

Chessie Trail Public Forum Minutes

December 7, 2017

6:00 – 7:30 pm

Turman Room, Preston Library, VMI

1. Welcome

- a. Col Jay Williams welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their interest and involvement
- b. The Chessie Trail is an important outdoor recreational attraction for our area as well as a critical asset for VMI's training program
- c. The agenda was organized with what we see as the key interest items first
- d. At the end of the day, the safety of the Chessie Nature Trail users is our #1 priority
- e. Again, we appreciate your attendance this evening

2. Attendees – The list is provided (Atch 1)

3. Chessie Trail Advisory Committee

- a. This committee was formed in June 2013 to bring in community representation to discuss and comment on the upkeep and ownership of the trail. The Committee meets on a quarterly basis with one annual public meeting during the year. The current membership is:
 - i. Jay Williams – VMI, Committee Chairman
 - ii. Chris Wise - Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC)
 - iii. Sam Crickenberger - Rockbridge County
 - iv. Noah Simon, Lexington City
 - v. Tom Roberts – City of Buena Vista
 - vi. Jean Clark - Director of Tourism, Lexington and Rockbridge Area Tourism
 - vii. Keith Holland - Owner of private land adjacent to the trail
 - viii. Eric Sheffield – FOCT

4. Recognition of Service – Mr. Keith Holland and Ms. Lisa Tracy

- a. Both Ms. Tracy and Mr. Holland are charter members of the committee. They are great friends and supporter of the trail and we thank them for their service.

- b. We are currently working to identify an adjacent landowner to replace Mr. Holland and hope to have them on board for the first meeting in 2018.

5. Here is how we will proceed through the meeting agenda tonight:

- a. Col Williams explained the format of the meeting:
 - a. Look at the Year in Review
 - b. Provide presentations on items that impact the Chessie Trail
 - c. Transition to Public Comments
 - d. Closing Comments and adjournment

6. Year in Review

- a. The FOCT have done an extraordinary job of helping maintaining the trail
 - i. Organized the April and October 2017 ½ Marathons – great attendance from runners to support staff
 - 1. 76% of the participants come from outside our area
 - 2. Approximately 300 participants in October
 - 3. \$9,000 raised and put back into the trail
 - ii. Purchased trail counters at a cost of \$2,500
 - 1. As of August 10th, 27,000 clicks have happened with 87% coming from the Lexington end of the trail
 - iii. Gate installations (100% complete through the entire trail)
 - iv. Trail maintenance
 - v. Eliminated graffiti
 - 1. Under bridge
 - 2. Mile markers
 - vi. Totally committed and constant set of eyes to help maintain the trail
- b. VMI Physical Plant oversees mowing maintenance contract and took the lead on the Mill Creek footbridge repair after high water damage. There is a great working relationship between FOCT and P2
- c. Several of the committee members participate in Braiding the Way and Shenandoah Valley Partnership to stay linked into initiatives

- d. Ms. Anna Swenty, Science Educator, Boxerwood presented the Geocaching project that she would like to propose to the committee. Ms. Swenty will come to the next committee meeting and discuss.

7. Presentations

- a. **East Lexington Update** - Col Dale Brown presented an update on the background and issues on the East Lexington end of the trail (Atch 2)
 - b. **VMI Recreational Trails Grant Update** - Col Jay Williams informed the group that VMI decided not to proceed with the grant project due to changes in required grant bidding and reimbursement processes. VMI has identified VMI funding sources to continue selected aspects of the project. To date, we have invested in parking areas and signage
 - c. **VMI Eastern Federal Lands Access Program Update (EFLAP) Grant** - Col Jay Williams informed the group that the grant was submitted on 15 Nov 16 and that they were contacted in Jun 17 to continue coordination on the project. Regulatory processes have slowed down; final approval and funding has not been received from Department of Transportation
 - d. **City of Buena Vista Project/Grant Update** – On behalf of Mr. Tom Roberts, Col Jay Williams updated the group on the projects and grants the City of Buena Vista are tracking. They continue to make progress in trail and pedestrian enhancements at the east end of the Chessie Trail. Over the summer were awarded a grant through VDOT to build concrete ramp underpass below the Route 60 bridge. This will allow safe & easy connection across Route 60 into Buena Vista. Will begin design work early 2018. The City continues to work with property owner of the Bontex industrial site on the future of the rail corridor and possibilities for trail connection to the River Walk. Also, they just completed brick pavers and new street trees on Magnolia Avenue in downtown
8. **Public Comments** – Col Jay Williams transitioned into the Public Comment portion of the meeting. He asked that attendees who wished to speak should raise their hand and he would call on them.
- a. Eric Sheffield – Spoke on the trail gate progress, signs, trail counters, FOCT races, and expressed his concerns with the current BV Road detour.

