

**THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS**

The Circuit Trails 2016 Annual Report

Updated May 2017

2016 In Review

2016 was an exciting year for the Circuit Trails. The Circuit Trails Coalition officially launched a new website and branding for the trail network in April. Two new bridges over the Schuylkill River opened to pedestrians and bicycles. The Coalition also launched a new grassroots campaign to galvanize support for the Circuit Trails on a local level. The region built nearly 11 miles of Circuit Trails and raised \$19 million in new funding.

Highlights

2016 was a year for connections on the Circuit Trails. Two bridges opened across the Schuylkill River. In Valley Forge, the old Betzwood Bridge—renamed **Sullivan's Bridge** for the Revolutionary War general who built a wooden bridge across the Schuylkill River—opened in August. The old Betzwood Bridge was closed in 1993 and removed in 1995. For 12 years, cyclists were detoured to an undersized four-foot boardwalk attached to the side of the Route 422 Bridge. Sullivan's Bridge is a welcome addition to the Schuylkill River Trail, establishing a safe and well-designed connection between the Schuylkill River Trail and Valley Forge National Historical Park.

In Manayunk, the **Pencoyd Bridge** opened in October, providing access to the beautiful West Laurel Hill Cemetery and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. Cyclists and pedestrians can now make a loop using the Manayunk Bridge upstream and the Pencoyd Bridge downstream. The Pencoyd Bridge rehabilitation project—led by O'Neill Properties' residential development—links the new apartment complex to Main Street and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority's (SEPTA) Wissahickon Transfer Center for buses and trains.

The **Chester Creek Trail** Phase I is complete and will have an official ribbon cutting in spring 2017. This first segment of the Chester Creek Trail runs 2.8 miles from Linvilla Orchards to the Lenni SEPTA depot and includes two repurposed railroad bridges and a trailhead at Knowlton Road. The Friends of Chester Creek Trail have championed this rail-trail in Central Delaware County. The trail will connect the SEPTA Wawa R3 Station to Upland, Pennsylvania and the East Coast Greenway in Chester, for a total distance of approximately 6 miles.

Burlington County completed a 1.97-mile section of the **Kinkora Trail** in spring 2016 with a formal ribbon cutting in summer 2016. This new segment ends approximately 1 mile north of the trail on Island Road that connects to Mansfield Township Park in Columbus. The Kinkora Trail will one day span 13 miles between Mansfield and Springfield Townships.

The Circuit Trails Coalition launched its **500 Miles by 2025 Campaign**. Coalition members, trail supporters and advocates are meeting with local officials at the municipal level to have them sign resolutions in support of building 500 miles of Circuit Trails by 2025. This supports the goal of completing the 750 miles of the Circuit Trails by 2040.



Lawrence Hopewell Trail

New Branding: Proud to Trail, Hundreds of Miles of Happy

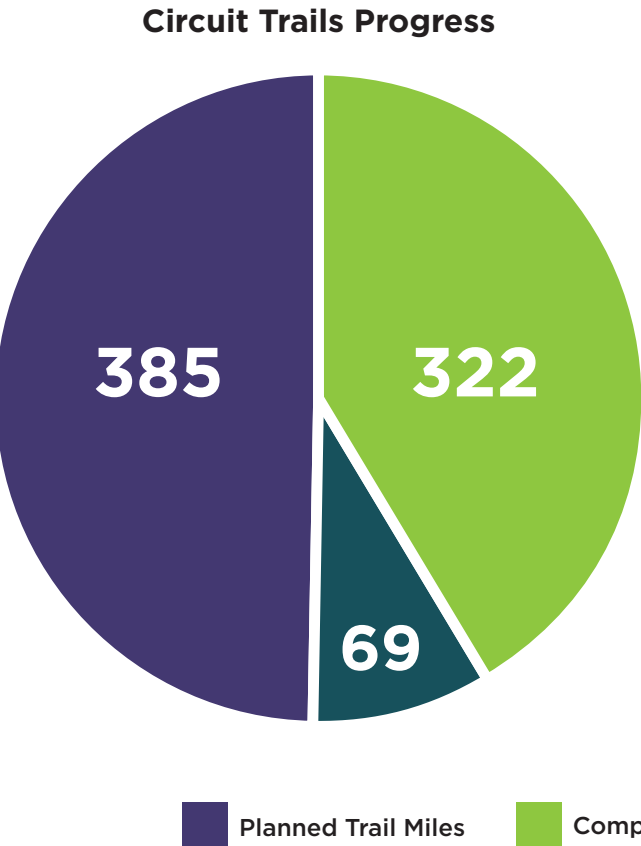
The Circuit Trails Coalition launched a new website and branding campaign to promote the trail network. The campaign launched during Opening Weekend for Trails, April 16-17. It was a gorgeous spring day for the celebration at Race Street Pier, which attracted a large crowd that included a guest appearance by Eagles defensive end, Connor Barwin, who is an avid cyclist and Circuit Trails supporter.



