

Chapter Six - Trail Implementation Strategy

Operation, Maintenance, and Security – Descriptions

Maintenance

Annual trail maintenance costs as estimated by the National Park Service can typically run from \$500 per mile for low-use trails to \$5,000 per mile for high-use trails. It is anticipated that the Shawnee Greenway will experience a high level of use. Trail use is anticipated to be highest from June to August.

Typical trail maintenance tasks include clearing fallen trees across trails, removing dangerous trees or limbs, bridge inspections, maintaining adequate shoulder clearances along trail, cleaning drainage structures, repairing erosion and damaged trail surfaces, removing invasive plant species, trash pick-up and removal, undertaking periodic inspections, and other associated tasks.

Experience on other trails has shown that with the aid of volunteers, these maintenance costs can be brought down significantly. The utilization of volunteer labor is an important component in managing a trail. The cleaning of drainage swales, drainage structures, and trash pick-up and removal along the trail are important volunteer tasks that can have immediate positive results.

Maintenance Task Schedule:

The following is an outline of the trail maintenance tasks that should be performed annually to maintain the trails in safe condition. Some tasks such as trash pick-up, drainage structure cleaning, plantings and other maintenance tasks can be completed by volunteers.

December, January and February

- Trails maintenance work in the winter months can continue dependent on weather conditions. Typical winter trail work may include:
 - Trash pick-up and removal.
 - Removal of dangerous trees or tree limbs.
 - Clearing free-hanging vines on trees in ROW
 - Minor repairs to trails (erosion repair, etc.)
 - Inspect and repair/replace signs, etc as needed.
 - Minor repairs to structures, fences, and bridge railings.
 - Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
 - Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

March

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Trail-wide inspection for winter damage. Schedule repair work over the next two to three months.
- Obtain bare-root and other tree and shrub plant materials for spring revegetation projects.
- Install spring plantings (continue into April.)
- Distribute / post information about major trail repair and expansion projects for the spring
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

April

- Bridge / Structure inspections (every other year) - staggered schedule
- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Complete tree and shrub plantings.
- Complete herbaceous and ground cover plantings.
- Begin major trail improvement project(s).
- Prepare and seed areas to prevent erosion.
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

May

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Complete spring plantings.
- First spraying of invasive species.
- Continue trail repair.
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Mow and trim (first time)
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

June

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Continue trail repair.
- Plan for fall planting.
- Removed downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of

vegetation

July

- *Trash pick-up and removal.*
- *Continue trail repair.*
- *Undertake second spraying of invasive species.*
- *Remove downed trees as required.*
- *Mow and trim (second time)*
- *Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required*
- *Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation*

August

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Continue trail repair.
- Distribute / post information about major trail repair and expansion projects for the fall
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

September

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Continue trail repair.
- Undertake third spraying of invasive species.
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Mow and trim (Third time)
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

October

- Trash pick-up and removal.
- Continue trail repair.
- Complete fall planting of balled and burlapped trees in “structured” areas (i.e. trail heads, picnic areas.)
- Plan for spring planting.
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

November

- Trash pick-up and removal.

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

- Continue trail repair.
- Remove downed trees as required.
- Keep drainage ways clear and clean out culverts as required
- Keep bridge deck surfaces clear and fencing/railing free of vegetation

Maintenance should not be deferred. Deferring maintenance for short-term savings is a faulty strategy with a poor chance of long-term success. Most funding agencies do not fund operational costs. If the trail quality deteriorates and does not provide a high quality recreation experience, it will lose popular support and thus funding. Maintenance costs will only increase and must be planned for by the Township and any management partners.

Operations and Security

As uses of each trail section increases, both operations and security of the trail will become somewhat easier. Initially, while trail use is low, there may be a greater occurrence of unwanted activity. Littering, vandalism and underage drinking are typical negative activities that occur on some trails. As runners, hikers, cyclists and other trail users populate the trail, they will become the eyes and ears of “authority”. Increasing numbers of trail users will have cell phones. People engaged in negative activities will not wish to be seen performing these activities and they usually will go elsewhere. This has been the general experience on trails across the country.

