

ABOUT US

ESRT WORKING GROUP

The mission of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail Working Group (ESRT WG) is to promote and support the development of a regional, multi-use trail extending 49.1 miles along the historic Eastern Shore Railroad corridor that connects towns, encourages outdoor recreation and tourism, contributes to economic growth, and supports a healthier, more prosperous community. The ESRT WG is an unincorporated coalition of public, private, and non-profit organizations based in Accomack and Northampton Counties on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

ESRT FOUNDATION

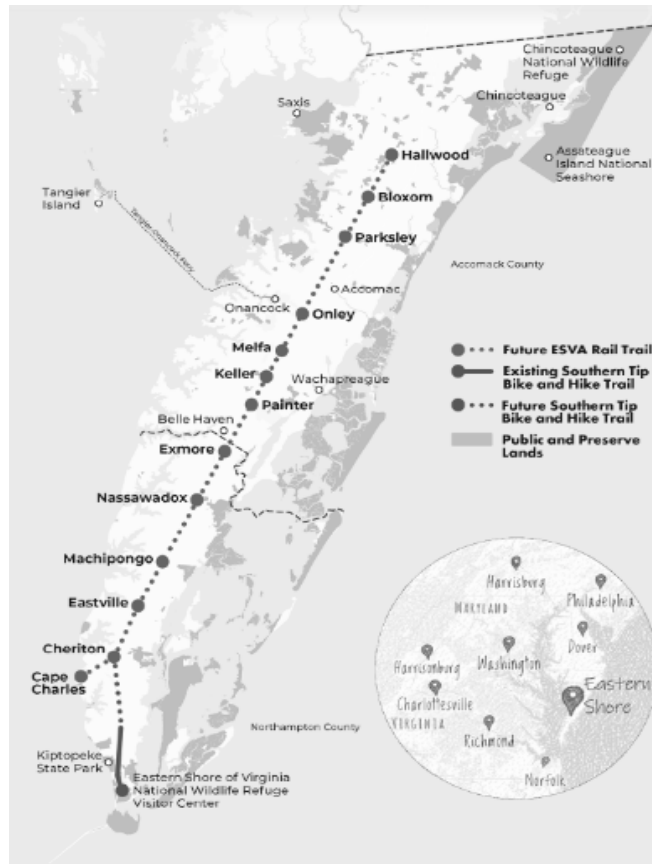
The newly established Eastern Shore Rail Trail Foundation (ESRTF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, to engage in the development, improvement, financing, use, operation, promotion, marketing, maintenance, and good repair of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail. The ESRTF is also the official Trail Sponsor for railbanking under the National Trails Act.

WHAT'S NEXT

The first phase of the ESRT has been funded! Through a Community Project Funding request, the Accomack Northampton Transportation District Commission (ANTDC) was awarded funding for the construction of the first ESRT segment located in the Town of Cape Charles in Northampton County. This phase includes roughly 2.3 miles of 10' wide paved path, one trailhead, a Park & Ride lot, and pedestrian access to cross Route 13. Stay tuned for updates!

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Spread the word! The ESRT Working Group and Foundation is committed to exploring all options for development and management of the future trail, but we need your support! For information on how to make a tax deductible donation to the Foundation, or for other ways you can contribute, visit our website! Help us make the future Eastern Shore of Virginia Rail Trail become a reality!



Accomack County • Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission • Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore • Eastern Shore Public Library • Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce • Eastern Shore Rail Trail Foundation • Eastern Shore of Virginia Master Naturalists • Eastern Shore of Virginia Tourism Commission • Northampton County Chamber • Northampton County Parks & Recreation • The Nature Conservancy • Town of Onley • Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust



info@easternshorerailtrail.com
www.esrailtrail.com



EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA

RAIL TRAIL



Photos left to right: Historic railroad courtesy of Cape Charles Historical Society, CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour, Kiptopeke Elementary School at the Southern Tip Hike & Bike Trail ribbon cutting. Front: CBES Between the Waters Bike Tour

History

Located along the spine of the peninsula between Pocomoke City, MD and Cape Charles, VA, the 1883 completion of the Eastern Shore Railroad ushered in a period of rapid economic growth on Virginia's Eastern Shore. Towns began developing along the new railroad while barges and ferries transported passengers and freight across the Chesapeake Bay. Towns like Cape Charles, Exmore, and Parksley grew around the success of their railroad stations. By 1910, the Counties of Accomack and Northampton were the wealthiest rural counties in America. Hotels and hunt clubs were built in scenic seaside locations, catering to wealthy clients from nearby cities who were attracted to the abundant game, produce, and seafood and were finally able to make the journey in comfort and style. Following the Great Depression, Virginia's Eastern Shore experienced decades of steady economic decline. In 2006, the Eastern Shore Railroad became the Bay Coast Railroad and continued operations under new management until 2018, when the last train made its final run up the Eastern Shore. Due to a long decline in rail traffic and deteriorating tracks, the decision was made to file a petition to abandon 49.1 miles of rail line between Hallwood, VA and Cape Charles, in turn providing a pathway to the corridor's preservation.

Trail Benefits

Preservation

The historic Eastern Shore Railroad corridor has been preserved following approval from the Surface Transportation Board to railbank the inactive line. By filing a petition for abandonment, the ANTDC actually initiated the process of "railbanking", authorized under the National Trails Act and is commonly used to preserve a corridor that would have otherwise been abandoned. This agreement ensures the right-of-way will remain in place for future rail operations. Until then, the corridor can benefit the public as the Eastern Shore Rail Trail, while also accommodating regional infrastructure needs, such as the backbone of our broadband network, wastewater treatment force main, and potential future natural gas lines.

Recreation & Accessibility

The Eastern Shore Rail Trail is for YOU! Enjoy a safe commute to work or school, indulge in local shopping and dining, take advantage of community amenities, connect with friends and family on a bike ride, train for your next marathon, or simply relish in nature during a leisurely stroll. The choice is yours!

Health

Trails offer natural and scenic views while also providing a safe, cost-effective place to enjoy healthy and sociable activities. According to the 2022 County Health Rankings, Accomack and Northampton County rank among the least healthy counties in Virginia, with only 11% of residents in Northampton County and 32% in Accomack County having adequate access to exercise opportunities, compared to 78% in all of Virginia. A study of the GreenBelt trail in Georgia reports that the majority of residents found opportunities for exercise and physical activity more accessible and convenient than before the trail was constructed. Trail users report it's easier to find time to exercise, they exercise more frequently, they enjoy moderate or vigorous physical activity, and their overall state of health and physical ability has improved. Multi-use trails encourage a healthy way of living through safe and accessible recreation, exercise, and social connection.

Economic Development

The Eastern Shore Rail Trail has the potential to greatly increase economic development in our region. Studies show trails boost spending at local businesses, encourage revitalization of vacant buildings, create new jobs, increase property values, attract visitors, and more. The Virginia Capital Trail has an estimated annual impact of \$5M and the Virginia Creeper Trail has been an economic driver for towns along the trail. In 2015, the Town of Abingdon estimated that "trail-related tourism revenues stand at about \$25 million a year."

With anticipation growing, we feel it's important to remind everyone that there are other projects taking place within the rail corridor, making it an active construction zone. **For the safety of all, the rail corridor is not yet open to the public.** Instead, pay a visit to the Southern Tip Hike & Bike Trail located in Cheriton, VA!



**UNDER
CONSTRUCTION**