

Gap Committee July 2019 Update

The Committee consists of Deb Frawley, Courtney Mahronich Vita, Kim Harris, Mike Baker, and Chairman Ron Steffey.

The following is an update of the Gap Committee work.

- The Committee requests the name be changed from the Gap Committee to the Trail Development Committee
 - See Attachment A
- Courtney Mahronich Vita, Kim Harris, and Ron Steffey attended the International Trails Symposium in Syracuse and were able to network with others including in depth conversations with people from the Rails to Trails Conservancy, PA DCNR, and the National Parks System.
- Barney Scholl, Bob Jennings, Deb Frawley, Courtney Mahronich Vita, Kim Harris, and Ron Steffey attended the Dominion/PEC Environmental Awards Dinner where additional networking occurred. Two award winners, Troy Firth and Aspinwall Riverfront Park, have been involved with sections of trails that are part of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and have communicated Erie to Pittsburgh Trail interests.
- City of Erie
 - The Erie and Western PA Port Authority has been granted a RecTAP Grant through PRPS to evaluate their trails and ways to improve the trail connections along the Bayfront. Steffey Trail Connections was chosen as the Peer.
 - The County, City, and Port Authority have notified the committee that it prefers Dobbins Landing as the start point of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail
 - See Attachment B
- MPO, RPO, PennDOT, DCNR and others are utilizing Long Range Transportation Plans in their funding analysis. Deb Frawley and Kim Harris were able to add more on the Northwest RPO, but trail groups need to become more involved in the process. Courtney Mahronich Vita and Ron Steffey presented trail projects they are working on to the Southwest Planning Commission Active Transportation Committee. We can help promote specific projects if we have knowledge of them. See Attachment C.
- This committee is recommending that we use the “8 – 80” concept in trail design for on-road and off-road. See Attachment D.
- Corry Area
 - Marty Raddock may have more in his report.
 - The Blue Zone Project had a kick-off event in Corry that promotes healthy active lifestyles. Marty Raddock and Ron Steffey were asked to participate in the event and provide information on trails in general and the opportunities available for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.
 - A conference call was held on May 13, 2019 to discuss a 3-mile rails with trails project. The conference call included representatives from the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad (WNY&PA), Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, Erie County Planning, PennDOT District 1, Impact Corry, Rails to Trails Conservancy, Steffey Trail Connections, and others. All were interested in assisting in the project, but the key is for the two railroads, WNY&PA and BPRR to initiate plans to combine rail use into one set

of tracks from the heart of Corry to the village of Lovell. The Rails to Trails Conservancy is interested in assisting in this project on several levels.

- Corry to Centerville
 - A Trail Workshop is planned for interested trail advocates on the East Branch Trail near Sportmans Road Bridge on July 11, 2019. The goal of the project is to initiate interest in trail design, construction, and maintenance. Funding was in part through through the PA Land Trust Association and the PA DCNR's PA RTP through FHA.
- Centerville to Emlenton
 - Kim Harris may have more on this area in her report
- Emlenton to Foxburg
 - Allegheny Valley Trails Association filed a CFA Greenways, Trails, and Recreation grant application for improvements to Ritchie Run Bridge. The planned improvements would not only make improvements for nonmotorized use but also for motorized construction and maintenance access.
- Foxburg to Freeport
 - Nothing to report to or from the Gap Committee. Chris Ziegler and Ren Steele may have more on in their reports.
- Freeport to the Point in Pittsburgh
 - Courtney Mahronich Vita will have more in her report.
- Please see individual trail groups' written reports and updates.

This report is submitted by Chairman Ron Steffey and is open to suggested edits by the committee. Once a final edit is approved by the majority of the Gap Committee, the report will be dated, signed, scanned, and sent to the EPTA Secretary.

Attachment A

Motion

The Erie to Pittsburgh Gap Committee requests the name of the Gap Committee to be changed to the “Trail Development Committee” to better describe the work of the committee and to lesson the confusion with the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP).

Background

Conversation with others that are familiar with the GAP are somewhat confused by the “EPTA Gap Committee”. This is also a more proactive and positive nomenclature that reflects the work of the dedicated committee members.

