



CITIZENS FOR A BETTER EASTERN SHORE **SHORELINE**

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Broadband Discussions Continue

By Sue Mastyl

Two recent forums hosted by the Eastern Shore chapter of Virginia Organizing, in partnership with CBES, have highlighted the continuing frustration on the part of many Shore residents about the progress with rolling out high-speed internet to the entire Shore.

On January 21, a forum, “How’s Your Internet? The State of Broadband on the Eastern Shore,” included panelists from state and local government, Accomack and Northampton School Districts and Eastern Shore Community College, Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, and local internet providers, and approximately 100 attendees. The forum highlighted many of the issues identified in the December 2020 *ShoreLine* (“Broadband Service on the Shore: An Interview with Patrick Coady”), including the slowness of the rollout, the lack of coordination among the Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority (ESVBA) and the private companies, and the expense of bringing “last-mile” service to outlying areas. A recording of the forum can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/384858921170/videos/171518454319970>.

A town hall, “Broadband Conversation With Users,” was held on February 9, with 28 participants from the community. The town hall focused on 4 key aspects of internet access – accessibility, affordability, reliability, and speed. Many expressed

a sentiment voiced by Miriam Riggs of Cashville, that internet access “was once a luxury, but now is an essential need.”

Wi-Fi hotspots are “really only a temporary solution; people parked in cars trying to do homework or work isn’t the solution.” – Charles Kolakowski, County Administrator for Northampton County

Advances at the State Level

During the January 21 forum, Kyle Rosner, Deputy Broadband Advisor to the Governor, noted that the federal government has done “a terrible job” in identifying coverage; the map developed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) “overstates where there’s coverage.” He said they’re following a different approach, which is locality-driven, so that communities can work with providers in coming up with a plan. (Notably, Congress authorized \$65 million in the December 2020 COVID-19 relief package for the FCC to obtain more accurate service data.)

Tamareh Holmes, Director of the Office of Broadband in the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), discussed the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative (VATI), which provides state funds to internet providers to expand their service. She noted that for 2021, only private-sector providers are eligible, in partnership with localities. However, the

Broadband Advisory Council recommended adding public broadband authorities, such as ESVBA, to those eligible for the funds, without having to partner with private companies. This change was put forth in a bill co-sponsored by Sen. Lynwood Lewis, which was passed in the General Assembly on February 19; if the Governor signs this, it will go into effect for 2022, enabling ESVBA to apply for these funds.

Holmes added that DHCD has been working with both counties and ESVBA to access funds through the Community Development Block Grant Program, which has had a broadband component since 2019.

New Initiatives by the Counties

During the forum, Mike Mason, County Administrator for Accomack County, indicated that the CARES Act funding provided “the most

See **Broadband**, cont’d on p. 2

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significant opportunity last year” to extend broadband services. During Phase 1, the funds were used to provide internet access, mostly Wi-Fi hotspots, in areas with a high density of students. Since the deadline for those funds was extended past December 2020, the county is working to expand the basic fiber footprint with the remaining funds. Charles Kolakowski, County Administrator for Northampton County, concurred, adding that the Wi-Fi hotspots are “really only a temporary solution; people parked in cars trying to do homework or work isn’t the solution.” He indicated that Northampton County will also be working to expand permanent services with the remaining CARES Act funds, working with the schools and the internet providers.

Mason presented an outline of the Accomack plan to the Board of Supervisors at their February 17 meeting. The Board voted unanimously to authorize Mason to develop a draft memorandum of understanding between the County and ESVBA, for the Board’s approval at a later meeting. The plan will include 5 projects totaling \$865,531, reaching 1,500 households and 45 miles of fiber, as follows:

