

# Moving the Circuit Forward To Reach 500 MILES BY 2025

How Greater Philadelphia can accelerate  
and advance progress on The Circuit Trails  
The Circuit Trails Coalition — Status as of 2020

THE  
CIRCUIT  
TRAILS

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## Moving the Circuit Forward To Reach 500 miles by 2025

### I. Background

In 2013, Greater Philadelphia committed itself to the goal of completing 750 miles of the Circuit by 2040. This goal is embedded in the region's 2040 Long Range Plan<sup>1</sup>, which cited the Circuit as one of the region's significant major bicycle/pedestrian projects. The Circuit Trails Coalition is governed by a steering committee that is comprised of elected representatives from the 65+ member organizations that work in collaboration with 25 state and local agencies and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to promote Circuit Trails development, marketing it to the general public and highlighting the Circuit Trails multiple benefits.

In order to make sure that the Region keeps on track toward its 2040 goal, in 2017, the Circuit Trails Coalition set an ambitious short term goal of working to ensure that 500 miles of the Circuit Trails are completed by 2025, which was cited in DVRPC's 2045 Long Range Plan<sup>2</sup>.

Throughout 2018 and 2019, the elected leadership of each county in the DVRPC region publicly supported this goal in the form of resolutions passed by each governing body. Similarly, volunteers who support the Circuit Trails asked their town or borough mayors, supervisors, commissioners or committee persons to support the goal by passing local resolutions. In all, 95 municipalities passed such resolutions and are mapped in Figure 1 (see p.4).

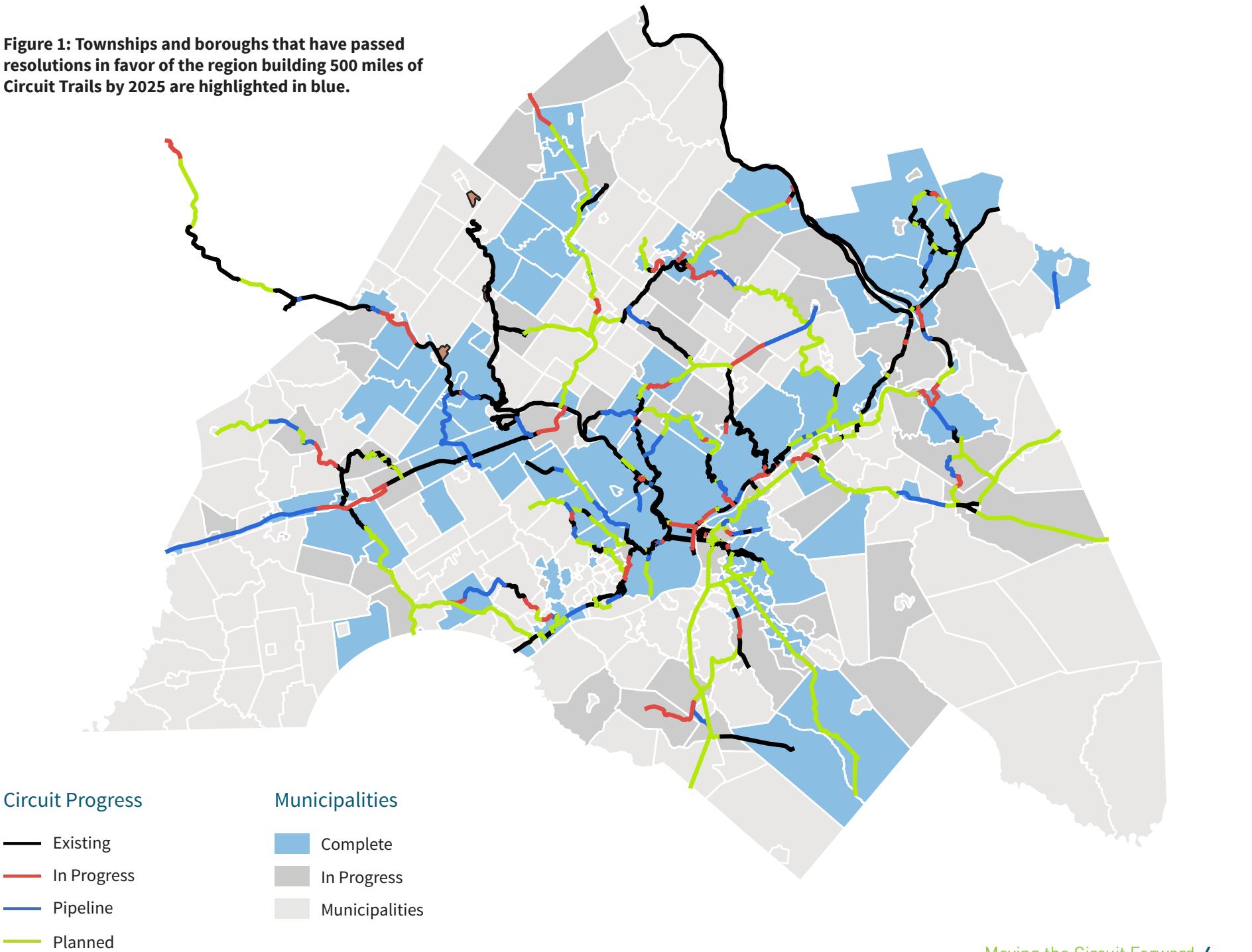
This report is the result of the last two year's worth of work conducted by members of the Circuit Trails Coalition to identify which segments could contribute to reaching the 500 miles by 2025 goal. There are two important databases that help the Circuit Trails Coalition track progress toward building out the Circuit.

The first is maintained by staff from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission. They maintain a [GIS map](#) of the Circuit and the status of each individual segment. Every six months, DVRPC staff report to the Circuit Trails Coalition on the number of miles completed.

The second is maintained by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). With input from dozens of Circuit Trails Coalition members, PEC created a database called the "[Pipeline Manager](#)" to track each segment's status with more detailed information about stakeholders, reports, and obstacles.

Throughout 2018 into the summer of 2020, PEC and the members of the Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee updated the information in the Pipeline Manager to improve the Coalition's understanding of each individual segment's status.

**Figure 1: Townships and boroughs that have passed resolutions in favor of the region building 500 miles of Circuit Trails by 2025 are highlighted in blue.**



## II. Status as of July 2020

In order to achieve the 2025 goal, approximately 146 miles need to be completed in the next five construction seasons.

The Circuit Trails completed 12.95 miles in 2020, including an additional 5.6 miles of trail improvements in the region. This brings the total to 353.26 miles built. When complete, the Circuit Trails will consist of 827 miles. Currently, approximately 81.48 miles are “in progress,” meaning that 71 trail projects are fully funded, right of way is secured and design is underway. Completion of those 81.48 miles by 2025 is relatively assured.

148.45 miles have been identified as in a “pipeline” stage, meaning that although a feasibility study has been conducted for these 71 trail projects, design of the project is not completed, or additional obstacles exist, such as lack of public right of way.

In total, there are 229.93 miles of trails that are “in progress” or in the “pipeline” stage. If 146 of those 229.93 miles could be constructed by 2025, the 500 mile goal can be achieved.

There are approximately 300 additional miles of Circuit Trails that are “planned”, which means that they are mapped and appear in local or county master plans or trail plans, but the process for conducting feasibility, design and construction has not yet begun. Since the Circuit’s beginning in 2012, more miles have been added to the network, bringing the total potential mileage to 827.

	PA	NJ	Total miles	Total segments
In Progress	43.53 miles	37.95 miles	81.48 miles	71 segments
Pipeline	92.96 miles	55.49 miles	148.45 miles	71 segments
Total miles of In Progress and Pipeline segments	136.49 miles	93.44 miles	229.93 miles	142 segments
Completed miles	269.37 miles	83.89 miles	353.26 miles	190 segments
Completed, In Progress & Pipeline miles	405.86 miles	177.33 miles	583.19 miles	

### III. Circuit Critical Gaps

#### Pennsylvania

1. Bridge Street in Morrisville will close the gap on 75 miles of continuous trail on the D&L Trail.
2. Gray's Ferry Crossing & Christian to Crescent Connector will create 13 miles of continuous trail on the Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia.
3. The Chester Valley Trail extension will link the Chester Valley Trail to the Schuylkill River Trail, thereby creating 89 miles of continuous trail on the CVT, SRT, Perkiomen, Skippack, Audubon and Valley Forge trails.
4. Wissahickon Gateway will close a long-standing gap in 34 miles of continuous trail on the SRT in Philadelphia and Montgomery County.
5. Central Delaware River Trail in Philadelphia will create 4 miles of new continuous trail in the most populated section of the Delaware River Trail.

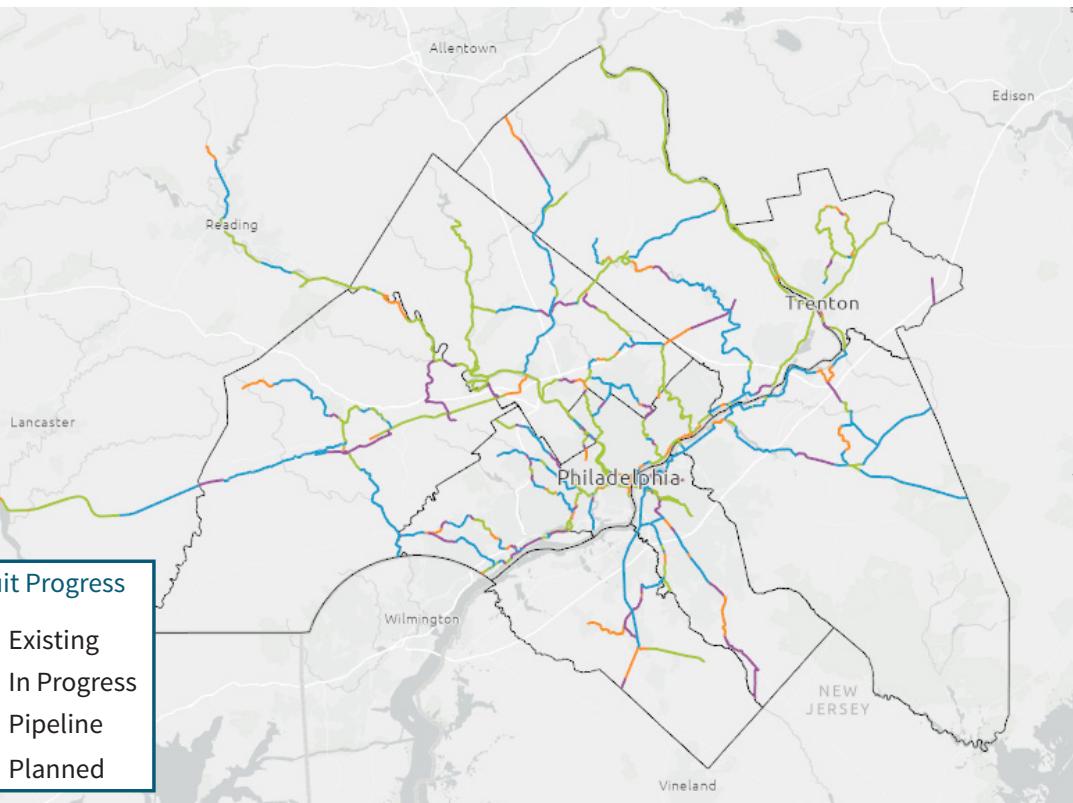
#### New Jersey

1. D&R Connector Trail — Wellness Loop to D&R Canal South Mercer — will open up 82 miles of continuous trail.
2. The Rancocas Creek Greenway segment between the Rowan Estate and the Smithville Park will add 4.5 miles that should catalyze further trail development.
3. Lawrence Hopewell Trail gaps will create 22 miles of continuous trail.
4. The Pub Connector will attain 8 miles of continuous trail.
5. Elk Township Trail will create 14 miles of continuous trail.

