

Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail Listening Session Compiled Notes

Four virtual listening sessions were held in January of 2021 to provide a forum for stakeholders to share their thoughts and concerns regarding a potential long-distance rail trail in the Shenandoah Valley. These notes compile the responses to questions that were asked during all four sessions, along with responses by email from those who weren't able to participate.

Planning team members participated in most of the sessions to hear and record the input. The team consisted of Kelly McClary, Dave Collett and Jennifer Wampler from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, John Madera with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission, Ann Cundy with the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, Bill Johnston from the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail Exploratory Partnership, Kim Woodwell from the Shenandoah Valley Alliance, and Ursula Lemanski, who is supporting the project through the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. The following stakeholders were invited to participate:

Jan. 12- Potential Non-Profit Partners

- Brantley Tyndall, Virginia Bicycling Federation
- David Brotman and Dave Kaueper, Friends of the North Fork
- Cat Anthony, Virginia Trails Alliance
- Kate Wofford, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
- Don Hindman, Shen Valley Rail Trail Exploratory Partnership
- Kyle Lawrence, Shenandoah Valley Bike Coalition
- Revlan Hill and Ann Siciliano, The Community Foundation
- Kevin Walker, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- Lynda Frost, The Trust for Public Land
- Marla Boutler, Shenandoah Community Foundation

Jan. 21-Business

- Sharon Baroncelli, Shenandoah County Chamber
- Jenna French, Director of Tourism & Economic Development, Shenandoah County
- Sheena Armentrout, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce
- Joshua Gooden, Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator
- Jennifer Bell, Tourism Manager City of Harrisonburg
- Daniel P. Lenz, Director, Warren County Parks and Recreation
- Michelle Bixler, Town of Strasburg Economic Development & Marketing Manager
- Doug Parsons, Executive Director, Warren County EDA
- Niki Foster Cales, President, Front Royal-Warren County Chamber of Commerce
- Jean Clark, Rockbridge Regional Tourism
- Jay Langston, CEO, Shenandoah Valley Partnership

- Sherry Norquist, Shenandoah Health District of the Virginia Department of Health
- Oskar Scheikl, Rockingham Schools Superintendent
- Mark A. Johnston, Shenandoah County Schools Superintendent
- Laura Bennet, Woodstock Commons
- Sally Cowal, Muse Vineyards
- Allon Lefever, Hampton Inn and Suites
- Christopher S. Kyle, Vice President Industry Affairs and Regulatory, Shentel
- Dr. Tommy Ball, Valley Health
- Margo Harris, Woodstock Commons
- Michael Lock, Play Favorites, Front Royal
- Brenda Black, Shenandoah County Tourism and Economic Development Coordinator
- Travis Clark – Shenandoah Memorial Hospital, Woodstock
- Stephanie Zayhowski, Hampton Inn & Suites, Woodstock
- Dr. Ellis Johns, Valley Health / Front Royal Family Practice; VCU Professor of Medicine
- Mike Koontz, First Bank
- Todd Holtzman, Holtzman Propane
- Don Hindman, Shenandoah Rail Trail Exploratory Committee

Jan 22-Land Managers

- Evan Vass, Shenandoah County Administrator
- Wyatt Pearson, Strasburg Town Manager
- Lisa Currie, Toms Brook Mayor
- Angie Clem, Woodstock Town Manager
- Dan Harshman, Edinburg Town Manager
- Neil Showalter, Mount Jackson
- Amber Smoot, New Market Marketing Director
- Bradford Dyjack, Rockingham County Planning
- Austin Garber, Timberville Town Manager
- Kyle O'Brien, Broadway Town Manager
- Edwin "Ed" Daley, Interim Warren County Administrator
- Timothy L. Wilson, Front Royal Director of Community Development and Planning
- Brandon Davis, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission Executive Director
- Bonnie Riedesel, Central Shenandoah Valley Planning District Executive Director
- Keven Walker, ED, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- Karen Beck-Herzog, Cedar Creek/Belle Grove National Historical Park Superintendent

- Kristen Laise, Executive Director, Belle Grove Plantation (legislated partner in Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park)
- Ashley Sonntag, Operations Manager, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, partner at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove NHP
- Brandy Boies, Strasburg Mayor
- Jeremy McCleary, Woodstock Mayor
- Rod Shepherd, Vice Mayor, Town of Mount Jackson
- Tim Proctor, Broadway Mayor
- Matthew Helt, Dispersed Recreation Program Manager (Trails and Wilderness), George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, matthew.helt@usda.gov
- Aaron Grisdale - Town of Woodstock
- Lemuel Hancock - Town of Woodstock
- Nathan Younger - District Manager, Virginia State Parks
- Tom Stevens, Chief Ranger, Seven Bends State Park
- Veronica Flick- Shenandoah River and Seven Bends State Parks
- Don Hindman Project Manager Shenandoah Rail Trail Exploratory Partnership don.hindman@gmail.com. Web page: Shenandoahrailtrail.org

