

BIKING THROUGH HISTORY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HISTORIC
PRESERVATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND BICYCLE TRAILS

by

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(Under the Direction of JAMES K. REAP)

ABSTRACT

Heritage trails, and rail trail projects specifically have much to offer the field of historic preservation. Not only are they means of preserving a linear corridor for use as a recreation trail, but they can also be utilized for economic development purposes within communities. The economic development impact of trails through increased tourism and town revitalization is particularly important in rural communities who may be suffering from lack of economic diversity due to the abandonment of the rail line. The research for this project looked at four trails on the eastern seaboard of the United States: The Virginia Creeper Trail in Virginia, the Main-Line Canal Greenway in Pennsylvania, the Great Allegheny Passage Trail in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the Erie Canalway Trail in New York. These trails were studied within the context of several themes: economic development programs targeting communities along the trail, multi-jurisdictional controls, trail related non-profit organizations, promotion of the trail as a tourist product, and the role of historic preservation in trail creation and development. The information gathered as part of the research was compiled into a set of 'best practices' that could be applied by trail advocates to influence future development or enhance existing construction. The 'best practices' as determined by the research was then applied to the Firefly Trail, a trail in development in Athens, Georgia. The purpose of this application was to demonstrate how the practices gleaned could be utilized by a trail currently in the schematic phase to positively influence its development.

INDEX WORDS: Historic Preservation, Rail Trails, Heritage Trails, Economic Development

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DEDICATION

Thank you to my parents, whose family vacation to the Virginia Creeper Trail in 2010 inspired this topic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Bicycles and the Environment	1
Bicycles and Health	3
Bicycles and Tourism	6
2 TRAIL HISTORY AND RESEARCH SUMMARY	24
Trail One: Virginia Creeper Trail	25
Trail Two: The Erie Canalway Trail.....	28
Trail Three: The Main-Line Canal.....	33
Trail Four: The Great Allegheny Passage.....	38
Study Results	43
3 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS	83
Economic Development Programs	83
Role of a Non-Profit and Multijurisdictional Control.....	87
Promoting Tourism	91
The Role of Historic Preservation.....	92
Conclusion	103

4	FIREFLY TRAIL, ATHENS, GEORGIA.....	106
5	CONCLUSION.....	151
	REFERENCES	156

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1: Summary of Trails	76
Table 2.2: Economic Development.....	77
Table 2.3: Involvement of a Trail-related Non-Profit.....	78
Table 2.4: Multi-Jurisdictional Aspect of Trails.....	79
Table 2.5: Attracting Visitors to the Trail.....	80
Table 2.6: Role of Historic Preservation on Trail.....	81
Table 3.1: Summary of Recommendations for Best Practices	105
Table 4.1: Summary of Recommendations.....	148
Table 4.2: Preliminary “Windshield” Survey	150

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1: Map of the Virginia Creeper Trail.....	27
Figure 2.2: Virginia Creeper Train	27
Figure 2.3: Map of the Erie Canalway Trail	29
Figure 2.4: Erie Canalway Trail Towpath	32
Figure 2.5: Map of the Main-Line Canal	35
Figure 2.6: Cargo on the Main-Line Canal.....	37
Figure 2.7: Map of the Great Allegheny Passage	39
Figure 2.8: Fallingwater.....	42
Figure 2.9: <i>Trail Town Program Manual Cover</i>	56
Figure 2.10: <i>Bicyclists Bring Business Program Manual Cover</i>	58
Figure 2.11: Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Logo.....	69
Figure 2.12: Historic Lock	72
Figure 2.13: Historic Dry Dock	72
Figure 3.1: Connellsville Caboose Visitors Center.....	85
Figure 3.2: An Example QR Code.....	100
Figure 3.3: An App developed for the Grand Teton National Park.....	100
Figure 4.1: Map of the Firefly Trail.....	107
Figure 4.2: Map of the lines of the Georgia Railroad in 1963	109
Figure 4.3: Georgia Railroad’s Ten-Wheeled Engine	112

Figure 4.4: Section of Former Railroad Bed.....	119
Figure 4.5: Intersection of Georgia-77 and S. Broad Street	123
Figure 4.6: Historic Crawford Depot	125
Figure 4.7: Crawford Depot Today.....	125
Figure 4.8: Town of Maxeys.....	127
Figure 4.9: Woodville Greenway.....	127
Figure 4.10: Town of Union Point.....	129
Figure 4.11: Town of Winterville	140
Figure 4.12: Maxeys Depot.....	144
Figure 4.13: Town of Winterville	1

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

From the beginnings of the modern bicycle in 1868 until today, bicycling has been a popular mode of transportation and recreation in the United States¹. What once was a means of transportation for the working class has now become a multi-million dollar industry focused not only on perfecting the technological aspects of the machine but also ensuring the rider's safety and enjoyment. Cycling has seen a renaissance in the recent history of the United States because of the increased amount of attention given to cyclists through the development and construction of bicycle infrastructure, both on and off-road. Bicycles have a lot of applicability in creating solutions for problems in today's society, including climate change, the health of the nation, and serving as a means of economic development through tourism, particularly in rural communities.

Bicycles and the Environment

In 2003 alone, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that transportation sources contributed more than 27% of the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.² Broken down even further, 81% of the GHG emissions from transportation came from on-road sources, such as personal automobiles and

¹ David V. Herlihy, *Bicycle: The History*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 76

² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Office of Transportation and Air Quality. *Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the U.S. Transportation Sector, 1990-2003*. (Washington, DC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2006), 6-7

heavier duty trucks and busses. Furthermore, 35% of the on-road GHG emissions were produced from passenger cars alone.³

The dependence on the automobile for travel is not a new trend, but the effects have become more pronounced in the first few decades of the twenty-first century. In the thirteen years between 1990 and 2003, there was a 20% increase in passenger vehicle GHG emissions. Combined with light duty trucks and sport utility vehicles, automobiles represented nearly 77% of on-road vehicle emissions, as well as 62% of all transportation-related GHG emissions. This sharp increase can be traced to two factors: a continued increase in passenger travel, as well as movement of freight, and because the increase in travel has outpaced the technological improvements to energy efficiency and pollution emissions controls.⁴

However, the increase is not simply attributable to more people on the road. Much of the increase in GHG emissions from personal automobiles is related to the nearly 35% increase in total vehicular miles traveled over the same thirteen year period.³ This increase offset the automobile industry's minor improvements in fuel economy increases.⁵ To put this in perspective, the number of American households only increased by 15% over the same period. The EPA research shows that in 2000, carpoolers accounted for only 12% of commuters. Transit riders and walkers ranked at 5% and 3% respectively. Between the three methods of transportation, each declined by 8%, 1%, and 3% respectively.⁶

³ Ibid

⁴ United States EPA, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* 6-10

⁵ United States EPA, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* 8

⁶ United States EPA, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions* 11

If the United States continues to build sprawling communities without feasible alternative transportation options, GHG emissions will only increase and the environmental condition will continue to worsen. One way to decrease GHG emissions is to reduce the number of automobiles on the road by increasing the availability and feasibility of alternative transportation methods, such as bicycling. The creation of a trail network would make it easier for people to travel in a safe environment, particularly for those who do not feel comfortable using on-road bicycle lanes, such as children and the less adventurous rider. Trail networks would also benefit those living in more rural areas where roads may not be able to support shared traffic due to vehicular speed. Providing people with the opportunity to use protected, off-road facilities would enable suburban or rural users to use alternative methods of transportation more efficiently and safely. Because bicycling does not produce GHG during its use, it is an entirely more green method of transportation. Sixty percent of all pollution generated by automobiles occurs within the first few minutes of operation. With most car trips in the United States lasting less than two miles, replacing one, two-mile car trip with one made on a bicycle will prevent significant amounts of GHG emissions from spewing into the atmosphere.

Bicycles and Health

Americans' obesity is often discussed as an epidemic, as it has been steadily increasing over the past few decades. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta reports that now more than a third of American adults

are considered obese, or 35.7% of the adult population.⁷ The numbers are no better for children and adolescents; the CDC reports that 16.9% of children and teens are considered obese, though adolescents are more likely to be obese than pre-school-aged children.⁸ In 2010, these percentages indicated that more than 78 million American adults and 12.5 million children and teenagers were considered obese.⁹

Obesity has serious consequences on Americans' health and the cost of healthcare. Those who are obese are more likely to be diagnosed with "heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancers," some of which are preventable with a healthy diet and exercise.¹⁰ In 2010, the CDC reported that twelve states had an obesity rate of 30% or greater among the adult population. Most of these states are in the Southeast, including Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina. In 2010, Georgia had an adult obesity rate of 29.6%.¹¹ Obesity also influences the amount spent on medical care in the United States. In 1998, obesity related medical costs totaled \$78.5 billion dollars, and was expected

⁷ United States Department of Health and Human Services. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. "Obesity and Socioeconomic Status in Adults: United States, 2005-2008", by Cynthia L. Ogden, Molly M. Lamb; Margaret D. Carroll, and Katherine M. Flegal. (Hyattsville, MD: United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), 1

⁸ United States DHHS, "Obesity", 2

⁹ United States DHHS, "Obesity", 3

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Overweight and Obesity: Adult Obesity." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).

¹¹ *ibid*

to grow by over \$40 billion dollars through 2006, and by 2008, was expected to increase to \$147 billion dollars.¹²

In an effort to combat rising obesity rates and encourage Americans to make healthier choices, the CDC and the Federal Government have made recommendations on policy changes that would help Americans reduce their chances of becoming overweight and obese. While many of these choices revolve around dietary changes, the importance of exercise and physical activity are also stressed. The CDC, on their *Vital Signs* website, recommend that states can help reduce obesity by “adopting policies that promote bicycling and public transportation”.¹³ This is reinforced by a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill study that explored the correlation between availability of bicycling and walking facilities and how often people used them in rural, suburban, and urban counties across the state. The results found that the more options and safe locations for exercise, such as neighborhood trails and sidewalks, the more likely adults were to utilize them for exercise. Many agencies and communities have created programs that specifically encourage the use of trails and other outdoor facilities for exercise to increase the health and well-being of the population, such as the Friends of the Smoky Mountain’s “Get On the Trail” program, Wisconsin’s Peninsula State Park’s

¹² Eric A. Finklestein, Justin G. Trogon, Joel W. Cohen, and William Dietz. "Annual Medical Spending Attributable to Obesity: Payer- and Service-Specific Estimates." *Health Affairs* 28, no. 5 (2009): 822-831.

¹³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "CDC Vital Signs - Adult Obesity: What can be done?" Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/AdultObesity/WhatCanBeDone.html> (accessed February 2, 2013).

“Like to Hike” program, and the Texas Trail Registry, aimed at helping people find trails nearby to utilize.¹⁴

Bicycles and Tourism

Bicycles have long been used for touring. The predecessor to the modern bicycle was the draisine or the velocipede; the rider used his feet to propel himself along the ground. It was cumbersome, slow, and never really took off as an invention, though developed in 1817.¹⁵ However, nearly 100 years after the modern bicycle was invented and refined, bicycle tourism experienced rapid growth in the late 1960s and 1970s in the United States, likely in part to the rails to trails movement. The Rails to Trails Conservancy reports that the movement had very humble beginnings; as railroad companies began to abandon lines and remove the tracks, local citizens began to explore the rail corridors that become open and available. The land was not formally designated as a trail, but people would walk the corridor and explore what was left behind, such as old mills and factories, bridges, and tunnels. Most people walked along the graded land, as the rails to trails movement predated the mountain, or all-terrain, bicycle and the trend of running for exercise. The movement eventually picked up the name “rails-to-trails” and

¹⁴ Sarah Weeks. “‘Get on the Trail’ with Friends of the Smokies and Covenant Health.” American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/Smokies-Covenant-Health-Trail-Missy-Kane.html> (accessed February 13, 2013); Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. “Peninsula State Park Trails ‘Like to Hike’ Program.” American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/Peninsula-State-Park-trails-for-health.html> (accessed February 11, 2013); Texas Department of Health. “Texas Helping People Find Trail to Physical Fitness, State Helps Communities Develop Programs and Facilities.” American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/TXhealth.html> (accessed February 12, 2013).

¹⁵ Herlihy, *Bicycle*, 19-30

went more mainstream as it transitioned to a true piece of the environmental movement because of the emphasis on “recycling, land conservation, wildlife habitat preservation ... historical preservation, physical fitness ... and numerous other benefits.”¹⁶

About the same time, the interest in trails reached the Federal Government and led to the creation of the National Trails System Act. Congress passed the Act in 1968 and majorly amended the legislation in 1983. The Trails Act was designed by Congress to give Americans access to space for recreation, preserve the availability of the nation’s outdoor areas and historic resources for the general public, and create trails near urban centers and with areas of either particular scenic beauty or historic transportation routes.¹⁷ Most importantly, The Trails Act gave Americans the means to establish these trails themselves by encouraging and assisting civic groups and others interested in trail development. As defined by The Trails Act, trails exist in four categories: recreation, scenic, historic, or connecting trails. The Appalachian and Pacific Coast Trails are defined as starting points for the dissemination of the trail network.¹⁸

The Trails Act defines each trail category. Recreation trails are those that provide urban areas with access specifically for multiple types of recreation, including both urban trails and natural trails within close proximity to urban areas.

¹⁶ Peter Harnik. "Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: History of the Rail-Trail Movement." Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, <http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/trailbasics/railTrailHistory.html> (accessed January 19, 2013).

¹⁷ National Trails System Act of 1968, with Amendments. Public Law 90-543. October 2, 1968.

¹⁸ *ibid*

National Recreation Trails can be designated by the Secretaries of either Agriculture or the Interior but also by state or local governments. National Scenic Trails and National Historic Trails can only be designated by Congress and are generally larger in scope compared to National Recreation Trails. National Scenic Trails should be “located to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significantly scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass.”¹⁹ The Trails Act suggests potential locations for the National Scenic Trails as areas of deserts, grasslands, mountains, rivers, and forests among others.²⁰

National Historic Trails, which must also be designated by Congress, are established to “follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel or national historic significance.”²¹ Because these trails are usually quite long, only the segments still on federal lands are included unless a state or local government nominates the portion over which they have jurisdiction. With the creation of the Trails Act came the creation of over 45 trails with National Historic Significance. Some of the more recognizable trails are the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail extending nearly four thousand miles from Illinois to Oregon, the Iditarod National Historic Trail extending two thousand miles from Seward to Nome, Alaska, and the Oregon National Historic Trail, a two thousand mile trail from Missouri to Oregon. The final category of trails included in The Trails Act legislation is the Side or Connecting Trails. As the name implies, these trails are meant to

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ *ibid*

connect other trails to create a more contiguous trail network for users, as well as provide more access points for the general public.²²

Several problems related to rail trail development led to the Act's revision in 1983. After a railroad corporation abandons the rail corridor – the beginning of a trail creation project – the easements that made up the rail corridor were dissolved and the vested rights to the land returned to the original parcel.²³ This meant the creation of rail trails was particularly difficult because a trail advocate had to re-negotiate with potentially hundreds of individual property owners for the rights to the former rail corridor land. This problem was addressed in the 1983 revision to the Trails Act, which allows for the easement to remain in effect in certain cases if the rail corridor was to be transformed into a recreational rail trail. In this revision, the railroad initiates abandonment proceedings, and if a trail use is negotiated between the railroad and a trail advocate, the easement would get interim trail use approval. Thus, the corridor would be, in essence, in limbo: it would not be used by the railroad as a rail corridor, but would not totally be given up either. Rail trail proponents have to accept a clause indicating that any trail creation is subject to future re-establishment of the railroad. These amendments to the Trails Act enabled trail advocates to have to negotiate with only the railroad for the rights to the right of way.²⁴ According to the Rails to Trails Conservancy, the first railbanked trail was the 185-mile Katy Trail in Missouri, approved by the Missouri legislature in 1987. More than 45 years after the movement began, there is over 15,000 miles of

²² Ibid

²³ United States Interstate Commerce Commission. *Rails to Trails: An Overview of ICC Rules*. (Washington, D.C. 1993),1-2

²⁴ US Interstate Commerce Commission, *Rails to Trails*, 2

trails on abandoned rail corridors in the United States, and an estimated 100 million users every year.²⁵

Bicycle tourism is still on the rise. In 2012, the Adventure Cycling Association found “nine new indicators that bike travel and tourism are booming,” including greater interest globally in bicycle tours, the development of bigger bicycle routes, including La Route Verte in Quebec, Canada, and the United States Bicycle Route System. Additionally, more states are conducting economic impact surveys of bicycle tourism in their state and investing in the promotion of bicycle tourism and cycling facilities and opportunities. Rural communities are driving the trend and developing bicycle tourism opportunities for visitors. The trade journal *Bicycle Retailer and Industry News* reported a “substantial increase in sales of gear and bikes for touring.”²⁶

Opportunities for rail trail creation and development have been heavily funded through the Federal Highway Administration’s transportation acts, specifically through the Transportation Enhancement program. Transportation Enhancements began with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), signed in 1991. The \$217 billion dollar act provided the means for much of the United States’ transportation infrastructure built or improved over a six-year period. Funding for the enhancement projects enabled communities to invest in facilities for multiple transportation modes rather than being restricted to

²⁵ Harnik, “Rails-to-Trails Conservancy History”

²⁶ Adventure Cycling Association. “9 New Indicators that Bicycle Travel and Tourism are Booming.” (2012) Adventure Cycling Association, <http://www.adventurecycling.org/news/20121204.cfm?use=web>. (accessed February 1, 2013).

investment in highway facilities. Money appropriated through ISTEA could be spent on ten different eligible activities, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities and mass transportation routes and networks.²⁷ Funding for transportation enhancement projects would be a defining feature of the next two transportation bills.

Enacted in 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) beefed up support for transportation enhancements. Two parts of ISTEA's legacy were improved with the transition to TEA-21: in addition to a 40% increase in funding support for enhancement projects, the Act mandated that some funding must be set aside for enhancement projects at the state level.²⁸ Each state had to set aside 10% of federally apportioned funds for their enhancement projects.²⁹

TEA-21 was replaced in 2005 with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which reauthorized federal support for transportation programs through FY2009. Transportation Enhancements remained virtually unchanged from TEA-21, funding twelve different categories of projects. This included: 1) pedestrian and bicycle facilities; 2) pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities; 3) acquisition of scenic and historic easements and sites (including historic battlefields); 4) scenic or historic programs including tourist and welcome centers; 5) landscaping and other scenic

²⁷ National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse. "TA Basics: History." National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse, www.ta-clearinghouse.info/history (accessed February 8, 2013).

²⁸ Lisa Wormser, Frank Markowitz, and Alex Estrella. "Two for TEA." *Planning* 64, no. 8 (08 1998): 10-13.

²⁹ John W. Fischer. "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act -- A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU Or SAFETEA): Selected Major Provisions: RL33119." Congressional Research Service: Report (10/18 2005): 1-41

beautification projects; 6) historic preservation of transportation related facilities; 7) rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation building structures or facilities; 8) preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including conversion and use of the corridors for bicycle trails); 9) inventory, control, and removal of outdoor advertising; 10) archaeological planning and research; 11) environmental mitigation of runoff pollution and provision of wildlife connectivity; and 12) establishment of transportation museums.³⁰

SAFETEA-LU also further increased Federal funding for transportation enhancements. Each state had to dedicate greater than 10% of their apportioned funds as part of the Surface Transportation Program (STP) for a fiscal year, or the amount that was apportioned to the state in FY2005. The priority was funding programs for bicycle and pedestrian programs that would promote non-motorized travel as well as safety and education programs for pedestrians and bicyclists. Between FY1992 with the advent of ISTEA through FY2004 at the conclusion of TEA-21, 55% of transportation enhancement funding was spent for pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, safety and education activities for pedestrians and cyclists, and the preservation of abandoned railway corridors.³¹

Funding for Transportation Enhancement projects from the federal government enabled the creation of many trails and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs across the United States. Over half of the funding for all transportation enhancement projects was spent directly for bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trails specifically for over twelve years. However, in 2012, Congress

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

passed the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) to replace SAFETEA-LU's provisions, which had expired in 2009 but were reauthorized on a yearly basis. MAP-21 departs from the successful transportation enhancement funding model in favor of Transportation Alternatives, a combination of the transportation enhancement, Safe Routes to Schools, and Recreational Trails programs. MAP-21 also significantly reduced federal funding for the Transportation Alternatives program and changed how the funds are distributed and which agencies are eligible to apply.³² This change in funding prioritization by the Federal Highway Administration will likely drastically reduce the available funds for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. This reduction in funding for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and education will negatively impact the implementation of alternative transportation infrastructure.

Increased prevalence of bicycle facilities and the availability of bicycle gear have led to increased outdoor recreation tourism opportunities for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Trails are flexible and multi-faceted as a tourist product and benefit many areas, including the environment and economics, and "should aim to provide opportunities for visitors to actively engage with authentic, emotional, and spiritual experiences".³³ Trails can also operate as greenways, not only connecting

³² America Bikes. "Biking & Walking in MAP-21." America Bikes, http://www.americabikes.org/map_21 (accessed February 2, 2013).

³³ Deborah Hayes, and Nicola MacLeod. "Packaging Places: Designing Heritage Trails using an Experience Economy Perspective to Maximize Visitor Engagement." *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 13, no. 1 (2007): 48, 56

“a region’s historic and cultural attractions” but also serving as a land management technique for a region rather than a community.³⁴

Scholars who have studied heritage tourism and heritage trails in particular praise the heritage trail as a low-impact development that allows tourists to see a variety of resources linked together and, in essence, packaged like a product.³⁵ Heritage trails, especially rail trails constructed on an abandoned railroad bed, are popular because of their gentle gradients that are easily accessible to all, wide corridors for maximum use, and firm surfaces that make travel easy for those on foot, bikes, or in wheelchairs.³⁶ Trails can be further designed to help with “environmental conservation and visitor management, in economic development, and in contributing to a deeper sense of place and community.”³⁷ The heritage trail, whether in an abandoned rail bed or constructed from scratch, is a multi-purpose trail with many additional benefits.