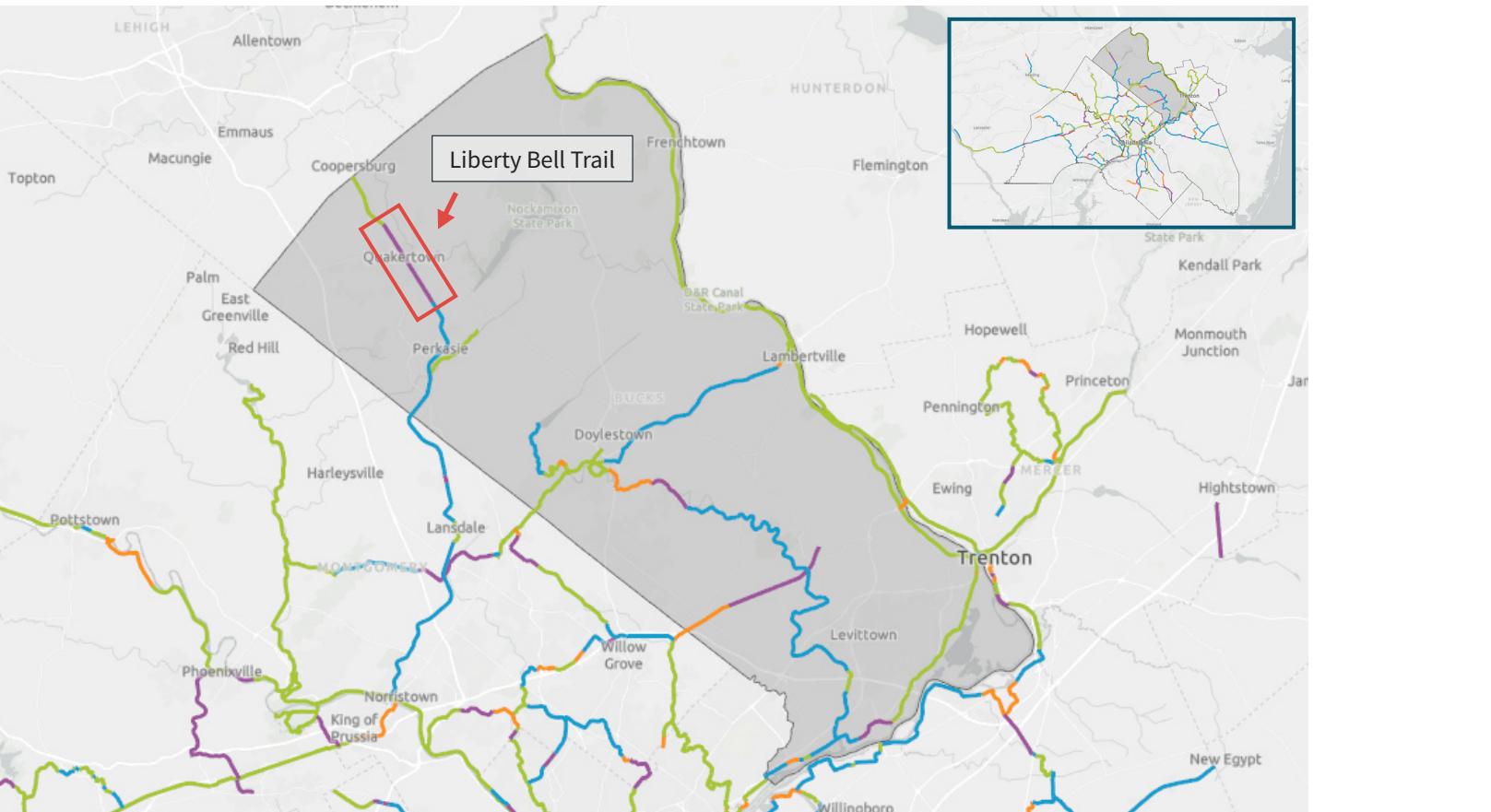
### IV. Full list of the Circuit Trails Segments that are In-Progress and Pipeline

The following list sorts the 142 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and if it's in the pipeline category, its Community Impact score. The Community Impact score is from an analysis conducted by the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia in 2018 to evaluate the impact these trails will have on citizens of the 9-county Greater Philadelphia Region based on equity, length, population and connectivity. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9.

In addition to the list of trail segments, the Circuit Trails Action Team has identified priority trails in the 9-county region to reach the short-term campaign goal of 500 miles by 2025 and to connect the Circuit's critical gaps. The Action Team's purpose is to build awareness, support and urgency for the completion of the Circuit Trails in the Greater Philadelphia area. The following maps accompany the list of trails for each county and show the Circuit's trail status as of July 2020.



# Bucks County



- Circuit Progress**
- Existing
  - In Progress
  - Pipeline
  - Planned

The priority trail in the county is the Liberty Bell Trail. This segment's trail status is "pipeline," meaning that the trail's sponsor or other organizations are actively working to move these trails forward by conducting studies, acquiring right-of-way, engaging local communities, and laying the groundwork to obtain funding for future design and construction.

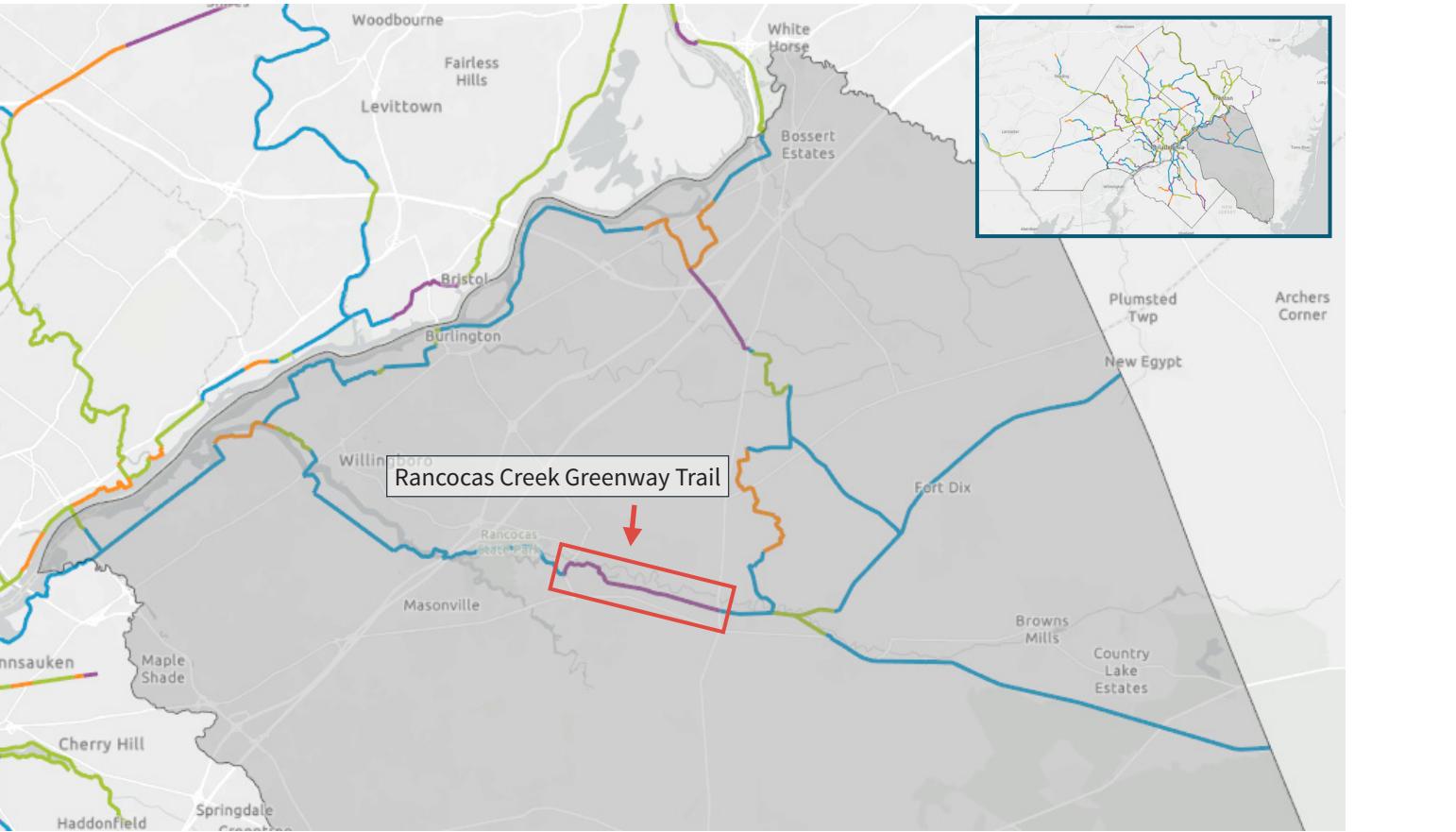
The following table sorts the 14 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
202 Trail	Solebury Trail - W. Bridge Street to Sugar Road	In Progress	3.08	0.27
D&L Canal Towpath	D&L Canal - Bridge Street Crossing	In Progress	6.73	0.08
East Coast Greenway	Bensalem - Biddle Lane to Station Ave.	In Progress	5.95	0.68
Liberty Bell Trail	California Road to Coopersburg	In Progress	1.85	3.01
Neshaminy Creek Trail	611 & Almhouse Road to Central Park	In Progress	3.43	1.23
Neshaminy Creek Trail	Upper State Road to Neshaminy Creek	In Progress	7.08	0.45
Neshaminy Creek Trail	Upper State Road to Unami Jr High Section	In Progress	N/A	1.52
Newtown Rail Trail	County Line Road to Bristol Road	In Progress	6.12	2.54
East Coast Greenway	Croydon Woods to Mill Street	Pipeline	9.50	2.37
Liberty Bell Trail	Rich Hill Road to California Road	Pipeline	3.03	6.23
Liberty Bell Trail	Fairview Ave to Veterans Park	Pipeline	1.85	2.39
Neshaminy Creek Trail	Dark Hollow Road to Mill Road	Pipeline	2.37	1.21
Neshaminy Creek Trail	Mill Road to Valley Road	Pipeline	2.67	1.40
Newtown Rail Trail	Bristol Road to Newtown Borough	Pipeline	6.32	5.86
Total Miles: 29.24				



