

SAUCON RAIL TRAIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Monday, July 25, 2011
Time: 5:03 PM
Location: Upper Saucon Township

Present: Jack Cahalan, Lower Saucon Township Manager; Tom Beil, Upper Saucon Township Manager; Roger Jurczak, Lower Saucon Township representative; Steve LaBrake arrived at 5:50 PM.

Guests John Brunner, Carolyn Lidie, Tom Gettings, Stephanie Brown, Jim Ravier

- **Welcome – Township/Borough Managers** – Jack welcomed everyone.
- **Intermunicipal Agreement Status – Update** – Jack said he believes everyone has reviewed the agreement. According to a letter we just shared, Coopersburg indicated they had looked over the language and they agree with the proposed language. There is apparently some language about indemnification that they were concerned about, but that's been straightened out. We believe that Coopersburg has approved the intergovernmental agreement even though Tom Beil hasn't gotten anything officially on that. We'll follow up on that. Tom Beil said there are comments from the Solicitors from Lower Saucon and Hellertown Borough and he will incorporate those comments into the next version of the agreement and he will email the agreement to all the Managers for approval of their respective bodies.
- **Trail Development – Updates**
 - **Jack Cahalan – Lower Saucon Township** – Jack said the three portions of the trail opened up in April and May of this year. Upper Saucon opened their portion followed by Lower Saucon and Hellertown Borough on May 7th. The trail is open from Bachman Street in Hellertown down to Community Park on Preston Lane in Upper Saucon Township. There have been thousands of people out using the trail since it was opened. For Lower Saucon Township, we installed privacy fencing at two areas of the Old Mill Road Crossing where the historic district is as there are houses that are very close to the trail so the Township agreed to put up wooden shadowbox fencing. . We put gates and bollards at our road crossings and what we are finding, even though we have signs at each of the gates that ask people to dismount before they cross the road, a majority of the people do not get off their bikes and keep riding; consequently we understand people are bumping into the bollards. We are going to cover them with yellow PVC sleeves for safety. It will add some more protection to the bollard in case someone does collide with it. Another thing that was happening was there was a cap on top some of those bollards and some were missing and we didn't want to have that pose any danger. That will be taken care of with the covers. We are also looking into a couple of minor parking issues down at the end of Old Mill Road by the bridge. It's a historic district and a dead end road. People are attracted down there to look at the houses and the Old Mill Bridge which is on the National Register and we have to work out some parking issues to do that. We have a verbal agreement with the owner of the trailhead property on Reading Road. They accepted the offer we made and we are trying to work out the rest of that. When we acquire that, it will provide us with access to the trail and a parking area. There will be some trail amenities such as a portable toilet, picnic benches, and that will be a good halfway point between Hellertown and Upper Saucon. We also received a small grant from the Delaware-Lehigh Heritage Corridor for those trail amenities. It was about \$2,500.00. Hellertown received an additional amount for their Tuminello property which is adjacent to the trail. He and Cathy Kichline attended a ceremony on July 14th to announce the grants. They've had a lot of people parking at the Water Street and Grist Mill Parks and accessing the trail. They also have had a lot of people who are biking to Hellertown's Farmer's Market on Sunday mornings.
 - **Hellertown Borough** – No one present.
 - **Dawn Kresge – Coopersburg Borough** – No one present.

- **Upper Saucon Township** – Tom Beil said he really doesn't have too much to report. They had a lot of positive feedback from their residents concerning the trail. Everyone seems very happy with it. They prepared a map and brochure so people know the lengths of the trail and how far they are biking or walking. We are pleasantly surprised that there weren't any issues with the trail. There have been no real problems with trespassing.