Both Reis and Jellum, and Hayes and MacLeod cite the creation of a tourist product as being central to cultural tourism. Cultural tourism is now focused on packaging experiences of “both a formal and informal nature as discretely packed cultural experiences” because the average tourist in the twenty-first century is

³⁴ Laura Thompson. "The Long Good Buy: How to Plan, Fund, and Complete a Multijurisdictional Recreational Corridor." *Planning* 67, no. 5 (05 2001), 4

³⁵ Hayes and MacLeod, “Packaging Places”, 48-50; Arianne Carvalhedo Reis, Carla Jellum. "Rail Trail Development: A Conceptual Model for Sustainable Tourism." *Tourism Planning & Development* 9, no. 2 (2012): 135-136

³⁶ Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development”, 134

³⁷ Hayes and MacLeod, “Packaging Places”, 48

“driven by the desire for insight rather than formal learning as a basis for understanding” and is interested in the experience available.³⁸

Reis and Jellum present a framework of “characteristics and facilitators” that, when combined, make a heritage trail into a tourist product that could be marketed according to the process for packaging experiences described by Hayes and MacLeod. The six characteristics proposed are considered “key elements for the tourism product” but all six do not have to be present for a successful trail; however the authors note that the more characteristics present make a stronger case for a trail as a distinguishable tourist product.³⁹

The six characteristics are: physical features, scenery, environmental aspects, length, gateways, and heritage. Physical features are those that make trails popular with users – the low gradients, gentle turns, and firm surfaces that make traveling easy for a variety of users and variety of modes of travel. Costs incurred with the transformation of a railroad bed into a rail trail is often significantly lower than creating a trail from scratch. Reis and Jellum note that the conversion of a “low amenity value resource” to a higher amenity value resource through the change from railroad to trail, combined with the lower cost associated with development make a trail a sustainable tourism product.⁴⁰

Scenery characteristics are what make the trail visually interesting and appealing to visitors such as rural courses with attractive landscapes and a variety of architecture for visitors to look at. Railroad corridors often ran through areas of

³⁸ Hayes and MacLeod, “Packaging Places”, 47

³⁹ Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development”, 136

⁴⁰ Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development,” 137

significant natural beauty that is difficult for other methods of transportation to reach. An added benefit is that the trail user is not confined while using the trail; there is more interaction between user and scenic environment.⁴¹ Environmental aspects come into play if the trail is along a migration route for animals such as birds, or if the trail is directly involved in wildlife conservation and plant preservation by providing a natural habitat for the flora and fauna. Rail trails around the world have been used to recolonize native species of plants and animals and provide a protected habitat. This has become a type of tourism unto itself – ecotourism – which is similar in idea to heritage tourism.⁴²

Length of the trail is important in attracting visitors from out of town; longer trails serve as a destination and activity unto themselves and bring visitors for longer times. However, Reis and Jellum claim that discussion on the exact length required for successful development of a rail trail for community tourism development is nearly impossible. Rather, the community should focus on creating a tourist experience that “embraces ‘slow’ experiences” and “reinforces the importance of [the tourists’] own history, values, and way of living. The close interaction between tourists and the experience of the community is what drives consumer demand. As such, capitalizing on a community’s local culture is of vital importance more so than the exact length of the trail.⁴³

Gateways are of vital importance to attract potential users to the trail. Reis and Jellum argue that because these trails are often rural and usually linear, rail

⁴¹ Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development,” 136-139

⁴² Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development,” 136-138

⁴³ Reis and Jellum “Rail Trail Development,” 136-137

trails need a place that functions as a trail head to provide the entrance and exit to the trail but also provides a place that visitors' needs can be met through a park ranger or extensive information posted on a board. Services associated with the gateways also make the experience more enjoyable for those visiting the site and are often what people remember about their experience on the trail; whether or not they found a hotel easily, was informed about dining options, trail service providers such as a bicycle shuttle, or transportation regionally. All of these aspects are important in making up the gateway to the trail, which serves not only as a point of departure for the trail but also as a means of unwrapping the tourist product created.⁴⁴

Finally, heritage is the most important characteristic of Reis and Jellum's model for the packaging of a trail as a tourist product. Because rail trails are associated with "hardships and successes" within a community, the added "connection of rail trails with the history of a local area's economic and social development" provides a heritage component to the overall trail. Longer distance trails that incorporate heritage provide an even better connection to a regional heritage because longer distance trails normally cross through several municipalities and as such, offer the trail user the chance to interact with the landscapes and built environment to learn about their history.⁴⁵

Reis and Jellum argue that three facilitators – low development costs, interpretation/education opportunities, and community involvement turn six characteristics into a tourism product like Hayes and MacLeod's research shows

⁴⁴ Reis and Jellum "Rail Trail Development," 138

⁴⁵ Reis and Jellum, "Rail Trail Development," 137-138

that tourists consume. Low development costs are associated with trails, particularly rail trails, because the corridor has been cut already. The path has been made – a trail proponent has to clear the track and pave the surface but the hardest part was completed by the railroad when the tracks were laid originally. Trails also require less maintenance than a road because the volume of people traveling on it is less; therefore the stress on the infrastructure is lower. If the trail is also used as a natural habitat for plants the maintenance will be even less.

In addition to low development costs, Reis and Jellum argue that using heritage sites and/or wild life corridors, in addition to some of the other characteristics, creates interpretive opportunities along the trail that generate opportunities to attract a variety of audiences. Attracting a variety of audiences not only brings more visitors to the trail, but it provides an opportunity to advance knowledge about different subjects to groups of people who may be initially attracted to a trail for an entirely different reason.⁴⁶ For example, someone who visits a heritage trail that is also a wildlife corridor may find that he or she is interested in learning more about the built heritage because of the interpretation provided on the trail. The visitor came for one reason – wildlife – but was engaged in an entirely new topic. Finally, Reis and Jellum cite the increased need for community involvement in trails and trail development as the final facilitator. Government cooperation, especially with trails that span multiple jurisdictions, is essential to the success of a trail and the communities along the trail hoping to

⁴⁶ Reis and Jellum “Rail Trail Development”, 139

benefit from the economic development of the trail.⁴⁷ Without the support of the community as well as the public sector, trails could not be created or supported to provide access to rivers, waterfronts, historic resources and landscapes for future generations.⁴⁸

As consumable products, heritage trails can be used to generate economic development in a community. Tourists spend money when they travel, and bicyclists are no exception. MacDonald reports that in 2010, Americans and other tourists visited sites managed by the United States Department of the Interior 437 million times. This tourism helped to sustain over 388,000 jobs and contributed over \$44 billion dollars in economic activity. While most of the benefits of the tourist money are the hospitality industry, including hotels and restaurants, visitors often visit other places and cultural sites while traveling, attempting to find vibrant local cultural experiences and be a part of authentic, emotional and spiritual experiential opportunities.⁴⁹ Researchers J. M. Bowker, Joshua Gill, and John Bergstrom have studied several rail trails and completed statistical analyses of each trail and their economic impacts on a local municipality. While the statistical research is beyond the scope of this thesis, the results are not. The authors found that overnight trips generate the most revenue for a community because tourists spend money on lodging, food, and other related trip expenses. In their in-depth analysis of the Virginia Creeper Trail in Virginia, they found that Virginia Creeper

⁴⁷ Reis and Jellum "Rail Trail Development", 136; Thompson "Long Good Buy", 7

⁴⁸ Thompson 9; Stuart MacDonald. "Historic Trails: Enhancing the Benefit to Communities." *We Proceeded On* 37, no. 4 (11 2011): 32.

⁴⁹ MacDonald "Historic Trails" 32; Hayes and MacLeod "Packaging Places", 48-50.

Trail tourists generate over \$1.6 million in output and creates more than 27 jobs in the local community.⁵⁰

Regardless of whether or not the trail is created from an abandoned railroad bed or built from scratch, a heritage trail can be a successful tourist draw and lead to economic development for a municipality. Shorter distance trails, as well as trails of medium distance, can also provide a safe route for commuters to use. Thus, the heritage trail has multiple applications and multiple benefits across the board. The bicycling community is growing in numbers likely in part because of an increased awareness of the environmental and economic impact of automobiles and suburbanization as well as increased funding for bicycling facilities. However, like research on rail trails and heritage trails, bicycling statistics are difficult to generate due to the difficulties in counting individual cyclists as well as obtaining accurate information about bicycle usage. The Pedestrian and Bicycling Information Center (PBIC), a part of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has worked to compile data related to bicycle use in the United States for those interested. The PBIC has published data related to bicycle use as surveyed through the National Survey of Pedestrian and Bicyclist Attitudes and Behaviors in 2002, sponsored by the United States Department of Transportation and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is the

⁵⁰ J.M. Bowker, John C. Bergstrom, and Joshua Gil. "Estimating the Economic Value and Impacts of Recreational Trails: A Case Study of the Virginia Creeper Rail Trail." *Tourism Economics* 13, no. 2 (06 2007): 254

most recent comprehensive data specifically related to bicycling and pedestrian trends and is already a decade old.⁵¹

Twenty-six percent of survey respondents biked for recreation purposes, slightly over 23% biked for exercise or other health reasons, and 5% of respondents used a bicycle to commute to work or school. Cyclists surveyed said they use paved roads 48.1% of the time for their biking trips and bicycle paths, walking paths, or trails only 13.1% and bicycle lanes on roads only 5.2% of the time.⁵² It is unclear whether the respondents answered this way because separate paths and trails do not exist or are unavailable to them or because the respondents choose to use the paved roads over other options. In 2009, the Bike League found through the National Household Travel Survey that bicycling and walking made up 11.9% of all trips made in the United States that year. This was up 9.5% in 2001 and accounts for a 25% increase in mode shares.⁵³

Heritage trails have only recently become an area of interest to scholars. Many of the articles read for this literature review have cited the need for more study on heritage trails and their usage. Limitations to study include the difficulty in conducting a survey along a trail as well as the fairly recent increase in the popularity of trails among travellers. Timothy and Boyd note that with the creation of the *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, there will be an increase in the scholarly study of heritage tourism in general, which will likely include heritage trails. They

⁵¹ Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. "General Bicycling Statistics." University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, Chapel Hill, NC, <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/facts/statistics.cfm> (accessed September 20, 2012).

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

specifically hope that “the journal will become a valued venue for the publication of innovative research in heritage tourism, forging linkages with research on other forms of tourism, but also in building necessary bridges across the academic-heritage industry divide.”⁵⁴

From their humble beginnings as transportation for workers to their evolution into the modern machine, bicycles have always been popular forms of transportation and recreation. Support for the use of bicycles as transportation is well-documented through designated funding from the Federal Highway Administration, the development of standards for bicycle facilities and transportation routes, and the time and energy spent on educating both cyclists and motorists on how to ‘share the road.’ The support for bicycles as a transportation method is also documented through the increasing numbers of trips made by bicycle: in 2009, bicycling and walking increased dramatically. Nearly 12% of all trips made in the United States utilized a bicycle or was done via foot. Continued support for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and education programs will make these modes of transportation even safer and more feasible for Americans in the future, and will have a positive impact on reducing the effects of greenhouse gasses.

Increasing rates of bicycling and walking will also have a positive effect on the waistline of Americans. Providing Americans with the facilities and environment where cycling and walking are safe will be crucial to helping reduce the rate of obesity in the United States in adults and children. Federal government

⁵⁴ D. J. Timothy, and S. W. Boyd. "Heritage Tourism in the 21st Century: Valued Traditions and New Perspectives." *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 1, no. 1 (2006): 12

support of cycling and walking, as part of a healthy lifestyle, will be one way to encourage citizens to utilize these facilities, especially those without access to other facilities such as gyms, as a result of geographical factors or socio-economic factors. Community trails and sidewalks are often free to the public and easily accessible to a variety of people regardless of age, socio-economic status, or gender.

Finally, trails can serve as a tourist product that provides opportunities for local community economic development and historic preservation. Trails provide a place where recreation meets community and regional history. Interpreting historic structures and objects along a trail provides an additional layer of interest to the trail that can be utilized to package the trail as a tourist product that visitors can consume by 'doing' the trail. In addition to preserving industrial heritage along a rail corridor, transforming an abandoned rail line into a trail also serves as landscape preservation by maintaining open space and any defining characteristics of the surrounding land. Attracting tourists to the trail through its marketing as a tourism product will generate additional revenue for communities along the trail as visitors patronize restaurants, souvenir shops, and stay overnight. Trails that incorporate historic preservation through interpretation and adaptive reuse are not only making the past available for public consumption, but they are also tools for communities to leverage the preservation of their heritage to increase economic development and generate revenue through tourism.

Chapter II

TRAIL HISTORY AND RESEARCH SUMMARY

In addition to the theoretical research in the preceding chapter, research into the practical side of heritage trail creation and maintenance was conducted through analysis of reports generated by trail use groups and other stakeholder groups associated with four trails along the East Coast of the United States, as well as several discussions with trail proponents and managers regarding their work. The particular trails include the Virginia Creeper Trail, the Erie Canalway Trail, the Main Line Canal, and the Great Allegheny Passage. These trails were chosen because they are significantly, if not entirely, rural in character and major economic engines for their region. These trails were also chosen because of their additional use of historic interpretation and preservation.

Trail use studies and other documents were analyzed from the Erie Canalway's Bicyclists Bring Business and the Great Allegheny Passage Trail's, the Trail Town Program. These programs were analyzed for their specific focus on economic development centered on trail development and operation in rural communities, as well as emphasis on historic preservation as a method of economic development. The goal of the informational interviews and the analysis of documents was to determine what, if any, characteristics made the trails successful and how historic elements of the trails could be applied to a trail in development

and planning stages to positively influence its development and success once created.

Trail One: The Virginia Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail is a 34-mile trail corridor stretching from Abingdon, Virginia to Whitetop, Virginia, close to the North Carolina border (figure 2.1). The railroad line originally extended into North Carolina, but the trail does not extend into the state today and the lands have been returned to private property owners. The rail line was operated by the Abingdon Iron & Coal Railroad Company, which was incorporated by the State of Virginia to transport materials produced in the area by the Southwest Virginia Mining Company. J.D. Imboden was a speculator who came to the rural isolated areas of Southwestern Virginia after the Civil War to mine and produce the iron ore located in the mountains and turn the area into a major steel industry center. The main mine was located in the town of Damascus, which had been renamed from Mock's Mill to Damascus ,a major iron ore and steel producing area in Syria, the Middle East at the time. The AI&CRC transported materials and goods produced in the Southwestern Virginia mountains to other cities and markets through Roanoke and other cities east of Abingdon and Damascus.

After the railroad had acquired all of the property necessary for production of the rail line, the rail line was cleared and graded using a supply of African-American prison inmates from Virginia penitentiaries. According to the history of the Virginia Creeper Trail, many men died while working on the massive project and were buried in unmarked graves along the side of the trail. After several years and

the AI&CRC railroad had still not been constructed due to lack of budgetary funds, the Virginia Western Coal and Iron Railroad Company took over, but had a similar fate budget-wise and could not complete the project. Finally, Wilton E. Mingea, stepped in and negotiated a price for the Norfolk & Western Railroads to acquire the easements for the railroad with the financial help of timber companies and real estate developers who saw the tremendous potential in shipping timber from the mountains, where the supply had not yet been exhausted. The track was finally laid, bridges were finally built over a two-year period, and the Virginia-Carolina Railroad began its maiden voyage on the tracks on February 7, 1900.⁵⁵ At its longest, the Virginia-Carolina railway was seventy-six miles long and stretched from Abingdon, Virginia to the town of Elkland, now Todd, North Carolina. The Virginia-Carolina Railway earned the name Virginia Creeper sometime during the 1930s or 1940s and the exact story is unknown. Legend says that the name came from the curvaceous nature of the rail line and its similarities to the Virginia Creeper vine, a native to the mountains of southwestern Virginia. Another story is that the name came from the way the train traveled through the mountains: up and down mountains and around mountainsides (figure 2.2). Because of the treacherous nature of the railroad, the train could only “creep” slowly down the tracks. Regardless, the name Virginia Creeper has added an element of quaintness to the trail, as well as the lure of the association with the trains of the past.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Edward H. Davis and Edward B. Morgan. *The Virginia Creeper Trail: Nature and History Along Southwest Virginia's National Recreation Trail*. (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1997), 47-49

⁵⁶ Davis and Morgan, *The Virginia Creeper*, 50-59



Figure 2.1. Map of the Virginia Creeper Trail from Abington to Whitetop, Virginia.⁵⁷

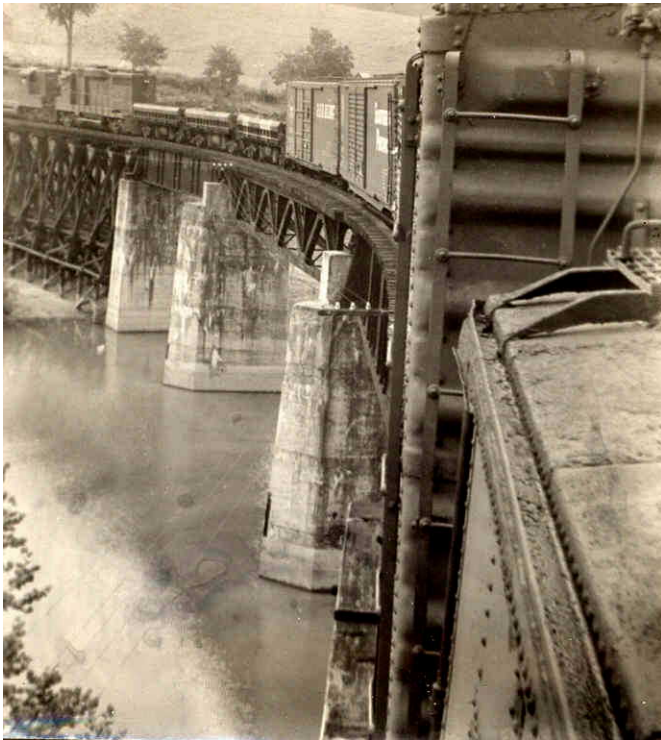


Figure 2.2: The Virginia Creeper Train.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Richard Smith, "Maps," Virginia Creeper Trail, www.vacreepertrail.us/maps

⁵⁸ Smith, "Virginia Creeper Trail Photos,"

<http://www.vacreepertrail.us/photos4.htm> (accessed February 10, 2013)

The last train ran on the Virginia-Carolina Railway on March 31, 1977. The Norfolk and Western had no choice but to return the railroad right of way to property owners in North Carolina per a clause put in deeds in North Carolina that stipulated railroad closures meant the right-of-way was returned to property owners. In Virginia, there was no such clause and interested trail proponents proceeded to negotiate a trail with the railroad corporation. The United States Forest Service bought the right-of-way between Damascus and Green Cove which was on the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area property, which the Forest Service managed. The Town of Damascus purchased another few miles to connect their town park to the trail. It took two years for the remaining section connecting Damascus to Abingdon to be purchased. The Virginia Commission for Outdoor Recreation and the Tennessee Valley Authority contributed the majority of the funds to enable the towns of Abingdon and Damascus to purchase the remaining 13 miles between the two municipalities. The entire trail was then completed. Congress designated the trail as a National Recreation Trail in March of 1986, and the final repairs of bridges, trestles, and other infrastructure was completed in 1989, at which point the Virginia Creeper Trail officially opened to the public.⁵⁹

Trail Two: The Erie Canalway Trail

There is perhaps no other trail that stirs national pride and imagination quite like the Erie Canal and the associated Erie Canal Trail (figure 2.3). Stretching from one end of New York State to the other, the trail will ultimately run 524 miles along the Erie, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca, and Champlain canals from Buffalo, New York to

⁵⁹ Davis and Morgan, *The Virginia Creeper*, 68-71



Figure 2.3: Map of the Erie Canalway Trail and its smaller, feeder trails.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, "Erie Canalway Map," <http://www.eriecanalway.org/documents/ErieCanalwayMap.pdf>

Albany, New York, making it quite an extensive trail system. The Canalway Trail follows the towpath of both historic and active canalways and is almost entirely off-road.⁶¹ The trail is a combination of federal, state and local efforts to bring awareness to the historic canal and is designated by the National Park Service as a National Heritage Corridor.

The Erie Canal is an amazing testament to American construction, engineering, and manufacturing. It is considered to be the United States' "most successful and influential public works project" in history.⁶² The canal was constructed in an 8-year period between 1817 and 1825 and stretches 363 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, linking the two markets for the first time. In addition to opening trading between the two areas, the Erie Canal contributed to the settlement of the Upper Midwest, Great Plains, and Northeast as travel was facilitated between these areas. The Erie Canal transformed New York into the "Empire State" and solidified its status as a "seaport and seat of world trade" because all goods coming from the Midwest had to pass through New York City's harbor.⁶³ The Erie Canal also served as a hands-on learning project for American engineers who had little skill in building canals. The Erie Canal was constructed at four feet deep, 40 feet wide and with the help of hand drills and dynamite, passed through "fields, forests, rocky cliffs, and swamps: crossed rivers

⁶¹ New York State Canals Corporation. "About the Canalway Trail." New York State Canal Corporation, <http://www.canals.ny.gov/trails/about.html> (accessed November 14, 2012).

⁶² Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "Learn: History and Culture." Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://www.eriecanalway.org/learn_history-culture.htm (accessed November 28, 2012).

⁶³ *ibid*

on aqueducts, and overcame hills with 83 lift locks.”⁶⁴ The success of the Erie Canal proved that shipping was a viable and effective method of transportation for goods and people and led to the development of other, smaller canals across the state to increase shipping potential. These canals – the Champlain, Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca – became the Erie Canal system and will eventually all have trails to accompany them. From 1905 to 1918, New York State constructed even more canals as part of the Barge Canal System. The Barge Canal System is considered to be an offshoot of the earlier, nineteenth century canals. The canals in New York State are still extensively used, adding to the character of the National Heritage Corridor and making for very interesting and varied scenery along the Canalway trails.⁶⁵

The Erie Canalway Trail has largely been constructed on the “towpath,” or the path forged by mules and mule drivers, called “hoggies,” that pulled boats and freighters through the canal at around four miles per hour (figure 2.4). When shipping on the Erie Canal peaked in the late nineteenth century, the Canal began to fade in importance to the region and the United States, especially after the advent of modern trucking and shipping and the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in the mid twentieth century. By the 1960s, municipalities along the Canal began to look for alternative ways to benefit from the Canal without the shipping industry. Several communities began acquiring property for recreational opportunities in places where the towpath still existed or could be repaired. In 1966, New York State acquired more than 30 miles of the original canal for creation of a linear state park.

⁶⁴ *ibid*

⁶⁵ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. “Learn: History and Culture”.



Figure 2.4: The former towpath now serves as the primary trail along the Erie Canalway.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Parks and Trails New York. "Parks and Trails New York Flickr," <http://www.flickr.com/photos/russnelson/7671496518/in/pool-ptny>, (accessed April 13, 2013).

After the investment by New York State, many other communities also became more actively engaged in conversion of the towpath and canalway. The State of New York also purchased the New York Central Railroad bed, which had been abandoned years before. The New York Central Railroad had been the first competitor to the Erie Canalway, laying its track close and often parallel to the Erie Canal itself!⁶⁷

The momentum to turn the towpath and areas along the Erie Canal into the trail began in earnest when the New York State Canal Corporation – owner and operator of the canal system – created the New York State Canal Recreationway Plan in 1995. The New York State Canal Corporation understood that the canal was no longer a viable economic engine due to the modern improvements in shipping and trucking technologies, and wanted to invest money to “reposition the canal corridor as a “linear park ... to enhance the economic development potential of the canal regions.”⁶⁸ American Trails, a non-profit that represents trail interests of all types, reported in 2010 that in the 15 years post creation and release of the New York State Canal Recreationway Plan and in the 40 years since the first trail beginnings, the canalway trail is nearly 75% complete with 270 miles of off-road path open and available for use.⁶⁹

Trail Three: The Main-Line Canal

The Main-Line Canal was the first canal to be constructed in the state of Pennsylvania and also utilized a railroad system to carry goods across the state to

⁶⁷ American Trails. "New York State's Erie Canalway Trail." American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/long/New-York-Erie-Canalway-Trail.html> (accessed November 30, 2012).

