



An Unexpected Destination



Public Meeting/Workshop #2 – SECRET VALLEY TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY (BOYERTOWN BOROUGH / BUILDING A BETTER BOYERTOWN)

Minutes – Public Meeting/Workshop #2

Meeting Date: Tuesday, October 1st, 2019 7:00pm-8:30pm

Meeting Location: Boyertown Borough Hall (100 South Washington St., Boyertown PA 19512)

Distribution Date: October 3rd, 2019

Attendance

- See Attached Attendance Sheet

Review & Comment:

I. INTRODUCTIONS

1. Adrienne Blank of Building a Better Boyertown (BBB), welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the second Public Meeting/Workshop for the Secret Valley Trail Feasibility Study. Adrienne introduced the project design team.
2. Bob Thomas from Campbell Thomas & Co. asked the audience to briefly introduce themselves before going over the workshop agenda for the evening. The agenda consisted of a review of the project and status update, a brief PowerPoint presentation, followed by small group break-out workshops and a questionnaire, before reporting back to the larger group for an open discussion.
3. In addition to the questionnaire and agenda, several maps had been distributed to tables throughout the room. These consisted of:
 - a. Map A – Base Map
 - b. Map B – Trail Alignment Alternatives
 - c. Map D – Loop Trail Map (inclusive to Colebrookdale Twp. and Boyertown Borough)
 - d. Map E – Interim On-Road Signed Route
 - e. Map F – Proposed Off-Road Trail Route

II. PROJECT SLIDESHOW

4. Bob Thomas went through a short slide show presentation to discuss the project scope, past studies and connections and the planning process that has taken place so far for the Secret Valley Trail Feasibility Study.
5. Past studies identifying a connection between Boyertown and Pottstown included a 1932 Map of the Proposed Regional System of Parks and Parkways. More recent studies included the Circuit Trails System Map, the Montgomery County Trail Network Map, The Berks County Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, and the more recent Greater Pottstown Trail

Feasibility Study that was recently completed.

6. Bob Thomas discussed the limitations of the Colebrookdale Railroad Company right-of-way within land owned by the Redevelopment Authority. The corridor is a single-track railroad, with numerous single-track bridges that would not be able to accommodate the trail while it is in operation. Recognizing these limitations, other trail corridors in the study area were identified.
7. Following background research and analysis as well as several sight visits, both an eastern and western trail corridor was identified, as well as a few smaller loop trail connections. These have been reviewed and refined throughout the planning process.
8. Utilizing information gathered from the the research and analysis process, several steering committee meetings, public workshop #1, small group meetings with each municipality in the study area, discussions with PennDOT, and several key person interviews, it became evident that the eastern trail corridor to connect Boyertown to Murgia Park was the preferred route.
9. Bob Thomas went through several presentation slides to show the conditions and potential recommendations for the Eastern Route between Murgia Park and Boyertown Borough. Beyond Murgia Park, the trail would link to the Manatawny Trail corridor that is being pursued in Pottstown.
10. The general off-road trail corridor will head north from Murgia Park at Manatawny St., through Goose Run Park, and on to Levensgood Rd. It would then connect along the Colebrookdale Rd. corridor as either a sidepath and/or field edge trail at the County line to Farmington Ave. It was acknowledged that this would require landowner negotiation. The trail would cross Farmington Ave. at Colebrookdale Rd. and follow field edges and the wooded hillside to tie into the southern end of Furnace Hill Rd. Following Furnace Hill Rd., the trail crosses Mill St. and continues north into "Camp on Cannon Hill" and Boyertown Community Park. It was noted that the trail will likely follow the edge of Boyertown Park, as the existing trails are walking only. Beyond the park, it will continue on-road using trail signage and "sharrows" along Front Street and Washington St. to the Colebrookdale Railroad Park and the business community on Philadelphia Ave.
11. Bob Thomas went over the maps located at each table, noting that project development phasing will be recommended as part of the study. Phasing might include an initial Loop Trail that will connect Boyertown Borough and Colebrookdale Township and will tie into the future trail corridor connecting to Pottstown.
12. Also discussed was an interim on-road route that could be a signed bicycle route. This interim route will help to build a trail user contingent and provide a base corridor that can be built upon to develop a fully off-road alignment.
13. A longer term, but preferred off-road trail alignment map was also discussed.
14. Before breaking into smaller workshop tables, Bob Thomas went over the project schedule, noting that the team is continuing with landowner interviews through the end of October, while also finalizing a preferred alignment. A Draft Report will be prepared by the end of the year, and finalized by the end of February, following a final study committee meeting. The Final Report should be complete in time to apply to the spring 2020 round of grants from DCED & GTRP.

