

**THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS**

**Semi-Annual Meeting
May 9, 2024**

Welcome!

**What is a passion that
brought you to the
Circuit Trails?**

Welcome!

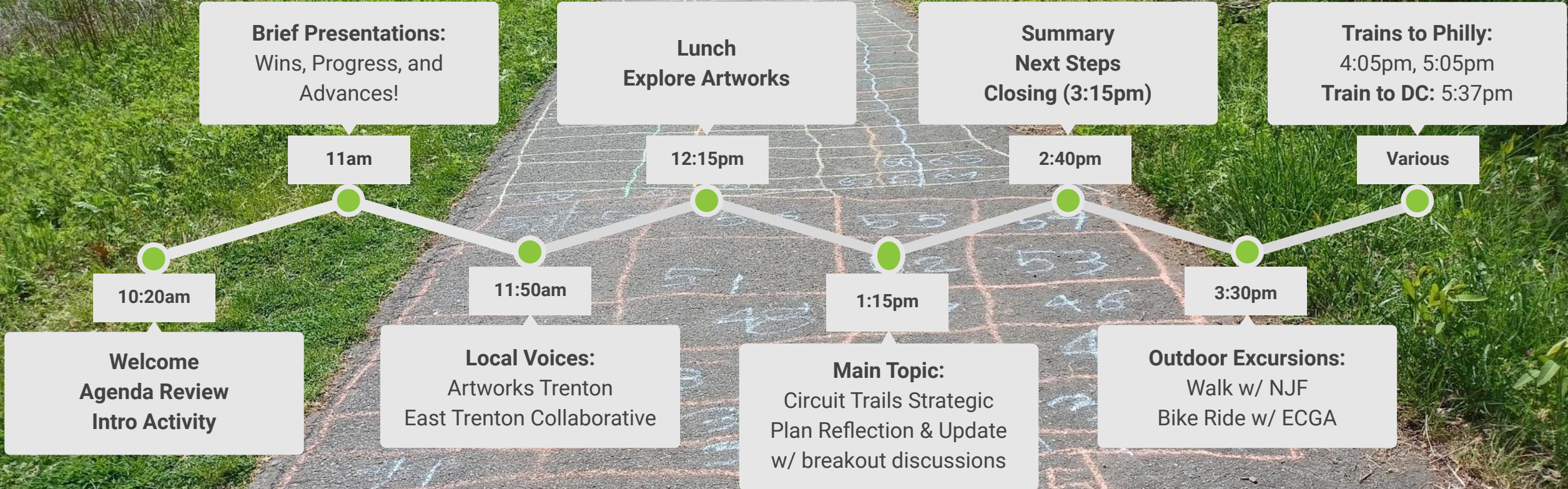
Bridge Street Crossing

[Link to PHL17 at 10 p.m.](#)

- One of PA DCNR's TOP TEN trail gaps "closed"
- 75 miles of continuous trail - Bristol to Allentown



Today's Agenda



THE CIRCUIT TRAILS

Wins, Progress, and Advances!

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Expand the Coalition

Coalition Assessment Phase 1: Structural Changes

Goal #3 - Better understand the coalition's make-up, capacity, and structure and evolve the Coalition as necessary so that it can better achieve its short- and long-term visions.

Objective 1: Assess the Coalition model and structure and make short-term changes as necessary based on the assessment.

New Circuit Trails Coalition Structure - DRAFT 5.2.24

Circuit Member Organizations, Non-Profits, Businesses

Leadership & Steering Committee

Led by 1 Chair, 1 PA Co-Chair, 1 NJ Co-Chair, SC is currently 13 members, each serves 2-year terms and is eligible for reelection (voted on by Coalition Members). Meets once a month.

Assessment Working Group

Consists of a small subset of Circuit members tackling the action items identified by Phase 1 of the Circuit Coalition Assessment (Member onboarding, leadership dev, engagement). This group also supports Phase 2 (ongoing now).

Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Committee

Focused on communications support for major Circuit events, campaigns, and other action items relevant to the region. Led by Circuit Chair w/ support from PA & NJ Co-Chairs, plus Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and Consultant: Devine + Partners. Works with PA and NJ Action teams to tackle relevant issues to priority projects.

PA Action Teams

Includes both county priority trails and multi-county priority trails

NJ Action Teams

Includes both county priority trails and multi-county priority trails

Learning Community

Convenes Coalition Members once every quarter for deep dive workshops showcasing work from different Circuit members, reflecting with questions and potential JEDI-based solutions and strategies to overcome challenges. Responsible for utilizing the Inclusionary Trail Planning Toolkit & implementing Equity of Access to Trails recs.

Community Grant Program Advisory Committee

Maintenance Committee

Works to better understand challenges, costs, opportunities, and strategies to better support maintenance and workforce development.

Circuit Public Sector Partners, Planners, and Trail Managers

- MPO: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
- County planning agencies: 5 PA counties (includes Phila County), 4 NJ counties
- Philly Parks and Rec Dept
- State DOTs
- NJ DEP & PA DCNR
- Transportation Management Authorities (TMAs)

Circuit Partners: Private Foundations

Ex: William Penn Foundation

Circuit Trails Programming & Grassroots Organizations

Includes both formal and informal groups of residents and local leaders who lead programming, stewardship, and engagement on the Circuit Trails (both in coordination and not in coordination with the Circuit Coalition)

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Led by PEC and coalition Assessment Team
- Supported by consultant Varissa McMickens-Blair
- January 2024 - July 2024

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Original goal
 - Develop a coalition that is more diverse and representative of current + potential trail users
- Original objective
 - Increase the size of the coalition and steering committee

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

- Learn from **program providers & place-based program hosts**
 - Interviews
 - Small focus groups
- **Survey coalition members** about programming
- Inventory successful **existing programs**
- Explore ways for program providers to **engage with the coalition**
 - Committees? Other structures?

