



TRAIL SEGMENT DESIGNATION PROCESS & APPLICATION

(Draft, April 2022)

APPLICATION PROCESS INTRODUCTION

In pursuit of the Vision captured in New Mexico's [Rio Grande Trail \(RGT\) Master Plan](#), landowners, land managers, and/or other jurisdictional entities are encouraged to develop trail segments that will contribute toward ultimate completion of a continuous statewide recreational facility. It should be understood that this is a totally **voluntary process**: as stipulated in the enabling legislation, the RGT corridor shall be comprised of "only land that is expressly authorized by the owner, including Indian nations, tribes or Pueblos, for inclusion in the Rio Grande Trail and not to be acquired by Eminent Domain; Eminent Domain shall not be used to establish or construct the Rio Grande trail or features, facilities or enhancements associated with the trail."

The RGT network is intended to include both a continuous Primary Alignment that follows the Rio Grande as closely as possible, extending from Colorado to Texas, and Secondary or Connector alignments that provide links from the Primary trail to nearby communities or points of interest. It is understood that some obstacles to a continuous river alignment will be encountered, due to sovereignty concerns, physical impasses, or other matters. In those cases – many of which are already reflected in the preferred alignments identified in the RGT Master Plan Appendices – alternate alignments will be considered, which may carry the RGT Primary Alignment many miles from the Rio Grande itself. In these cases, continuity will take priority over proximity to the river. It is also acknowledged that other alignment opportunities may exist which have not yet been identified, but which would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In order to become part of the RGT network, trail segments must be approved through an **official designation process**, which may be approached in one of two ways. Previously constructed (existing) trail segments that meet the criteria established in the RGT Master Plan (see link below) may be designated through the completion and submittal of a Primary or Secondary Trail Segment Designation Application form. For entities looking to design or construct a trail segment, but unsure if it would qualify for designation, an Interim (*or Preliminary, or Conditional...?*) Segment Designation Application may be submitted. **Interim/Preliminary/Conditional** designation will provide a level of confidence that the trail segment will be eligible for permanent designation upon its completion.

Submitted applications will be reviewed by the Rio Grande Trail Commission for approval on a quarterly basis, at regularly scheduled Commission meetings.

It should be noted that designation of a particular RGT segment will not preclude designation of other parallel segments, as it has been identified during the working group input process that it is reasonable and appropriate to allow for parallel routes of the RGT to serve different user groups.



APPLICATION PROCESS GUIDANCE

Each proposed trail segment should uphold the Rio Grande Trail Vision, as defined in the Master Plan:

"The Rio Grande Trail is New Mexico's cross-state, recreational trail for hiking, biking, and horseback riding along the Rio Grande. Trail users explore, learn about, and connect with a tapestry of diverse natural habitats, rich history, striking landscapes, and vibrant communities. The trail contributes to cultural and environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, spiritual growth, and economic prosperity for New Mexico and its visitors."

Applicants should refer to the RGT Master Plan for general guidance on trail segment implementation (links provided below), paying special attention to the following excerpted guidelines:

1. **Use existing trails along the Rio Grande corridor wherever possible:** "to the extent feasible, select existing trails for the route of the Rio Grande trail; to the extent feasible, in the case of nonmotorized existing trails, avoid widening these trails."
2. **Minimize environmental impacts:** "ensure that any recommended designation, construction and use of the trail will minimize environmental impacts."
3. **Preserve sensitive habitats:** "endeavor to avoid areas of significant habitat value and ensure that any recommended designation, design, construction or use of the trail will minimize the impact on habitat."
4. **Prioritize non-motorized use:** "in the case of new trails on public lands, construct the trails for non-motorized use; provided, however, that such trails may, but are not required to, be open to power-driven mobility devices for individuals with mobility impairments."

The application (below) should be completed by the current landowner and/or land manager and submitted to the Rio Grande Trail Commission for review at [email, webpage, etc.] at least 4 weeks prior to a scheduled Commission meeting.

Completed application submittal packages will be reviewed and ranked by the Trail Alignment Subcommittee according to a point system applied the evaluation categories outlined in the application forms below. Once the Trail Alignment Subcommittee has reviewed and evaluated the application, one of two actions will be taken. If the application appears incomplete, or additional questions need to be answered, the Subcommittee will follow up with the applicant and request a resubmittal that meets the requirements for designation. If/when the application is complete and acceptable to the Alignment Subcommittee, the application will be forwarded to the RGT Commission along with the Subcommittee's recommendation for approval, and the applicant will be contacted and asked to present a summary of the proposed alignment at the next quarterly Commission meeting for formal review and action.

