HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STATE PARK
6888 Green Bay Road
Green Bay, VA 23942

High Bridge Trail State Park
MASTER PLAN
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2012 UPDATE

Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
203 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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Reviewed and recommended for approval by the Board of Conservation and Recreation at their July 27, 2012 meeting, then made available for review for 30 days by the Virginia General Assembly.

Approved:

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David A. Johnson, Director
Department of Conservation
and Recreation

September 26, 2012
Date

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
203 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

High Bridge Trail State Park
Master Plan Executive Summary

This master plan is intended to set forth a clear vision for the future phased development of High Bridge Trail State Park while fulfilling the narrative text requirements of Chapter IV of the Virginia Capital Outlay Manual and the *Code of Virginia* §10.1-200.1 The current update envisions the desired future condition for the park when it is fully developed. This updated 2012 Master Plan will define management emphasis and set guidelines for future development. This report will reflect both the mission and the future direction of the park. Goals and objectives were established in 2006 for providing a wide range of day-use recreational activities, educational and interpretive programs and facilities, and a well-equipped and trained staff to manage and maintain the park.

The purpose of High Bridge Trail State Park is to provide a premier non-motorized, shared-use path for pedestrians, bicyclists, and horseback riders in the Heart of Virginia; to preserve and protect in perpetuity the historic, natural, and recreational resources along the trail; and to interpret the trail corridor to offer an understanding of the region's historic events and their causes, impact, and legacy to individuals, the community, and the nation in the full context of American history.

High Bridge Trail State Park is the park system's best example of an accessible trail. It is within an easy drive of most of the state's population, and with its firm, flat, stable surface—easy to use by all ages and skill levels. Over 86,000 people visited the park in 2011 with an economic impact of 1.4 million dollars for the region—and with the official opening of the High Bridge in the spring of 2012, visitation is destined to increase dramatically.

High Bridge Trail State Park was created by the abandonment and subsequent donation of a segment of the South Side Rail Road by Norfolk Southern Corporation. Norfolk Southern filed for abandonment September 30, 2004. The 2005 General Assembly session authorized the Department of Conservation and Recreation to accept donation of the railroad corridor for a state park. The park is named for the remarkable high railroad bridge over the Appomattox River, the location of a battle fought during Lee's retreat from Petersburg.

The section that was abandoned runs from near Burkeville to near Pamplin City, a distance of 33.8 miles. Currently 30.9 miles is open to the public, and planning for connections into the anchoring towns is underway. The corridor averages 100 feet in width but is up to 500 feet wide in some areas. In Farmville, some parcels outside of the rail bed itself have been given to the Town, and significant parcels have been acquired by DCR east of Farmville that will be developed for supporting uses like visitor/discovery centers, equestrian services, parking, picnicking, single-use trails, overnight use, and administrative/maintenance nodes. These parcels include Rochelle (143.83 acres) Piney Grove (286.14 acres) and the Scott Timberland tract at High Bridge (60.439 acres). The 8-map set of the corridor depicts the locations of these parcels, the proposed development at High Bridge and proposed parkwide improvements. Individual maps of Rochelle and Piney Grove depict proposed improvements on these parcels.

High Bridge is the focal point of the park and has had the highest level of visitation. The parking area initially planned for Aspen Hill Road has been moved closer to High Bridge to provide closer access for all visitors, but especially for those with disabilities or mobility impairments. The administrative node initially proposed for Farmville has been shifted to High Bridge to meet visitor demand. A discovery center here with side trails to the river, viewing areas and historic sites will encourage visitors to spend more time in the area.

The corridor's eastern and western management areas are split by Main Street in Farmville. The management node initially planned for Rice on the eastern end will be shifted to Piney Grove. The western management node is proposed for Prospect, and will be near the depot currently under renovation by the Prospect Historical Society.

Since the corridor was acquired and the initial master plan approved in 2007, the trail has been surfaced for 30.9 miles, bridges have been decked, and day-use parking and restrooms have been provided at intervals along the trail. Gates are guarding roadway crossings and regulatory and wayfinding signs are in place. An administrative and management node has been established in a former VDOT shop on Green Bay Road, and several staff residences are in place.

