

## Public Open House Meeting Summary

<b>Title:</b>	Warwick to Ephrata Trail Extension Feasibility Study Public Open House
<b>Date and Time:</b>	Tuesday, July 23, 2024, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM
<b>Project Team:</b>	Brian Funkhouser Sarah Pritchett Katherine Wyrosdick
<b>Steering Committee:</b>	DeLyn Alumbaugh, Adamstown Borough James Johnson Null, Adamstown Borough Dave Matz, Adamstown Borough Kurt Reich, Cocalico School District Dr. Steven Melnyk, Cocalico School District Josh Byrom, Cocalico School District Student Todd Stewart, Denver Borough Michael Styer, Denver Borough Sandy Flory, Denver Borough Fred Wagaman, Denver Borough Michael Hession, Denver Borough Donald Miller, East Cocalico Township Eddy McAlanis, East Cocalico Township Tommy Ryan, East Cocalico Township Michael Domin, Lancaster County Planning Department Darryl Eberly, West Cocalico Township JJ Stoner, West Cocalico Township Jeff Sauder, West Cocalico Township Carolyn Hildebrand, West Cocalico Township
<b>Number of Participants:</b>	110

### Welcome and Review of Agenda

- Brian Funkhouser of Michael Baker International welcomed everyone in attendance to the open house and began a formal presentation at 6:30.
- Members of the study steering committee stood to be recognized.
- Brian highlighted the study purpose, methodology, and initial findings.
- A one-hour question and answer session followed the presentation. Attendees were encouraged to leave feedback on comment cards provided.

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## Presentation

- **Study Scope:** The project scope is intended to uncover the most feasible alignment to extend a trail into the Cocalico Region. The study process will identify obstacles to extending a trail.
- **Methodology:** A traditional approach was followed:
  - The project team met with a steering committee composed of representatives from the four municipalities and the Cocalico School District.
  - Numerous stakeholders were contacted including: Lancaster Bicycle Club; Denver Cold Storage; Stevens Feed Mill; Gehman Feed Mill; East Penn Railroad; PennDOT Bureau of Rail Freight; Four Seasons Produce; area chambers of commerce; and municipal officials.
  - Public engagement efforts included a public survey and a public open house.
- **Potential Alignments:** Several alignments were considered as part of the feasibility analysis:
  - **Cocalico Sewer Easement**
    - The sewer easement option featured a circuitous route that made it less feasible.
    - Also, agricultural preservation easements and private property made this alternative route challenging.
    - The steering committee dismissed this route as a feasible option during its January 25 meeting due to these challenges.
  - **Railroad ROW (Rail-to-Trail Option)**
    - This was the primary corridor considered initially.
    - The right-of-way is owned and operated by the East Penn Railroad, a shortline serving several rail-dependent businesses.
    - The railroad is not in favor of sharing its right-of-way with other uses, due to safety and liability concerns.
    - The railroad is already vying with trespassing and yard waste within the right-of-way.
    - In other successful rail-to-trail projects, the right-of-way used is typically a double track that has additional space for a trail. The East Penn railroad line is single-track.
    - The steering committee decided during its May meeting to discontinue consideration of the rail right-of-way as a feasible option.
  - **Roadway-Based**
    - The steering committee considered roadway-based options for the alignment, but it was also dismissed as a feasible option because it did not have the qualities of an off-road trail (separation from traffic, intrinsic qualities, etc.). The consensus was that if a trail was to be considered it needed to be off-road.

