



2023 EQUESTRIAN TRAILS CIRCULATION MASTER PLAN

NOVEMBER 29, 2023

Introduction

The Equestrian Preservation Element in Wellington's Comprehensive Plan establishes the Equestrian Preserve Area (EPA) with specific goals and objectives for preservation and protection of the equestrian lifestyle along with the equestrian industry as whole. The Element also identifies an equestrian trails circulation plan as a key component within the EPA to improve safety of both motorists and equestrians and provide a connected circulation system. In recognition of the importance of the equestrian trails circulation plan, the Element established policies for the regular review and update of the circulation plan and the use of the plan to program capital improvements that improve equestrian safety.

The Village of Wellington first adopted the plan identified as the "*Equestrian Circulation Plan – Existing & Currently Planned Elements*" in Ordinance No. 2014-26. This ordinance established a formal "circulation plan" with a focus on bridle trails.

As background, equestrian circulation has been a Village priority since incorporation. In September 1997, an *Evaluation of Equestrian Circulation* was prepared by International Equestrian Design. This evaluation was then expanded upon by CH2M Hill in March 2004 in the *Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan*. This 2004 circulation plan became the basis for trails implementation and was utilized for 10 years. Trail maintenance and capital improvements were primarily funded based on this 2004 plan.

The *Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan* has now served the community for more than 18 years. Many of the trail standards in the plan were implemented, including the adoption of the original colors for the trails. This 10-year implementation strategy was scheduled to sunset in 2015. After reviewing this plan, a strategy to (re)evaluate and inventory the overall trail system was undertaken. Various Wellington departments continue to evaluate the mobility system, evaluate pathway improvements, review trail usage and conditions, highlight points of improvements, and develop a list of capital projects with cost and implications time frames. This latest review of the overall circulation plan memorializes the evaluation by the departments and provides the Equestrian Preserve Committee recommendations for additional improvements and new projects to be added to the capital projects list.



The Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan (2023) follows a multi-step process to fulfill the vision of Wellington. The plan review process is the first task in the evaluation and analysis of the latest Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan. This includes the review of the previously developed plans and, the research and documentation of completed improvements. The second step is an

evaluation of the current trail and pathway system. The evaluation of the trail and pathway system incorporates data including existing paths (public and private), equestrian destinations, trail trip counts, and stall data. This information is combined to create a comprehensive analysis of the equestrian community. The analysis is then used to prepare recommended improvements to the plan. The final step of the process is the exploration of funding opportunities, followed by a cost estimate for the recommended improvements. The result is then presented to the Equestrian Preserve Committee for recommendation to the Village Council for adoption and implementation of an updated Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan (2023).

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Plan Review

The basis of the evaluation and recommendations provided within this plan update began with a thorough review of the existing 2016 Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan.

The primary areas of focus from the 2016 Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan were to catalog bridle path improvements since 2016, combine the trail volume data with the stall data to model the estimated trail usage, and present recommended future improvements to the trail system.

Bridle trail improvements since 2016 consist of the following:

1. Brown Trail- Improved approximately 2,000 ft. of overall bridle trail.
2. Blue Trail Crossing – Extend existing culvert within the C-23 canal crossing, widening this link from the Blue trail (Saddle Trail Park) to the Yellow Trail (Pierson Rd). Improve Pierson road crossing into the show grounds.
3. Red trail / C-2 Canal Right-of-Way – Installation of asphalt millings from Greenview Shores Blvd. to 40th Street (C-24 Canal) asphalt millings to stabilize soils due to increase in usage.
4. Greenbrier Blvd / Ousley Farms Roadway crossing – installation of an equestrian crossing with a flashing light and stripping for the red trail along the C-2 canal.
5. Greenbrier Boulevard Trail Improvements – Removed existing two rail fence and installed three rail fences along the north side of Greenbrier Boulevard to widen trail.
6. Yellow Trail Improvements (South Shore Boulevard to South Fields Road)- Improved footing, 3-rail fencing along Pierson Road, installation of “F” type curbing and roadway signage.
7. Brown Trail Improvement – install asphalt millings to improve footing along the west side of Paddock Park II from the C-2 Canal to the C-15 canal.
8. Ousley Farms Road – paved alternative vehicle pathway along the west side (east side of the C-2 Canal), from Greenbrier to Pierson Road.
9. North of Pierson Road across from PBIEC – improved approximately 3,000 ft. of trail between South Shore Blvd. and the C-6.