- Provide fiber service to communities who have previously failed the financial parameters of ESVBA’s micro-community program – 10 communities with 102 homes, plus an additional 301 homes that will be passed by this fiber (\$200,874)
- Construct fiber along 16 strategic sections of road, totaling 41.7 miles, that do not have fiber-to-the-home options; if Charter Spectrum provides service to any of these areas, it will be removed from the plan (\$537,391)
- Seed funding to offset ESVBA installation costs for low- and moderate-income households (\$50,000)
- Provide funding for a targeted community (Red Bank in Accomack County) if the current regional VATI application is not awarded to the county (\$52,266)
- Complete preliminary engineering design for the Captains Cove area (over 1,000 homes) as a prerequisite for the ESVBA 2022 VATI application (\$25,000)

A map of the targeted communities for the plan can be found at [https://go.boarddocs.com/va/coa/Board.nsf/files/BY4QD56871B0/\\$file/ESVBA%20Potential%202021%20Projects%20Maps%2020210210.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/va/coa/Board.nsf/files/BY4QD56871B0/$file/ESVBA%20Potential%202021%20Projects%20Maps%2020210210.pdf), and is shown on page 3.

Updated Status From Internet Providers

During the forum, representatives from ESVBA, Neubeam, and Charter Spectrum provided updates on the status for each company. ESVBA provides internet service only via fiber-to-the-home, Neubeam provides internet and phone service via wireless towers fed by ESVBA’s fiber, and Charter Spectrum provides internet, phone, TV, and entertainment via their own fiber.

Robert Bridgham, Executive Director for ESVBA, noted that they continue to expand the options they provide, with a small business rate

approved in fall 2020. In determining where to expand coverage, they balance several factors, including student density and areas with no coverage from other providers. They “continue to push the network out,” even in areas that are very expensive to construct. They took out a \$5 million loan to expand the network from 350 to 550 miles, and are getting “closer to those individuals with no options.” The current plan includes coverage in all 19 incorporated towns (including Tangier), plus expanding with a “major leg down each neck.”

Eric Collins, Director of Government Affairs, Charter Communications (Spectrum), described their Internet Assist program, geared toward low-income households, at \$17.99/month with a free modem. Typically, he said, there is no charge for installation. He indicated that the final phase on the Shore will be completed by March 16, with access to more than 18,000 homes and businesses (out of a total of 29,791).

Barry Toser, Executive Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Declaration Networks Group Inc. (Neubeam), noted that they have been operating on the Shore for 6 years, and “work with every customer” to come up with a pricing plan that will work. He added that they have worked with multiple communities to design the right program.

Robie Marsh, Executive Director, Eastern Shore of Virginia Chamber of Commerce, noted that although we’ve “come a very long way” in rolling out internet service on the Shore, the remaining voids in affordable residential service affect economic development, hurt efforts to keep the Shore’s youth here, and hurt efforts to recruit and retain the workforce. Making affordable internet available on a widespread basis, he said, “is the best low-impact investment.”



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ESVBA Potential 2021 Projects - Accomack County

Unpassed Microcommunities:

