Meeting Minutes

Bellefonte Central Rail Trail Feasibility Study
Public Meeting Two
Meeting Date and Time: 6:30 pm, June 4, 2008
Meeting Location: Benner Township Elementary School

Attendees:

Ted Pruss  Paul Rito
Arlene Pruss  Doug Erickson
Kim Gasper  Paul Simpson
Gilbert Gummo  Jay Stetson
Mike Shamalla  Anne Denahy
Don Holderman  Sue Hannegan, Centre County
Carol Gay  Department of Planning and Development
Fred Gay  Beth Rider, Centre County
Chuck Anderson  Department of Planning and Development
Jon Eich  John Buerkle, Pashek Associates
Jude Simpson
Debbie Cleeton
Randy Getting
Trish Meek

The following represents a brief review of discussions held during the above meeting:

1.1  Buerkle thanked everyone for attending this evening’s meeting. He indicated that this project was the vision of six municipalities that the former Bellefonte Central Rail Trail corridor passes through. Buerkle indicated this was the second of two meetings. The first meeting was held earlier in the process to discuss the proposed project, and to: identify whether there is property owner support; and what concerns or issues property owners may have regarding the proposed project.

1.2  Buerkle indicated the proposed trail is a vision of Bellefonte and State College Boroughs, and Patton, Benner, Spring, College and Ferguson Townships.

Those municipalities asked the County for assistance in determining if it would be feasible to build a shared-use trail from State College to Bellefonte. The County applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for funding, the grant application was approved, and
the County hired Pashek Associates to complete the study. Rider then introduced John Buerkle from Pashek Associates.

1.3 Buerkle reviewed the agenda for the meeting:

1. Explain what steps are involved in a feasibility study.
2. Review of demand analysis completed for the proposed trail.
3. Present the recommendations resulting from the feasibility study.
4. Answer questions attendees may have regarding the proposed recommendations.
5. Discuss next steps in the process.

1.4 Buerkle provided a brief background on the trail as follows:

- Trail development has begun on the PSU Arboretum property.
- Public access has been verbally committed by:
  - Spring-Benner-Walker Joint Authority for 4.1 miles of the former corridor
  - Approximately 3.72 miles through Toftrees and associated properties
- Corridor is held by private land owners along Stevenson Road and along Buffalo Run Road to Armagast Road.
- Some land owners along the former corridor are not supportive of the proposed trail.

1.5 Buerkle indicated the proposed trail could provide many benefits to the region in the areas of:

- Health and Wellness
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Economic Development

1.6 Next, Buerkle reviewed the results of the demand analysis that were completed for this study.

- Demand - 163,000 residents within 15 mile radius of proposed trail
  76,056 residents in the communities the proposed trail would pass through
- Growth rate of the corridor communities, 16%, and Centre County, 9.7%, well exceeds the state average of less than 4%

Our analysis projects there would be approximately 429,000 visits per year to the proposed trail.

1.7 Buerkle then reviewed the potential economic impact of the proposed trail on the region utilizing the results of studies completed along other similar trails including:
York County Heritage Rail Trail, Pine Creek Trail, Northern Central Railroad Trail, Great Allegheny Passage, and the Oil Region Alliance Trail Utilization Study.

Buerkle noted the projected economic impact is based on soft good sales, and hard good sales. Soft goods sales are typically split between trail region and point of origin and hard goods sales are typically spent at point of origin.

### Projected Soft Good Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft Goods</th>
<th>Projected Annual Trips</th>
<th>Percent Making Purchase</th>
<th>Average Expenses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soft Goods</td>
<td>429,000</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>$12.76</td>
<td>$4,050,790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Projected Annual Hard Good Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hard Goods</th>
<th>Projected Annual Trips</th>
<th>Percent Making Purchase</th>
<th>Average Expenses</th>
<th>Average Life (Years)</th>
<th>Ave. No. of Trips</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Goods</td>
<td>429,000</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>$367</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>$2,798,548</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.8 Buerkle indicated close proximity to a rail-trail will generally raise property values by 6-10%. Buerkle noted the May / June 2008 issue of the Penn Stater included an advertisement for the OpeQuon Hill development which was marketing “direct access to future bike path to State College.”.

1.9 Buerkle indicated that through the feasibility study process he has identified various alignments of the trail as:

- **Feasible** – meaning aspects of the alignment and corridor are generally favorable for trail development.
  - General support of property owner(s)
  - May require acquisition of easements for trail development

- **Not Feasible** – meaning aspects of the alignment and corridor are generally not favorable for trail development
  - Land owner opposition
  - Conflict with other uses
  - Environmental constraints

1.10 Buerkle indicated that the anticipated uses on the proposed trail would be non-motorized and include:

a.) Walking
b.) Hiking
c.) Biking
d.) Jogging

Buerkle noted that motorized uses would not be permitted and the trail would be designed in a manner to prohibit access to it with motorized vehicles such as ATVs and snowmobiles.

