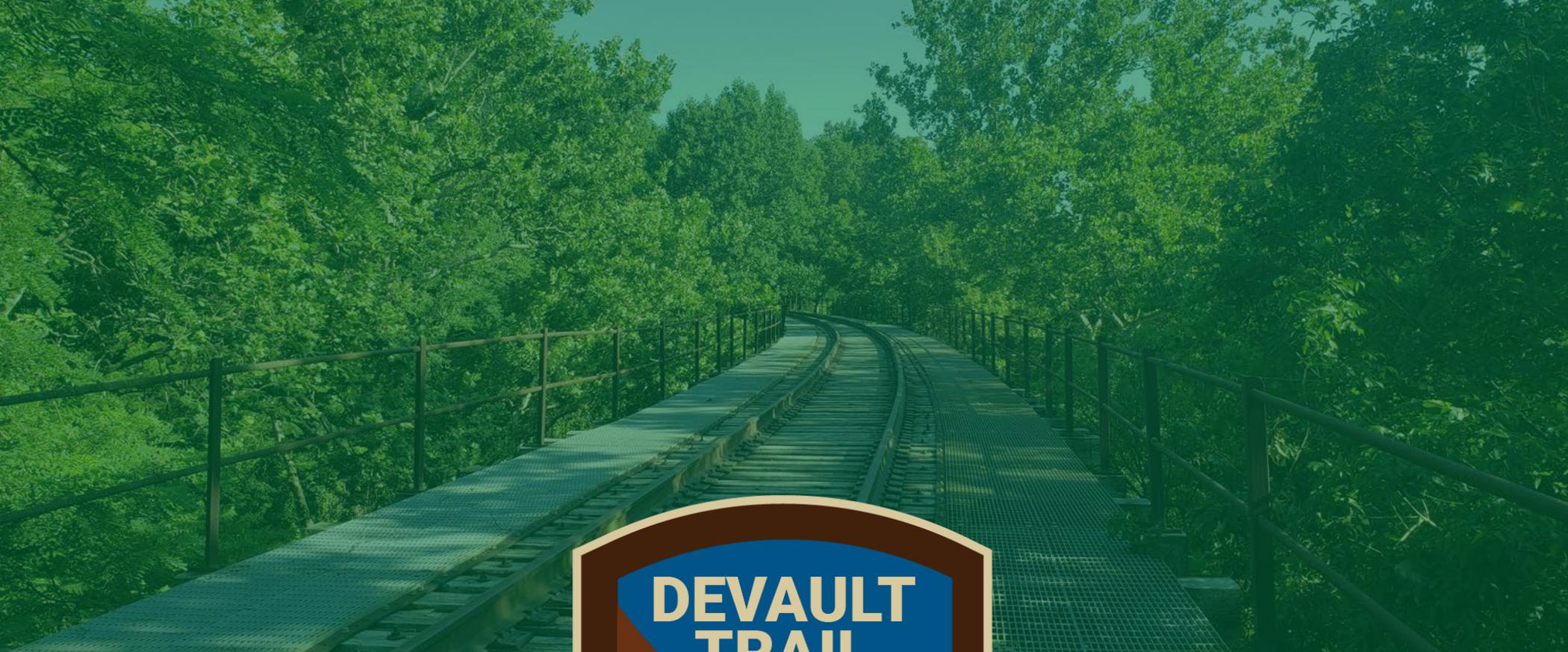




DEVAULT TRAIL ACTIVATION PLAN

FINAL REPORT, JUNE 2022



Prepared for:
Charlestown Township



Prepared by:
Transportation Management
Association of Chester County



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1. Introduction

THE TRAIL CORRIDOR

Of all the unbuilt trail connections in Chester County, Pennsylvania, the Devault Trail is perhaps the most important; one that could have a significant impact on future connectivity, livability, and transportation options in the region. The proposed Devault Trail—for which a feasibility study was already prepared in 2015—will utilize a six-mile, dormant freight-rail line to create a scenic pedestrian/bicycle connection between the Borough of Phoenixville to the north, and the office parks and corporate employment centers of Great Valley, located to the southwest, in East Whiteland Township.

