

THE SCOPE

On Friday, October 27, 2024 Trail Strategies, LLC toured the potential River Trail with Great Headwaters Trails Foundation (GHTF) volunteer engineers and then led a charette with the members of the GHTF board and volunteers. This meeting enveloped a large amount of information –focusing on the proposed River Trail, tied organizations, and past trail successes in the area. The purpose of both the field visit and the charette was to identify key challenges and benefits with the current trail concept and to 1) evaluate the feasibility of the current plan and recommend potential design modifications, 2) recommend future actions that would help move components of the larger project forward.

Prior to the meeting, Trail Strategies, LLC was able to review GHTF’s organization structure & background; future trail’s 30% plans and feasibility study prepared by MSA in 2019; updated April 2024 cost estimate by MSA; property-interest related documents; the River Trail Commission (RTC) Bylaws, and other media related to potential trail expansion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each section within this report has specific recommendations, however, prioritization of the recommendations and commitment to more critical action items will be an important element to help move the project forward. Highlights of the recommendations are included below:

- 1) Local government support is critical to the success of the project. Grassroots support and communication with local officials from them will be critical to the success of the project. GHTF working more in the background for the trail advancement would be beneficial.
- 2) Branding of the River Trail as a community project vs. GHTF’s project is important.
- 3) Establishing smaller, obtainable mini goals is critical for messaging, focus, and the project’s success.
- 4) Media regarding the trail can be simplified and should be reviewed to ensure positive messaging (vs. defensive). Communication for the trail should be developed specifically with targeted audiences and purposes.
- 5) Local data to support the trail benefits will highlight the need specific to the area (vs. nationwide studies).
- 6) Opportunities for potential alignment modifications that could decrease the construction costs should be explored.
- 7) It is recommended that Segment #6 is the 1st priority for trail design development.
- 8) The alternate north route for Segment # 5 does not meet the intent of the overall River trail with linear connectivity.
- 9) Six segments are currently identified for the larger trail. The start/end of some of the segments could be revisited (with segments potentially split further) to better support funding availability.
- 10) GHTF should review their current branding and ensure “Foundation” is included in all media in their name. GHTF should continue to promote positive events and impacts that they hold/are responsible for.
- 11) The effectiveness of the River Trail Commission should be further explored.