

MEMORANDUM

TO: Bob Pellegrino, Northampton Township Manager

THROUGH: Evan Stone, Executive Director

FROM: Richard Brahler, Director of Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Newtown Rail Trail Phase Two Update

DATE: February 8, 2023

Please let this serve as a status update on the Newtown Rail Trail Extension to Churchville Nature Center Project.

As you are aware, the County hired Gilmore & Associates in 2022 to perform the design and engineering services for the project. On January 17, 2023, Gilmore & Associates completed three key project documents. The Culvert Inspection Report for the railroad culvert over the Ironworks Creek on Elm Avenue, Tree Survey for the project corridor, and Environmental Assessment Report. A summation of the reports can be found below.

Culvert Inspection: The report indicated that there are no major issues with the culvert and that it can support trail development.

Tree Survey: The arborist recommends 191 trees be removed along the length of the project area. Nearly all of these trees identified in the report to be removed are dead or dying and would pose a hazard to the trail and its users. Every effort was made to align the trail in such a way to preserve important tree species.

Environmental Assessment: The team from Gilmore & Associates completed their Phase I Environmental Assessment. They are going to conduct follow-up soil testing at select sites within the project area to determine if any remediation activities will be needed for the project.

Trail Alignment: Gilmore & Associates is finalizing the conceptual trail alignment for the Rail Trail through the Churchville Nature Center. The trail will run within the rail bed from its pedestrian crossing at Bristol and Knowles Avenue, cross Bustleton Pike and over the reservoir until turning into the Churchville Nature Center facility, between Aqua and Brooke Drives. The trail is planned to have two switchbacks to navigate the varying terrain found at the northeast corner of the project area, and then work its way towards the

Nature Center's eastern side. We should also note that portions of the trail will be constructed on an elevated boardwalk to account for slope and wetland issues. A map of the proposed new alignment has been attached for reference. Trail alignment within the nature center is being coordinated directly with nature center staff.

Bustleton Pike Crossing: The crossing of the trail at Bustleton Pike will involve coordination between Northampton Township, Bucks County and PennDOT. We are well-aware of the safety issues associated with Cornell Avenue and Bustleton Pike just north of the proposed trail crossing and will seek guidance from Northampton's transportation engineer as the crossing is developed. Following the completion of the final conceptual trail alignment and trail crossing, the County and Northampton will review the proposed measures. Initial scoping work from PennDOT indicated that traffic signal upgrades, flashing beacons, pavement markings, and ADA ramps may be needed to move people safely across Bustleton Pike. Once the safety measures are decided upon, Gilmore & Associates will develop the final crossing layout to PennDOT Standards. The County will be responsible for obtaining any easements associated with the crossing and safety improvements.

Public Outreach: Once the conceptual alignment for the trail is finalized, the County will conduct public outreach to solicit public feedback on the project. The County is recommending hosting a public open house where residents can stop in to speak with County staff and view the conceptual drawings of the trail. The purpose of this open house is to address public concerns and issues that arise prior to final design. We recommend holding the open house at the Churchville Nature Center in May of 2023, timeline permitting. We anticipate this event to be like the open houses the County held for the portion of the trail in Upper Southampton Township.

The upcoming tasks and phases for the project include:

Phase 1: Site Inventory Analysis, & Environmental Clearance (February to April 2023)

Remaining Tasks:

- Soil sample testing
- Final Conceptual Trail Alignment

Phase 2: Preliminary Design (March to May 2023)

Remaining Tasks:

- PennDOT Right of Way Clearance
- PennDOT Categorical Exclusion Evaluation
- Utility Clearance
- Develop Preliminary Opinion of Probable Construction Cost
- Public Open House to present conceptual trail design.

Phase 3: Permitting & Approvals (May-November 2023)

Remaining Tasks:

- PennDOT Safety, Traffic, and ADA Review
- PADEP/Army Corps Chapter 105/Section 104 Joint Permit for Waterway Obstruction
- NPDES General Permit for Stormwater & Erosion Control

Phase 4: Final Design & Bid Package (December-June 2024)**Remaining Tasks:**

- Preparation of Bid Plans and Documents
- Preparation of Opinion of Probable Construction Cost
- PennDOT Construction Review
- PennDOT Plans, Specifications & Estimates Review

Phase 5: Bid for Construction (Fall 2024)**Remaining Task:**

- Construction bidding – Fall 2024
- Construction completion – Fall 2025

We hope you find this update useful and encourage you to share it publicly as you deem applicable. A copy of the update will be posted to the project portal which can be found here: <https://www.buckscounty.gov/1543/Newtown-Rail-Trail-Phase-Two>. Likewise, we encourage the Township to make this link publicly available.

If you have any questions or would like us to present a project update to the Board of Supervisors, please let us know. We look forward to continued cooperation as we continue with the project.

NEWTOWN RAIL TRAIL (PHASE 2)

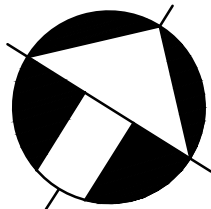
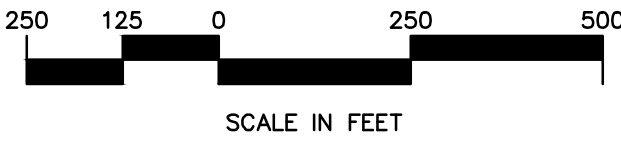
MPMS 117953

DISTRICT	COUNTY	ROUTE	SECTION	SHEET
6-0	BUCKS	0000	NRT	OVERALL
NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP				
REVISION NUMBER	REVISIONS			DATE
1	ADA ADDITIONS			10/26/22

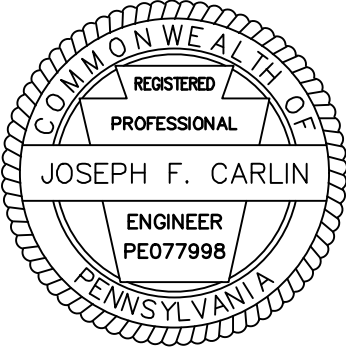


NEWTOWN RAIL TRAIL PHASE 2

OVERALL CONSTRUCTION PLAN



PLANS PREPARED BY
GILMORE & ASSOC., INC.
65 E. BUTLER AVENUE,
SUITE 100,
NEW BRITAIN, PA 18901



10/27/2022