Jan. 26 Transportation

- Lemuel Hancock, Town of Woodstock Planner/Designer
- Ann Cundy, Central Shenandoah PDC
- Brad Reed, VDOT Planning Division
- Austin Garber, Town of Timberville
- Tyler Hinkle, Shenandoah County Planner
- John Madera, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission
- Kyle O'Brien, Town of Broadway
- Joe Petty, Warren County Zoning Administrator
- Lee Pambid, Town of Strasburg, Planning and Zoning Administrator
- Bradford Dyjak, Rockingham County, Director of Planning
- Adam Campbell, VDOT Staunton District Planning
- Amanda Kerns, Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission
- Tim Wilson, Town of Front Royal
- Taryn Logan, Warren County
- Ronnie Hoffman, Edinburg
- Neil Showalter, Mount Jackson
- J. Todd Walters, New Market
- Don Hindman, Shen Valley Rail Trail Exploratory Partnership
- Joe Petty, Warren County

Questions and answers documented from the conversation, chat log and email.

General Interest

Is there interest in a rail trail from Broadway to Front Royal?

- Yes, because it will bring tourism and economic impact—it is an incredible opportunity for the Shenandoah Valley.
- It will encourage conservation of key resources as well as community development.
- There is widespread support for this project.
- Yes, it is needed to provide alternative transportation connecting the towns
- With Broadway serving as the southern terminus, this could be huge for the town, and a game changer for the entire Shenandoah Valley. It has 100% support from the town council and the citizens are also behind it.
- The Town of Front Royal is interested in seeing the proposed trail continue to Riverton
- Yes. The Shenandoah Valley is lacking adequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. A rail trail of this scale not only is a benefit to residents, but largely to visitors who will be attracted to an off-street trail that allows users to experience the area from a new perspective. Warren County has made improvements to local parks by adding walking trails; which have become a popular destination, heavily used during good weather.
- Yes. Though the route does not pass by the Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation area in Middletown, this is a very outdoor-based park. Hiking and outdoor activities are very popular in the towns near here and along the route. Love the idea.
- It is a fabulous idea. I am the Chair of the Winchester-Frederick County Tourism Board and though I don't have any hard evidence with me today, we are observing heavy interest in outdoor recreation. Some of that is COVID-driven but I think this trend is here to stay.
- Yes, the ability to bolster public health, and allow all ages to have a safe area to recreate in the outdoors cannot be understated. The existing location of the rail line is generally accessible to all socio-economic levels in our community.
- Woodstock is excited. The trail runs through town and would connect the school campus and several neighborhoods. The Town is building a bike/pedestrian trail system around the rail-trail as the spine and we have received some funding for this network
- Strasburg is also excited. The trail comes through town and would connect with several neighborhoods. It would connect areas in the town that are consistently less-served--it would address equity and infrastructure in areas that might not be served otherwise.
- Yes, the trail users will bring a vibrancy that spills over and uplifts the people in the Valley. Bike shops and young people set a different tone that will contribute to sense of place

- Yes, in the ten years I have worked in the area, this has been the most broadly supported, bipartisan issue I've seen
- Yes, due to the tourism and economic development that comes with people walking, running, and biking each day—along with special events. BikeVirginia has been successful here in spite of not having good infrastructure
- Yes, the pandemic has brought a new energy for this type of infrastructure. Businesses would literally pop up along the trail
- Yes, the trail would offer beautiful vistas and connect metro areas
- The trail would be the spine connecting towns that offered alternative transportation to schools
- Yes, with the proximity to I-81 and I-66, would be a huge tourism draw but would also serve local residents
- Yes, the train tracks are a historical part of these communities with lots of opportunity for historic interpretation and outdoor classrooms. Now the tracks are overgrown and an eyesore. The trestle is in the logo for Toms Brook. At least we can improve what we have
- Rail trails are truly transformational for historic trail towns
- The concept has been covered in local newspapers and widely discussed in the towns and with the Battlefield Foundation. People view this as an improvement to what is there now, with 25-foot trees growing in the middle of the tracks. It is no longer a desirable location to be near the tracks—this project would greatly improve property values.
- The quality of life for nearby residents cannot be overlooked, in terms of safe routes to schools and the health benefits
- Existing trails provide plenty of challenging hike and bike trips, but the accessible, safe, easy trail experience is missing
- I do believe there would be a strong interest in a rail trail from Broadway to Front Royal. Many of our club members would enjoy making use of such a trail. Also, I have many customers at my shop (Element Sports) who come in asking for just such routes. The C&O Canal Trail and Western Maryland Rail Trail are popular with people north of Winchester, and the W&OD with people east of Winchester. Those from the south of Winchester in the Stephens City and Front Royal area would really love such a trail near them (and I'm sure people even further south). Even people from other areas are always looking for new places to go, and would love a rail trail in that area.