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Expand the Circuit Community

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**Marketing + Communications
May 2024**

Team RTC



Brandi Horton
VP of Communications



Cas Marburger
Director of Communications



Suzanne Matyas
Social Media and
Engagement Strategist



Anthony Le
Digital Content and Web
Manager



Joe Lacroix
Designer



Anya Saretzky
Project Manager, Circuit Trails

Communications Partners



Christine Reimert
Strategy + PR



Alyssa Zinar
Digital Content and
Engagement



Meghan Shaffer
Digital Content and
Engagement



Holistic Support of Strategic Plan

Representation and access are consistent themes in the marketing planning and execution, supporting:

Goal #1: Complete 500 miles of Circuit Trails by 2025 with a focus on increasing trail access within under-resourced communities.

Objective 2: Generate public and governmental support for Priority Projects.

Goal #2: Expand the number of Circuit Trail users among under-represented groups and residents of under-resourced communities.

Objective 1: Market the Circuit Trails to potential new trail users with a particular focus on under-represented groups and under-resourced communities

Leveraging Market Research for Immediate Action

Results from the JEDI Working Group study offered powerful, actionable insights for the communications strategy:

- Place the trail user at the center of the story—the Circuit Trails are theirs to create the experiences they value and seek out
- Align the Circuit Trails with audience priorities—meet them where they are
- Position the Circuit Trails as THE destination, and the experience as relevant to individual interests
- Diversify paid media channels to engage more relevant/influential channels
- Increase off-trail and tangible engagement opportunities to introduce the Circuit; provide reasons to keep coming back
- Provide an experience—whether it's self guided, in small groups or organized

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100s OF MILES
OF HAPPY

Circuit Trails JEDI Task Force

Market Research: Equity of Access to Trails

How do underrepresented communities use trails?

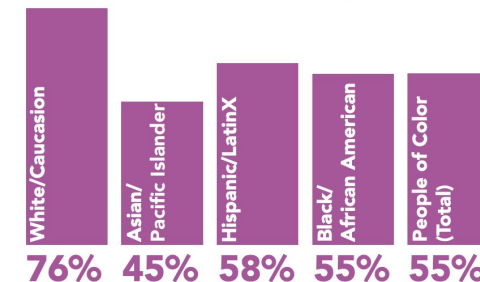


10 actions to take right now for more inclusive trails

- 1. Invite everyone to have their fun on the trail**
The best way to overcome a subtle lack of welcome is to offer compelling activities geared towards the tastes of the audience. Live music, festivals, family-oriented activities, pop-up shops, local artisans, historical commemorations, and food trucks were key ideas.
- 2. Extend an overt welcome**
Imagery can be meaningful. Stakeholders suggested that public art at trail access points feature people of color, and posting the message "Black Lives Matter" in key locations would also convey a sense of respect and welcome.
- 3. Host organized group activities**
Many people want to be on the trail with a friend or in a group, both for fellowship and to alleviate their safety concerns. Post-COVID, offer opportunities to join up with other people along the trail to pursue similar interests, with activities such as guided nature hikes or birdwatching walks, yoga along the trail, exercise groups, and activities for children.
- 4. Create spaces where people feel safe.**
With few exceptions, people insisted they did not want to see a police presence on the trail. Most people would rather see "park rangers," whom they felt would use a trail in areas where safety is a concern.

Do you agree with the statement:

"When I am in the parks or on the trails around here, I see other people like me."



Id allow them to gather with family and ad a book or enjoy nature. These could ids, and benches and other places to sit.

urface, lighting in certain areas, and easier g. In addition, they hoped for amenities rts courts or fields, and boat rentals.

borhoods to point the direction to the e into the Circuit Trails Network, not just ating further destinations that could be hance that thirst for exploration.

n the urban environment. They want a ster, the sound of birds, splashes of color. can dip out of their normal world and dip for a short time.

ike them enjoying the trail. They want to they belong there. The Circuit's website e neighborhoods having fun on the trail.

il Door-to-Door
l curating images to their local followers ls. At the same time, many people asked yers, conversations, and traditional mail.

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Approaching Key Strategic Imperatives

Recognize accomplishments, celebrate trail experiences, and generate momentum: trail mileage, funding, political support, IRL engagement

Leverage diverse media and partnerships to create opportunities for meaningful activations and cross promotional initiatives

Elevate authentic representation of trail users, their connection to trails, and the community value of trails in partnership with grantees

Maintain the momentum of the established Circuit Trails general consumer awareness campaign

Ensure inclusion and welcome is prioritized across all communications

Bringing it Together

My Circuit Trails: Framing

Invite everyone to have their fun on the trail + Show people enjoying the trail

Market Research Takeaway

Elevate authentic representation of trail users, their connection to trails, and the community value of trails in partnership with grantees

Marketing Strategic Imperative

Market the Circuit Trails to potential new trail users with a particular focus on under-represented groups and under-resourced communities

Strategic Plan Objective

My Circuit Trails



My Circuit Trails: Michael's Experience

AUTHORED BY: THE CIRCUIT TRAILS

SHARE POST: [f](#) [x](#) [v](#) [m](#)



To Michael Moulton, the head of the [East Falls River Landing Friends Group](#), trails provide a "mini retreat," a source of refuge.

