



BIKE-PED COALITION
OF YORK COUNTY

Rails to Trails in York County Exploratory Meeting

May 11, 2023

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Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Meeting Goals
3. Rails-to-Trails Benefits
4. Success Stories
5. Why Rails to Trails in York County
6. Past York County Efforts
7. Potential Challenges
8. Next Steps

Appendices

- Carolina Thread Trail – Adopted Connections, York County
- York County Railroad Lines, 2023
- York County Rail Status Map, 2016
- McConnells Lowrys Trail Property Owner Map, 2016
- Resources
 - Advocacy Guides
 - York County Plans
 - Models/Examples
- BPC Mission, Vision, Strategy and Goals



Meeting Goals

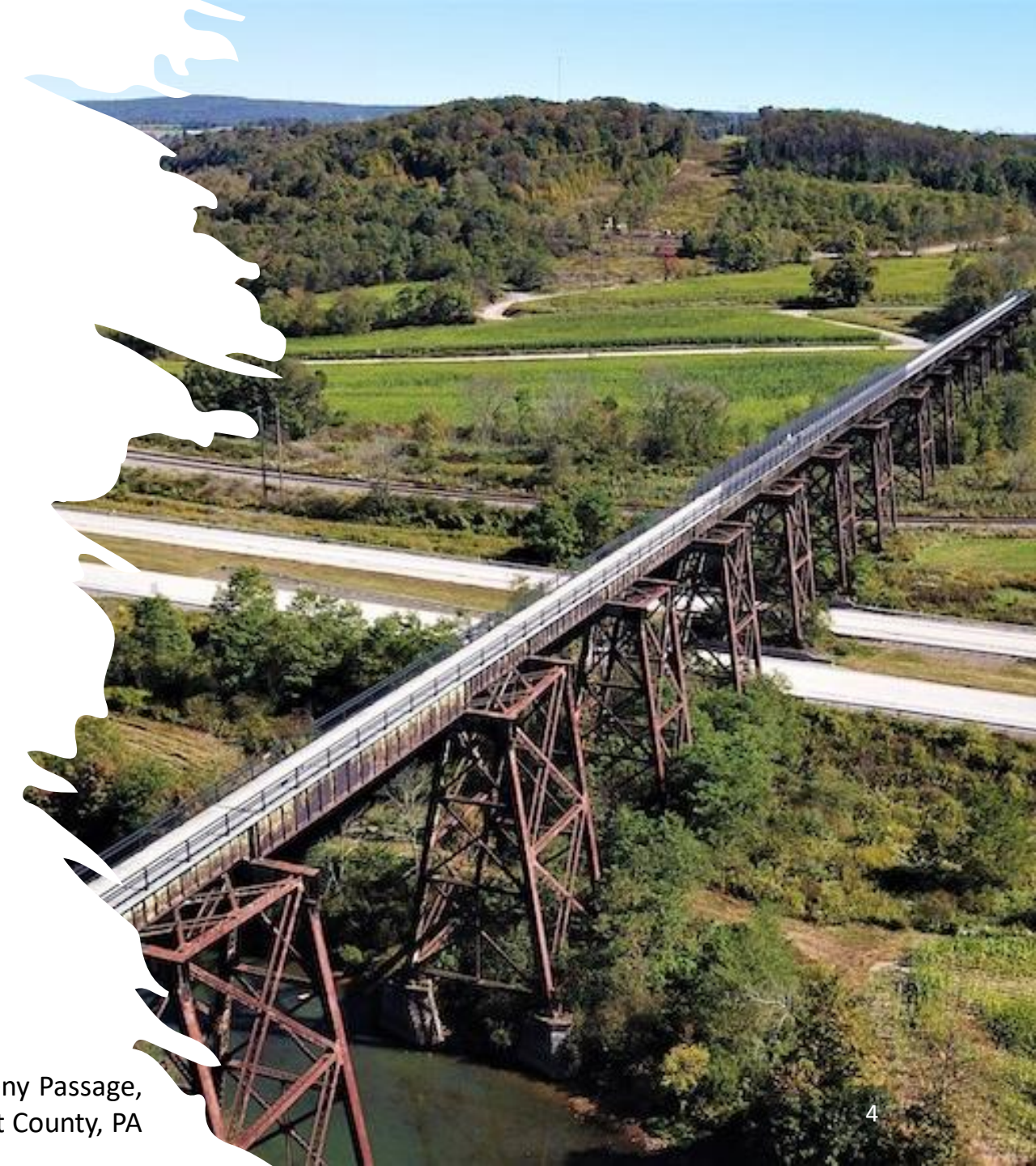
1. Determine support for Rails to Trails in York County
2. Identify core group
3. Begin to think about partnerships

Anything else?