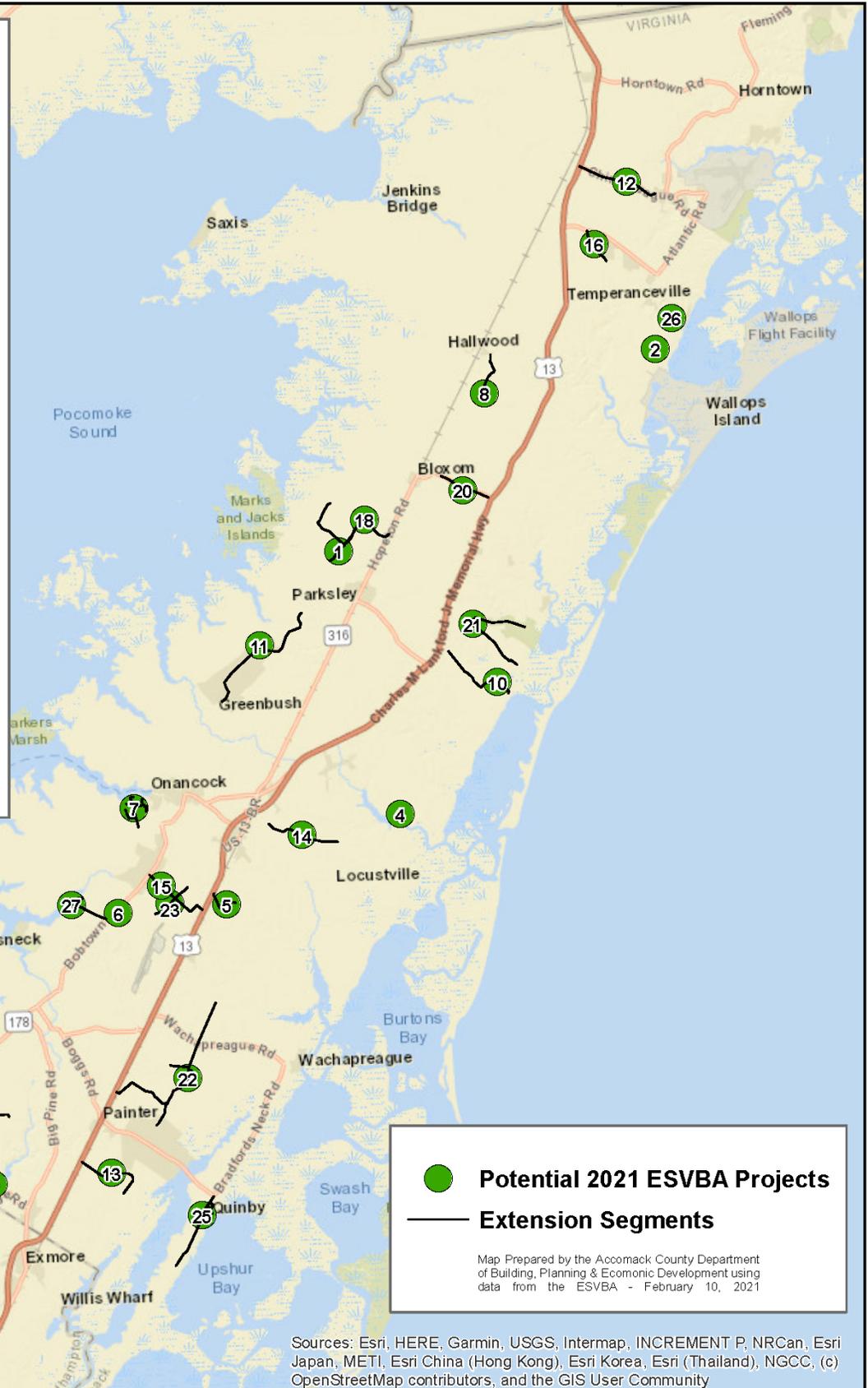
- 1 - Big Road
- 2 - Bogues Bay Drive
- 3 - Creek Bluff
- 4 - Dix Farm Road
- 5 - Doe Crossing
- 6 - Evergreen Lane
- 7 - Locust Grove 2
- 8 - Ox Hearth-Bethel Church
- 9 - Hillsborough
- 10 - Metompkin View

Strategic Segments:

- 11 - Bayside Road (Deep Creek to Lee Mont)
- 12 - Chincoteague Road
- 13 - Coal Kiln Road
- 14 - Daugherty Road
- 15 - Dogwood Drive
- 16 - Greta Road
- 17 - Hacksneck Road
- 18 - Matthews Road
- 19 - Nandua Shores
- 20 - Nelsonia Road
- 21 - North Metompkin
- 22 - Red Hill Road/Seaside
- 23 - Redwood Road
- 24 - Shell Bridge Road
- 25 - Upshurs Neck Road
- 26 - Wisharts Point Road

Targeted Community:

- 27 - Red Bank



● Potential 2021 ESVBA Projects
— Extension Segments

Map Prepared by the Accomack County Department of Building, Planning & Economic Development using data from the ESVBA - February 10, 2021

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Industrial/Commercial in a Tourism-Driven Local Economy – Is Conflict Inevitable?