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- o **Railroad ROW Frontage**
  - The steering committee opted to pursue a “railroad right-of-way frontage” option as the most feasible route.
- o **SPUR – Adamstown Connector**
  - This alternative route would connect a mainline trail with Adamstown Borough.
  - Three options were initially considered:
    - Horseshoe Trail
    - PPL Utility Easement
    - Roadway-based options
  - The Horseshoe Trail was dismissed, as it would not adequately accommodate typical trail users due to its rugged and uneven terrain.
  - Using a combination of utility easements and roadways may be the alternative route considered in the future if the study continues.
- **Public Survey:** Current findings of a public survey were presented.
  - o Survey was originally published on June 24, 2024.
  - o As of July 23, the survey had generated 906 responses.
  - o What is your general level of interest for developing a multi-use (pedestrian and cyclist) trail network between Ephrata, Denver, Reinholds, and Adamstown?
    - 80% responded with Yes.
    - 15% responded with No.
    - 5% responded with Maybe.
  - o Survey respondents’ top reasons for wanting a multi-use trail to be built:
    1. Health and exercise
    2. Recreation
    3. Quality of Life
    4. Transportation
  - o Survey respondents anticipated use of a multi-use trail if it were to be built:
    1. A few times a year (117)
    2. A few times a month (257)
    3. A few times a week (300)
    4. Every day (32)
    5. Seasonally (more often in the summer) (106)
  - o Survey respondents’ top features that would need to be included to make this trail network an asset to the community.
    1. Parking Areas
    2. Lighting and Security
    3. Bathroom Facilities
    4. Wayfinding Signage.
    5. Picnic and Rest Areas

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- o Are there any significant destinations that you would like to see connected with a potential multi-use trail?
  - Cocalico
  - Ephrata
  - Denver
  - Parks
  - Shops (Ice cream, coffee, etc.)
  - Downtown areas
- o Survey respondents' top concerns about a potential trail project:
  - Farmland Preservation
  - Habitat Damage
  - Safety and Security
- Next Steps
  - o Feedback received as part of the open house will be communicated back to the steering committee and will inform the development of a final report.

### **Q&A**

#### **Eminent Domain**

- Q1: Has eminent domain ever been used for rail trail or funded by taxpayer dollars?
- A1: According to Lancaster County representatives, it has never been used in Lancaster County.

#### **Survey Accuracy**

- Q: Presumably, the routes shown on the original social media post are what most people were answering the survey about. Now, the route on the social media post has been dismissed and a new route is being considered. Does this impact the data?
- A: The survey was created for respondents to indicate an interest in a multi-use trail network. The survey was created to gauge if constituents would want a trail to be built in general, how often they would use it, potential obstacles, and what would need to be included to make a trail network feasible. The idea was to gauge if members of the public want trails in the area at all.

#### **Potential Route Confusion**

- Q: The presentation wasn't clear enough to understand what route is being considered. What is being studied?
- A: The committee is looking at the railroad right-of-way frontage as a potential alignment.

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## **Private Property Owner Engagement**

- Q1: The municipalities reposted the map with the incorrect route. Why didn't they use the other maps that were presented at tonight's meeting? The map that was posted was done in 2020. It would be fair to property owners to have an accurate map with the route that shows the implications for various property owners in the communities.
- A1: The process of developing a trail begins with a feasibility study. This is where we are currently. The team is not at the point in the process where we begin to contact private property owners. The purpose of the feasibility study is to look at broad concepts. This usually starts with utility easements and railroads, and then moves from there. Property ownership is ever changing, and at this point in the process, it would be a risk to start the process of contacting private property owners.
- Q2: If you cannot get through a property, why do any of this?
- A2: Once a point is reached where a private property owner declines, the project will have to examine other options. Tonight's open house showcases the challenges the municipalities will face when working with private property owners.

## **Feasibility Study Cost to Taxpayers**

- Q: How much taxpayer money was used for the study?
- A: \$64,896. Half was funded by PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and the other half was matched by the participating municipalities.

## **Field Survey**

- Q: Did someone go out and look at the route before it was put on paper? Did anyone walk it?
- A: No.

## **Environmental Concerns**

- Q: How will the trails be maintained and constructed considering that the potential routes cross or directly on wetlands, floodplains, and bog turtle nesting areas?
- A: This would require EPA permitting. These are similar obstacles that have been overcome in other trail projects.

## **Removal of Sewer Easement and Rail-to-Trail Route Options**

- Q: On the second and third slide with sewer easement and rail trail, what were the dates and meetings that dismissed those as potential trail routes. Can we have those printed out tonight?
- A: No, printing them tonight is not feasible.
- Q Follow-up: Can you have them emailed?

