

**Secretary's Greenway Program Advisory Committee
Economic Benefits Work Group Meeting Summary
September 1, 2004**

Attendees: Jerry Walls (Co-facilitator), Linda Boxx (Co-facilitator), Pat Tomes, Jane Sheffield, Anna Breinich, Bill Mineo, Dan Accurti, Carl Knoch and Meredith Hill.

We reviewed the notes from the June Work Group meeting. Linda Boxx who was unable to participate in the June meeting shared that she thought it was very important to focus on direct spending numbers because the numbers that have been generated from other studies that include indirect spending seem unrealistic. This can reduce the credibility of a study and therefore its overall impact. Linda suggested that what we really want are studies that produce good baseline results that can be compared from year to year and be additive across several trail corridors.

Members discussed several options for how to approach undertaking economic studies and revisited and clarified the experiences of the York and Great Allegheny Passage projects. Anna Breinich proposed keying into existing unique opportunities such as the recent White Haven tax assessment and data generated from that or to select some specific case study examples that reflect both the urban and rural trail experiences.

After a good deal of discussion, the group seemed to reach consensus on the following:

- Major and first priority of a study should be focused on the economic impact from trail users and from the businesses that exist along trail corridors as opposed to the issue of possible increase in adjacent property values.
- Study should target several long-distance recreational trails that have the following characteristics:
 - Corridor is 20 miles or more in length;
 - There are existing businesses and potential for new business formations along the corridor;
 - There are communities that sit adjacent to the trail (vs. trail in very remote area);
 - Methodology for user survey (e.g. windshield vs. intercept) could be different depending on trail.
- Survey components should include the following:
 - Should limit survey to 10 questions;
 - User demographics;
 - Trail characteristics – why does user come to that trail;
 - Spending – how much are users spending on their visits;
 - User counts – studies need to invest in getting good user counts (note: GAP has 11 infrared counters but also need “interrogator” to pull data off counters).

Pat Tomes spent a few minutes explaining the Rails to Trails Conservancy's interest in undertaking economic impact studies. She indicated that RTC would be teaming up with Carl Knoch and submitting a DCNR grant application for economic impact study work. Carl provided some information on his background and the work that his company Interactive Marketing Solutions has done in this area with several studies of the York Heritage and Northern Central Trails. Carl shared that the cost for conducting a study similar to those he has done in the past is estimated at \$5,000 per trail not including trail counter equipment.

RTC's intent would be to collect user data on 4-6 trails in the state selecting a diverse grouping of trail types in rural, urban and suburban settings. A "trail user survey" template would be developed that could facilitate a consistent approach to this work and the replication of studies elsewhere in the state. Such a tool would be available to local communities and trail groups interested in generating this kind of data for the trail corridor in their area. There would also be a separate business survey instrument developed to capture the economic data associated with trail-based businesses. A suggestion was made to ask DCED for community development input into this survey. Member thought DCED should be involved from a tourism point of view and perhaps could help with funding this portion of the project (e.g. matching funds).

Work Group members supported the concept outlined by Pat Tomes and Carl Knoch and agreed this would be a good vehicle to get more economic impact / user data on additional trail corridors in the state as well as to build additional capacity for more studies to be undertaken.

Members also had a discussion about how to get property value change data since the Work Group has expressed interest and identified the value in collecting this kind of data also. All agreed that getting this kind of data is a much more complex and challenging undertaking than the economic impact data from users and businesses. At this point, a project regarding property value impacts will be seen as Phase II of the Work Group's efforts. For now, members agreed that we should investigate where similar studies/analyses have been done before moving forward with a specific effort in this area. Bill Mineo talked about a study in Chester County where land was condemned for a county park. He said he would share the information with the Work Group. Dan Accurti said that PennDOT has engaged Penn State to do an analysis of enhancement projects to determine their impact and that property values was to be a part of that work. He agreed to find out the status of that project and to report back to the Work Group at their next meeting.

Next Steps / Meeting Commitments:

- Report out to the full advisory committee at the December meeting;
- With the support of the Work Group, RTC will move forward to submit a DCNR grant proposal;

- Solicit interest from DCED in this work and invite tourism and/or community revitalization staff to the next Work Group meeting;
- Bill Mineo will provide Meredith with the Chester County study on property value impacts so she can forward to Work Group members;
- Dan Accurti will report on the status of the PSU study and will invite them to present their work at the next Work Group meeting;
- Tentatively set next meeting date for sometime in January 2005 based upon status of PSU work – Dan Accurti to advise.