

# Williamsburg leaders seek funding for regional trail

Project would help create 190-mile trek in commonwealth



The Virginia Capital Trail, here as it parallels Greensprings Road, is popular for walking and riding. STAFF FILE

BY JAMES W. ROBINSON STAFF WRITER

A 94-mile trail for walking, running and biking could one day connect Williamsburg with Fort Monroe and Virginia Beach.

For the second year, Williamsburg is asking for state funding for its part of Trail757, a project that would link existing trails and build new ones to create a regional trail system across Hampton Roads. The request for state funding is

among the items included in the city's legislative agenda for 2025. The agenda is a way to provide state and federal legislators a quick reference that outlines the city's position on certain issues.

Funding for Trail757 is a priority carried over from Williamsburg's 2024 agenda. The city wants to connect the Virginia Capital Trail, a 52-mile trek from Richmond to Jamestown, with Trail757, a long-distance multiuse trail. Trail757 would pick up from Jamestown and go through Williamsburg to Fort Monroe near Hampton.

In all, Trail757 would create a trail system of about 190 miles, at a cost of \$240 million to \$300 million, and be the longest continuous multiuse trail system in Virginia. By connecting cities and towns, it's intended to "open up a world of health, productivity, and adventure to hundreds of thousands of Virginians and visitors," the Trail757.com website reads.

Bob Crum, executive director of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, said the trail offers "an exciting opportunity" to extend the Virginia Capital Trail.

"The trail will interconnect recreation, tourism and business areas," Crum said, "and is expected to generate positive economic impacts for our communities and residents."

The Virginia Capital Trail is a "successful economic development and tourism endeavor" with the idea of extending to Trail757 following suit, according to Williamsburg Assistant City Manager Michele Mixner DeWitt. A segment of Trail757, formally known as the Birthplace of America Trail, would also include a ferry that would take visitors across to Surry County, Smithfield and Suffolk, linking to First Landing State Park in Virginia Beach.

Regional planners began working on the project following the completion of the Richmond-to-Jamestown Virginia Capital Trail in October 2015. Since then, various segments in different localities have received funding.

DeWitt called the trail a "regional Hampton Roads effort." Localities that would have a piece of the trail have been working to map out the best places for new stretches of it, she said, such as the path that runs along Monticello Avenue between New Town and William & Mary's School of Education.

"That could be a link for one of the routes to come through from Jamestown to Fort Monroe," DeWitt said. "So, we're conscious as a city as we're working on our local bike and pedestrian trails, let's think about how it would connect to the larger trail."

According to its website, Trail757 plans to connect with the South Hampton Roads Trail, a 41-mile multiuse trail that would run through Suffolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake and Norfolk to Virginia Beach, as well as the Elizabeth River Trail, a 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-mile multiuse path with 11 sections from Norfolk State University to the Port of Virginia while following the Elizabeth River. Those two segments would connect with the Virginia Capital Trail in Jamestown.

The trail has seen support from the Tidewater Trails Alliance, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission/Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization, and RVA757 Connects. Most recently, Williamsburg received funding for Phase 2 of the College Woods Circuit, which is located on Strawberry Plains Road from Ironbound Road to Berkeley Lane. The circuit forms a loop with the recently completed Monticello Avenue Multiuse Trail.

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