Michael is rejuvenated by the routes he rides on the [Circuit Trails network](#) and finds a particular sense of peace on the section of the Schuylkill River Trail in East Falls. It's there that he has a direct connection point to the water via an accessible landing—a project that is the result of his efforts with the East Falls River Landing Friends Group in conjunction with the [East Falls Development Corporation \(EFDC\)](#).



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Street Teams

Extend an overt welcome + Invite everyone to have their fun on the trail
Market Research Takeaways

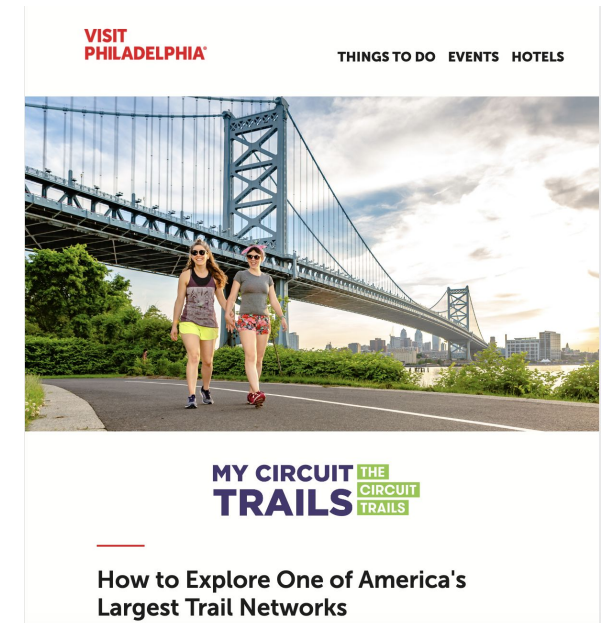
Ensure inclusion and welcome is prioritized
Marketing Strategic Imperative

Market the Circuit Trails to potential new trail users with a particular focus on under-represented groups and under-resourced communities
Strategic Plan Objective



Paid Media

- Digital Advertising (social and display) throughout the season
- WDAS Radio partnership with ads and events
- Partnerships with regional community-based publishers
- Influencers
- Visit Philly



Earned Media

- Integrate Circuit Trails into more far-reaching stories
- Leverage press around key moments to drive advocacy goals
- To date, 495 total earned hits since the 2021 strategic plan

RAISE Grants Illustrate Transformative Impact of Connected Trail, Walking and Biking Infrastructure



Circuit Trails Network Nears 50 Percent Completion, Secures \$41.7 Million in Funding for Trail Projects in 2023



By Mark Hostutler

Published: 5:22 am EST December 22, 2023 | Updated: 2:36 pm EST December 20, 2023



Circuit Trails Network Nears 50 Percent Completion, Secures \$41.7 Million in Funding for Trail Projects in 2023



By Mark Hostutler

Published: 5:22 am EST December 22, 2023 | Updated: 3:13 pm EST December 20, 2023



Top 10 Pennsylvania Trail Gap Closed; Officials Celebrate Opening of Crossing on D&L Trail in Bucks County



By Mark Hostutler

Published: 5:02 am EDT April 29, 2024 | Updated: 5:15 am EDT April 29, 2024



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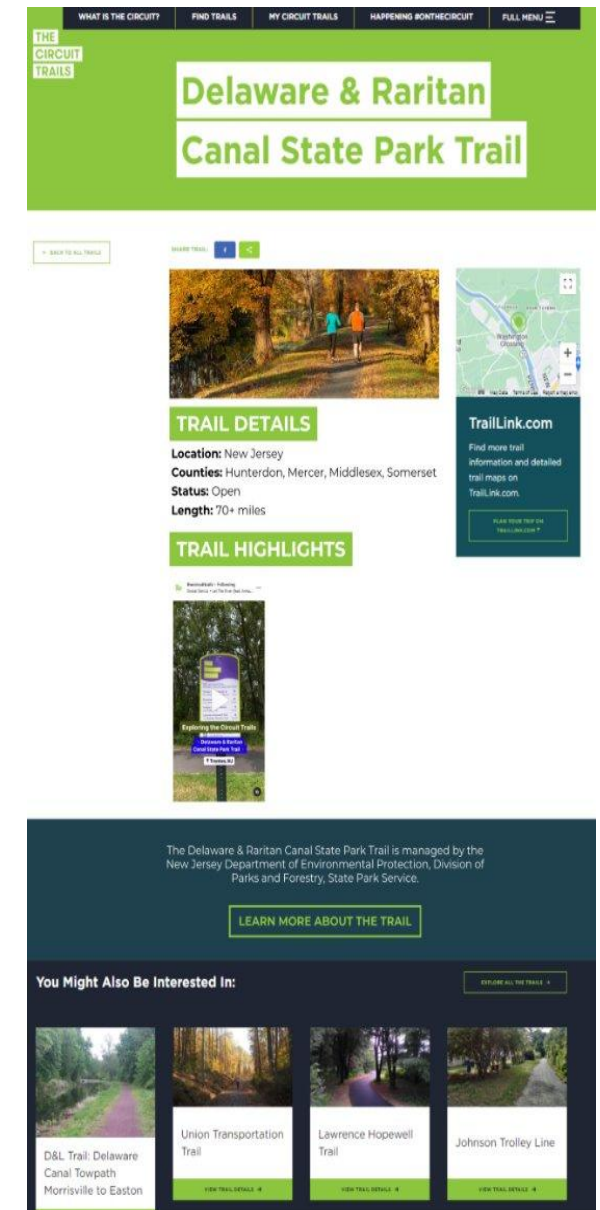
Owned Media

Provide opportunities to get involved, both as an explorer of and advocate for the Circuit.