ShoreLine Editorial

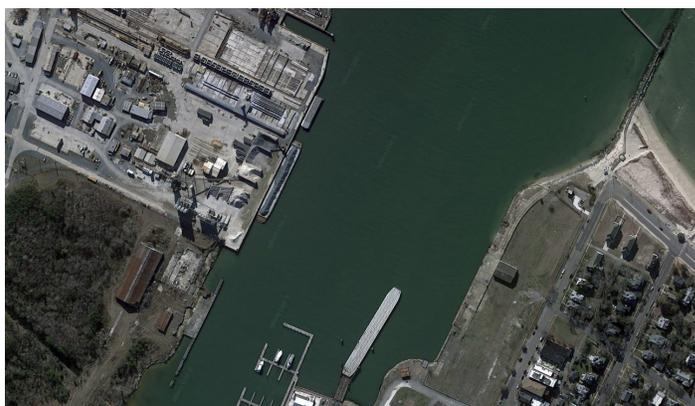
CBES has catalogued areas of our local economy where existing commercial or industrial activity could negatively impact the image that has become the tourism signature of the Eastern Shore. Everyone loves watermen – until their work disturbs the early morning solitude of shoreline residents, or their beds clog some of the best fishing flats. Everyone loves farming – until the smells, equipment, noise, dust, etc. of a farming operation start impacting the neighbors' quiet enjoyment of their country place. Sometimes the conflict is real, and difficult, if not impossible, to solve. Sometimes, it is a part of the authenticity of the very experience tourists are seeking. We continue to believe that it is through citizen involvement, in collaboration with government and corporate interests, that solutions to complex problems can be devised most equitably for all parties.

We are seeing the outline of yet another example playing out in Cape Charles. The former Bayshore Concrete plant has new owners, Coastal Precast Systems. They are investing in upgrading and modernizing the facility to ensure it remains a viable part of the economy of Cape Charles. By all accounts, this effort has been applauded all around, as jobs and production have increased at the plant. There are even rumors of expansion into new space.

The plant location, as well as the harbor, former railroad yard, and the area south of Mason Avenue, has always been zoned industrial/commercial. Until relatively recently, the harbor was used primarily by workboats and a few pleasure boats. The conflict emerged when the owners of the industrial-zoned property exercised their protected zoning status rights and the formerly commercial areas of Mason Avenue were redeveloped as upscale residential, and the pleasure boaters experienced the results of sharing the harbor with an existing industrial operation that was ramping up their business.

This revitalization of the industrial site is occurring even as the town is experiencing a long-deserved boom in tourism and reputation. But the reality is that the concrete plant is an industrial operation. The noise of equipment backup alarms, the hours of operation, the dust that comes with concrete fabrication, are also a part of the scene. It did not take long before some residents began to complain about the impact on their neighborhoods and at the harbor. They formed a grass roots group – Citizens Concerned for Cape Charles (CCCC) – to coordinate and consolidate their concerns. The town manager, John Hozey, met with the group and helped facilitate meetings with the plant.

While still early in the process, there appears to be



The concrete plant (left) is a close neighbor to downtown Cape Charles. Google Earth photo.

room for optimism that the plant and town citizens can find common ground. Several members of the group have been able to work with the plant on the backup alarms, to see if they can be quieter. The plant has purchased a water truck and is wetting down the area to reduce dust. In what could be a great long-term solution, the plant has already started construction on a 20-foot-high wall on the harbor side that may have a real impact on both noise and general impact of the industrial site.

CBES feels that all parties are working hard to make this work. It would be easier for many to take a position that the plant is not compatible with tourism and the reputation of the town and should be shut down. It would be easy to dismiss the complaints as whining by “come here’s” that do not care about the value of local jobs. But so far, the conversations are continuing and progress is being made to address areas that the plant thinks can be feasibly improved and that will improve the ease of living next door to an industrial facility. We would like to congratulate Town Manager Hozey for his work on both sides of the issue, the Town Council for staying open to the conversation, and of course, Coastal Precast management for its good-faith efforts to be a positive contributor to the community. There seems to be a lot to celebrate by the CCCC also, and we will try to keep our readers apprised of further progress.

