

GREATER KINGSTON TRAIL/GREENWAY FEASIBILITY/MASTER PLAN

**Public Meeting
May 19, 2008
6:30 pm
Luzerne County Annex**

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees:

Julie McMonagle	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Janet Sweeney	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
George White	Rettew
James Caldwell	Rettew
Brent L. Birth	Rettew
Andy Gegaris	Luzerne County
Brian L. Grove	Senator Baker
Karen Szwast	West Side Trail
Michele Schasberger	Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership
Judy Rimple	ASTA
Michael Thomas	PA House NE Delegation
Rory Sweeney	Times Leader

Julie McMonagle, Vice President, Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) NE Region Office gave a brief overview of the agenda and the project background. According to Julie, there is a lot of trail work occurring in the county and this project will connect the existing trails on the west side of the Susquehanna River. She also explained that PEC recently put out a Request for Proposals for the City of Wilkes-Barre Trail/Greenway Master Plan. This project will connect the D&L National Heritage Corridor, key destinations in the City of Wilkes-Barre and other regional trails to recreation facilities along the east side of the Susquehanna River.

According to Julie, the time frame for this project is approximately twelve (12) months. She also stated that the study area encompasses the following municipalities: Courtdale, Edwardsville, Forty Fort, Kingston, Larksville, Luzerne, Pringle and Swoyersville Boroughs.

Michelle Schasberger added that according to a study by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, utilitarian bike trips average 60%. This means that these trips are not just recreational trips, but trips made as a means of transportation for work, shopping and other reasons.

Julie went on to explain that PEC received funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Luzerne County Office of Community Development and the Sordoni Foundation in order to conduct this project. She stated that project will follow the standard (DCNR) public participation process. According to Julie, PEC will conduct the public participation process aspect of this project which includes municipal surveys, general public questionnaires, and key person interviews. Julie added that we will try to meet with the individual municipalities in order to get their input. Julie also stated that PEC retained Rettew to prepare the site analysis, inventory and map of area amenities, develop proposed trail routes and develop trail construction and management cost estimates. Karen Szwast suggested that the best way to meet with the municipalities was to get on their respective Working Session agendas. She also added that, when at these meetings, make a request that one or two people from the municipality join the steering committee for the project.

Julie then explained that the long term maintenance and management is very important to the success of the project. She added that we probably do not want to create another organization to do the long term maintenance and management but rather would like to use existing organizations or trail groups.

Julie also informed the meeting attendees that PEC applied to DCNR for another trail/greenway feasibility/master plan project for a study area that will encompass Dallas, Jackson, Kingston, Lake, Lehman, Plymouth Townships and Dallas and Harvey's Lake Boroughs in Luzerne County. According to Julie, the proposed trail/greenway will examine potential connections to key destinations including but not limited to the Back Mountain Trail, Susquehanna Warrior Trail, Frances Slocum State Park, the Back Mountain Recreation Park, Jackson Township Park, Moon Lake Park and adjoining Lackawanna Forestry Tract and recently acquired Theta Lands along Harvey's Creek, and area state game and forest lands. Julie then turned the meeting over to Jim Caldwell of Rettew.

Jim introduced the Rettew team to the meeting attendees, including himself, George White, Senior Environmental Scientist and Brent Birth, PLS Surveying Services. Jim explained that they all will be the primary contacts at Rettew for this project. Jim then explained that Rettew will be following the basic outline for services as represented in the RFP. Rettew will collect background data, create mapping, identify linkages and potential corridors within the study area, utilize the survey data as collected by PEC, identify ownership of parcels, conduct a physical assessment of the study area to delineate what is out there and how it will impact the trail, develop the preferred alignment (with input from the steering committee, surveys, municipalities, etc), determine the cost estimates for construction and develop a maintenance and management plan.

George White then presented the mapping completed so far and explained that the maps are works in progress and not final by any means. George explained that the GIS database, to date, includes the Luzerne County parcel data, 2005 aerial photos and USGS maps. He informed the meeting attendees that Rettew is going to push the technology with this project by bringing a "stand alone" GIS to the meetings. This GIS is very interactive which George then demonstrated the capabilities of the GIS to the meeting attendees.

