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Users of the Circuit will engage in active transportation, promoting better health and providing environmental benefits. DVRPC included completion of the Circuit as a goal of its most recent long-range plan, Connections 2040. Plan for Greater Philadelphia.

Over 280 miles of the system are open for use, 60 more miles will come online soon, and about 410 miles remain to be built. Individual trails that compose the Circuit are the product of the hard work and dedication of advocates and partnerships at the local, county, and regional levels.

These advocates and partnerships move individual trails from planning to design and through construction. The Circuit Coalition is a collaboration of non-profit organizations, foundations, and agencies working to advance completion of the Circuit. For more information visit: www.connectthecircuit.org

DVRPC REGIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM

Between 2011 and 2013, DVRPC awarded over $9 million to 42 multi-use trail planning, design, and construction projects throughout Greater Philadelphia as part of the Regional Trails Program. The Regional Trails Program, administered by DVRPC, with funding from the William Penn Foundation, capitalized upon opportunities for trail development by providing funding for targeted, priority trail design, construction and planning projects that promote a connected, regional network. The program also provided technical assistance to trail developers, counties, municipalities and nonprofit organizations.

In total, the Regional Trails Program will add 20 miles to the Circuit and move additional miles of trail from planning to final design.

OTHER RESOURCES

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Rails to Trails Conservancy: Financing/Funding – www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/trailBuilding/toolbox/informationSummaries/funding_financing.html

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THE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) IS THE REGIONALLY AGREED UPON LIST OF PRIORITY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS AS REQUIRED BY FEDERAL LAW, ADMINISTERED BY DVRPC, AND INCLUDES MULTIMODAL PROJECTS. THE TIP DESCRIBES FUNDING AVAILABLE TO TRAIL PROJECTS IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA.

The availability of funding, the timing of application processes, and match and eligibility requirements vary among these programs, so it is advisable to contact program staff and monitor the above websites for program announcements.

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How do you find those partners? Since trails by their nature cross political boundaries, the first places to look are the local governments of cities, towns, and counties through which the trail runs. These governments can incorporate trails into comprehensive plans, provide the expertise of local planning and engineering staff, and support trail projects with in-kind and cash contributions. Landowners along the trail’s route are also key players and will be important if land acquisition is required to complete your project. Businesses, community institutions, and others can be strong allies. If your trail connects to a transit station or route, coordinate with the transit agency to ensure users can move from the trail to transit seamlessly.

Pennsylvania Act 89 of 2013 established a state multimodal transportation fund to fund multimodal projects, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. PENN DOT is developing procedures and guidance for distribution of the fund.

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) administers a portion of Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale Legacy Funds supplied by the impact fee on unconventional gas drilling. Trail planning, design, and construction of right-of-way acquisition are eligible for this funding under the CFA’s Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program. For more information: www.rrsdp.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/trails-and-recreation-program.

Coastal Zone Management (CZM) funds projects that improve and enhance coastal estuaries such as the Delaware Estuary. Planning, design, and construction of bike and pedestrian facilities that enhance public enjoyment of, and access to, coastal resources are eligible. Right-of-way acquisition is also eligible. For more information: www.dep.state.pa.us/Revegetation/crmgrants/crmgrants.htm or www.dvrpc.org/environment/coastalzone-management.

The Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) provides funding to undertake early stage planning, analysis, or design initiatives for projects or programs which enhance smart development or revitalization and also improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system. For more information: www.dvrpc.org/tcdi.

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The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the Regionally Agreed Upon List of Priority Transportation Projects as required by Federal Law, administered by DVRPC, and includes multimodal projects. Placement on the TIP is a crucial step in securing federal transportation funds for a project. Working collaboratively, DVRPC’s member governments and agencies develop the TIP and are responsible for formally submitting candidate projects. Therefore, project sponsors and advocates should coordinate closely with one or more of these entities to prepare a project for inclusion in the TIP.

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) administers a portion of Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale Legacy Funds supplied by the impact fee on unconventional gas drilling. Trail planning, design, and construction of right-of-way acquisition are eligible for this funding under the CFA’s Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program. For more information: www.rrsdp.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/trails-and-recreation-program.

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Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) provides grants and technical assistance for the development of local and regional trails, greenways, parks, natural areas, and open space, with priority given to statewide greenways and regionally significant trails. PA DCNR’s grants are provided through the agency’s Community Conservation Partnership Program (CCPP). Trail planning, design, and construction as well as right-of-way acquisition are eligible. For more information: www.dcnr.state.pa.us/bro/grants/index.aspx or contact PA DCNR Regional Advisor Jeffrey Knowles: jpknowles@pa.gov.

Pennsylvania Act 89 of 2013 established a state multimodal transportation fund to fund multimodal projects, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. PENN DOT is developing procedures and guidance for distribution of the fund.

Funding Sources

Sources of funding for trails can include federal, state, county, and local governments; private companies and foundations; and other sources. State and federal funding in southeastern Pennsylvania is typically accessible from three agencies:

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) maintains the region’s transportation improvement program (TIP) and administers several grant programs, for which trail planning, design, and construction are eligible.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) sets aside federal transportation funds for community-based “non-traditional” projects that build infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. Planning, design, and construction of on-road and off-road facilities including a bikeway, trails, cycle tracks, bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, and pedestrian and bicycle signals are all eligible.

Concentration Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds transportation-related projects that help reduce emissions from mobile sources and meet the National Clean Air Act Standards. Design and construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities are eligible. For more information: www.dvrpc.org/cmaq.

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Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) administers a portion of Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale Legacy Funds supplied by the impact fee on unconventional gas drilling. Trail planning, design, and construction of right-of-way acquisition are eligible for this funding under the CFA’s Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program. For more information: www.rrsdp.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/trails-and-recreation-program.

The availability of funding, the timing of application processes, and match and eligibility requirements vary among these programs, so it is advisable to contact program staff and monitor the above websites for program announcements.

County and Municipal Planning Commissions and Parks and Public Works Departments administer county and local capital and open space funds. These funds may be available for trail planning, design, and construction. For more information:

Bucks County Open Space Program www.buckscounty.org/government/communityservices/planningcommission/ovs.


In-kind contributions of labor or equipment and assistance with right-of-way acquisition may also be available from county or municipal sources.

Contact county and municipal staff for more information on what is available in your area.

Foundations and private sources can also provide funding for trail planning, design, and construction.

The William Penn Foundation directed $10 million to a program administered by DVRPC to fund trail design and construction projects, planning and feasibility studies, and technical assistance. The Foundation also provides direct grants to support trail planning and advocacy.

National Trail Advocacy Groups, such as the Rails to Trails Conservancy and People for Bikes, offer periodic grants.

Developers of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings can construct or pay for trails. Developers should be encouraged to view trails as an amenity.

Corporations can support trail building efforts. Bristol Myers Squibb and the Educational Testing Service have played a key role in development of the Lawrence Hopewell Trail.

Property owners can donate trail easements or property, or sell them at a discount to make projects feasible.

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The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the regionally agreed upon list of priority transportation projects as required by federal law, administered by DVRPC. The TIP lists all projects that intend to use federal funds. The TIP is a multimodal program and includes multi-use trail projects. Placement on the TIP is a crucial step in securing federal transportation funds for a project. Working collaboratively, DVRPC’s member governments and agencies develop the TIP and are responsible for formally submitting candidate projects. Therefore, project sponsors and advocates should coordinate closely with one or more of these entities to prepare a project for inclusion in the TIP.

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- Chester County Open Space Preservation www.chesco.org/index.aspx?nid=179


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