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ *ibid*

provide a means of connectivity between Philadelphia and the rural areas in the western part of the state and Pittsburgh (figure 2.5). Construction began in 1826.⁷⁰ The Main-Line Canal was originally intended to be a railroad only, but the Philadelphia merchants that made up the 1824 Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements in the Commonwealth eventually shifted their preference to a canal system. The Philadelphia merchants were desperate to be able to trade, particularly with the industrial markets in Pittsburgh following the completion of the Erie Canal in New York because New York City became the principal port on the East Coast, taking business away from Philadelphia. Being able to transport goods to and from Pittsburgh would not only provide access to the interior Midwestern United States for goods from Philadelphia through use of the Ohio River, but would also allow goods from Pittsburgh to reach larger markets through Philadelphia. The canal also “opened the western part of the state to settlement and promoted the rapid growth of towns along the route,” development of the western part of the state – both in terms of population and economy – can be attributed to the canal, making it a success.⁷¹

Originally, the canal portions were approved on a special “canal construction bill,” introduced in Pennsylvania Congress in January 1826. The bill approved construction of the eastern and western sections of the canal, but did not provide a means for the canals to be connected in the middle part of the state.⁷² Construction

⁷⁰ David Fritz and A. Berle Clemensen. *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal: Juniata and Western Divisions; Special Study*. (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1992), 5

⁷¹ Fritz and Clemensen. *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 17

⁷² Fritz and Clemensen, *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 4-5

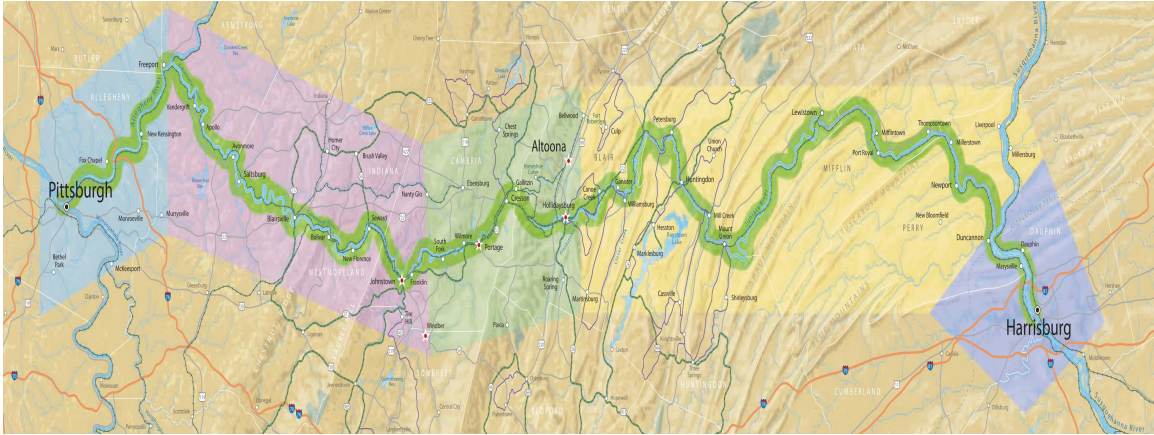


Figure 2.5: Map of the Main-Line Canal. The entire trail will eventually consist of a land-based portion as well as a water trail route.⁷³

⁷³ Allegheny Ridge Corporation. "Pittsburgh-to-Harrison Main Line Canal Greenway." Allegheny Ridge Corporation, www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org (accessed February 1, 2013).

began on July 4, 1826 in Harrisburg. During construction, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania eventually provided for the connection of the two canal segments in the middle of the state through the Juniata River, and work began in 1827. Because the Juniata portion of the project crossed portions of the Allegheny Mountains, the canal was constructed in short segments with many locks to enable boats to traverse the mountains.⁷⁴ The Juniata division was completed in 1832 at a total of 127.32 miles covering a rise of 582 feet, three inches using 88 locks.⁷⁵ Segments of the canal were in operation as early as 1829, but the entire system could not be utilized until the portage railroad was completed across the mountains. To travel from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, cargo was loaded onto barges in the borough of Columbia. The barges were unloaded at Hollidaysburg, transferred to the railroad cars to traverse the mountains, and were reloaded onto barges in Johnstown to travel to Pittsburgh (figure 2.6).⁷⁶

The Main-Line Canal was expensive to construct and maintain and as such, the Commonwealth wanted to sell the operation beginning in 1842, though no offer was high enough. When the Pennsylvania Railroad Company constructed its line across the state in 1854, the interest in selling the obsolete canal again rose to the forefront. Eventually, the Pennsylvania Railroad bought the operations at a much-reduced price in 1857. The railroad company began abandoning the canal system in small fragments, ultimately completing the abandonment in 1899. Not much of the

⁷⁴ Fritz and Clemensen, *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 8

⁷⁵ Fritz and Clemensen, *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 9

⁷⁶ Fritz and Clemensen, *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 13-14



Figure 2.6: Cargo traveling on the Main-Line Canal had to complete several steps to cross the Allegheny Mountains. Cargo was loaded onto a barge, then transferred to a railroad car to cross the Allegheny Mountains, and then reloaded onto barges to complete the journey across the state.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Allegheny Ridge Corporation. "History of the Canal." Allegheny Ridge Corporation, http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/about_history.shtml.

Main-Line Canal remains visible today. Because the railroad and canal system did not transform directly into a rail trail, much of the canal and railroad has been lost to the elements and nature, particularly floods in the rivers utilized. The canal's locks, often constructed of large stones quarried from the surrounding areas, sometimes remain and are visible reminders of the technological wonder that linked the two sides of Pennsylvania.

Trail Four: The Great Allegheny Passage

The Great Allegheny Passage Trail is a trail from Cumberland, Maryland to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that connects the Potomac River watershed to the Ohio River watershed and the mid-Atlantic to the Midwest United States (figure 2.7).⁷⁸ The Great Allegheny Passage trail, which will be finished next year, is the masterpiece of more than thirty years worth of work to turn several smaller trails into one large regional trail that spans hundreds of miles.⁷⁹ The trail is laid on former rail lines of the Western Maryland Railroad and the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad. Several trail alliances came together to form the regional Allegheny Trail Alliance in 1995 to work on the trail and focus their efforts to make a trail that would serve the entire region of southwestern Pennsylvania.

The Great Allegheny Passage was originally a means to traverse the Allegheny Mountains. The Passage was "opened by Major General Edward Braddock in 1755" and was an important part of the colonies' victory and success at

⁷⁸ Edward K. Muller. "An Uncommon Passage: An Introduction." *An Uncommon Passage: Traveling through History on the Great Allegheny Passage Trail*. Edited by E. K. Muller. (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press), 1.

⁷⁹ Muller, "An Uncommon Passage: An Introduction," 1; Phone call to Trail Town Program, conversation with author, phone, December 5, 2012.

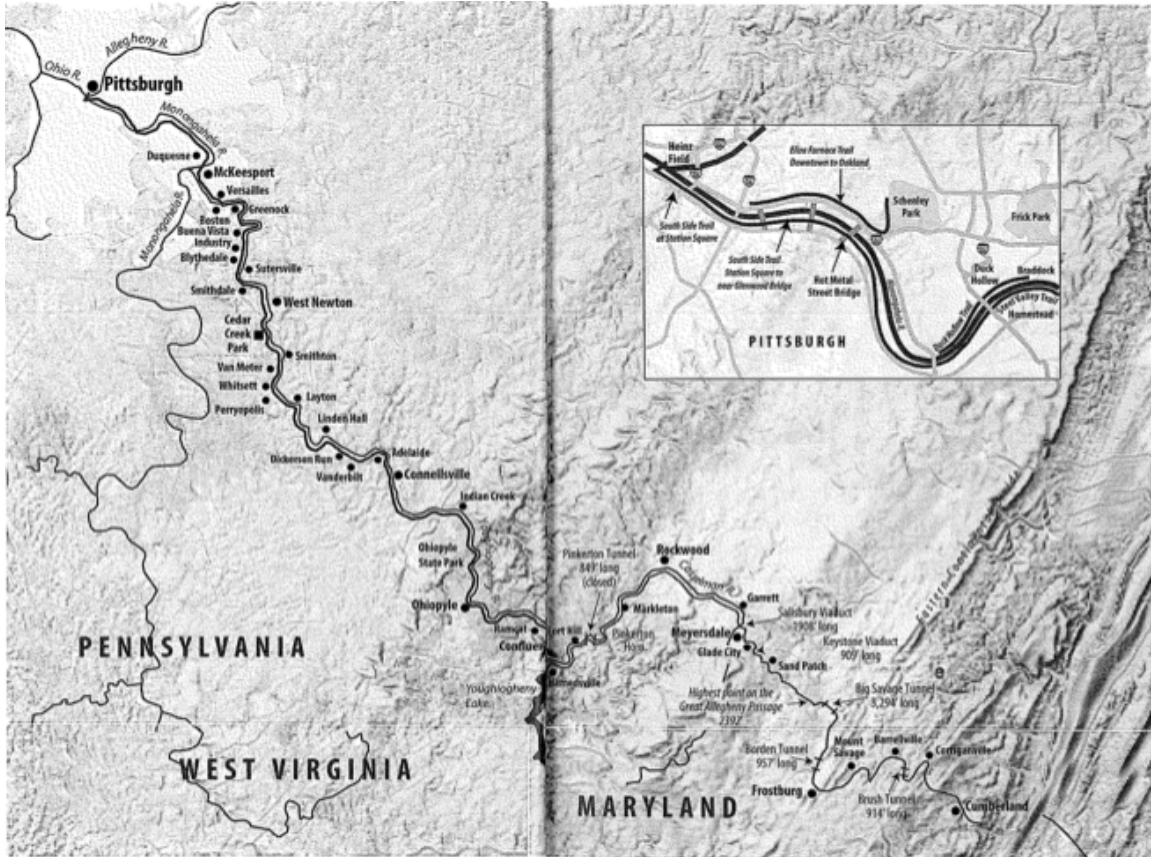


Figure 2.7: Map of the Great Allegheny Passage. In Cumberland, Maryland, the trail connects to the C&O Towpath to Washington, D.C.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Muller, "An Uncommon Passage," vi-vii

taking the Ohio River Valley from the French and Indians during the French and Indian War. The Great Allegheny Passage also offered a way for Virginians to expand westward, which eventually created problems with other settlers from Eastern Pennsylvania who had crossed the mountains using an alternate trading path. The conflict over which group controlled the land ultimately led to the extension of the Mason-Dixon Line to settle the dispute over power between Virginia and Pennsylvania.⁸¹ As the nineteenth century progressed, the railroad lines became a central factor in the rapid industrialization of the United States because the rail lines could move “agricultural products and natural resources such as timber, coal, and iron ore to Cumberland and Pittsburgh at the eastern and western ends” of the railroad line.⁸² As Pittsburgh developed into the iron, and later steel, capital of the United States, the lower Monongahela River Valley became “known as the Steel Valley,” where the coking coal mined out of the earth was used to create metal goods for shipment all over the nation and the world.

The railroads that crisscrossed the Allegheny Mountains did more than just move industrial goods and other raw materials; the railroads also carried people, tourists looking to escape the city life for more pastoral life and vacations in the countryside.⁸³ Resorts, hotels, and camps brought vacationers from the Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Washington, DC for mountain vacations along the rivers.⁸⁴ One of the first hotels, The Ohiopyle House, opened in Falls City in 1871 across the train tracks from the depot for easy access. The Ferncliff Hotel opened for summer

⁸¹ Muller, “An Uncommon Passage”, 4

⁸² Muller, “An Uncommon Passage”, 5

⁸³ Muller, “An Uncommon Passage”, 6

⁸⁴ Muller, “An Uncommon Passage”, 7

vacationers in 1879 in Falls City, and was one of the earliest buildings to be electrically lit using hydropower in Falls City. Many other hotels, campsites and private second homes were constructed along the railroad for ease of access. Perhaps the most famous vacationer in the region was Mr. Edgar J. Kaufmann, Senior. Kaufmann was the owner of the Kaufmann Department Store in Pittsburgh. He opened Camp Kaufmann at Bear Run for employees of his department store in 1916, though the camp closed in the 1930s because of the Great Depression. After the closure of Camp Kaufmann to employees, the Kaufmann family continued to use the property; each family built their own vacation cottage on the property. Kauffman himself invited Frank Lloyd Wright to Bear Run to design his vacation home: Fallingwater (figure 2.8).⁸⁵

As the steel industry began to wane in the southwestern Pennsylvania region, the railroad began to close and shut down as factories closed their doors and ceased operations. By 1990, all of the factories, mills, and industries closed their doors.⁸⁶ However, as the industry was shutting down, recreational opportunities were gearing up in the countryside served by the railroad. Water sports took off in popularity, and conservation groups worked to clean up and protect the countryside. Recreational opportunities such as hunting, fishing, skiing, hiking, rock climbing and kayaking expanded, and began the conversion of the region from one of natural resource exploitation and manufacturing to one of natural resource

⁸⁵ Kevin J. Patrick. "The Spirit of the Passage: Where Past and Future Meet." In *An Uncommon Passage: Traveling through History on the Great Allegheny Passage Trail*. Edited by E. K. Muller. (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 208-214

⁸⁶ Muller, "An Uncommon Passage", 7



Figure 2.8: Fallingwater, the house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for department store magnate Edgar J. Kaufmann, of Pittsburgh.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. "The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: Fallingwater." The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, www.paconserve.org/43 (accessed April 17, 2013).

conservation and outdoor recreational opportunities. The abandoned railroad lines began to be viewed as the perfect place to bicycle: it was a “topographically friendly trail” for cyclists and another way to enjoy the mountains.⁸⁸ In 1986, the first portion of the abandoned railroad was developed into a trail in the town of Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania. Soon after, several other groups began developing trails along the former railroad. In 1995, the trail operators coalesced and formed the Allegheny Trail Alliance to build one continuous trail – the Great Allegheny Passage. The continuous trail system would make the trail a regional trail and serve as a regional attraction. When completed, the trail will run from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to Cumberland, Maryland. In Pittsburgh, the trail will have an additional 52-mile segment that will run to the Pittsburgh International Airport and the town of Coraopolis, Pennsylvania. In Cumberland, Maryland, the trail links to the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Railway Towpath, which runs to Washington, D.C. The Great Allegheny Passage is expected to be completed in 2013.⁸⁹

Study Results

Each of the four trails was evaluated on five aspects: economic development along the trail or because of the trail, involvement of a non-profit organization, the impact of multi-jurisdictional ownership, methods of attracting visitors, reasons as to their success or things that may prevent success, and the role of historic

⁸⁸ Muller, “An Uncommon Passage”, 7-8

⁸⁹ Phone call to The Progress Fund, December 5, 2012; Allegheny Trail Alliance. “About the Trail.” Allegheny Trail Alliance, www.atatrail.org/tmi/about.cfm, accessed March 3, 2013.

preservation along the trail. The results are provided here by theme, as well as organized into charts at the end of the chapter for easy reference and accessibility.

Economic Development and the Trails

Economic development in trailside communities is an important by-product of each trail. Tourists who use trails often will spend money in the towns they come to, either for necessities such as food and lodging, but often for souvenirs and other services. In 2000, a economic impact study was conducted along the Santa Fe Trail, a Scenic Byway in Santa Fe, New Mexico that found that their 852,000 visitors generated over “\$88 million in direct and indirect spending in communities and counties along the trail.” Other studies of historic trails have found that some trails have generated over “\$22.4 million in total industrial output, \$12.4 million in total income and \$14.1 million in total value added for fifteen trail counties around the trail” and that often the biggest recipients of the economic stimulus was the retail, lodging, and food sectors.⁹⁰ This money generated in each community helps drive the economic engines of the communities, especially as many communities are isolated and still hurting from the economic loss of the railroad and associated manufacturing. The Great Allegheny Passage trail and the Erie Canalway Trail have specific programs dedicated to helping trailside communities take advantage of the economic opportunity generated by cyclists and tourists on the trail. The Trail Town Program specifically targets communities along the Great Allegheny Passage, while the Bicyclists Bring Business Program targets communities along the Erie Canalway Trail.

⁹⁰ MacDonald, Stuart. "Historic Trails: Enhancing the Benefit to Communities." *We Proceeded On* 37, no. 4 (11 2011): 32.

The Trail Town Program was started by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, an umbrella group of regional trail related non-profits that manage the Great Allegheny Passage, as a means of generating economic development in the small towns along the Great Allegheny Passage. The targeted program also works to address “trail-wide issues and opportunities” for these towns through regional cooperation not only between each town and the trail but also between the towns themselves.⁹¹ The Trail Town Program’s goals are to “1) retain, expand, and increase revenues of existing businesses; 2) recruit sustainable new business; 3) facilitate collective action by the Trail Towns to create a world class recreational destination; and 4) improve the buildings and infrastructure in each town to create a visitor friendly destination.” The program launched with support from the Progress Fund in 2007 and expanded to include western Maryland in 2009.⁹²

Both the Trail Town Program and the Bicyclists Bring Business Program attempt to guide communities in redevelopment by providing a checklist for community members to guide them through viewing their communities through the eyes of cyclists and those unfamiliar with the community. The Trail Town Program is sponsored and funded directly by the Progress Fund, a community development lender targeting the region in which the Great Allegheny Passage is located, hence it has more of a hands-on impact than the Bicyclists Bring Business Program, which is housed within Parks and Trails New York and not directly funded.⁹³ The Allegheny Trail Alliance created the Trail Town Manual that the Trail Town Program

⁹¹ Trail Town website: www.trailtowns.org/1overview.aspx

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ www.progressfund.org/main/htm. “About us”;
<http://www.ptny.org/canalway/b3.shtml>

implemented and uses to guide their work in communities along the trail. The Manual states that it “is not designed to help a community build a trail, but rather to enhance a community that already has a trail in or near it” by guiding developers “through an organization process; help [one] work with or create a local group focused on downtown revitalization; give [one] the tools to identify what [the] town needs to become a Trail town; give [one] ideas [one] on where starts the revitalization’ and give tips on how to make [one’s] hard work last over time”.⁹⁴ The Bicyclists Bring Business program sponsored by Parks and Trails New York does similar work in their manual for communities and offers information on how to “attract cyclists to [one’s] communities, understand and meet their travel needs and desires, and help them find the kind of vacation experience they are seeking” by providing “strategies for building on what [one] already offers to enhance the appeal of [one’s] community and business to bicycle tourists and strengthen the local economy. These two programs help the communities along the Great Allegheny Passage and the Erie Canalway Trail take advantage of the economic impacts cyclists and other trail tourists may have on communities.

The other trails studied do not appear to have targeted economic development programs or activities. Perhaps this is a result of their shorter length in comparison to the Great Allegheny Passage and the Erie Canalway Trail or the significantly fewer number of towns located along the Virginia Creeper Trail and the

⁹⁴ Allegheny Trail Alliance. *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania*. Latrobe, Pennsylvania: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005, 3; Parks and Trails New York, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, and New York State Canal Corporation. *Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York’s Canal Communities*. Albany, New York: Parks and Trails New York, 4

Main-Line Canal in comparison to the two previous trails. The Main-Line Canal's governing and planning hierarchy is laid out in their master plan to include a development officer plus other supporting programmatic staff. The Development Officer's job description states that the officer is to "plan, organize, coordinate, and participates in funding the future development of the Main-Line Canal Greenway." The plan states that the four positions, including Development Officer, should be filled by either the Allegheny Ridge Corporation staff or through partnerships with other organizations that have the capability of completing this task.⁹⁵ When asked to clarify if there is an economic development officer or program, a representative for the Allegheny Ridge Corporation noted that the Allegheny Ridge Corporation works one on one with communities that need economic development assistance but does not offer a full-fledged program like those that operate on the Great Allegheny Passage of the Erie Canalway. The representative noted that this may be something that is developed in the future, as their water trail portion was receiving more attention as a destination for paddle tourists, but it was not planned at this time.⁹⁶ The Virginia Creeper Trail does not seem to have a targeted economic development program either. The Virginia Creeper Trail is managed by the three agencies that own the trail – the Towns of Abingdon and Damascus and the United States Forest Service – and the Virginia Creeper Trail's Advisory Board which is made of representatives from the three jurisdictions, a jurisdictional partner, adjacent landowners, and representatives of the Virginia Creeper Trail Club, the

⁹⁵ Greenways, Incorporated. *The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway: Pennsylvania's Millennium Trail*. Altoona, Pennsylvania: 2004, 53-57

⁹⁶ Phone call to Allegheny Ridge Corporation, December 4, 2012.

trail's non-profit organization partner. The stated goal of the Virginia Creeper Trail Advisory Board is to "manage the policies of the trail as they cross jurisdictional boundaries in order to promote a uniform experience for trail users along the length of the trail."⁹⁷ The description of neither the Advisory Board nor the non-profit states that economic development of the communities along the trail is a goal of their organization. A representative from the town of Abingdon confirmed this; the majority of funds have been state or federal grants for trail creation and development and is not targeted at the trail communities. The representative said the Virginia Creeper Trail Club is involved on the ground, but mostly in activities related to trail keeping and not economic development.⁹⁸

Economic Development Programs

Two of the trails studied for this project have separate programs dedicated to economic development assistance in the towns along the trail. Parks and Trails New York manages the Bicycles Bring Business program along the Erie Canalway Trail, and the Progress Fund sponsors the Trail Town Program along the Great Allegheny Passage Trail. Each program offers assistance to communities specifically regarding how to attract bicyclists and other trail users into the community, how to anticipate and plan for their needs while traveling, and, because many of the communities have economies rooted in industrial development, how to begin thinking about economic restructuring to a tourism-based economy.

⁹⁷ Virginia Creeper Trail Club. "Creeper Trail Advisory Board." Virginia Creeper Trail Club, <http://www.vacreepertrail.org/creeper-trail-advisory-board> (accessed March 2, 2013).

⁹⁸ Phone call to Town of Abingdon Parks and Recreation Department, December 5, 2012

The Trail Town Program idea was launched in 2001 by groups, such as the Allegheny Trail Alliance and local governments, who were interested in economic development along the Great Allegheny Passage to bring the towns together as a linearly connected business community centered on the economic potential of the trail (figure 2.9).⁹⁹ The Progress Fund, a development organization located in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, provided the funding for the launch of the Trail Town Program so that the goals of the program could be realized in the communities along the trail. The Trail Town Program also closely aligns with the mission of The Progress Fund to “maximize its impact by targeting businesses that see opportunity in the tourism industry.” The Progress Fund “supports economic development by lending needed capital and by providing technical assistance to entrepreneurs” in over 40 counties in regions of Pennsylvania, the state of West Virginia, the Mountain Maryland region, and Appalachian Ohio.¹⁰⁰ In 2005, the Trail Town Manual was completed and published as a joint project of the Allegheny Trail Alliance and the Trail Town Program. The *Trail Town Manual* is intended for communities and other agencies along the Great Allegheny Passage and provides information on topics such as getting organized to create the “trail town” atmosphere and identity, issues with trail town design, economic restructuring for trail towns, promotion of the trail town, and how to create a trail town master plan.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Trail Town Program. “About Us: Overview.” Trail Town Program, <http://www.trailtowns.org/1overview.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013).

¹⁰⁰ The Progress Fund. “The Progress Fund: About Us.” The Progress Fund, www.progressfund.org/main.htm (accessed October 20, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Allegheny Trail Alliance. *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania*. Latrobe, Pennsylvania: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005.

TRAIL TOWNS

— Capturing Trail-Based Tourism —



A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA

Figure 2.9: Cover of the Trail Town Program’s Manual for trail communities: “Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania.”¹⁰²

¹⁰² Allegheny Trail Alliance. *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania*. Latrobe, Pennsylvania: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005.

The *Trail Town Manual* goes over all details a community needs for attracting bicycle tourism, including services cyclists and other trail users look for and need, how to give directions, interpretation of the community's history and local historic sites, and how to distinguish the town as part of the larger Great Allegheny Passage Trail. A representative from the Progress Fund confirmed this and added that the Trail Town Program tries to connect trail users to the community and give them some information on the town and its history while giving them information on services that can be found in each town.¹⁰³

Part of the *Trail Town Manual* is the "Trail Town Self-Assessment Checklist," which covers three large aspects of Trail Town development: "traffic and access issues checklist," "business checklist," and "design checklist." The Self-Assessment Checklist is designed to give municipalities a 'jumping off point' to see where the town currently stand and provides a means for evaluation and prioritization of future projects and community needs. The communities are urged to think of the trail as one piece of the economic development puzzle and to plan carefully to avoid overextension and failure.¹⁰⁴ The Trail Town Program was originally just for communities along the Great Allegheny Passage in Pennsylvania, but in 2009, based on the success of the towns in Pennsylvania, the project expanded to Western Maryland and where the trail begins in Cumberland. One of the first joint projects of the Trail Town Program with it's parent program, the Allegheny Trail Alliance was the implementation of a signage guidelines manual for communities along the trail,

¹⁰³ Phone call to the Progress Fund, December 5, 2012.

¹⁰⁴ Trail Town Program. "Plan It: Business Planning." Trail Town Program, www.trailtowns.org/business-planning.aspx (accessed January 12, 2013).

including trailheads and all additional signs along the trail to develop a cohesive and consistent look. Though generally expensive, the signage lends a cohesive look and consistent message to trail users and is likely worth the initial cost and maintenance costs, especially as the Great Allegheny Passage was made when several smaller trails consolidated into the Passage. The cohesive look of the signs helps guide tourists and trail users along the trail; no matter where one is along the trail, the same type of information will be given and there is no feeling of being “lost” or without information on the trail.¹⁰⁵

The Trail Town Program has several other projects they do in addition to helping towns implement projects based on the *Trail Town Manual*. Perhaps the biggest and most time intensive are the economic impact studies conducted every few years. These studies are important because they help the Program and the Allegheny Trail Alliance quantify the impact of the trail and the tourism along the trail, but also because it helps business owners and potential business owners determine whom their market is, where they are from, and how they are spending money. Knowing this enables the program to track trends in order to refine its technique and change emphasis as necessary, as well as help business owners make smart business decision rooted in fact and statistics.¹⁰⁶ For example, in 2008 the economic impact study indicated that the average overnight visitor to the Great

¹⁰⁵ Allegheny Trail Alliance. “Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual.” Allegheny Trail Alliance: Latrobe, PA, 2008.