Future Devault Trail

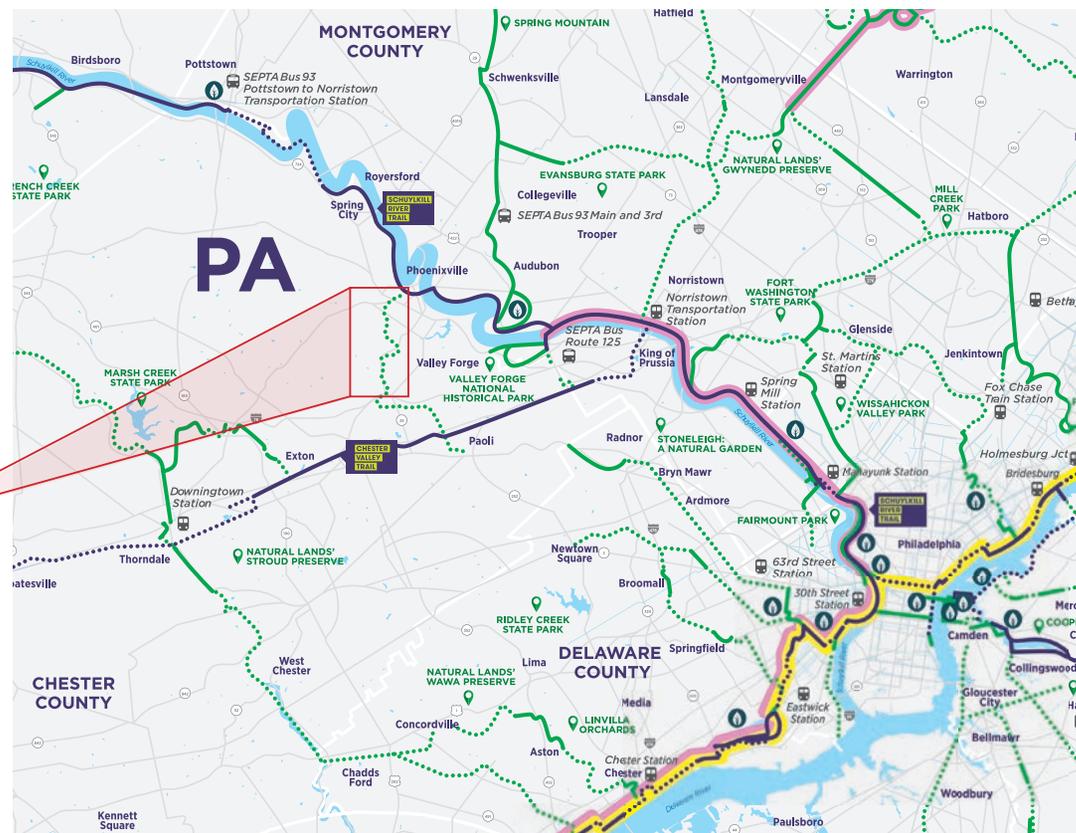


Figure 1: Circuit Trails Regional Context Map

MAP LEGEND

	Passenger Rail Stations		East Coast Greenway (ECG)
	Bus Stations		9/11 National Memorial Trail
	Watershed Education Centers		Existing Trails
	Parks		Trail Network Spines
			Trails in Progress
			Other Regional Trails



THE TRAIL CORRIDOR cont.

More importantly, the Devault Trail represents an opportunity to construct an alternate commuter corridor between one of the fastest-densifying communities in the Philadelphia suburbs (the population of Phoenixville is 17,000 and growing rapidly) and one of the largest concentrations of employers in the entire Delaware Valley (the daytime population of Great Valley, pre-COVID, was 60,000 people). Additionally, Phoenixville Pike, the road that runs parallel to the proposed Devault Trail, carries over 10,000 vehicles each day.

Thus, the Devault Trail corridor has the potential to remove single-occupancy vehicles from the road, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and greatly improve air quality. Moreover, the Devault Trail would connect to the existing Schuylkill River Trail in Montgomery County to the north and several existing or proposed Chester County trails to the south, including the Chester Valley Trail, the Warner Spur Trail, and the Patriots' Path. (With planned linkages, the Devault will provide a looped connection between the Schuylkill River Trail and the Chester Valley Trail.) The Trail also represents an opportunity to connect existing parks, recreational facilities, environmental areas, and schools/community facilities already located along the length of the Devault corridor.