III. PUBLIC WORK SESSION

15. Bob Thomas referred everyone to the maps that were distributed to three workgroup tables, as well as a questionnaire that attendees received upon their arrival.
16. A team member was available to answer questions and discuss the alignment at each workshop table. Questionnaires were completed by attendees and feedback was reported to the larger group following the smaller group discussions.
17. Key points from each work group are as follows:
 - a. Table 1 discussed the interconnecting trails planned throughout the region and the

need for trail gaps to be filled in. These trail connections are key for bicycle commuting, as well as for recreational use. Bob Folwell of the Schuylkill River Greenways currently commutes from Gilbertsville to Pottstown for work and could utilize the Secret Valley Trail to commute by bicycle.

- b. The electric bike movement was mentioned as an option to increase the user base and to address concerns for hills in the area.
- c. A resident on Farmington Ave. has horses and was hoping there would be a trail corridor that equestrians could utilize along the Colebrookdale Railroad corridor, similar to the experience found on the Perkiomen Trail. The horse owner is currently landlocked and has to trailer horses to the trail network in Green Lane. It would be nice to access equestrian friendly trails, without the need to trailer the horses. The horse owner is looking to develop a local network of private equestrian trails for local horse owners in her neighborhood but would also like to connect to the Secret Valley Trail.
- d. Connecting bicycle trails to trains was also discussed. Amtrak now allows full size bicycles on many of its trains, but this was not always the case. Bob Thomas once had to sneak his fold-up bike in a bag onto the train before it was allowed.
- e. Connecting to the historic train station in Pottstown should be looked into. Some predict that passenger service will return to the line between Reading and Philadelphia in the future.
- f. It was noted that bicycle tour groups occasionally come through Boyertown and spend the night. Attracting these groups to utilize the Secret Valley Trail and Colebrookdale Railroad should be pursued.
- g. It was noted that the Redevelopment Authority recently purchased land at 2nd and Chestnut St. for use as a rail yard. The loop trail being shown on the "Loop Map" should be directed around the new railyard.
- h. The water treatment facility adjacent to the railroad at Mill St. was discussed is a good opportunity for a trail boardwalk. This may even evolve into a place for a bird observatory or a nature center.
- i. The steep hill behind Camp on Cannon Hill is already used by a number of local mountain bikers who have agreements with property owners to develop a network of single-track mountain bike trails which the mountain bikers maintain. Working to bring a multi-use trail to connect with these trails could be a great opportunity/connection. The mountain bike network may even serve as a new destination that could be improved through public funding.

IV. ADJORNMENT / FINAL COMMENTS

1. After receiving feedback from the small table discussions and questionnaires were collected, Bob Thomas asked if there were any additional comments and went over the next steps to take place as part of this feasibility study.
2. Bob Thomas and Adrienne Blank thanked everyone for their information and asked that they feel free to contact Building a Better Boyertown or the Consulting Team with any further information, questions, or comments.
3. Following the meeting, ongoing discussion continued with those who were interested.

The above constitutes CTC's interpretation of the meeting and will become part of the permanent record unless corrected by any of the parties within five (5) days of the distribution date.