



## **Neshaminy Greenway Trail – Dark Hollow Park – Frequently Asked Questions**

**Additional information about the trail can be found at:**

<https://trails-bucksgis.opendata.arcgis.com/pages/ngt2-dark-hollow>

### **Why were the Intent to Enter letters sent without direct/personal communication?**

We recognize that there should have been a personal communication with the neighbors impacted prior to the Intent to Enter letters were sent. Subsequently, we maintained open lines of communication with residents and maintained a project portal to provide access to applicable plans and project related documents as the project progressed.

### **The Intent to Enter letter references Eminent Domain. Does this mean you will be taking part of my property?**

No. The County will not be taking anyone's land as part of this project. The Pennsylvania Eminent Domain Code was referenced as being the authorizing legislation granting government agencies, as well as utilities, the right to enter your property for specific purposes.

### **Why is Bucks County interested in pursuing the development of trails?**

Bucks County is currently developing trails across various areas of the county based on feedback and input received during the development of the *Bucks County Open Space & Greenways Plan* (2011). During the development of that plan, residents were asked what types of recreational facilities were needed in the county. 64% of survey respondents indicated that dedicated bicycle lanes were needed in the county and 65% indicated that Trails were needed in the county. When asked what types of trails residents wanted, 56% cited hiking/nature trails; 54% cited off-road bicycle paths; and 52% cited multi-use trails.

### **What are the origins of this project?**

The vision for a trail along the Neshaminy Creek dates back to as far as 1955 when the Bucks County Parks Board recommended creation of a linear park system along various stream valleys in the County including the Neshaminy Creek. This was further promoted in the 1974 & 1986 *Bucks County Parks and Recreation Plans*; [Upper & Middle Neshaminy Creek Watershed River Conservation Plan \(2003\)](#); and [Lower Neshaminy Creek Watershed Conservation Plan \(2005\)](#). In 2014, Bucks County developed and adopted the [Upper Neshaminy Creek Trail Feasibility Study \(2014\)](#)

We recognize that the passage of time may have created gaps in awareness for the project. Additionally, we understand that there are new neighbors to the area who were not present for the prior presentations and public meetings. Going forward we are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with residents and will maintain a project portal to provide access to applicable plans and project related documents as the project progresses.

## **What opportunities were provided for public input as part of the development of the *Upper Neshaminy Creek Feasibility Study*?**

Five public meetings were held to solicit public input into the plan:

- **April 23, 2013** – Public Workshop held at Doylestown Library to kick off the project and solicit feedback and input prior to the start of field work.
- **September 13, 2013** – Presentation to Doylestown Bike & Hike Committee to review proposed trail alignment and gain feedback and input.
- **December 17, 2013** – Presentation to Doylestown Township Board of Supervisors.
- **January 28, 2014** – Public workshop held at Doylestown Library to discuss proposed trail alignment.
- **February 4, 2014** – Presentation to Doylestown Township Board of Supervisors.

The draft version of the plan was posted on the Bucks County website for public review and comment. All of the meetings, as well as the availability of the draft study, were advertised on the Bucks County website and via press releases. In addition to public meetings, a variety of newspaper articles helped to generate awareness of, and interest in the *Upper Neshaminy Creek Trail Feasibility Study*.

- **December 11, 2012 - The Intelligencer** - *Grants will help Neshaminy Greenway grow*
- **April 25, 2013 - Bucks County Herald** - *Trail would link Neshaminy Creek Greenway*
- **May 10, 2013 - The Intelligencer** - *Should Bucks County's next nature trail go with the flow?*
- **February 6, 2014 - The Intelligencer** - *Million-dollar homes planned in Doylestown Township*
- **April 21, 2014 - The Intelligencer** – *Grant hikes hopes for trails*
- **June 1, 2014 - The Intelligencer** – *Study finds central Bucks trail could cost \$13 million*

## **How was the conceptual alignment of the trail determined?**

The conceptual trail alignment identified in the study was based on a variety of factors including: Environmental Considerations, Safety, Potential Cost, Land Ownership, Connectivity to Parks, Schools, Shopping, and Residential Areas. Feasibility and trail alignment are done in consultation with engineering firms who provide expertise in environmental concerns, safety aspects and costs.

## **What alternative alignments were considered?**

Several alternative alignments were investigated and subsequently not pursued due to various factors. Those alternatives included the following:

### *South side of the Neshaminy Creek*

Placement of the trail along the south side of the creek was evaluated as an alternative but the presence of significant steep slopes, a stream tributary, extensive wetlands, the proximity to homes located in the Greens of Doylestown, and the lack of county-owned property contributed to this being a less feasible alignment. Given the limited amount of

land behind one segment of that route, with the backs of homes being 35' to 50' from the creek embankment, this proposed alignment would also require the installation of two bridges.