Attachment B

Motion

The Trail Development Committee reviewed the recommendations of the Presque Isle State Park Managers, Visit Erie, the Erie County Executive and Planning Department, the City of Erie, and the Erie and Western Pennsylvania Port Authority and recommends the start/end of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail be located at the Dobbins Landing in the Erie Bayfront Area. This includes the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Development Committee involvement to:

- 1. Assist and cooperate with the previously mentioned stakeholders and others to “Support partner organizations” as recommended by Key Issue #2 and to “Advocate, Educate, Promote” as recommended by Key Issue #4 of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance Strategic Plan adopted on January 17, 2018. This will also include assistance to***
 - a. Design, manufacture, and install a marker designating the start/end of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail***
 - b. Design and implement a route and signage for directions to and from the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail start point***
 - c. Complete installation phases so a Celebration can be scheduled during the PA Greenways and Trail Summit in Erie in 2021***

Background info for Motion

- The motion is consistent with the EPTA Vision, Mission, and is an implementation of parts of all four Key Issues to the EPTA Strategic Plan of 2018.
- There is a reason why the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail has very few off-road trail miles in Erie County. There were no active Erie to Pittsburgh Trail advocates leading projects. The Trail Development Committee (Formerly the Gap Committee) sees opportunities to make a dramatic change in trail development. It will take nurturing and cooperation. Committee members are willing to put resources into assisting the emerging Erie County Trail advocates and possible Erie to Pittsburgh members and partners.
- Four months ago the Erie and Western Pennsylvania Port Authority Executive Director Brenda Sandberg was unaware that the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance was still active. Now she is excited to be considered for the start point to be in the Bayfront and possibly on Port Authority property. The project helps promote the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail existence and progress.
- The Port Authority requested and obtained a RecTAP Grant to evaluate and make recommendations for trails for their property at the Bayfront. Erie to Pittsburgh Trail has opportunities to be involved.

- County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper asked that Erie County, the City of Erie be included in determining the start point for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail
- There is no “grand” start point for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail in either Pittsburgh or Erie. While it may not be “follow the yellow brick road” it is a concept that will attract people.
- No trail groups have been sustainable advocates for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail in Erie County
 - This has changed over the last three years in the Corry area.
 - We have an opportunity to aid in Erie County Trail Advocates development
- We have an opportunity to help others that are asking for help. If we aid others and are successful it can lead to funding and staff funding for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail
 - Staff funding does not need to be for an EPTA Employee, it can be tasks assigned by a cooperating agency that sees the value of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.
 - Those that get results get more funding. There are proven paths for funding to those that produce
 - There is a proven path of no funding for those that do not produce results
- The Trail Development Committee (we want to change the committee name to better describe the committee’s work and minimize the confusion with the GAP) can assist in this Bayfront Project. This is not anything new, the committee members have been helping organizations requesting help for longer than the committee has been formed in all the counties involved in the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

Attachment C

Motion

The Trail Development Committee requests that it can represent the goals and missions of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance when communicating with others such as PennDOT, DCNR, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Regional Planning Authorities (RPO) when the “Local Champion Team” is not established, present, or requests assistance.

Background info for Motion

The strategies by funders for trail projects are more frequently requiring projects to be mentioned in Official Planning documents and on lists such as the TIP and the LRTP. Recently the Gap Committee was able to include projects on the Northwest Planning Commission LRTP. While we are being aggressive, we wish to work within the wishes of the EPTA Board and bring this to the EPTA Board for guidance.

Attachment D

Motion

The Trail Development Committee requests that the 8 80 concept is adopted for guidelines for on off-road and on-road design, construction, and maintenance. The concept is based on what is good for an 8 year old and an 80 year old person is also good for the community.

Background info for Motion

A frequent question concerns on-road strategies. We became bogged down trying to establish suggested guidelines for on-road sections of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. The consensus of this committee is to use the 8 80 Concept. Several articles on this can be reviewed by a 8 80 cities search. While the concept is very broad, it does provide a basis for consideration for the uniqueness of every situation.