Rail-to-Trails Benefits

- Design, base and infrastructure already in place (will likely need to be improved)
- Flat to gentle grades – accommodates many types of users and abilities
- Connects:
 - people to downtowns, employment areas, parks, schools, etc.
 - cities and towns to each other
- Advantageous for a transportation facility
- Routes offer unique perspectives
- Fosters economic development and revitalization
- Generally the most popular type of trail – local, regional, national draw

Photo: Great Allegheny Passage,
Somerset County, PA



Success Stories

Successful Projects

- Mary Black Rail Trail – Spartanburg, SC
- Swamp Rabbit Trail – Greenville, SC
- Thermal Belt Trail – Rutherfordton, NC
- Virginia Creeper Trail – Damascus, VA

Local Rail Trail Projects under Development

- Great Falls Rail Trail - Great Falls, SC
- Carolina Harmony Trail - Shelby, NC – Phase 1 under construction

Photo: Great Falls Rail-Trail
Corridor (pre-construction)



Why Rails to Trails in York County

- Significant portion of the Carolina Thread Trail Master Plan for York County
- Active transportation option
- Longer distance trail potential
- Leveraging existing background work
- Meeting the needs of a fast-growing region - quality of life
- Ensuring we don't miss the opportunity
- Appreciating York County beyond city borders
- Economic development
- Agribusiness / agritourism opportunity
- Political capital



Photo: SC 161 near Tirzah (note RR corridor off to the right)

Past Rails-to-Trails Efforts in York County

- Advocates investigated Rails-to-Trails opportunities in York County in the past decade:
 - Duke Spur line along Highway 161 from RH to York (YC Bike/Ped Task Force (renamed BPC))
 - a section towards McConnells (Carolina Thread Trail)
 - [Newport](#), connecting on Herlong, to York (City of Rock Hill)
- Past challenges:
 - The rails - challenging to work with; cited safety concerns
 - Duke - wanted to retain the spur line, 7-8 years ago, though rails were not functioning, overgrown, in disrepair
 - Easements - control of easements; didn't pursue "rail with trail" since easements only allowed commercial terms (supporting Duke, not a trail)
- Takeaways:
 - Perfect opportunity from downtown Rock Hill to York. Part of it has been paved over - for several years on the roads - so a good indicator that rail use would not continue
 - We need to work together as a strong coalition to overcome hurdles
 - **Don't let the process get derailed if some opposition or roadblocks are encountered**



Rails to Trails Potential Challenges

- Railroads
- Landowners
- Adjacent landowners
- Level of public support
- Political
- Financial
- Legal

Others?



Looking forward

Building broad-based community support and partnerships are key success factors. A diverse trail coalition needs to be strong enough to overcome hurdles.

Create a “Friends-of-the-York County Trail” Group

Local and State

Governments and Agencies

- York County
- City of Rock Hill
- City of York
- Town of Clover
- Town of Fort Mill
- Schools
- Parks and recreation
- SC DHEC
- SC DOT
- RFATS MPO
- Catawba Regional COG
- York County Economic Development
- Visit York County
- York County Chamber of Commerce

Nonprofits and Coalitions

- Carolina Thread Trail
- Bike/Ped Coalition of York County
- Wholespire York County
- Tobacco-Free York County
- Upper Palmetto YMCA
- Bicycling, running, walking, skating, horseback riding, and hiking clubs (e.g., Rock Hill Bicycle Club)
- Groups serving the elderly and people with disabilities (e.g., Adult Enrichment Centers, Maxabilities, Catawba Area Agency on Aging, Council on Aging, AARP)

Organizations

- Benefitting businesses (e.g., hotels/motels, restaurants, breweries, coffee shops; cycling, camping, fishing outfitters and rental shops)
- Hospitals, insurance companies, and other corporations wanting to improve quality of life in community (e.g., Atrium, Novant, Piedmont)
- Adjacent property owners (e.g., one small business owner cited two police stakeouts of the unused rail line from her property)
- Media

And identify a core group



Next steps

- Form a core group
- Engage “Friends of the Trails” and identify partnerships
- Identify challenges
- Identify opportunities
- Create a plan for this corridor
 - Planning grant?

