

IV. Implementation Plan

A. Phasing Plan – Prioritization of Recommended Improvements

In reviewing this section, the reader is asked to refer to the Implementation Recommendation Maps, G and H, included in Appendix 4.

In developing the following recommended action plan for trail development, the study team took into account such factors as:

- The ability of each phase of construction to “stand on its own,” i.e., that each phase will receive significant usage, even if the entire trail remains to be constructed
- New sections of trail that serve, where possible, as extension of existing sections of trail
- Phase 1 projects are included in each municipality so that trail implementation may begin simultaneously in several locations, and so that municipalities do not need to wait for implementation to proceed in neighboring jurisdictions
- Topography
- Public ownership
- Ease of acquiring easements or rights-of-way
- Ease and expense of construction

In all cases, first phases of trail construction can involve the construction of the trail with a soft surface (fine crushed stone). If a paved surface is desired, that can be added during subsequent phases.

1. First Phases of Development

Upper Merion

The trail from Valley Forge National Historical Park to Bob Case Park is deemed a good candidate for early construction. This section of trail also serves Heuser Park with its many outdoor activities and large parking lot. Significantly, Upper Merion Township supervisors have voted to fund construction of a multi-use trail between Heuser Park and Bob Case Park. The extension of this initial section of trail north to Valley Forge Park constitutes Phase 1 in Upper Merion Township.

Bridgeport

The trail between borough property at Norristown dam and Dekalb Street, then along the riverside through O’Neill’s Bridgeview development, would be Phase 1 in Bridgeport Borough. The trail alignment between the dam and Dekalb Street would be on the existing access road and parking lot.



Information kiosk and public parking lot have been built adjacent to the fish ladder at Norristown Dam in Bridgeport

O’Neill Properties Group

intends to develop a half-mile of riverfront in Bridgeport. Now mostly vacant land, O'Neill intends to construct hundreds of apartment units, with a riverside trail on the banks of the Schuylkill River. O'Neill has submitted preliminary plans for the first phase of the apartment complex, near the foot of Ford Street.

Once Riverview and its riverside public trail are completed, in order to connect with the trail on the north side of Dekalb Street an easement will need to be negotiated with the owner of the property on the northeast corner of Dekalb Street and Front Street.

The crossing of Dekalb Street will utilize the signalized crosswalk to be completed as part of the Chester Valley Trail. Construction of the Chester Valley Trail is set to commence in 2009.

West Conshohocken

Phase 1 in West Conshohocken begins half a mile north of the borough line, in Upper Merion Township. Beginning from the intersection of PA Routes 23 and 320 in Swedeland, the trail would extend south to the borough, linking large employment centers including the Inquirer Printing Plant, GlaxoSmithKline, Portland Road industrial park, and the Tower Bridge complex. Access to commuter rail service to Philadelphia is then available by utilizing the sidewalks on the Matsonford Bridge.

This section of the trail alignment includes a large inland "horseshoe" necessitated by the refusals of Norfolk Southern and PECO to permit a riverside trail (PECO's concerns center around their desire to keep the public away from sensitive above-ground natural gas facilities at that location).

At the Tower Bridge complex, two options present themselves. Opening the existing asphalt river trail to the public will require the permission of the owners of Five Tower Bridge. If that is not forthcoming, Barr Harbor Drive may be utilized: hikers on the existing concrete sidewalk, cyclists on the thirty foot wide roadway.

Lower Merion

Upgrading the Harry Olson Trail and constructing the trail through Flat Rock Park constitute Phase 1 in Lower Merion Township. The southern end of the Harry Olson Trail connects directly with sidewalks leading across the Green Lane bridge to Manayunk to the east, and along Belmont Avenue to Belmont Hills to the west. Upgrading the Harry Olson Trail may follow one of three options: a minimal project that would leave the existing trail as is but add footbridges at key locations, a middle option that would create an eight foot wide soft-surface trail, and a third option resulting in a twelve foot wide asphalt trail.

2. Second Phases of Development

Upper Merion

Phase 2 in Upper Merion consists of two sections: Abrams to Bridgeport, and Bridgeport to Swedeland. Both sections include reaches that traverse lands owned by Norfolk Southern, but the trail alignment was carefully selected to avoid at-grade crossings of the active Harrisburg Line, and to avoid running adjacent to those tracks. It is therefore hoped that NS will consider sale of the required strips of land for the trail corridor. Completion of Phase 2 in Upper Merion Township will result in a continuous trail from Valley Forge National Historical Park to West Conshohocken.

Lower Merion

Phase 2 in Lower Merion follows the west bank of the Schuylkill River, linking the Green Lane bridge/Belmont Avenue with a connection to the Cynwyd Trail. In effect, this extends the Harry

Olson trail (completed in Phase I) southward from Belmont Avenue. In order to avoid a “dead end,” this reach of trail should not be constructed until a branch of the Cynwyd Trail to Pencoyd is built, or until Norfolk Southern abandons rail service over the Blackie Bridge and the bridge is rebuilt to accommodate pedestrians. A third viable scenario involves O’Neill Properties Group’s proposed residential development on the Connelly Containers/Georgia Pacific site. If that development (with its riverfront trail) is completed, Phase 2 (and Phase 4/Lower Merion below) would provide a useful link to the Harry Olson Trail.

3. Third Phase of Development

Lower Merion

Phase 3 is the trail linking West Conshohocken to Flat Rock Park in Lower Merion. This includes Reaches 30 and 32, the hillside trails below the Schuylkill Expressway, and will require permission from PennDOT to construct.