Ed. Note: We understand that the Cape Charles Town Council has been working on having a meeting in a town venue large enough to accommodate all the parties who want to participate, including town officials, residents and other stakeholders of Cape Charles, and representatives from Coastal Precast Systems. We encourage all who are interested in the discussion to attend, and will be posting information regarding the time and place for the meeting on the CBES Facebook page.



Springing into Bike Tour 2021

By Donna Bozza

The 20th of this month marks the arrival of spring, a season of hope and renewal. It seems an appropriate time to announce CBES plans for our 2021 *Between the Waters Bike Tour*, set for Saturday, October 23.

After a dismal 2020, which saw the fallout from the pandemic cancel cherished Shore events, including our 28th annual Bike Tour, CBES is optimistic a fall event is feasible. To this end, it has been decided to cap the ride at 500 attendees, to better ensure their safety and those of our volunteers and community. Registration is scheduled to open May 1.

The start and finish of this year's tour will be at the Shore's southern tip aside the bay at Sunset Beach Resort and Cape Charles/Chesapeake Bay KOA. As our Ocean or Lead Sponsors, the staff at Sunset Beach will provide a welcome to cyclists as they begin and when they return from 1 of 4 routes. The routes, of 25, 40, 60, and 100 miles, will once again wind along the Shore's seaside and bay-side, showing off the bounty of farm fields, waterviews, and highlighting historic hamlets and towns, with some routes extending to lower Accomack County.

The Bike Tour is CBES only fundraising event, but we are also cognizant of the positive impact it has on Shore businesses. The last tour brought an estimated \$385,000 in direct dollars to our community. Also, as one of the largest ecotourism events here, the tour promotes the Eastern Shore as a wonderful place to bike or just visit.

CBES will continue to provide updates on the Bike Tour at www.cbcs.org and an upcoming Facebook Event Page.



We will be sharing Shore Artist Bethany Simpson's "Mermaid Bikes the Bay" design on the 2021 Bike Tour's commemorative T-shirts, posters, etc.. Thank you, Bethany!

Please welcome 2021 Lighthouse Sponsors, the American Borate Company!

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Plastic Pollution and Our Clothes

RECYCLING CORNER

Plastic pollution is a significant environmental issue, and the single biggest source (35%) of microplastics in our oceans comes from washing the synthetic fibers in our clothes and bedding. At least 60% of our clothing is made with synthetic fibers, including polyester, acrylics, spandex, and nylon; even cotton can be treated with harmful chemicals that make their way into our waterways.

These microfibers are shed from our laundry, as they break off and go down the drain. One study found that plastic shedding from washing machines could release 793 pounds of microfibers per person each year.

So what can we do? We can start by purchasing apparel and bedding made from natural fibers, without harmful chemicals. And we can reduce our purchases; on average, Americans buy one piece of clothing every 5 days.

We can also change our laundry habits. Long-term, companies are developing microfiber filters for washers and dryers. Until then, here are a few things we can all do:

- Use a device to capture the microfibers before they get into the water supply, including:
 - Internal devices in the drum, such as the Guppyfriend washing bag (<https://us.guppyfriend.com>) or the Cora Ball (<https://coraball.com>)
 - External filters, such as the Lint LUV-R (<https://environmentalenhancements.com/store/index.php/products/products-lint-filter>) or the PlanetCare Microfiber Filter (<https://shop.planetcare.org/products/microfiber-filter>)
- Don't tumble-dry synthetic clothing, use a clothesline.
- Reduce your washing frequency – only wash clothing and bedding that is truly dirty, and try spraying your clothes to refresh them between washings with a spray such as Soapwalla (<https://soapwalla.com/collections/all/products/the-spray>), which includes essential oils.
- Spray your clothes, shoes, and gym equipment with vodka (the cheap kind) to reduce bacteria from sweat.
- If buying a new washing machine, opt for a front-loading machine, since it will shed fewer fibers.