Other ideas?

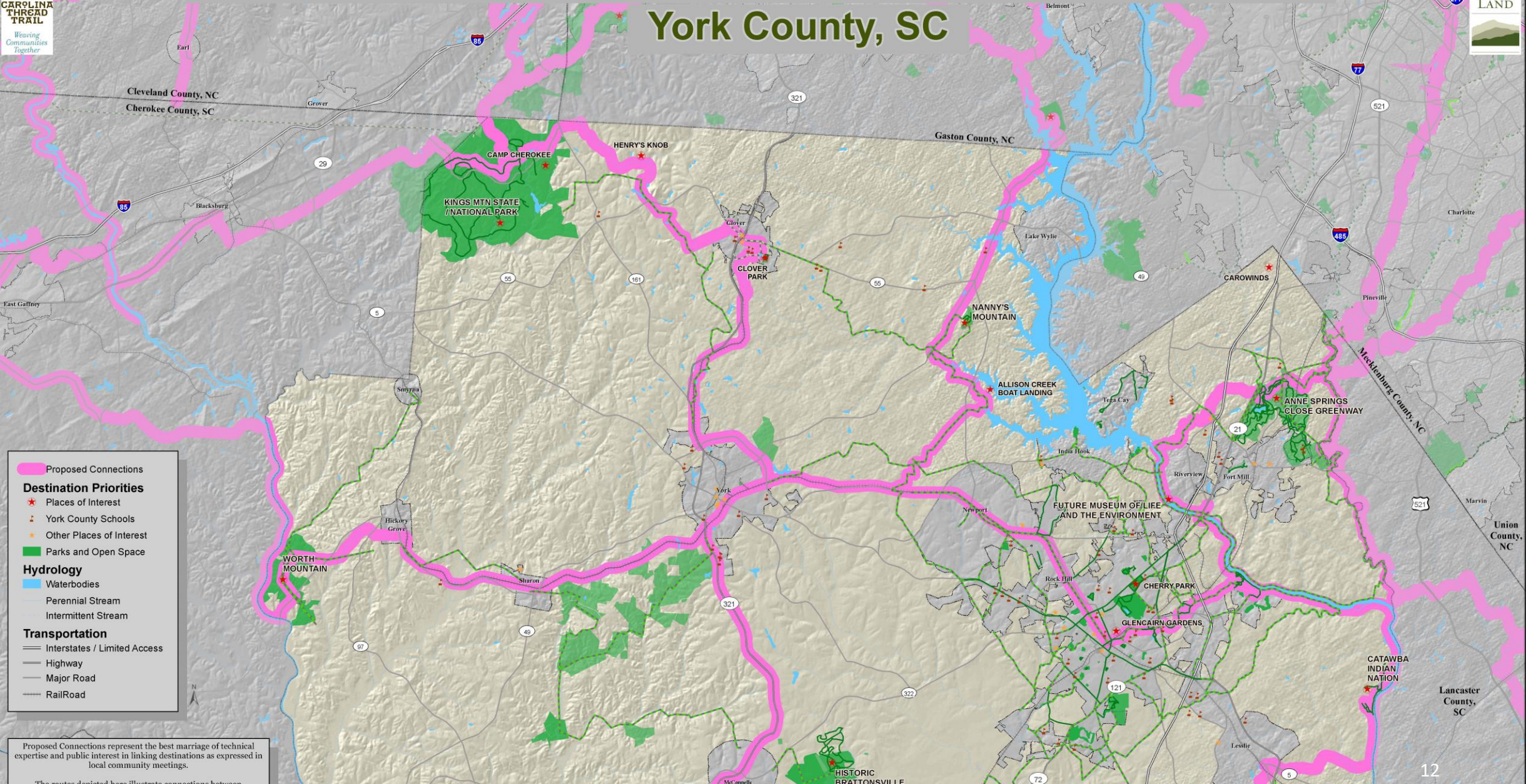
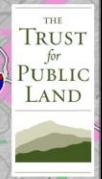