Upper Bucks Rail Trail

# Burlington County



Circuit Progress
Existing
In Progress
Pipeline
Planned

The priority trail in the county is the Rancocas Creek Greenway Trail. This segment's trail status is "pipeline," meaning that the trail's sponsor or other organizations are actively working to move these trails forward by conducting studies, acquiring right-of-way, engaging local communities, and laying the groundwork to obtain funding for future design and construction.

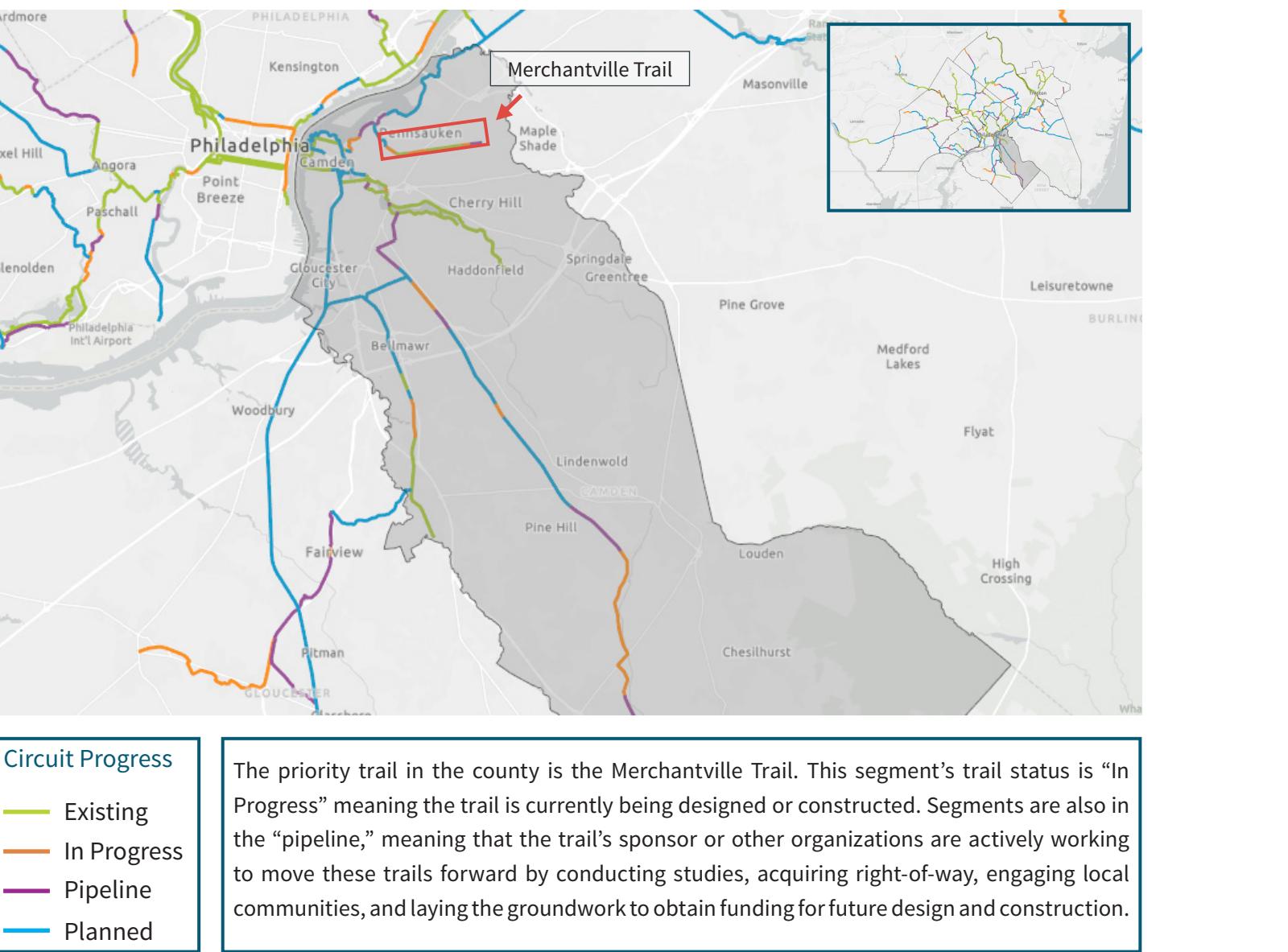


The following table sorts the 7 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trails highlighted in green are the priority trails and are identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Arney's Mount Trail	Pemberton Road to Juliustown Road - Segment 2	In Progress	1.11	1.49
Arney's Mount Trail	Juliustown Road to Jacksonville Road	In Progress	1.13	2.87
DRHT	Norman & River Drive to PA Ave. at Rancocas Creek	In Progress	5.41	1.70
DRHT	Route 130 Bypass	In Progress	3.54	4.64
Rancocas Creek Greenway Trail	Pennsylvania Ave. to Pennington Park	In Progress	5.25	0.34
Kinkora Trail	Old York Road to Village of Columbus	Pipeline	4.58	2.63
Rancocas Creek Greenway Trail	Long Bridge Park to Route 206	Pipeline	7.52	4.62