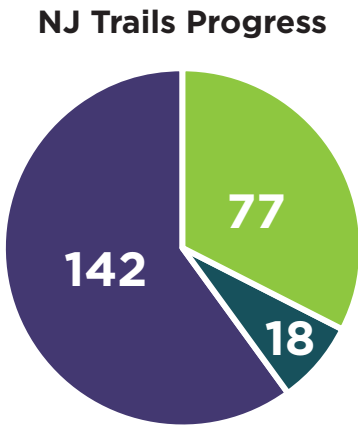
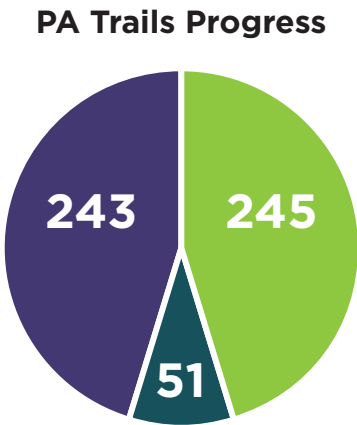
As part of the Circuit Trails branding campaign, new materials are available for promoting the Circuit including a print map, signage, brochures and postcards. The unified signage, designed to be used on any Circuit Trail, complements existing trail branding. Trail advocates have a variety of formats to choose from to include Circuit Trails branding in their signage plan. A pilot phase for signage implementation will begin in 2017.

Trails Completed in 2016

Circuit Trails added nearly 11 miles of new trail in 2016, including two bridges over the Schuylkill River. Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania and Burlington and Mercer counties in New Jersey all added new segments of Circuit Trails. This brings the total number of Circuit miles built to 322.



Trail Segment	State	Mileage
Kinkora Trail - Mansfield to Island Road	NJ	1.97
Lawrence Hopewell Trail - Whiskey House	NJ	2.00
Big Woods Trail	PA	2.00
Chester Creek Trail - Phase 1	PA	2.80
Green Lane Connector	PA	0.10
Newtown Square Branch - Pennsy Trail	PA	0.90
Pencoyd Trail	PA	0.50
Schuylkill River Trail - Phoenixville, Ph. III	PA	0.30
Sugarhouse Trail Extension	PA	0.10
Sullivan's Bridge	PA	0.25
TOTAL		10.92



Funding

The Circuit Trails received more than \$19 million in new funding—in part because of new funding streams established in 2015—for planning, design, engineering and construction of new trails. Funding support came from federal, state, local and private grants including more than \$4 million in approved grants from the William Penn Foundation.

The Circuit Trails Coalition worked with Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and county planners to provide information on funding sources for trails. The Circuit Trails region is fortunate to have dedicated money for trail planning and building. Because these funding streams exist, approximately 20 miles of Circuit Trails are teed up to be completed in 2017 (see Coming Trails on page 4).

Trail Usage

DVRPC collects data on Circuit Trail usage through 12 permanent counters. In 2016, there were over three million uses on the 12 trails with permanent counters throughout the region. DVRPC data is available at dvrpc.org/webmaps/PermBikePed/.

Surveys

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) continued to conduct trail surveys in 2016 with a particular focus on tailoring the survey questions to the specific needs of each trail being studied. The users of seven trails were surveyed generating 661 responses. Key findings include:

- Knowledge of the Circuit Trails averaged 40 percent among respondents.
- Eighty-four percent of the Forbidden Drive survey respondents correctly identified that trail's watershed.
- An average of 72 percent of those surveyed in Pennsylvania reported they consider the river or creek adjacent to their trail “extremely clean” or “clean.”