Since there is preliminary evidence that microplastics can move into groundwater (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/10/201026153939.htm>), those of us on septic systems need to take these measures as well.

Sources:

HydrofinitTM. XFiltraTM could prevent microfibre pollution in our oceans. July 9, 2019. <https://www.hydrofinit.com/blog/xfiltra-could-stop-microfibre-pollution-in-our-oceans>

Keeping Track

The Nature Conservancy Opens Access to “New” Trail

Residents and visitors to the lower Northampton County seaside have received an invitation to hike a coastal trail that locals have been familiar with for decades. At the east end of Sunnyside Road in Oyster can now be found a small parking lot and viewing platform overlooking the marsh. There is a ramp and a dedicated parking space for mobility-challenged visitors. A shell-lined coastal path extends around the tip of a small peninsula, long dubbed “Horse Head Island” by locals.



The Nature Conservancy opened the trail a few months ago, after obtaining a grant to build the platform and other improvements. Future plans include educational signage as well as benches along the trail, which was created during the early-to-mid 20th century, when shellfish-processing companies dumped their spoil along the water's edge.

The trail offers views of seaside marsh and the “oyster rocks” that are helping to renew the oyster population in the area, once threatened by over-harvesting and the parasites Dermo and MSX. Shorebirds are abundant, as are the fiddler crabs that emerge as their burrows are exposed by the falling tide.

Visitors to the trail area are advised to wear sturdy shoes, as thinner soles can be cut by sharp shells. Be aware that especially during times of calm weather, insects are plentiful.

A group of Oyster residents has agreed to be stewards of the trail; although they do periodic clean-ups, they would also like to remind visitors to pack out their trash and pick up after their dogs.

Thanks to The Nature Conservancy, hikers now have another destination for engaging in safe outdoor activity suitable for the entire family. The trail is modest, at around 40 minutes round-trip; it is one of the rare accessible walks along a seaside marsh on the lower Eastern Shore.



Napper IE, Barrett AC, Thompson RC. The efficiency of devices intended to reduce microfibre release during clothes washing. *Science of the Total Environment*, vol. 738. October 10, 2020. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0048969720339346#f0025>

Ziff A. Mom detective: What to do about laundry and plastic pollution. *Moms Clean Air Force*. February 1, 2021. <https://www.momscleanairforce.org/laundry-plastic-pollution/>

Crisfield's New Bike Trail

Submitted by George Mapp

Crisfield has almost finished the first 5 miles of the "413 Rail to Trail" that will eventually extend 16 miles along Route 413 to the town of Princess Anne. According to Clint Sterling, Director of Somerset County Recreation and Parks, the trail will officially open sometime in the first quarter of 2021. Paving is complete and people are already using it – in particular, a group of seniors walk 2 miles every morning. "It's becoming a community hub," says Sterling.



There have been challenges. Some homeowners and businesses were concerned about getting in and out of their driveways across the trail. In each case, Sterling's team met with them and came up with solutions. One business, a lumber mill, was concerned about the effects of their heavy trucks. The solution was to establish a buffer zone around the mill's entrance and to use a special concrete pour that should hold up to the wear and tear. In the end, almost everyone has been pleased. Residents and business owners now have better access across the former railroad tracks, improved stormwater drainage, and some landscaping – trees and flowers.

Funding for construction was 80% from the federal Transportation Alternatives Program and 20% from the Maryland Bikeways Program. No local funding was used.

Maintenance of the paved trail and 3-foot shoulder will be the responsibility of Somerset County. They will put aside \$10,000 to \$15,000 each year to establish a reserve for re-paving costs. The remaining portion of the 66-foot-wide corridor will be maintained by Maryland State Highway Administration, which is essentially the Maryland Department of Transportation.