¹⁰⁶ Trail Town Program. “Plan It: Market Information.” Trail Town Program, <http://www.trailtowns.org/market-information.aspx>, accessed January 13, 2013; Campos, Inc. “The Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study: 2008-2009.” Trail Town Program, http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/07-294gapeconomicimpactstudy2008-2009_executivesummary.pdf, accessed January 13, 2013

Allegheny Passage spent \$98 on lodging, but spent \$114 in 2010, indicating that there is a continual, if not increasing, demand for the product.¹⁰⁷ Knowing this information helps future business owners determine their options – what type of business to open and the best place to do so – and helps guide investment decisions. The data collected also helps bring in grant money because communities, individual businesses, and The Trail Town Program itself can show they are on the ground in the communities researching and refining their approach to best suit the trail users and the communities at large.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the economic impact studies, the Trail Town Program helps communities and businesses with small projects and other improvement projects along the trail. Some of the projects included The Trail Town Bike Rack Matching Grant Program, a grant program for business and public spaces to buy bicycle racks because by offering a safe place to store a bicycle, a town or business can tell cyclists that they are bicycle friendly. The Trail Town Program has also helped implement safety improvements for trail and road crossings to make crossings safer for bicyclists and motorists alike through the Connecting “Trail to Town” initiative.¹⁰⁹ Historic preservation also seems to be a huge component of the programs of the Trail Town Program, though they are not necessarily marketed as historic preservation. The first major project, completed in 2008, was a grant-funded

¹⁰⁷ Frostburg State University Center for Regional Progress. “2012 Trail Town Survey for the Trail Town Program.” Trail Town Program, http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/trail_town_user_survey_final_report.pdf, accessed January 13, 2013

¹⁰⁸ Phone Call to the Progress Fund, December 5, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Trail Town Program. “About Us: Initiatives.” Trail Town Program. <http://www.trailtowns.org/initiatives.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013).

project to create public art in some of the communities along the trail highlighting the town's history as part of the Pittsburgh region's 250th birthday. In West Newton, Pennsylvania, a sculpture was created out of old railroad spikes from the trail representing early pioneers in town history. In Meyersdale and Connellsville, Pennsylvania, murals representing the towns' histories were painted on buildings and water towers. These public art projects not only invite tourists to learn more about the small communities in which they are located but also serve to generate community pride in the residents.¹¹⁰

Similar to the public art project, in the town of Connellsville, many pieces of the railroad heritage have been left or abandoned over the years. A train caboose car was left abandoned on the side of the tracks and left to deteriorate. An affiliated conservation group received a grant to transform the cabooses into a welcome center. The transformation project received tremendous public support and ultimately involved the local trail group, vocational technical school, the community public works department and the municipal government. Now that the structure has been completed, not only does it provide a real structure for visitors to utilize as a visitors center, but it also transformed a deteriorating piece of history into an asset for the community and preserved a tangible piece of the railroad heritage of the town.¹¹¹ Thus, most of the projects completed by the Trail Town Program are at least tangentially related to preservation, though rarely marketed as preservation.

¹¹⁰ Camp, Amy. "Public Art Program About Community Connections." Trail Town Program, http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/SharedFiles/trail_town_public_art_summary.pdf, (accessed January 13, 2013).

¹¹¹ Trail Town Program. "Connellsville Caboose Welcome Center." Trail Town Program, <http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/2rehab-connellsvillewelcomecenter-caboose.pdf> (accessed January 13, 2013).

When asked about this, the Trail Town Program said that the preservation efforts that have been the most successful had a champion or leader that organized the efforts, otherwise the projects struggled to get participation and support from community members. Thus, most of their projects are marketed as economic development and community revitalization efforts, with preservation-related components bundled inside.¹¹²

But perhaps the work with the longest lasting effects for both preservation and economic development in the trail towns are the business owners and community groups who rehabilitate historic structures for use. The Trail Town Program and the National Main Street Program have many things in common, particularly the approaches to community revitalization through community participation. The National Main Street Program, an initiative begun by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, describes their work as “enabling communities to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts by leveraging local assets – from local historic, cultural, and architectural resources to local enterprises and community pride.”¹¹³ The “four-point approach” espoused by the National Main Street Program targets the community organization for revitalization, the efforts at promotion of the town and its revitalization, the design and unique built environment of the town, and the economic restructuring plan of the community in an effort to build a diversified economy based on the communities assets.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Phone call to the Progress Fund, December 5, 2012.

¹¹³ National Trust for Historic Preservation. "The Main Street Four-Point Approach." National Trust for Historic Preservation, <http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street/about-main-street/the-approach/> (accessed October 20, 2012).

¹¹⁴ *ibid*

Similarly, the Trail Town Program's Trail Town Manual sets communities up to organize themselves for revitalization and helps community leaders start promoting the town as a destination along the trail. The Trail Town Program leaders help communities and business owners with design and economic restructuring approaches by encouraging business and property owners to be good stewards of their historic properties, particularly storefronts because they send the most immediate message to visitors about the community.¹¹⁵ The data collected in the economic impact surveys guides the economic restructuring for communities because it enables Trail Town Program staff to help potential business owners view community needs and potential niches for development. An example of this is in Myersdale, Pennsylvania. Business owners opened a hotel, restaurant, bar, and event center in a historic structure in the historic downtown, even naming the business the Morguen Toole Company after a former business located in the structure. This preserved not only the building and the materials, but also preserved a small piece of intangible community heritage.¹¹⁶

The Trail Town Program, sponsored by The Progress Fund, has been successful at revitalizing communities along the Great Allegheny Passage and creating opportunities for communities to increase their visitation by tourists utilizing the trail. The program has been successful through its creation and

¹¹⁵ Allegheny Trail Alliance. *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania*. Latrobe, Pennsylvania: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005; Trail Town Program. *Progress Through Preservation: A Guide for Preservation and Economic Development in Trail Towns Along the Great Allegheny Passage*. Greensburg, Pennsylvania: Trail Town Program, 2010.

¹¹⁶ Trail Town Program. "Rehabilitation: Morguen Toole Company, Myersdale." Trail Town Program, <http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/5rehab-morguentoole.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2013).

implementation of the Trail Town Manual, an instruction manual for communities on how to make their town more visitor friendly, as well as how to prioritize community revitalization projects and encourage a diversified economy to sustain the community with the Great Allegheny Passage Trail as a component of the economy. The Trail Town Program also has seen success through the conduction of economic impact studies, which guide future development projects and help entrepreneurs make educated decisions when starting a business. Finally, the Trail Town Program has been successful because of its support of small projects in communities aimed at creating a positive image of the community through public art creation, bicycle storage rack installation, and preserved and maintained historic storefronts.

The Bicyclists Bring Business Program developed and managed by Parks and Trails New York, which began in 2006, appears to be largely patterned after the Trail Town Program operated by the Progress Fund for the Great Allegheny Passage, which began in 2001 (figure 2.10). Through a review of the Bicyclists Bring Business Program Manual, it appears that the program's goal is to provide strategies for communities to build on their current infrastructure to enhance the appeal of their communities to attract bicycle tourists and to strengthen the local economy.¹¹⁷ A representative from Parks and Trails New York confirmed this, adding that the program was also designed to expand the trail communities' horizons to see the larger goal and the role each community can play in it, as well as to inspire

¹¹⁷ Parks and Trails New York, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, and New York State Canal Corporation. *Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*. Albany, New York: Parks and Trails New York.

Bicyclists Bring Business

A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists
to New York's Canal Communities

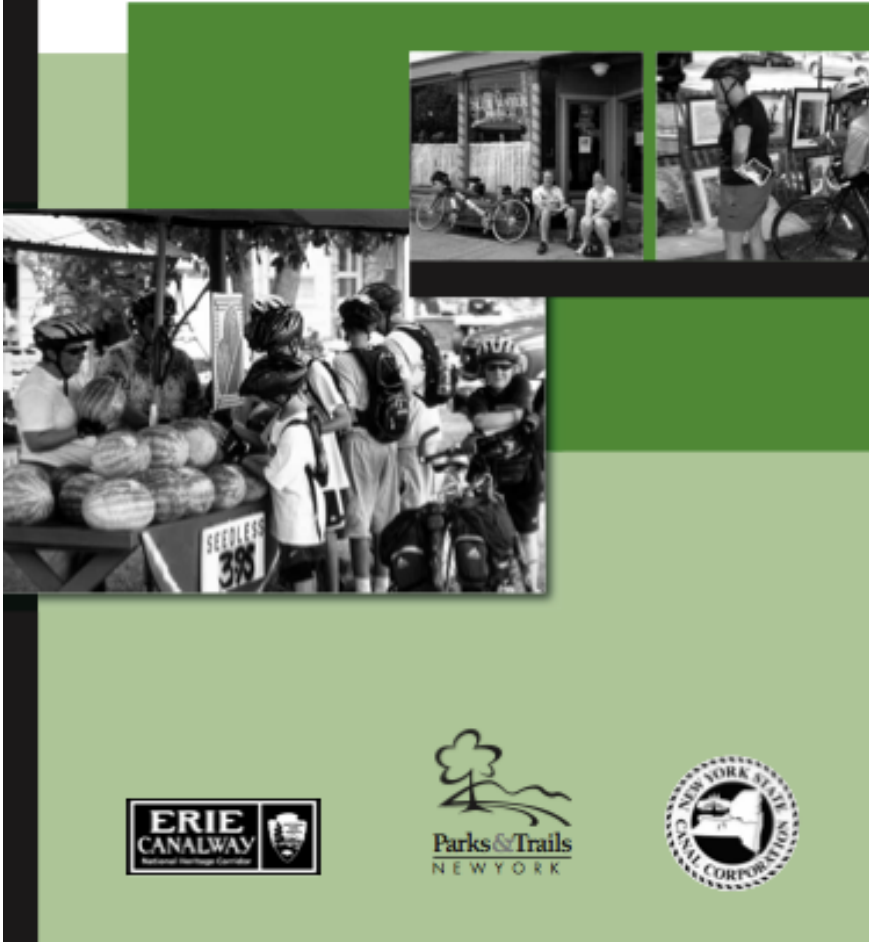


Figure 2.10: Cover of the *Bicyclists Bring Business Manual*, written by Parks and Trails New York with support from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Canal Corporation.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Parks and Trails New York, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, and New York State Canal Corporation. *Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*. Albany, New York: Parks and Trails New York.

communities by other communities' successes. The Bicyclists Bring Business program aims to provide examples of what other communities have successfully done and help interested communities understand how similar ideas can be implemented into their own plans with the idea that small, incremental changes can sometimes have a very large and meaningful impact.¹¹⁹ The program is implemented in the form of the *Bicyclists Bring Business Program Manual* but also through strategic planning workshops, called Roundtables, that are held at various points along the trail. The ideas and outcomes of the Roundtables are summarized and published online for others to view and take ideas from.¹²⁰ The first Roundtable Discussions was held in May of 2006; the Bicyclists Bring Business Program will turn seven this year.

The *Bicyclists Bring Business Program Manual* was developed to help communities who want guidance for their revitalization projects. The Manual has checklists similar to those of the Trail Town Program to help communities view themselves through the lens of a cyclist entering town for the first time. The questionnaire enables communities to have meaningful discussions and plan which tasks are most important for implementation. In addition to Parks and Trails New York, the National Park Services' Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor and the New

¹¹⁹ Phone call to Parks and Trails New York, January 10, 2013.

¹²⁰ Parks and Trails New York. "Bicyclists Bring Business Roundtable Summaries." Parks and Trails New York. <http://www.ptny.org/canalway/b3summaries.shtml> (March 3, 2013).

York State Canal Corporation are sponsors of the project and are intimately tied to the success of the communities along the Erie Canalway Trail.¹²¹

Compared to the Trail Town Program, however, the Bicyclists Bring Business Program does not appear to be as involved with the communities along the trail on a day-to-day basis after the completion of the initial Bicyclists Bring Business workshop is completed. A representative from Parks and Trails New York confirmed this, saying it was due to a lack of funding and lack of staff time to devote to the project.¹²² This inability to conduct follow-up assessments of the communities along the Erie Canalway Trail who have participated in the Bicyclists Bring Business program in some capacity is limiting to the program's effectiveness at generating economic and community revitalization in the communities along the trail. While personal relationships are certainly made during the Roundtable programs and through any individual coaching, it does not appear that Bicyclists Bring Business has as much effect on the communities due to lack of direct involvement and reinforcement of program goals and tasks as laid out in the Program Manual.

Also compared to the Trail Town Program, Parks and Trails New York does not, at this time, have an economic development study to quantify the true impact of the Bicyclists Bring Business program and the direct impacts it has had on communities. Two communities who have participated in the Roundtable program have gone on to receive grants from New York State Homes and Community

¹²¹ Parks and Trails New York, Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, and New York State Canal Corporation. *Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*. Albany, New York: Parks and Trails New York.

¹²² Phone Call to Parks and Trails New York, January 10, 2013

Revitalization: Albion, New York received a grant for \$477,000 and Lockport, New York received a grant for \$251,300.¹²³ The New York State Main Street Program's purpose is to help communities revitalize their downtowns "through targeted commercial/residential improvements such as façade renovations, interior commercial and residential building upgrades, and streetscape enhancements."¹²⁴ The checklist provided as part of the Bicyclists Bring Business Program Manual can help communities prioritize their projects as part of the streetscape and façade improvement programs to help make the funding have the maximum impact in their communities.

Because the Bicyclists Bring Business program is not as mature and developed like the Trail Town Program, the program can be viewed as a small, but important compliment to the Main Street Program. Many communities that have hosted the Bicyclists Bring Business program have been or will become New York Main Street Communities, if not a National Main Street Community. The ideas generated in the Roundtable workshops can certainly help communities prioritize revitalization projects for improvement, such as in Albion and Lockport, two towns that participated in the Roundtable workshop and have gone on to become New York State Main Street Communities. With the Close the Gaps Campaign underway

¹²³ Parks and Trails New York. "Bicyclists Bring Business Roundtable Summaries." Parks and Trails New York. <http://www.ptny.org/canalway/b3summaries.shtml> (March 3, 2013); New York State Homes and Community Revitalization. "Funding History: New York State Main Street Awards." New York State Homes and Community Revitalization. www.nyshcr.org/programs/NYMainStreet/FundingHistory.htm (accessed March 3, 2013).

¹²⁴ New York State Homes and Community Revitalization. "New York Main Street Program: About the New York Main Street Program." www.nyshc.org/Programs/NYMainStreet, accessed March 3, 2013.

for the Erie Canalway Trail – 75% of the trail is off-road already and only 84 miles have yet to be constructed – the program may shift more from a development focus to a promotion oriented focus similar to that of the Trail Town Program, whose associated trail has been very nearly complete for several years and will be completed in 2013. Any transition of the program will be guided by the answers Parks and Trails New York develops as to how to package the trail, and how to promote and enhance the trail for local and long-distance visitors.

Multi-Jurisdictional Approach and the Role of the Non-Profit

Each trail has a unique history, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, but each trail's history is not complete without an understanding of the parties involved in the creation and development of the trail. The Virginia Creeper Trail was a grassroots effort by a few local property owners and citizens to create a trail in an abandoned railroad bed that was later turned over to the respective municipalities after it was purchased from the railroad corporation and became a municipal-run trail.¹²⁵ Development was simpler for the Virginia Creeper Trail because it was done all at once. The Erie Canalway Trail was also started in a grassroots manner, but very localized. It is primarily managed by the New York State Canal Corporation and the multiple municipalities and governmental agencies along the trail. The Erie Canalway Trail, being hundreds of miles long and developed in a fairly haphazard

¹²⁵ Davis, Edward H., and Edward B. Morgan. *The Virginia Creeper Trail: Nature and History Along Southwest Virginia's National Recreation Trail*. Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1997, 50-59, 68-71

fashion, has made the establishment of the trail much more difficult to manage, oversee, and coordinate.¹²⁶

Similarly, the Main-Line Canal Greenway and the Great Allegheny Passage Trails have developed in a haphazard fashion before coalescing into a coordinated effort, but unlike the Erie Canalway Trail, did not have a large governmental agency overseeing the development of a considerable portion of the trail. The Great Allegheny Passage was originally a series of shorter trails overseen by individual counties or other regional agencies. Eventually, the trails were consolidated into the Great Allegheny passage to create the 150-mile trail known today. Each county owns the portion of the trail that passes through the jurisdiction; the Allegheny Trail Alliance does no maintenance or governing of the trail.¹²⁷

Because of the multi-jurisdictional nature of these trails, an important resource for all trail use proponents with each trail is coordination with other municipalities and governmental agencies that have jurisdiction and control over sections of the trail. The levels of formality of these agreements differ greatly between the trails studied for this project and are representative of each unique trail's situation and needs. The Virginia Creeper and the Main-Line Canal Trails likely have the most formal of arrangements. The Virginia Creeper has a separate Virginia Creeper Trail Advisory Board that is made up of representatives from the towns of Abingdon and Damascus, Virginia, the United States Forest Service,

¹²⁶ American Trails. "New York State's Erie Canalway Trail." American Trails, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/long/New-York-Erie-Canalway-Trail.html> (accessed March 5, 2013).

¹²⁷ Allegheny Trail Alliance. "Beginnings of the Great Allegheny Passage." Allegheny Trail Alliance, www.atatrail.org/au/page5.cfm (accessed March 2, 2013).

Washington County, and at-large property owners who own property along the trail.¹²⁸ The Advisory Board was the group that set up the rules and regulations of the trail at its outset, but ownership and enforcement powers have been handed over to the three governmental agencies along the trail. A representative of the City of Abingdon confirmed that the three governmental agencies work closely together to enforce the rules established by the advisory board and do handle the day-to-day operation of the trail but consult the Advisory Board as needed.¹²⁹

The Main-Line Canal Greenway Trail has another formal arrangement of trail representatives. Because the trail crosses fourteen counties and four major watersheds, the trail was divided into five clusters to make sure each area was represented equally.¹³⁰ According to the master plan, The Main-Line Canal Greenway Alliance is a “loosely structured group of existing public and private sector groups who are collectively committed to the goals and plan of action” for the trail and will “work closely to share resources and oversee the implementation of plan objectives, including land acquisition, trail facility development, management, and maintenance.” The master plan says that the Greenway Alliance will meet on a monthly basis, but the Alliance apparently only meets on a quarterly basis at this time.¹³¹ The Greenway Alliance’s goals are to help the greenway operate as “1) a

¹²⁸ Virginia Creeper Trail Club. “Creeper Trail Advisory Board.” Virginia Creeper Trail Club, <http://www.vacreepertrail.org/creeper-trail-advisory-board> (accessed March 2, 2013).

¹²⁹ Phone call to City of Abingdon, Virginia Parks and Recreation Department, December 5, 2012

¹³⁰ Allegheny Ridge Corporation. “About the Clusters.” Allegheny Ridge Corporation, <http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/clusters.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2013).

¹³¹ Greenways, Incorporated. *The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway*, 53, Phone Call to Allegheny Ridge Corporation, December 4, 2012.

resource for local citizens, decision makers, and project managers who envision a bright future for their rivers, forests, and towns; 2) a forum for encouraging inter-municipal cooperation and knowledge sharing; and 3) an ‘umbrella’ presence that can consistently promote the many unique resources of the corridor to tourist markets, while seeking out new funding sources to be utilized for local efforts and initiatives.”¹³²

The Allegheny Trail Alliance Board consists of representatives from seven individual trail groups that represent the trail segments that make up the Great Allegheny Passage.¹³³ The trail groups appear to maintain control of development and maintenance on their portion of the trail, as some trail groups’ website indicates that they are the organization that is responsible for maintaining the portion of the Great Allegheny Passage that passes through their jurisdiction.¹³⁴ A representative of the Allegheny Trail Alliance confirmed that structure is set up to allow for a strong sense of local autonomy for the trail while allowing for cooperation between trail groups at the system level. The only decisions that the Allegheny Trail Alliance makes are for the Great Allegheny Passage system as a whole. According to the Great Allegheny Passage website, this would be the Great Allegheny Passage’s

¹³² Allegheny Ridge Corporation. “Mission and Vision.” Allegheny Ridge Corporation, http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/about_mission.shtml (accessed March 5, 2013).

¹³³ Allegheny Trail Alliance. “Who we are.” Allegheny Trail Alliance, <http://www.atatrail.org/au/who.cfm> (accessed March 1, 2013).

¹³⁴ Mountain Maryland Trails. “Our Segment of the Trail.” Mountain Maryland Trails, <http://www.mmtrails.org/index.php/our-segment-of-the-trail-mainmenu-20> (accessed March 3, 2013); Regional Trail Corporation. “Regional Trail Corporation.” Regional Trail Corporation, www.regionaltrailcorp.com (accessed March 3, 2013)

Graphic Identity and Sign Guidelines Manual, which gives standards for all trail signage in an effort to promote consistency along the entire trail.¹³⁵

The Erie Canalway Trail has a large challenge because of the sheer length of the trail and the number of stakeholders along the trail, and their apparent lack of organization. The New York State Canal Corporation owns and manages nearly two-thirds of the trail and advises the New York Canal Recreationway Commission, which is responsible for the maintenance of and periodic revision of the Canal's Recreationway plan, and to make recommendations for the future of the Canal system with three guiding principles: "preserving the best of the past, enhancing recreational opportunities, and fostering appropriate and sustainable economic development." The Recreationway Commission is comprised of twenty-four members, of which fourteen are voting members. The Governor of New York approves the appointments to the commission. It is unclear whether or not the commission has control over areas that are beyond the Canal Corporation's jurisdiction.¹³⁶ Parks and Trails New York notes on their website that in addition to focusing on helping communities plan and develop their trail segments, their desire is to develop the Canalway Trails Association New York which would provide a coordinated management structure for the trail. Perhaps in the future there will be more of a coordinated effort among the trail's jurisdictions and related non-profits

¹³⁵ Allegheny Trail Alliance. "Who we are." Allegheny Trail Alliance, <http://www.atatrail.org/au/who.cfm> (accessed January 1 2013).

¹³⁶ New York State Canal Corporation. "Canal Recreationway Commission." New York State Canal Corporation <http://www.canals.ny.gov/news/crc/index.html>, (accessed March 2, 2013).

to manage the entire trail, but at the time of this research it appears that this management framework is not yet in place.¹³⁷

Promoting Tourism

The promotion of tourism along the trails appears to be left up to trail related non-profits and other tourism organizations. The longer trails are promoted as a statewide trail, such as the Erie Canalway Trail but the trails of intermediate length, such as the Main-Line Canal Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage Trail are marketed more regionally because they do not cross an entire state. The shortest trail studied, the Virginia Creeper, is also marketed as a regional attraction for Southwestern Virginia. Advertisement of the trails seems to be primarily left up to local tourism agencies and does not appear to be handled directly by the non-profits or other trail managers researched. However, a search of each trail group or trail owner's websites indicates that all parties involved in the trail promote the trail in some way, even on a small level. The smallest promotion of the trail may be by the Allegheny Ridge Corporation, the governing organization for the Main-Line Canal. Their website provides general regional maps of the greenway and water trails. It offers tourists information on the water trails and geo-caching opportunities along the trail but does not provide any information beyond that for those interested in visiting the area, such as where to stay or rent equipment. A representative for the Allegheny Ridge Corporation confirmed that the promotion of the trail is handled by other agencies, not by their office.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Parks and Trails New York. "Canalway Trail." Parks and Trails New York. <http://www.ptny.org/canalway/> (accessed March 1, 2013).

¹³⁸ Phone call to Allegheny Ridge Corporation, December 4, 2012.

