

Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee
Public Trails Forum – Overview & Summary of Feedback
March 16, 2019

The Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee (PTAC), Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and Lancaster County Conservancy held a Public Trails Forum at Columbia Crossing on Saturday, March 16, 2019. This well attended trails event provided opportunities to learn about local and regional land and water trail connections. The 55 attendees visited five stations facilitated and/or supported by partnering organizations including PTAC, the Conservancy, National Park Service, Martic Township Rail Trail Advisory Committee, Lancaster County Planning Commission, and DCNR. The public and members from various user groups provided feedback all about trails.

Alex McDonald, DCNR Chief of Trails, Greenways, and Statewide Planning Section and Regional Facilitators provided an overview of the forum, *“to learn about local projects, ideas, opportunities and concerns associated with all types of trail uses and management, to help land and trail managers provide a more sustainable trails system, more consistent management across jurisdictions, and a better quality recreation experience for the public”*. Lori Yeich, DCNR Regional Services Division, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation provided a snapshot of local and regional projects sharing current maps and an overview of trail connections across the region including the York Heritage Rail Trail, Enola Low Grade, Lebanon Valley Rail Trail, Northwest River Trail, and highlighted other trails used by the public and supported by community partners including the Martic Township Rail Trail Advisory Committee, Mason Dixon Trail Association, Horse-Shoe Trail, Keystone Trails Association, Lancaster County Conservancy, and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Thanks to volunteers and community partners who supported this trails event and Susquehanna Heritage for use of Columbia Crossing.

Trail Topics of Discussion:

Public feedback generated at the forum, email, and via forum questionnaire.

1. Management and Maintenance of Existing Trails

- Public view (who does what)
- Need for education
- Permission from private land owners
- Overuse (party spots, ex. Muddy Creek)
- Difficult to get younger generations to help
- Use of trails at wrong time of year
- Safety concerns
 - Good maintenance helps users feel safe
 - Emergency access phone #, contact info
- Compliments to trail (township ID markers with contact info to report problems, trailhead contact information, and consistent signage and emergency information per municipality – mile markers)
- Access for horses (interest in development of trail shoulders for horse use)
- Drones on trails (disruption to wildlife, how to enforce township to township)

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- Invasive species management along trails
- Removal of fallen trees
- Replace invasive species with native species
- Host events to bring in younger people
- New trail building requests
- No statewide volunteers to support
- Liability to cover volunteers (waivers)
- Trail etiquette
- Advisory to unify maintenance efforts (municipality to municipality)
- Develop standards for maintenance
 - Monthly written inspections
- Protection of our trails
- Hunting season safety concern (Sunday hunting)
 - Hunting info should be posted with emergency information
- Cleanliness, maintenance of surface, consistency of signage
- Who enforces trail rules?
- Within 1000 feet of any trail access, there is a learning curve, particularly with newbies, as to how to use the trail safely
 - Consider smoking prohibited in rules, maybe "young lungs at play" or a similar program
 - Loose dogs, cyclists riding like trail is one way, even around corners, cyclists going too fast
 - Slippery when wet wooden bridges (signage to warn users)

2. Planning and Construction of New Trails

- Trail surface
 - Stone vs asphalt? Costs – need more consideration on which one is appropriate for particular trail
 - Compromise (resin / stone – can be recycled)
 - Revisit TSA – ask PSU room for improvements (review installations, self-healing)
 - Surface management – highest quality granular needed and worth the money spent
- Concerns with asphalt along rivers and natural areas (does not fit in)
 - Asphalt as a material depends on the user
 - Asphalt is more resistant to flooding, use in appropriate locations
 - Asphalt plus Canada geese can be slippery
- Asphalt in the “right” place
 - Issue with speed of bikes
- Appropriate stone is necessary
 - Runners prefer stone (possible side path)
- Possibly breaking up trail surfaces (multiple uses with multiple surfaces make it truly multipurpose)
- Would like to see off shoots, need options (runners, equine, mountain biking)