- **Mileage Markers** – Roger said we have six (6) mileage markers under construction that should be ready for installation soon. The posts turned out very nicely. As the pictures show, Northampton Community College did the numbers and letters. The markers are stained and are also painted yellow. There are Nos. 51 to 53, and the significance of that is when we reviewed the original rail maps, we noticed that on the map there were milepost marker from Philadelphia to Bethlehem. It was a large enough scale that you could measure where the mile marker was located before. We kicked around the idea where would mile marker 1 be and would that change as more mileage of the trail was added. It was a consensus that we would use the map and original milepost markers from the railroad. We recognized that the Greenway in Bethlehem is pretty well underway and eventually will connect to the SRT. Mile marker 53 is right around Bachman Street which is the end of the northern part of the SRT. 50-1/2 is just beyond where the future Lower Saucon trailhead will be. That was the reason for the numbering system. We have mile markers and half-mile markers and after talking with several of the first responders the request was made that in addition to indentifying the trail which is SRT on the second line, that we also signify a municipality on the top line. The mile markers are similar to the road markers used in Pennsylvania. They will tell you what the route numbers are, the mileage marker, and if you are going on a divided highway. That was the reason for the municipality and the name of the trail and the mile marker destination. In that same conversation, it was suggested by the first responders that we also mark the roadways that the trails cross. Initially, that was put on the back burner until we got the mile markers finished. He said initially it was suggested to keep in style with the mile markers, to use a 4'x4' wooden post and to identify the name of the street or roadway on the 4'x4' post. What was learned in the process of creating the mile markers was the font sizes relative to the sizes of the post, and traditionally, when you see the concrete posts that are used by the some municipalities for street signs, the lettering on a 4'x4' post, unless you had a gigantic post, the font was significantly small. In talking with Tom Henshaw, and in keeping in mind what the first responders said, is if we can somehow add to the post the mile marker designations, 51, 52, 53 for the street that the trail was crossing, the police officers, when they are coming down Meadows, for example, they are at 51-1/2. In walking some of the streets in South Bethlehem, he saw signs and the font is about 3" to 4" in letter size and it's a reflective material. Near the tail end of the sign where the street would be, they also signify a small block with a range of addresses that exist in that block. His thinking was if we get the standard reflective material and on that little tag, put the mile marker number and advise the first responders what street has what mile marker sign. In lieu of the wooden marker, it was mentioned that they employ the standard street sign, and what that would require is basically maybe a 12" piece of post on top of the signage we all have at the stop signs adjacent to the roadways, and we would have this highly invisible marker with the information for emergency purposes. It would not require an additional signage post and installation, just a modification to what we already have. The cost would be significantly less than what we have. Jack said how would it be mounted? Roger said at every intersection, the trail has a stop sign. That stop sign is 4' to 6' away from the edge of roadway. You have those 2'x2' steel posts and just to add on an additional length and put the street signage at the top above the stop sign, it would be out of the way for people riding on a bike. It would be out there on the road. If we have the SRT going in one direction and a road sign going in another direction, that would achieve the identification of the roads. The lettering would be whatever it is for the standard street signs, probably about 4". Jack said that's not going to go over well at one of the crossings as the residents feel that we have overkill with the street signage. That's why he thought a post would fit in more. Is it going to be seen coming up the trail? Roger said the standard street size, Tom Henshaw gave him some numbers, and with the letters, the cost of the sign was approximately \$28.00. Jack said it's not going to go over well. Someone said she thinks it's a good idea. Jack said we can run it by everyone and see what they think. Someone said you only talk about one per crossing. Jack said we had an incident earlier and this will give County 911 information so that the first responders will be dispatched to the correct road. We have the gates with Knox box padlocks. The police officer can open the gate and the emergency responders can meet them there. Roger said once we install the physical posts, we will get down the exact distance the post is from the nearest street crossing. The only other

recommendation was from one of the Police Chiefs who asked if we could mark the road crossing with the numbers, they are familiar with the roadways and after a short amount of time, they would know the roads and they would know pretty much how to get there the fastest way. Visibility of the markers was also a topic of conversation. Stephanie Brown said that there may be people who may not be familiar with the trail and may not understand how this will work. Jack said we have to get information out at the kiosks and on the websites to educate everyone how it works. If someone is unfamiliar with the area or the trail, they won't know the streets or the park, but they can see this mileage marker with the number and 9-1-1 will know where that is. When they say 51-1/2, in a couple of minutes, the emergency vehicle should be there. This was agreed on by the emergency responders that it's the quickest way for them to respond to an incident on the trail.