Trail users also help the township maintain and operate the trails. When there are problems, trail users notify the township about the issue. This is a beneficial process that leads to the smooth operation of the trail. It is important that municipal office phone numbers and e-mail addresses be posted at the various trail heads and trail connection access points as a part of trail signage.

There will inevitably be injuries that occur on the trail. The multi-purpose sections of the trail will be designed to be accessible by police vehicles and ambulances to deal with these occurrences. Municipal maintenance vehicles, such as pickup trucks, will also access the trail for periodic inspections or maintenance. Bollards, gates and other vehicular controls will keep out private motor vehicles.

Trail Partner Responsibilities

Shawnee Institute, Smithfield Township, The Multi-municipal Recreation Consortium, Monroe County, and the National Park Service are all potential trail management entities. The best solution may be a delineated division of

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

responsibilities among several or all partners. At the feasibility stage, the county or multi-municipal level of government appears best suited to take on the general management of a “regional recreation trail facility” such as the Shawnee Greenway. Such action would require a new commitment by Monroe County to consider the Shawnee Greenway as a “county-level park” facility. Monroe County would need to reconsider its personnel, budget and technical capabilities. Somerset is an example of a Pennsylvania County that acquired and manages the 42-mile segment of the Allegheny Highlands Trail as its “first county park”. Monroe currently has a recreation department, a roads department, and a county engineer that could all be tasked to take on trail management responsibilities – not without additional costs. Again, Somerset should be considered an example of a county that has enlisted multiple partners to help fund the design, construction and maintenance of its county park trail.

Phased Implementation Strategy

Shawnee Greenway Trail is developed in three (3) phases

Phase 1 – DWGNRA (McDade Trail) to Smithfield Township Park

This is a substantial segment of trail (approximately 2-3 miles) with five major bridges. A strong case can be made that with the NPS parking areas for the McDade Trail at the north and the Smithfield Township Park with parking and porta-johns to the south, that this segment becomes a discrete useable segment – regardless of timing for the 1-80 trail underpass construction

Phase 2 – Smithfield Township Park to PennDOT Welcome Center (via RR Station)

There are two options for this segment. One creates a permanent trail in the floodplain. The other uses a portion of the existing RR ROW on a limited basis – until the 1-80 underpass is built.

Negotiating a use agreement with Monroe County Rail Authority for one of the two tracks within the R.O.W on a limited-term basis is clearly a better option than investing in a trail within the flood plain that requires heavy maintenance, a new bridge with long approaches, and an isolated at-grade crossing of the MCRA active RR R.O.W. The flood plain route is a high-cost, high maintenance, higher liability option that becomes essentially obsolete when the I-80 trail underpass is completed.

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

Phase 3 – Smithfield Township Park to PennDOT Welcome Center (under I-80)

This ultimate phase needs to be made a priority by Monroe County and partners, and advanced by several avenues through design and construction.

Potential Funding Sources

Surface Transportation Program (STP):

Eligible projects include the construction of bicycle transportation facilities; construction of pedestrian walkways; bicycle safety brochures, maps and public service announcements. Any bicycle project must be primarily a transportation project and STP projects should encourage desirable traffic patterns. Additionally, STP projects should sensitize people to environmental and social concerns.

Ten percent of STP funds are set aside for Transportation Enhancements (TE). TE projects enhance the environs of the transportation network. STP projects are not required to demonstrate impacts on traffic or transit.

TEA-21 Enhancements (Update):

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) is a federal program that funds transportation related projects and is a direct successor to the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The bill allocated approximately \$217 billion nationwide over six years and includes funding for recreational trails and parks. In Pennsylvania, the Department of Transportation (PennDOT) administers several TEA-21 bicycle and pedestrian related programs. Grant awards in excess of \$1 million are not unreasonable for trail projects.

