

**THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS**

**Semi-Annual Meeting
November 14, 2024**

Welcome!



2021 Strategic Plan:
Assessing Progress +
Lessons Learned

2021 Strategic Plan:
Report Backs

Strategic Plan
Conversations:
Looking Forward

Closing
Outdoor Activities 2:45pm

10:15am

12:30pm

1:25pm

2:20pm

9:30am

11:45am

12:50pm

1:55pm

Welcome
Agenda Review
Intro Activity

Lunch
AIM Academy Presentation

Coalition Assessment:
Findings and Activity

Summary and
Next Steps

Today's Agenda

The 2021 Circuit Trails Coalition Strategic Plan: Assessing Our Progress & Lessons Learned

Significant Accomplishments

- **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

Expand the Circuit Trails Network

- Engaged elected & agency officials to help secure \$200+ million in trail projects on the PA TIP
- Completed Gap Analysis Report & Online Portal
- Published annual Moving the Circuit Forward
- Launched a Maintenance Committee
- Clear advocacy strategies developing among NJ members

Expand the Circuit Trails Community

- **Implemented an inclusive marketing strategy based on Equity of Access to Trails**
 - **Earned + paid media, strategic partnerships, street teams**
- **Invested \$317,000 in 16 grantee partners to activate trails among under-represented groups across the network**
- **Grantee programs reached more than 2,000 people in 2024**

Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition

- **Completed assessment of coalition model and structure**
- **Implemented short-term changes (committees)**
- **Completed research into program providers and program hosts**
- **Established the Learning Community**

A woman in an orange tank top and black shorts is jogging on a sidewalk. She is wearing a black cap and sunglasses. The scene is outdoors, with a large tree in the foreground that has white blossoms. The background shows a street with parked cars and a building. The text "Strategic Plan Update: Moving Forward" is overlaid on the image in a green box.

Strategic Plan Update: Moving Forward

Key Questions

- **Leveling up.** How can we integrate what we've learned since 2021 into the Coalition's next chapter?
- **Increasing participation.** How can we strengthen and grow engagement in the coalition, especially in diverse and underserved communities?
- **Strengthening our foundation.** How can we evolve our structure, develop the next generation of leaders, and address emergent funding needs? How can we ensure adequate support for trail networks for programming, operations & maintenance?

How We'll Do It

- Work in partnership with the **Institute for Conservation Leadership**
- **Create space for dialogue & reflection** within existing/planned committee meetings
- **Identify additional avenues** for current CTC members, partners and others to share their ideas & hopes for the future
- **Work with small groups** to develop different aspects of the strategy, revise & approve with full Steering Committee, then share with full CTC & begin to implement

Timeline

Develop engagement strategy

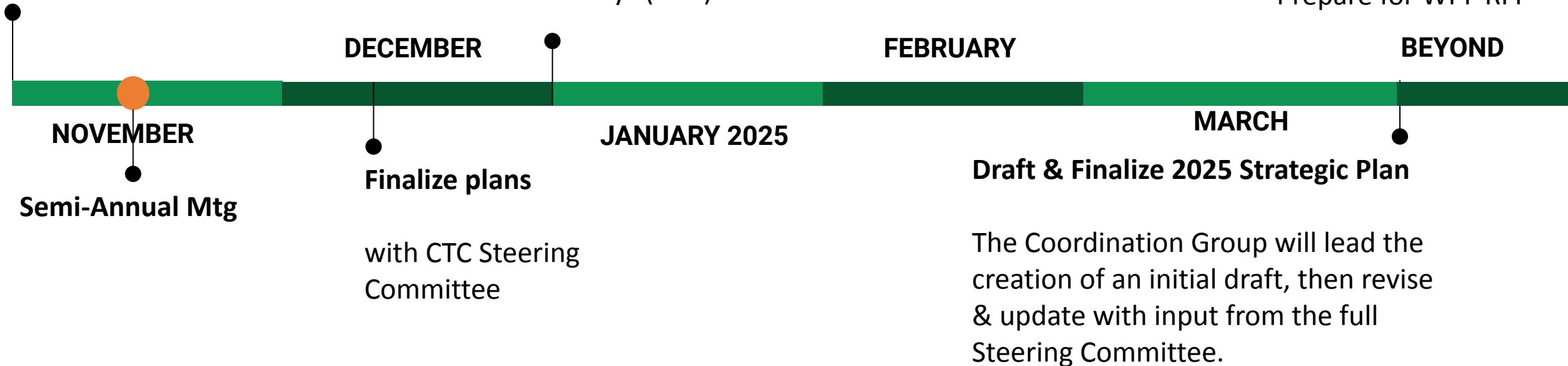
Identify spaces & avenues for feedback among members, partners & beyond

Jan - Feb: Gather feedback & develop strategies

In committee meetings, small group discussions, 1 on 1 conversations and/or surveys (TBD).