The trail experience has been improved by projects initiated by the host counties of Appomattox, Cumberland, Nottoway and Prince Edward along with Pamplin, Prospect, Farmville and Burkeville. A restroom, landscaping, trailheads, renovated depots and trail construction and extensions have all been donated by these jurisdictions.

This master plan update was guided by an advisory committee made up of representatives of state and local government, businesses, educators, adjacent landowners, trail users and civic organizations. The committee met on May 22, 2012 and completed their work with a final public input meeting held June 6, 2012. The master plan identifies the location of proposed facilities and prioritizes their development over four phases. DCR will continue to acquire from willing sellers parcels of land for this development, and negotiate with willing landowners to protect the park's viewshed with conservation easements.

A visitor experience plan under development in 2012 identified four experience areas for the park: rural remote, rural social, urban social and focal point (High Bridge). Facility development, trail management, interpretive displays, kiosks, signs and other media will reinforce the experience area and its themes. Protecting viewsheds, managing resources, maintaining the trail, providing appropriate education and interpretation and meeting the needs of volunteers are essential aspects of a positive visitor experience.

This linear park in particular lends itself to interpreting events on a space/time continuum, (i.e. a Civil War timeline leading up to the surrender at Appomattox). There are many stories to tell along the trail, but assistance is needed to capture and document oral histories and search for related imagery. Partnerships with universities and local historical societies are needed to undertake this work.

This trail serves as a gateway for novices, disabled users and youth learning or re-learning to ride bikes or horses. Young users need to be encouraged to keep going with rewards like play spaces along the trail at predictable intervals. Providing shade trees and shade structures along the trail can serve multiple purposes, including the creation of focal points and rest stops. Clearing a view from selected spots with benches at observation points can add interest and rest areas along the trail.

Trail users and their animals need access to water along the trail. By digging wells and utilizing existing water systems, hydrants will be provided at "Whistle Stops," planned rest areas along the trail. Other amenities available at Whistle Stops include covered restrooms, picnic benches, bike racks, mounting blocks, hitching posts, and interpretive signs.

In 2008, legislators approved a $7.5 million bond package to complete the trail. DCR has also been awarded Enhancement Grants and Stimulus Funds to move forward with park development. Both VDOT and the Town of Farmville entered partnership agreements with DCR which provided trail construction at a significant cost savings. These kind of collaborative partnerships have accelerated park development. The support of the communities and the Friends of High Bridge Trail has been critical for development efforts.

During summer months the Appomattox River will be a draw for tourists and a potential revenue generator, with tube and kayak rentals. More analysis is needed to fully understand how the river and other water features can best be utilized in this context. Other water features under study include Marrowbone Creek and Bad Luck Branch.

This 2012 update focuses on connecting High Bridge Trail State Park to other resources in the region and expanding partnership efforts. Nearby public lands include the Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park, four state parks (Holliday Lake, Twin Lakes, Bear Creek Lake, and Sailor's Creek Battlefield Historical State Park), three state forests (Cumberland, Prince Edward-Gallion and Appomattox-Buckingham), Briery Creek Wildlife Management Area, Sandy River Reservoir, and Wilck's Lake Park. Longwood University and Hampden- Sydney College are also neighbors. All proposed trail connections to these public lands are independent of the state park facility.

The market for High Bridge Trail State Park, as well as the towns it supports, will benefit from safety improvements to roads that are used by bicyclists visiting other outdoor recreation opportunities in nearby state forests and parks. Experienced cyclists will be able to ride the High Bridge Trail and loop back on the proposed bike route identified in the attached context map. Further improvements to U.S. Bike Route 1, which will connect to the trail in Burkeville, would encourage overnight trips by bicyclists.

The nexus of Lee's Retreat Civil War driving tour, the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail® driving tour and all the available outdoor adventure in the area should provide a magnet for the region if these opportunities are cross marketed. Regional orientation signs placed in the towns and surrounding public lands will help spread the good news about all there is to enjoy in Virginia's Heartland (see attached connectivity map).