Typically, a non-federal match is required to be 20% of the grant award. A strategy preferred by PennDOT is to locally prepare construction documents and obtain necessary environmental clearances, property control documents and utility relocations plans as the local match for these “pre-construction” tasks so that the project is as ready as possible for construction bidding when funding is awarded. The costs to prepare these documents can be the non-federal match to the TEA-21 funds, and does not necessarily need to be exactly 20% if all needed documentation can be completed for less.

Legislative Funding:

State and federal elected officials can often include items into legislation for worthy projects in their districts. A conversation between county and municipal officials and legislators is the way to begin this process. This type of funding should be targeted toward capital improvement projects.

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

KEYstone Community Grant Program:

A bond issue approved in a statewide referendum initially funded this program. Perennial funding is through a dedicated percentage of the statewide real estate transfer tax.

Funding from the program is dedicated toward recreation, environmental, and cultural heritage resources throughout the state. Several agencies distribute funds through competitive grants, including: the PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Historic and Museum Commission, and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Trail projects are eligible in the DCNR funding application rounds annually (usually mid-October). State funds can be used for discrete projects or as a match to federal funds. DCNR requires a 50-50 match (cash or in kind) to its grant awards for trails.

DCNR - Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program:

This program provides funding to states to make grants for trail and trail-related projects. Funding to this program is provided to the Commonwealth through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Act (ISTEA) of 1991 which included the Symms National Recreational Trails Act (NRTA), and the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 (NHS Act).

The monies may be used for the development of urban trail linkages near homes and workplaces; maintenance of existing recreational trails; development of trail-side and trail-head facilities; provision of features which facilitate the access and use of trails by persons with disabilities; acquisition of easements for trails, or for trail corridors identified in a State trail plan; acquisition of fee simple title to property from a willing seller; and construction of new trails on state, county, municipal, or private lands. This fund can be used for motorized (snowmobile) trails.

PA Growing Greener:

The Growing Greener Program signed into law by Governor Tom Ridge in 1999 will invest millions over five years to preserve farmland and protect open space; eliminate the maintenance backlog in State Parks; clean up abandoned mines; restore watersheds; and provide new and upgraded water and sewer systems.

In 2002, the state legislature added additional monies to the program due to its great popularity. Four different agencies are involved in helping communities "grow greener" under the Environmental Stewardship & Watershed Protection Act: Departments of Environmental Protection, Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and PENNVEST. Of these four agencies, projects that may be applicable to the trail development will most likely be funded by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

6. Trail Implementation Strategy

The Act authorizes grants for acid mine drainage abatement, mine cleanup efforts, abandoned oil and gas well plugging and local watershed-based conservation projects. These projects can include: watershed assessments and development of watershed restoration or protection plans, implementation of watershed restoration or protection projects, stormwater management wetlands, riparian buffer fencing and planting, streambank restoration and agricultural BMPs. These grants are available to a variety of eligible applicants, including: counties, authorities and other municipalities; county conservation districts; watershed organizations; and other organizations involved in the restoration and protection of Pennsylvania's environment. These grants will support local projects to clean up “non-point” sources of pollution throughout Pennsylvania.

Since many of the proposed trails and greenways include areas along waterways, there will be many opportunities for re-establishment of riparian buffers. It may be possible to blend Growing Greener grants with other grants for trail construction. This funding source would be most applicable to greenway corridors along township creeks.

DCED Community Revitalization Funds:

The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) Community Revitalization Fund is a state program that supports local initiatives that improve the stability of communities and enhance local economies. The grant program covers a wide range of eligible uses including: acquisition of land, buildings, and right-of-ways; recreation projects; programs and developments that build capacity of the local community and relevant local organizations to better serve the needs of the community, and other reasonable and necessary expenses related to community-based activities. Active support of the district's state senator and / or state representative is critical in a successful grant application.