1.11 Buerkle began by presenting an overview of the feasibility recommendations for each section of the proposed trail:

- Phase I
  - Phase Ia - Upper Gyp Road to Coleville Park – Feasible
  - Phase Ib - Upper Gyp Road to Buffalo Run Community Park – Feasible

- Phase II
  - Phase IIa - Montauk Circle Extension – Feasible
  - Phase IIb - Village at Penn State through Toftrees – Feasible

- Phase III
  - Phase IIIa - Bellefonte Loop North – Feasible
  - Phase IIIb - Bellefonte Loop South – Feasible

- Phase IV - Toftrees West to Lower Julian Pike Trail Access – Feasible

- Phase V - Lower Julian Pike Trail Access to Buffalo Run Community Park – Currently Not Feasible

1.12 Buerkle further reviewed each phase in further detail while referring to mapping of the corridor.

a) Phase Ia - Upper Gyp Road to Coleville Park - 2.40 Miles

- Corridor held by Spring-Benner-Walker Joint Authority
- Requires formal agreement with Graymont for Coleville Park
- Requires agreement with Graymont for temporary trail access point at Upper Gyp Road

b) Phase IIb – Upper Gyp Road to Buffalo Run Community Park – 2.00 miles

- Majority of corridor held by Spring-Benner-Walker Joint Authority to Armagast Road
- Easements required from property owners between Armagast Road and Park
- Design process must include property owners between Armagast Road and Buffalo Run Community Park to address issues and concerns
- Provide screening and fencing to reduce impact of trail on residences
- Requires PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit for Armagast Road crossing
c) Phase IIa – Montauk Circle Extension – 1.06 miles
- Majority of property held by investors
- Additional private property owner
- Easements required from property owners
- Property likely developed as future phases of Toftrees
- Follows former rail corridor to Montauk Circle - Cedar Cliff neighborhood
- Easement for trail exists at Montauk Circle

d) Phase IIb – Village at Penn State through Toftrees – 4.50 miles
- Majority of existing Toftrees Development
- Some properties held by investors
- Easements required from property owners

e) Phase IIIa – Bellefonte Loop North – 1.70 miles
- Portion of proposed trail on Graymont property - requires easement
- Some portions of proposed trail on private properties - requires easements
- Portions of trail within existing public right-of-ways or on unopened streets
- Connects to Downtown Bellefonte, Industrial Heritage District, and Tallyrand Park
- Consistent with recommendations of Bellefonte Waterfront Master Plan

f) Phase IIIb - Bellefonte Loop South – 1.68 Miles
- Some portions of proposed trail on private properties - requires easements
- Portions of trail within existing public right-of-ways or on unopened streets
- Trail through Spring Creek Nature Park
- Connects to Downtown Bellefonte, Industrial Heritage District, and Tallyrand Park
- Consistent with recommendations of Bellefonte Waterfront Master Plan

g) Phase IV – Toftrees West to Lower Julian Pike – 1.06 miles
- Property held by Toftrees and investors
- Property likely developed as future phases of Toftrees
- Lower Julian Pike Road to be improved to accommodate trail

h) Phase V – Lower Julian Pike to Buffalo Run Community Park
- Corridor goes through private property
- Property owners generally not supportive of trail

1.13 Buerkle then reviewed a summary of the projected construction costs for the proposed trail:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Opinion of Probable Constructio n Cost</th>
<th>Ave. Cost L.F.</th>
<th>Implementation Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ia</td>
<td>Upper Gyp Road to Coleville Park</td>
<td>$764,228</td>
<td>$60.41</td>
<td>Multi-Municipal Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Buffalo Run Community Park to Upper Gyp Road</td>
<td>$1,381,335</td>
<td>$130.81</td>
<td>Multi-Municipal Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIa</td>
<td>Village at Penn State</td>
<td>$409,176</td>
<td>$31.89</td>
<td>Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIb</td>
<td>Montauk Circle Extension</td>
<td>$252,182</td>
<td>$45.28</td>
<td>Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIa</td>
<td>Bellefonte Loop North</td>
<td>$1,151,900</td>
<td>$127.56</td>
<td>Multi-Municipal Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIIb</td>
<td>Bellefonte Loop South</td>
<td>$1,782,178</td>
<td>$201</td>
<td>Multi-Municipal Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Toftrees West to Lower Julian Pike Access Point</td>
<td>$654,370</td>
<td>$116.54</td>
<td>Developer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Julian Pike Trail Access to Buffalo Run Community Park</td>
<td>Currently Not Feasible</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Currently Not Feasible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Cost** $6,395,369

1.14 Buerkle then reviewed a summary of the financial implantation strategies:

Based on this scenario if seven municipalities participate in each of the seven phases:

- The per municipality cash match required per phase averages approximately $22,000.
- The per municipality in-kind services match required per phase is approximately $17,000.

1.15 Buerkle then reviewed a projection of the estimated operation, maintenance, and security costs. This estimate projects it would cost an average of $4,535 per mile to provide these services for the trail if they could not be provided by volunteers.

Buerkle indicated the model for operation, maintenance, and security is that volunteers support most of the requirements at no cost. Municipalities typically provide materials, equipment, and in-kind labor as needed, above and beyond the abilities of volunteers. The per mile cost above assumes no volunteer participation.