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- Planning is important – the water needs to get off the trail, maintenance of drainage
- Parking is part of planning, need appropriate locations to support users
 - Parking placement considerations and signage
- Being aware and sensitive to environment – no damage
- Planning --- concept of emerald necklace, trails connecting to parks, towns and other features
 - Start planning with knowing your intended users
- Trails as transportation – planning for future
- Long distance trails – need amenities and places to stay
- Turkey Hill Trails – great example of a trail with good facilities and design
- Conflict between passive and active users
 - User conflict between walkers/hikers, separate from biking; on multiuse trails
- E-bikes regulated locally and need for state wide guidance
- Users going where they are not allowed; planning appropriately for these uses
- Connecting trails is a priority
- More focus on sustainability when building new facilities
- State BMPs – when multiple uses are appropriate, how to build a trail to handle compatible uses/users
- Amenities and features – improve existing trails – connect existing trails rather than creating brand new trails
- More options/amenities in and around trails (multi-surfaces for difference users, off shoot trails, etc.)
- Users often need very different things. We tend to talk about them as the same
- PA Equine Council training – applies to all natural surface trails
- Find models for trails – cities/localities – need mentors for those getting started
- More incentives to landowners (compensation and liability)
- Don't plan forever – every plan should give the low hanging fruit (good design and maintenance)
 - Don't build without a plan!
 - Identify partners and funding – get agreements
 - Be very clear in planning (what are the goals)
 - Form follows function, need to identify uses
 - Multiuse trails are not the only trails (need resources for hiking trails, etc.)
 - Proper planning = decisions based on intended and not intended users
- Harness passionate people to motivate decision makers
- Construction:
 - Utilize existing resources (such as work crews, public and private partners)
 - Don't skip on construction! (It will get you in the end, drainage problems, etc.)
 - Design and materials that are more sustainable and appropriate for conditions
 - Sustainable design can cut down on pipes and infrastructure = less maintenance
- Need more information on Economic Impact for communities
- Challenges include unintended users, surface, future maintenance

3. Access to Trails and Use of Public Lands

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- Managing different user groups – over use
- Increasing diversity
- Consistent management between different owners (includes governmental coordination)
- Signage and education on trail rules – trail educators onsite
- Increased parking and other amenities
- Role of technology especially for younger people
- Connecting land and water trails
- Destination signage and public transportation
- Engaging the arts
- Access to trails need
- Directional signage needs to be consistent, offer visual clues, amenities
- More love by the Advisory Council for water trails
- MA and PA Greenways – lots of landowners
- Northwest Trail – people get lost, green line
- Horse owners need more options
- Use piers to connect Lancaster/York
- How do we plan for users and how do we control users?
 - Education events
 - Coordinating with user groups with mapping
 - How to control over use
 - How do you use technology to connect young people to the trail?
 - Get artists involved and Photographers (explain user groups to include the arts)
 - Private landowners restricting use
 - Private landowner restriction use makes trails more important
- Community education effort on trail rules – consistency between trails on rules
- Hikers – who has priority? – going up and going down
- Camp Mack – restricted uses by certain owners (public, Game Commission)
- Private landowners can restrict access to the river front
- Need to plan for future land transfers to create public access
- Ferry established
- Trail use – people using it helps with enforcement of the rules
- Rules need to be posted
- Add land north of Hellam Hills for Mason Dixon Trail
- Coordination of various organizations on trails
- Find locations where the water trail connects to land trails
- Bush Island potential site
- Statewide issue – few foresters could be used to educate hikers, etc. (recreational foresters)
- Connectivity is important
- Provide enough parking
- Diversity – how do we get more diverse groups involved (connections to communities)
- Public transportation to trails
- More kids on trails

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- Public awareness (signage – where, how to)
- Connecting with public officials (educate on economic impact, health benefits, etc.)
- Better web based directions (need parking location – GPS)
- Printed maps that show connected areas
- Parking lot at Muddy Creek
- Make sure parking lots are large enough, location of parking lots, trailer parking for horseback riders
- Promote carry in, carry out
- Trail educators at parking lots
- Public lands rules vary by owners, needs to be coordinated and consistent
- Parking, water to land trails
- Water trails – access is hindered by the Fish & Boat Commission requirements for boats that are paddled vs. motorized boats

4. Trails Funding - Municipal, County and State

- Horseshoe Trail – looking for equine trails funding for easements, roads too busy and need for traffic control
- Additional footpath thru this area – walking with bikes is hard
- Need more signage
- Mason-Dixon Trail – funding for equipment and maintenance
- Grateful for funding support, interest for Conoy Township/Northwest River Trail must now focus on maintenance
- KTA – 3,000 miles of trails, huge need for equipment for maintenance
- Footpaths challenging to fund by DCNR because of ownership requirement – work with local partners, private donors – must highlight conservation, public benefit, habitat consideration
- Amenities along the trail – education on opportunities i.e. binding (?)
- LCC has new assessment tool to ID potential trail properties
- Connection b/t Columbia and Washington Borough – must do some in-kind services; public Right of Way (ROW) challenges
- In Columbia – funding can be less for natural trails – keep it simple and more sustainable
- Don't understand how funding works – more education on funding opportunities to leverage for equine opportunities
- Must work with municipal officials for support
- More access trails to rail trail towns
- Cleanup along the trails (i.e. dogs, trash)
- Purchase ROWs to move trails off of the roads
- What has past funding been used for?... (planning, securing public ROWs, construction, etc.)
- Who is the starting point? Municipal advisors work with funders, consultants, public input important
- Funding to manage multiple uses on trails – consider in design phase
- Long term maintenance, plan for costs, sustainability
- Alternatives to generating revenue?