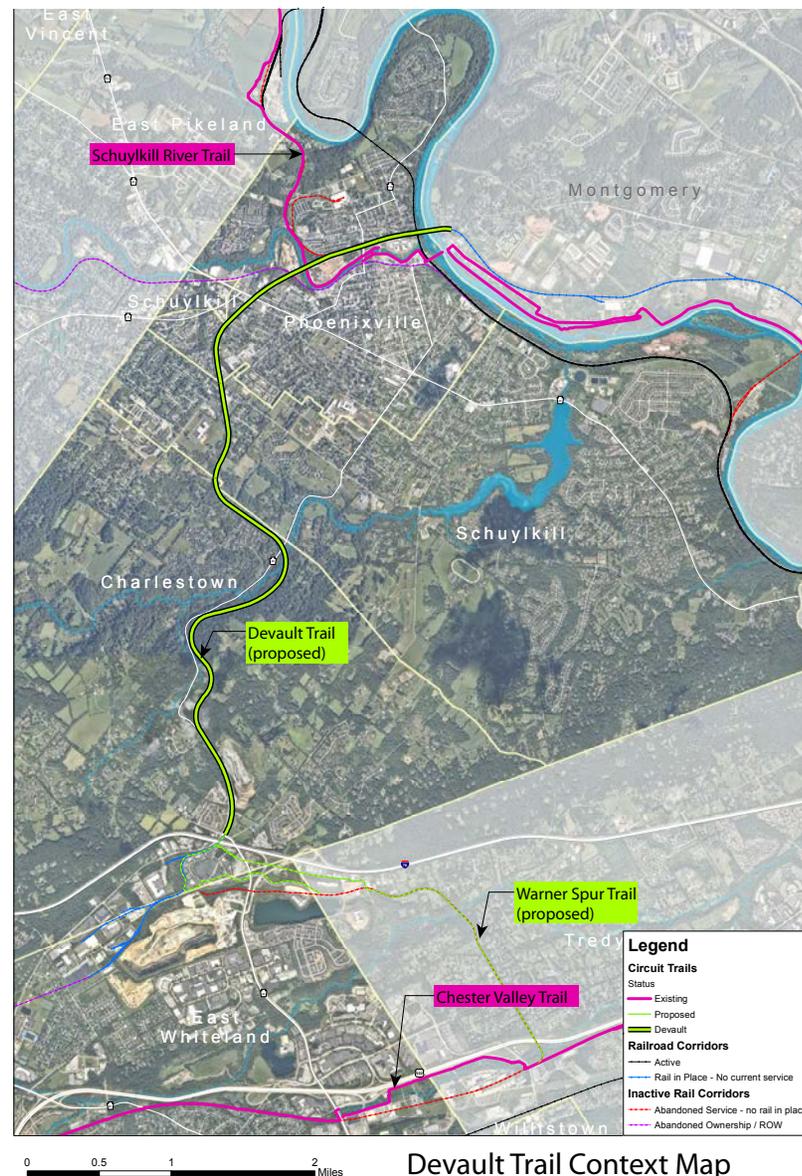


Figure 2: Devault Trail Vicinity Map



BUILDING UPON THE 2015 FEASIBILITY STUDY

This current “Activation Plan” builds upon a Feasibility Study for the Devault Trail that was commissioned in 2015 by Charlestown Township, and conducted by Campbell Thomas & Company and Ray Ott & Associates. The Study was funded through a Chester County Vision Partnership Program grant obtained by the Township. ([Link to Feasibility Study](#))

The 2015 Devault Trail Feasibility Study determined that building a trail on the existing rail bed would indeed be possible, and the best alignment would be one that most-closely followed the rail bed (as opposed to being placed on road). The Feasibility Study also determined that the most appropriate uses for the Devault Trail would be walking/running, cycling, and perhaps horseback riding (on a separate parallel path).

Knowing that the trail is feasible, and what the best uses for the path would be, this Activation Plan represents the next logical step in making the Devault Trail a reality. It seeks to answer one central question: if and when Norfolk Southern Railroad were to relinquish control of the rail line, what entities should be in place to acquire, own, and manage the [future] trail corridor?



“ What is known today as the Devault Branch is the northern portion of what the Pennsylvania Railroad built in 1883 as the Phoenixville Branch between the Main Line at Frazer and Phoenixville. To achieve the required grade to climb up to the Great Valley from the Schuylkill River, the line employed a great “S” curve coming out of Phoenixville, a significant and well-known curved trestle over Pickering Creek, and a shelf built into the forested hillside leading up to Devault. This all makes for a scenic trail with easy grades through otherwise hilly country.”

–Robert Thomas
Campbell Thomas and Co.



2. Activation Plan Methodology

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Figure 3: Trail Development Process lays out the basic stages in the development of the Devault Trail. As can be seen, the current Activation Plan is only the second of seven general stages in the overall process. It is also important to note that there will be opportunities for stakeholder and public input at every future step along the way. Funding for each stage shown in Figure 3 would be sought between phases.

PROJECT APPROACH

The project team's approach to the Devault Trail Activation Plan was to be as engaged, thorough, and collaborative as possible. This approach can best be summed up through the following seven steps:

- Examine comparable trail projects in our region and elsewhere.
- Conduct interviews with essential agencies and stakeholder groups.
- Study the existing demographics, economic conditions, and preferences in the corridor.
- Engage the Steering Committee throughout the project.
- Look at all combinations for trail acquisition, ownership, maintenance, and public safety.
- Determine the best and most feasible option(s) for the future Devault Trail.
- Engage the public.



Figure 3: Trail Development Process



STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As mentioned above, stakeholder and community involvement was one of the basic tenets of the project. Following is a brief synopsis of the primary groups involved in the Activation Plan process (along with the Project Team), and the roles played by each.

- **Project Steering Committee** – the Steering Committee was the principal advisory group for the project, and regular monthly or bi-monthly meetings were held for the entire length of the project. The Committee was made up of representatives from all four trail corridor municipalities, The Chester County Planning Commission, the Montgomery County Planning Commission, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, The Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Campbell Thomas & Co., and TMAAC. *(A list of names/affiliations of all Steering Committee members can be found in Appendix A.)* It is important to note that representatives from Norfolk Southern Railroad were contacted and interviewed early in the process, but that they declined the opportunity to serve as a member of the Steering Committee for the length of the project.
- **Trail Corridor Municipalities** – Along with being represented on the Project Steering Committee, elected officials and managers from four municipalities located along the trail corridor (East Whiteland Township, Charlestown Township, Schuylkill Township, and Phoenixville Borough) were briefed on the project at major milestones and were involved in both public meetings and outreach efforts. As the actual grant recipient, Charlestown Township was involved from grant inception through final acceptance of the Activation Plan by their Board of Supervisors.
- **Natural Lands Trust** – Trails and property acquisition specialists from NLT were consulted by the project team for their expertise in securing trail corridor land in the region, and for their potential role in the future acquisition of the Devault Trail corridor from Norfolk Southern Railroad.