Buerkle noted that the University provides a tremendous pool of potential volunteers. Furthermore organizations like the Centre Region Bike Coalition can assist.

Typical volunteer programs include Adopt-a-Trail programs, Quarterly Trail Clean-ups, Community Service projects, and community service to satisfy judicial penalties as established through the county court system.

1.16 Buerkle indicated that everyone involved wants the trail to be a good neighbor to adjacent property owners. To that end he recommends various design elements to respond to land owner concerns along the proposed trail. These include:

a.) Plantings – to screen the views from the trail to rear windows of homes, where necessary.
b.) Signage – “Stay on Trail” and “Respect Private Property”.
c.) Control Points – to limit access onto and off of the trail.
d.) Fences – to limit access off of the trail corridor where safety concerns are present on adjacent property.

1.17 Buerkle stated that final design of the trail must take into consideration concerns of adjacent property owners and that those concerns must be addressed in the final design.

1.18 Buerkle then discussed the proposed management structure for the trail. He recommends a public component and private component.

a.) Centre County Greenways and Trails Coalition
   Public Component - Decision Making Body
   - Provides access to government funding
   - Acquires property and easements
   - Holds property and easements
   - Ensures consistent development throughout corridor
   - Insures for general liability of trail
   - Provides routine maintenance
   - Provides law enforcement
b.) Friends of Centre County Greenways and Trails  
   Private Non-Profit Component - Advisory Role  
   - Provides access to foundation and corporate giving  
   - Organizes and conducts fundraisers  
   - Organizes volunteers  
   - Assists with property and easement acquisition  
   - Coordinating the promotion of the trail.  
   - Promotes and advocates the trail  
   - Builds support for expansion of the trail.

Buerkle recommends the public component be an intergovernmental agency created in accordance with PA Act 177. Buerkle recommends the following entities be invited to be a part of this agency:

- Bellefonte Borough  
- Benner Township  
- College Township  
- Ferguson Township  
- Patton Township  
- Spring Township  
- State College Borough  
- Pennsylvania State University  
- Spring-Benner-Walker Joint Authority  
- Centre County

He recommends the private non-profit component be organized as a 501.c.3. organization under state and federal law. Buerkle indicated that it was suggested the possibility of establishing this under the Centre County Community Foundation.

1.19 Buerkle then opened the meeting up for comment. The following commented were made by meeting attendees:

a.) Residents located between Buffalo Run Community Park and Armagast Road also expressed their continued concern over the proposed trail. They questioned the precise alignment of the trail as it would go through that area. Buerkle recommended that when design of this phase begins, the trail be flagged on-site and that a meeting be held with property owners to further discuss and resolve this alignment. Several felt it would be difficult to get support from all landowners. It was suggested that an alternative alignment on the north side of Buffalo Run be explored. Buerkle indicated this was reviewed in the field and that the area is very wet and contains wetlands that cannot be disturbed. Buerkle suggested that if preliminary design efforts cannot resolve the concerns of property owners then this section, from Buffalo Run Community Park to
Armagast Road, be deferred for future re-evaluation, as is recommended for the Lower Julian Pike to Buffalo Run Community Park segment.

c.) An attendee asked if building the trail would require an increase in county or municipal taxes. Buerkle indicated the implementation plan identified in the feasibility study would not require a tax increase at either level.

d.) Many attendees spoke in support of the proposed trail indicating it would be a great asset to the Bellefonte / State College Region.

e.) Dr. Paul Simpson spoke on behalf of the local medical community. He indicated that he has 30 to 40 patients that are overweight and weigh over 400 pounds, and that 50% of his patients are clinically obese. He said the health community will support the proposed trail as a mechanism to advocate healthy lifestyle choices, and to provide health and wellness opportunities to the region’s residents.

1.20 Buerkle then reviewed the next steps in the planning process as follows:

- Submit plan to Centre County Planning Commission for review and consideration.

- Planning Commission recommend a course of action to County Commissioners accept and adopt plan as guide for the future of the Bellefonte Central Rail Trail.

- County Commissioners take action officially adopt plan by resolution as recommended by Centre County Planning Commission.

- Stakeholders begin implementation of Recommendations by creating management organizations.

  - Municipalities
  - County
  - Spring-Benner-Walker Joint Authority
  - Non-profit Organizations
  - Penn State University
  - Residents

- Stakeholders & management organizations raise funds for trail development.

- Management organizations complete pre-development efforts.

- Trail development begins.

1.16 Buerkle concluded the meeting by thanking everyone who attended.
In an effort to be conscious of our impact on the environment, Pashek Associates has chosen to deliver this document in a digital format. If you are unable to retrieve the attached file, or desire a hard copy this file and the referenced attachment(s), please email me your request at jbuerkle@pashekla.com.

The information contained in these minutes was recorded by Pashek Associates and represents our interpretation and understanding of the discussions that occurred during the meeting.

Prepared by:

John O. Buerkle, Jr., RLA, AICP

Distribution: Community Advisory Committee Members
Monica Hoffman, PA DCNR
Wes Fahringer, PA DCNR Regional Advisor