Based on your contacts, is there interest from adjacent landowners and are there issues that will need to be addressed?

- Yes. Please pay attention to this issue. One church lady whose home adjoins the rail line told me she was opposed to the bike route 'as homeless people would start sleeping in my yard.' Some folks will oppose this. Some folks will have negative reactions. So positive stories from other trails need to have their stories told out front in bold letters
- The concept has been covered pretty widely within our communities without any negative feedback.

- Lots of towns have property-- are adjacent landowners
- Many adjacent landowners would see this as an improvement on what is going on there now, since the corridor is overgrown and dilapidated, even dangerous
- Not desirable neighbor right now. Likely property owner values would be significantly improved by the trail.
- There was a push in the 90s for a tourist train to go through, but the push-back centered on the noise the train would create. People welcome the idea of a walking trail with scenic views

Based on your knowledge of the community, what are the pros and cons that we should consider?

Pros

- Physical benefits (better health, less diabetes, hypertension and obesity)
- Social benefits (better mental health, more connections, fewer suicides, less crime)
- Physical connections between the towns and to places of interest
- Function as part of transportation network as alternative transportation corridor
- What better way and reason to be connecting people?
- Recreational centerpiece of the Valley
- Taking care of what is around you (conservation values)
- More people will visit the state park
- Great get-a-way from metro areas—close to other population centers
- Scenic views, particularly from the bridges along the trail
- People who enjoy use of the trail will be more interested in nature
- The existing, conservative economic impact analysis of one segment is very positive (i.e. Visitors spending will generate an estimated \$10.8 million economic impact per year, supporting 98 new jobs in Shenandoah and Rockingham Counties)
- An easily-accessible place for outdoor recreation, possible commuter use, safe place for cycling without steep climbs, a great place for families with kids, etc

Cons

- Number and condition of bridges and associated costs
- Consideration of costs. Often projects of this size are considered in pieces that are manageable. Still tremendous upfront cost is the acquisition of right-of-way and improvements for bridge structures on the right-of-way

Funding and Management

If you were creating a list of options for how to fund a trail project, what would be on your list?

- State legislative appropriation, an allocation from VA General Assembly budget
- SmartScale funding- piecemeal/phased approach (state funding)

- VDOT state funding programs require that projects meet a VTRANS Tier 1 need, require intervention at the Secretary's level for a waiver
- PDC/MPO Planning grants (also state dollars, must address a VTRANS Tier 1 need)
- The trail is an order of magnitude above and beyond most bike/ped projects that will require the General Assembly's support. Only 40% of SmartScale applications for bike/ped projects were successful, and those tend to be smaller projects. The SmartScale scoring method determined that the Ashland to Petersburg Trail costs outweighed benefits and so the application was not funded.
- Nest within other transportation infrastructure needs (multimodal, highway related)
- Several planning grants available through the Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, the Multimodal Planning Grant program and the Growth & Accessibility Planning Technical Assistance (how pieces fit together in urbanized context)
- TAP (transportation alternatives set-aside) managed by CTB, but only 1-2 million every few years
- SRTS (Safe Routes to Schools)
- Utility rental (i.e. buried fiber optic for broadband)
- Using the corridor path as conduit for utilities as potential revenue source. There is also an opportunity to expand utility access along the corridor.
- We need to develop technology networks around the county. Perhaps the trail corridor provides an opportunity for a partnership
- Public health care funds
- Railroad or other corporate legacy fund
- Philanthropic donations
- Perhaps a 'membership' option for cyclists and walkers. Something akin to what public radio stations do with their sustainer members. I know this wouldn't cover all of the costs. General upkeep in the towns could be done by town maintenance crews. I think the state would need to play a role.
- Consider allowing private businesses and organizations to sponsor sections of the trail. This would range from financing the cost of construction to maintenance.
- Other sponsorship (pavers, benches, kiosks)
- Naming rights (if held by regional body and not state)
- Consider allowing individual donors to contribute. Donors could be recognized by their name being included in the map display at the nearest trailhead and painted (stenciled) on the trail surface itself.
- Some localities are already making strategic planning/budgetary decisions and plans related to this R2T concept - for parking areas/open space/beautified parklets for rest - in addition to identifying ways to take advantage of grants for redevelopment projects along the rail (CDBG, brownfields grants, local Tourism Zones, etc.)

