

— What is the difference between the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program and the Multimodal Planning Grant Program?

Feasibility Study Grant Program

Feasibility studies bridge the gap between conceptual planning and programming of projects. They build upon higher-level planning efforts and take a comprehensive approach to identify possible route alternatives of multimodal corridors. The purpose of this type of study is to evaluate technical feasibility of a project from a design, permitting, and constructability perspective. Input solicited from the local community and stakeholders help guide the development of recommended routes. Project types include paved trails, shared-use paths, sidepaths, greenways, and sidewalks. It is important to note that a feasibility study does not present a final design for construction.

The purpose of the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program is to improve the pipeline of multimodal projects to access state and federal funding. The feasibility study program will produce well-conceived projects with demonstrated community support that will be competitive in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and for federal investment. Quantity-based preliminary cost estimates will be generated for route alignments to help inform further decision making, identify funding needs, and develop next steps for project implementation.

Multimodal Planning Grant Program

The Multimodal Planning Grant Program was created by the N.C. Department of Transportation Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) and the Transportation Planning Division (TPD) in January 2004. The program encourages municipalities to develop comprehensive multimodal, bicycle, and pedestrian plans. A comprehensive multimodal, bicycle, or pedestrian network plan allows a municipality to set a vision for multimodal transportation in their community, plan for a multimodal network, and identify priority multimodal projects in addition to policy recommendations. Please note that a community can apply for only one type of plan in an individual grant cycle.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— What facilities are eligible for the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program?

The following facilities are eligible for the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program:

- **Paved Trail:** A paved trail surface, such as asphalt or concrete, offers greater accessibility for bicyclists, pedestrians and other nonmotorized users of all ages. Asphalt pavement tends to be the most popular and cost effective for paved trails. Concrete pavement is more durable, but it typically costs more than asphalt pavement. Paved trails are typically 10-feet wide or greater can also be known as a “shared-use paths”, “greenways” or “sidepaths” depending on site context.
 - **Shared-Use Path:** A facility, that should meet ADA standards, and may be used by bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users of all ages. Shared-use paths are separated from the roadway by an open space or a physical barrier or within an independent-right-of-way and can also be known as a “multi-use trail”, “multi-use path” or “greenway.”
 - **Greenway:** A greenway provides a travel area separated from motorized traffic for bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users. These facilities generally follow corridors of undeveloped land preserved for recreational use or environmental protection. These corridors are often utilized as buffers since they often separate and protect the natural environment from the built environment.
 - **Sidepath:** A specific type of facility, which should be designed to meet PROWAG standards, that is physically separated from the road but still located within the roadway right-of-way.
- **Sidewalk:** The portion of a street or highway right-of-way, beyond the curb or edge of roadway pavement, which is intended for use by pedestrians. Sidewalks are generally narrower than paved trails and are usually constructed of concrete pavement or pavers.

— Can counties, regional governments, or non-profit organizations apply for funding?

The following governmental entities and non-profit organizations can apply to the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program: municipal governments, county governments, regional governmental agencies (MPOs/RPOs), and non-profit organizations (bicycle, pedestrian, and transit advocacy organizations, Friends-of-the-Trail groups, land conservancies with 501(c)(3) designation). Please note that this excludes universities/colleges and other organizations such as business improvement districts.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— Can the funding be used to develop a bicycle and pedestrian feasibility analysis in other municipal/county study or planning efforts?

Any feasibility study developed with these funds must focus on a stand-alone paved trail path or sidewalk project, requests for funding to develop such elements are not within the scope of this grant.

— Does this grant program fund design or construction of paved trails or sidewalks?

These funds are made available for the development of feasibility studies for paved trails or sidewalks only. Proposals detailing specific construction projects are not eligible for consideration.

— Is a local match required?

A local match may not be required dependent upon the funding source for the program year offered; however, it may be a factor to consider for a competitive grant cycle.

— What types of funds can be used for a local match?

Municipal funds and funds secured from other states or federal agencies and organizations or businesses may be used for the local match. NCDOT state or federal funds provided to a municipality cannot be used as a local cash match. Powell Bill funds may not be used toward the local match – [see here](#). Donated services or materials cannot be used to meet the local participation requirement. The local match must be a cash contribution.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

— How much does the study cost to develop?

Project budgets are contingent upon corridor context and complexity. These guidelines are provided to help determine the scale of the project. The development of a small-scale study will differ from that of a large-scale study. The following should be considered in the development of a study:

- Cost
- Number of route alternatives
- Mileage range
- Jurisdictional range
- Corridor constraints
- Community and stakeholder engagement expectation

Refer to the following table for a comparison between the two project scales.