“ The Devault Trail is an important connector between two of the Circuit Trail’s most important spines—the Schuylkill River Trail and the Chester Valley Trail, and it connects to important job centers and communities on either end. What’s more it will provide users access to some of the most beautiful countryside in Chester County. It’s a trail that offers it all!”

–Patrick Starr
Pennsylvania Environmental Council



STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT cont.

- **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)** – Representatives from PennDOT’s Office of Multimodal Transportation were consulted by the project team for their expertise in transportation corridor acquisition/ownership and possible state, county, and local sources of funding for alternative transportation infrastructure projects.
- **Chester County Planning Commission and Parks & Preservation Department** – Because of the importance of their role and expertise with trails in the region (including prior negotiations with Norfolk Southern Railroad for the Chester Valley Trail property), Chester County Planning Commission were not only part of the TMACC (consultant) project team, but were also represented on the project Steering Committee. Personnel from the Chester County Parks & Preservation Department were interviewed/consulted as part of the research into potential ownership and management structures for the future Devault Trail.
- **West Chester University** – In order to understand and map the current demographics, economic conditions, and preferences in the trail corridor, the Department of Geography and Planning at West Chester University was engaged by the project team. The department chair (and professor), along with two graduate assistants, contributed in-kind time to study housing, income, employment, population, health, and disposable income data in the Devault corridor, and how these conditions might be reflected in future support for a new trail.
- **Public Meetings and Outreach** – In order to promote greater awareness and involvement in the Devault Trail Activation Plan process, two (virtual) public meetings were held at critical junctures in the project: the first to introduce the project and review existing conditions along the corridor, and the second to set forth a “preferred plan” for the acquisition, ownership, and management of the Devault Trail. (*A summary of questions from the two meetings can be found in Appendix B.*) Homeowners, neighborhood associations, and stakeholder groups were also appraised of project progress (and people were able to reach out to the project team) through a special Devault Trail project web page on the regular TMACC website. Social media postings and U.S. Mail postcard meeting announcements were also used to promote both meetings to the public.



COMPARABLE PROJECTS

Following is a summary of four comparable trail projects that were studied by the Project Team for their potential applicability to the acquisition, ownership, and management of the Devault Trail. Research into these trails included interviews with current agency/municipal trail personnel at each location.

Schuylkill River Trail

The Schuylkill River Trail (SRT), which spans over 75 miles from downtown Philadelphia to Frackville, PA (north of Reading) is part of both The Circuit and the East Coast Greenway. It is significant not only because of its length and prominence in the Philadelphia region, but also because the [future] Devault Trail would link directly to the SRT north of Phoenixville in Montgomery County. Because the SRT was put together over such a long period of time and involved a former rail corridor (originally) and then the acquisition of private property (later), sections of the trail are owned and managed by different agencies and non-profit organizations including the Schuylkill River Development Corporation, the City of Philadelphia, Montgomery County, Chester County, the Borough of Phoenixville, and the Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area.



Schuylkill River Trail

Photo: Mark Henninger / Imagic Digital

Chester Valley Trail

The Chester Valley Trail (CVT), as of May 2022, is a 14.7 mile rail-trail that runs from King of Prussia through Great Valley to Exton, PA, with plans for a (future) seven-mile extension west to Downingtown. While it is owned in its entirety by Chester County, and 13.5 miles of it are managed by the same, part of the eastern portion of the trail fall within, and are managed by, Montgomery County. Like the Schuylkill River Trail, the CVT is part of The Circuit, and it is hoped that eventually all three trails (CVT, Schuylkill River, and Devault) will all be linked together in a continuous loop.



Chester Valley Trail

Photo: East Whiteland Township



COMPARABLE PROJECTS cont.

Saucon Rail Trail

The Saucon Rail Trail is a 7.5-mile trail located along a former rail line in the Lehigh Valley, southeast of Allentown, PA. First opened in 2011, it is owned and managed through a 30-year intergovernmental agreement between four municipalities (Upper and Lower Saucon Townships, Hellerton and Coopersburg Boroughs), which established the Saucon Rail Trail Oversight Commission. The Saucon Rail Trail is noteworthy not only because of its relative geographical nearness and comparable length to the Devault, but also because it spans the same number of municipalities (four). While the municipal partners share the administrative costs of the Trail/Commission, each municipality bears its own costs for maintenance and improvements within their jurisdictional limits.