Total Miles: 18.29

# Camden County

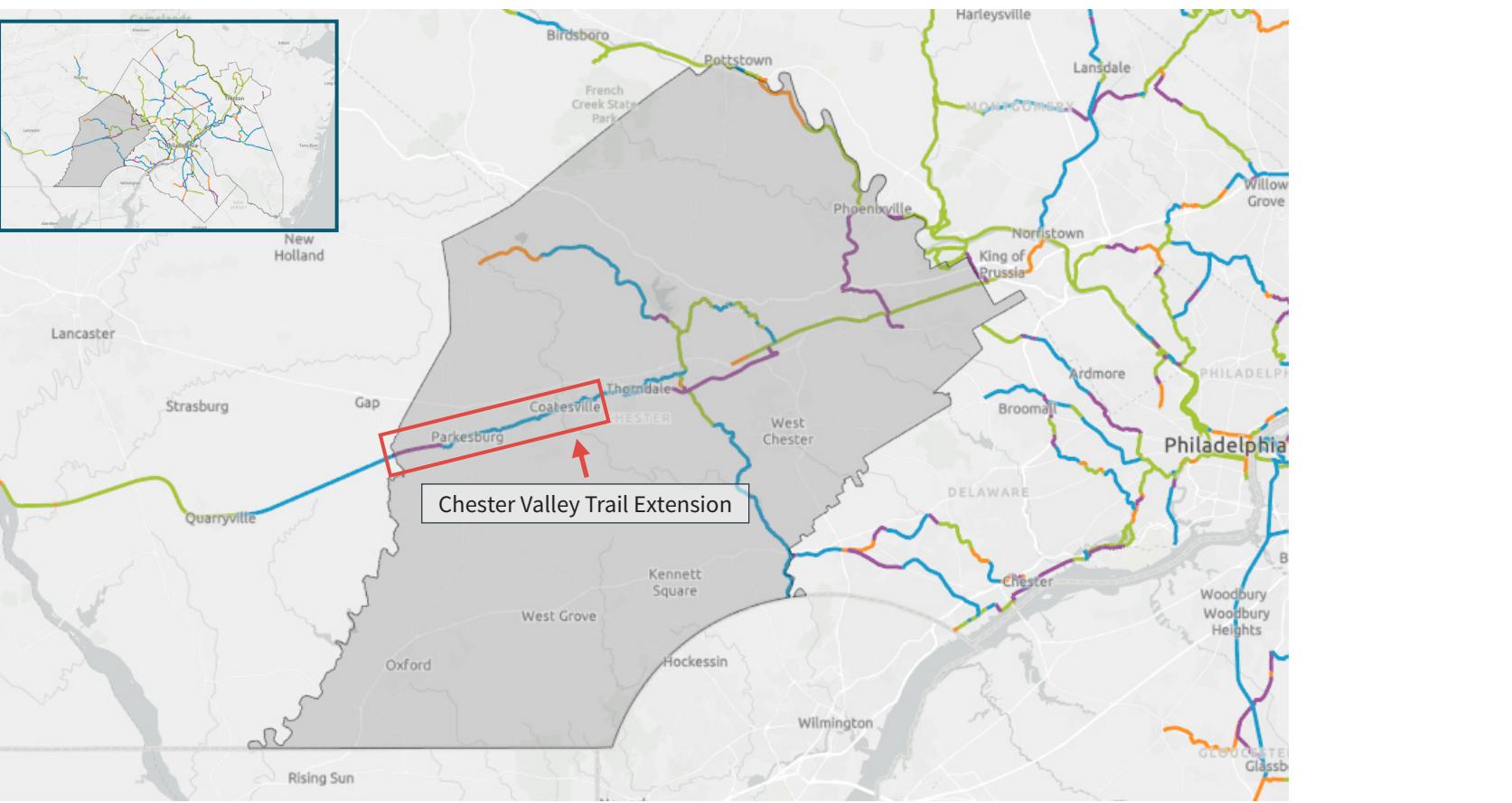


The following table sorts the 23 trail segments that are the “in progress” or “pipeline” categories by county. The table provides the trail segment’s name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trails highlighted in green are the priority trails and are identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Camden County Link	Merchant Street to Station Ave.	In Progress	4.72	1.08
Camden County Link	Cross Keys Road to New Brooklyn County Park	In Progress	5.86	5.10
Camden County Link	Sommerdale Road to Wakonda Road	In Progress	5.92	0.45
Camden County Link	Pub Connector	In Progress	12.00	0.10
Camden Greenways	Riverbirch Trail	In Progress	9.00	0.05
Delaware River Heritage Trail	Cramer Hill Park Trail	In Progress	8.54	0.77
Gloucester - Mt. Ephraim Trail	Evesham Road to Oak Ave.	In Progress	8.52	1.53
Gloucester - Mt. Ephraim Trail	Clements Bridge Road to Brown Ave.	In Progress	N/A	1.84
Merchantville Trail	Cove Road to Bethel Ave.	In Progress	9.28	0.25
Merchantville Trail	N. 36th Street to Euclid Ave.	In Progress	11.90	0.57
Merchantville Trail	Stockton Park Trail	In Progress	10.50	0.35
Camden County Link	Browning Ave. to Champion Ave.	Pipeline	7.04	0.79
Camden County Link	Champion Ave. to Oakland Ave.	Pipeline	6.53	1.16
Camden County Link	Station Ave. to Clements Bridge Road	Pipeline	5.56	0.71
Camden County Link	New Brooklyn Park Parking Lot to Cedar Brook Road	Pipeline	3.77	1.51
Camden County Link	Cooper River Trail South to Collings Ave.	Pipeline	6.67	0.87
Camden County Link	Lower Great Egg Harbor Greenway	Pipeline	1.74	7.70
Camden County Link	Gibbsboro Road to Berlin - Cross Keys Road	Pipeline	7.96	2.02
Cooper River Trail - South	Baird Boulevard	Pipeline	12.00	0.24
Cooper River Trail - South	Route 130 Crossing	Pipeline	12.00	0.18
Delaware River Heritage Trail	Baldwin's Run Trail	Pipeline	8.22	0.53
Delaware River Heritage Trail	24th Street to Baldwin's Run Trail	Pipeline	8.24	0.89
Merchantville Trail	Bethel Ave. to Union Ave.	Pipeline	8.74	0.36

Total Miles: 29.05

# Chester County



Circuit Progress	
—	Existing
—	In Progress
—	Pipeline
—	Planned

The priority trail segment in the county is the Chester Valley Trail Extension. This segment's trail status is "pipeline," meaning that the trail's sponsor or other organizations are actively working to move these trails forward by conducting studies, acquiring right-of-way, engaging local communities, and laying the groundwork to obtain funding for future design and construction.

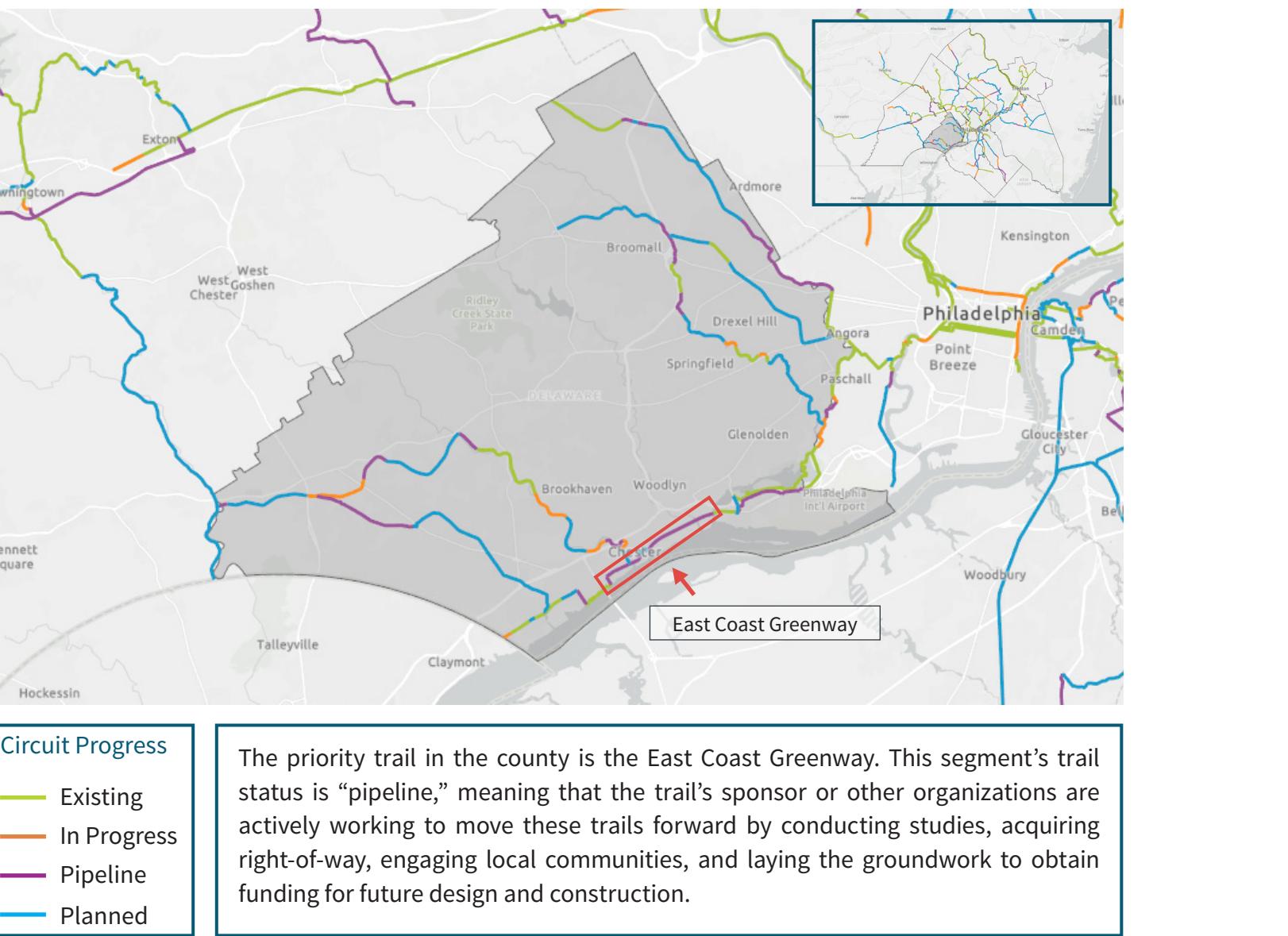
The following table sorts the 10 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Brandywine Creek Trail	Robbins Road to Johnsontown Park	In Progress	7.47	0.59
Chester Valley Trail	Chester Valley Trail - 4a	In Progress	6.34	1.04
Schuylkill River Trail	Parkerford Road to Route 422	In Progress	5.71	4.11
Brandywine Creek Trail	P&T Trail to Robbins Road	Pipeline	5.83	0.30
Chester Valley Trail	CVT Extension to Downingtown - P&T Line	Pipeline	9.86	6.68
Devault-Warner-Paoli	Paoli to Chester Valley Trail	Pipeline	8.92	1.35
Devault-Warner-Paoli	Chester Valley Trail to Devault Line	Pipeline	6.07	3.24
Devault-Warner-Paoli	Warner Spur to Schuylkill River Trail	Pipeline	6.72	5.60
Struble Trail	Chestnut Tree Road to Honey Brook	Pipeline	2.88	3.85
Struble Trail	Dorlan's Mill Road to Reeds Road	Pipeline	3.29	1.23