Plans or Policies That Inform This Plan

Wellington has adopted local plans or policies that directly or indirectly address trail connectivity and active transportation within Wellington. See the table below for key plans and policies that are relevant to the Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan.

Existing plan or policy	Year	Resource	Key plans or policies goal
Complete Streets Resolution	2022	Policy	The Complete Streets Policy is a transportation system initiative to plan, design, construct and maintain transportation facilities that are safe, connected, efficient, and convenient for users of all ages and abilities.
Vision Zero Resolution	2022	Policy	Policy addresses traffic death and crashes are preventable through roadway design and change in perspective. Identifies high crash corridors and emphasizes urgent need to allocate resources to minimize or eliminate crashes and deaths.

Evaluation of the Current Trail and Pathway System

Wellington established the Equestrian Overlay Zoning District (EOZD) to define geographically those areas where a higher concentration of the equestrian residential lifestyle, regional equestrian venues and related supportive land uses and businesses occur. Exhibit 'A' – Wellington EOZD shows the areas of EOZD coverage within Wellington. The majority of the EOZD occurs from Pierson Road south to Wellington limits and between Flying Cow Road (western limit) to 120th Avenue (eastern limit). Rustic Ranches occurs just west of Flying Cow Road and Saddle Trail Park and Paddock Park occur just north of Pierson across from the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center. There is one notable exception to the general concentration of the EOZD. Palm Beach Little Ranches, located in the northeast corner of the Village, is an enclave of equestrian

residences mostly isolated from the balance of the EOZD both by distance and primarily non-equestrian residential neighborhoods.

Our analysis of the existing trail system, usage counts and the recommendations being provided paid close attention to how best to safely reinforce connectivity of this isolated area with the balance of the EOZD and venues throughout the Village of Wellington.

The existing bridle path system has been inventoried and is shown on Exhibit 'B' – Existing Bridle Path System.

The existing bridle path system has been inventoried and is shown on Exhibit 'B' – Existing Bridle Path System. The existing bridle trail system consists of various trails, typically on ACME right of ways, within the village. There are various trails within neighborhoods that also connect to the trail system and ultimately the Equestrian Destinations.



Equestrian destinations are shown on Exhibit 'C' and highlight such venues as Wellington Environmental Preserve, Palm Beach International Equestrian Center, Grand Champions and International Polo Club.

Trip Count and Stall Data:

Over a 13-day period in March and April of 2014, 28 cameras were stationed throughout the EPA to obtain trail usage information. Exhibit 'D' reflects the 28 camera locations and those locations are color coded to reflect the range of trips* at each of the locations. The dark red color represents the highest number of equine trips at over 2,501 and yellow represents the lowest assumptions that trails closest to venues such as the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center and trails adjacent to major thoroughfares (Pierson and Lake Worth) would likely see higher usage. Highest usage was on the Yellow Trail with 3,934 equine trips between the Blue and Pink Trails as well as on the Blue Trail Loop with 2,259 equine trips.

Exhibit 'E' – Stall Count is a graphic representation of the inventoried stalls** occurring within each of the large blocks as shown on the exhibit. Maroon colored blocks represent

the highest concentration of stalls with numbers between 1,501-3,000 stalls and yellow blocks contain the least stalls at fewer than 100. The number of stalls and the trip counts match fairly closely with the majority of activity and stalls occurring north and south of Pierson Road near the equestrian centers and with a slight decrease in density (the orange blocks) towards the southeast. Density of stalls and intensity of trail usage decreases rapidly from the maroon and yellow blocks in all directions towards the fringes of the EPA.

The Composite Analysis (Exhibit 'F') combines the existing trail map, the destination/venue information, and stall inventory to provide a more comprehensive view of the intensity and density occurring within Wellington and more specifically the EPA.