Doodle Trail

Opened in 2015, the Doodle Trail occupies 8.4 miles of former rail bed in the northwestern corner of South Carolina. It represents a two-municipality partnership between the cities of Easley and Pickens, and while the two have a formal sharing arrangement, each municipality is responsible for taking care of maintenance on their respective parts of the trail. Similar in length to the Devault corridor, the Doodle Trail is also analogous because the right-of-way was owned by Norfolk Southern Railroad.



Saucon Rail Trail

Photo: donjarnis (Trailink.com)



Doodle Trail

Photo: Thomas E. Taylor



3. Activation Plan Recommendations

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Following is a summary of the recommendations being made for the future acquisition, ownership, and management of the Devault Trail. The project team took a comprehensive approach toward evaluating all possible combinations of management structures—these different configurations are illustrated in *Figure 4: Outline/Matrix of Potential Ownership and Management Structures on the following page*.

The columns in Figure 4 contain not only the agencies/organizations that would likely be involved in the establishment of the Devault Trail, but also the three most likely types of structures for the future management of the trail (municipal authority, inter-municipal agreement, and non-profit association). The rows in Figure 4 represent the different steps/stages in the acquisition, ownership, design, construction, maintenance, and patrol/policing of the trail.

Early in the evaluation process – after speaking with trail specialists, legal experts, and personnel involved with the comparable projects outlined in Section 2 – it became apparent that either a municipal authority, an inter-municipal agreement, or a non-profit association would be the most likely/appropriate management entity for the future Devault Trail. It also became clear that PennDOT, Natural Lands, and Chester County were all agencies/organizations that should be considered for roles in the trail development process (or even to take on the prime acquisition ownership, and/or management responsibilities themselves).

As mentioned previously, the project team took great care to evaluate all combinations for the future Devault Trail, taking the approach that each trail is unique and that not one model was necessarily appropriate to serve as the sole replica for a management entity. Additionally, the approach considered the possibility that completely different agencies/organizations could play roles in the process at different stages along the way. Figure 4 indicates which agencies/organizations are actually equipped to handle the tasks listed down the left side of the matrix, by designating each with a “yes” or a “no.” Further, Figure 4 designates (via the green shading) which entities are “recommended” by the project team to handle each task. Detailed explanations for recommendations at each task/step are also provided.

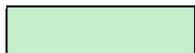


BACKGROUND RESEARCH cont.

Figure 4: Outline/Matrix of Potential Ownership and Management Structures

	PennDOT	Natural Lands	Chester County	Municipal Authority	Inter-Municipal Agreement	Non-Profit Association
Negotiation w/ Norfolk Southern R.R.	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Land Acquisition	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Purchase	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grant Sources	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Bond	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
Donation	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lease	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Land Ownership	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trail Design	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Construction	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maintenance	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tree	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trail Surface	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Management:	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trash	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trail Clean Up	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Snow Removal	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Policing	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Legend



= Recommended



EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Negotiation and Acquisition from Norfolk Southern Railroad

At the beginning of the Activation Plan project, TMAAC reached out to Norfolk Southern, who stated that they do not have a preference for which entity (or type of entity) might acquire the rail property. The railroad did make it clear that they only want to deal with one body/organization. Early in the project, TMAAC also reached out to representatives from Natural Lands, because of their experience with open space and rail corridor acquisition in the region (along with previous experience negotiating with Norfolk Southern Railroad and a willingness to get involved in the Devault project). It is for these reasons that we recommend Natural Lands take the lead in negotiating the purchase of the rail corridor. While other organizations (such as the Chester County Planning Commission) could assist in the process, including a title search that would naturally precede any negotiation and acquisition, Natural Lands would be the definite lead/point of contact in negotiating and acquiring the property.

Trail Ownership

While it is within the realm of consideration that one entity (such as Natural Lands or Chester County Parks & Preservation Department) could hold ownership of the trail corridor once it is acquired, it is the preferences of these organizations NOT to own the property. Additionally, after looking at examples of other trails in our region (and elsewhere) that abut more than one municipality, it became evident that it is common practice for municipalities to each hold ownership for the portion of trail within their jurisdiction. Further, it is important to acknowledge that each municipality can own a portion of the trail even if their funds were not involved in the purchase of the trail (i.e., if acquisition funds came from grant sources outside the municipalities).

We recommend that the Borough of Phoenixville, Schuylkill Township, Charlestown Township, and East Whiteland Township each hold ownership of the portion of the trail corridor in their respective jurisdictions.



EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS cont.

Trail Administration/Management

After close examination by the project team, we recommend an inter-municipal agreement between the four trail municipalities (the Borough of Phoenixville, and Schuylkill, Charlestown, and East Whiteland Townships). An inter-municipal agreement is the generic term for an agreement that specifies the joint provision of public services between two or more municipalities, who are normally but not necessarily neighbors (definition from Wikipedia). In Pennsylvania, a local government may enter into intergovernmental cooperation with or delegate any functions, powers or responsibilities to another governmental unit, local government or authority as defined in section 5602 (relating to definitions) upon the passage of an ordinance or resolution by its governing body. (From Pennsylvania General Assembly, Chapter 23 - Title 53.)