#### *Pebble Hill Road/Valley Road On Road Facilities*

In planning for trails and bicycle facilities, safety is always a top priority, as is the need to consider pedestrians, bicyclists, those with mobility impairment, and other segments of the population. Although some bicyclists may feel comfortable utilizing these roads, the narrowness of the roads, the lack of shoulders in many areas, the presence of blind spots in others, make them unsuitable for use by pedestrians, less experienced cyclists, and those who are mobility impaired.

Additionally, these on-road routes also do not provide for connectivity to other existing and future segments of the planned Neshaminy Greenway Trail and would result in these on-road bike routes terminating at higher-volume, higher speed roads without any bicycle or pedestrian facilities.

#### **Previous correspondence indicated that a trailhead and access road through the Kohl's property would be constructed. Is it still part of the plan?**

After further consideration, the access road through the Kohl farm and trailhead have been abandoned.

#### **The feasibility study suggested the potential for walking access to the trail from the east end of Pebble Hill road by using the parking lot at the Kinder Care day care school. Is it still part of the plan?**

After further consideration, the Pebble Hill Road connector trail leading up to the Kinder Care day care has been abandoned.

#### **How safe will the trail be for the homes along the route?**

Crime and safety are concerns often expressed as part of the development of trail projects. However, in our experience, as well as studies addressing this issue, crime does not increase because of the introduction of a trail. Typically, crime levels for properties in close proximity to trails is no greater than that of the surrounding area.

The notion that a connected trail systems provide a gateway for crime is not supported by the statistics, especially in Doylestown. With over 25 mile of existing bike and walking pathway trails in the Township, crime has not risen and the incidence of crime has not increased as a result of these trail connections. Most law enforcement agencies advise us that having "eyes on the trail" is actually a deterrent to crime. Trails behind homes are viewed no differently than sidewalks at the front of a home as it relates to being a vector for crime.

A few studies assessing the relationship between trails and crimes include:

***Buncombe County Greenways & Trails Master Plan (2012)***

<http://www.buncombecounty.org/common/parks/MasterPlan/7-Safety.pdf>

***Pinellas Trail Community Impact Study (2001)***

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization

[http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas\\_exec.pdf](http://www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org/pdf/Pinellas_exec.pdf)

***Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Effect on Property Values and Public Safety (2000)***

Donald L. Greer, Ph.D., Project Director, University of Nebraska at Omaha Recreation and Leisure Studies Program - School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

***Rail-Trails and Safe Communities – The Experience on 372 Trails (1998)***

Rails to Trails Conservancy [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped\\_bike/docs/rt\\_safecomm.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/docs/rt_safecomm.pdf)

Additionally, we conducted our own analysis of crime on three trails in the area with the following findings:

**Pennypack Trail – Montgomery County (February 2015 – December 2016)**

- Of the 21,476 calls responded to in the township from February 2015 to December 2016, only 59, or 0.27%, occurred within ¼ mile of the Pennypack Trail.
- The Regional Trails Manager of the Pennypack Trail indicated that crime along the Pennypack Trail is almost non-existent and that there was less trouble in the corridor after the trail was established.

**Will the existing parking lot on Valley Road be improved as part of this project?**

Improvements to the parking lot on Valley Road are included as part of this project.

**Is there an estimated cost for construction?**

The estimated cost for construction for the trail is approximately \$1,600,000.00.

**The trail heads will include benches and parking. Who will be responsible for collecting trash from the parking areas and in general for the trail?**

Trail maintenance activities, including trash pick-up will be handled by the County.

**What agencies are involved in the trail permitting and review process?**

A variety of agencies provide reviews, permitting for, and consultation on trail development projects. The Bucks County Conservation District has reviewed and approved the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Plans. In addition, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has reviewed and approved the Small Projects Waterway Obstruction Permit. Finally, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office has reviewed the Archaeological Resources Report and determined that no further archaeological work is necessary for this project.

**How will the project address areas of wetlands and existing drainage?**

The trail has been designed to minimize the impact to wet areas, and no wet areas/wetlands will be drained. If required, boardwalks, similar to the one on the Upper Bucks Rail Trail will be considered.

**What environmental studies have been done?**

In addition to the required environmental studies, we also performed a [Woodland Assessment](#) and [Wildlife Report](#) at the request of the Citizens Advisory Design Committee.

**Are the trails planned to be impervious surfaces?**

Yes, the trails are planned to be crushed stone, which is considered impervious. Using this trail surface will minimize damage from flood events, provide for long term durability and meet ADA requirements. Vegetated swales, rain gardens and other best management practices will be incorporated into the project to mitigate stormwater runoff from the trail. The storm water management design of the trail has been reviewed and permitted by all applicable local, state and federal agencies as required.

**Will there be opportunities for volunteers and watershed stewards to be involved in the project?**

We would appreciate the assistance of the watershed stewards as part of this project. Possibilities include a volunteer planting day to install trees along the trail when construction is complete, or assistance with educational signage related to watershed protection along the trail. We would be open to a discussion on these or other ideas.