**A trip is a horse and rider traveling in any direction. The counts are of horse and rider only; motorized vehicles were counted separately.*

*** It is assumed that one stall is equivalent to one horse when used for estimating Wellington's horse population.*

Routine Trail Inspections

Staff routinely inspects the trail system for safety, flooding, and maintenance issues. Wellington staff also responds to complaints or notifications from residence if problems are observed.

Staff & Committee Recommendations

Involvement and input from the community, especially those citizens who actively use the trail system and have a vested interest in the equestrian trail pathways, is critical to any analysis and provides valuable information that maps and data cannot convey alone.

Equestrian Preserve Committee

Throughout this process, the Equestrian Preserve Committee (EPC) was engaged to provide their input, comments and recommendations through a series of EPC public meetings. Additionally, Wellington staff met one-on-one with each committee member to address their specific concerns as it relates to the equestrian trails, safety, and any potential capital improvement projects.

The following is a prioritized list of recommendations as a result from the one-on-one meetings with the EPC members regarding the Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan, potential CIP projects, and general concerns:

1. Trail Maintenance

- a. Maintain existing trails: This includes mowing, milling, fence repair, and grading, as necessary. This is currently an ongoing Wellington responsibility.
- b. Potentially add asphalt millings to pathway: This is typically done only in high traffic bridle paths and when it appears to be visibly necessary. After the updated trail count is conducted, it may be implemented on more bridle trails based on usage.

2. Traffic and Driver Safety Issues

- a. Speeding Traffic (Vision Zero Plan): Wellington's new Vision Zero Plan will aid in the effort to slow vehicles traveling on roadways throughout Wellington, including the EPA. Specific areas of interest can be identified in the plan to implement traffic calming measures.
- b. Proximity of cars to horses: This is sometimes unavoidable in areas where horses share the road with vehicles in areas such as Saddle Trail. However, when bridle trails are in close proximity to vehicles, physical barriers are preferred (3-rail fences, etc.).

3. Bridle Trail Safety

- a. Horse crossings
- b. Fencing
- c. Trail signs

Staff's recommended CIP projects

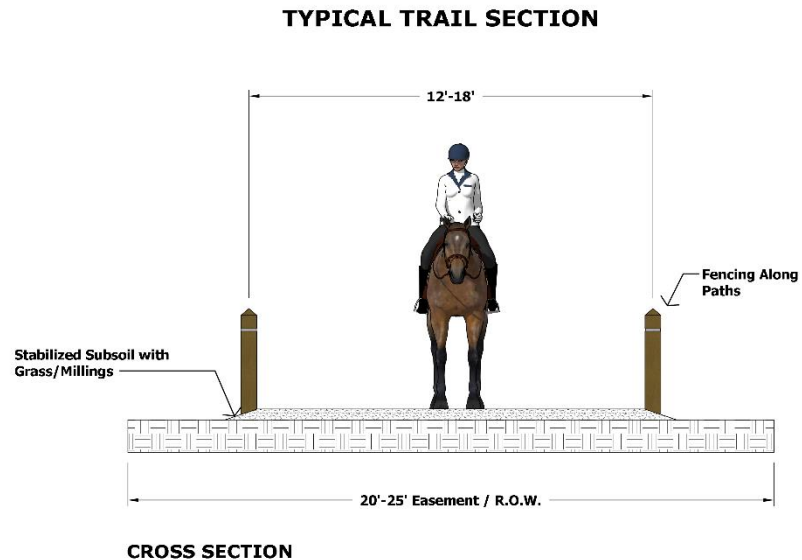
1. Culvert Crossing Installation SW corner of Section 34
 - a. Project will connect the Gray and Orchid Trails while also providing access to the C-26 canal for Public Works.
2. Mid-Block Crossing on Flying Cow Road to Connect Rustic to the Yellow Trail
 - a. Project will connect the Rustic Ranches neighborhood to the Yellow Trail and the overall trail system.
3. Filling of Swale along ACME Road Bridle Trail
 - a. Filling of the swale and installing a stormwater system to increase the width of the existing trail and provide a greater separation distance between vehicles and horses.