Total Miles: 27.99



# Delaware County

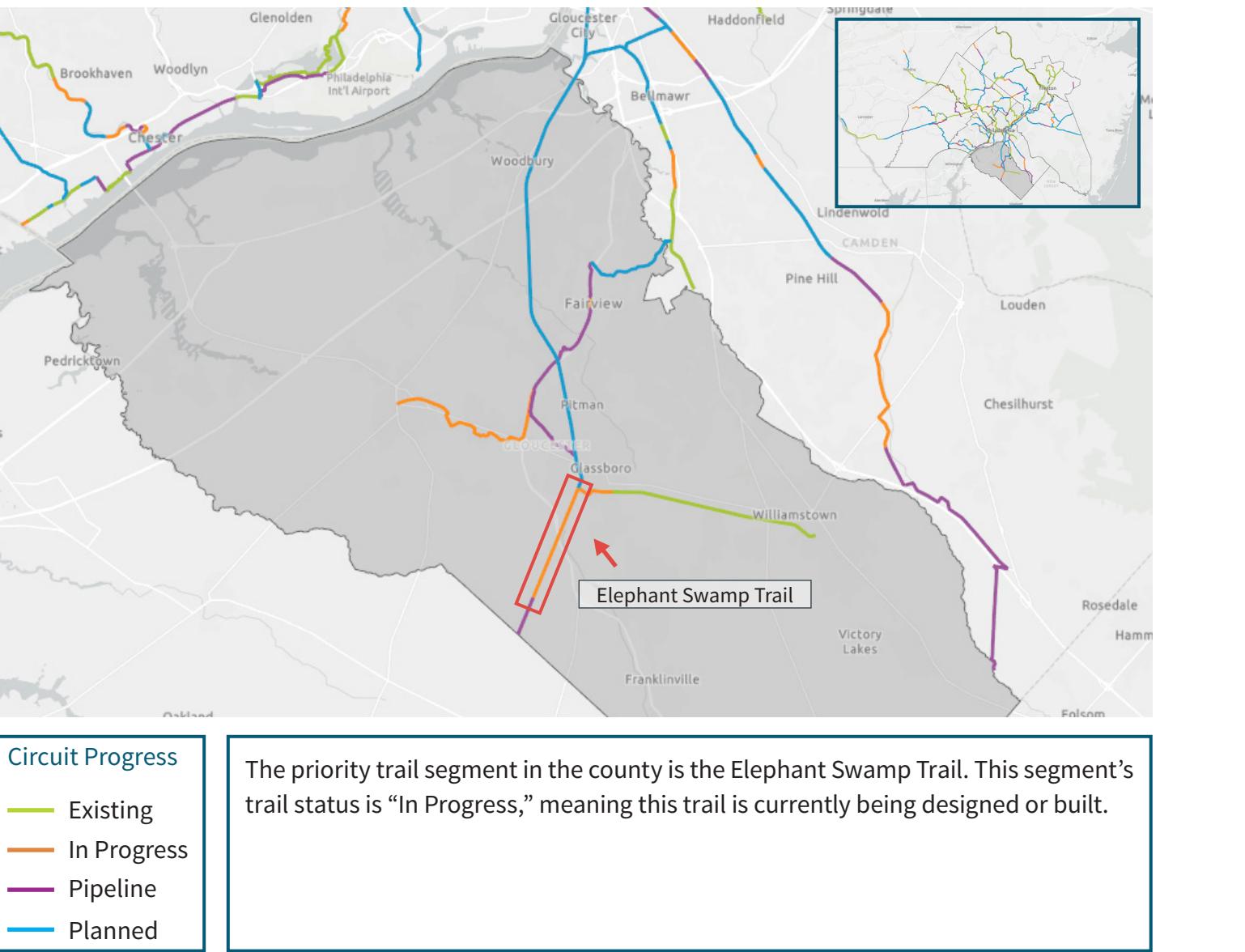


The following table sorts the 24 trail segments that are the “in progress” or “pipeline” categories by county. The table provides the trail segment’s name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trails highlighted in green are the priority trails and are identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Chester Creek Trail	Kerlin Street to Incinerator Road	In Progress	8.66	0.72
Chester Creek Trail	Bridgewater Road to Creek Road	In Progress	7.09	1.31
Darby Creek Trail	Baltimore Ave. to Kent Park	In Progress	10.16	0.31
Darby Creek Trail	Swedish Cabin to Rosemont	In Progress	10.45	0.30
East Coast Greenway	Marcus Hook Bike Lanes	In Progress	4.67	0.26
East Coast Greenway	Chester City Highland Ave. - 4th Street to Waterfront	In Progress	7.43	0.53
Octoraro Trail	Concord Road to Route 202	In Progress	7.25	2.58
Chester Creek Trail	Lenni Road to Wawa Station	Pipeline	4.48	0.72
Chester Creek Trail	9th Street to Kerlin Street	Pipeline	8.79	0.55
Darby Creek Trail	Pilgrim Park to Merry Place	Pipeline	5.95	0.79
Darby Creek Trail	West Chester Pike Underpass to Haverford Reserve	Pipeline	4.76	1.85
Darby Creek Trail	West Chester Pike Underpass	Pipeline	5.96	0.47
East Coast Greenway	Chester Branch Rail Trail - Morton Ave. to Darby Creek	Pipeline	9.50	2.34
East Coast Greenway	Chester City - 2nd Ave - Norris Street to Crosby Street	Pipeline	7.75	1.27
East Coast Greenway	Chester City - Norris Street - Waterfront to 2nd Ave.	Pipeline	8.31	0.29
East Coast Greenway	I-95 Wormhole	Pipeline	9.09	0.24
East Coast Greenway	Airport Business Park to Jansen Ave.	Pipeline	2.65	1.05
East Coast Greenway	JHNWR to Airport Business Park	Pipeline	2.89	0.57
Forge to Refuge	Jansen Ave. to Manor Park	Pipeline	4.93	0.72
Forge to Refuge	City Line Ave. to Eagle/Wynnewood Road	Pipeline	4.52	1.82
Forge to Refuge	Spring Mill Road to Radnor Trail	Pipeline	5.04	0.82
Garnet Valley Greenway	Clayton Park to Route 202	Pipeline	7.91	3.20
Octoraro Trail	Polecat Road to Concord Road	Pipeline	1.05	0.97
Octoraro Trail	High Trail and Bridge	Pipeline	3.62	0.24

Total Miles: **23.92**

# Gloucester County

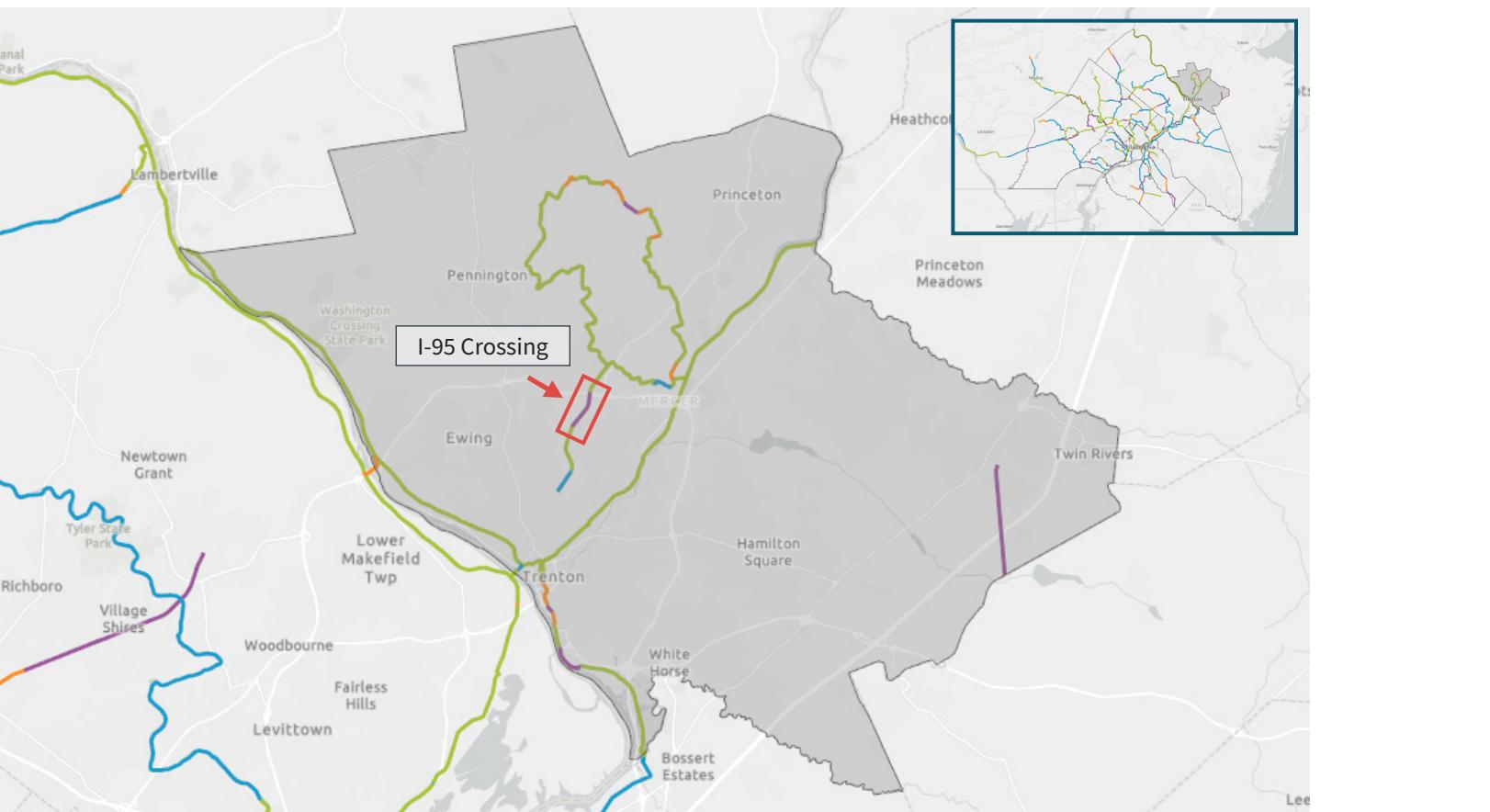


The following table sorts the 7 trail segments that are the “in progress” or “pipeline” categories by county. The table provides the trail segment’s name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Glassboro - Elk Trail	Sewell St To Elephant Swamp Trail	In Progress	4.80	3.50
Harrison - Mullica Hill Trail	Mullica Hill Trail to Chestnut Branch	In Progress	2.93	5.94
Monroe Township Bike Path	Bridgeton Secondary to Delsea Drive	In Progress	7.20	1.13
Glassboro - Elk Trail	Elephant Swamp Trail	Pipeline	0.56	1.18
Dinosaur Trail	Chester Branch Creek to Rowan University	Pipeline	5.96	2.65
Dinosaur Trail	Gloucester Light Rail to Chester Branch Creek	Pipeline	1.16	1.14
Dinosaur Trail	Delsea Drive to Gloucester Light Rail	Pipeline	4.87	3.53

Total Miles: 19.07

# Mercer County



- Circuit Progress**
- Existing
  - In Progress
  - Pipeline
  - Planned

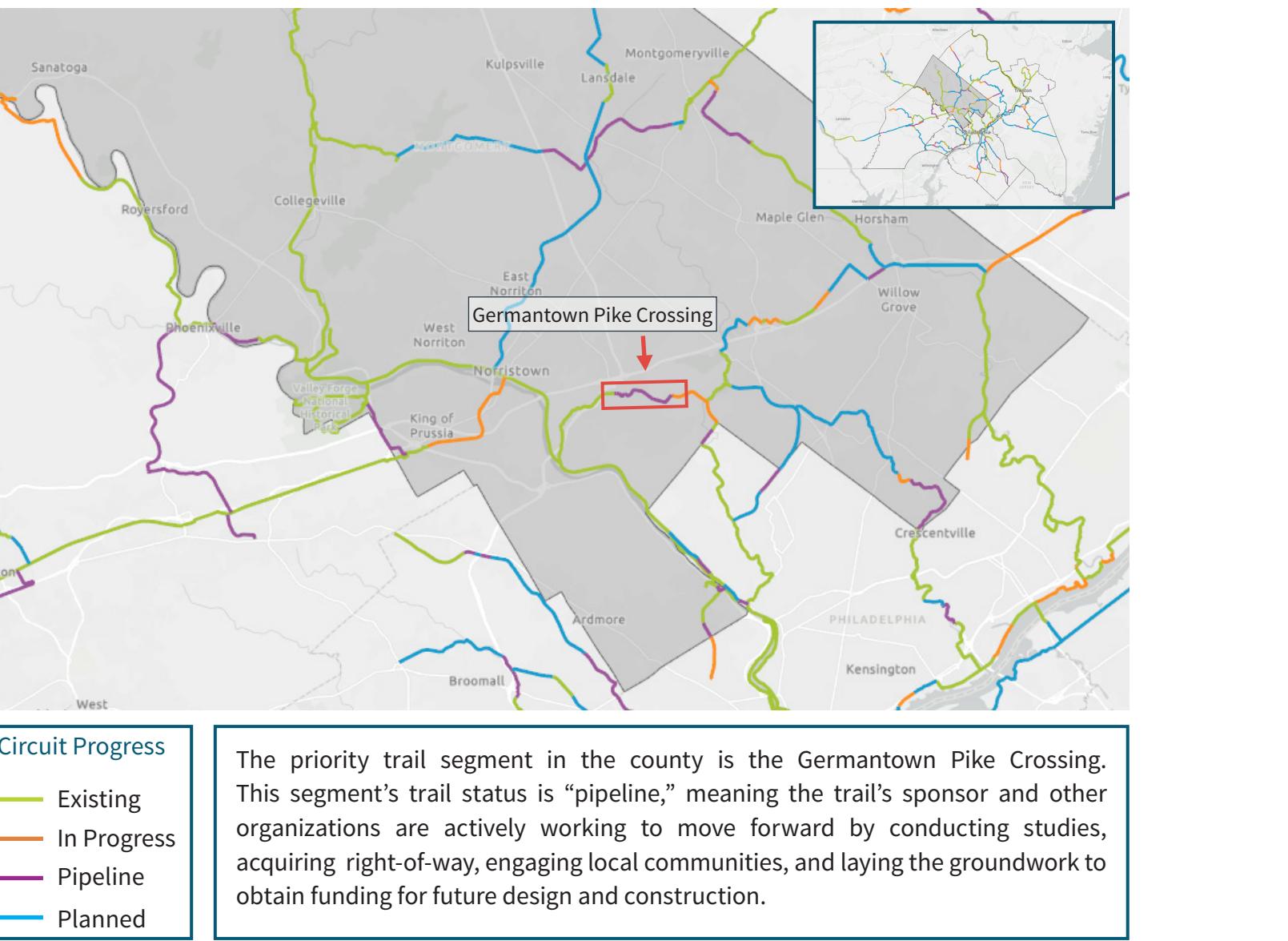
The priority trail segment in the county is the I-95 Crossing. This segment's trail status is "pipeline," meaning the trail's sponsor or other organizations are actively working to move these trails forward by conducting studies, acquiring right-of-way, engaging local communities, and laying the groundwork to obtain funding for future design and construction.