Appendices

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Carolina Thread Trail - Adopted Connections York County, SC



Proposed Connections
 Proposed Connections

Destination Priorities

- Places of Interest
- York County Schools
- Other Places of Interest
- Parks and Open Space

Hydrology

- Waterbodies
- Perennial Stream
- Intermittent Stream

Transportation

- Interstates / Limited Access
- Highway
- Major Road
- Rail/Road

Proposed Connections represent the best marriage of technical expertise and public interest in linking destinations as expressed in local community meetings.

The routes depicted here illustrate connections between

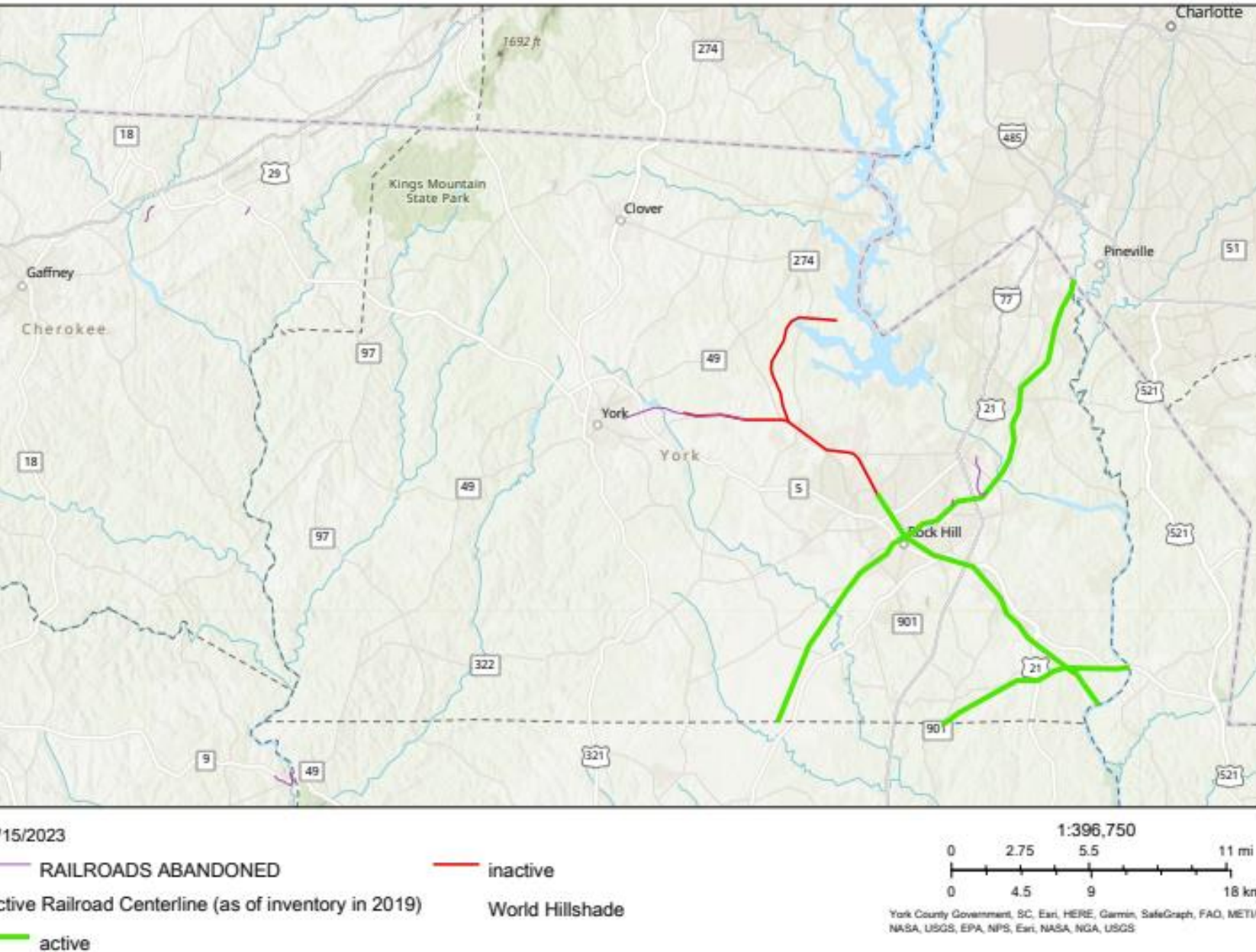
Railroad lines in York County

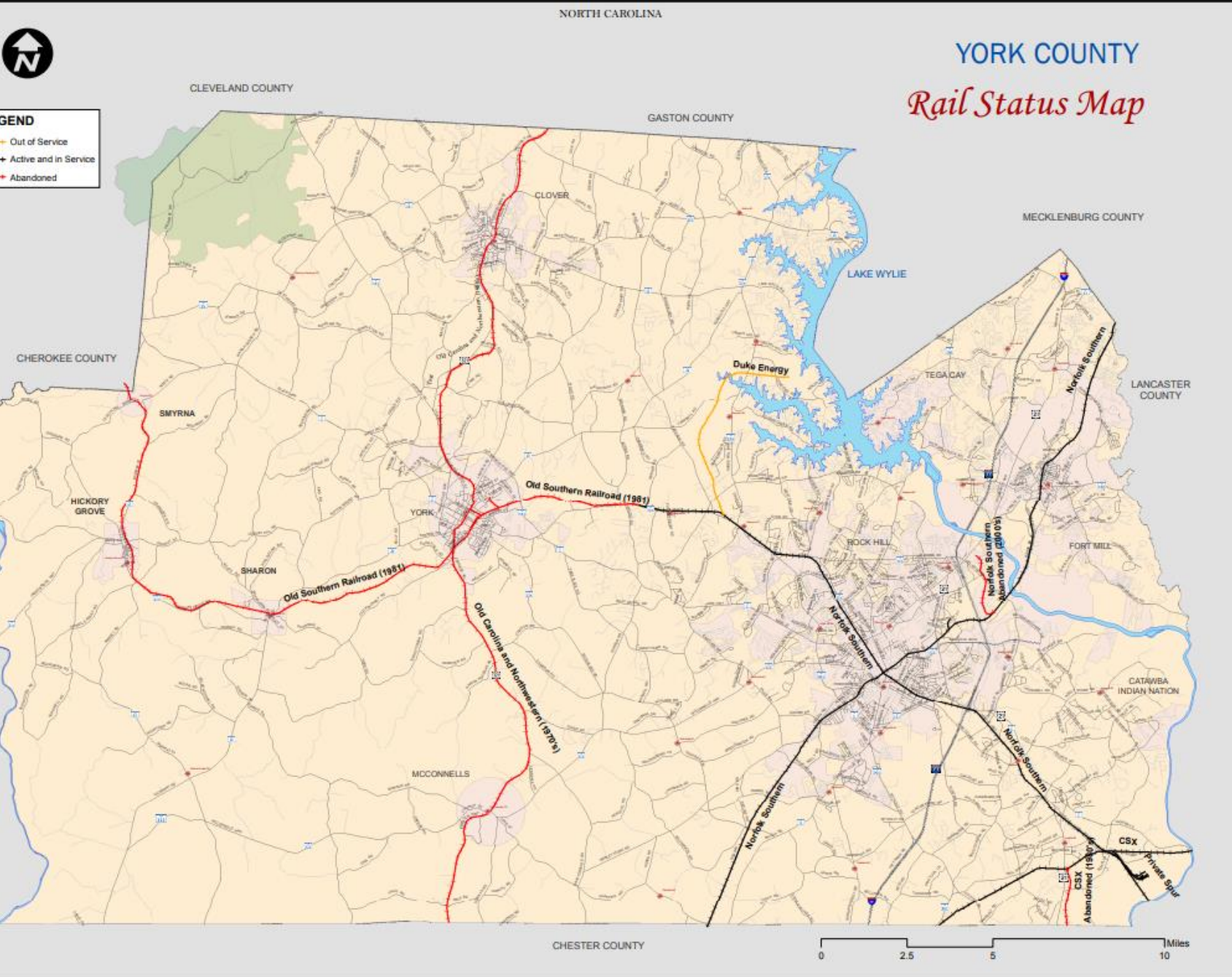
Map date: 2023

York County Railroad Lines

Observations

- Focus on red (inactive) and purple (abandoned):
Rock Hill to York
 - Norfolk Southern
 - Investigate ownership of Old Southern Railroad
- Future consideration:
Duke spur
- Most of Norfolk Southern line is in RFATS territory;
the Old Southern Railroad section is in
Catawba COG territory





