



The Circuit Trails Coalition – Basic Governance Framework

History of the Circuit Trails Coalition

The Circuit Coalition (renamed the Circuit Trails Coalition in 2016) was created in 2012 to coordinate and advocate for the completion of the Circuit (renamed the Circuit Trails in 2016), Greater Philadelphia's Regional Trail Network in nine counties, including five in Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) and four in New Jersey (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer). The original governance document was created in September 2012, updated April 2014, February 2017 and March 2019. Archived governance documents are available upon request.

The Coalition was created to follow up on successful collaborative efforts amongst multiple organizations, which working closely were able to secure a \$23 million USDOT TIGER grant in 2009 and create the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Regional Trail Fund in late 2010. Because of the success of these efforts, a need for an ongoing collaboration was identified (instead of the previous haphazard or opportunistic collaborative efforts).

The Circuit Coalition partners worked together for over a year to coordinate the official creation of the Circuit, which was defined as 750 miles of multi-county, multi-state, connected trails; and of the Circuit Trails Coalition, which was composed of over 35 member organizations in 2012.

Finally, a GIS mapping and cost estimating analysis were performed by the DVRPC to determine what the ultimate cost of completing the network would be - \$250 million over 20 years, or \$12.5 million per year.

The Circuit Coalition was officially created at a ceremony held at Schuylkill Banks in Philadelphia on May 31, 2012 – attended and supported by: Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, DVRPC Executive Director Barry Seymour, DVRPC board members and county representatives, supporters from the business and foundation communities, and every Circuit member organization.

Since then, the Circuit Trails have expanded to over 800 miles and as of 2019, about 325 miles have been completed. In 2017, the Circuit Coalition launched the 500 miles by 2025 campaign to gain support for accelerating the pace of trail construction in order to meet the regional long term goal of finishing the Circuit by 2040.

Process to become a Member Organization:

Organizations interested in joining the Circuit Trails Coalition should have some kind of connection with multi-use trails that accommodate all types of users in the nine counties of the Greater Philadelphia Region in PA and NJ. Organizations outside this area can still submit a request, but must demonstrate their connectivity and relevance to the 750+ miles of trails that have already been mapped.

The procedure for joining shall work as follows:

- 1) Organizations submit a written request to the Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee on official organization letterhead.
- 2) The Steering Committee will review the request and upon review, may act to approve or disapprove the applicant's request.

Benefits and Responsibilities of Member Organizations:

Coalition membership will have multiple benefits for member organizations. A few of these benefits include:

- 1) Each Member Organization will receive one single vote to select the members of the Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee and on other votes brought to the membership by the Steering Committee.
- 2) Each Member Organization will be able to make nominations to the Steering Committee.
- 3) Each Member Organization can submit content, events, etc. to be posted in the Circuit Trails blog and social media.
- 4) Each Member Organization will be able to assist the Steering Committee and state and regional governmental agencies in identifying trail development priorities.
- 5) As part of the Circuit Trails Coalition, each Member Organization will have unmatched access to the leaders in regional trail development, and to multiple other networking opportunities.
- 6) Each Member Organization will have up to date access to the latest federal, state, and regional trail funding information, and will help direct funding campaigns.
- 7) No annual membership renewal is necessary.
- 8) Finally, All Member Organization employees will be eligible to participate in Circuit Trails Coalition events and meetings – even those not formally open to the general public.

Each member organization will have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Attend Semi-Annual Coalition meetings and participate in occasional seminars and surveys
- 2) Vote in annual Steering Committee member elections
- 3) Exhibit and promote the Circuit Trails branding and the organization's participation in the Circuit Trails Coalition, including by posting the Circuit Trails logo and map on the organization's website, using the appropriate social media hashtags (#onthecircuit, @circuittrails) when promoting events on or in conjunction with the Circuit Trails, by writing articles and blog entries about the Circuit Trails, and by performing presentations about the Circuit Trails.
- 4) If the organization plans, designs, engineers, or builds segments of trails within the Circuit Trails, it shall include the Circuit Trails logo and a mention of the Circuit Trails in all project communications to the public and in signs at construction sites. On-trail Circuit signage is encouraged on new and existing trails.
- 5) Cooperate with the Steering Committee in implementation of the Strategic Goals and Action Items that are selected by the Steering Committee every two years.

Removal of Organization from Membership

A Member Organization shall remain in good standing with the Coalition unless an issue of concern is brought to the attention of the Steering Committee. Should an issue arise, the Member Organization shall receive the opportunity to present their point of view at a subsequent Steering Committee meeting; and receive guidance from the Steering Committee on how to correct the issue. If the issue persists, the Steering Committee can recommend exclusion of the organization from membership. The Member Organization will remain officially a member of the Coalition until, after a 30-day comment period, it is excluded by a majority vote of the membership.

Steering Committee of Coalition:

The Steering Committee (SC) will be composed of 12-14 members, each with a single vote. The SC shall have a balance between different types of organizations, including:

- 1) At least 4 members from an organization based in PA and 4 members from an organization based in NJ
- 2) At least 3 members to represent trail-building and trail-management organizations

Furthermore, the SC members shall represent as best as possible a geographic balance of the many different components of the Circuit.

The Chair, Pennsylvania Vice-Chair and New Jersey Vice Chair of the Steering Committee shall be responsible for advancing the interests of the Circuit Trails Coalition; for convening a monthly meeting for the Steering Committee; for maintaining

communications with the overall Circuit Trails Coalition membership; and for convening the full membership meeting on a regular basis.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs are selected by the Steering Committee for two year terms after the election of new members. Length of terms may be adjusted by one year to ensure continuity of at least the Chair or one Vice-Chair each year.

Responsibilities of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is responsible for setting, tracking and implementing Circuit Coalition strategic goals, inviting new members to join the Circuit Coalition, inviting organizations and companies to become Circuit Ambassadors, recommending approval of new additions of trail segments to the Circuit, keeping all Circuit Coalition members up to date on activities, programs and events and representing the Circuit Trails at events throughout the network's footprint. Each Steering Committee member is expected to attend two community events annually on behalf of the Circuit.

Process to become a member of the Steering Committee:

The Circuit Trails Steering Committee members are elected from among the membership once a year, in the fall. Nominations are solicited from all Coalition members, and at least 30 days notice will be provided for election of Steering Committee members. Their terms start in January and last for two years.

At the day of the vote, each Coalition Member Organization shall have one single vote.

Schedule of Meetings:

Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee Meetings:

The Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee shall meet in person, to coordinate and communicate amongst member organizations, on a monthly basis. Non-Steering Committee members of the Circuit are invited to attend meetings and are welcome to address the Steering Committee at any time with permission of the chair.

Circuit Trails Coalition Semi-Annual Membership Meetings:

The full membership of the Circuit Trails Coalition shall meet twice a year in May and November. These meetings provide an opportunity for networking and updating the general membership on important developments regarding the Circuit Trails.