The Virginia Creeper Trail Club markets the trail on their website by providing information for tourists and others interested in the trail, such as equipment rental, horseback riding, links to lodging places, and information on the trail elevation and weather.¹³⁹ A representative from the City of Abingdon confirmed that most of the trail's promotion is done by the Virginia Creeper Trail Club and the Washington County Chamber of Commerce because it is a primary economic development engine for the Southwestern Virginia region and is promoted heavily as such. The Erie Canalway Trail is marketed on some levels by the New York State Canal Corporation, the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, designated by the National Park Service, and Parks and Trails New York, in addition to local communities promoting it themselves. The New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor promote the trail by providing information on the trail in a very general sense; each website gives a history of the canal and its importance to New York and the nation. The National Heritage Area logo (figure 2.11) reminds tourists of this important collaboration when it is displayed. In addition, the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor gives more information for tourists on what opportunities are available along the trail, but does not provide information on where one can rent bicycles or stay the night.¹⁴⁰ Parks and Trails New York, the statewide non-profit, offers guidebooks on the Erie Canalway Trail, hosts the Cycling the Erie Canal tour, an eight-day tour of the trail and sponsors the End-to-End

¹³⁹ Virginia Creeper Trail Club. "Virginia Creeper Trail Club: Official Site of the Virginia Creeper Trail Club." Virginia Creeper Trail Club, <http://www.vacrepertrail.org/> (accessed March 1, 2013).

¹⁴⁰ New York State Canals Corporation. "About the Canalway Trail." New York State Canal Corporation, <http://www.canals.ny.gov/trails/about.html> (accessed November 14, 2012)



Figure 2.11: Logo of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The National Heritage Corridor is a partnership with the National Park Service.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor." Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, www.eriecanalway.org, accessed March 5, 2013.

designation for those who have traversed the entire length, either on their own or as part of the tour group.¹⁴²

In contrast, promotion of the Great Allegheny Passage seems to be a large portion of the work of the Allegheny Trail Alliance. The Alliance's website has many links to help interested visitors plan their trip, such as information on how to prepare, where one can find lodging, food, and other amenities along the trail, camping sites, bicycle tours and rides, and information on the trail towns. Additionally, the Allegheny Trail Alliance publicizes events and festivals along the trail, provides information from past visitors in the form of trip reports, links to articles on the trail and its construction as well as several articles on the trail from a tourism perspective from such sources as *National Geographic*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Baltimore Sun*.¹⁴³ A representative from the Allegheny Trail Alliance confirmed that one of their tasks is promotion of the trail and the promotion has been the result of fortuitous circumstances; Pennsylvania provided major state funding from grants to do major marketing campaigns over a number of years for radio spots and advertisements in local newspapers through the region. The initial promotion of the trail led to increased interest in the trail and generated the interest in the trail by major metropolitan newspapers and national magazines.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Parks and Trails New York. "Cycling the Erie Canal Bike Tour." Parks and Trails New York, <http://www.ptny.org/canaltour/index.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2013); Parks and Trails New York. "Erie Canalway End-to-End Recognition Program." Parks and Trails New York, <http://www.ptny.org/canalway/End2End.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2013).

¹⁴³ Allegheny Trail Alliance. "About the Trail." Allegheny Trail Alliance, www.atatrail.org/tmi/about.cfm, accessed March 3, 2013.

¹⁴⁴ Phone call to Allegheny Trail Alliance, February 1, 2013.

The Role of Historic Preservation

Scenic and natural landscapes are an obvious draw for tourists, but the built resources along a trail are also a draw for tourists, and preservation of such resources is vital to the continued attraction of the trail. Many of the trails studied as part of this research have significant industrial resources along them and are important clues to the history and foundation of the United States. Both the Main-Line Canal Greenway trail and the Great Allegheny Passage run through the coal mining and steel manufacturing region of Southwestern Pennsylvania.¹⁴⁵ The Virginia Creeper Trail travels through not only an area important for its timber resources but also important as an area of early iron working.¹⁴⁶ The Erie Canalway Trail highlights America's first instance of a major shipping route and an impressive feat – connecting the interior of the United States to the markets of the East Coast and beyond.¹⁴⁷ The preservation of locks, trestles, and other industrial heritage resources plays an important part in the education and interpretation of the nation's history to generations that are constantly further removed from the era of industrial growth and development in the United States (figures 2.12, 2.13).

¹⁴⁵ Fritz and Clemensen, *Pennsylvania Main Line Canal*, 17; Muller, "An Uncommon Passage," 5

¹⁴⁶ Davis and Morgan, *The Virginia Creeper*, 47-49

¹⁴⁷ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, "Learn: History and Culture," http://www.eriecanalway.org/learn_history-culture.htm



Figure 2.12: A historic lock on the Erie Canalway Trail in Lyons, New York. Less than 100 of the early stone locks remain; most were replaced by concrete in the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁸



Figure 2.13: A dry dock at the Chittenango Landing Canal boat Museum. Dry docks were used to aid in boat repair, particularly to the underside of the vessel.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "What Is That?: Guide to Common Canal Structures; Historic Lock." Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, <http://www.eriecanalway.org/Gallery-Structures/gallery-pg07.htm>, accessed March 5, 2013

Historic preservation and trail development also seems to go hand in hand; the websites of several trail groups have information specifically related to the history of the trail and the preservation opportunities located along the trail.¹⁵⁰ It appears that cross-promotion of the trail and the historic preservation opportunities along the trail are key for the success of each – trail users may not initially realize the importance of the historic preservation along the trail, just as some visitors interested in historic preservation may not realize they could be trail users at the same time. The two concepts seem to have a mutually beneficial relationship and their symbiotic relationship appears to work.

Many of the small towns located along these trails are listed, at least in part, on the National Register of Historic Places, such as West Newton Pennsylvania on the Great Allegheny Passage and Abingdon, Virginia on the Virginia Creeper Trail. Often, attractions nearby are located in historic districts or are historic landmarks themselves, such as Fallingwater along the Great Allegheny Passage, the Theodore Roosevelt National Inaugural Site in Buffalo, New York where President Roosevelt was inaugurated as the 26th President of the United States and the Women’s Rights

¹⁴⁹ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. “What Is That?: Guide to Common Canal Structures; Dry Dock. <http://www.eriecanalway.org/Gallery-Structures/gallery-pg10.htm>, accessed March 5, 2013

¹⁵⁰ Allegheny Ridge Corporation. “Main Line Canal Case Studies.” Allegheny Ridge Corporation, http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/case_studies.shtml (accessed March 1, 2013); Allegheny Trail Alliance. “A Brief History of the Trail.” Allegheny Trail Alliance <http://www.atatrail.org/au/trail.cfm> (accessed March 1, 2013); Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. “Learn: History and Culture.” Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://www.eriecanalway.org/learn_history-culture.htm (accessed November 28, 2012).

National Historic Park, in Seneca Falls, New York, home of the women's rights movement in America in 1848.¹⁵¹

Historic preservation adds another dimension to the scenic qualities to the trail by allowing visitors to experience more than just the natural setting of the trail. The trail user can imagine traveling through the rail corridor and experiencing the small, railroad-centered communities much as rail passengers might have in the years when the rail line was active. The visitor can see, touch, and explore lock remnants, abandoned coking plants, and former train depots and begin to understand the connections between the railroad, the region, and the economy as a whole. Without the availability, interpretation, and preservation of these resources, these trails would certainly not be as interesting and would likely receive less visitor traffic. Heritage preservation is an important part of trail development and a good supplement to natural preservation of the surrounding natural and scenic landscapes. It is because of the railroad that these features exist, and similarly, without the railroad, the trail would likely not exist either. Thus, the preservation of the industrial features and built environment along the trail provides a visible and tangible link to the corridors past and helps solidify the trail as method of linear preservation.

This chapter has sought to provide a brief history of each trail surveyed, both historically and within the context of the trail's development, to better understand the relationship between each trail and its region. Information was gathered from

¹⁵¹ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "Explore: Culture and Heritage." Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://www.eriecanalway.org/explore_things-to-do_heritage.htm (accessed February 28, 2013).

each trail's website, master plans, annual reports, and other associated organizations on several topics, including economic development, multi-jurisdictional management and the role of a non-profit, tourism promotion and historic preservation and trail development. The research also covered two major programs targeting economic development in communities along two trails of significant length, the Great Allegheny Passage and the Erie Canalway Trail. The information gathered per topic is charted in the subsequent pages and is further analyzed in the next chapter for application in the following chapter.

Table 2.1: Summary of Trails

Trail	State(s) ¹⁵²	Length	Status
Virginia Creeper Trail	Virginia	34 miles	Complete
Main-Line Canal	Pennsylvania	320 miles	Incomplete
Erie Canalway Trail	New York State	524 miles	Incomplete
Great Allegheny Passage	Maryland-Pennsylvania	141 miles	Incomplete, will be completed in 2013

¹⁵² Due to length and intricacies of trail development, it is impossible to accurately quantify the number of specific jurisdictions involved in each trail.

Table 2.2: Economic Development

Trail	Economic Development
Virginia Creeper Trail, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail is a major economic draw in the area - \$1.2 million in direct expenditures by tourists in 2003 • Attracts a lot of tourists, over 100,000 annual person trips¹⁵³ • Grants have been acquired from VDOT, US Forest Service • Virginia Creeper Trail Club actively participates and acquires grants
Main Line Canal, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegheny Ridge Corporation works with individual communities and other agencies on an as-needed basis • No infrastructure for a large program yet • Could be potential for a larger program if water trails take off
Erie Canalway Trail, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist community with revitalization through Bicyclists Bring Business program, summer bike tour • New York State Canal Corporation has jurisdiction of most of trail and contributes financially to the trail’s upkeep and maintenance, 2013 budget estimated at over \$893,000.¹⁵⁴ • Assisted by counties, communities, New York State Parks Department
Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started the Trail Town Program in early 2000s • Held Trail Town Working Group meetings once a quarter for business owners to get to know each other and work together • Developed the manual that would be picked up and implemented when the Progress Fund started the Trail Town Program as a funded position • Allegheny Trail Alliance wanted to see the Trail Town Program focus on improving economic development and community capacity building
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All trails are involved in economic development to some extent • Parks and Trails New York and Trail Town Program have direct economic programs that partner with communities • A variety of funding sources are used for trail development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grants for smaller projects • Erie Canalway has a large component owned by New York State Canal Corporation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National Historic Area designation

¹⁵³ Bowker, Bergstrom, and Gil, “Estimating the Economic Value and Impacts of Recreational Trails,” 249-256

¹⁵⁴ New York State Thruway Authority and New York State Canal Corporation. “2013 Budget.” New York State Thruway Authority and New York State Canal Corporation, www.thruway.ny.gov/about/financial/budgetbooks/books/2013-budget.pdf (accessed April 13, 2013).

Table 2.3: Involvement of a Trail-related Non-Profit

Trail	Involvement of a Non-Profit Organization
Virginia Creeper Trail, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rail trail was started by a few individuals; the project began in 1977-1978, trail was fully opened in 1987 • Individuals turned over the trail to the two communities along the trail and the US Forest Service • Started the Virginia Creeper Trail Club to maintain and serve the trail
Main-Line Canal, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegheny Ridge Corporation acts as a facilitator for the trails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Receives funding from the Community Partnership Fund from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources • Assists rural communities with work on projects • Has helped write grant proposals, help municipal governments and other groups with capacity building • Allegheny Ridge Corporation’s initiatives include: water trails and geo-caching trail
Erie Canalway Trail, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and Trails New York assists with the promotion and advocacy of the trail • Helps fill in the gaps between the New York State Canal Corporation, the National Park Service, and the local communities
Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegheny Trail Alliance functions as an umbrella group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Each county or regional non-profit sends representatives to the board ○ Oversees implementation of things that affect the entire trail as a whole • Allegheny Trail Alliance coordinates fundraising at the system-wide scale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has also created a signage plan, an interpretive concept plan, and handles marketing of the trail
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All trails have some sort of non-profit involved • Large regional or statewide non-profits help promote trail on a larger level, coordinate the support of the different jurisdictions • Having trail groups at a local level is extremely important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Helps maintain local community interest and connectivity between town and trail ○ Funding for local projects ○ A network of local non-profits can help maintain overall trails, especially those of significant length • Larger trails have devoted economic development programs that help smaller towns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These towns have seen significant improvement and impact at the economic level

Table 2.4: Multi-Jurisdictional Aspect of Trails

Trail	Multi-jurisdictional Aspect
Virginia Creeper Trail, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate the Virginia Creeper Trail Advisory Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Specifies number of residents from each jurisdiction to form a well-represented board ○ Board was responsible for creating the rules and regulations of the trail • Three shareholders meet to discuss things affecting the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Everything is brought to the table; look out for the best interest of the trail, the Advisory Board, the community, and their partnership ○ Share resources among communities
Main-Line Canal, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenway Alliance is divided into six clusters with a specific number of representatives from each cluster <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not interested in governance powers ○ Tries to create awareness of opportunities along the greenway, especially those in other areas, increase awareness of the trail ○ Created the master plan for the trail
Erie Canalway Trail, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-jurisdictional aspect has been difficult because it is so long <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eastern part sees the trail as a locally used trail, not part of the greater Erie Canal Trail • New York Canal Corporation oversees much of the trail and is the driving force behind the trail's management • Lack of cohesiveness along the trail • No operating agreement between communities
Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each county owns the boundary of their own trail and is responsible for the trail on their property • Allegheny Trail Alliance works at the system-wide scale but does no maintenance and has no regulatory force
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to have a formal agreement for trail-related issues and cohesive planning and organization • Level of formality depends on the needs of the trail, but results indicate that a more formal set-up is better (representatives based on a district set up, etc.) • Prevents disjointed approaches to development and maintenance • Promotes a coordinated effort for all communities on the trail

Table 2.5: Attracting Visitors to the Trail

Trail	Attracting Visitors
Virginia Creeper Trail, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local tourism department handles the marketing in the region • Markets the trail in conjunction with other events and places in the area • Work to ensure that it is listed on trail websites
Main-Line Canal, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and regional tourism agencies work on the promotion of the trail • Allegheny Ridge Corporation works on the developmental side only
Erie Canalway Trail, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the trail is incremental • Experience has been difficult to get towns and regions to work together • National identity associated with the Erie Canal has not been taken advantage of to attract visitors • Do offer guided tours of the trail each summer
Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pennsylvania has given state grants to do major marketing campaigns, including radio spots, advertising, inserts in the newspaper • Have had a lot of travel writers cycle the trail and write about it on their own – heard about it through word of mouth • Word of Mouth is important to the trail, want all of their visitors to have the best experience • Have had to be careful of the image when marketing the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do not want to give away false information or make people feel like they have been misled
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most trail advertising and promotion is the work of a tourism agency • Regional and state-wide approach appears to work best through the incorporation of other sites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ex: Barter Theatre in Abingdon, VA or Fallingwater in Mill Run, PA • Cross-promotion is key – can reach other markets who may be trail users but not know it • Market to people along other parts of the trail to encourage local support of the trail

Table 2.6: Role of Historic Preservation on Trail

Trail	Views on Historic Preservation
Virginia Creeper Trail, Virginia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want the trail to remain as authentic as possible • Homesites are original, some are still left • Leave footprints of the buildings in place • Do not want to do much to detract from the trail atmosphere and the historic feel of the trail • Trail is not manicured so the atmosphere remains natural and maintains the native flora and fauna • Combined with the structures and homesites, the trail user can experience the trail like the train would have
Main-Line Canal, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge role in trail development • Common heritage in the area is based on the canal, considered a marvel at the time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducting a canal resource survey to see what is left for interpretation, determine the impact of the canal on the town, how the canal’s legacy is affecting towns today • Working with the National Park Service and the State Park service to maximize funding, encourage historic preservation, and work with tax credits for historic structure rehabilitations • Historic preservation is a means to work with each other to accomplish goals for the trail
Erie Canalway Trail, New York	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making resources available along the corridor is key to people’s interest in the trail • Strong percentage of people who are interested in history use the state-wide trail • If the historic infrastructure was not still in place along the trail, the subset interested in history would not likely be interested • Marketing tool and a marketing perspective
Great Allegheny Passage, Pennsylvania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes hand in hand • Development of a whole trail is the manifestation of historic preservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Takes a linear abandoned thing and repurposed it • People love old railroad structures and other resources left along the trail • Adds to scenic quality • Communities are hopefully inspired to do development consistent with historic preservation and the feel of the trail • Believe tourists want an authentic experience, which is part of the discovery along the trail
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural and built environments along the trails are huge

	<p>attractions for people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added dimension to the trail – the history along the trail<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ex: industrial heritage, national expansion and population changes, rural communities, farmland and farming practices• Historic preservation is a good addition to natural landscape preservation component• Part of creating the tourism product<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Becomes part of the overall package
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Chapter III

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

Information from the preceding research has been analyzed to form a set of 'best practices' from conclusions of the four trails studied. These 'best practices' can be used by both new trail advocates and managers looking to build upon the lessons learned elsewhere and by current trail managers and supporters seeking to improve and reinvigorate their own trail.

Economic Development

Trails and economic development go hand in hand, though the extent to which the economic development aspect is nurtured is dependent on the trail. For some longer trails, targeted economic development programs were implemented to help communities revitalize their economies, but other trails had more of a hands-off approach to economic development on the trail. Some of the direct economic development assistance has helped generate additional economic development through receipt of additional state funding. The Bicyclists Bring Business program has been involved in several communities that have gone on to receive funding and grant support as part of the New York Main Streets Program.¹⁵⁵ The greater awareness of their community's appearance to outsiders gained through the application of the community checklist will help communities prioritize the funding

¹⁵⁵ New York State Homes and Community Revitalization. "Funding History: New York State Main Street Awards." New York State Homes and Community Revitalization. www.nyshcr.org/programs/NYMainStreet/FundingHistory.htm (accessed March 3, 2013).

received from the State and apply it to revitalize the community within the context of the Main Street Program but also as a stop along the Erie Canalway Trail.

On a smaller level for all trails, grants have been sought to help fund smaller projects to supplement funding from the state or local governments. Some communities along the Great Allegheny Passage have used grant money to add public art to public spaces, and one community obtained a grant to convert an abandoned railroad car into a visitor's center for trail users (figure 3.1). State and Federal governments play an important role for some trails; the United States Forest Service is the trail manager for a portion of the Virginia Creeper Trail and the New York State Canal Corporation operates and maintains nearly two-thirds of the Erie Canalway Trail.¹⁵⁶ These are additional partnerships that offer the possibility for more funding from an external source.

Future trail advocates should be willing and able to think outside of the box for funding opportunities. Federal, state, and local funds are becoming increasingly diminished in availability and, unfortunately, cannot always be relied upon for total

¹⁵⁶ United States Department of Agriculture. Forest Service. "Mount Rogers National Recreation Area." United States Department of Agriculture. <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/gwj/specialplaces/?cid=stelprdb5302337> (accessed March 2, 2013); New York State Canal Corporation. "About the Canal Corporation." New York State Canal Corporation. <http://www.canals.ny.gov/about/about.html> (accessed March 2, 2013); Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "About Us: What is the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor?" Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. http://www.eriecanalway.org/about-us_what-is-erie-canal.htm (accessed March 2, 2013)



Figure 3.1: The Connellsville, Pennsylvania caboose rehabilitated into a Visitor's Center.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Trail Town Program. "Connellsville Caboose Welcome Center." Trail Town Program, <http://www.trailtowns.org/Data/Sites/1/2rehab-connellsvillewelcomecenter-caboose.pdf>, accessed January 13, 2013

financial support. In the past, funding for the federal Transportation Enhancement program provided significant resources for bicycle and pedestrian related infrastructure development, including the development of rail trails.¹⁵⁸ When Congress enacted the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), funding for transportation enhancement projects was consolidated into the Transportation Alternatives program along with the Safe Routes to Schools and Recreational Trails programs. Not only is the amount apportioned for Transportation Alternatives projects reduced, but the consolidation changes how funding is distributed and will make it more difficult to receive.¹⁵⁹

Trail advocates and managers may find that setting up their own targeted economic development program based on the principles of the Trail Town Program and the Bicyclists Bring Business program may be the best course of action. These programs are dedicated to helping communities take advantage of trail traffic to generate business and revitalization opportunities. While the Trail Town Program in particular is very developed and mature, someone looking to start a similar program on their own trail should start with a checklist similar to that of the Trail Town or Bicyclists Bring Business Programs. These checklists help communities self-assess in order to prioritize improvement projects that will enhance the connection between the trail and community. As the program matures, more facets

¹⁵⁸ Fischer, John W. "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act", 15

¹⁵⁹ America Bikes. "Biking and Walking in MAP-21." America Bikes, http://www.americabikes.org/map_21 (accessed February 2, 2013); Fischer, "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act," 15-16.

can be added to the program to help communities continue to evolve economically as the trail evolves and matures.

Grants can be an additional source of funding, especially for special projects that go above and beyond routine maintenance, such as public art projects and visitor's center renovations, among others. One way to reduce costs associated with trail maintenance might be to involve any non-profit associations related to the trail with some sort of the routine maintenance tasks. If a municipal or county authority agrees to fund and take care of the bulk of the work, a non-profit might take on smaller projects such as collecting trash and keeping the area clean for visitors. This small task would cut down on the expenses that had to be covered by a governmental agency. And, as will be discussed below, having community support and buy-in to a trail project is critical for lasting success for a trail.

Role of a Non-Profit and Multi-Jurisdictional Control

Community buy-in and support is important for the success of a trail. Non-profits are crucial for maintaining interest at a local level and helping with the connectivity between the communities, the trail and trail visitors. A non-profit should be created and nurtured for the trail to serve these functions for a trail, more if the trail is larger. The Virginia Creeper Trail is supported by the Virginia Creeper Trail Club, the Erie Canalway Trail is supported by Parks and Trails New York, and the Main-Line Canalway and the Great Allegheny Passage trails are supported by a coalition of non-profits. Non-profits help support a trail by hosting websites that offer additional information about amenities on the trail and in surrounding communities for tourists. Additionally, non-profits should offer events along the

trail to encourage support and use of the trail not only by tourists, but also by local residents.

These trail groups also present another avenue for funding for trail related projects. Non-profits can raise money for trail creation, maintenance, and other special projects, as well as seek out and acquire grants for special projects. In addition, a network of trail-based non-profits can also help maintain the overall trail as a unit rather than a trail of disjointed segments. For example, the Great Allegheny Passage began as a series of smaller, countywide trails along the abandoned railroad corridor, each with their own non-profit. As the trails became more popular and began to grow together, the trails were consolidated into the single Great Allegheny Passage entity. The Allegheny Trail Alliance, made of representatives from each non-profit along the trail, created standards to be applied to the entire trail to consolidate the segmented trails into a single cohesive trail in the minds of visitors. The standards also apply to other routine maintenance to ensure a level of consistency along the trail for users.¹⁶⁰ Similar to this approach taken by the Great Allegheny Passage, making the trail appear as one continuous product is important for helping guide tourists along the trail, especially if the trail is of significant length or has several other connecting trails.

Unfortunately, community buy-in and support for a trail does not always happen immediately and is rarely developed overnight. Many property owners are wary of the trail being so close to their property because of a perceived negative

¹⁶⁰ Allegheny Trail Alliance. "Graphic Identity & Sign Guidelines Manual." Allegheny Trail Alliance: Latrobe, PA, 2008.

impact on their property stemming from trail users.¹⁶¹ As a result, it is important for a trail manager to work with the community to support a trail. Residents often see the trail's benefits to an area recreation offerings and environmental health, but may not see the economic benefit aspect as clearly.¹⁶² Often this is accomplished through the efforts of the trail's non-profit(s) as they promote the positive aspects of the trail and serve as a resource for community members to voice their concerns. A member of the non-profit organization may be a good resource as a trail advisory board member, particularly if the trail is of significant enough length to have a board representing different regions of the trail. The representative would be knowledgeable about the trail and its needs from the community's perspective in ways that property owners may not be, and could be an important advocate for visitors and their needs along the trail that a community resident or trail manager might not recognize.

Whether or not a formal advisory board is created, the community should have a way of voicing concerns and contributing ideas to the trail to feel like true participants in the process. The non-profit organization could serve as the critical link between the community and the governing structure of the trail. Community input standards, similar to those of another public agency such as a department of transportation or community planning, should be implemented to inform citizens about the rail development process and give interested parties a platform in which

¹⁶¹ Sharon L. Todd and Lynn S. Anderson. "Place Attachment and Perceptions of Benefits Generated By the Future Tioughnioga River Trail Project." (paper presented at 2005 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, Bolton Landing, NY, April 10-12, 2005), 404-405

¹⁶² *ibid*

to respond. Even after the trail is developed, maintaining a clear and open channel of communication will enable citizens to feel as if their concerns and ideas matter to those making the decision about the trail, especially if their concerns are addressed and ideas are considered.

