



# Capital Trails Coalition

## Progress and Accomplishments

*Building a world-class, equitably distributed, and connected trail network in the DC Region.*

### **The Problem**

The Washington, DC region has some beautiful trails, but they are not connected. This results in a fragmented network, and there is often inadequate coordination between jurisdictions to address gaps in the network. There was no unified vision for an interconnected, trails system in the Washington, DC region before the Capital Trails Coalition came along in 2016.

### **The Solution**

The solution to the lack of shared vision and coordination was to build a coalition of diverse stakeholders who are involved in trail development. The Coalition needed to include the agencies responsible for building individual projects, as well as the community advocates calling for the projects. Business improvement districts, environmental organizations, and local elected officials were the other critical pieces to the Coalition model.

### **The Goal**

The goal of the Capital Trails Coalition is to collaboratively plan, advocate for, and accelerate the implementation of an interconnected network of equitably distributed, multi-use trails that will transform public life in the Washington, DC region. Distribution of our existing trails makes it clear how generations of systemic injustice and bias in transportation planning and development have limited Black communities' access to transportation resources like trails. The CTC prioritizes expanding trail access in underserved communities and places, and ensures that community voices are a part of the trail planning process.

### **Stages of The Coalition**

First, we had to build and structure the Coalition. What does it mean to be a Coalition member? Who will serve on the Coalition's Steering Committee? The first two years of the Coalition were really about laying the foundation for a long-lasting, collaborative, and well-structured Coalition. Next, we had to define the criteria for which trails will be included in the network. Since the vision is for a world-class, trail network, we spent a lot of time crafting which trails will make it into the network. Once we had a defined set of criteria, we set off to map the network—an undertaking that had never been done before. We met with all six jurisdictions to understand the existing network (that met our criteria), identify all of the planned trails (taken from pre-approved Trail Plans), and understand which projects



are high priorities for the jurisdiction. Today, we are engaging with the public and elected officials to build support for the network and expedite the trail development process.

## **Progress and Accomplishments**

2016:

- Capital Trails Coalition is launched, Steering Committee is established.
- 30 organizations and agencies sign on.

2017:

- Coalition agrees upon a common set of criteria for network inclusion.
- Data gathering and mapping begins.

2018:

- Equitable Trail Development definition and work plan is created.
- The first ever trails map of the Washington DC region (showing both existing and planned trails) is completed. This is called the Capital Trails Network.
- More than 60 organizations and agencies are members of the Coalition.

2019:

- Trail projects are prioritized. Working groups form to tackle each of the priority projects.
- Capital Trails Network is included in Transportation Planning Boards' long-range plan, Visualize 2045.
- Released a cost estimate for building out the remaining ~400 miles of planned trails.

2020:

- The Transportation Planning Board and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments adopt the National Capital Trail Network. This formalizes the trail network as a priority for our regional planning body and makes trails more competitive for state and federal funding.
- Focused on growing the coalition and our online presence
  - Added 21 new members
  - Grew our Twitter following by 112%
- Created an "Our Progress" page on our website to highlight the new miles of trail built across the region and track the projects under construction:
  - 11 new miles of trails have been built since 2016
  - 32.5 miles of trail are under construction



2021:

- We released the long-awaited CTC Impact Report which quantifies the economic, environmental, and health benefits of completing the 881-mile trail network.
- Legislative bodies in four of the six member jurisdictions unanimously pass a resolution in support of completing the Capital Trails Network by 2030. The District of Columbia included \$113.1M in their FY23 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to construct 12 trails across DC, a \$102.3 million increase over the current CIP.

### **What's next?**

- Pass the remaining two CTC resolutions in the City of Alexandria and Fairfax County.
- Work with our partner jurisdictions to take advantage of federal dollars passed in the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill*.
- Update the 2019 cost estimate to determine the current cost of the remaining network.
- Complete a strategic planning process to determine the Coalition's goals for the next three years.
- Continue to build our base across Prince George's and Fairfax Counties.