Begin to implement Strategic Plan

Share with the full CTC; begin to take next steps together. Prepare for WPF RFP



Strategic Plan Update Coordinating Group

- **Patrick Starr**, PEC, Coalition Chair
- **Justin Dennis**, Trust for Public Land, NJ Chair
- **Anya Saretzky**, Rails to Trails Conservancy, PA Chair
- **Eleanor Horne**, Advisor
- **Emilia Crotty**, PEC, Project Manager

WANT TO ADD YOUR NAME TO THIS LIST? JUST OFFER!

Equity of Access to Trails 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**

A man in a dark blue jacket, blue jeans, and a dark cap is walking on a paved path. He is looking towards the left. In the background, a large steel truss bridge spans across a river. The bridge has multiple arches and is supported by concrete piers. The river is calm, and there are some rocks in the foreground. The sky is blue with a few clouds. The overall scene is outdoors and appears to be a park or a recreational area.

Strategic Plan Update: What We Did

Stations

- A. **Expand the Circuit Trails Network** (Patrick Monahan)
- B. **Expand the Circuit Trails Community** (Anya Saretzky)
- C. **Expand the Circuit Trails Coalition** (Daniel Paschall)

Progress, Lessons, Status Activity

1. **5 minute individual worksheet**
2. **Three stations: Rotation 1 (20 min)**
3. **Three stations: Rotation 2 (20 min)**
-- Lunch --
4. **Report backs**

Lunchtime Presentation: Jeff Fetterman, AIM Academy





SEND IT!

FOR SAM



STRONG
PLANCED
M PLAYER
BRIT

SEND IT!