All of the trails surveyed in this study had a formal agreement for trail-related issues, such as planning, organization, and governance, though the level of formality varied greatly among the trails. Many of the trails had committees established with a set number of members and criteria for their selection. Others had less formal agreements but consulted with other managers when decisions needed to be made. The level of formality depends on the needs of the trail, as each trail setting and its problems are unique to that particular area. Results from the research seem to indicate that a more formal arrangement is better. Having an advisory board, however formal, is important to prevent a disjointed approach to trail development as discussed above. The structure for an advisory board should be established as early as possible to ensure consistency during development and facilitate communication between the different groups responsible for trail maintenance and operation. The trail will be much more enjoyable for visitors and trail users who are looking to consume trails as a product if all parties are operating in tandem and working together for the trail, as discussed above in the literature.¹⁶³

A potential trail manager should coordinate with the trail managers from other jurisdictions along the same trail to create a trail advisory board for their trail. This is especially important during the start-up period, and board members can

¹⁶³ Hayes and MacLeod, "Packaging Places," 56-57.

easily transition to a position on a more managerial board as the trail and board develops and matures. This advisory board could operate in the sense of a board of directors for the trail; active involvement in the day-to-day operation and establishment of the trail in the beginning but transitioning to a more hands-off approach as the trail no longer needs additional support to get up and running. Not only does this prevent a disjointed development approach, with each jurisdiction doing different planning work, it helps generate cooperation between municipalities and jurisdictions as well as facilitate the transmission of ideas from one group to another. The creation of an advisory board is of special importance for trails that span multiple jurisdictions to increase cooperation among groups that normally are not required to consult with the others before making administrative decisions, especially regarding public facilities within their own jurisdiction.

Promoting Tourism

All trails examined are advertised through a tourism agency, such as a chamber of commerce or department of tourism. The trails are promoted on the regional or state level to attract a wider audience of potential trail users. Promotion at the state and regional level also allows the trail to be cross-promoted with other attractions in the area to attract those who may not initially be attracted to the trail. A trail manager should enlist the help of a tourism agency to help promote the trail. Agencies that specialize in the promotion of sites are better equipped to organize large-scale advertising and marketing campaign. A trail's non-profit can also play a role in promoting tourism along the trail. Parks and Trails New York helps promote the Erie Canalway Trail as a statewide trail by hosting bicycle tours and helping

cyclists complete the trail from one end to the other and earn the title of an ‘end to ender’. A trail should utilize its non-profit organization to offer special occasion events or tours to attract tourists to the trail, reinforcing the promotional work of the tourism agency. Finally, some trails use their advisory boards to promote events and other activities on other segments of the trail to encourage support of the trail from local residents who may not normally go to other towns along the trail as tourists themselves.¹⁶⁴ A trail advocate should actively try to promote the trail in conjunction with other attractions in the area to make the trail more recognizable in the community and attract a wider audience of visitors.

The Role of Historic Preservation

Finally, historic preservation plays a tremendous role in trail development. Not only is a trail the preservation of a historic railroad route, but trail development often encompasses the structures and objects that exist alongside the railroad bed that gives clues as to the industry and people that once lived along it. These remnants and artifacts, much like the natural and scenic landscapes along the trails, are often what attract visitors to the trail and keep their interest as they travel the trail. The preservation of the buildings and objects along the trail also add another level of dimension to the trail. Beyond beautiful scenery, the interpretation of the structures and other man-made objects offers a lesson in the history of the region. Many of these are related to themes such as industrial strength of the region, the birthplace of the nation’s industrial might and power during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the railroad’s role in national expansion into the

¹⁶⁴ Allegheny Trail Alliance. “Local Events and Festivals.” Allegheny Trail Alliance, <http://www.atatrail.org/ne/rides.cfm> (accessed March 3, 2013).

interior. The Erie Canalway Trail, the Great Allegheny Passage, and the Main-Line Canal Trail were instrumental in settling the Ohio River Valley and ultimately the American Midwest while the Virginia Creeper Trail was a crucial part in the development of a overwhelmingly isolated rural region. In addition, having properties listed on the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places brings an extra level of promotion to the trail. Someone interested in historic places, especially of industrial sites, may become a trail user to see these structures. The inclusion and promotion of historic resources along a trail helps attract those interested in historic preservation or industrial resources that previously may not have been viewed themselves as trail users. Historic preservation is also helpful for trail managers when, in the case of the Erie Canalway Trail, the preservation of the collective whole can result in a National Heritage Corridor or area designation.¹⁶⁵ . Unlike a traditional park, the National Heritage Corridor is a special designation by the United States Congress that forms partnerships to manage and preserve canals, towpaths, structures, and other historical and natural features along the Canalway while leaving the ownership and jurisdictional control of the areas to the municipal authorities they belong to.¹⁶⁶ Designation provides additional resources and funding from the National Park Service and the Federal government for projects and

¹⁶⁵ The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor was created by Congress in 2000 to serve as a public private-partnership to protect and manage the National Heritage Corridor, which stretches 524 miles across New York.

¹⁶⁶ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. "About Us: What is the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor?" Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://www.eriecanalway.org/about-us_what-is-erie-canal.htm (accessed March 2, 2013).

municipalities within the bounds of the Heritage Area that other trails do not have access to.

A potential trail manager should start the process of incorporating historic preservation by having a survey conducted of the resources along the trail. Someone looking for preservation assistance might start with their State Historic Preservation office for support with a survey of historic resources. Many of the trails studied for this work have conducted their surveys in conjunction with their state historic preservation office, which is a good place for anyone looking for preservation assistance to start. Surveys should study a large swath on each side of the trail to ensure that all of the associated equipment and structures are found and recorded. For instance, along the Main-Line Canal, many of the original locks and other lift mechanisms have been destroyed after years of abandonment and disuse. The assistance of the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office helped to discover and excavate resources. In addition, state historic preservation offices can help simply identify objects remaining from the railroad was functioning and can assist in figuring out how to interpret the resource. The State Historic Preservation Office may also be of benefit to a trail manager interested in listing potentially eligible properties on a state register of historic places or on the National Register of Historic Places. A trail manager and the responsible tourism and development agency might also, after completion of a survey, begin to market the historic resources along a trail to attract those interested in the history of the area and the railroad line. This will help attract those potential visitors who may not think they

are the trail type but will utilize the trail to view history in an up-close and personal way.

Interpretation of the resources on the trail is vital to the success of the preservation element on a trail. After all, identifying the features and recording their existence does nothing for their preservation if no one can appreciate them and understand their significance, both alone and within the larger context of the trail. The National Park Service, in their publication *Wayside Exhibits: A Guide to Developing Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits*, says that “an effective wayside exhibit enhances a direct and meaningful connection between visitors and the landscape” and that care should be taken to ensure that the signage will “attract and focus attention on the site, not the wayside [exhibit]. If the first wayside they [the tourist] encounter is disappointing visitors may not stop at others.”¹⁶⁷ The types of waysides are further divided into two types: low-profile exhibits, the traditional storyboard platforms that “give site-specific interpretation about features that visitors can readily see” and upright waysides, which are used to advise tourists about the area or the trail. In addition, the National Park Service has developed four criteria that makes a good wayside opportunity: “a significant feature, site-specific graphics, visitor access, and regular maintenance.”¹⁶⁸

The first criterion, significant landscape feature, is the defining and unique feature about a location that makes one care about the “unique significance” of the place. This connection must be made within an extremely short amount of time –

¹⁶⁷ National Park Service. *Wayside Exhibits: A Guide to Developing Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits*. (Harpers Ferry, Vest Virginia: National Park Service, 2009), 7

¹⁶⁸ National Park Service. *Wayside Exhibits*, 7

the Park Service recommends during the first three-second glance – otherwise trail users will likely continue on without consideration of the signage or feature. If the landscape does not offer an obvious feature to link to, such as an abandoned railroad caboose or special landscape feature, the connection must be made through additional graphics.¹⁶⁹ The second criterion comes into consideration if the landscape feature is not readily available to the viewer. If this is the case, the sign should have some sort of graphic that is specific to the site that conveys the story of the landscape to the viewer. The Park Service recommends a historic photograph because of the immediate association that is made but notes that in the absence of historic photographs, illustrations will suffice provided they are detailed and site-specific.¹⁷⁰

The third criterion is related to safety and accessibility for the visitor. The Park Service recommends that signage be placed so that it is close to the trail so that people will see it rather than miss it all together. The Park Service also recommends that the signage be placed far enough off the trail that those users who stop to view it will not disrupt or block the traffic occurring on the trail behind them. Accessibility for the disabled is also addressed; those who may be visually impaired may take advantage of audio programs mounted on the signs at more sophisticated sites.¹⁷¹ Finally, the fourth criterion for appropriate wayside signage is regular maintenance. More than just a cleaning, this includes repairs to bases or damaged signboards due to weather, natural wear and tear, animals, or vandalism. Signs that

¹⁶⁹ National Park Service. *Wayside Exhibits*, 8

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*

¹⁷¹ National Park Service. *Wayside Exhibits*, 9

have additional elements for the disabled, such as braille interpretation, require more frequent cleaning, though on average the traditional storyboard will last nearly five years before replacement is necessary. The regular maintenance of signage is important because of the critical link it serves between people and the place and the role it plays in facilitating deeper connections between the two. If the signage is deteriorated beyond use, then the connections between visitors and the place will not be made as effectively or easily.¹⁷²

The Park Service cautions against overuse or misuse of interpretive signage. Like an overabundance of restroom facilities or parking lots, this would be in situations where signage is so prevalent that its intrusion totally undermines the nature of the site. Additionally, signage would be inappropriate if used to attract attention to sensitive locations, such as a natural habitat, or if the instillation of postholes for the sign would disrupt the ecosystem of the area. Finally, the Park Service cautions against using waysides to interpret “complex or dynamic” stories well, including “multiple geologic events, activities that cover vast expanses of terrain well beyond the view, and complex human interactions” and suggests that the interpretation of these issues are much better handled through other means.¹⁷³

Interpretation methods have evolved – and continue to do so – over the years as technology changes and is now interactive and usually involves the use of one’s smartphone. With the rise in popularity and availability of smartphones and the portability of the Internet through cell phone data plans, multimedia is becoming increasingly more common as a means of interpreting historic sites. Situation or

¹⁷² *ibid*

¹⁷³ National Park Service. *Wayside Exhibits*, 10

location based applications are becoming more popular methods for interpretation. The additional information provided through interactive, multimedia “helps visitors to move around the destination, make short-term decisions, and perform on-side transactions and activities” in addition to enriching “travel experience and further influence how visitors view a destination.”¹⁷⁴ Tan and Chang argue that “destination marketing organizations” provide information to tourists through the traditional pamphlet or the wayside exhibit boards such as the ones the National Park Service recommends, discussed above. However, with the rise in mobile phone technology, including high-resolution screens and remote access to the Internet, the destination marketing organizations have another avenue to use for supplying tourists with information. Utilizing this technology also allows marketing organizations to create more interactive and modern applications to distribute the information based on the visitor’s location or situation.¹⁷⁵

One such technology application is the QR code. QR, which stands for “quick response,” is a two-dimensional barcode that can be read by a camera on a smartphone. The data contained in the image of the barcode is “read” through a QR code reader on the user’s phone. The QR code’s advantage is that it can convey to the user an immense amount of information such as “information on the destination, contact information, or hyperlink to more online destination information.”¹⁷⁶ In the context of a historic park or trail, a QR code could be programmed to take users to a video or audio clip that further illustrates and interprets the history of the site,

¹⁷⁴ Wee-Kheng Tan and Yu-Chung Chang. “QR Code as an On-Site Tourism Information Source.” *Information Technology and Tourism* 13 (2012): 75-76.

¹⁷⁵ Tan and Chang, “QR Code as an On-Site Tourism”, 76

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*

information on the businesses and services available in the next community, or geolocate the user on the trail based on their cell phone's GPS coordinates. In addition to being able to house significantly more information than the traditional storyboard wayside sign, the QR code takes less space to display, the manager has the ability to continuously update the information, and there is no associated maintenance and upkeep fee for physical signs, which can be prohibitively expensive.¹⁷⁷ Tan and Chang conducted a survey in Taiwan to gauge the enthusiasm of visitors to QR codes compared to other, more traditional mediums of information sharing at several Taiwanese tourist sites. The authors found that the QR codes were well received by tourists despite being a relatively new use as a source of tourism information. Tan and Chang found that many users were enamored with the technology because of its novelty, but liked the application because it was more interactive than brochures and demonstrated the user's technological skill and knowledge to friends and other tourists. The researchers also found that visitors used the QR code predominately for the convenience and portability, and they predict that as QR codes become more popular and more widely used, "the convenience of QR code will become even more persuasive in convincing visitors to rely on QR code" (figure 3.2).¹⁷⁸

Another option for utilizing technology for interpretation along a trail is the "app," or application (figure 3.3). Apps, downloaded directly to the phone or tablet device, "are software applications that perform specific tasks directly on the hand-

¹⁷⁷ Tan and Chang, "QR Code as an On-Site Tourism Information Source," 76-77

¹⁷⁸ Tan and Chang, "QR Code as an On-Site Tourism Information Source," 86



Figure 3.2: An example QR code on a National Park Service sign. The QR code takes the user to downloadable maps of the site. The QR code image is read by one's smartphone to deliver information or links to websites as programmed into the code.¹⁷⁹



Figure 3.3: An app developed for Grand Teton National Park. The user can download the app to a smartphone or tablet, as shown in the photo. The user can then access information regarding specific points of interest within the park.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ National Park Service. "National Park Service Pilots Maps for Smartphones – Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area." National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/samo/parknews/national-park-service-pilots-maps-for-smartphones.htm>, accessed March 5, 2013

¹⁸⁰ Prevost, Ruffin. "Foundation Funds Mobile App, Website for Tech-Savvy Grand Teton Visitors." Yellowstone Gate, <http://www.yellowstonegate.com/2012/08/foundation-funds-mobile-app-website-for-techsavvy-grand-teton-visitors/>, accessed March 5, 2013

held device” and “provide touch screen interactivity for the user.”¹⁸¹ With the ever-increasing popularity of smartphones and the downloadable apps from each brand’s “App Store” like Apple’s iTunes and Google’s Android Store, utilizing apps for the interpretation of sites and the dissemination of information is a logical next step for trails. Bryan and Zion National Parks in Utah are already utilizing apps for interactive tours for park visitors. The apps developed for the Bryce and Zion National Parks provide visitors with information on about 30-40 topics and sites within the park. The segments are direct and short but engage the visitor to “interact directly with the resource, or learn and develop an interest in the resource from afar” by utilizing “historic photos ... descriptive and substantive narration, and full-color video” and providing “an interactive map ... trail descriptions, trip planning, and even interactive games, fun facts and scavenger safaris” to reach tourists of all ages, including children.¹⁸² This level of interaction and flexibility is unparalleled, especially with older means of interpretation. As it becomes more accepted as a practice here in the United States, tourists will come to expect it more and more. However, the benefits associated with its implementation – lower maintenance costs and greater flexibility – should not be overlooked.

Similar to the QR code, using an app to deliver information creates an interactive experience for trail users of all ages. Smartphone technology is rapidly improving and becoming more widespread amongst all age groups. The touch screen features on smartphones allow the visitor to explore the site digitally and

¹⁸¹ McCarthy, Catherine. "Location-Based Technology: A must for Your Interpretive Repertoire." Interpretation Australia Symposium, Launceston, Tasmania (November 2010), 3

¹⁸² McCarthy, "Location Based Technology," 4

access information about each site on the trail or in the park as well as access information on the surrounding area. The visitor can use the app to access specific information regarding a site, such as a video or audio clip, or find information regarding trip planning and other nearby excursions. Unlike the predecessor to the interpretive app – the audible CD one rented at the site – the visitor can access the app before and after the trip. This not only keeps the visitor connected to the site, but also opens up the possibility of trail promotion by word of mouth and ‘show and tell’.¹⁸³ For many trail managers, positive reviews from word of mouth were highly favored and are often considered the best publicity.

The creation and installation of the more permanent “story boards” will reach audiences uninterested in smartphone technology and are appropriate in situations where the information is unlikely to be revised. The newer QR code technology, which relies upon smartphones, may be less expensive over the long run and allows for greater ease in changing the information given and displayed. The QR code also allows trail managers and developers to add multimedia to the trail, such as video footage or a narrator giving information for the site. A QR code system might be used to develop an interpretation plan specifically for children to keep their attention and help them learn at an age-appropriate level. This could be used to help develop field trips for school-aged children, even if just utilizing the trail in a pedestrian manner rather than bicycling.

QR codes could also be used to produce and provide a tourism-guide for communities along the trail. Communities might choose to participate because the

¹⁸³ McCarthy, “Location Based Technology,” 4

interactive feature could link people to businesses related to bicycling repair, restaurants, or lodging, and turn-by-turn navigation geared towards cyclists could be added. This would help cyclists feel more comfortable venturing into an unfamiliar community to find the resources they want or need. Additionally, smartphone technology could be used to develop additional bicycle tours of the community. For instance, a community might wish to develop a tour highlighting a historic district. Providing a brochure digitally would be an interesting way to capitalize on the trail visitors who come into the community for other resources, especially those who are also interested in historic preservation. The preservation and incorporation of historic resources along the trail not only makes the trail interesting and informative, but also can be highlighted and promoted to attract visitors who may not realize the trail's potential to be more than just an avenue for physical activity.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for trail development, maintenance, and operation. A trail advocate will ultimately have to make decisions that are best for the trail within the unique situations and circumstances of the individual trail. However, for guidance, there are some lessons and ideas that can be learned and applied from other trails, as have been highlighted here with several trails from along the eastern seaboard of the United States. This research pointed to several factors of trail development and operations, economic development assistance, multi-jurisdictional controls, the role of a non-profit organization, promotion of the trail to tourists, and the role of historic preservation in trails.

Evidence indicates that successful trails capitalized upon their strong points and attempted to de-emphasize or worked to overcome the weaker points and worked within the constraints of the environment surrounding it and did so by inspiring the local community to become partners in development. Taking this lesson forward, this paper will try to apply some of the ideas generated here to a trail in development in the area surrounding Athens, Georgia to try to better position the trail for success during development and after opening.

Table 3.1: Summary of Recommendations

Making a successful trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the length of the trail • Consider location of trail to capitalize on nearby population clusters, other amenities, and scenic qualities
Accounting for obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate problems and weaknesses • Conduct studies with trail users for input from those who will use the trail
Facilitating Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a specific program to help communities target their economies • Seek funding from a variety of sources
Working with the Non-Profit Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profits help bolster community buy-in and support • Offer additional information for tourists • Serve an important role as a link between the general public and those in development and managerial roles
Working with multiple jurisdictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create operating agreements between communities for standardization • Ease of communication between different groups responsible for the maintenance and operation of the trail
Advertising the Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek assistance of local tourism agencies • Offer special occasion guided tours or trips along the trail
Role of Historic Preservation in Trail Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a survey of the resources along the trail • Interpret resources to provide information and entertainment to trail users • Explore new technologies to improve interpretation, such as QR codes or the development of apps for smartphones

Chapter IV

FIREFLY TRAIL, ATHENS, GEORGIA

In the previous chapter, the four former railroads now trails were discussed in terms of five concepts: economic development, multi-jurisdictional control of a trail and the role of a non-profit, attracting visitors, and the role of historic preservation in trail construction and development. The research was then analyzed for trends amongst trails and to determine some 'best practices' that could be beneficial for future trail advocates to help guide trail development, especially in a historic corridor. In this chapter, the conclusions generated from the previous chapter will be applied to a trail currently in development in northeastern Georgia that will span three counties: Athens-Clarke County, Oglethorpe County, and Greene County (figure 4.1).

The Firefly Trail, as it has been named, is proposed to be located on the Athens Branch of the Georgia Railroad. The Georgia Railroad Company was chartered on December 21, 1833 by Athens resident James Camak and other Georgia businessmen, who wanted to construct a railroad between Athens and Augusta. At the time, Camak and his associates, Athens residents William Williams, William Dearing, and Asbury Hull, were in the process of constructing a cotton mill in Athens. Operations were delayed on the mill when the equipment, ordered and shipped from England, was delayed. The equipment was received at the Savannah Port, sent up the Savannah River to Augusta, and loaded onto horse-drawn carts.

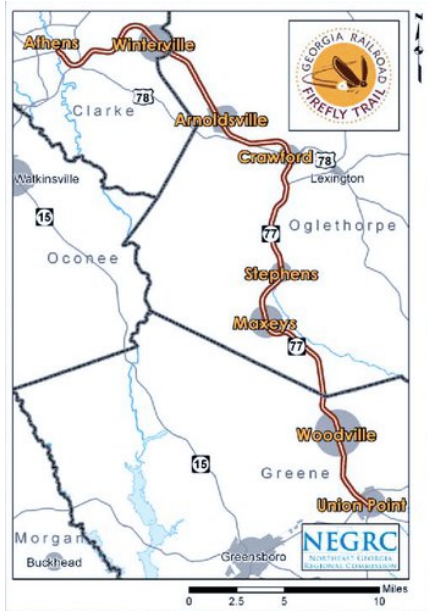


Figure 4.1: Map of the Firefly Trail from Athens, Georgia to Union Point, Georgia.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. "Athens, Ga. Launches New Rail-Trail Project." R-t-C Blog. <http://community.railstotrails.org/blogs/trailblog/archive/2012/03/23/inspired-by-the-silver-comet-athens-launches-plan-for-the-firefly-trail.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013).

When they arrived in Union Point, the carts with the equipment became stuck in the ubiquitous Georgia clay mud with the onset of winter when they arrived. The carts had to be dug out in the spring when the ground had dried and hardened. After this, the men petitioned the State to incorporate a railroad with track running from Augusta to Athens (figure 4.2). The charter was approved by the Georgia legislature on December 21, 1833.¹⁸⁵

Construction on the railroad started in 1835 in Augusta. Interestingly, not all were fond of the idea of a railroad to start. The residents of Lexington, Georgia, the county seat of Oglethorpe, thought the train would disrupt the peaceful nature of their town and prohibited railroad construction within four miles of the town limits. Residents in Augusta thought the railroad would take away business from their river port trade.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the railroad was constructed and the Georgia Railroad Company started business. The railroad was financed entirely from capital through the issuance of stock, rather than accepting outside funds.¹⁸⁷

The Georgia Railroad Company became the Georgia Railroad and Banking Company in 1836. The Company was having a difficult time meeting the financial needs of the railroad because the chief engineer, John Edgar Thomson, was constructing the railroad faster than the Company's board of directors could finance its construction. The Georgia Railroad Company diversified its interests and became the Georgia Railroad & Banking Company when their amended charter was

¹⁸⁵ Hanson, Robert H. *Safety - Courtesy - Service: History of the Georgia Railroad*. (Johnson City, Tennessee: The Overmountain Press, 1996),1

¹⁸⁶ Hanson, *Safety - Courtesy - Service*, 1

¹⁸⁷ Hanson, *Safety - Courtesy - Service*, 2



The Georgia Railroad, circa 1963.

Figure 4.2: Map of the Georgia Railroad lines in 1963. The Athens Branch is the spur that extends to the top, from nearly in the middle of the main line of the railroad.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, ix

accepted by the Georgia legislature in January 1836. The principal bank was located in Athens.¹⁸⁹

The railroad was ultimately built to Atlanta in 1845. This 171-mile route from Augusta to the state capital became the main line of the railroad and improved travel and commerce considerably in the northeastern part of the state. Combined with other rail lines, the Georgia Railroad became a key line in the Southeast, connected to Charleston, South Carolina and Memphis, Tennessee with the Georgia, South Carolina, Western & Atlantic, and Memphis & Charleston railroads. The Georgia Railroad was also a vital line from Atlanta to Virginia for the Confederate States of America during the Civil War; the only other alternate routes were through Chattanooga or Savannah. The Georgia Railroad line was well maintained and was able to accommodate over 800 tons of freight per day. This put the railroad line in the top tier of Confederacy rail lines in 1863.¹⁹⁰

The businessmen from Athens and their successors held the operations of the railroad until 1840, when operations began to shift to Augusta and businessmen there. Despite their control over the railroad operations and development, the line to Athens was merely a branch off of the main Georgia Railroad line. Even then its construction was often delayed due to financial problems, all the while the main branch was still being built. It is not known why the Athenian businessmen endorsed the delay of the spur to the town where the railroad was headquartered.