	SMALL-SCALE FEASIBILITY STUDY	LARGE-SCALE FEASIBILITY STUDY
COST	\$60,000 - \$80,000	\$80,000 - \$120,000+ Significantly more complex and extensive corridors may result in a higher plan cost
NUMBER OF ROUTE ALTERNATIVES	Up to 4 alternatives to be evaluated	Greater than 4 alternatives to be evaluated
MILEAGE RANGE	¼ mile to 3 miles	3 to 15+ miles
JURISDICTIONAL RANGE	Up to 2 jurisdictions along the corridor	2+ jurisdictions along the corridor (may require additional jurisdictional meetings/coordination)
CORRIDOR CONSTRAINTS	Minimal utilities Moderate topography Smaller FEMA studied streams (creeks and streams) Moderate roadway characteristics constraints (minor road crossings, moderate to high traffic volumes, moderate to high-speed limits)	Rail corridors/crossings Significant roadway characteristic constraints (controlled access roadways, major road crossings, high traffic volumes, high speeds) Larger FEMA studied streams (major water bodies – rivers, lakes) Moderate/significant utilities Significant topography
COMMUNITY + STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATION	3 steering committee meetings (virtual) 1 online survey 1 public meeting Up to 4 focused stakeholder (landowners, local businesses, underrepresented groups, etc.) meetings (1-on-1 or may include multiple stakeholders per meeting)	4-5 steering committee meetings (virtual) 1 online survey 1 public meeting Up to 8 focused stakeholders (landowners, local businesses, underrepresented communities, etc.) meetings (1-on-1 or may include multiple stakeholders per meeting)



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— What documents are required to submit with an application?

The following documents are required to submit with an application:

- Hyperlinks (or digital copies) to relevant previous plans or studies
- Resolutions of support (from participating jurisdictions MPO/RPO and local jurisdiction)
- Resume(s) of staff who will manage the study
- Letters of support
- Study area map

The study area map should include project boundaries/corridors to be studied and relevant base map layers, such as municipal/county boundaries, roadway characteristics, water bodies, parks and open space, existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit connections, etc.

— How to determine if this project is a part of the Great Trails State network?

The Great Trails State Plan was created by the Integrated Mobility Division, in coordination with the Transportation Planning Division and North Carolina State Parks. This plan draws upon existing plans and new recommendations to identify a network of shared-use paths and trails that connects all 100 counties in North Carolina, with a special focus on connections between population centers and North Carolina State Parks. The primary outcome of this planning process was to develop a statewide trail map coupled with an action-oriented network plan and 5-year implementation strategy.

A key selection criterion in the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program will award additional points for projects that are along the Great Trails State network. To determine if your project is part of the Great Trails State network, click on the following link to view an interactive ArcGIS webpage of the network: <https://ncdot.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?useExisting=1&layers=daecddb2e6374981b3ed122305d2baf5>.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— Are proposed rail-trail projects eligible to study through this grant program?

Proposed rail-to-trail and rail-with-trail projects are eligible to study through this grant program. However, proposed rail-with-trail projects along active Class I rail lines are not eligible due to CSX and Norfolk-Southern (NS) policies not permitting private or public parallel bicycle and pedestrian paths along active rail corridors. All feasibility study projects proposed along or across rail corridors will require coordination with the NCDOT Rail Division throughout the study process. A map of the active and inactive rail lines across the state may be viewed at the following link: <https://ncdot.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=352556db969240c99a06a179f56b8403>.

— How will proposals be selected?

Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) staff will conduct a preliminary review of all applications for completeness and general appropriateness. Eligible proposals will be reviewed by IMD staff with support from individuals with professional experience in developing, administering, and/or implementing paved trails and sidewalk feasibility studies. Recommended proposals will be forwarded to the NCDOT Board of Transportation for final approval.

— What are the selection criteria?

Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) staff will review each proposal and evaluate it based on the stated vision, goals, and needs of the jurisdiction; comprehensiveness of scope; understanding of issues and opportunities; level of local commitment; and feasibility of successful study completion. For a comprehensive list of criteria, see the “Selection Criteria” section of the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program Overview document: [NCDOT IMD Feasibility Studies Program](#)



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— When will selected communities receive funding?

It is anticipated that jurisdictions will be notified of the feasibility study grant award in 2026. As described in the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program Overview document, NCDOT will utilize prequalified on-call firms to prepare the studies. NCDOT will administer all payments to the consultant preparing the study. The planning process will begin once NCDOT has assigned a consultant to the project and negotiated study cost.

Agreements for Jurisdictions providing a Local Match:

The jurisdiction will submit a lump sum of their matching funds for this project with the signed agreement. NCDOT will then administer all payments to the consultant preparing the study. The study process will begin once (a) the agreement is executed and the local match is received and (b) NCDOT has assigned a consultant to the project and negotiated study costs.