212



PROJECT BIKE TECH





The Killbuck
Center for ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION







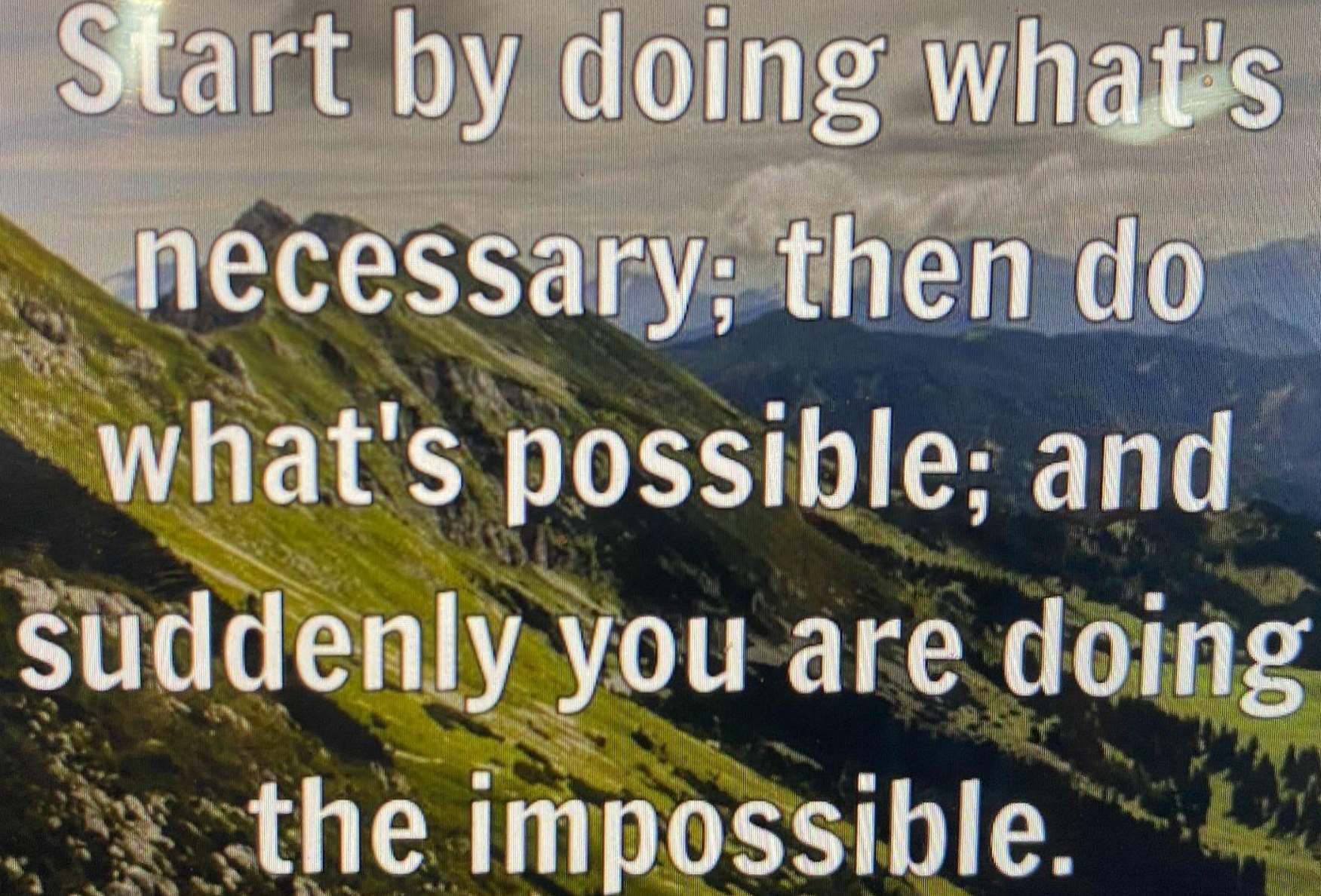
MAVERICKS

LETTERMAN

CYCLES

YETI



A scenic view of a mountain valley. The foreground shows a rocky, rocky slope on the left, leading down to a green valley floor. In the distance, there are more mountain ranges under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, bold, sans-serif font with a slight drop shadow.

Start by doing what's
necessary; then do
what's possible; and
suddenly you are doing
the impossible.

Francis of Assisi

Progress, Lessons, Status Activity

1. 5 minute individual worksheet
2. Three stations: Rotation 1 (20 min)
3. Three stations: Rotation 2 (20 min)

-- Lunch --

4. Report backs

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Cultivate Relationships

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



Actions Taken Based on Scope of Work

- **14 Individual and Group Interviews Conducted**
- **20 Google Survey Respondents**
- **Participation in 2 In-person PEC/Coalition Convenings**
- **3 Coalition/Assessment Committee Virtual Meetings**
- **Participation in 2 Virtual PEC/Coalition Convenings/Sessions**
- **3 case studies have been identified from among interviewees. These examples help to clarify grantees', place-based organizations, and other program providers' needs, challenges, and experiences as they conduct programs on and near the trails.**

Case Study #1

- Grassroots in nature
- Serves in a unique capacity within the Chester community
- Youth focused – reach the youth and get their families also
- Fun on and near the trails
- **Maxing out in terms of internal capacity to do more**
- Focus on education and safety
- **Prioritizing need to pay people to do the work**
- Addressing physical needs of the trails in Chester AND the people needed to care for them
- Takes careful steps towards real collaboration – in a community that has too often been disappointed by partners making big promises who don't stay



Barron Lacy
9th Street Youth + Community
Center, City of Chester



Case Study # 2

Ajoa Abrokwa, She Is Focused & Fit

- Smaller and more grassroots
- Connections are made thru word of mouth communication
- Potential to grow the work is enormous
- **Organizational capacity building and funding are greatest needs**
- Success stories are more qualitative in nature

Jessica Day West, Neighborhood Bike Works

- Larger organization, more staff with longer org history
- Collects data to tell the story of their success
- Tiered system of programs
- Two-pronged approach to outreach – repair & group riding
- **Could serve as an organizational capacity mentor – share their growth steps with others**



Case Study #3

Neighborhood Collaborative Community Gardens

- Smaller and more grassroots
- Neighborhood centered
- Work study, education and career training for youth
- **Transportation is a serious challenge**
- From safe places to play, to gardening, to community stewards
- Instilling community pride and growing social capital
- Transforming blight into beauty
- Combating negative image of their city
- **Inspiring a new/next generation of leaders and service provider in Camden**
- **Funding and internal staff capacity are also challenges**



Jackie Santiago

**Jacqueline
Santiago**



Erielys Vicente

**Erielys
Vicente**



Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Survey Findings

Challenges to increased equity and/or to organizational growth/capacity

- Limited Organizational Capacity / Funding (10)
- Promotion / Marketing / Generating Interest (6)
- Safe & Convenient Access to Trails (5)
- Volunteer Recruitment & Retention (3)
- External Conditions (1)

Coalition Assessment Phase 2: Survey Findings

Strategic supports, solutions, or assistance could the Circuit Trails Coalition provide