Overview of Recommendations

1. **Update the Trail Counts.** Staff is recommending that a consultant be hired to conduct an updated trail count to confirm the average daily trips on the trails since the data is now almost 10 years old. Depending on the results of the new count, staff may also recommend that these counts be conducted every 10 years, or sooner if desired, in order to be more productive with annual maintenance and prioritize future Equestrian Capital Improvement projects.
2. **Complete missing trail segments.** There are various areas throughout Wellington where additional connections from existing trails should be established. These improvements would increase connectivity and thus usability of the trail system through increased convenience. Each segment should be evaluated based on safety, improvement costs, accessibility and the *projected added value* to the overall system.

Path Recommendations – Exhibit 'G' shows specific areas of improvements along with proposed canal and equestrian road crossing locations.
3. **Provide additional roadway and canal crossings.** Exhibit 'G' – Path Recommendations 2024-2026 shows proposed locations for both roadway and canal crossings. Exhibit 'H' – Typical Canal Crossings and Exhibit 'I' – Proposed Trail Standards show typical methods of creating these crossings.
4. **Establish Potable Water and Shelter Location.** Exhibit 'G' – Path Recommendations shows one (1) potential potable water/shelter location adjacent to Flying Cow Trail/Environmental Preserve. This recommendation originated from the CH2M Hill plan and remains a valid improvement for the long term and was reinforced by the committee. This is anticipated to be implemented into the Wellington Preserve Expansion project. In addition to this, there will be horse trailer parking added to the future expansion as well.

5. **Typical Trail.** The preferred typical bridle path with the Village would be 12 to 18 feet in width with stabilized Bahia grass as the footing. The easement width required to accommodate the usable pathway would be 20-25 feet. The use of 3 rail fencing would be as a safety barrier.



For high volume trails where grass cannot be maintained and width is an issue, a bridle pathway width of 8 to 10 feet is recommended. The footing would be asphalt millings with grass shoulders where possible. Asphalt millings which are tilled into the native soils is the recommended pathway material on high volume trails. Wellington should continue to implement asphalt millings on heavily used trails. Exhibit 'J' – Proposed Trail Standards provides a typical detail, policy information and additional criteria for trails and crossings. These standards can be found in the Engineering Standards Manual.

6. **Continued Data Collection/ Trail Usage** – Continue to engage the Equestrian Community through outreach, surveys, and committees to better understand the most critical issues from the actual users of the system. Continue to monitor trail usage through the use of cameras and expand locations to areas as previously noted. Trail usage is one of the key activities within the EPA and will be solidified by the updated counts. The establishment of a trail riders committee or a means of reporting trail conditions may be a means of maintaining the Wellington trail system in a rideable condition.
7. **Mobile Application.** Establish a mobile application for trail way-finding, maintenance, social outreach, fitness and education. Potentially implement a QR code to be displayed on trail signs with a link for complaints, suggestions, trail conditions, etc.

Funding

The list below has been updated from the previous reports to reflect current sources and opportunities.

- a. Palm Beach Transportation Planning Agency (TPA) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- b. Florida Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program
- c. The Florida Recreational Trails Program
- d. Economic Development Grants
- e. Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
- f. Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program
- g. Department of Environmental Protection

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Estimated Costs

Exhibit 'J' – Equestrian Improvements Estimated Costs provides a current estimate of probable costs with respect to each type of recommended improvement. Additionally, each individual trail segments provide a detailed information and are ranked from low to high based on need.

Exhibit 'J' is a 3-year plan of prioritized improvements to the bridle trail system and Equestrian Preserve Area. Note that these are budgetary numbers and are subject to change based on actual time of construction.

Maintenance Costs:

Wellington spends approximately \$165,000 annually on maintenance of the Bridle Trail System. This maintenance varies from fencing, sodding, drainage improvements, footing stabilization, and grading. The maintenance is typically performed by staff's inspections or by a resident's complaint. When the updated trail counts are obtained in 2024, staff anticipates to re-prioritize scheduled maintenance items based on the need and outcome from the study.