Outreach: Youth and Hospital Engagement

RTC continued outreach to youth and hospitals on behalf of the Circuit Trails in 2016. RTC brought 948 young people onto the Circuit Trails for walks and bike rides and incorporated watershed education into the programming. RTC also organized 25 clinician-led walks on Circuit Trails in collaboration with local trail groups and hospitals, including Kennedy Health System, Jefferson Hospital, Cooper University Hospital, Phoenixville Hospital, Paoli Hospital, Lankenau Medical Center and Aria Health in order to reach new audiences.



Ulysses Wiggins Waterfront Park Promenade, New Jersey
Port Richmond Trail, Pennsylvania

Looking Forward

Coming Trails

The Circuit Trails Coalition's lobbying efforts for more trail funding has paid off with many trails in the pipeline. Although some of the segments below are small in terms of mileage, many fill crucial gaps.

Trail Openings 2017 - Confirmed

State	County	Trail	Mileage
NJ	Camden	Cooper's Poynt Park	0.4
NJ	Camden	North Park Drive Bike Lanes	1.6
PA	Delaware	Darby Creek - Sweedish Cabin to Kent Park	1.0
PA	Delaware	Marcus Hook ECG	1.25
PA	Delaware	Tinicum Route 291 ECG	0.7
PA	Montgomery	Schuylkill River Trail - Keystone Blvd. to Lower Pottsgrove	1.5
PA	Philadelphia	Bartram's Mile North	0.45
PA	Philadelphia	Bartram's Mile South	0.35
PA	Philadelphia	K&T Phase 1	0.9
PA	Philadelphia	Schuylkill River Trail - South St. to Christian St.	0.3
Total 2017			8.45

Trail Openings 2017 - Awaiting Confirmation

State	County	Trail	Mileage
NJ	Mercer	Trenton Wellness Loop	1.2
PA	Montgomery	Liberty Bell Trail	0.5
PA	Philadelphia	Baxter Trail	1.5
PA	Philadelphia	Frankford Creek Greenway - Phase 1 (Toonkany - Tacony)	1.3
PA	Philadelphia	Tacony Creek Trail - Phase B	TBD
Total 2017			4.5



Schuylkill Banks Boathouse | Delaware River Heritage Trail | Gray's Ferry Crescent

Expanding the Circuit Trails

The Circuit Trails Steering Committee unanimously approved the Burlington County Freeholders' application to designate **Arney's Mount Trail** as a Circuit Trail. The 8.58-mile trail connects to the Kinkora Trail and the Rancocas Creek Greenway. Construction of the 2.2-mile Phase I will begin in 2017. Phase II is slated for 2018.

The 5.95-mile **Harrison Trail** is planned to connect Ceres Park in Gloucester County to Mullica Hill.

The 5.6-mile **Devault Line Trail** is planned to connect the Schuylkill River Trail in Phoenixville with the Warner Spur Trail in Devault near the Route 29 exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

The 3.2-mile **Warner Spur Trail** is planned to connect the Chester Valley Trail and the Devault Line Trail in Chester County.

The 9.1-mile **PECO Right-of-Way Trail** in Delaware County is planned to connect the East Coast Greenway near Marcus Hook with the Octoraro Rail Trail just west of Spring Valley Road in Concordville, Pennsylvania.

In 2016 the Circuit Trails added 32 miles of planned trails.

New Circuit Trails Coalition Members

The Circuit Trails Coalition approved the following organizations for membership in the Circuit Trails Coalition in 2016:

French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust has a long history of trail protection. Founded in 1967 the French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust is a leader in regional and land trail protection.

Natural Lands Trust is a nonprofit in Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey that has worked to preserve open space for more than 60 years. Natural Lands Trust worked with the Delaware River Waterfront Corporation to acquire right of ways for the waterfront trail in Philadelphia. The organization also worked on the Brandywine Trail and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

Valley Forge Park Alliance is a 40-year-old nonprofit membership organization with 2,000 members who value and support Valley Forge Park, which is home to segments of the Schuylkill River Trail.