Not only would an intergovernmental agreement be the simplest management entity for the future Devault Trail, it is also the most logical choice, as the special taxing and borrowing capabilities of an authority are not needed (and avoids the extra layer of governmental “distance” created by using an authority).

Our recommendation is that an inter-governmental agreement between the four Devault municipalities take the form of a simple written document stipulating how trail management, maintenance, and public safety/policing would be done, along with how costs would be shared equitably between Phoenixville, Schuylkill, Charlestown, and East Whiteland.

The agreement would stipulate the makeup of a representative governing body (how many from each municipality along with other stakeholder groups to be included, if necessary), and how often the representative group would meet. (The body should meet at least once annually to address needs and to plan an annual maintenance schedule.)



EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS cont.

Trail Maintenance

First and foremost, we recommend that all four municipalities contribute (both financially and in-kind) for trail maintenance.

However, the options for how maintenance would actually be performed on the trail include the following, the final arrangement for which will have to be selected and agreed upon by the municipalities:

- A third-party maintenance contractor;
- A maintenance contract with one of the municipalities;
- All four municipalities could participate;
- Maintenance could be supplemented by volunteers (i.e., a “Friends of the Devault Trail” group).

Figure 5: Municipal Maintenance Checklist shows the range of all possible maintenance and trail upkeep needs, broken down into 1) Constant/Ongoing Needs (daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly) and 2) Long-Term Needs. The graphic is intended to give Phoenixville, Schuylkill, Charlestown, and East Whiteland an idea of the maintenance commitments that will need to be considered, no matter which maintenance arrangement for the trail is agreed upon/selected. It is also intended to be used by the trail municipalities when considering their annual budgetary cycles.

Figure 5: MUNICIPAL COMMITMENT CHECKLIST

1. Constant/Ongoing Trail Needs

- **Maintenance (Daily/Weekly)**
 - » Trash/Recycling Removal (Receptacles)
 - » Litter/Trash Pickup along Trail (Including Illegal Dumping)
 - » Storm Debris Cleanup
 - » Kiosk/Trail Head Upkeep
 - » Restrooms/Portable Toilets
 - » Vandalism Repair
 - » Snow Removal
- **Maintenance (Monthly/Yearly)**
 - » Mowing & Vegetation Management
 - » Tree Trimming/Removal
 - » Trail Repair/Patching/Sealing/Replacing Crushed Stone
 - » Maintenance of Trail Markings
 - » Maintenance/Repair of Trail Signage
 - » Fences & Bollards
 - » Bridge Inspection (Usually done biannually)
- **Public Safety**
 - » Regular Police Patrol
 - » Police/EMS/Fire Emergency Response

2. Long-Term Needs

- **Maintenance**
 - » Repair of Bridges & Culverts
 - » Trail Repaving
 - » Invasive Species Management
 - » Wildlife Habitat Creation
 - » Drainage Issues/Erosion Control



EXPLANATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS cont.

Public Safety/Policing/EMS

The safety of those using the [future] trail is of great concern to municipalities, potential trail users of the trail, and residents with properties directly adjacent to the corridor. After studying how public safety is handled on comparable trail projects and examining the individual situations in each of the four trail municipalities, we are recommending the following structure for policing on the Devault Trail:

- All four municipalities would share responsibility for public safety in their jurisdictions (or in the case of Charlestown Township, the Pennsylvania State Police);
- With mutual aid agreements, emergency response could overlap between municipalities;
- As with maintenance, a “Friends of the Devault Trail” group could help patrol the corridor. (It is important to note that a safe trail is created through regular patrolling of the corridor, and not simply by how well police/fire/EMS respond to emergency situations that arise. It is the combination of regular patrols and [potential] emergency response that make for the best possible scenario for the future Devault Trail).

“The Devault Trail will not only provide connectivity between two trail systems, but also off-road pedestrian access to areas in neighboring communities and extensive opportunities for exercise and nature enjoyment. It’s a critical component of our regional plan, requiring intergovernmental cooperation, so we’re pleased to have strong regional planning partnerships.”

–Susan Bednar
Charlestown Township Board of Supervisors



4. Next Steps

While Figure 3 illustrates how the current Activation Plan fits into the basic framework of steps/projects to develop a trail, there are some basic, necessary, smaller actions that the Devault Trail municipalities can take to move the entire project along.

These include the following actions:

- Establish a formal working group to put the inter-municipal agreement together;
- Complete title search for the rail corridor property (or properties);
- Engage Natural Lands to begin negotiations with Norfolk Southern Railroad and draw up a letter of intent;
- Identify funds/grants for land purchase;
- Begin a master development plan for the trail. Potential funding sources include the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and the Chester County Vision Partnership Program Grant.



“ There are a lot of people eager to see this project move forward.”