Expand community-based content sharing through direct engagement and produced content

Highlight things people can do like “itinerary” style content and advocacy “how-tos”

Showcase personal trail experiences to welcome people to the Circuit



Outcomes

Organic Social Community: 31,262 +33% since 2021

Video Reach: 505,340 since 2021 and prioritizing video as a part of the strategic plan

Web Engagement: Users up 27% during peak campaign window (25.8K Jul. – Sept.)

Earned media hits: 495 total since the launch of the strategic plan

Newsletter audience: 11,360 + 1,440 Circuit Citizens

In Progress + Upcoming

Monthly Content - October 2024

- 3 newsletters (in partnership with BCGP)
 - 1 Grassroots Newsletter (full audience)
 - 1 Coalition Newsletter
 - 1 Monthly Action to Circuit Citizens (engaged audience)/minimum
- 2 Circuit Trails Blogs (minimum)
- 1 My Circuit Trails Video + 1 trail itinerary video a month
- Paid Content Creator Posts — at least 1 post a month
- Ongoing social content
- Ongoing earned media
- Paid media

Monthly Content November 2023 – March 2024

- 3 newsletters (in partnership with BCGP)
 - 1 Grassroots Newsletter (full audience)
 - 1 Coalition Newsletter
 - 1 Monthly Action to Circuit Citizens (engaged audience)
- 1 Circuit Trails Blog
- Ongoing social content
- Ongoing earned media

How to Get Involved

- **Showcase Circuit:** on website, social, materials, press
- **Engage with the Circuit on Social:**
#OnTheCircuit, FB/Insta/TikTok
@thecircuittrails, X (Formerly Twitter)
@circuittrails
- **Share Content:** blogs, events/ribbon cuttings/ground breakings, advocacy needs, community partnerships, opportunities
- **Amplify the Circuit Story:** Circuit Citizens and advocacy, events, fun happenings

Training and Tools:

tinyurl.com/CircuitSocialTools

Photos: tinyurl.com/circuitphotofolder

Share updates, ask questions, get swag
and resources: anya@railstotrails.org

THANK YOU!

Community Grant Program

Locally led, community-based / identity-based programming on trails



Community Grant Program Expansion

- **Original funding:** \$150K from William Penn Foundation
 - 10 grantees
 - 2023 + 2024
- **Additional funding:** \$167K from National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
 - 6 new grantees
 - 1 strategic partner
 - 2024 + 2025

Community Grant Program Expansion

- **New funding:** \$112K from William Penn Foundation
 - 10 grantees?
 - 2025 only
 - Expected launch: July/August 2024
 - New applicants welcome!

ARTWORKS
TRENTON'S VISUAL ARTS CENTER

COMMUNITY



D&R Canal Trail - Artworks Trail Jam 2023

Photo: Daniel Paschall, ECGA



Chester Creek Trail - Chester Bike Rodeo



Chester Creek Trail - Chester Bike Rodeo

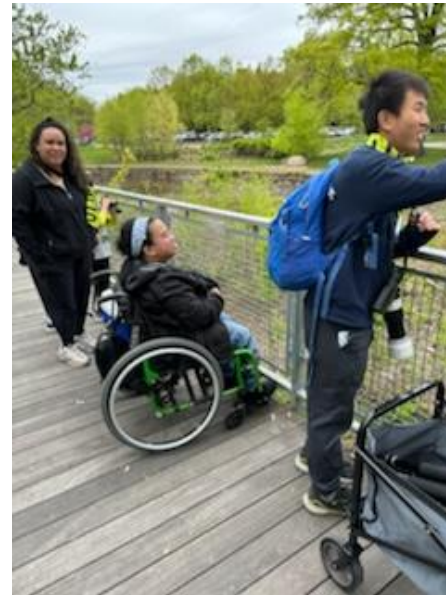
Photos: Emilia Crotty, PEC





Chester Creek Trail - Environmental Center Upgrades

Photos : Barron Lacy, 9th St. YCC -- Chester Creek Trail-- Environmental Center 2023



Schuylkill River Trail - Exploring Nature w/ DPP





Ben Franklin Bridge (and elsewhere) - Hike + Heal capacity increase



Cobbs Creek Trail - Healing Through the Land



Photo: Emilia Crotty, PEC



EAST TRENTON
COLLABORATIVE

**D&R Canal Trail Access -
East Trenton Collaborative**

Grantee Convenings

- Collaboration between Circuit Trails Coalition, Justice Outside, WPF
- Priorities
 - Build relationships
 - Spend time outside together
 - Develop a network of outdoor program providers
 - Support outdoor leaders



December 2023 - Camden, NJ

April 2024 - Wilmington, DE



What to Expect Next

- **Round 2 Launch**

- Application window: July/August 2024
- New applicants welcome!
- More details soon
- **Join the Advisory Group!**
 - Email ecrotty@pecpa.org