Circuit Trail Champions

How are trails built? There is no single answer to this question. The enormous effort that goes into creating a trail is not always apparent at the celebratory ribbon cutting. From initial conceptual planning, garnering political and popular support, to finding funding for the design, engineering and construction, each trail has its own story. It takes hard work and determination, and it doesn't happen overnight. The hard work may come from local advocates, local governments, regional organizations (such as the East Coast Greenway) or public-private partnerships. The key to seeing trails come to fruition is often tenacity. Below are profiles of three trails that represent the diversity of paths to trail development.

Lawrence Hopewell Trail

Amazing things happen when collaboration occurs between for-profit companies, township government and a nonprofit trails organization. The Lawrence Hopewell Trail (LHT), known as the Mount Rose Distillery Segment, is a result of that kind of collaboration. The trail segment, located off Pennington Rocky Hill Road near Carter Road in Hopewell, New Jersey, traverses a property previously known for a series of cell towers. In this collaboration, Pinnacle Towers, Inc. subdivided and transferred a parcel of land to Hopewell Township so that the LHT could be built. The agreement was both generous and simple. Pinnacle Towers would donate the land on the condition that the Township and the LHT would handle the appearances and the planning board application. Because of this tremendous gift, bikers, walkers and nature enthusiasts now enjoy a bucolic trail without any sense of the cell towers and busy roads that are nearby.

The funding for construction is yet another partnership story—DVRPC, the New Jersey Department of Transportation and REI Co-op provided the funding to build the trail. For generations, area residents and visitors will benefit from the shared vision, generosity and phenomenal cooperation and support of all partners. In so many ways, trails build bridges.



Left to Right:

Eleanor Horne, Co-President,
Lawrence Hopewell Trail

Colin Manning, Store Manager,
REI Co-op Princeton

Paul Pogorzelski, Hopewell Township
Administrator/Engineer

Becky Taylor, Co-President,
Lawrence Hopewell Trail

Vanessa Sandom, Hopewell Township
Committee Member and LHT Trustee



Left to Right:

Vanessa Sandom, Hopewell Township Committee Member and LHT Trustee

Becky Taylor, Co-President, Lawrence Hopewell Trail

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Eleanor Horne, Co-President, Lawrence Hopewell Trail



The Lawrence Hopewell Trail

Friends of Chester Creek Trail

The Chester Creek Trail is an excellent example of a friends group taking the lead to get a Circuit Trail built. The Friends of the Chester Creek Trail (FOCCT) started as a citizen-run grassroots effort. The group attributes its success to a visionary leader, Mike Fusco, who worked tirelessly for decades to make the trail happen. Unfortunately, Mr. Fusco passed away before seeing the trail built. The dedicated, hardworking board members took up the mantle with the help and financial support of FOCCT members, bicycle organizations and conservation organizations. FOCCT also cultivated key political support—Andy Reilly, a former Delaware County Councilman was instrumental in bringing SEPTA, the owner of the right-of-way, to the table. The FOCCT formula of visionary leadership, a hardworking board and key political support is a recipe for success. The FOCCT overcame local opposition, vandalism and a spurious lawsuit over the right-of-way. The 23 years of hard work has paid off. Even though the township has decided to have the official ribbon cutting in the spring of 2017, on a 40 degree day in January the trailhead parking lots were full with eager trail users.

Newtown Rail Trail in Northampton Township

The Newtown Rail Trail highlights the work local advocacy groups do to promote the building of trails. Bike Bucks County, an advocacy group for cycling in Bucks County, along with the Penn Tammany Greenway Coalition, played starring roles in advocating for the Newtown Rail Trail. This 8.5-mile trail, slated for the old SEPTA Newtown rail line, passes through five municipalities. The 4.5 miles of the trail in Northampton Township faced stiff opposition from local residents. Although ultimately not successful (this round), Ken Boyle of Bike Bucks County, Brig Masone of the Penn Tammany Coalition, and local advocates launched an amazing grassroots effort to support the trail. Through petitions and getting large numbers of advocates to turn out for public meetings, the team kept the momentum going for the long haul. This is the way trails begin—the tenacity of these groups is admirable and will position them to push for the trail's completion when the time is right.



Schuylkill Banks
All photos by Thom Carrol