–Charlestown Township resident
From public meeting held on 6-15-21

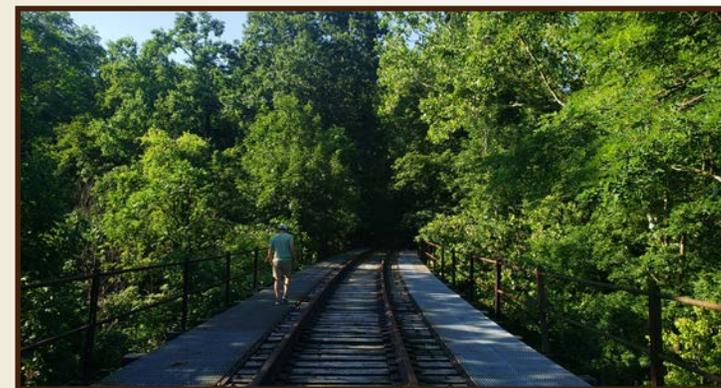


5. Conclusion

The Devault Trail is a historic opportunity to make a multi-modal connection between the population centers of Phoenixville Borough and Great Valley. Not only does this rail corridor represent a tremendous future recreational and commuting opportunity, but an unparalleled scenic and environmental resource for the region as well. Moreover, the path would be the next logical “spoke” in the Philadelphia-area trail circuit, by connecting the existing Schuylkill River Trail to the north and several existing or proposed Chester County trails to the south, including the Chester Valley Trail, the Warner Spur Trail, and the Patriots’ Path.

This Activation Plan, while only one step in the trail formation process, is a significant one. Besides setting forth recommendations for the appropriate groups (and structure) to acquire, own, and manage the future trail, it serves as a catalyst for the immediate next stages in the process: the formation of a working group for the inter-municipal agreement and the property research and engineering steps (outlined in the previous section) that continue to push the trail project forward.

So that the overall progression does not languish, and to capitalize on public awareness and support generated by this current planning effort, we strongly urge the Devault Trail municipalities and stakeholder groups involved in the Activation Plan process to follow up on the recommendations contained in this report in a timely manner.



“ In Chester County, the Devault Trail is perhaps the most highly anticipated connection for the future of the regional Circuit Trails network. Right now, there are over 360 miles of Circuit Trails in the Greater Philadelphia area. Once this critical gap is completed, it will provide improved multi-modal transportation options, for all, throughout the region.”

–Patrick Monahan
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia



Appendices



Appendix A: **STEERING COMMITTEE AND PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS**

Steering Committee

Linda Csete, *Manager*, Charlestown Township

Michael Churchill, *Planning Commissioner*, Charlestown Township

Zach Barner, *Director of Planning and Development*, East Whiteland Township

Steve Brown, *Director of Codes & Life Safety*, East Whiteland Township

E.J. Mentry, Jr., *(former) Manager/Treasurer*, Schuylkill Township

Susan Guerette, *Board of Supervisors*, Schuylkill Township

Bill Hartman, *Trails & Open Space Planner*, Montgomery County

Bob Thomas, *Partner*, Campbell Thomas & Company

Ed Theurkauf, *Planner*, Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee

Patrick Starr, *Executive Vice President*, Pennsylvania Environmental Council

Patrick Monahan, *Regional Organizer*, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia

Project Team

P. Timothy Phelps, *Executive Director*, TMACC

Jonathan Ewald, *Manager of Corporate & Community Outreach*, TMACC

John Meisel, *Manager of Transportation Operations & Planning*, TMACC

Rachael Griffith, *Sustainability Director*, Chester County Planning Commission

Brian Styche, *Environment and Infrastructure Director*, Chester County Planning Commission

Gary Coutu, *Department Chair and Professor*, West Chester University Department of Geography and Planning

Madison Schettig, *Graduate Assistant*, West Chester University Department of Geography and Planning

Jacob Winger, *Graduate Assistant*, West Chester University Department of Geography and Planning

Phoenix Media Group (PMG)



Appendix B: **SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS & COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS 1 AND 2**

Questions/Comments from Public Meeting/Open House #1 Held on June 15, 2021

1. Who, ultimately, would be accountable for trail safety, policing, trash pickup, and maintenance on a daily basis?
2. Who will be responsible for monitoring and policing the trail for misuse?
3. Will there be trash receptacles along the trail? If so, how often will they be cleaned? If not, who will be responsible for the trash along the trail?
4. Will there be emergency phones along the trail to request help?
5. Since parts of the trail are adjacent to residential properties, what will be done to protect their privacy and property?
6. Concerning the possible price of the trail property, what is the status of the evaluation of Norfolk Southern book value (historically used by railroads) versus the appraised value currently used by in the real estate development and conservation professions?
7. How many years out are we from actually seeing the trail open, assuming that everything goes somewhat smoothly from this point forward?
8. Best case scenario, when will the trail be paved and ready to go?
9. Once an entity is formed for trail ownership, a committee will also need to be formed to grapple with public safety/trail safety issues, as the project goes through engineering.
10. Does the proposed Devault Trail and the Warner Spur have strategic value environmentally and politically in the overall regional trail network?
11. How will the trail connect to other sites and parks within East Whiteland Township?
12. Do you have a ballpark estimate of what the cost of acquiring the right of way and developing the trail will be?
13. What is the price tag and where will funding come from?
14. Why was the rail line service between Phoenixville and Devault abandoned?
15. Is the rail line actually “abandoned” or is it officially listed as “inactive?”
16. When was the last time that the railroad performed maintenance on the line?
17. What will happen to the rest of the rail line that goes from Mont Clare to the Oaks marketplace? Can the Devault Trail extend to there?
18. Would the federal Rails to Trails Act be used to develop the trail, and what would that do? If not officially abandoned, could the Act help convert the corridor to trail use to avoid the conversion of rights?