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- Promoting economic benefits, businesses, marketing, etc.
- Purchase private land before others grab it (money isn't readily available in short term period)
- Trails attract businesses, economic benefit
- State agencies should work together to give funding – cooperation between agencies and municipalities
- Concurrent planning, long term vision, ability to purchase land
- Agricultural preservation
- Underdeveloped areas – should be more access for redevelopment
- Utilize free labor (i.e. scouts, civic clubs (who do they contact? LCC, Columbia Crossing, etc.))
- Adopt-a-Trail, Trail Stewards – signage to recognize groups
- Adopt-a-mile on a trail
- Leverage funding for big ticket projects
- Connect Wrightsville to Columbia
- Ask for donations from trail users (donation boxes) – but challenging on public lands
- Fundraisers
- Advocate legislators on importance of funding (state)
- Municipalities should be encouraged to hold conservation easements (threat to recreation use statute)
- Learn about trails to state agencies, local elected representatives/senators
- Trail funding is under advertised

5. Public-Private Partnerships and Community Outreach – County, Municipal and Public Planning and Collaboration

- Expand engagement with public-private partners (Sierra Club, schools, hospitals, colleges, municipal public works, Chambers for economic development, county park rangers, etc.)
- Improved municipal collaboration
 - Comp plans need to include trails (update where needed)
 - Constituents need to speak up and attend municipal meetings
 - Need to talk and work with other municipalities
 - Municipal barriers can get in the way of progress
 - More public notice and engagement about municipal and partnership trail progress beyond newspaper post (use technology to share with the public)
- Engage youth and millennials for community service and participating in trail opportunities
 - Shared Trail Ambassadors Program (goes beyond municipal and community partner boundaries)
 - Schools – trail classrooms
- Cross state promotion of trails that is beneficial to all trails (check out ExplorePATrails.org)
- Engage partners to address conflicts between users (bikes-horses-dogs off leash)
- Improved collaboration to provide adequate infrastructure, parking, etc.
- Shared BMPs across municipalities and community partners (trail etiquette – address conflicts with trail users)
- Educate partners about liability protection for private property owners

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- Success – business partnerships = economic development, develop model or others
- Speaker series on trail topics to educate municipalities and partners, learn from others (don't recreate, a waste of time)
- Highlight great partners (ex. LCSWMA and Manor Township - NWRT)
- Governmental agencies face more hoops and public (government side moves slowest with more constraints, easier to get support in private sector)
- Consideration for PA Recreation Use Statues
 - Add amendments that address conservation easements, \$ and liability
- Limited funding to protect remaining utility lands
- Mason Dixon Trail – need to work with partners to engage youth and millennials especially with generational shift
- Challenge – horses not allowed on trails – need municipal collaboration on Enola Low Grade Trail – perhaps partners could help bring in money, potential to rotate users each weekend?
- Keystone Trail Association – State Game Lands permit trail maintenance only on Sunday, if Sunday hunting passes, what happens?
- Partners need to work together to educate users – concern about dogs off leash on trail
- Trail etiquette brochure needs produced – consideration for all users
- Eagle Scout projects can help
- Adequate infrastructure for all users – identify and plan across municipal and private partner boundaries
- Engage hospitals – provide funding to build and maintain trails, not just education money (Hospital Fund-a-Mile)
- Building network to expand connections to/from a linear trail
- Success – retail owners asking how to attract trail users, nonprofits are resources to businesses
- Create a resource brochure for other municipalities to use
- Businesses need to be advocates for trail – share and tell municipalities and elected officials
- Should have another forum at a larger venue (ex. John Wright) and invite presenters from other trail groups – Schuylkill, Alleghany, etc. (ex. host presenter on trail volunteer groups successful engagement of younger generations, benefits of trails and engaging businesses, etc.)
- Consider less funding for consultants (a lot of money is spent on consultants), get money for building trails, not paying fees
- Connect NWLCRT to Conewago Trail near Elizabethtown and extend NWLCRT to Dauphin County
- Not transparent until the final outcome is announced
 - Need for more public engagement to build awareness of trails

Thank you for your feedback!
Lydia Martin, PA Trails Advisory Committee, Public Trails Forum