The following table sorts the 12 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
DRHT	D&R Canal South to Wellness Loop	In Progress	9.82	1.38
DRHT	D&R Canal Connector - Lalor St. Park to Cass St	In Progress	10.50	0.37
LHT	Carter to Cleveland Road	In Progress	2.55	0.93
LHT	Moores Mill - Mt. Rose Rd to Bailey Court	In Progress	4.27	0.40
LHT	Dyson Tract	In Progress	8.57	0.46
LHT	Pretty Brook Rd	In Progress	6.60	0.34
Scudder Falls Bridge Trail	Scudder Falls Bridge - Mercer County	In Progress	8.87	0.37
DRHT	Cass St to Union St	Pipeline	9.00	0.24
Johnson Trolley Line	Eggert Crossing Road to I-295	Pipeline	7.74	0.98
Johnson Trolley Line	I-95 Crossing	Pipeline	7.89	0.06
LHT	Cleveland Rd	Pipeline	4.97	0.47
Union Transportation Trail	Old York Rd to Mercer St (Route 33)	Pipeline	8.00	3.12
<b>Total Miles:</b> 9.12				



# Montgomery County

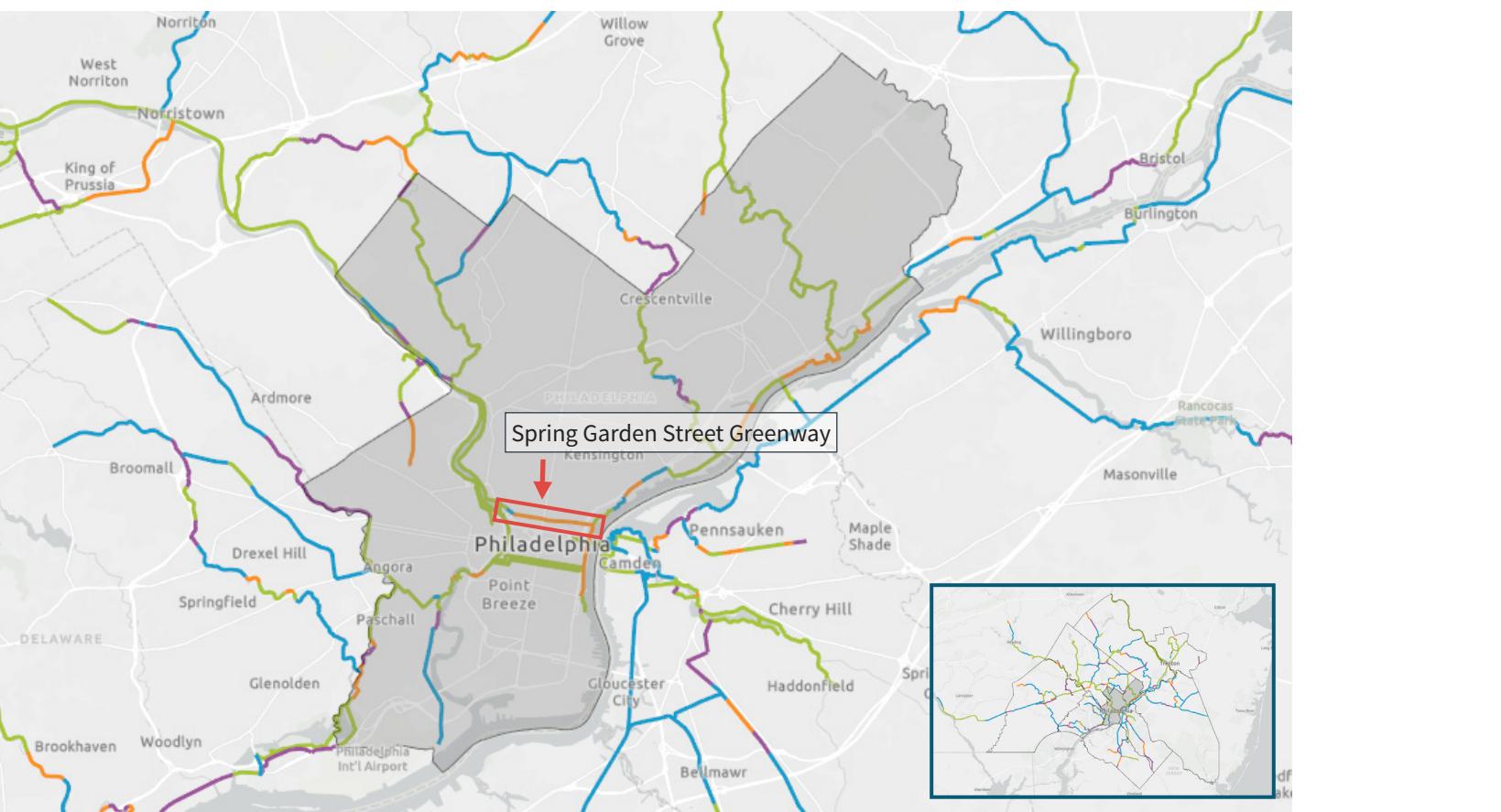


The following table sorts the 23 trail segments that are the “in progress” or “pipeline” categories by county. The table provides the trail segment’s name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in the red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Chester Valley Trail	CVT Extension East - Phase II	In Progress	11.00	3.75
Cross County Trail	Joshua Road to Wissahickon Trail	In Progress	2.74	1.13
Cross County Trail	Pennsylvania Ave. to PA 309	In Progress	4.46	0.45
Cross County Trail	PA 309 Overpass to Life Time/TruMark Entrance	In Progress	6.69	0.20
Cross County Trail	Susquehanna Road to Bantry Drive	In Progress	6.00	0.87
Liberty Bell Trail	Stony Creek Park to Andale Section	In Progress	6.98	0.37
Parkside/Cynwyd Trail	City Line Ave. to Montgomery Ave.	In Progress	8.32	0.47
Pennypack Trail	Byberry Road to County Line Road	In Progress	8.30	0.83
Power Line Trail	Horsham Road to Montgomery Twp Gazebo Park	In Progress	4.93	0.13
Power Line Trail	Montgomery Twp Gazebo Park to 202 Parkway Trail	In Progress	6.80	0.28
Schuylkill River Trail	Route 422 to Industrial Highway	In Progress	8.04	0.70
Schuylkill River Trail	Stenton Ave. Sidepath	In Progress	6.53	0.81
Tookany Creek Trail	New 2nd Street to Mill Road	In Progress	6.08	0.55
Cross County Trail	Germantown Pike Crossing to Joshua Road	Pipeline	2.69	2.10
Cross County Trail	Powerline Trail to Byberry Road	Pipeline	N/A	3.17
Cynwyd Spur Trail	Cynwyd Spur	Pipeline	10.08	0.38
Gulf Road Connector	Chester Valley Trail to Valley Forge Loop Trail	Pipeline	8.93	2.18
Liberty Bell Trail	Hatfield Section - Vine Street to Lincoln Ave.	Pipeline	6.98	0.43
Power Line Trail	Biwood Road to Horsham Road	Pipeline	4.20	2.54
Schuylkill River Trail	Northwestern Ave.	Pipeline	6.27	0.55
Tookany Creek Trail	Cheltenham Ave. to Ashbourne Ave.	Pipeline	9.59	1.30
Tookany Creek Trail	Ashbourne Road to Jenkintown Road	Pipeline	5.04	0.77
Tookany Creek Trail	Jenkintown Road to New 2nd Street	Pipeline	4.61	0.66

Total Miles: **24.62**

# Philadelphia County



Circuit Progress
Existing
In Progress
Pipeline
Planned

The priority trail segment in the county is the Spring Garden Street Greenway. This segment's trail status is "In Progress" meaning this trail is currently being designed or built.

The following table sorts the 22 trail segments that are the "in progress" or "pipeline" categories by county. The table provides the trail segment's name, the trail corridor that it is part of, its mileage and its Community Impact Score. The Community Impact Score evaluates the impact these trails will have on residents based on equity, length, population, community need and connectivity potential. The combined results led to scores ranging from 0 to 11.9. The trail highlighted in green is the priority trail and is identified on the map in red.