Questions/Comments from Public Meeting/Open House #1 Held on June 15, 2021 cont.

19. Chester County Parks Department has a good record maintaining trails such as the Chester Valley and Schuylkill River Trails. What are the barriers to Chester County owning, maintaining, and patrolling the Devault Trail?
20. When will engineering and design of the trail be initiated? What are the requisite conditions to initiate this? Have the rail bed and bridges been inspected yet?
21. What are some of the positive impacts/benefits of trail development (for residents/adjacent property owners)?
22. What will be the impacts to property values, environmental concerns, and the safety of families along the trail corridor?
23. What about “just compensation” for the landowners that Norfolk Southern Railroad acquired easements from, or even right of way agreements?
24. The recently published Chester County Return on Environment document addresses property values near trails (<https://www.chescoplanning.org/openspace/roe.cfm>)
25. I am a cyclist who regularly rides both the Schuylkill River Trail and the Chester Valley Trail, and I am happy to hear this trail is moving forward. At the same time, I am an environmental advocate and worry about the impact of trail construction through wetlands and mature natural habitat, which I know to be home to dozens of bird species, several species of mammals, tree frogs, turtles, and more. The area through which the Devault tracks run along the Willborne Acres neighborhood to--and along--Buckwalter Road buttress an intermittent tributary to Pickering Creek. That land is listed in the Chester County Landscapes Map as “significant natural landscape: [that is] protected by regulations or should be subject to limited disturbance. Conservation practices protect and restore these natural resources.” Furthermore, Map 3 of the 2019 Regional Comprehensive Plan designates that same area as “Hydric Soils and Wetland”, and the Future Land Use Map (Map 2-2) on the 2008 Regional Comprehensive Plan lists the same area as a “Natural Conservation Area”. Finally, if my recollection is correct, an environmental survey done in preparation for a potential sale of land adjacent to the tracks by the Pennsylvania Department of Education Chester County Intermediate Unit (Technical College High School—Pickering Campus) designated that area in which the Devault tracks as protected wetland.
 - Have the agencies responsible for this trail's development contracted an environmental study to be conducted; and, if so, where can a copy of that study's results be found?
 - Have the agencies responsible for this trail development considered purchasing land from the PDE IU (Technical College High School—Pickering Campus) property just west of the Willborne Acres neighborhood to route the trail away from the wetlands so that the trail does not run through them; if not, why not?



Questions/Comments from Public Meeting/Open House #1 Held on June 15, 2021 cont.

- What are the responsible agencies doing to ensure that the area in question is “subject to limited disturbance?”
 - Will the responsible agencies be installing natural and native-plant privacy screening where the trail buttresses residential property? If not, why not?
 - Have the appropriate agencies notified or solicited input directly and deliberately from the residents of Willborne Acres; and, if so, when was that input solicited and what were the findings?
 - Thank you for your work on making this trail happen while also ensuring minimal disruption to wetlands, mature natural habitat, natural water sources, and the natural life that depends on those environments.
26. Please make sure the bridge over 29 is a destination with benches, planters & really good safety fencing and conspicuous security cameras.
27. There are a lot of folks eager to see the project move forward.
28. What can we do to advocate for this trail?
29. Looking forward to progress on this trail. Thanks for the open house and keep up the good work.

Questions/Comments from Public Meeting/Open House #2 Held on April 28, 2022

1. When was Norfolk Southern Railroad engaged in process, and what will contact with them look like moving forward?
2. Were the Circuit Trails Coalition and other trails groups involved in the planning process?
3. Is eminent domain under consideration for the acquisition of the rail corridor?
4. Where will the start of the trail construction be?
5. What are the immediate next steps for acquisition of the trail corridor?
6. How long will it take until the trail actually opens for use?
7. Since the Chester Valley Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail are County owned, why is an inter-municipal agreement being considered for the Devault Trail? Why won't Chester County take ownership?
8. How is the trail being viewed as a transportation/commuting resource? (Besides just recreational use.)
9. Why isn't Chester County interested. Wouldn't it be easier for participating municipalities to contribute funds to the County?
10. Would it be possible to extend the Devault Trail across Route 29 on the southern end? Is it a Norfolk Southern issue?