Roger said with the discussions that occurred between Hellertown and Lower Saucon's Council, the concept of color-coding was discussed. At an earlier time, we had not planned on doing mile markers between those roadways. Depending on where you were, there was going to be several different colors used. It was confusing and when we talked about the mile markers it was suggested that since we have four municipalities, we could deal with four different colors, and Hellertown chose green, Lower Saucon chose orange, and we found that reflective tape was available. The mile markers will have a stripe below it with designated colors relative to the municipality. There are telegraph poles along the trail which are about 100' to 125' apart. There's probably five to eight telephone poles remaining in good condition and our game plan was when we got the street signs in, we would take some 6" aluminum flashing and wrap it around the telephone pole, put the tape around it and we'd have the telegraph pole marked as the same color as the municipality you are in. Carolyn said the poles don't belong to you. Jack said yes, they are in the right-of-way and covered by our leases. Someone said she doesn't understand the colors. Jack said it's a back-up system that may be easier for someone to spot if they cannot see the mileage marker from where they are at. It was run by the 9-1-1 center and they are on board with it.

Stephanie Brown asked about the maintenance of the posts. Roger said the posts with their dimensions and how much they are put in the ground; he would guess you are talking about a 50-100 year longevity. In terms of maintenance, they are conditioned with a tung oil finish which is natural material that sheds water, which will need to be re-done every three to five years maybe. Jack said the best thing about this is that the cost is being taken care of by two businesses in Hellertown.

- **John Brunner, PA Highlands Trail Steering Committee** – John said he works for the Appalachian Mountain Club. He came on board a little less than a year ago to work on the Highlands Trail. He also worked with a volunteer trail group at the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation area. That trail is very heavily used and beat up. The PA Highlands Trail network has a Steering Committee and the representation is partly non-profits while Wildlands Conservancy is a key partner; Natural Lands Trust, Bucks County Planning Commission, a few municipalities, mainly in Bucks County, and there's a reason for that. The Highlands Trail exists in New York and New Jersey. It begins near the Hudson River. It comes down into North Jersey and follows the Highlands along Musconetcong River and crosses the Delaware River in Riegelsville, NJ and then into PA. Part of the trail isn't even complete on the NJ side yet. The goal for the PA Highlands Trail is to get that trail down to the operational trail in Adams County, which is about 150 miles, and we would be crossing the Schuylkill River, Delaware River, Perkiomen Creek, and Susquehanna River along the way. There is a 50-year plan for the trail to be completed; however, it appears that there are opportunities for the Highlands Trail to co-align with a number of existing trails. They start out in Riegelsville, and they are looking at a scenario as their next step to get to the Perkiomen Trail and then there is potential hook up with Ringing Rocks Park, Nockamixon State Park. There are existing open space features all the way down. They have one potential route which would take us down the towpath from Riegelsville and getting across the canal with the foot bridges that exist and get to Nockamixon State Park and maybe go to Quakertown or Sellersville. In Quakertown, there is a trail already, then it could go to Perkiomen Trail. If you can visualize how the trail could get to Adams County, in theory, they would go right down through Montgomery County. There is a lot of trail activity going on around the region, especially in municipalities like Milford and Richland Townships; and he's really impressed by their effort. In your case, your intermunicipal trail serves your local population and it could be to some degree, helping boost your local businesses and wellness, the benefits are clear. For something like the Highlands Trail, it wouldn't be like the Appalachian Trail where you'd have really rugged people