Population centers that are the closest large markets for this park include the Richmond and Roanoke metro areas, and Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Staunton and Waynesboro. Other markets could be tapped into with public transportation to the area or sponsored programs that include transportation.

The updated phased development plan gives the park manager maximum flexibility to respond to visitor needs by including parkwide improvements throughout the remaining phases of development. Parkwide improvements include landscaping, viewsheds, picnicking, interpretive signs, land acquisition, side paths, utilities, parking and Whistle Stops.

The following list presents the projects that have been identified by DCR staff amd the public and the Master Plan Advisory Committee that will need to be completed to bring the park to its desired future condition. The projects are listed in priority order by phases. The cost for future development of the park is estimated at $ 54,890,635.

Phase I $17,504,384
Visitor center at High Bridge Focal Point
Day use areas at Rochelle and Piney Grove
Primitive camping at Piney Grove
Eastern Administrative/maintenance node development
Connections to Burkeville and Pamplin
Prospect Depot (completed by Prospect Historical Society)
Access road to Piney Grove and High Bridge
Service road improvements to Rochelle
Improvements at Rice

Phase II $12,971,196
Expand amenities at High Bridge Focal Point
Group camp at Rochelle
Discovery zone/center and trails at Piney Grove (environmental education)
Staff residence at Piney Grove
Western administrative/maintenance node development
Water access/launch at High Bridge
Service road at High Bridge (Cumberland side)
Observation deck and trail at High Bridge

Phase III $11,410,988
YCC Bunkhouse, full-service campground and equestrian camping at Piney Grove
Develop/improve water features
Western Admin/maintenance node development
Trails at Rochelle and High Bridge, restoration of wagon bridge at High Bridge