Someday, perhaps, cyclists will be able to do a bike/ferry excursion from say, Onancock, to Tangier, Crisfield, Princess Anne, Pocomoke, Saxis, Parksley, and back to Onancock. Who knows, the Reedville folks across the Bay may want to join in. 

Planet or Plastic? A New Exhibit at Nauticus

The U.S. museum debut of National Geographic's exhibit, *Planet or Plastic?*, opened at Nauticus on January 30, and runs through April 25. The exhibit traces the history of plastic from its invention in the mid-1800s to the present, including the plastic pollution of the oceans and the death of untold numbers of marine animals, and the rise of single-use plastics during the COVID-19 pandemic. The exhibit also includes practical steps to reduce, reuse, recycle, and refuse single-use plastic products.

Nine million tons of plastic waste end up in the ocean every year. To help prevent 1 billion items from reaching the ocean, take the pledge to reduce your use of plastic bottles, bags, straws, utensils, and cups and lids at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/plasticpledge/>.

The exhibit is free for Nauticus members, and is included in the general admission ticket (\$15.95 adults, \$11.50 children). Capacity is limited, and masks are required for anyone 5 years of age and older.

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PAID HELP WANTED: Part-Time CBES Bike Tour Coordinator

Be a part of the oldest, most popular bike tour on the Eastern Shore, scheduled for October 23, 2021. The successful candidate for the job will be detail-oriented and unflappable, with keen organizational skills to handle the many moving parts of the Bike Tour process. These include reviewing the 4 tour routes for functionality; planning/setting up morning sign-in, lunch/rest stops, and finish; plus coordinating and helping to recruit volunteers.

Event planning experience is a plus, as well as good people skills. Flexible hours throughout 2021, starting immediately, with a concentration of full-time hours needed the 2 weeks before the Bike Tour as well as on the day of the event.

Job comes with a detailed manual and access to previous BT Coordinator. This is a great project to share with a spouse or partner! Contact info@cbes.org or 757-678-7157 for more information.

Citizens for a Better Eastern Shore
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**Northampton County
Comprehensive Plan
Timeline***

March 7

30-Day Public
Comment Period Closes

March 24*

Final Joint Worksession to
Review and Address Public
Comment

April 14*

Public Hearing Draft
Submitted to County
by Consultants

May 4*

Joint Public Hearing

**Dates tentative; please verify
by calling the County Planning
Office: 757-678-0443*

Community Calendar*

**NOTE: For current status of public meetings, go to the appropriate website
or contact by email or phone.*

Accomack County
757-787-5700

www.co.accomack.va.us

- 1st Wed **Board of Zoning Appeals**
10 AM, Accomac
- 2nd Wed **Planning Commission (PC)**
7 PM, Accomac
- 3rd Tues **School Board**
6:30 PM, Accomac
- 3rd Wed **Board of Supervisors (BOS)**
5 PM, Accomac
- 4th Tues **PC Work Session**
7 PM, Accomac
- 4th Thur **Wetlands Board**
10 AM, Accomac

CBES and Other Activities

- 1st Wed **VIMS Public Seminar**
7:30 PM, Wachapreague
- 3rd Tues **ES Ground Water Committee**
10 AM, Accomac
- 3rd Tues **CBES Board Meeting**
7 PM, Eastville or Belle Haven

Northampton County
757-678-0440

www.co.northampton.va.us

- 1st Tues **Board of Zoning Appeals**
10 AM, Eastville
- 1st Tues **Planning Commission (PC)**
6 PM, Eastville
- 2nd Tues **Board of Supervisors (BOS)**
6 PM, Eastville
- 2nd Thurs **School Board Work Session**
6 PM, Machipongo
- 3rd Wed **Wetlands Board**
Meets as needed, Eastville
- 3rd Wed **PC Work Session**
2 PM, Eastville
- 4th Tues **BOS Work Session**
5 PM, Eastville
- 4th Thurs **School Board**
6 PM, Machipongo

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