¹⁸⁹ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 3

¹⁹⁰ Storey, Steve. "Georgia Railroad." Georgia's Railroad History and Heritage, <http://www.railga.com/georgia.html> (accessed January 3, 2013).

Nevertheless, the Athens Branch of the track was completed in 1841 and ran for 39 miles, from the branch fork at Union Point to Athens. The track was of lighter construction than the main line. Thomson, the engineer, reported that the track could handle steam or horse power in the beginning, until the track had deteriorated so much that steam could not be used. Thus, the Athens Branch originally operated with horse drawn carts on 5-gauge track for many years, until the Athens Branch was rebuilt with standard gauge track and could run locomotives.¹⁹¹ The Branch carried some interesting freight over the years of operation. The Georgia Railroad had an operating agreement for Railroad Post Offices that began in the 1870s. Railroad Post Offices were operated along the Athens Branch line from 1882 until 1937. In addition, the Athens Branch also provided passenger service for travelers (figure 4.3). With the Georgia Railroad's extensive network of lines, passengers could easily travel to Atlanta, Augusta, Savannah, or through connections, reach any city on the East Coast. Though the Georgia Railroad was not known for its luxurious accommodations for passengers, the Railroad did operate four sleeping cars until about 1905. After their own sleeping cars went out of service, the Georgia Railroad operated some Pullman sleeping cars for a few years. The accommodations for passengers were not particularly lush, but are described as "respectable ... considering the very rural nature of the territory" served by the Georgia Railroad.¹⁹²

During the 1920s and 1930s, the train lines operated by the Georgia Railroad began to carry both freight and passenger services at the same time, becoming

¹⁹¹ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 4-5; Storey, "Georgia Railroad."

¹⁹² Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 96-99



Figure 4.3: The Georgia Railroad's Ten-Wheeler No. 220 at the depot in Maxeys.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 99

“mixed.” This was an attempt to save money and increase efficiency of the railroad; “a coach or combine, instead of a caboose” could be operated on the branch lines more easily than running two separate trains. Because of decreased revenue due to economic conditions, the transition would ultimately become vital to the continued operations for the Georgia Railroad. In the early 1930s, the Athens Branch’s services were nearly ended. Whereas four trains had normally run from Athens to Union Point Mondays through Saturdays, with three on Sundays, the reduced service meant that only one train ran each way Mondays through Saturdays with no train service on Sundays.¹⁹⁴ This practice of mixing services on trains would later be extended to the main line of the railroad, from Augusta to Atlanta.¹⁹⁵

Things rapidly began to change for the Georgia Railroad in the 1960s as a result of decreased reliance upon railroad transportation and travel and increased mergers and acquisitions by larger railroad conglomerates. This culminated in the latter part of 1974 with the division of the Georgia Railroad’s main operations between different railroad companies affiliated with it. The accounting and traffic departments were consolidated with the “lessee roads”: accounting functions were moved to Louisville, Kentucky and absorbed by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, and the traffic operations were consolidated with the Seaboard Coast Line and moved to Jacksonville, Florida. At this point, the Georgia Railroad did not have “much more status than an operating division of the Seaboard Coast Line or the Louisville & Nashville,” and had become part of “The Family Lines,” a group of railroads. In 1983, the Georgia Railroad was merged into the Seaboard System

¹⁹⁴ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 41

¹⁹⁵ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 98-99

Railroad. The purchase price was \$16.5 million dollars for the Georgia Railroad & Banking Company's railroad property, the same amount the railroad had been valued at by the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1916. Accounting for inflation, the property is estimated to have been worth nearly eleven times that at the time of sale.¹⁹⁶ The Seaboard System abandoned the Athens Branch in 1984, though the very small, half-mile section from downtown Athens to Old Winterville Road remained in operation until 1997. The Seaboard System ultimately joined CSX Transportation in 1986.¹⁹⁷

After the branch line was abandoned in the 1980s, the railroad divested itself of the property that comprised the line. In cases where property was originally acquired through an easement, the property was returned to the original parcels. If the property was acquired through fee-simple purchase, the land was sold to any buyer. Areas still exist where there is questionable evidence as to the true ownership of land, which will complicate further development of the trail.

The desire for a trail in the old Athens Branch began with Athens-Clarke County, who wanted to develop a trail on the corridor. The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's work to develop the idea into a regional trail is first mentioned in the regional bicycle and pedestrian plan produced by the Commission in 2005. In the summary of the advisory committee meetings, the committee wanted to see multi-use facilities included in the plan for the regional network "in

¹⁹⁶ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 89-94

¹⁹⁷ Storey, "Georgia Railroad"; Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 94

the form of greenways and rail-trail corridors.”¹⁹⁸ It is listed in the 2005 master plan’s list of projects delineated per county as a 24.37 mile proposed rail to trail project from the Clarke County line to the Green County line.¹⁹⁹

In the 2010 update to the master plan, the desire for a rail trail project was more fleshed out. The rail to trail listed in 2005 had been given a name – the Firefly Trail – and had been expanded to 39.31 miles, an increase of nearly 15 miles. A stated program recommendation for the 2010 update is “historical and cultural walking and bicycling tours” to highlight the “valuable historical and cultural assets” within each small town and community in the region. A stated policy recommendation of the plan is to regionally coordinate the implementation of the updated plan through representatives of each county and municipal government.²⁰⁰ Acting on both the policy and program recommendations will be crucial to the successful implementation of not only the greater regional bicycle and pedestrian master plan, but also for the Firefly Trail itself.

Because the future Firefly Trail is still in development and planning stages, the recommendations from the previous chapter are relevant for consideration and incorporation. While focusing on the trail’s attributes to generate support and interest, resources can be applied to those areas needing extra attention for improvement to create a trail that will ultimately be successful and beneficial for the communities along the trail and the region as a whole.

¹⁹⁸ Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. *Northeast Georgia Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan*. (Athens, GA: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, 2005), 40

¹⁹⁹ Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, *Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2005*, 85

²⁰⁰ Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. *Northeast Georgia Plan for Bicycling and Walking*. (Athens, Georgia: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, 2010), 14-16

It is hard to name successful aspects of a trail that has not yet been completed. John Devine, an ex-officio board member of the Firefly Trail, Inc., the non-profit organization developing the trail, said that the trail will be successful because it is a great concept and that the time is ripe for the development of the concept [the trail].²⁰¹ In Athens, the community's interest is primarily in using the trail as a transportation corridor and then as a recreational corridor, but in the smaller communities to the southeast of Athens, the trail will provide opportunities for economic development. The trail has received support from the local governments involved – Greene, Oglethorpe, and Athens-Clarke Counties – which could help continue to drive public opinion about the trail in a positive direction as well.²⁰²

There are several attributes that could be leveraged to make the trail successful once it is completed. First, the Firefly Trail is close to several cities in both Georgia and South Carolina, making it within easy reach for tourists interested in experiencing the trail. Atlanta, Augusta, Athens, Georgia, and Columbia, South Carolina are easily within a few hours drive to the area for those who do not want to travel considerable distances. The Firefly Trail is close enough for a long day trip but could also easily be turned into a weekend trip for those who have more time or who may wish to travel farther distances on the trail. Having these cities relatively close by also gives trail promoters the opportunity to tie into different events in the region for cross promotion, similar to the promotion of the Virginia Creeper Trail.

²⁰¹ Conversation with John Devine, January 22, 2013

²⁰² Aued, Blake. "Bike Ride Will Raise Awareness of Planned Trail." *Online Athens*. <http://onlineathens.com/local-news/2012-03-20/bike-ride-will-raise-awareness-planned-trail> (accessed March 4, 2013).

For example, the Firefly Trail could be promoted at the Twilight Criterium, held annually in Athens. The Criterium is a professional bicycle race that draws cycling enthusiasts from all over the state to race and spectate.²⁰³ This market might be predisposed to like cycling, but many may not have necessarily thought about cycling on the Firefly Trail or even known of its existence. Another market for promotion of the trail is University of Georgia home football game attendees. Many families come to Athens for games and might be interested in the trail as a family-friendly activity during their weekend in town, especially as the temperatures begin to cool off in the fall.

Another successful aspect of the trail is the length; the trail is 39 miles from Athens to Union Point, Georgia. Like the Virginia Creeper Trail in southwestern Virginia, the trail, when developed to its full extent, will be long enough to stretch into a multi-day trip for the more leisurely cyclists but can still be covered in a day by the more adventurous cyclists looking for a challenge. There are also several small towns that are located along the future trail, allowing for a turn-around point for those looking to cover only a section of the trail, or potentially a place to stay the night for those looking to cover the trail in multi-day segments. These towns and communities along the trail will also help cyclists and trail users feel safer because the cyclist will not be in total isolation. Any needs that arise during a trip, for food or lodging, can be met in the small towns. There is not the sense of total isolation once one has left the trailhead because there will be stops along the way.

²⁰³ Twilight Criterium. "Terrapin Twilight Criterium." Twilight Criterium. <http://www.athenstwilight.com/> (accessed March 4, 2013).

Finally, the trail's rural, pastoral scenery and landscapes will add to the attraction of the trail (figure 4.4). Because there will be a trailhead in Athens before transitioning to more rural, small town communities, the trail user will experience both urban and rural landscapes in addition to the rolling hills and farmland that are characteristic to this area. The rail bed is still largely flat from when the train ran on it. The gentle grades characteristic of abandoned railroad beds will make the trail more accessible to different age groups and those of different physical abilities, making the trail more attractive for its ease of use.

Potential unsuccessful aspects are easier to identify, though many will change over time as the trail is developed and then refined and improved. The largest challenge impeding development is the abandoned 39-mile corridor because it presents challenges in acquisition and development for the Firefly Trail, Inc. If the trail is to be developed by its non-profit, the group will have to acquire and develop the corridor on its own. Conversely, if the non-profit organization is not going to acquire and develop the trail itself, determining which parties will develop the trail will be the first step toward development. For instance, Athens-Clarke County has a greenway commission and a rail trail commission. It is unclear which group, if either, will be involved in the trail's development. It will be important for those groups and entities interested in participating as a major stakeholder to commit to the task and responsibility.

Intimately related, another challenge to trail acquisition and development is the estimated 20-year development horizon, which may make maintaining



Figure 4.4: A section of the former railroad bed that will be transformed into a trail as development begins.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Photo by author

momentum and interest in the trail difficult. Preventing burnout, of either the trail managers or the non-profit board will be important to sustained energy and development progress. Devine noted that another challenge intimately associated with development challenges is the public perception though the non-profit currently has no plans to condemn land for trail development.²⁰⁵ The misinformation then skews the public's perception of the project and has the potential to impede the development phase. In addition, because board members and volunteers of the Firefly Trail, Inc. are largely driving the project, ensuring that the board does not stagnate will be vital to the survival of the organization and the productivity of its members.

The first challenge facing the trail that will change as development occurs is the current lack of infrastructure. The trail route has been identified and property will be acquired to form the trail in a process established by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. The lack of infrastructure includes not only the trail itself, but also the accompanying trail signage, trailhead parking lots, restroom facilities along the trail, and other associated features. These will, of course, be implemented as the trail is developed and matures, but would make the trail less effective and attractive if only parts were implemented instead of the entire trail.

Another challenging aspect facing the Firefly Trail is the current lack of trail-related service-economy functions. Many of the communities along the trails surveyed in the previous chapter had many businesses that supported the trail. These ranged from bicycle rental and repair shops to inns or bed and breakfasts.

²⁰⁵ Conversation with John Devine, January 22, 2013

Most of these businesses likely did not begin operation until the trail and the demand for the services were established, but without the cultivation in the towns along the Firefly Trail, the trail might not see the same success. An extensive market study should be undertaken – perhaps by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission or the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Georgia – to help communities understand what they can sustain in terms of new, trail-related businesses. As has been said about the Trail Town Program, the trail is only a piece of the economic development puzzle, not the entire picture.

Finally, any lack of connectivity between the towns along the trail and the trail itself could be detrimental to the overall success of the Firefly Trail. Trails do not exist in a vacuum, isolated and separate from the surrounding landscape and communities. Rather, trails are a passageway through a community and the flow and connectivity to the rest of the town are just as important for a trail as the thoroughfare, especially if the trail is to serve as a conduit of people. If visitors and trail users do not feel safe traveling off of the trail into a community they are unlikely to leave the trail, negating any potential economic development through tourism. It is important, when designing the trail, to consider how a trail user, unfamiliar with the area, will interact at the intersection of trail and town. Is the intersection one that is easy to navigate and invites the visitor in to learn more and explore? Or does it turn the visitor away by withholding information – intentionally or unintentionally – about the town and the amenities and resources available there? The intersection of trail and town also includes real-life intersections with

roads, potentially high-speed highway roads, like GA-10 in Athens and GA-77 in Crawford (figure 4.5). Whether or not the trail provides a safe and easy passage beyond the roads will send a strong message to trail users about their safety on the trail and the ease of use and accessibility that was intended when designing it.

Fortunately, all of these challenging aspects mentioned here, and most of those not listed or yet discovered, can be easily negated through anticipation of the needs and perceptions that visitors will experience during the trail's design phase. For example, it may cost more upfront to create and construct an alternative crossing for the trail at a state highway, but the expenditure may be justified by reduced potential for traffic-related conflicts and fatalities. Those who are responsible for the design of the trail might find it beneficial to create, adapt, or borrow either the Trail Town Program or Bicyclists Bring Business' checklists for communities. Each checklist was crafted to guide communities in thinking like a trail user would as the trail is designed for the best appearance and functionality on the ground.

In examining how the economic impact of the trail may affect the communities, it is apparent that each town will have a different experience with trail-related economic development. Because Athens is a starting node on the trail, it is likely to see a moderate increase in traffic. However, because Athens is a large town compared to the other trail communities, the trail will not likely have as large of an impact overall: it is just one project in a big city. Since people will generally begin or end their trip on the trail in Athens, the greatest impact may be on restaurants and hotels.



Figure 4.5: Intersection of GA-77 and South Broad Street, south of Crawford, Georgia.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Photo by author

In a town the size of Athens, the trail could improve the property values of the parcels it touches since the trail will be both a feature for visitors and a locally-utilized transportation corridor for cyclists. Winterville might also see an increase in property values if people consider utilizing the trail as an alternative commute to Athens. Over time, people could be drawn to Winterville because of its small-town feel and easy accessibility to Athens.

Oglethorpe County might see an overall increase in visitors, but is not likely to see much impact on the unincorporated area, much of which is farmland and other privately held land. However, there are three communities in Oglethorpe County that will likely see positive economic benefits as a result of the trail. Arnoldsville, the first town after leaving Clarke County en route to Union Point, has significant potential for development. The Arnoldsville Fair Havens Plantation is not only a historic site within the county, but is currently operating as a bed and breakfast at the time of this publication. The house provides an interpretation opportunity and a place for travelers to stay along the way.²⁰⁷ Crawford is the next town on the trail headed southbound. The town of Crawford has perhaps the most potential for economic development along the trail. The historic Crawford Depot, owned by the Oglethorpe County Chamber of Commerce, is a unique stone structure with significant potential as an interpretation site or meeting place along the trail (figure 4.6, figure 4.7). The Chamber of Commerce could consider expanding its operations within the building to include a visitors' center or another trail-related

²⁰⁷ Lauderdale, Ken. "Fairhavens Plantation Bed and Breakfast." Fairhavens Plantation Bed and Breakfast." <http://www.fairhavensplantation.com/> (accessed March 1, 2013).



Figure 4.6: The Crawford Depot in Oglethorpe County in 1982. The depot is unique for its stone construction; the rest of the Georgia Railroad Depots were overwhelmingly made of wood construction.²⁰⁸



Figure 4.7: Crawford Depot today.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Hanson, *Safety – Courtesy – Service*, 202

²⁰⁹ Photograph by author

operation. The Chamber of Commerce is the organization that hosts the Firefly Festival in Oglethorpe County. Crawford is also a significantly sized community within Oglethorpe County and has several businesses – restaurants in particular – that will likely see increased patronage from the trail users. Crawford may also benefit from a small rise in property values, especially along the trail.

Maxeys is the smallest community along the trail in Oglethorpe County (figure 4.8). However, what Maxeys lacks in size they may make up for in enthusiasm. The current mayor of Maxeys was the Executive Director of the Firefly Trail, Inc. and is excited about the possibilities of bringing tourists into the town.²¹⁰ Because the community is so small, the trail will not likely be utilized as a transportation resource, but it will bring trail users into the town. Any businesses that open up to take advantage of any market demands in Maxeys will stand to benefit from the increased trail traffic.

Finally, Greene County has two communities that the trail will pass through. Woodville is very excited about the trail and the potential it has to bring tourists to Woodville.²¹¹ However, the integrity of the railroad bed has been compromised within the town limits. Some time ago the community planted trees in the rail bed and paved a sidewalk alongside the former rail corridor (figure 4.9). The sidewalk is narrow and will not easily accommodate two-way traffic. How the community responds to the trail will be interesting – if the trail developers insist on the removal

²¹⁰Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “Athens, Ga. Launches New Rail-Trail Project.” R-T-C Blog. <http://community.railstotrails.org/blogs/trailblog/archive/2012/03/23/inspired-by-the-silver-comet-athens-launches-plan-for-the-firefly-trail.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013).

²¹¹ Conversation with Devine, 1/22/2013



Figure 4.8: Town of Maxeys, Georgia.²¹²



Figure 4.9: The Town of Woodville has planted trees in the former railroad bed and paved a sidewalk adjacent to them. These may be in conflict because of the existing walking trail when the Firefly Trail, Inc. is ready to restore the railroad bed for a trail.²¹³

²¹² Photo by author.

²¹³ Photo by author.

of the trees or the sidewalk, how will the town react? This has the potential to affect how tourists perceive the community and their feelings towards cyclists, especially if the situation becomes hostile to cyclists.

The last town on the trail a cyclist would come to from Athens is Union Point. Union Point should be anxious for the trail to be developed because of the potential revenue generated from the trail in the wake of the 2001 exit of the community's largest employer, sock maker Chipman-Union.²¹⁴ The town has a very active downtown development authority that is actively involved in the revitalization of downtown Union Point.²¹⁵ Many historic preservation projects have been completed in the community and these structures establish Union Point's character (figure 4.10). Because Union Point, like Athens, will serve as a major terminus for the trail, Union Point also stands to see increased traffic, particularly in the lodging and restaurant industries, as people stay the night before or after cycling on the trail. Union Point along with Crawford and Winterville appear to be the three communities with the most interest in the trail and the potential impact it will have on the community due to increased revenue through taxes and spending.

It would be beneficial for all three counties if the Firefly Trail were to bring enough trail users to really create lasting economic development in the communities

²¹⁴ Patrick, Rhiannon Brewer. "Sock Plant to Close." *Online Athens*, http://onlineathens.com/stories/080901/bus_0809010044.shtml (accessed April 13, 2013).

²¹⁵ Downtown Development Authority of Union Point. "Union Point Downtown Development Authority." Downtown Development Authority of Union Point. <http://www.unionpointdda.org/7.html> (accessed March 2, 2013).



Figure 4.10: Town of Union Point.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ Photo by author.

along the trail. The multi-governmental and non-profit approach to the trail's development will position the trail to be able to receive funding from a variety of sources. Government organizations are able to take advantage of transportation alternatives funding available from the Georgia Department of Transportation.²¹⁷ The non-profit will be able to apply for grants and other sources of funding to supplement governmental funding for either the development of the trail or other post-trail development enhancement activities.

It would be advantageous if, ultimately, a program like the Bicyclists Bring Business or Trail Town Program could be established along the Firefly Trail to help communities capitalize on the tourism market and diversify their economic opportunities. A similar program for the Firefly Trail might be able to help communities determine the market potential for things such as lodging, restaurants, or retail. Market studies help potential small business owner make informed decisions when deciding where to locate and what type of business to open. This is a primary function of the Trail Town Program on the Great Allegheny Passage. The Program also helps communities and small business owners take advantage of the built environment to attract tourists through promotion of unique aspects and characteristics of town. In addition, the Program promotes the rehabilitation of buildings, particularly their storefronts, for businesses related to the trail.²¹⁸ An emphasis on appearance not only helps invite visitors into a community but also

²¹⁷Georgia Department of Transportation. "Transportation Enhancement." Georgia Department of Transportation. <http://www.dot.ga.gov/localgovernment/FundingPrograms/TransportationEnhancement/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed March 1, 2013).

²¹⁸ Allegheny Trail Alliance. *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism; A Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania*. Latrobe, Pennsylvania: Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005.

helps keep invested money working within the community, especially if products and services needed are acquired locally. While the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission does specialize in economic development and would logically be a good organization to head up such a program, it might also be beneficial to the trail if another agency was started and funded to run the program. Both the Bicyclists Bring Business and the Trail Town Programs are run by organizations other than the one that coordinates the trail. The Bicyclists Bring Business Program is run by the statewide non-profit Parks and Trails New York. The Trail Town Program is housed within The Progress Fund, an economic development group that helps small businesses by providing business assistance, start up capital, loans, and advice to “businesses that build the rural economy, typically while honoring the environment, reusing historic structures, reinvigorating traditional business districts, and creating living wage jobs.”²¹⁹ If the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission were to create a Firefly Trail program similar to the ones studied, it would be beneficial to have a staff person solely dedicated to the Firefly Trail’s program. The staff person could coordinate with other state agencies focused on economic development and historic preservation, such as the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Historic Preservation Division and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, as well as national and federal agencies and non-profits. Having a staff person dedicated to the Firefly Trail’s needs and the economic development of the communities and three counties it passes through would help ensure that the program was fully implemented and working for the communities. Having a program in name only

²¹⁹ The Progress Fund. "The Progress Fund: About Us." The Progress Fund, www.progressfund.org/main.htm (accessed October 20, 2012).

without programming would not have the intended impact on the communities and counties that need the support.

All of the trails surveyed in the previous chapters had a non-profit associated with the trail that worked to support, promote, and maintain the trail with volunteers and activists. The Firefly Trail already has a non-profit that is working to promote the trail within the area. Firefly Trail, Inc., which gained 501(c)(3) status in 2012, has been working since 2007 through an Advocacy and Advisory Committee that meets with staff from the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission to plan the trail.²²⁰ The non-profit has helped complete initial evaluations and conducted inventories of the resources along the trail in 2008, and in 2009 helped gather local support at community meetings held to discuss the trail.²²¹ In addition to promoting the Firefly Trail and events directly related to the trail, the non-profit is active in promoting other developing trails in the region.

Each trail club or associated non-profit plays a different role, one that is specific to the trail with which it is associated. The Virginia Creeper Trail Club, for instance, chose to set up the rules and regulations for the trail at first before turning over operation and maintenance of the trail to the municipal and federal governments with jurisdiction. Other non-profits take a larger role in the day-to-day operations and running of the trail. The Firefly Trail, Inc. board appears to be flexible as the trail's non-profit organization and open serving as a trail champion

²²⁰ Firefly Trail, Inc. "Firefly Trail, Inc." Firefly Trail, Inc.
<http://fireflytrail.tumblr.com/nonprofit>, accessed March 21, 2013.

²²¹ Aued, Blake. "Rail-Trail Project Faces Long Road." *Online Athens*,
http://onlineathens.com/stories/062309/new_453501525.shtml (accessed March 1, 2013).

for governments who are developing the trail with their own staff or actively developing the trail for other counties. While Athens-Clarke County will likely use their own planners and staff as part of their Greenway Office within the Parks & Facilities department, Firefly Trail, Inc. will likely have to act as trail developer in Oglethorpe and Greene counties. In the counties with smaller governments, the non-profit needs to be prepared to play a more hands-on, on the ground role as trail keeper. Since the communities the trail passes through are so varied in terms of their management and operations capacity, the Firefly Trail, Inc. will likely have to take on many different roles and cater to the needs of the trail all along the way.