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- A Follow-up: Yes.<sup>1</sup>

## **Social Media Graphics Update**

- Q: Can you repost the social media graphics with the corrected map tomorrow so that the public is notified that there has been a change?
- A: We can't guarantee tomorrow, but we can update the maps on social media within 8-10 days.

## **Meeting Minutes**

- Q: Can we obtain a summary of tonight's meeting discussion?
- A: Yes.

## **Final Report**

- Q: Where will the results of the study be disclosed?
- A: The results of the study will be included in a final report that will be given to the municipalities.

## **PPL**

- Q: Was PPL approached regarding potential use of their easement?
- A: The team has not approached PPL.

## **Key Discussion Points**

### **Trail Development Methodology**

- Several participants expressed concern that the study process for the development of a trail should begin by contacting property owners.

### **Eminent Domain**

- A participant voiced wanting a legally binding agreement that Lancaster County and its municipalities will never use eminent domain to extend the Warwick to Ephrata trail.

### **Map Confusion**

- Several participants stated that the survey results should be considered inaccurate since the map on the flyer was what most people taking the survey were using to inform their responses.
- When participants reached out to a project team staff member before the meeting, they received a map that showed the proposed trail alignment not crossing onto their property. A document was sent to residents with the same map that was originally used

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<sup>1</sup> The sewer easement option was dismissed during the committee's January 2024 meeting, while the railroad right-of-way option was dismissed during the May meeting.

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on social media with the sewer easement route alternative. This has led to confusion about what route is currently being considered and which property owners would be affected if the municipalities decided to build a new multi-use trail.

### **Safety Concerns**

- A participant explained that the current trail is not in use particularly by mothers and children due to concerns for safety regarding crime, drug use, and encampments.
- A participant was concerned about the need to address e-bike usage and enforcement.
- Participants expressed a need for more signage for safety reasons.

### **ADA Compliance and Trail Grade**

- Rail-to-Trails follow a minimum slope requirement to avoid navigating steep grades. Some of the trails that you showed have bigger slopes and steeper grades. To consider alternative routes could be a waste if they are not ADA-compliant. The feasibility study should include an analysis of slope grades to ensure ADA compliance.

### **Environmental Concerns**

- Several participants expressed that their land runs up to the edge of the rail line and that it is floodplain and wetlands. Participants expressed concerns surrounding trail maintenance under these conditions.
- There are also bog turtles that nest in certain areas, and this could provide an obstacle to building a trail along that route.
- Several participants see value in a topographic study being performed as part of the feasibility study.
- Preserving Cocalico Creek's trout stream and water quality are causes for concern.
- Several participants expressed concerns about hunting near the trail as well.

### **Spur Route**

- The spur wouldn't be a great use of project resources. It would be better to look at floodplains.
- Participants expressed that they aren't sure how a spur route to Adamstown would be a great option.

### **Sewer Easement Petition**

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- Two farmland owners oppose the sewer easement but were unable to attend the meeting.
- The petitioners also requested transparency in the process.

### **Trail Development Cost**

- Participants were concerned about the trail's cost per mile.
- Participants expressed issues with Pennsylvania's budget deficit and responsible spending. They requested assurance that taxpayer dollars will be used diligently.
- Several participants expressed that the feasibility study was a misuse of tax dollars.

### **Farmers and Legal Liability**

- A participant stated concerns about farmland impact and legal liability in the case that someone became ill from chemicals. Uncertainty about costs and insurance coverage.
- It will be up to the municipalities to decide if they want to indemnify or work with farmers to ensure that they won't be held responsible if trail users were affected by farming practices and spraying of chemicals on crops.

### **Public Opinion**

- An East Cocalico Township official said he would not be supporting eminent domain and proposed that the supervisors put this item on their next meeting agenda to end the study.
- A majority of meeting participants indicated being in favor of ending the study.

### **Adjournment and Next Steps**

- There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 PM.
- Meeting notes will be available within 8-10 days and distributed to those who provided their email address on the meeting sign-in sheet as long as its accurate and legible.