- Connection to Potential Partners & Institutions (6)
 - Support Increased Organizational Capacity (5) →
 - Promotions / Amplify Offerings (3)
 - Information (3)
 - Connection to Funders / Funding (2)
 - Advocacy for Engagement & Maintenance Funding (1)
 - Physical Improvements (1)
- Administrative support
 - Programmatic support
 - Leadership development

Recommendations for Strategic Planning

1

FUNDING

This is the number 1 need and challenge for most organizations we engaged through this process. Collaborative grants, transportation funds, staff wages, and introductions to funders all rose to the top of people's minds when asked how they thought the Circuit Trail could help. Not always as the funding source, but as a bridge/connector.

2

WAYFINDING/NETWORKING

The desire for additional and more innovative and connective wayfinding signage, maps, QR codes, and trail details was consistent across interviewees and survey respondents. Similarly, there was hope that the Coalition could support expanded sharing of information about available programs along the trails.

3

CAPACITY BUILDING

Many interviewees and survey respondents described organizational and individual overload as a major issue. There was a consistent suggestion that the Circuit Trails Coalition could increase its efforts to develop mentorships, offer capacity building workshops, and otherwise support organizations struggling at the leadership level.



Gathering Insights

- What insights did you gain?
- What is one question or idea this brings up for you at the coalition considers its direction for the next three years?

Trio conversations (10 min)

Mentimeter Polls

Strategic Plan Update: Looking Ahead



5 Questions for Deeper Thinking

- Why is participating in the coalition important to your organization?
- What aspect of the work are you / your team most excited by?
- What is important to pursue or address at this time?
- Some general areas that are rich with opportunity might be...
- What limitations in time, energy, money, and resources do we need to deal with?

5 Questions for Deeper Thinking

- Individual Thinking (5 min)
- Talk in Trios (15 min)
- Whole Group Share / Mentimeter Poll (10 min)

Check out a committee meeting!

- Steering Committee Meetings are open to all
 - 2nd Thursdays at 1:30pm
- Maintenance Committee
 - 1st Mondays at 11am
- PA & NJ Trail Development *(Coalition Partner agencies, counties, municipalities especially welcome)*
 - 3rd Thursdays: PA at 10am, NJ at 11am
- Advocacy, Communications, and Policy Committee
 - 4th Wednesdays at 10am

For more information and calendar invitations: anya@railstotrails.org

Stay Involved with the Coalition All Year!

Upcoming Meetings/Events

- Monthly Pennsylvania Trail Development Meeting
 - Next meeting: Nov 21, 10am
 - Email patrick@bicyclecoalition.org to receive invite
- Monthly New Jersey Trail Development Meeting
 - Next Meeting: Nov 21, 10am
 - Email patrick@bicyclecoalition.org to receive invite
- Monthly Advocacy, Communications and Policy Committee Meeting
 - Next meeting: Nov 27, at 10am
 - Email pstarr@pecpa.org to receive invite
- Monthly Maintenance Committee Meeting
 - Next meeting: Dec. 2 at 11am
 - Email wfraser@cleanair.org to receive invite
- Learning Community virtual session on Green Gentrification
 - Monday, December 9 from 3pm-4:30pm
 - Email daniel@greenway.org to receive invite or join the Zoom meeting by clicking [here](#)
 - In August, Trust for Public Land Published [an important paper on Green Gentrification](#), which reports that large greenway projects are one of two types of urban greening projects that cause gentrification. Want to learn more about TPL's paper and think together about how the Circuit can work to prevent displacement that can result from green gentrification? Join us for the December Learning Community, featuring Linda Hwang of the Trust for Public Land presenting key findings from TPL's report.
- Monthly Steering Committee Meeting
 - Are open to all
 - Next meeting: Dec. 12, 1:30-4pm
 - Email anya@railstotrails.org to receive invite
- Circuit-wide Happy Hour on Dec. 12 at 4:15pm at Uptown Beer Garden
 - Email anya@railstotrails.org to receive invite

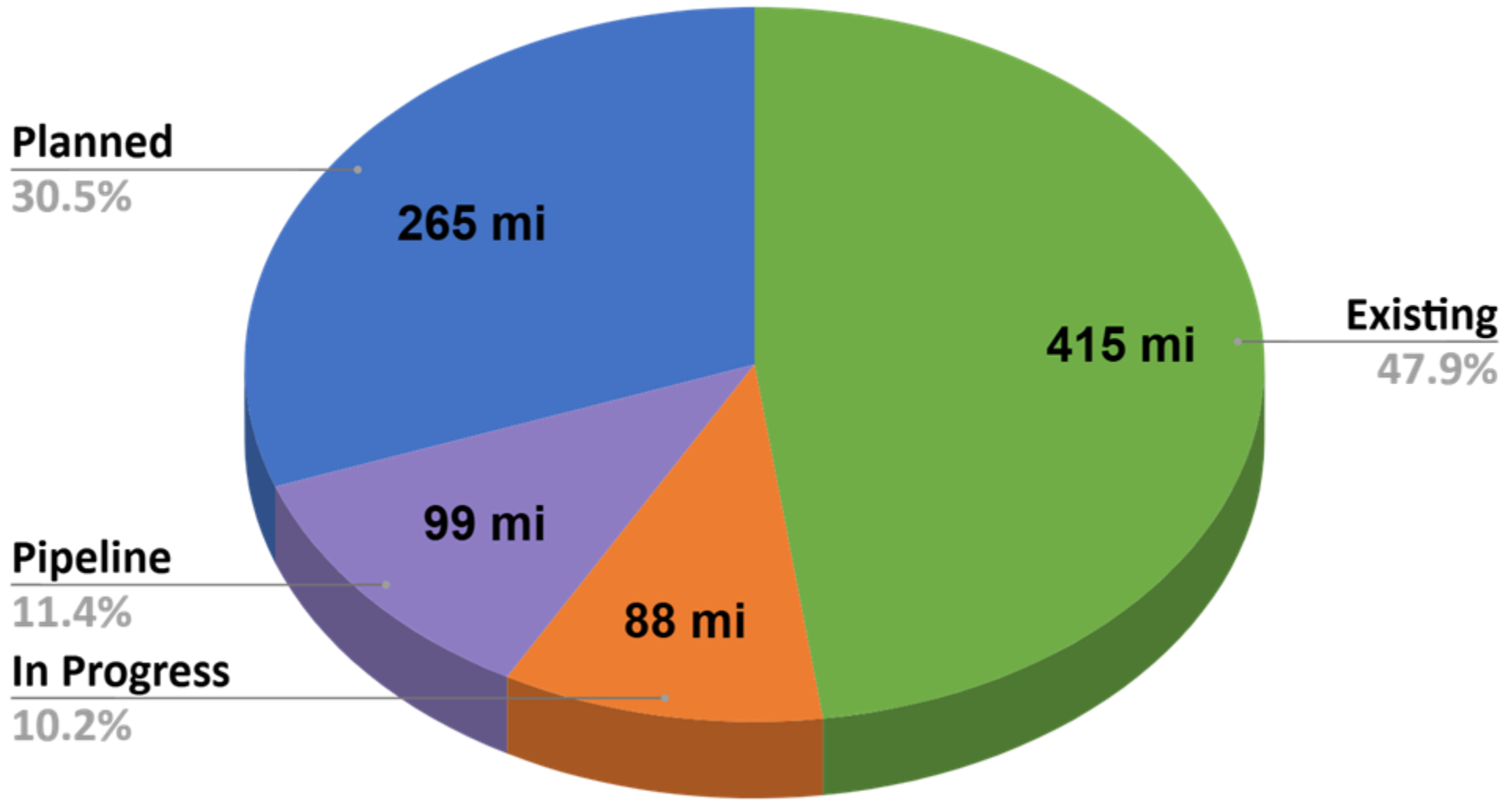
Other important Reminders:

- Steering Committee election and nomination process
 - [Nominations](#) due Monday, December 2
- Share your events and accomplishments for promotion! Email anya@railstotrails.org

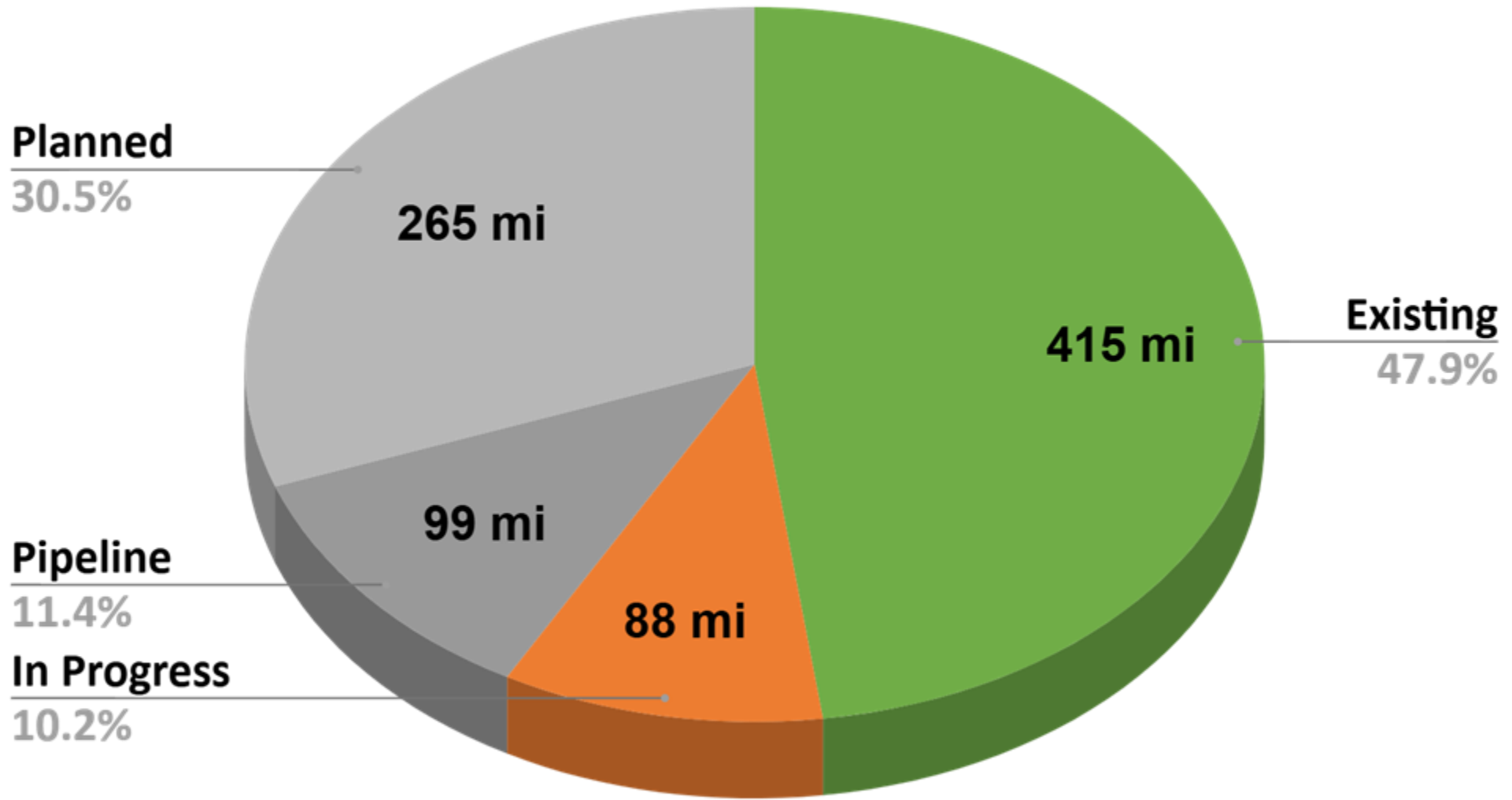
**THE
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Updates from Around the Circuit

Trail Miles: Overall Status



Trail Miles: Overall Status



Schuylkill Banks

The Christian to Crescent Schuylkill River Trail extension is progressing well. The **cables on the cable-stayed bridge have been connected** and the projected opening is mid-year 2025. This project will connect the Center City section of trail with the Grays Ferry Crescent.



Neighborhood Bike Works

In FY24, NBW provided 139 outdoor experiences , allowing our participants to explore estuaries, navigate the Circuit Trails, and discover local greenspaces. **We are getting youth outdoors nearly every other day!**

Photo: Schuylkill River Trail South



Youth Development United



- Distributed 330+ bikes, helmets and locks, and provided learn-to-ride and other outdoor activities for children and adults in Chester.
- Collaborating with partner organizations and local officials for continued community impact.

Trenton Walks!



- Sponsored by the City of Trenton Green Team with the support of the Mercer County Action Team of the Circuit Trails Coalition
- **26 Walks on trails in Trenton (June to November), with 162 total participants completing 425 person miles!**
- Builds on Trenton as a regional trails hub in the developing regional trails network
- Residents
- City Workers
- Trail Advocates
- 1 to 3 mile walks
- Volunteer leaders

- Goals: Get people together to enjoy being outdoor, engage community, get healthy exercise, overcome perception that trails are unsafe public spaces, build effective partnerships
- “Walk the Talk” Pledge to have each other’s backs
- Great way to rediscover Trenton and build support for completion of trail gaps



Building Community Connections

Inclusive marketing strategies, like the partnership with WDAS and street teams prioritized opportunities to make community connections, reinforcing the importance of reaching people in the communities where they live and aligning with media and brands they value.



Street team at an event in Camden.



Patty Jackson at Cobbs Creek Trick or Treat Trail and Harvest Festival

MyCircuitTrails + Itinerary Videos

- Video content amassed 365,800 views this year
 - Video reach since 2021 prior to this year's campaign was 505,340 in total
- Video was our most shared content
- Content around things to do and sights to see are the most popular.



107 Earned Media Placements

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

LOCAL NEWS

50 kids go home with bikes after bike rodeo in Eyre Park

20+ Scenic Bike Trails in and Around Philadelphia to Try Now

‘Landmark’ \$200M in funds for new trails in Philly, Chester, Delco, Montco

Five Trails in Your Neighborhood to Try Out This Summer



By Mark Hostutler

Published: 5:18 am EDT July 31, 2024 | Updated: 7:31 pm EDT July 30, 2024



Image via Thom Carroll.

The Circuit Trails network serves as a connector to outdoor spaces for recreation, relaxation, and access to incredible destinations.

Did you know there are more than 411 miles of trails in the Greater Philadelphia region? That's right, the



Celebrate
Trails
Day

APRIL 27, 2024

#OnTheCircuit

THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS

Celebrate Trails Day

- ~20 events #OnTheCircuit
- TV coverage on local CBS, NBC and FOX
- Print coverage in 5 local outlets



Celebrate Trails at Eight Greater Philadelphia Events on the Circuit Trails This Saturday



By Mark Hostutler

Published: 5:22 am EDT April 25, 2024 | Updated: 3:28 pm EDT April 23, 2024




Circuit Social


Total Audience: 32,564


Growth from 2023 = 10.68%

Reached more than **2.5M** impression across all organic, paid and influencer social content.



 **life_w_larissa** You can walk between states?? How cool is that!
13h 2 likes Reply

 **giddys_girl** I love this for South Jersey 🍌🍌
4w 1 like Reply

 **wildkidswander** I love this! Need to do this next year 🥰
4w 1 like Reply

Rails to Trails Conservancy and Camden Greenways Inc.

- Partnered with Urban Promise school and community volunteers to repair 60 used kids bikes
- Distributed bikes at Camden Bike Day on Sept. 7