The floor was then opened up for questions and comments.

Judy Rimple stated that it is very important to establish the key destinations and identify where people want to go (i.e. Baskin Robbins). She added that there is a lot of water stuff in the study area including the levees and those areas should definitely be looked at for this project. She also added that we should keep the local elected officials informed about the project.

Michelle Schasberger stated that we should try to identify existing ROWs that are established community trails/paths as possible feeders to the trail. She added that there are places/paths that may be in danger of being lost and these sites/paths, once identified, should be given consideration. Judy agreed and added that we will need to prioritize what is necessary to acquire now before we may lose it.

Michelle then stated that from her perspective the following three items should be given consideration: community paths (especially those in danger of being lost); key connector parcels; and existing trail heads (what are the issues we have at existing access points). She also asked that 3rd Avenue be looked at for at least a pedestrian crossing because it is a very dangerous intersection.

The entire group agreed that there needs to be some sort of overall umbrella coordinating entity.

Julie then stated that based on the input from this meeting PEC's next steps will be to set up the following meetings:

- Local municipalities to explain the project and solicit for steering committee members;
- Allen Bellas from the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority because the Authority is a major owner of rail corridors within the study area;

- Jim Brozena Luzerne County Flood Protection Authority to discuss potential connections to the levee trails; and
- Joe Gibbons Luzerne County Engineers Office to also discuss the levee trails.

Julie then stated that key destinations and linkages will be the next iteration of maps for the next steering committee meeting. The meeting attendees recommended that PEC send a blanket e-mail to the steering committee requesting key destinations within the study area.

Julie informed the committee that the next meeting date would be set for early July.

There being no other comments or discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

GREATER KINGSTON TRAIL/GREENWAY FEASIBILITY/MASTER PLAN

**Public Meeting
October 7, 2008
6:30 pm
Hoyt Library**

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees:

Julie McMonagle	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Janet Sweeney	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Joe Chacke	Forty Fort Borough
Bob Skulsky	Susquehanna Greenways/D&L NHC
Andy Gegaris	Luzerne County
Michele Schasberger	Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership
Karen Szwest	West Side Trail Commission
George White	Rettew

Julie McMonagle, Vice President, Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) NE Region Office explained the background of the project. According to Julie, there is a lot of trail work occurring in the county and it is the intent of this project to connect the existing trails on the west side of the Susquehanna River. She emphasized the importance of the future management and maintenance of the trail. Julie explained that the long term maintenance and management is very important to the success of the project. She added that we probably do not want to create another organization to do the long term maintenance and management but rather would like to use existing organizations or trail groups. According to Julie there are funding opportunities for acquisition, design and construction of the trail, however, once the trail is built the management and maintenance will have to come from other sources.

Julie then introduced George White from Rettew, the consultant working on the project for a project update. George reiterated that this is a living document and will be updated and changed accordingly as we progress through the planning process. George stated that Rettew is still in the process of collecting and preparing the GIS data, photos, etc. for the master plan.

George informed the committee that we (Rettew and PEC staff) met with Allen Bellas, Redevelopment Authority of Luzerne County/Luzerne County National Recreation Trail earlier in the day to discuss their holdings within the study area. According to George, the meeting went well and Allen is supportive of our efforts. Mr. Bellas also informed us of a rail right of way that we previously did not have in the GIS database. This right of way is in Kingston borough and runs from the northern boundary of Kingston borough where it crosses the Crossvalley Expressway to the Kingston Community Park, however there is a break in the ROW just below Rutter Avenue. The Redevelopment Authority also owns a track in Edwardsville, this option would involve crossing Toby Creek. There used to be a railroad bridge but unfortunately that is now gone.

George then presented the committee with the following items to discuss and think about:

Wyoming Valley West School District some of the schools are planned for closing, however, State Street school is safe.