As such, it will be important to make sure that all communities and areas are represented equally so that no community or group feels under-represented at the decision making table. This is especially imperative in the counties where the non-profit will be actively serving as trail keeper. It is important to ensure that all property owners along the trail feel their interests are represented, as they will all be affected in some way by the location of the trail. It might be beneficial to start another sub-committee within the Firefly Trail, Inc. made up of property owners who want a voice in the trail development. The committee might have a residency requirement and specify the number of property owners per county who live along the trail, or just require a specific number of representatives from the county at large. This would ensure that people from each county actively have a role in the promotion and development of the trail and that other concerned citizens have a specific representative to voice concerns to. The Virginia Creeper Trail has an Advisory Board that has a residency requirement for a certain number of spots on

the board and then accepts a few at-large members. Because so much of the Firefly Trail will pass through unincorporated area in each county, and because there will be relatively little direct governmental implementation and development of the trail, involving local community members will be important to the success of the trail by ensuring that all opinions are voiced and heard.

The Firefly Trail, Inc. will also continue to play a crucial role in fostering and inspiring enthusiasm for the trail project throughout the years to come. Successful trails seem to not only have enthusiasm from tourists and outside trail users, but also from local residents who support the trail. Enthusiasm from tourists and the local community will lead to increased tourism generated by word of mouth recommendations from visitors, but also from other groups, such as cycling clubs and trail supporters. With that being said, enthusiasm about the trail from local residents can do a lot to spur and generate excitement from those using the trail as tourists. The Trail Town Program helps communities build excitement and appreciation of the Great Allegheny Passage based on the ripple effect it has on the reputation of the trail and the sense of hospitality a community exudes. To achieve this, the non-profit might consider hosting special events for community members on the trail, encouraging locals to take ownership of the trail through volunteerism opportunities, or serving as mediator for property owners who have issues or problems with the trail. All of these suggestions should be implemented to increase good will towards the trail by community members who may not see the value in the trail at the outset, or who do not appreciate the increased traffic generated by trail-related tourism.

A formal operating agreement might be beneficial for the Firefly Trail, especially if control and day-to-day operations will be the responsibility of several different organizations. Athens-Clarke County will likely take responsibility for managing their section of the trail, while it is yet unclear whether the Firefly Trail, Inc. will be responsible for managing the rest of the trail. Because of the potential for a significant number of stakeholder groups, depending on how the trail is organized, a formal agreement between those groups maintaining the trail is key. A formal agreement would specify the required maintenance work in addition to other details such as unified signage, trail width, grounds maintenance and upkeep. The regulated efforts would ensure that each county dedicated a similar minimum amount of money and labor to the trail to protect the cohesiveness of the trail. The stakeholder groups and the roles and responsibilities of each should be decided early on and committed to so that progress will not be disrupted by frequent changes in leadership. As discussed earlier, a successful trail functions as a unit; that is, the consumer can visualize the trail as an entire product from the actual trail to the interpretive panels along the trail to the landscaping around the trail. Discrepancies between areas along the trail, overly manicured grass at one end and no maintenance at the other, for example, would disrupt the flow of the trail in the consumer – the trail user’s – mind. The cohesiveness of the trail will also influence the trail user’s perception of safety. Because the trail is long and predominately rural, knowing where one is in relation to the next community, as well as what resources can be found there will help trail users feel safer while using the trail.

There will also be little question for tourists about where the Firefly Trail goes – the continuity of the trail will help newcomers navigate along the trail.

Of course, for the Firefly Trail to be successful, potential visitors need to know about its existence. Hopefully, one day the Firefly Trail will be so successful and well known that it's reputation will precede it through word of mouth. However, it will always be important to publicize the trail's existence and the opportunities available along the trail for visitors. There are several major metropolitan areas within a few hours drive of the Firefly Trail – Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, and Macon, Georgia and Columbia, South Carolina. All of these markets should be tapped. Because of the current lackluster American economy, many potential tourists are looking for vacations that are close by and reasonably priced for the experience. For individuals, couples, and families rail trails provide a great bargain. Trails are experienced outdoors in the natural landscape, can offer lessons in history, and sometimes give urban dwellers a glimpse into rural America and the small town communities that America was founded upon. An average day trip costs only transportation, perhaps equipment rental, food and souvenirs, and the only additional expense for overnight trips is the lodging. Lodging options could range from camping trailside to bed and breakfasts, inns, or hotels, providing a range of accommodations and prices. The Trail Town Program tracks how much visitors spend on average per night at lodging places along the trail. The study found that even during the economic recession of the late 2000s, visitors continued to stay in communities along the trail and the average spent per night actually rose.²²²

²²² Phone call to Progress Fund, December 5, 2012.

The Firefly Trail, Inc. board has recognized that part of their responsibility up front will be the promotion of the trail. They understand that its particular role in the promotion of the trail will be to promote the trail as a cohesive, regional trail instead of several small segments of trail. This is especially critical, as the trail will be developed in phases rather than all at once. Local tourism authorities will most likely do most of the promotional work, particularly of the trail and how it fits into each community's individual events. Other trails, specifically the Virginia Creeper Trail but others as well, have found success in the cross-promotion of their trail with other tourist attractions in the area. The Virginia Creeper Trail cross promotes with the Barter Theatre, a historic theatre in Abingdon, Virginia that regularly hosts theatrical performances.²²³ For example, a trail user knows that he or she is interested in trails and will likely seek out trails to visit and use for personal enjoyment. However, someone who comes to a region with a trail, but for another purpose, may not know that he or she is a trail user. There may be preconceived notions about who belongs on a trail or the level of skill or ability needed to enjoy the feature, or any number of reasons that hold potential trail users back. Pointing out how interests might overlap on a trail might help overcome the misconception that trails are for a particular type of person. People often use the Erie Canalway Trail because they know they will be able to see historic structures and objects, because Parks and Trails New York and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor promotes this aspect. History is their passion, and the trail is the vehicle through which a passion is enjoyed.

²²³ Adventure Damascus Bicycles. "Virginia Creeper Trail." Adventure Damascus Bicycles. <http://www.adventuredamascus.com/> (accessed March 2, 2013).

A similar approach can be utilized by the Firefly Trail to promote tourism along the trail and in the three county region it passes through. The University of Georgia in Athens, the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta, and the future Central Georgia rail trail connecting the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail in Macon to the Oconee River Greenway in Milledgeville, are all potential avenues for cross promotion of the trail.²²⁴ Many people travel to Athens during the Fall for football games and might be interested in spending more time with their family by utilizing the Firefly Trail, especially once the trailhead is established in Athens. Golf and outdoor enthusiasts enjoy the Masters golf tournament in Augusta every April. Promoting the potential to enjoy other outdoor activities in the region during the Georgia spring might attract some potential tourists, especially those who have travelled farther to get to Augusta and may be staying longer. Winterville and Crawford have their own festivals every year that would be prime opportunity to attract potential trail users.

The Winterville Marigold Festival and the Crawford Firefly Festival are annual events that draw people to the community, which is an opportunity to promote the trail.²²⁵ These are all opportunities to reach out to different audiences who may not realize that there is more to rail trails than just the opportunity to cycle through the countryside.

²²⁴ Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Commission. "Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Association." Central Georgia Rail-to-Trail Commission, www.cgrta.org (accessed December 31, 2012).

²²⁵ Winterville Marigold Festival, Inc. "Winterville Marigold Festival." Winterville Marigold Festival. <http://www.cityofwinterville.com/marigold/index.html> (accessed March 1, 2013); Online Athens. "Crawford Depot Hosting First Annual Firefly Festival." Online Athens. <http://onlineathens.com/local-news/2011-10-12/crawford-depot-hosting-first-annual-firefly-fest> (accessed March 1, 2013).

Finally, reaching out to the agencies with the state of Georgia is another way to promote the Firefly Trail. The Georgia Department of Economic Development houses the state's tourism office and runs Explore Georgia, the interactive website for discovering tourism opportunities within the state.²²⁶ The Department might consider showcasing all of Georgia's rail trail opportunities; knowing where all of the trails are located and basic information about each trail might lead to increased tourism around the state as a whole. Another avenue for greater promotion might be through either the Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources or the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation. Because the Firefly Trail has such a strong history component, advertising with agencies that promote historic preservation might attract those interested more in history and wish to utilize the trail as a means to view the history of the area, particularly the industrial heritage of the Georgia Railroad.

Lastly, preservation should be a large component of the Firefly Trail's development and interpretation. More than just the preservation of old buildings, incorporating preservation into trail planning and development encompasses the preservation of landscapes, communities, and culture, especially that of rural, small-town America which is becoming increasingly scarce today (figure 4.11). In addition, preservation does include the built heritage and is an effective way of documenting and interpreting the remaining industrial heritage along the railroad bed, as well as traditional crafts and methods of farming still in use in rural

²²⁶ Georgia Department of Economic Development. "Explore Georgia: Official Georgia Tourism and Travel Website." Georgia Department of Economic Development <http://www.exploregeorgia.org/>, accessed March 2, 2013).



Figure 4.11: The town of Winterville and the Winterville Depot.²²⁷

²²⁷ Photo by author.

communities. The historic preservation component not only adds another dimension to the trail, but also attracts those tourists who may not be interested in trails themselves, but use the trails as a means to view and experience history. Interpreting history through place-making exhibits is a way of presenting “buried or obscured historic events, voices, and artifacts” to the attention of the tourist. It is easily accessible and requires no permanent interpretation staff.²²⁸ It allows visitors to gain a greater awareness of the importance of the site, while still permitting the visitor to make their own conclusions about the importance of the site within its regional context. Preservation can only bring positive outcomes to the trail.

The preservation and subsequent interpretation will add an additional educational component. This can be used not only by those on the trail for recreational pursuits, but also by school groups who might travel to the trail from around the region to explore local and regional history in a more interactive and hands-on way. The interpretation along the trail should be produced in such a way to be relevant to both young and mature audiences, such as elementary school children as well as adults. Making the information accessible for different audience levels will make the trail more relatable for all age groups, which impacts the amount that one will take from the trail after departing.

Interpretation will be a large part of creating and nurturing the historical aspect of the trail. The Firefly Trail is of local significance in the three counties it passes through and gains state significance when considered as part of the larger

²²⁸ Keith Helmetag, “Place-Making Exhibits Draw From History,” *Urban Land*, (May 2009): 91-93

Georgia Railroad network. Because of the trail's limited significance, interpretation of the remaining features (table 4.2) will be crucial to developing the preservation aspect of the trail. Adequate interpretation should not only discuss the sites but also connect their relationship to the trail and to the development of the three counties to make the interpretation meaningful. Some of the features to be interpreted are the three remaining depots, the small, historic downtowns with commercial space and historic homes, and the agricultural endeavors that have taken place. The stories are interesting because they give tourists a sense of how everyday people lived – the vernacular, or “blue collar” history that is easy to relate to. As discussed previously with regards to directional and informational signage, the signage related to the interpretation of historic resources should also be standardized for consistency, ease of use by trail visitors, and clarity. Much of the trail will pass through largely residential or agricultural lands in Oglethorpe and Greene counties and will not prominently feature interpretive signage. However in the communities the trail does pass through, particularly Athens, Crawford, Winterville, Maxeys, and Union Point, there will be more opportunities to offer interpretative signage for visitors. The relative isolation of the trail might make application of QR codes or development of a Firefly Trail ‘App’ more feasible. Maintenance would require only making sure the QR code links were operational and the app was up to date, compared with checking signage along the trail for signs of vandalism or wear and tear. However, just as the app and the QR code are new interpretation technologies, the trail's 20-year development horizon means that technology will continue to evolve. Trail developers should keep this in mind when planning and updating

interpretation so that there is a mix of interpretation methods available for users. Not all visitors will have the same technological resources or interest in utilizing the newest technologies. In Crawford and Winterville, the depots have been or are in the process of being restored. The Maxeys depot has not been restored and the Woodville depot sign is located on the side of a building (figure 4.12, figure 4.13). It is unclear whether the building served as the depot or the sign was just relocated.²²⁹ All of these depots provide the opportunity for more interpretation or adaptive reuse. Information such as the industries served by the train, architectural information, historical photos and oral histories of the depot and its importance to the town should be featured as part of the interpretation plan. In Athens, interpreting the history of the railroad's development, beginning with James Camak and the cotton mill would be a good starting point to understanding the trail's context. The standardization of the interpretation signage will help guide visitors along the trail and will help to further develop the story of the former railroad and the surrounding area by making signs recognizable and the story consistent and cohesive. The consistent signage will also reinforce the system of standardized directional and informational signage used to keep trail visitors informed while guiding them along the trail.

Incorporating the historic structures that remain on the trail would add an additional element of interpretation to the trail. The towns of Winterville, Maxeys, and Crawford retain their historic depots, and could be adaptively reused to serve as a rest stop for cyclists, a place to use the restroom or get information on the town

²²⁹ Site visit February 2, 2013



Figure 4.12: The Maxeys Depot. The structure was for sale at the time of this photo and is in obvious need of repair.²³⁰



Figure 4.13: The Woodville Depot sign is located on the side of a building. It is unclear whether this was the original depot, or if the sign has been moved.²³¹

²³⁰ Photo by author

²³¹ Photo by author

itself. The Crawford and Winterville depots are currently being used as civic centers, and could continue to serve as a meeting place for the community without being disrupted by general trail traffic.

The depots and historic commercial structures also serve as a way to interpret the developmental history of each community along the trail. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office commissioned a study in the 1980s on the morphology of communities within the state. Several of the towns along the trail fall within the railroad community morphology as outlined in the study: railroad stop and railroad strip. The railroad stop is the smallest type of town, distinguished by the railroad tracks at the heart of the community. The community most often had dwellings along the tracks but no depot, sometimes a warehouse but few, if any, other public structures. Woodville is likely a railroad stop town. This is supported by the Woodville town stop sign, located on the side of a building rather than a depot, as seen in the figure above. The railroad strip type town is the most common form in Georgia according to the study. In these towns, the main road paralleled the tracks instead of lying at right angles to them. Commercial development paralleled the tracks, either facing or backing up to the tracks. Often, the commercial structures were on one side facing the residential structures on the other. The most distinguishing feature of this type of town is that the railroad tracks bisect the center of town. Examples of this type of town are Maxeys, Winterville, and Union Point. These towns have roads that run parallel to the tracks. Their historic commercial structures are generally to one side of the track with residential across

it. These communities are larger than the railroad stop communities and have their own depots.²³²

Finally, if the Firefly Trail, Inc. or the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission decided to implement a program like the Trail Town Program or the Bicyclists Bring Business, a way of helping generate economic development could center on historic preservation and the rehabilitation of the historic commercial buildings in each small downtown. Reinvesting money in the downtown commercial structures would not only improve community appearances but would also invest money into community infrastructure. Owners of commercial buildings interested in rehabilitating their buildings would be eligible to apply for rehabilitation tax credits from the State of Georgia and the federal government.²³³ Taking advantage of these tax credits would make a rehabilitation project much less expensive for property owners to bear. Rehabilitating historic commercial buildings might also provide opportunities for employment, as local contractors and building craftsmen could be hired to do the work, further increasing the power of the economic investment within the community.

Not only would rehabilitation and investment in the communities help improve the properties themselves and the community's land and tax values, but also help the community improve its appearance for trail users. This will be critical for attracting trail users into a community, as well as connecting the trail with the

²³² Darlene Roth, "Georgia Community Development and Morphology of Community Types," Roth and Associates, 1989.

²³³ Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division. "Tax Incentives." Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division, <http://georgiashpo.org/incentives/tax>, accessed March 20, 2013.

community. Trail users visit trails to explore the region in a hands-on, up-close-and-personal way rather than shielded by a vehicle. Part of this, according to Boxx, is making each community a unique destination along the trail. A trail user would rather see unique places and spaces in each community as a way of getting out of the world of chain restaurants and hotels. Preservation of a community's built heritage can help brand each different community as a unique destination, different from the one before and after to invite tourists to continue to explore along the trail.

Chart 4.1: Summary of Recommendations

<p>Making a successful trail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tap into nearby population clusters (Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, GA and Columbia, SC) • Promote length of trail – can be accomplished in a day or in a weekend • Gentle grades and scenic landscapes mixed with small, rural communities
<p>Accounting for obstacles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of overnight accommodations along the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Might hurt Union Point as a trail head especially • Lack of infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trail will have a gradual implementation • Trail connection with communities will be important when infrastructure is built
<p>Facilitating Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail has support of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and county governments • Grants will be key for funding assistance and getting the trail project off the ground • A program similar to the Trail Town Program or Bicyclists Bring Business should be explored <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total implementation or partial implementation of just the principles
<p>Working with the Non-Profit Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already have a non-profit created and actively involved in the development of the trail • Will need to promote the trail to local property owners and residents, as well as tourists
<p>Working with multiple jurisdictions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should develop a formal operating agreement between counties if the Firefly Trail, Inc. will not serve as permanent trail keepers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Will help prevent a disjointed approach to trail development and maintenance
<p>Advertising the Trail</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefly Trail, Inc. will serve as a tourism board for the trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other tourism boards should be recruited as well • Cross-promote with other activities to attract a wider audience • Lobby Georgia Tourism Department to highlight all rail trails around the State to attract attention to Firefly Trail • Encourage Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Historic Preservation Division to include rail trails as part of history to discover in Georgia
<p>Role of Historic Preservation in Trail Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way of preserving landscapes, communities, and culture, especially small town America • Attracts people who may be more interested in history than the trail • Educational component for local school children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interactive way to help them to learn their community’s own history

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interpretation of the resources along the trail will be key to incorporating the history of the surrounding communities into the trail• Utilize new technologies in interpretation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ QR codes and development of Apps for smartphones• Help each community retain its unique qualities so it remains authentic, different, and has character<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Want the trail user to want to keep exploring• Reuse historic structures for trail-related amenities<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ex: visitor centers, restrooms, community centers,
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Table 4.2: Preliminary “Windshield” Survey²³⁴

Location	Resource	Potential Interpretation Themes
Athens	Terminus of the railroad	Why the railroad was developed; why the spur to Athens
Winterville	Historic District	Community as it relates to Athens, developmental history
Winterville	Depot	How the railroad shaped Winterville
Arnoldsville	Fair Havens Plantation	Inhabitants, agriculture
Arnoldsville	Ruinous Cotton Mill	Industry on train route
Crawford	Historic District	Oglethorpe County history, why the train went through Crawford instead of Lexington, developmental history, major industries
Crawford	Depot	Stone depot instead of wood
Maxeys	Depot	Smallest depot
Maxeys	Community	Smallest town on train line, what kept Maxeys from growing, agricultural endeavors
Union Point	Historic Commercial District	Convergence of the railroads, Industry and business, Greene county history

²³⁴ This list is just a preliminary list. A more thorough, comprehensive survey should be undertaken by a qualified preservation professional for more accurate information. Contacting the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office for assistance is a good place to start.

Chapter V

CONCLUSION

Using trails as a form of historic preservation and economic development is a relatively new concept, but one supported by government agencies, trail advocates, and by the general public. Bicycling as a form of outdoor tourism has increased over the decades since the rails to trails movement quietly began in the 1960s as railroad corporations began abandoning unprofitable routes across the United States. Since then, the trend has grown into a national movement that has influenced national transportation policy and has seen the conversion of over 15,000 miles on former rail beds to multi-use trails that serve as recreational facilities, preservation tools, and conservation methods.

The purpose of this work was to explore the relationship between trails, historic preservation, and economic development, particularly in rural communities by studying successful trails in the United States that exhibit similar qualities or characteristics and then apply the knowledge to a trail in development locally. The trails studied were the Virginia Creeper Trail, the Erie Canalway Trail, the Main-Line Canal Trail, and the Great Allegheny Passage. These trails were examined with a framework of five different areas: economic development, the role of a non-profit, multi-jurisdictional controls, promoting tourism, and historic preservation. The information gleaned from the research was then used to create a set of best

practices that could be applied by trail managers to trails either developed or undeveloped. These recommendations include:

1. Economic Development
 - a. Implement a specific program to help communities target their economy
 - b. Conduct studies on trail use and visitors to understand the market supply and what tourists want
2. Role of a Non-Profit
 - a. Should be founded to:
 - i. Help bolster community support
 - ii. Offer additional information for tourists
 - iii. Serve as a link between the general public and those in development and managerial roles
3. Multiple Jurisdictions
 - a. Create an operating agreement between communities for standardization
 - b. Facilitate communication between different groups responsible for the maintenance and daily operations of the trail
4. Promoting Tourism
 - a. Seek assistance of local tourism agencies
 - b. Offer special occasion guided tours or trips to garner interest in the trail
5. Role of Historic Preservation Along the Trail
 - a. Conduct a survey of the resources
 - b. Interpret resources for visitors
 - c. Explore new technologies to improve interpretation of resources

However, further research on this subject is needed, not only on the impact of historic preservation on trails, but also on the Firefly Trail itself. As trails begin to

incorporate other elements such as preservation, it will be important to understand more about how preservation affects trails and the tourist. It will also be important to understand the role of preservation in the economic impact; is the economic growth specifically related to the preservation of the historic resources along a trail or more the result of the trail itself and only marginally enhanced by the preservation along the trail. Further study is also needed to determine the best method of interpretation to trail users of different ages, skill levels, and interests. Because of the inherently rural and isolated nature of most trails, it is not feasible to have an interpreter or docent available along the trail to answer questions and guide tourists. As such, it will be important to know more about trail users' habits and preferences regarding interpretive elements.

Further study is needed of the Firefly Trail in particular. The trail faces a 20-year development horizon, which will pose significant challenges to the developer(s) of the trail. More study should be focused on the groups best suited to implement the development process, either county governments, the non-profit, or the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission. The potential economic impact of the trail on each town should also be studied to guide future implementation of a economic development program like the Trail Town Program or the Bicycles Bring Business program. Further study also needs to be conducted on the historic resources that are left and their potential as interpretation stops. These are all vital to the success of the trail and should be explored more thoroughly early in the development process so that the trail's development is as smooth as possible.

Historic preservation can incorporate the historic structures and landscapes into a trail to preserve rural farming character of the area and interpret the history of the rail corridor and its importance in the history of the communities it passes through. This added dimension to the trail created by the preservation and interpretation of landscape or cultural features will provide “a deeper knowledge of place for visitor and the community” as well as “increase community ownership and help to foster or strengthen cultural identity” in a region.²³⁵ This greater awareness of the community and its broader historical significance within the context of the region and the railroad help make trails a specific linear place that can be visited and traveled by tourist consumers looking to experience a place and its history. The interpretation of the trail’s history within the context of its surroundings builds on the other benefits of rail trails – the low gradients, scenic character, surrounding environment, length covered, and the unique community destinations – to create a rail trail as a tourist product that can be consumed by visitors.²³⁶ This creates not only an opportunity to preserve a rail corridor and interpret the history surrounding it but also leverage a once-abandoned rail corridor for consumption by tourists to increase economic development opportunities for local communities that can capitalize on trail-related business and markets for further development and growth.

Bicycles are not a new invention and walking trails are not either. Both have been enjoyed for generations for their simplicity and ease of use. Yet it is the simplicity of the bicycle and the trail that make them obvious solutions for some of

²³⁵ Hayes and MacLeod, “Putting Down Routes,” 59

²³⁶ Reis and Jellum, “Rail Trail Development,” 136

life's largest problems, namely transportation-related pollution and congestion and obesity and sedentary lifestyles. The combination of the bicycle and the trail may not be a new phenomenon, but their application to societal problems and ability to channel resources for community development earn them a place in the planner's toolbox. It will be the multi-faceted solutions that will make a difference in our increasingly complex society, one fraught with budget cuts, red tape, and regulation. Trails allow us to provide a place for safe exercise, interaction with nature and each other while simultaneously letting us explore our relationship to our community and our place within the world around us. Incorporating history along the trail through interpretation of events, places, and people further allows us to engage not only with our surroundings, but also with our history. It is this communion with those who have come before us that transform the ordinary space into a place, a place of meaning and hope for the future. Utilizing trails for the interpretation of history is the ultimate manifestation of the American Dream: forging paths into the wilderness to explore who we are, dream of what can be, and then actively pursuing it. This is bicycling through history for a better tomorrow.

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