If the Commission concurs with the Alignment Subcommittee recommendation, and no adverse public comment is received within 30 days following the public presentation to the Commission, formal approval of the requested designation will be made at the next RGT Commission quarterly meeting. Alternatively (e.g., in cases where time is of the essence for funding purposes), conditional approval may be granted by the Commission immediately following the presentation, to be made effective pending receipt of no adverse comments within 30 days of the Commission meeting.



DESIGNATION APPLICATION FORM (DRAFT)

At a minimum, the application package should include the following information:

- Applicant Name and Contact Information
- Segment Name (for future identification purposes)
- Whether Application is for **INTERIM** or FULL Designation

*(Note: **Interim Designation** is for proposed future trail segments; **Full Designation** is for existing/constructed trail segments.)*

1. Location/Description

Please describe the boundaries, extent, and relative location of the trail segment and how it relates to the Rio Grande Trail Corridor.

2. RGT Vision

How does this segment support the vision of the Rio Grande Trail?

3. Ownership

Is the segment in public ownership, or are necessary easements or agreements in place? If not, describe the plan for obtaining and/or managing trail right-of-way.

4. Public Support

Please indicate whether there has been any public outreach, and whether there are any groups, organizations, or individuals that have demonstrated support for this trail segment.

5. Connectivity

Describe how this trail segment would provide continuity and/or connectivity within the overall Rio Grande Trail system.

6. Accessibility

What level of access/accessibility is anticipated for the general public and different user groups?

7. Impact Studies

Have environmental impact studies and/or cultural surveys been conducted to understand the potential negative impacts of trail designation? How will impacts be addressed or mitigated? (Required for full designation, optional for interim designation)

8. Capacity to Maintain

How will trail segment be maintained, and by whom?

9. Public Safety

Indicate how public safety concerns will be addressed.

10. Additional Documentation

Please provide any supporting documentation that would help the Commission evaluate your request as a separate attachment.



SCORING CRITERIA

Segment Name: _____

Applicant: _____

Application is for FULL / INTERIM Designation: _____

<i>Evaluation Criterion (from Application Form)</i>	<i>Considerations</i>	<i>Score (0-5) *</i>
1. Location	Is the segment identified as a preferred alignment in the RGT Master Plan? If not, how does it relate? Could this segment enhance the RGT Corridor? <i>(0 = Does not relate, 5 = Relates well or follows preferred alignment)</i>	
2. RGT Vision	Does this application meet or support the Vision statement for the RGT? <i>(0 = not at all, 5 = fully)</i>	
3. Ownership	Is segment in public ownership, or are necessary easements in place? <i>(0 = None, 5 = All)</i>	
4. Public Support	Is there evidence of public support? <i>(1 = Public process not yet undertaken, 5 = Good public support)</i>	
5. Connectivity	How well does/would this segment connect to other segments of the trail, or to nearby communities or points of interest? <i>(0 = Isolated segment, 5 = Good connectivity)</i>	
6. Accessibility	Would this segment be accessible to a wide variety of users and user groups? <i>(1 = Limited accessibility, 5 = Accessible to wide variety of users)</i>	
7. Potential Impacts	How much consideration has the applicant given to potential environmental and cultural impacts, and mitigation of any impacts? <i>(1 = Impacts not yet evaluated, 5 = Few impacts; full mitigation proposed)</i>	
8. Maintenance	Has applicant demonstrated capacity and intent to maintain this segment? <i>(0 = No, 5 = Yes)</i>	
9. Public Safety	How well will public safety concerns be addressed? <i>(0 = No consideration provided, 5 = Well planned)</i>	
10. Documentation	Has sufficient information been provided to demonstrate that trail segment meets the goals of the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan? <i>(1 = Minimal, 5 = Sufficient)</i>	
	<i>Total Score:</i>	

* Maximum Score = 50 points

Minimum Score for Interim Designation => 30 points

Minimum Score for Full Designation => 40 points

A score of 0 in any category would constitute a fatal flaw and require resubmission.



RESOURCES

If you have questions about the application, please email riograndetrailcommission@state.nm.us.

For more information about the Rio Grande Trail Master Plan and preferred alignments, please visit:
<https://www.emnrd.nm.gov/riograndetrailcommission/rgtcmaps/>.

NM Outdoor Recreation Division Trails+ Grant information: <https://bit.ly/ORDGrants>

Other links...?: