

# Trail Development: Questions and Resources

**The County has been building trails over the past several decades. Based on our experiences, training and research your concerns and questions are familiar to us. This document will serve to answer your questions and provide you access to nationwide research.**

## *Are trails safe?*

Yes, a resounding yes, trails are safe. Both, our experience with trails here in Anne Arundel County, and national studies share that crime is negligible and much lower than in other areas.

### What studies have said

## *How do adjoining neighborhoods view trails?*

The County's experience is that neighborhoods sometime express concern before a trail is built but then after it is in place, it is viewed as a wonderful community asset for recreation, exercise and walk/bike transportation. For example the neighborhoods in Arnold, Severna Park, Millersville and Glen Burnie along the B&A Trail cherish the trail and many neighborhoods build small trail connectors for easier and safer access. It is also common to see real estate listings mention "Access to Trail" as a selling feature as with the image at right taken recently.

### What studies have said

## *How do you determine where a trail phase stops and starts?*



The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) share that factors – in addition to affordability – include demand, connectivity, improved safety, removal of barriers must also be considered. Additionally, the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration suggests:

- A trailhead should provide a place for all trail users to enter a trail system and could include space to park and unload bicycles or other trail equipment.
- Trail projects must provide connections to a regional system or link significant land uses.
- Construct on- or off-road trails with logical termini (e.g., between residential neighborhoods, park and ride lots, schools, colleges, businesses, or parks).

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## Where are trails built?

Anne Arundel County was an ideal location for several rail lines due to its proximity and location between Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis. As travel by automobile, truck, and bus prevailed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the rail lines declined and were later abandoned. Several of the County's trails utilize former railroad right of ways, but also road right of ways have been utilized. In any event, the County must provide ownership or property rights documentation to funding and permitting agencies prior to construction.

For example, the South Shore Trail includes both a former railroad right of way and road right of way. This was the case in Phase I from near Route 3 northbound to Waterbury Road as well as Phase II from Bonheur



Historic 1838 Hopkins Atlas of South Shore Trail

Avenue to Annapolis Road, near Sappington Station Road. To provide a simplified history related to the former railroad: the railroad acquired rights by purchase or inquisition from large farms or tracts of land → passenger railroad enjoys a heyday of roughly 100 years (1840-1935) → passenger railroad era ends due to popularity of automobiles → State acquires railroad rights → County prepares master plan to repurpose right of way via the Rails to Trails movement → County acquires railroad rights from the State → County builds Phase I which opens in 2019 and continues efforts to design and build remaining trail phases. More history is available in the [master plan](#).

More particularly in the Phase II section of the South Shore Trail, Holladay Park Road is a public right of way or public road where the trail will run alongside and occupy with a trailhead. The trailhead often includes vehicle and bicycle parking, benches, park signage and landscaping.

At present, Holladay Park Road is in a special category known as a [Public Works Agreement](#) where a developer holds certain responsibilities. In this case, the County's responsibility is on hold until such time as the development concludes. The reason for this is the active residential subdivision development known as the Preserve at Severn Run.

## What you want to know about trails in Anne Arundel County...

- The County's recreational trails are managed by the Department of Recreation and Parks and staffed with a superintendent, rangers, maintenance supervisor and maintenance crew. <https://www.aacounty.org/departments/recreation-parks/parks/trails/index.html>

## Trail Development: Questions and Resources

- County Trails enjoy a long standing and active Friends group, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization of dedicated volunteers helping to promote, protect and enhance the multimodal trails of Anne Arundel County. They would welcome your interest and involvement. <http://www.friendsofaatrails.org/about-us/>
- The Friends group includes a special volunteer segment known as the Trailblazers who help trail users and County staff through education of trail etiquette, locating related resources like bike and coffee shops, informing staff about damage or problems with the facilities, and more. <https://www.severnaparkvoice.com/stories/trailblazer-awards-recognize-volunteers-who-make-recreation-better-safer-and-more-accessible,11223?>
- The County created the Bicycle Advisory or Bike Commission in 2015 to advise it towards filling system gaps and making linkages for a safe interconnected network of on-road bicycle lanes and multi-use trails to enhance and contribute to the health, environment, quality of life and economic vitality of the County. <https://www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/bicycle-advisory-commission/index.html>
- In 2017 the first pedestrian and bicycle planner position was created and filled and the Office of Transportation was formed.

### *Additional Resources*

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- Williams, John. *References on the Relationship between Bike Trails and Crime/Property Values*. Rep. Maplewood NJ: National Center for Bicycling & Walking, 2003.