- b. Joe Watkins – Expressed his concern on the Old BV Road detour and offered VMI his services and information that he has researched.
 - c. Robbie Faulkner – Expressed that addressing the pedestrian traffic safety needs to be taken into consideration in future Old BV Road detour discussions.
 - d. Dick Halseth – Informed the group of the Miller House activities and a new initiative to identify a lumber mill and several other businesses that supported the railroad and the impact of the current detour has on that initiative.
 - e. Becky McKenzie – Asked a question where are we considering the end of the trail? COL Clark responded that this is an issue that will continue to be worked through the process. Ms. McKenzie wants to know how to respond to questions.
 - f. Chris Wise – Expressed concern that the detour information did not go out ahead of the actions. Also, he asked about the VMI funding that will be used to address the Recreational Trails Grant that is not being pursued.
- 9. Closing Remarks** – After the public comment portion of the meeting concluded, Col Jay Williams thanked all for attending and great conversation and feedback.
- 10. Adjourn** – The meeting concluded at 7:30 pm.



JAMES L. WILLIAMS, JR., P.E., CEFP
Colonel
VMI Post Engineer

2 Attachments

- 1. Attendee List
- 2. East Lexington Presentation

Chessie Trail Public Forum
Sign In Sheet

December 7, 2017
6:00 - 7:30 pm

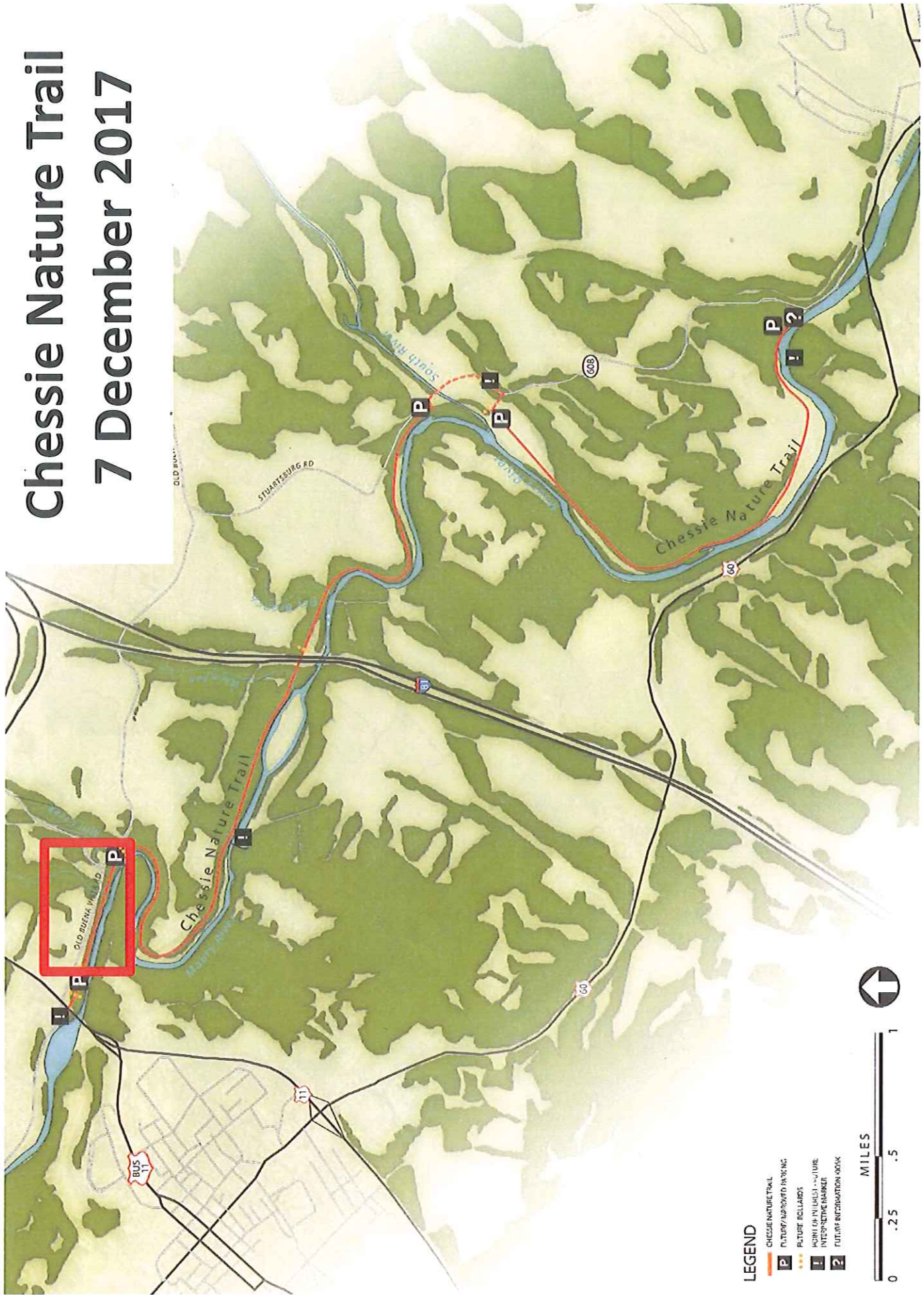