4. Fourth Phase of Development

Upper Merion

Should a riverfront trail from Kunda Park in Upper Merion (and past the PECO Fire Academy in West Conshohocken) become possible at some future date, it would provide a more direct alignment than the “inland” Phase 1 trail. Phase 1 would also remain in place, thus providing a loop trail in West Conshohocken.

Lower Merion

The fourth phase in Lower Merion is the link between the Cynwyd Trail connector and the proposed O’Neill Properties Group development at Pencoyd.

Construction of this section of trail may be moved ahead of other phases, depending upon when the O’Neill project is completed.

Beyond Phase 4: The improvements to trails in Philadelphia that would connect with the Schuylkill River West Trail at the Pencoyd Iron Bridge are part of Fairmount Park’s long-range plan, to be completed by the City some future date.

B. Opinion of Probable Acquisition and Construction Costs

The budgetary opinion of probable construction costs presented in this report is based on analysis of trail characteristics across each segment (reach) of trail. Linear foot costs for each trail type are derived from CTC’s experience with trails of similar characteristics in Pennsylvania. The typical linear foot cost for each trail type is adjusted by a factor reflecting special construction characteristics within the reach (e.g., a trail constructed along a densely wooded slope will likely be more expensive than a trail traversing an open field).

The Summary of Probable Costs table, broken down by phase, follows on the next page. For a more detailed analysis of probable construction costs, please refer to the Preliminary Opinion of Probable Cost in Appendix 6.

SUMMARY OF PROBABLE COSTS

Description	Miles	Cost
Phase 1	8.2	\$5,026,758
Phase 2	4.1	\$6,543,778
Phase 3	3.8	\$3,496,707
Phase 4	0.1	\$63,572
Total*	16.3	\$15,130,815

*If West Conshohocken Kunda Park / PECO / NS segment is constructed, add \$2,552,870 and if West Conshohocken Viaduct / Spiral Ramp over NS is constructed, add \$3,450,000.

C. Opinion of Management and Maintenance Costs

Maintenance costs generally range from \$5,000 to \$7,000/per mile/per year for similar trails. We recommend that the responsible agencies use a figure of \$7,000 per mile to estimate maintenance costs during the first year after development. This figure can be evaluated at the end of the first year. This cost can be used for fundraising purposes as well as to solicit volunteer help for maintenance.

Many trail operators have been able to supplement their maintenance program by creating partnership agreements with local businesses, clubs and organizations. Formal cooperative agreements can be made with these partners that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party. Developing an effective maintenance management system is an on-going process.

D. Potential Funding Sources

Funding sources will vary according to the type of work being performed: studies, acquisition, design or construction. A list of potential sources is provided in Appendix 1.

Of particular interest are at this time:

- Montgomery County Open Space Funds
- DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program Grants
- PennDOT "Smart Transportation" funds
- Public Dedication of Land and Fees-in-Lieu for Parks and Recreation. A free guide to using Section 503 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code is available at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/>
- Owing to the economic development aspects of the Schuylkill River West Trail, funding opportunities are available through the Department of Community and Economic Development. DCED's Single Application for Assistance allows

applicants to apply for financial assistance from the Department's various funding sources. Details are at <https://www.esa.dced.state.pa.us/ESAW/>

E. Recommendations and Responsibilities for Future Action

The proposed alignment of the Schuylkill River West Trail passes through four municipalities in Montgomery County. This study recommends that each of the four municipalities take the initiative to design and build their portion of the Trail. This study's designs can be used as a template, to ensure the Trail's continuity. Montgomery County may assist the four municipalities within the County by making Open Space funds available, and providing guidance from its experience in developing and operating other long distance trails in the County.

Funding sources at the County, State and Federal level often place multi-municipal efforts at the top of the list, when determining which projects will be awarded grants. Thus, trails that do not cross municipal boundaries, and those with gaps or "dead ends," will be viewed less favorably by funding sources, and will therefore be more difficult to implement.

Early actions: In a significant early step, Upper Merion Township is about to begin construction of the first piece of the Schuylkill River West Trail. In 2008, Township supervisors voted unanimously to fund the trail between Heuser Park and Bob Case Park (designated Reach 4 in this study).

Existing Sections of the Trail: There are existing trails, albeit informal in some cases, in every municipality along the Schuylkill River West Trail. Trails sections such as the link from the apartment complexes in Upper Merion Township under Route 422 to Valley Forge National Historical Park, and the so-called "Harry Olson Trail" from Flat Rock Park to Belmont Avenue in Lower Merion already receive some degree of public use which should be recognized in setting priorities for development. Of note is the fact the these two sections of Trail link with other existing trails, which helps to explain their current level of use, even though they have little or no signage.

Coordination with Other Trails and Agencies: The Schuylkill River West Trail will link with the Schuylkill River Trail and the Horse-Shoe Trail at Valley Forge National Historical Park, with the Cynwyd Trail near Bala-Cynwyd, and with the Schuylkill River Trail and Fairmount Park near the Pencoyd Bridge. Such linkages provide opportunities for joint responsibilities for development and maintenance of sections of the Schuylkill River Trail. In addition to working beneficially with each other as has already occurred in the development of this study, the four municipalities should work closely with agencies involved with linking trails such as the National Park Service, the Manayunk Development Corporation, and the Fairmount Park Commission. In particular, the development of the off-road Schuylkill River Trail in the lower end of Manayunk, where it is now in Main Street, offer opportunities for joint trail development. Such multi-county, multi-municipal coordination is most attractive to many funding sources.