- **Lessons Learned Report**

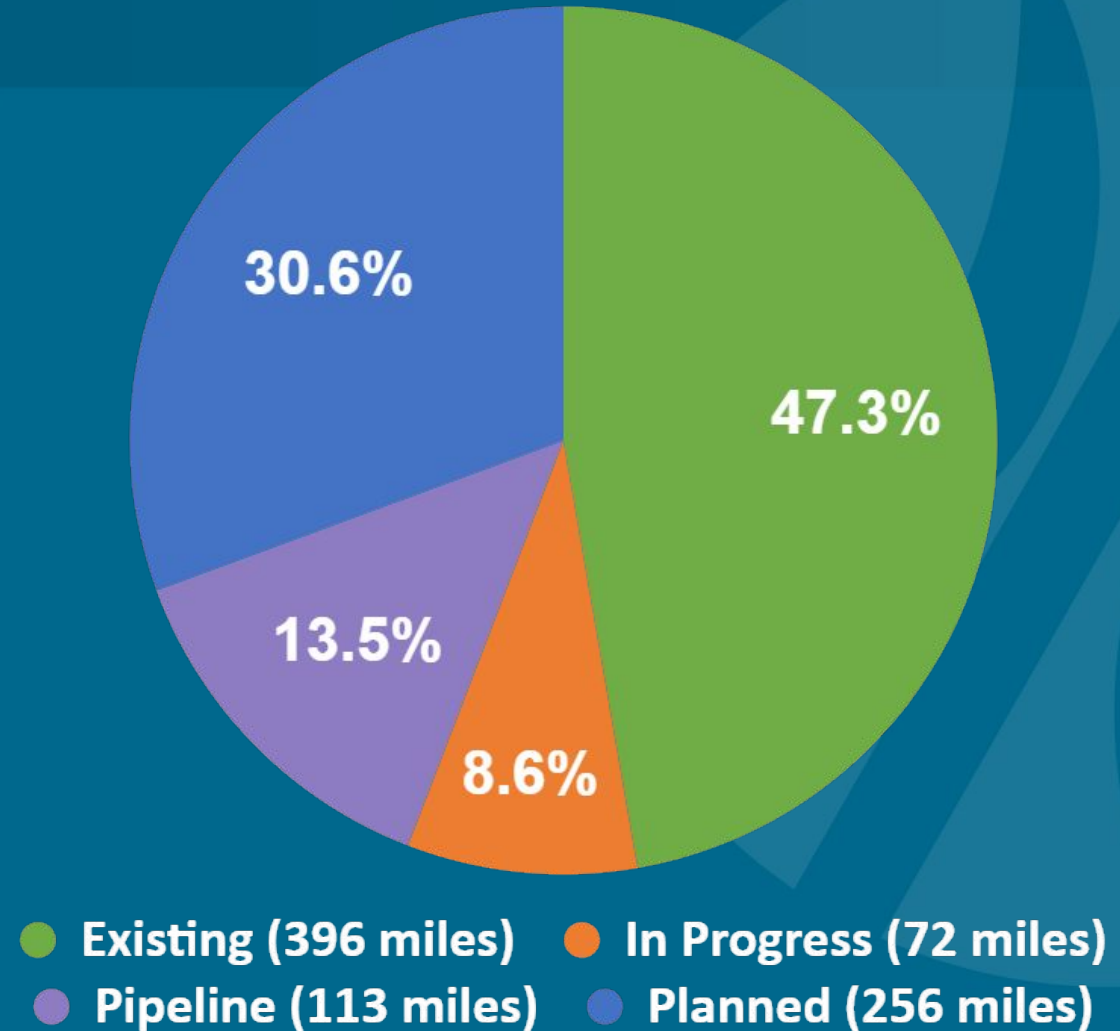
- General lessons from 2023 grantee partners

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Expand the Network

Mileage Update

- Over 396 miles are now complete!
- Over 72 miles are in progress
- About 45 miles fully-funded



Recent Awards - Transportation Alternative Set-Aside (Pennsylvania)

- Chester Creek Rail Trail - Phase 2 - \$1,500,000
- East Coast Greenway - Norris Street - \$1,300,000
- Power Line Trail (Upper Moreland) - \$2,465,780
- US 202 Trail - Easton Road Bridge - \$700,000
- Cobbs Creek Trail - Segment B2 - \$1,500,000
- Frankford Greenway - Adams Ave to Worrell St - \$1,500,000

Recent Awards Neighborhood Access and Equity (NAE) Grant Program

- East Coast Greenway in Chester City - \$2,500,000 (planning)

Recent Awards - Pennsylvania DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund

- Chester Valley Trail - Enola Low Grade Segment - \$907,000 (construction)
- Chester Creek Trail - Phase Two - \$300,000 (construction)
- Delaware River Trail Extension - Columbia to Lehigh - \$210,000 (design)
- Frankford Creek Greenway Phase III - \$250,000 (design)

Local Voices:

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**Artworks Trenton &
East Trenton Collaborative**

The East Trenton
Collaborative x
Community
Outreach Garage x
ArtWorks:

In-Community
Transportation
Activation

An example of
inter-organization
collaboration to
maximize
community impact



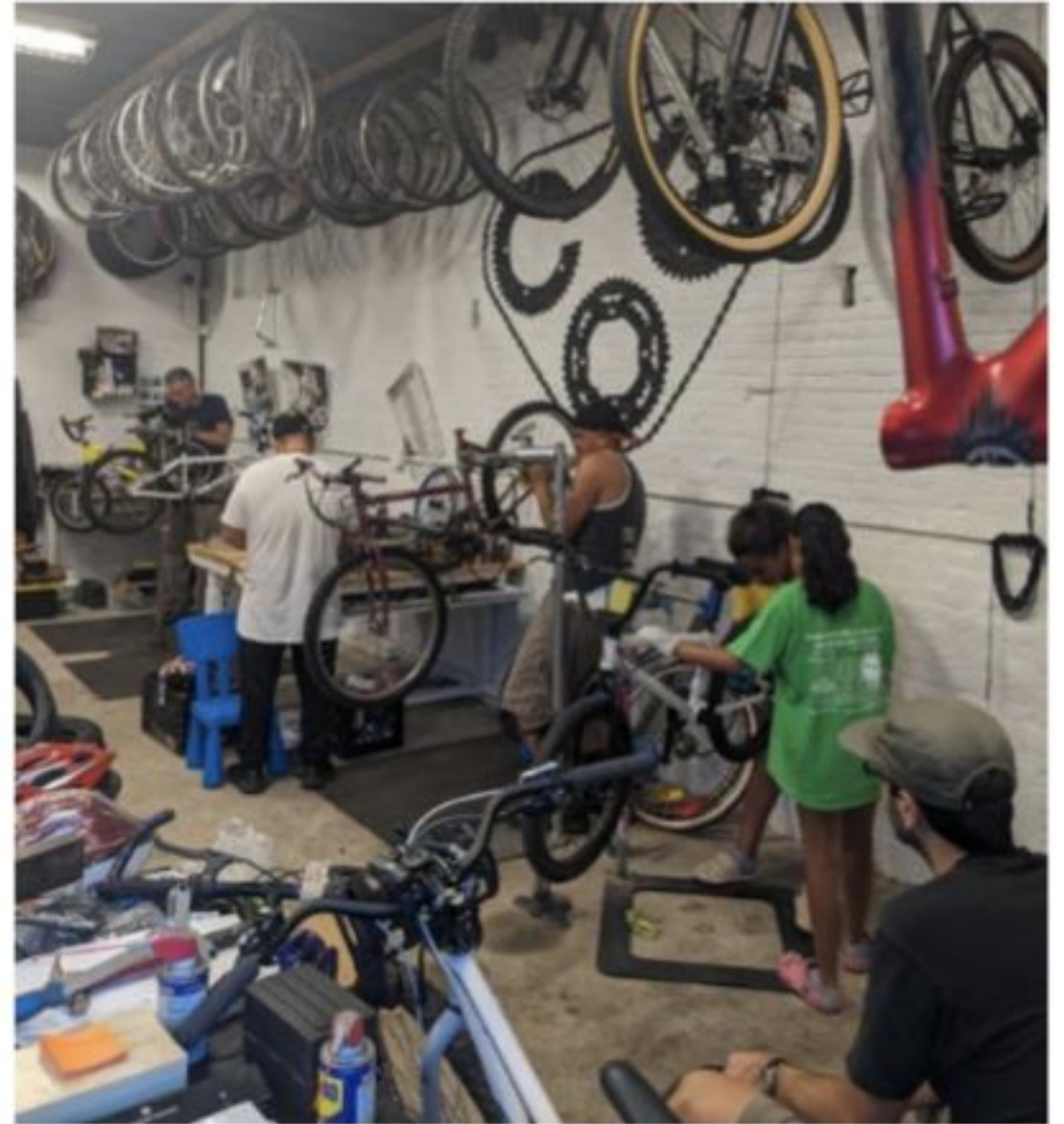








Community Outreach Garage





ArtWorks Trail Jam







On-going Initiatives



Mulberry trail crossing (working with City, County, and State DoT)



Traffic pattern reconfiguration by Darlene C. McKnight and the newly renovated East Trenton Library Community Center



Sherman Ave trail entrance

PATN LANK RAS

GOG

in our STREETS



3:30pm Walk & Bike Ride Details

- Walk with Chris Sturm and Zeke Weston, NJ Future
- Bike Ride with Daniel Paschall, East Coast Greenway Alliance

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Lunch!

