

Saltville works to connect sections of the Salt Trail

Linda Burchette | Staff | Posted: Tuesday, October 20, 2015 5:41 pm

A long-awaited connection between the Saltville side and the Glade Spring side of the Salt Trail may finally be on the way.

The Saltville Town Council on Tuesday night adopted a resolution asking the Commonwealth Transportation Board to establish a Transportation Alternatives Program project for the construction of the Salt Trail Land Bridge Backbone.

Gavin Blevins, a planner with Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, attended the meeting to discuss a TAP 21 grant through the CTB to complete a missing section of the trail. When efforts began in 2010 to

complete this project cost estimates were around \$86,000, Blevins said. Now the cost is estimated at \$168,000 due to increased labor costs and the amount of site work needed plus \$7,000 for the design and fees to total about \$175,000.

The grant would be 80 percent state and federal funds with a 20 percent match from the town. The town would also be responsible for maintenance and operating costs of any facility constructed with TAP funds unless other arrangements are made with the Virginia Department of Transportation.

Mayor Todd Young said the town should go ahead and seek the grant now even though the council doesn't know from where the matching funds of approximately \$34,000 will come. There has been a lot of work done on this project already, he said, and with Glade Spring working on its end, the town of Saltville needs to work on its end and not stand still. The trail is a draw for tourism, he said.

Blevins said this step is just applying for the grant, with the application due Nov. 9, and at this point the town doesn't have to say from where its match will come. The grant award phase is at least six months away, he said, offering plenty of time for the town to budget for its match.

The Virginia Salt Trail, established in 2008 as a part of the Rails to Trails program, runs for about eight and a half miles on the former rail bed from Allison Gap Road in Saltville to Old Mill Road in Glade Spring, offering an outdoor experience for hikers, runners, cyclists and equestrians. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the trail.



Salt Trail

A section of the Salt Trail behind the Virginia Tech Aquacenter in Saltville.

Much of the trail passes through a pastoral landscape of farms and woodlands, crossing several roads. The trail includes some on-road segments near Saltville and also incorporates other local paved trails.

Reviews of the trail vary with some users noting the lack of signage indicating the direction of the trail between Saltville and Glade Spring, litter, and horse manure as well as muddy, eroded conditions at times. The trail bed consists of concrete, crushed stone, gravel, grass and dirt.

The grant to complete a missing section looks to build a land bridge from the side of a bank along the trail near the Gypsum property to an area near the Tin Bridge trestle. The project will look at several alternatives to create a more accessible and identified connection between the seeming dead ends of the trail on the Saltville side and the Glade Spring side, where the trail runs into and follows a road or two, including Highway 91 between the two sides. The land bridge would help bring this section of the trail closer to Saltville.

In other business at the meeting, it was announced that the Saltville Volunteer Fire Department received a grant to provide smoke detectors to be installed in eligible homes. Call the Saltville Town Hall at 496-5342 for more information.

It was also announced that the annual Fish-a-ree in Saltville will not take place until April 2016 due to the condition of the water in the ponds being too warm for the fish to be stocked.