7. Previously adopted plans, studies, designs or engineering that identify project (link or attach, with brief descriptions)
8. Project length (miles, as accurate as feasible to the tenth of a mile)
9. Project improvements (crossings, structures, boardwalks, bridges, amenities, etc.)

10. Total project cost

- a. Budget of project costs (itemized, as detailed/accurate as possible, upload/attach)
- b. Other funding sources (if not 100% CTP funded)
- c. How was this cost estimation derived? (consultant, NCDOT cost estimation tool, rough estimate, etc.)

11. Capacity and support

- a. Project lead: please briefly describe the capability of the project lead to implement/deliver the project
- b. Project team: please briefly describe all members of the project team who will be actively involved in the implementation of the project, and their respective roles
- c. Stakeholders, please briefly describe other stakeholders who are in support of this project (formal letters of support are welcome, but not required)

12. Projected project schedule (design, land acquisition, construction, completion)

13. Have you had contact with the ECGA NC Greenway Manager regarding this project?