Phase IV $13,004,067
Cabins at Piney Grove with access road and bridge

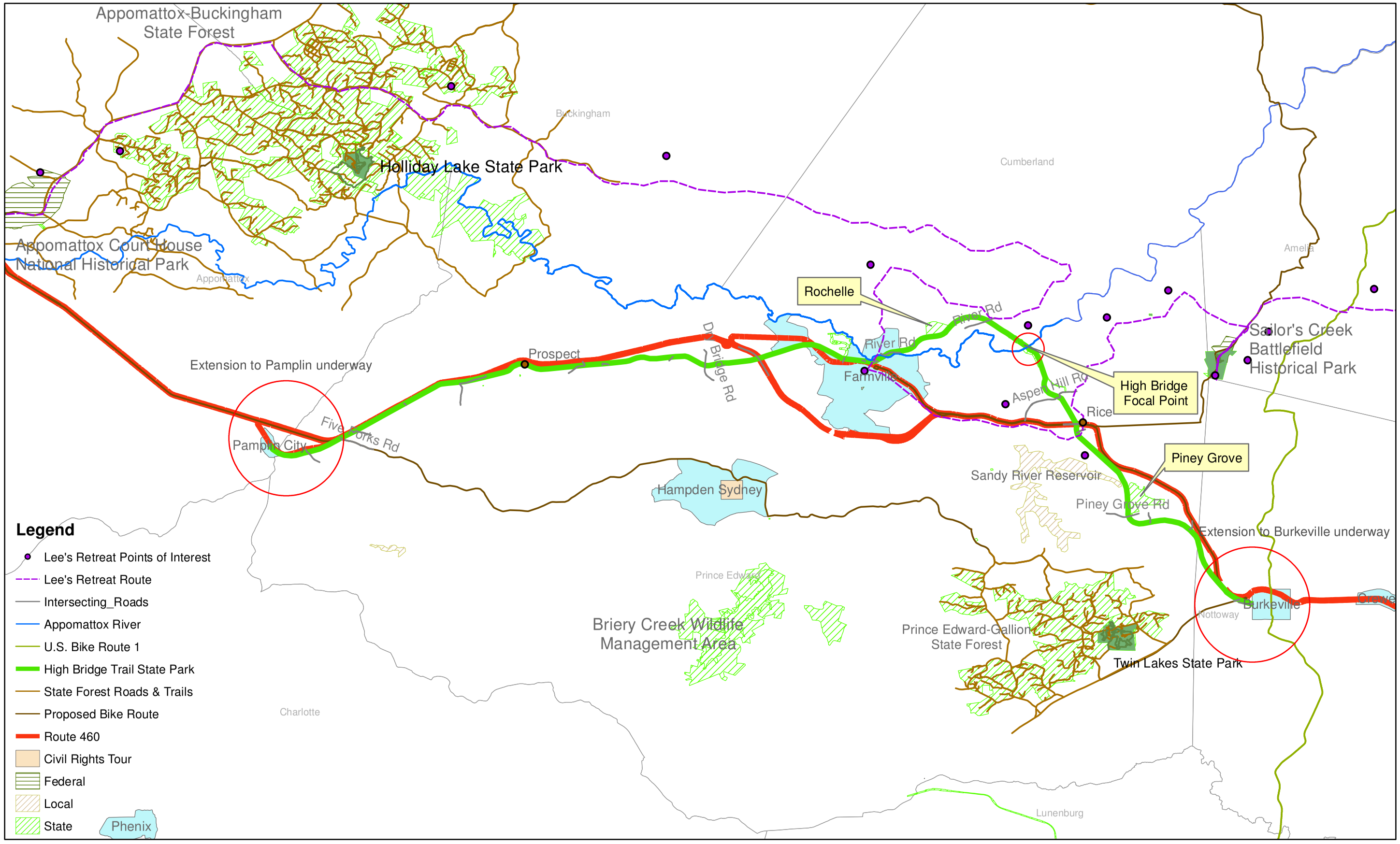
Staffing and operational costs at High Bridge Trail State Park are presently budgeted at $305,000 annually, including salaries for 3 staff positions. With the current facilities and operational requirements, the park has an identified need for 7 additional positions and $495,000 in funding. However, this amount does not cover the cost for one-time expenses such as vehicles and equipment needed to support the additional staff and management of the park. In order for the park to operate effectively and efficiently at full build out, the park must be provided the projected staffing and operating costs identified as "existing additional needs" and the costs for the 4 development phases. The total budget for High Bridge Trail State Park at full build out is projected to be $1,692,000 with 18 staff positions.

HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STAFFING AND OPERATING COSTS

EXISTING (FY 12)	EXISTING ADDITIONAL NEEDS *	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	FULL BUILD OUT
STAFFING						**STAFFING**
Park Manager						Park Manager
	Asst. Park Manager		Asst. Park Mgr			Asst. Park Mgr (2)
Chief Ranger	Chief Ranger					Chief Ranger (2)
	Educ. Specialist		Educ. Specialist			Educ. Specialist (2)
Park Ranger	Park Ranger (3)	Park Ranger	Park Ranger	Park Ranger	Park Ranger	Park Ranger (8)
	Office Manager					Office Manager
			PST		PST	Program Support Tech. (2)
SALARY TOTAL						**SALARY TOTAL**
$151,000	$329,000	$40,000	$186,000	$40,000	$77,000	$823,000
WAGE TOTAL						**WAGE TOTAL**
$63,000	88,000	$87,000	$71,000	$45,000	$59,000	$413,000
OTPS TOTAL						**OTPS TOTAL**
$91,000	$78,000	$87,000	$93,000	$32,000	$75,000	$456,000
TOTAL BUDGET (FY12 dollars)						**TOTAL BUDGET (FY12 dollars)**
$305,000	$495,000	$214,000	$350,000	$117,000	$211,000	$1,692,000

NOTE – All costs (salary, wage, OTPS (Other than Personnel Services)) are based on FY12 budget projections.
* Existing additional needs represents staff positions and/or operating costs not fully funded due to prior state wide budget reductions. These estimates do not include costs for one-time expenses such as vehicles and equipment to support the additional staff and projects.

High Bridge Trail State Park



1 in = 3 miles

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