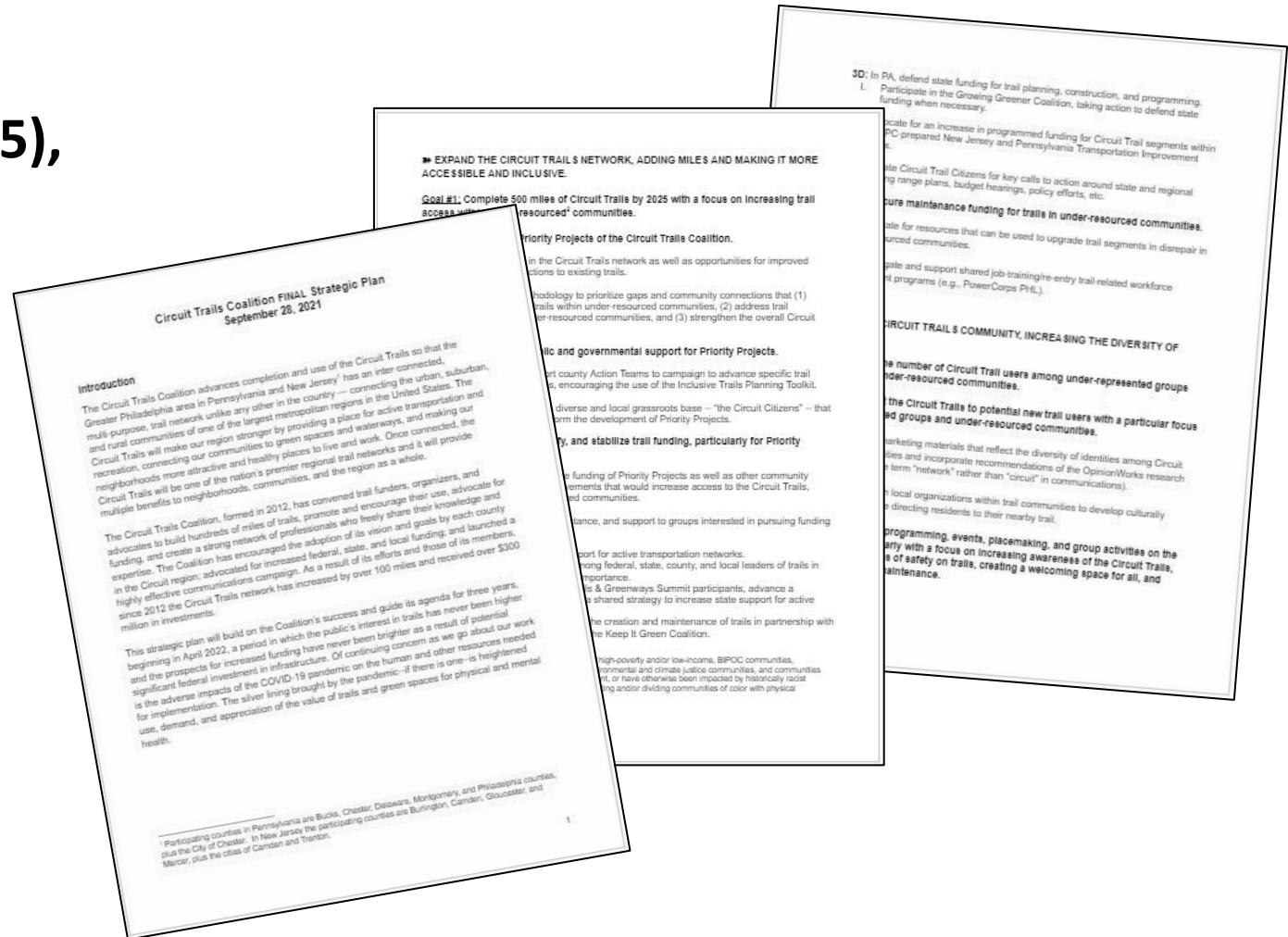
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Strategic Plan Reflection + Update

2021 Strategic Plan

Over the next three years (2021-2024/5), the Circuit Trails Coalition will:

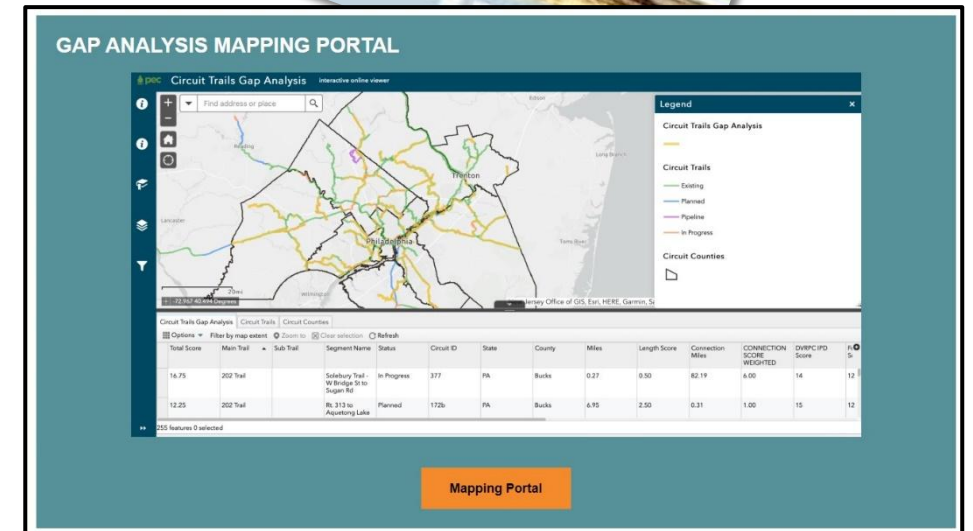
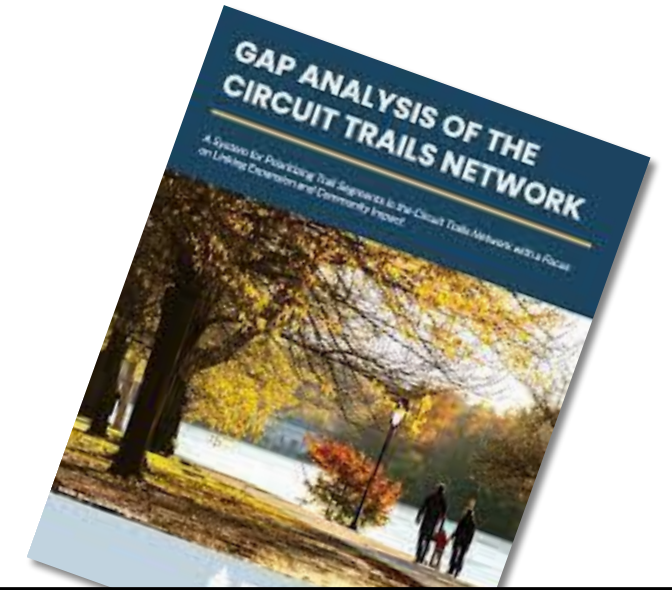
- ➡ **Expand the Circuit Trails network**, adding miles and making it more accessible and inclusive.
- ➡ **Expand the Circuit Trails community**, increasing the diversity of trail users.
- ➡ **Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition**, making it more relevant and representative.