Trail	Segment Description	Status	Community Impact Score	Miles
Delaware River Trail	Spring Garden Street to Washington Ave.	In Progress	7.05	1.9
ECG - Allegheny to Art Museum	Spring Garden Street Greenway	In Progress	8.40	2.12
ECG - Allegheny to Art Museum	Richmond Street Bike Lanes - Lehigh to Susquehanna	In Progress	4.80	0.71
ECG - Cobbs Creek	Cobbs Creek Connector - Segment D	In Progress	9.74	0.32
ECG - Cobbs Creek	Cobbs Creek Connector - Segment C	In Progress	7.93	0.81
ECG - Cobbs Creek	Cobbs Creek Connector - Segment B, Phase 1	In Progress	10.10	0.24
ECG - Riverfront North	K&T Trail Phase 2	In Progress	9.48	0.74
ECG - Riverfront North	Tacony - Holmesburg Gap	In Progress	9.01	1.49
ECG - Riverfront North	Baxter Trail - Police Firing Range	In Progress	10.32	0.63
Fox Chase - Lorimer Trail	Rhawn Street to Shady Lane	In Progress	8.07	0.62
Parkside - Cynwyd Trail	Parkside & 53rd to City Line Ave.	In Progress	8.10	1.29
Pennypack Trail	State & Rhawn Crossing	In Progress	11.33	0.07
Tidal Schuylkill River Trail	Schuylkill Banks - Grays Ferry Swing Bridge	In Progress	12.00	0.10
Tidal Schuylkill River Trail	Schuylkill Banks - Christian to Crescent	In Progress	12.00	0.42
Cresheim Trail	Forbidden Drive to Stenton Ave.	Pipeline	5.60	2.20
ECG - Cobbs Creek	Cobbs Creek Connector - Segment B, Phase 2	Pipeline	8.28	0.68
ECG - Riverfront North	North Delaware Ave. Extension - Phase II	Pipeline	10.20	1.14
Forge to Refuge Trail	Market Street to City Line Ave.	Pipeline	9.50	2.17
Frankford Creek Trail	Torresdale Ave. to I Street	Pipeline	9.86	1.68
Ivy Ridge Trail	Manayunk Bridge to Ivy Ridge Station	Pipeline	5.53	0.57
Schuylkill River Trail	Wissahickon Gateway	Pipeline	7.08	0.31
Tidal Schuylkill River Trail	Schuylkill Banks - 61st Street to 56th Street	Pipeline	10.32	0.51
Total Miles: 20.72				

## V. Policy Recommendations

While there are a sufficient number of trail segments that can potentially meet the goal of 500 miles by 2025, the current pace of miles of Circuit trails being added is unlikely to enable the region to meet that goal. Between 2015 and 2020, 53 miles of new trails were added regionally, which comes to an average of 10.6 miles a year. The Circuit Trails Coalition wants to do what it can to enable this pace to increase.

To successfully develop 500 miles by 2025, the Circuit Trails Coalition believes a number of obstacles need to be overcome that are slowing down or preventing Circuit Trails “in the pipeline” from advancing. As a bi-state entity that shares knowledge and information frequently, the Circuit Trails Coalition has learned an enormous amount about how the two states and nine counties work to develop trails and have observations to share that we think can advance progress in Circuit Trail development.

We offer these policy recommendations tailored to the various entities that impact the Circuit Trails: the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), key state agencies, counties and the Circuit Trails Coalition advocacy and friends groups as well. We think these recommendations will help eliminate identified obstacles and help counties and municipalities complete the construction of more miles of Circuit Trails.

### Recommendations for DVRPC

#### 1. Create a ROW acquisition team.

Many Circuit Trails projects languish for years in the “pipeline” status post-feasibility analysis pending right-of-way (ROW) acquisition. Without ROW, many projects will not be funded for design or construction, and if they are, they cannot be built until ROW is fully secured. As a result, projects often become “stalled” due to the time-consuming, difficult, and often complex process of acquiring right-of-way. The challenges of ROW acquisition are manyfold, and some steps require technical expertise and/or professional legal assistance that aren’t always readily available to trail sponsors.

The Circuit Trails Coalition recommends that DVRPC retain a **multi-skilled “right of way” acquisition team** to do the heavy-lifting for trail development projects deemed to be a priority. Such transactions become “easier” given experience, and most municipalities have limited ROW experience even through the services of contracted municipal solicitors. This is not to mention that these services are expensive, the process is time-consuming, and these significant costs are difficult to fund through existing grant sources.

Ideally, DVRPC’s ROW acquisition team would consist of experienced professionals familiar with trail access easements and shared-use agreements, as well as fee simple acquisitions. Experience with eminent domain procedures is crucial. Additionally, the team should be familiar with and comfortable engaging and negotiating with railroads and utilities. A distinct advantage of a regional ROW acquisition team would be to bring a regional focus and perhaps a higher level of persistence than most municipalities can maintain to negotiations with railroads (CSX, Norfolk Southern, Conrail, SEPTA) and utilities (PECO, natural gas, wastewater). Typically, these negotiations suffer from a “David vs. Goliath” paradigm that doesn’t adequately reflect the significant regional benefits of trail development in the context of a localized ROW negotiation.

#### **The creation of a DVRPC ROW acquisition team would provide the following benefits to trails sponsors:**

1. Quick, easy, and low- or no-cost access to specialized ROW transactional skills.
2. Access to ROW transaction skills that do not require a time-consuming or difficult procurement process.
3. The ability to maintain a sustained focus on ROW challenges without getting side-tracked by competing municipal priorities.
4. A repository of ROW acquisition skills that benefit from repetition and experience.
5. The ability to contextualize Circuit trails as a regional BENEFIT and not just a local cost when negotiating with regional entities such as railroads and utilities.

Implementation of a ROW acquisition team will enable trail projects to move expeditiously past feasibility into engineering, design and construction, which is where local governments and NGOs want to be focusing their efforts.

#### 2. Support creation of multi-municipal authorities to accelerate trail development.

The Circuit Trails intentionally connect communities, workplaces, and destinations of regional significance. Often, these trails require multi-municipal corridors and coordination. Fortunately, within the Circuit Trails regional footprint, several counties have been pro-active developers and managers. However, due to limited resources and competing priorities, not all Circuit Trails have this opportunity.

In Pennsylvania, a proven tool for trail corridor ownership and management is the multi-municipal authority enabled under Pennsylvania’s Municipal Authority’s Act (PA Statutes Title 53, Chapter 56). Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority is one example. Authorities are granted powers akin to those of municipalities that can be exercised across the boundaries of member municipalities and are often used for the construction and operations of infrastructure such as wastewater treatment plants in order to achieve the efficiencies

and cost-savings of collectivization. Parkways, parks, and recreation grounds are also considered authorized purposes under this statute. Some Circuit Trails languish, in spite of real and obvious opportunity, due to the lack of an entity prepared to develop, own and operate the trail upon completion. The Circuit Trails Coalition believes that DVRPC should help facilitate the **establishment of Trail Authorities in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey when asked by local municipalities** in order to unlock the economic and community value these trails will bring

**The establishment of multi-municipal Trail Authorities facilitated by DVRPC would address these challenges to Circuit Trails completion:**

1. How to obtain and hold a trail ROW during the planning and development phase
2. How to cost-effectively operate and maintain a trail that crosses numerous jurisdictions
3. How to reduce the significant costs to establish a trail authority by providing technical assistance and cost reimbursement

Because Authority establishment is not inexpensive and requires specialized financial and legal experience, we recommend that DVRPC reimburse upfront costs to municipal and NGO actors willing to take the lead in establishing one. DVRPC could provide technical assistance to facilitate the upfront consideration of the benefits and costs of Trail Authorities by supporting creating business plans that calculate costs and potential revenues, as well formulas for the distribution of costs and revenues amongst participating municipalities.

**3. Enhance dedicated capacity for trail planning and development.**

One of the most frequently cited reasons that some counties and municipalities give for not being able to advance more trail miles is that they do have enough staff capacity or knowledge to easily procure trail planning, design and construction services. The hardest and most resource intensive phase of trail development is often designing and engineering the trail and carrying it through permit review and approval process. **Enhancing current capacity at DVRPC or developing a process whereby DVRPC procures consultant services on behalf of municipalities or counties** could be a game changer for some trail corridors.

**Recommendations for Counties**

**4. Adopt best practices to advance Circuit Trails.**

Some of the region's counties have robust planning and development departments that allow them to take advantage of grant opportunities to fund and build out Circuit Trails. As a rule of thumb, it is these counties that have the most miles of Circuit Trails built and have been most successful at winning state and federal grants.

**The counties that have been more successful at developing Circuit Trails share some or all of these attributes:**

1. Full time employees who manage trail planning and development projects
2. Parks Departments that are responsible for trail maintenance
3. Leadership on significant corridors
4. Townships are not primarily responsible for heavy trail maintenance or security
5. County trail plans that have been created and adopted officially within the last 10 years

Camden and Burlington counties each have full time employees who work on trail development, among other responsibilities. Chester County Planning Commission has a full time trail planner and the Chester County Department of Facilities has a capital projects manager who focuses a good portion of their efforts on trails. Chester County's Department of Parks also oversees maintenance of the three main county trails. The Montgomery County Planning Commission also has a full time trail planner, while the Parks, Trails and Historic Sites Department is responsible for maintenance of the Schuylkill, Perkiomen and Pennypack Trails. Philadelphia has a full time trail planner in its Office of Transportation, Infrastructure & Sustainability and the Parks & Recreation Department maintains many of its Circuit Trails, supplemented by friends groups and community development corporations. Philadelphia has three community development corporations that take the lead on development of its two major trails, the Schuylkill River and Delaware River Trails. Lastly, Philadelphia has a Trails Master Plan (2013) that was updated in 2017 and 2018. **The Circuit Trails Coalition encourages all counties to learn from one another to improve their capacities to advance trail development, including through adoption of these best practices.**

## Recommendations for PennDOT

### 5. Enhance coordination of Circuit trail projects with state road projects with a full time District-Level Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinator.

PennDOT Connects is the Commonwealth's process for institutionalizing better coordination between Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) District offices and local governments and plans before the scoping and delivery of capital projects<sup>3</sup>. District offices work with Regional Planning Organizations and Metropolitan Planning Organizations and municipalities to discuss what kinds of bicycle and pedestrian improvements (along with other issues such as transit access, stormwater management, utility issues, etc.) should be incorporated into or accommodated by capital projects.

The PennDOT Connects process is being implemented between District 6 and DVRPC and consequently opportunities to advance Circuit Trail projects are identified when they intersect with capital projects. As of December 2019, PennDOT hired two full time Bicycle-Pedestrian Coordinators for District 6 to assist traffic engineers with the planning and implementation of trails.

## Recommendations for NJDOT

Since 2015, New Jersey has built approximately 20 miles of trail within the Circuit Trails network; in order to meet 500 miles by 2025, it needs to build 50 more miles. This has prompted the Circuit Coalition to examine Pennsylvania's practices and policies that have led to advancing the trail network. The following recommendations are focused on ways that New Jersey can increase mileage in the coming years based on that examination.