with two sets of shoes doing a through hike from the mountains in New York. It's possible, but we don't really see shelters there being along the trail for people to sleep. There is a potential of doing through hiking on a regional basis. When you get into Milford Township, there are trails that connect with more remote communities. Tom Gettings said he thinks the SRT is a real godsend to the whole concept of the Highlands Trail. The existence of the SRT is really key, and it's in the right place. The SRT has a lot of activity. John said in speaking to Andy Hamilton, they are working on the Open Space Plan in Bucks County and one of their planners is on their Steering Committee and she confessed that although Bucks County has an excellent park system, they don't have a lot of emphasis of connecting their trails. So far, the SEPTA line is still on the map. He's hopeful that it will stay on the map and get the County's support. Someone asked about the SRT going to Quakertown. Tom Gettings said the SEPTA line north of Quakertown is under a contract to a freight short line that makes weekly trips. Someone said there are trails with rails right next to them. John said he's here this evening to formerly introduce the idea and get a conversation going. He'd be glad to come back and do a Power Point presentation for a larger audience.

Stephanie Brown asked how they deal with the resistance from property owners to a trail going in their back yards? John said in Bucks County as they try to go from the Delaware River to Nockamixon State Park, what they usually do is try to meet with these people and talk about the trail. They try to find out what kind of people are going to be using these trails and the concerns about property values and that sort of thing. It's usually pretty easy to talk to people once they see how the trail works, how it's maintained. He doesn't think it's possible to propose something like that without people being worried about changes in their community. Tom might have more personal knowledge about Weisenberg Township and Lehigh County as to whether there's been resistance to the rail trail there or not or responding to people who are worried about trails coming through private property. Tom Gettings said nothing of significance. The Ironton Rail Trail goes through a very populated area, then rural, then suburban, then back and forth and it's been improved and the way they handled the volunteer systems, the trailheads, it's a big asset to the community.

Jack thanked John for coming and said they will be keeping in touch with him.

- **Other Issues**

- Jack said the mile markers will probably be installed this week by Public Works.
- Steve asked Tom Beil if they had plans to do mile markers in Upper Saucon Township? Tom said there's no money in their budget to do it this year, but it's a good idea. Steve said would there be interest there to get sponsorships like Lower Saucon did. Tom said sure, if someone else wants to pay for it. Tom said the section in Lower Saucon and Hellertown is equal to Upper Saucon, so however many signs they have. Jack said that would be six markers. Steve asked if Upper Saucon Township would extend the trail from Coopersburg to the Bucks County line? Tom said it depends how far Coopersburg extends their part of the trail. If Coopersburg extends it all the way to their southern border then yes, they would extend it as it's a very short distance to where Springfield meets. We just don't want to end it. They'd like some commitment from Springfield that they are interested. If Springfield is not interested, then the place to end it is in Coopersburg. Tom Gettings said that's where John gets involved and would talk to Springfield Township. Jack said the only thing is that the section in Bucks County stills has the tracks and ties on it and that needs to be cleared by SEPTA. We understood that SEPTA made a profit by selling the steel rails that were removed on our sections. Springfield Township would also have to go through the whole lease process that we went through.
- Jim Ravier asked how the trail is going to be maintained in the fall? There will be leaves very thick. How are you going to get them off? Jack said they didn't discuss that, but he's been on other trails they don't go and take the leaves off. Tom Beil said he walked the trail last fall and didn't really notice a problem with leaves. He doesn't know if they blow off the trail or get ground up. It didn't seem to be a problem. The Township Park has a lot of trees and there are occasionally leaves there, but it's nothing you couldn't walk over. We'll have to first see if there's a problem and if so, how we're going to handle it, but he really doesn't think it's going to be a problem. He didn't notice anything on the trail that would be an issue.

- The meeting adjourned. The time was 6:50 PM. Next meeting – August 22nd at Lower Saucon Township @ 5:00 PM; September 26th at Hellertown Borough @ 5:00 PM; October 24th at Coopersburg Borough @ 5:00 PM.