

# THE CIRCUIT TRAILS

## **The Circuit Trails Coalition – Basic Governance Framework**

### **History of the Circuit Trails Coalition**

The Circuit Coalition (renamed the Circuit Trails Coalition in 2016) was created in 2012 to coordinate and advocate for the completion of the Circuit (renamed the Circuit Trails in 2016), Greater Philadelphia's Regional Trail Network in nine counties, including five in Pennsylvania (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia) and four in New Jersey (Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer). The original governance document was created in September 2012, updated April 2014 and February 2017. Archived governance documents are available upon request.

The Coalition was created to follow up on successful collaborative efforts amongst multiple organizations, which working closely were able to secure a \$23 million USDOT TIGER grant in 2009 and create the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) Regional Trail Fund in late 2010. Because of the success of these efforts, a need for an ongoing collaboration was identified (instead of the previous haphazard or opportunistic collaborative efforts).

The Circuit Coalition partners worked together for over a year to coordinate the official creation of the Circuit, which was defined as 750 miles of multi-county, multi-state, connected trails; and of the Circuit Trails Coalition, which was composed of over 35 members in 2012.

Finally, a GIS mapping and cost estimating analysis were performed by the DVRPC to determine what the ultimate cost of completing the network would be - \$250 million over 20 years, or \$12.5 million per year.

The Circuit Coalition was officially created at a ceremony held at Schuylkill Banks in Philadelphia on May 31, 2012 – attended and supported by: Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter, DVRPC Executive Director Barry Seymour, DVRPC board members and county

representatives, supporters from the business and foundation communities, and every Circuit member organization.

### **Circuit Trails Coalition Structure**

The Circuit Coalition also saw the need for a more focused steering committee and governance structure. This revised document delineates the governance structure for the Circuit Trails Coalition, with subsections to describe the basic principles of governance for the Coalition.

### **Process to become a Member Organization:**

Organizations interested in joining the Circuit Trails Coalition should have some kind of connection with multi-use trails that accommodate all types of users in the nine counties of the Greater Philadelphia Region in PA and NJ. Organizations outside this area can still submit a request, but must demonstrate their connectivity and relevance to the 750+ miles of trails that have already been mapped.

The procedure for joining shall work as follows:

- 1) Organizations submit a written request to the Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee on official organization letterhead.
- 2) The Steering Committee will analyze it and take it to the overall members for consideration.
- 3) Upon analysis, the request might be approved or additional information requested from the applicant organization.

### **Benefits and Responsibilities of Member Organizations:**

Coalition membership will have multiple benefits for member organizations. A few of these benefits include:

- 1) Each Member Organization will have up to date access to the latest federal, state, and regional trail funding information, and will help direct funding campaigns.
- 2) Each Member Organization will receive one single vote to select the members of the Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee and on other votes brought to the membership by the Steering Committee
- 3) Each Member Organization will be able to make nominations to the Steering Committee.
- 4) Each Member Organization can submit content, events, etc. to be posted in the Circuit Trails blog and social media.
- 5) Each Member Organization will be able to assist the Steering Committee and state and regional governmental agencies in identifying trail development priorities.
- 6) As part of the Circuit Trails Coalition, each Member Organization will have unmatched access to the leaders in regional trail development, and to multiple other networking opportunities.
- 7) No annual membership renewal is necessary.

- 8) Finally, All Member Organization employees will be eligible to participate in Circuit Trails Coalition events and meetings – even those not formally open to the general public.

Each member organization will have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Exhibit and promote the Circuit Trails branding and the organization's participation in the Circuit Trails Coalition, including by posting the Circuit Trails logo and map on the organization's website, by writing articles and blog entries about the Circuit Trails, and by performing presentations about the Circuit Trails.
- 2) If the organization plans, designs, engineers, or builds segments of trails within the Circuit Trails, it shall include the Circuit Trails logo and a mention of the Circuit Trails in all project communications to the public and in signs at construction sites.
- 3) Cooperate with the Steering Committee in implementation of the Strategic Goals and Action Items that are selected by the Steering Committee each year.
- 4) Serve as a point person or member of one or more of the strategy subcommittees, depending on area of expertise and interest.

### **Removal of Organization from Membership**

A Member Organization shall remain in good standing with the Coalition unless an issue of concern is brought to the attention of the Steering Committee. Should an issue arise, the Member Organization shall receive the opportunity to present their point of view at a subsequent Steering Committee meeting; and receive guidance from the Steering Committee on how to correct the issue. If the issue persists, the Steering Committee can recommend exclusion of the organization from membership. The Member Organization will remain officially a member of the Coalition until, after a 30-day comment period, it is excluded by a majority vote of the membership.

### **Steering Committee of Coalition:**

The Steering Committee (SC) will be composed of 12-14 members, each with a single vote. The SC shall have a balance between different types of organizations, including:

- 1) At least 4 members from an organization based in PA or NJ
- 2) At least 3 members to represent trail-building and trail-management organizations

Furthermore, the SC members shall represent as best as possible a geographic balance of the many different components of the Circuit.

The Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Steering Committee shall be responsible for advancing the interests of the Circuit Trails Coalition; for convening a monthly meeting/conference call for the Steering Committee; for maintaining communications with the overall Circuit Trails Coalition membership; and for convening the full membership meeting on a regular basis.

**Process to become a member of the Steering Committee:**

The Circuit Trails Steering Committee members are elected from among the membership once a year, in the fall. Their terms start in January and last for two years. The election of the forthcoming Steering Committee is held by a nomination committee that is appointed by the Steering Committee in September of the preceding year.

At the day of the vote, each Coalition Member Organization shall have one single vote.

**Schedule of Meetings:**

*Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee Meetings:*

The Circuit Trails Coalition Steering Committee shall meet in person at least on a monthly basis. On occasion or in extraordinary times, the meeting may be scheduled as a conference call in lieu of meeting in person. The goal, however, is to have face-to-face meetings so that better coordination amongst member organization occurs.

*Circuit Trails Coalition Membership Meetings:*

The full membership of the Circuit Trails Coalition shall meet twice a year in May and November. These meetings provide an opportunity for networking and updating the general membership on important developments regarding the Circuit Trails.