### 6. Create new positions to accelerate New Jersey trail projects.

To accelerate trail development in the New Jersey counties, we recommend that the New Jersey Department of Transportation (**NJDOT**) **create a comparable position at DVRPC as the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)'s Project Implementation Manager**. The role of this position is to guide trail applicants through the PennDOT review process, ensuring that trail projects meet relevant design standards. We recommend that NJDOT hire a "Project Liaison" to assist trail sponsors with trail project implementation at each of New Jersey's MPOs (DVRPC, North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA), South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO)). These project liaisons should also regularly communicate and coordinate efforts with the New Jersey Circuit Trails Council.

<sup>3</sup> PennDOT Connects Implementation Report – 2017 Highlights

## Recommendations for NJDOT (con't.)

### 7. Incorporate trail projects into the Complete Streets checklist and better coordinate trail development with the highway planning process.

The NJDOT recently released its newest Complete and Green Streets Model Policy. This policy ensures that streets are designed for all types of mobility, not just vehicular traffic. The success of a street designed in accordance with the new Complete & Green Streets policy will be one that accommodates people walking to transit, people riding bicycles or scooters, and people driving. **NJDOT can encourage the development of trails by adding their development to the Complete & Green Streets checklist and calling them out as recommended facilities.**

"Opportunities to accelerate multi-use trail development that would advance active transportation" could be added to the model Complete Street Checklist (such as the one listed on p.19 of the new guidance) in order to ensure that any state road improvements are coordinated with opportunities to advance local trails during the capital project planning process. In cases where there are particularly dangerous corridors along highway stretches, **NJDOT should consider the opportunity for off-road trails to facilitate safe bicycle and pedestrian travel along the corridor.**

### 8. Use existing federal funding sources for design of trails and increase the maximum size of TASA construction awards.

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Program funding in New Jersey is often restricted to construction. While design is an option on the TASA application, it is only awarded in combination with construction. In addition, local public agencies are strongly discouraged from applying for design funding through TASA because the design process can add many years onto projects. Because of this, what often happens is that projects must seek funding for design from other sources, delaying or even stopping the process of developing a trail. NJDOT should loosen the restrictions on the use of TASA funding in order to fund the design stages of trail development independently of construction in order to allow more projects to move forward.

NJDOT should also increase the maximum amount of TASA awards to create more trails that can be used for transportation. Trails can cost as much as \$1 million per mile, and the maximum TASA grant amount is currently set at \$1 million. Out of the 68 miles of Circuit trails in New Jersey that are "in progress" and "in pipeline," 34 miles are ready for design and/or construction. The demand for TASA funding greatly outstrips what is available on a per project basis.

Trails should also be considered in this year's update of the Highway Safety Improvement Plan (HSIP). Specifically, trail crossings should be prioritized and Highway Safety Improvement Program funding should be used to address these sorts of issues. This would greatly help with trails that already exist, but have little or no indication of a crossing when they intersect with roadways.

## Recommendations for NJDEP

### 9. Enhance staffing and capacity for NJDEP's Recreational Trails Program.

NJDEP's Recreational Trails Program has one full-time staff member responsible for all of the grants awarded through the State's Recreational Trails Program. **The Recreational Trails Program needs more staff in order to proactively promote, plan and manage trail development projects within the state** while serving as an advocate for trails among other departments and groups, such as NJDOT, the various MPOs, and the New Jersey Trails Council. Establishing an expanded trails program within NJDEP (or other appropriate department) would ensure that there is coordination and capacity within state government to push for the construction of an interconnected statewide trail network incorporating the Circuit Trails and other regional networks in North and South Jersey.

### 10. Create a larger “Trail Planning, Design and Construction Fund” for NJ Circuit Trail Projects.

In addition to addressing the staffing problem, **funding through the Recreational Trails Program should be increased overall and the maximum size of individual awards should be increased and restrictions eased** so that the funds can be used to not only plan and study trails, but also design, construct, and maintain them. In 2015, approximately \$1 million was available statewide for trail projects, and the maximum grant award was \$24,000<sup>4</sup>. Clearly, such small individual awards are only adequate to fund modest plans and studies, not the much larger amounts needed for trail design and construction activities.

An expanded grant program could be modeled off of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR's) Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) which is meant to improve Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation assets by giving grants for a variety of projects, including significant dollars for trail development (approximately \$8 million statewide per year). This program is made up of a variety of funding sources such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Keystone Fund, Recreational Trails Funds, Heritage Areas Funding, etc. New Jersey should create a similar fund to promote trail planning, design, construction, and maintenance by bringing together funds from programs such as the Preservation Act, Green Acres, Blue Acres, Recreational Trails, Highway Safety Funding, and others. Not only that, NJDEP should also create easy to use checklists for filling out applications and provide pre-application assistance to municipalities and counties looking to utilize such funds.

## Recommendations for the Circuit Trails Coalition

### 11. Convene stakeholder working groups or task forces around specific trail segments.

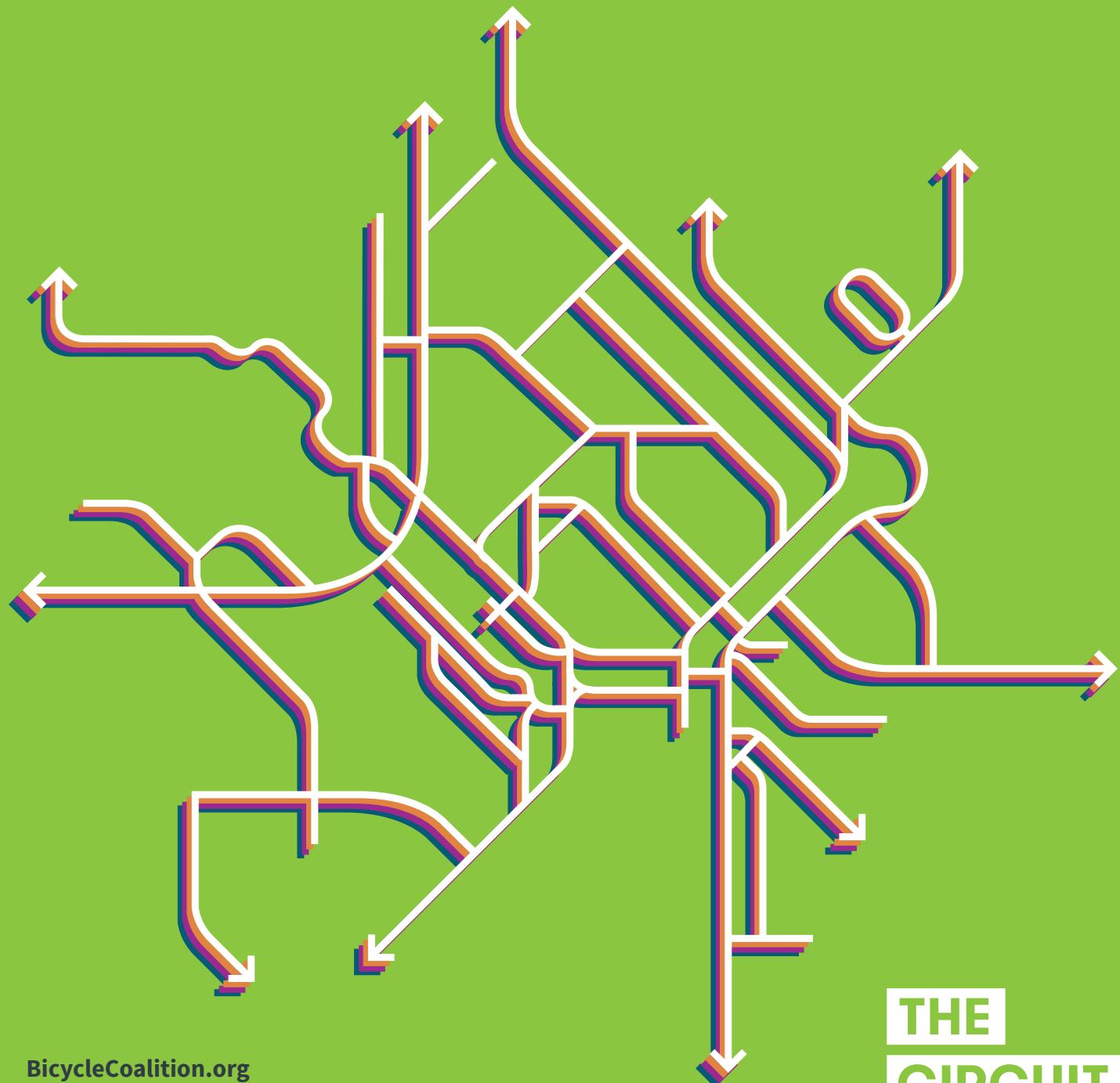
The advocacy and friends groups that are members of the Circuit Trails Coalition should collaborate with trail sponsors to **convene stakeholder working groups or task forces around specific trail segments, especially segments that are in the Pipeline category**. Currently, there is a Forge to Refuge Task Force dedicated to advocating for that trail. Recently, Pennsylvania Environmental Council has been working with Franconia, Hatfield, Lansdale, North Wales, Perkasie, Richland, Quakertown and Upper Gwynedd townships to further develop the Liberty Bell Trail. The Bicycle Coalition is working with Philadelphia's Office of Transportation, Infrastructure & Sustainability, the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership, and the Frankford Community Development Corporation to start community engagement around closing a gap in the Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Trail. Enhanced collaboration and coordination to help support trail projects in the pipeline category is greatly needed.

### 12. Prioritize particular trails and identify critical gaps.

Obviously, it isn't easy to prioritize or rank 129 segments, or advance all of them simultaneously. But, the Circuit Trails Coalition does believe that would be useful to **identify those trails that would greatly increase regional connectivity and expose more of the region's population to riverways, natural resources, and the outdoors through Circuit Trails**. The Circuit Trails Coalition thinks there is merit to highlighting some critical trail gaps to document progress toward enhancing the use of Circuit Trails for recreation and transportation. The criteria that we believe are important to focus on include:

1. Likely to be achievable by 2025
2. Add significant connectivity - making the most of the miles
3. Relatively short distances that would increase usage exponentially
4. Be on the “in-progress” or “pipeline” list

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/trails/pdf/rtp\\_faq\\_3-2016.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/trails/pdf/rtp_faq_3-2016.pdf)



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