Map date: likely 2016

York County Rail Status Map

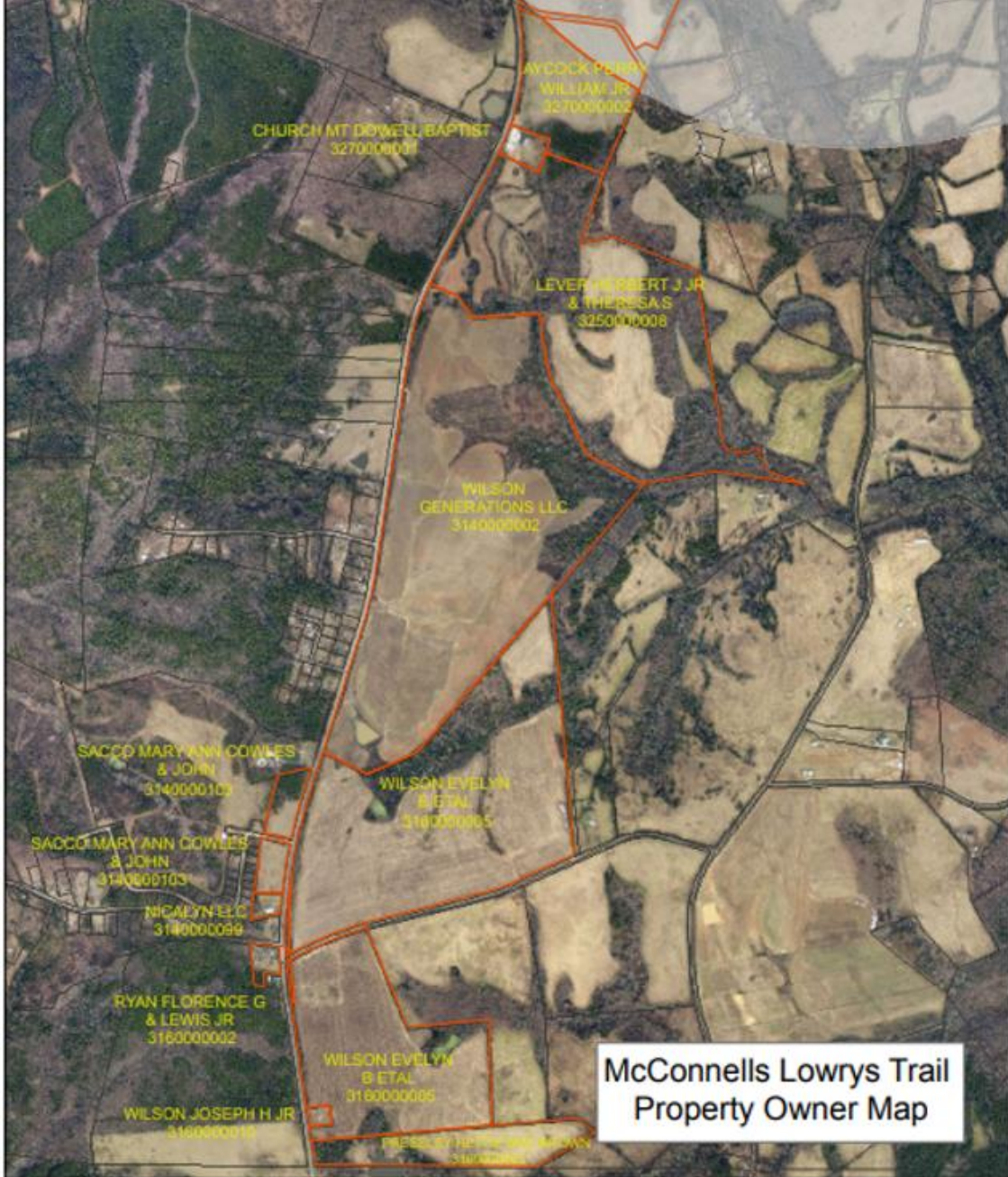
Observations

- Norfolk Southern owns Newport traveling parallel to Old York Rd (161)
 - Very accessible
 - A lot of road crossings
 - No bridges
 - Re. line between Norfolk Southern and York ("Old Southern Railroad") - Norfolk Southern-owned now?
- Duke owns Spur line (crosses 274 and goes back to power station)
 - Within easements with over 20 property owners
 - 2-3 trestles (all need to be rebuilt)
 - Would have to rebuild line leading up to it including through the woods

McConnells Lowrys Trail Property Owner Map (2016)

Observations

- Ownership reverted back to property owners



Map Key

Adjacent_Parcel_McConnells_Lowrys_Trail

Resources: Advocacy Guides

- [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#): *A great resource with technical tips, assistance, and guidance.*
 - [Trail-Building Toolbox](#)
 - [Acquiring Rail Corridors: A How To Manual](#), 6.1.1996
 - Fact Sheet: [Working with Trail Opponents](#), 5.12.2008
 - [Secrets of Successful Rail-Trails](#), An Acquisition and Organizing Manual for Converting Rails into Trails, 1.1.1993
 - Fact Sheet: [Railbanking](#) - What, Where, Why, When and How, 1.1.2013
- [Palmetto Conservation Foundation](#)
 - [A Citizens Guide to Rail Trail Conversion](#), 2017

Resources: York County Plans

- Carolina Thread Trail [Master Plan for York County Communities](#) - p. 19 - Identify Funding p. 23 - Abandoned Rail Corridors
- York County [2022 Comprehensive Plan Update](#) - Goal NR-2.2C Explore possible rails to trails network connection opportunities.
- RFATS [Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Plan](#)
- City of York
 - [Comprehensive Plan](#), 2019-2029 (p. 70) - RAIL TRANSPORTATION
 - [Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Study](#), 2016
 - [York Parks Master Plan](#), June 2021
- City of Rock Hill
