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Plan mapping out regional bike path

Trail would weave from Richmond to Hampton Roads

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SUFFOLK — A plan is underway to build a paved pedestrian and bicycle path that will connect Richmond all the way to South Hampton Roads.

The proposed 60-mile path would connect the existing Capital Trail — a 52-mile trail between Richmond and Jamestown — to the South Hampton Roads Trail, via new paths on both sides of the James River.

An ad hoc committee of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization and a consultant have been studying potential routes for the Peninsula trail, which would ideally be 10 feet wide and entirely separated from the regular roads where cars travel.

It's too soon to say where the new Peninsula trails would go exactly, but the plan is to have them start at the Jamestown-Scotland ferry (where the Capital Trail ends), said Rob Case, HRTPO's principal transportation engineer. From there, one new trail would



THERESA CLIFT/DAILY PRESS
Members of an ad hoc committee of the Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization draw out potential routes on a map for connecting the existing Capital Trail to the South Hampton Roads Trail.

travel through James City County, Williamsburg, York County, Newport News and Hampton (to Fort Monroe), while the other would travel through Surry and Isle of Wight counties and Suffolk.

The project is in its very early stages; construction would not start until after 2017, Case said. It's also too soon to say which side of the James River would be constructed first.

"This could take decades," Case said.

Funding would likely come from federal and state funds, Case said.

"We're trying to get a line on a map that the localities and the state can take over," Case said. "We're trying to get a concept out there that people can embrace and envision."

As of now, it's many different

Online

See the proposed map and watch a video from the meeting at dailypress.com.

lines on a map that show the many different alternatives where the path could travel — through the Historic Tour Roads in Yorktown, through Newport News Park, down the Hampton shoreline or many places in between.

Although the long-term plan is for a separate path, in the short term, it could share the road with cars in some areas, Case said. Portions of Hampton Highway, Yorktown Road, Big Bethel Road, Thomas Nelson Drive and Hampton University-owned Emancipation Drive could be used for that purpose, said Chris Chop, a consultant with Michael Becker International, the firm hired to work with the group until July.

Opposition from Hampton University or any of the other roadway owners could eliminate some of those potential routes, however, Chop said.

The trail could also travel down Pembroke Avenue, then down Fenwick Road all the way to Buckroe Beach, then down to Fort Mon-

roe. Currently there is no road connecting the two popular Hampton beaches; a bike path there would have to get the necessary government approvals.

The group, which started meeting this year, is also brainstorming how to brand the trail and what to call it.

"Colonial Trail," "Peninsula Trail," and "East Coast Greenway" were some possible names thrown around during a committee meeting Wednesday in Suffolk.

"Do we want to build this as a historical trail?" Case asked the group. "I think it's got benefits but also that can be sort of limiting in the frame of people's minds as to what this thing is about."

The trail also could be marketed as recreational, practical or a mixture of both.

The next step is for the first phase of public involvement, but the group wants to narrow down the number of potential routes first.

"If they see this map, they're going to see a spider web and say 'That goes right by my house,' which could be a good or bad thing," one committee member said.

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