According to George, in order to tie into the Susquehanna Warrior Trail we need to get around Lech (he has encroached on about 3/10 of a mile of the trail). Potential options are to go over Carey Avenue, down the sidewalk on Main Street, or through the Heavy Media property at the lower edge of their property; or perhaps through Larksville, but this option presents a very steep grade. Much discussion ensued regarding this issue and it was decided to continue to think about options and discuss it again at the next meeting.

Kingston – a road was identified that seems to have very little traffic and was just paved, we need to find out who owns it and are there any plans for it. It could be a flood basin right of way, and we should contact Jim Brozena to verify that.

Forty Fort Borough would like to see the trail go through the borough along the rail corridor. According to Joe Chake it is an area of concern due to garbage and overgrown foliage.

We need to add the Dallas Area Municipal Authority to the mailing list as there is potential DAMA right of way that could work for the trail.

Vaughn Street may be a possibility especially since it is a lightly traveled road.

Joe also informed the committee that there are many key destinations in Forty Fort Borough including the Little League Fields, Holy Name Field, Forty Fort Park, Dana Street Elementary School, the Meeting House, the Cemetery, and the Dennison House on Dennison Street. The cemetery also provides a connection to the levee trail, but we would need to talk with Dick Hughes, solicitor for the Cemetery Association. There is also an alley that traverses the borough that would provide a connection from the park and school to the other end of the borough near the Dunkin Donuts. From there we would like to see a connection to the West Side Trail with the Svetland House as a key destination.

Rettew will continue to collect background data, create mapping, identify linkages and potential corridors within the study area, utilize the survey data as collected by PEC, identify ownership of parcels, conduct a physical assessment of the study area to delineate what is out there and how it will impact the trail, develop the preferred alignment (with input from the steering committee, surveys, municipalities, etc), determine the cost estimates for construction and develop a maintenance and management plan.

George needs to label the names of the parks.

Julie informed the committee that the next meeting date would be set for November, 2008.

There being no other comments or discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

GREATER KINGSTON TRAIL/GREENWAY FEASIBILITY/MASTER PLAN

**Public Meeting
November 19, 2008
6:00 pm
Hoyt Library**

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees:

Janet Sweeney	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Michele Schasberger	Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership
George White	Rettew

George began the meeting with a focus on potential connections with the Back Mountain Trail through Luzerne Borough. One issue in this area is crossing the off-ramp of the Crossvalley Expressway/Rt. 309 in the Borough.

Once the trail approaches Rutter Avenue there is a problem area behind an accountant's office. At this area there are right of way (ROW) issues. According to George, the Redevelopment Authority of Luzerne County (LCRA) right of way in Kingston Borough runs from the northern boundary of Kingston Borough where it crosses the Crossvalley Expressway/Rt. 309 to the Kingston Community Park, however there is a break in the ROW just below Rutter Avenue.

Michelle stated that Kingston Borough may not be interested if there are perceived negative impacts to their residents.

George stated that Option 1A designates the spine of trail as the main grade of the LCRA. The original idea was the abandoned rail grade to the north because it is mostly privately owned. However, Allen Bellas is amenable to letting us designate the active line currently owned by Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority. The positive aspect to this option is that it is ready to go and was just put it into the design phase. The parks that we were hoping to connect to can be serviced just as well from this option, as from the original option.

The focus of the discussion went back to Luzerne Borough and the issue of going around the flood basin located there. The last time we met, George had been to the site and informed the committee that there was a walkable area along the side of the flood basin with trees and grass. It also seemed as if people were using this as a walking trail. However, since then, George revisited the site and found that the trees were cut down and the grass was gone. Due to this activity, George felt that we should contact Jim Brozena to ask him about this area and find out what the future plans are there.

However, a benefit to using this area for the trail is that we could provide a connector to the West Side Career and Technology Center on Courtright Street to the flood basin, thereby, providing the school access to the flood basin which could perhaps provide some educational opportunities for the students.

George then directed the committee to look at the east side of the study area. He stated that with Option 1A, there was a potential to tie into the Frank Slapar Park in West Wyoming Borough with a spur. He added that there are wetlands on the property perhaps providing the potential for a nice small nature trail.