Turman Room, Preston Library, VMI

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Chessie Nature Trail

7 December 2017



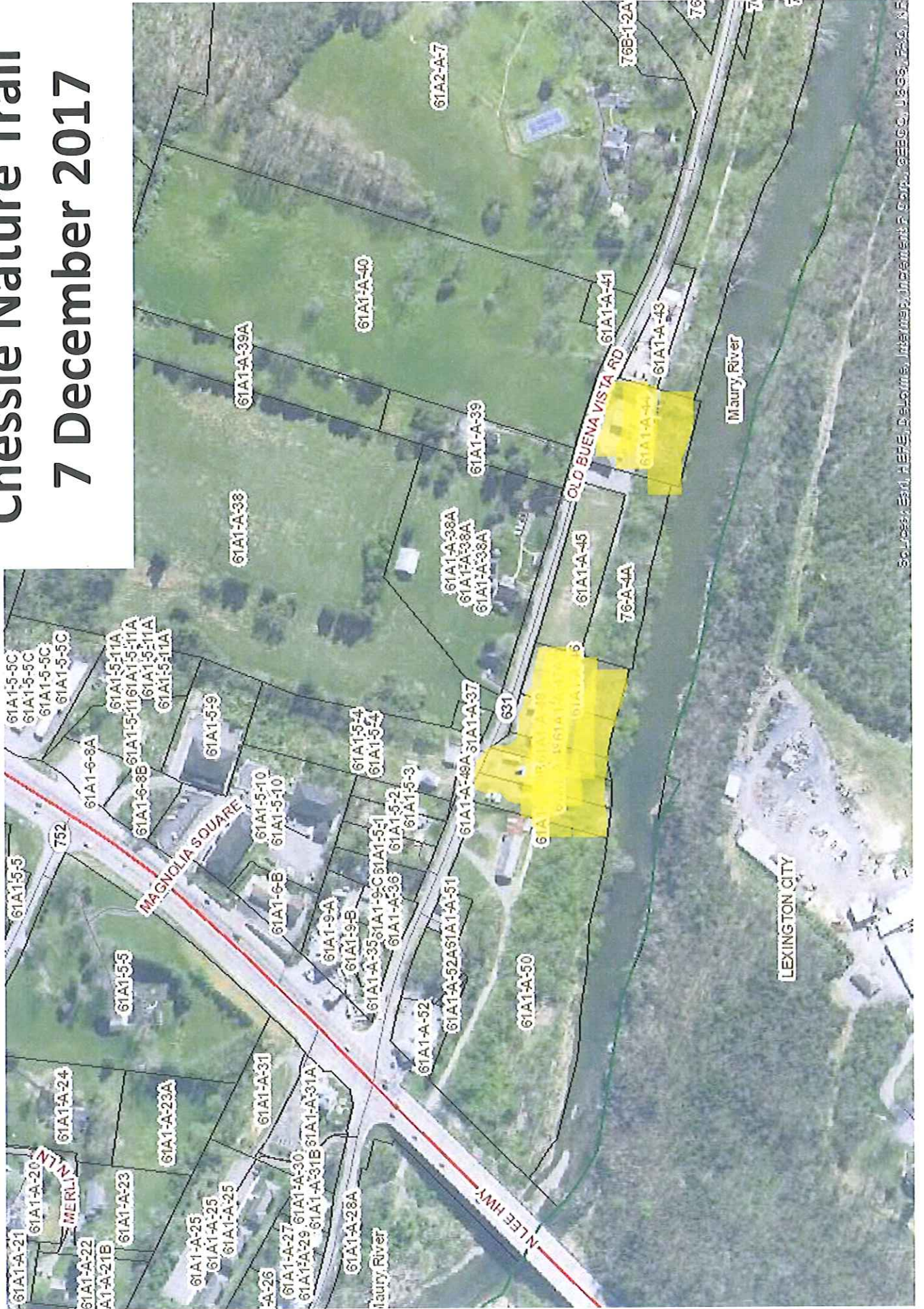
LEGEND

- CHESSE NATURE TRAIL
- FUTURE/APPROVED PARKING
- FUTURE BOLLARDS
- POINT OF INTEREST - CULTURE
- INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE
- FUTURE RESTORATION - DOCK



Chessie Nature Trail

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LESS AND EXCEPT those plots or parcels of land conveyed by the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway in the following deeds: Deed Book 325, Page 517, Deed Book 328, Page 610, Deed Book 326, Page 532, and Deed Book 335, Page 426, each in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court, Rockbridge County, Virginia;

AND FURTHER LESS AND EXCEPT any other plots or parcels of land included within the above real estate description, but heretofore conveyed by the Grantor herein to a third party and duly recorded in the Clerk's Office, Circuit Court, Rockbridge County, Virginia.

Chessie Nature Trail

History

- 2010 VMI invited property owners to meet.
 - Discuss permanent access across private property.
 - Interest from the owners at that time did not result in permanent access.

- 2010 VMI signed agreement with City to pursue connection of Woods Creek Trail to Chessie Nature Trail.
 - The City of Lexington had a T-21 grant of \$140,000 for this project.
