



2023 EQUESTRIAN TRAILS CIRCULATION MASTER PLAN

AUGUST 28, 2023

Introduction

The Equestrian Preservation Element in Wellington's Comprehensive Plan establishes the 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 Equestrian Preserve Area (EPA) to improve safety of both motorists and equestrians and provide a connected circulation system. In recognition of the importance of 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 provided the Equestrian Community with 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, trips 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 Wellington Council for adoption and implementation of an updated Equestrian Trails Circulation Master Plan (2023).

Table of Content

Introduction2

Table of Content.....4

Plan Review.....5

Plans or Policies That Inform This Plan.....5

Evaluation of the Current Trail and Pathway System.....7

Site Analysis9

Recommendations10

Funding12

Estimated Costs13

DRAFT

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.

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

Wellingtons 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
Bike and Ped Plan Update	2021	Plan	The Bike and Ped Plan emphasizes connectivity and the widening of pathways from 8 feet to 10-12, where possible. In addition, the plan provides where improvements are proposed within the Equestrian Preserve Area.

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.

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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.

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 system is shown as public (green) and private (blue) trails. Both the Purple and Green trails will serve important roles in providing connectivity and linkage to Palm Beach Little Ranches and the balance of Wellington. Providing connectivity would also reinforce and expand multi-modal usage throughout Wellington in concert with the Bicycle & Pedestrian Circulation Plan. The challenge in providing connectivity to Palm Beach Little Ranches is the safe crossing of Forest Hill Boulevard at both the North and South ends and crossing beyond. Although multi-modal usage is referenced in the circulation plans, golf cart usage is not being addressed in this plan.

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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. One point of reference is the 629 stalls within the Palm Beach Little Ranches area (northeast corner of Wellington) and reinforces the importance of strengthening connectivity.

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.*

Site Analysis

Staff conducted a field inspection in May of 2023 to assess issues and concerns with Public Works department to discuss the current challenges and solutions. Several underlying issues within our trail and pathway system are flood related drainage issues, crosswalk safety concerns due to speeding traffic, missing pathway infrastructure through various roadway segments, hedges encroaching onto bridle paths (i.e. Mallet Hill subdivision), and deteriorating trail pathway conditions due to heavy trail traffic use.

The solutions discussed were to increase trail improvement allocation through Wellington’s capital improvements budget, design and enhance crosswalks and pathways, and continue to execute bridle path easement agreements.

Recommendations

Involvement and input from the community, especially those citizens who actively use the trail system and have 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 meetings.

The following recommendations are from the final EPC meeting regarding the Equestrian Trails Circulation Plan update: **EPC TO RECOMMEND AT SEPTEMBER 6th MEETING**

1. ~~CONNECTIVITY: Provide access to the golf course north of Forest Hill Boulevard from the C-17 canal. The location north of Forest Hill Boulevard provides a convenient location for riders coming south from Palm Beach Little Ranches along the Purple Trail/C-8 Canal.~~
2. ~~SURVEYS: Explore methods of distributing surveys to the public; try internet based surveys and field surveys.~~
3. ~~WAYFINDING: More mile markers and trail identification signs will provide riders with better information regarding their position within the trail system. Signs should inform riders of their location, access points to nearby trails, equestrian amenities and venues, distances to points of interest, and other pertinent information for the rider.~~
4. ~~TRAIL COUNTS: Continue using cameras for trail counts. The data collected is valuable for determining high traffic areas in the trail system and planning future improvements accordingly. Suggested trail segments for the next round that were not included in the latest counts are: the Green Trail, the Yellow Trail near the show grounds entrance, and more locations in Saddle Trail Park.~~

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Improve Safety within Trail Segments and Crossings.** There are various areas throughout Wellington where additional safety measurements should be established. These improvements would increase safety for pedestrians and equestrian trail riders. Each trail segment and crossing

should be evaluated based on safety concerns, improvement costs, accessibility and the *projected added value* to the overall system.

Path Recommendations – Exhibit ‘G’ shows eight specific areas of improvements along with proposed two (2) road crossing locations.

2. **Provide Additional Roadway and Canal Crossings.** Exhibit ‘G’ – Path Recommendations 2024-2026 shows proposed locations for both roadway and canal crossing. Exhibit ‘H’ – Typical Canal Crossings and Exhibit ‘I’ – Proposed Trail Standards show typical methods of creating these crossings. The recommendation related to canal crossings would be related to matters of storm water flow and establishing connectivity through the trail system.
3. **Establish a 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.
4. **Continue to Improve Trail Conditions.** The preferred typical bridle path with Wellington 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 ‘I’ – Proposed Trail Standards provides a typical detail, policy information and additional criteria for trails and crossings.
5. **Update Bridle Path Trip Counts Data and Continue Outreach Efforts**– Exhibit “D”- Bridle Path Trip Counts is a study conducted in 2014, a recommendation to update the trail count study is a high priority item. 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. Trail usage is one of the key activities within the EPA.

Funding

The list below has been updated from the previous plans 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 improvement and breaks down individual trail segments for further analysis and to aide in prioritizing.

The items costs are provided for include the continued improvement of high usage trail footing (existing trails with asphalt millings), implement additional trail and roadway signage, continue to improve typical street crossing for safety purposes, implement one (1) new bridle trail in Section 34 (Orchid Trail), construct one (1) canal crossing and one (1) potable water and shelter station.

If one was to implement all of the recommendations at once within the same fiscal budget, the costs would total approximately \$2.8 million. Obviously, not all elements are recommended to be implemented at the same time. Instead, the items should be prioritized based on safety concerns, usage and connectivity. The recommendations previously presented are included within the upcoming annual budgets.

Trail Footing:

Continue to implement asphalt millings for high volume; approximately \$950,000 over a three-year period.

Canal Crossing:

Implement one (1) canal crossing to reinforce connectivity within Little Ranches, cost \$250,000.

Shelter & Water Location:

Implement within the first three-year period; cost \$150,000.

Trail and Roadway Sign Program:

Implement within the first two-years: cost \$300,000.

Proposal of a New Trail (Section 34):

Implement within the first two-year period: cost \$700,000.

Trail Improvements (fencing and multi-modal pathway enhancements):

Implement within the first two-year period; cost \$400,000.