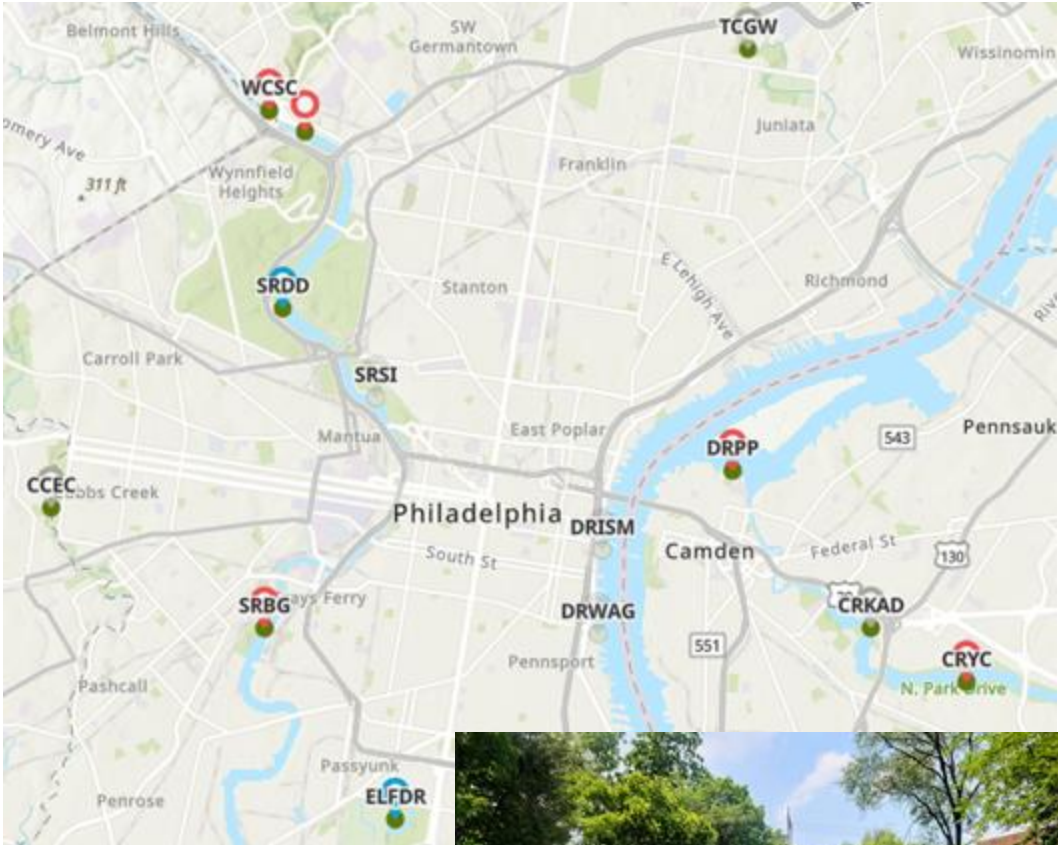


Circuit Trails Maintenance Committee

- Presented at Semi-annual Mtg about the importance of trail maintenance
- Trained trail managers in PEC Trail Operations Management (TOM) Tool
- Act as a resource to municipalities interested in pursuing trail construction projects
- Applied to CZM funding to create a trail maintenance volunteer stewardship best practices handbook
- Secured We Conserve PA funding to host a trail maintenance workshop
 - Polled regional trail managers on trail maintenance training topics of interest
- Began building a library of trail maintenance resources to provide circuit region volunteers, managers, and agencies



Riverways Collaboration



- Became Tidal Delaware Water Trail Manager
- Typically get 15,000+ people/yr in Philly & Camden boating in kayaks and canoes
- Trained over 100 high schoolers in environmental leadership in summer and 24 year-round
- Sampled regional rivers for bacteria for safe on-water recreation

Pennsylvania Environmental Council



View of Philly from Petty's Island in the Delaware

- Hosted an overnight BikeOut event in May with over 100 participants.
- Administered \$317,000 for the Circuit Trails Community Grant Program and helped fund trail related activities for 16 Grantees around Philly.
- Provided project management and grant writing capacity for Chester, Bristol, and Upper Darby Townships.
- Took Coalition members on a private nature tour of Petty's Island!

Outdoors for Everyone - City Nature Challenge



Outdoors for Everyone - Birding



Outdoors for Everyone - Fish finding



Lawrence Hopewell Trail



- Record attendance at Full Moon Ride with more than 500 riders
- Two new segments expected in 2025—Maidenhead Meadows and LVS
- Johnson Trolley Trail concept study recommendations early 2025
- We're hiring:

<https://lhtrail.org/lht-jobs/>



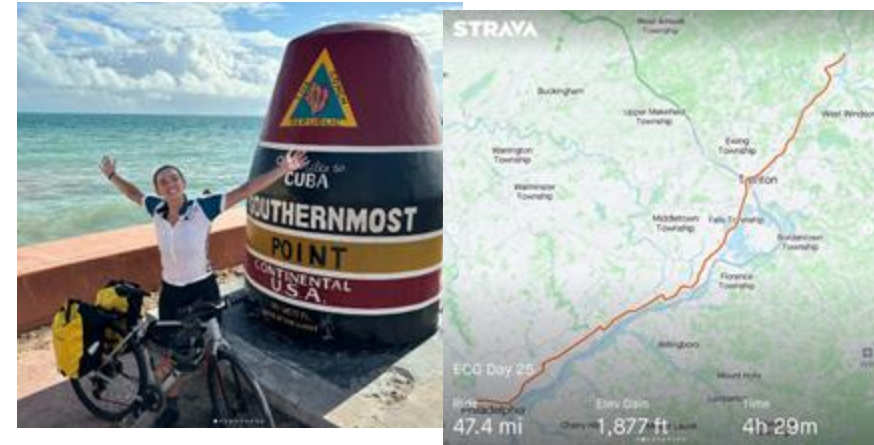
East Coast Greenway Alliance



ECGA celebrated **TIP funding wins** and provided support to Greenway project teams in Bristol, Chester, and Philly.

ECGA joined other Circuit Members (RTC, BCGP, NJCF, & DRGP) to lead a guided ride of progress along the **Delaware River Heritage Trail** from Burlington to Trenton, NJ

This week, Miranda Baltaxe (@mirandabbikes) joined a growing number of riders to complete the **entire East Coast Greenway**, biking across the Circuit on days 25 and 26 of her 54 day trip



D&L Trail



PEC, Morrisville Borough, DVRPC and a plethora of partners cut the ribbon on the Bridge Street Pedestrian Crossing in April 2024 - completing one of Pennsylvania's Top Ten Trail Gaps!