According to George, as the trail continues west we could run from the rail grade down Dennison Street (the sidewalks are in poor condition but at the very least there is a sidewalk) to provide a connection to the Luzerne County Sports Complex in forty Fort Borough.

Michelle asked that Rettew assign a different color to the trail options that we feel are a priority at this time so they stand out. She added that we should not get rid of the other options, but just highlight the preferred ones at this time.

As we continue west through the study area, George indicated that in Edwardsville Borough there are some right of way issues at the west end of the rail spine.

George then stated that as we continue through Edwardsville Borough we could provide a connection to the John J. Hopkins Memorial Park located between High Street and Lawrence Street. We could provide this connection to the park with either a trail over an underground stream or along our rail spine (realizing rail right of way issues).

According to George, there is a quad trail up through mine lands, from the back of a parking lot all the way down to Church Street in Larksville Borough that is under one owner. He added that we also need to contact Allen Bellas regarding what the WWV School Board is planning for their property in Larksville Borough which is in the vicinity of the mine lands.

There being no other discussion the meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm

GREATER KINGSTON TRAIL/GREENWAY FEASIBILITY/MASTER PLAN

Steering Committee Meeting

May 20, 2009

6:30 pm

The Luzerne County Annex

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Attendees:

Janet Sweeney	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Julie McMonagle	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Michele Schasberger	Wyoming Valley Wellness Trails Partnership
Bob Skulsky	D&L/SGP
Jim Caldwell	Rettew
George White	Rettew

Jim Caldwell gave a brief update of the project status since our last meeting which was held on November 19, 2009. Based on the feedback received from the steering committee, Rettew has revised the options/alignments since that last meeting.

According to Rettew, since the last meeting the “Back Road Bike Route” has been added in order to make a connection throughout the entire study area. However there is not one consistent name for the “Back Road”. It was suggested that we look in the West Side Trail Plan for a name.

Rettew suggested that, along Welles Street and Slocum Avenue, we would only have to provide signage for the trail, making this an easy implementation option.

According to Rettew, alternative alignments are identified on the map by dashed lines. The main spines are identified as the Kingston Area Trail and the Back Mountain Trail Extension both providing connections to parks and schools. The third trail alignment option is the Larksville Trail which ties into the “Back Road Bike Route” at Romanesky Park in Larksville with a potential connection to the Susquehanna Warrior Trail.

The extension of the Back Mountain Trail is shown as a dashed line along Rutter Avenue and it eventually connects to the Levee Trail. All that would be necessary is to provide signage along this route to direct people either north or south. Church Street could be a potential trail head.

The Back Mountain Trail Extension as identified as an option on the draft map, traverses private property Right of Way, however the right of way has not yet been encroached upon. So this is something to think about and decide how to approach it if we decide to pursue this as a potential alignment.

The questions was raised regarding what types of trailheads would be appropriate. The type of trail heads will be handled in the final design phase and can be determine then.

PEC will meet with the various municipalities to present the trail maps and try to get “buy in” from the municipalities. The master plan will not be finalized until these municipal meetings have been conducted.

It was recommended that we look into the Rail to Trails Conservancy as they have information regarding the benefits of trails, but local testimonials would be very beneficial to have when meeting with the municipalities.

We should stress that this will be creating an amenity for the people along the trail, not really bringing people into the area, but providing an amenity.

The question was raised as whether or not we are going to recommend phases, first the main route and then the connectors? Yes, we are going to recommend phases. Let’s get what can be done quickly “low hanging fruit.” We also need to put this question to the municipalities, ask them what their priorities are and what would they support?

The question was raised that if the municipalities choose to become part of existing trail organizations how would these existing organizations prioritize trail sections? Would their trail sections take priority over the alignments that will come out of the Kingston feasibility/master plan?

PEC will also shop this around to bicycling shops. Sicklers, Main Bike World, Around Town Bikes.

Rough draft of the report is done and has been submitted to PEC.