 - [Comprehensive Plan](#) (no mention of rails)
 - [Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#)

Resources: Models/Examples

- SC Parks, Rec and Tourism
 - Discover SC: [10 of the Best SC Rail Trails](#)
 - SCPRT Rail Trails - screenshot, 2008
- Wikipedia [Triple C Rail Trail](#)
- Thermal Belt Rail Trail: Linking Forest City, NC, Spindale, NC, and Rutherfordton, NC <https://www.thermalbeltrailtrail.com/>
- Spanish Moss Trail Port Royal, SC <https://www.spanishmosstrail.com/>
- Kings Mountain Gateway Trail, Kings Mountain, NC <https://kmgatewaytrails.org/trails/> (Part of Thread Trail)
- Swamp Rabbit Trail, Greenville/Travelers Rest, SC <https://www.greenvillesc.gov/316/Swamp-Rabbit-Trail> and this podcast <https://simplecivicsgreenvillecounty.org/revitalizing-greenville-the-swamp-rabbit-trails-journey-community-impact/>
- North August Greenway Trail, North Augusts, SC <https://www.northaugustasc.gov/government/city-departments/parks-recreation-tourism/greenway-trail>

Bike/Ped Coalition of York County Mission, Vision, Strategy & Goals

Mission: To support York County and its communities becoming more pedestrian, cycling, and roller-friendly.

Vision: An engaged York County where walking, cycling, and rolling are safe, accessible and preferred forms of transportation and recreation.

Strategy: Educate, advocate, and promote the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of walking, cycling and rolling

Goals:

1. Support local governments, government entities, and organizations in their efforts to increase bicycle, pedestrian, and rolling accessibility and safety.
2. Support York County residents in efforts to advocate for safer, more accessible cycling, rolling, walking, and running.
3. Engage and support decisionmakers and community members to promote the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of walking, cycling, and rolling.

Website: <https://bpcyc.org/>