 - As part of the 20% match VMI paid \$15,750.
 - City efforts are still on-going.

Chessie Nature Trail

Recent Activities (2017)

- Apr Property Owner blocked trail w/dumpsters.
Re-routed the trail until the dumpsters were removed.
- Aug Property Owner blocked trail w/fence.
VMI Re-routed trail (twice).
Executed MOU with Leeches for temporary use of their property.
Re-routed the trail to se access thru Leech property.
Investigated roadway easement w/VDOT.
Coordinated w/VDOT to add pedestrian signage.
Reviewed posted speed limit w/County.
Investigated Prescriptive Easement with Office of the Attorney General.
Initiated preparation of appraisals for easements.
- Sept Property owner added trail restrictions.
- Nov CMI contracted for survey of VMI property boundaries.
Working with Mr. Faulkner created a new off-street parking area and erected new signage to improve access to the trail.
Eliminated the temporary on road path (Safety).

Chessie Nature Trail

Future Activities

Improvements in off-street parking and signage.

- Permanent access from the road to the parking.
- Improved trail information signage.

Continue the process to prepare appraisals for permanent easements

- Complete survey and plats.
- Fair market value.
- Meet with property owners to discuss fair market value offer for a permanent easement.

Ensure safety of Chessie Nature Trail for all users.

Continue efforts to restore trail connectivity.