Strategic Initiatives

➔ **Expand the Circuit Trails network**, adding miles and making it more accessible and inclusive.

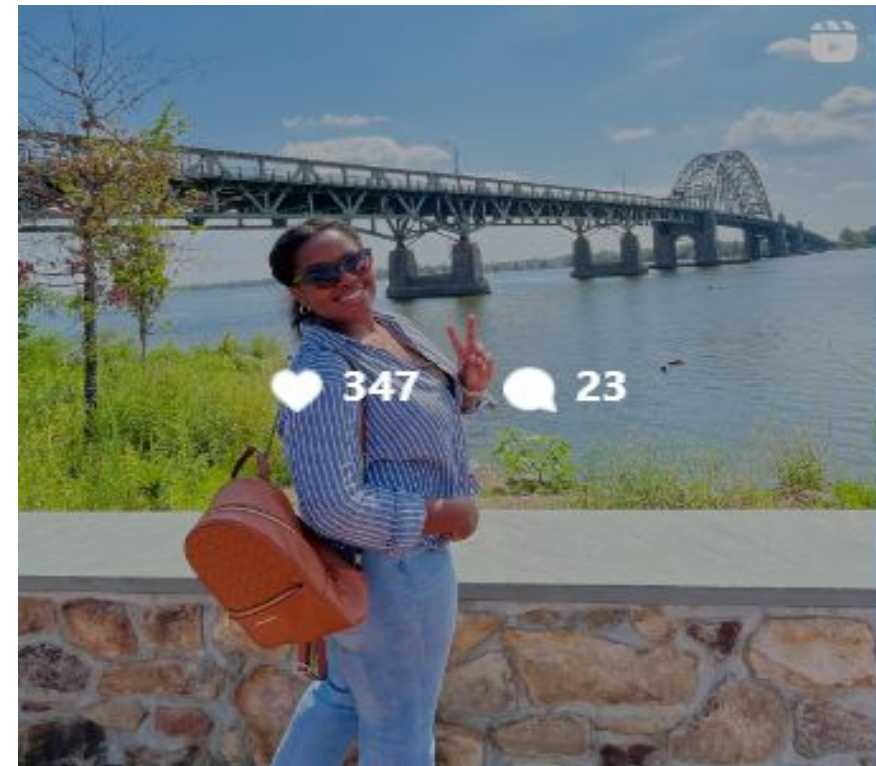
- **Community Connections** – Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia
- **Gap Analysis** – Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)
- **Trail Maintenance Funding + Operations** – Clean Air Council and Riverfront North Partnership
- **Workforce Development** – PEC



Strategic Initiatives

➡ **Expand the Circuit Trails community,**
increasing the diversity of trail users.

- **Culturally Relevant Marketing –**
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC)
- **Community-based Programming –**
RTC
- **Trail Ambassador Assessment –** PEC



WALK WITH ME

TACONY CREEK PARK

Calling all walkers!

- Let's take a stroll in the park together
- Join your neighbors every week for a healthy and empowering walk
- The trail is a paved and fairly flat Circuit Trail
- All ages and abilities welcome

Fridays 9-10AM
E Tabor & E Olney Ave Gateway, Philadelphia 19120

Tookany/
Tacony-Frankford
Watershed Partnership, Inc.

FREE!

Strategic Initiatives

➡ **Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition**, making it more relevant and representative.

- **Coalition Assessment** – PEC, East Coast Greenway Alliance (ECGA), Lawrence Hopewell Trail (LHT)
- **Learning Community** – PEC, ECGA, LHT
- **Community Grant Program** – PEC + JEDI Task Force members

Community Grant Program

Locally led, community-based / identity-based programming on trails



Equity of Access to Trails

Rooted in Research: Recommendations

1. Invite everyone to have their fun on the trail
2. Extend an overt welcome
3. Host organized group activities
4. Create spaces where people feel safe
5. Develop places to gather and relax
6. Prioritize trail maintenance and amenities
7. Install useful signage
8. Build an urban oasis
9. Show people enjoying the trail
10. Leverage local social media and traditional door-to-door

Breakout Groups

1. Expand the Circuit Trails network (Daniel)
2. Expand the Circuit Trails community (Will)
3. Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition (Pauline)

Breakout Group Topics

- Looking Back (30 min)
- Break (5 min)
- Looking Ahead (30 min)
- Break (5 min)
- Full Group Reconvenes

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Report Back + Discussion

Next Steps

- Strategic Plan subcommittee
- Summer 2024 launch
- Consultant support

Outdoor Activities

- Walk with NJ Future
- Bike Ride with East Coast Greenway Alliance