— How long will the community have to complete the study?

It is anticipated that selected consultants will have between 6-12 months total (approximately 6 to 9 months for a smaller scale feasibility study and approximately 9 to 12 months for a larger scale feasibility study) from the date of receipt of an NCDOT written Notice to Proceed to complete the study. Final timeframes will be determined during creation of agreements and finalization of consultant contracts.

— What type of assistance is available to communities preparing an application?

Staff from the Integrated Mobility Division (IMD) will be available to answer questions and provide guidance. Please contact IMD's Statewide Planning and Programming Manager, Joseph Furstenberg, with any questions at jcfurstenberg@ncdot.gov or (919) 707-2603. MPO and RPO planning staff may also be able to provide helpful information or staff assistance. In addition, a program overview, FAQs (this document), and study content standards may be found on the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program webpage: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/IMD-Feasibility-Studies-Program.aspx>.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



— What does a feasibility study look like?

In 2022, NCDOT partnered with a consulting firm to conduct two feasibility pilot studies for the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program. The two studies were conducted on the Middle Fork Greenway in Watauga County and the North Main Street Sidepath in Marion. These studies provide an in-depth look at various considerations that helped to inform the development of alternatives for each study. The preferred alignments for each project were informed by steering committees and public input. The benefits of active transportation facilities, potential facility amenities, recommended route cut sheets, maintenance recommendations, and paths to implementation are other key sections detailed in the studies to help both the client and the public visualize all aspects of development for their respective projects. Appendices supplement the main study and include information on funding and design resources, detailed cost information, community engagement information, and SPOT scoring component resources. Read below to learn more about each of the pilot studies.

Sidepath Pilot Study: City of Marion North Main Street Sidepath Feasibility Study

The proposed North Main Street Sidepath is a 3-mile corridor connecting Downtown Marion with the Joseph McDowell Catawba Greenway along US 70. The proposed sidepath is a critical missing link in the City of Marion's bicycle and pedestrian network and is an identified corridor of the Fonta Flora State Trail. The North Main Street Sidepath Feasibility Study evaluates potential route scenarios along North Main Street (NCDOT roadway corridor), US 70, and the Catawba River to determine the preferred route. This study also provides cost estimates and an implementation plan to construct the sidepath. The project was led by NCDOT's Integrated Mobility Division and the City of Marion. Supporting agencies involved in the study were McDowell County, NC State Trails, and Friends of the Fonta Flora State Trail.

One key highlight from this study was the phasing and prioritization section for the preferred alignment of the sidepath. Two implementation scenarios were proposed in phases and highlighted the need to involve a coordinated effort to design, fund, and construct the corridor. This study emphasizes the importance of collaboration during project development opportunities which may involve multiple agencies and may utilize various funding sources.

View the study at: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Documents/Marion%20N.%20Main%20Street%20Sidepath%20Feasibility%20Study.pdf>.



IMD FEASIBILITY STUDY GRANT PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Greenway Pilot Study: Middle Fork Greenway Feasibility Study

The Middle Fork Greenway was envisioned to provide residents and visitors alike with opportunities for recreation and active transportation, connecting people and places between the Towns of Boone and Blowing Rock along the Middle Fork River. The community has already made great progress on the implementation of this vision in partnership with the Blue Ridge Conservancy, the Town of Boone, the Town of Blowing Rock, Watauga County, and NCDOT.

The Middle Fork Greenway Feasibility Study assesses existing conditions, evaluates potential routes for opportunities and constraints, develops detailed cost estimates, and provides strategies for implementation for Sections 3 and 5 of the Middle Fork Greenway as identified in the Middle Fork Greenway Master Plan. The project team developed and evaluated six route alternatives for each section of the greenway. Recommendations for preferred routes were identified through technical analysis, input from the community and study steering committee, and landowner outreach by Blue Ridge Conservancy along the proposed trail corridor. In addition to greenway alignments, the study recommends two stream restoration projects along Section 3 of the greenway. It is recommended that the stream restoration project be constructed in advance of or as part of the greenway construction to ensure integrity of the trail and reduce maintenance burdens. The study also documents funding resources for the Blue Ridge Conservancy to pursue to support land acquisition, design and engineering, permitting, bridges, retaining structures, underpasses, trail construction, park amenities, and operations for the Middle Fork Greenway.

View the study at: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Documents/Middle%20Fork%20Greenway%20Feasibility%20Study.pdf>.

Content Standards for the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study may be found on the Paved Trails and Sidewalk Feasibility Study Grant Program webpage: <https://connect.ncdot.gov/municipalities/PlanningGrants/Pages/IMD-Feasibility-Studies-Program.aspx>.