- Strasburg is looking to include the rail trail in our next comprehensive plan update and ensure it is a topic of discussion with all future residential development that occurs along or in close proximity to the existing rail line.
- TREC decking has done well and although they are asked for donations often, perhaps that is a possibility
- Local investment along with private and non-profit sectors
- Local funds
- Political will
- With the anticipated increase in property values, could the ownership/leasing of land be a revenue source?
- This project will provide connections that overcome the urban/rural divide. Look for foundations that support this type of project
- Private trusts/donation, foundation and community grants
- Social media/on-line fundraising Campaigns
- Rails-to-trails conservancy
- Federal funds
- BUILD grant-federal discretionary spending program for localities and regions—bypasses VDOT/CTB. Ability to match with non-federal funding is key to success
- FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program)- Eastern federal lands access (connections to federal lands or national trails)
- The designation of U.S. Bike Route 11 could be a leverage point for groups like People for Bikes
- RTP (Recreational Trails Program)-for amenities along the trail
- Battlefield Land Trust (vistas along the trail, historic interpretation, conservation easements)
- The opportunity zone around Mount Jackson (much aligns with rail) could be good for federal funding (listed as disadvantaged area). Also touches on two adjacent trails, including the Tuscarora. There is a lot of potential by tying with existing infrastructure
- VA Dept of Forestry-Urban and Community Forestry

What kind of creative financing should we research for the plan?

- Consider Crowdfunding.
- Once the trail is completed, hold an annual race down the trail to cover maintenance costs and promote visibility of the trail and tourism to neighboring communities.
- Incentives for private property owners along the route to provide access or land acquisition.
- In-kind contributions
- Sponsorship opportunities
- Creative placemaking opportunities could be used to access money for those trailheads
- Consult with others who know fundraising—they may have great ideas.

If you were creating a list of options for long term management and operations of either a linear park or transportation facility (shared-use path), what would be on your list?

- Unit of state park system (with Seven Bends connection), Virginia state parks need to have a role in this project. The proximity to existing state parks make this an additional benefit for a DCR role.
- Branch of the Shenandoah Battlefield Foundation
- VDOT (supported by multiple partners), recent study on Capital Trail showed VDOT was the best option
- A non-profit supported by two VDOT districts, towns and counties
- The towns can help with long-term management
- Volunteer groups/private entities or a public/private partnerships
- Volunteers can do a significant amount of work if they are overseen by formal staff
- Consider outsourcing sections to local park and recreation departments, which may be able to provide maintenance for a reasonable amount.
- Could be partnership of counties and towns.
- What about an existing non-profit that holds other parkland?
- This project will need a large entity, perhaps a regional authority if not the state
- The creation of a spin-off “friends group” could help support extra amenities like trash cans. Explore a Friends group that can contribute maintenance above and beyond what staff can provide
- Recognize the limitations of a Friends group—they are better at communication and support, not maintenance and management
- Friends groups are an awesome partner to supplement paid staff, but don’t push too much work that way and assume that capacity will persist through the long term
- Use students (community service) to help with maintenance
- Who owns the corridor will determine who maintains the corridor
- Private stewardship and club recognition – similar to Adopt-A-Street programs
- Since it will be a transportation facility, it may require inclement weather maintenance similar to roadways to ensure safe travel
- Conservation groups could help preserve the natural environment along the trail
- Valley Health sponsorship?
- The Atlanta Beltline offers [a trail adoption plan](#) that could serve as a model
- Glo-fiber (Shentel) would be supportive
- The delivery services (UPS, Amazon, FedEx) are making tons of money and filling up I-81 with their trucks. The trail parallels the biggest truck corridor—these companies should consider supporting this project for community spirit/public relations.
- Maintenance is key, the scale of this proposed trail would require a long-term maintenance plan

- Look at the level of resources available from each partner. For example, VDOT has maintenance equipment and funding, what do counties and localities have? Use this information to develop a management structure

The High Bridge Trail State Park in Farmville has successful partnerships with towns along the route. Is there potential for this type of partnership in the Valley?

- Yes. I think the Mount Jackson town council would actively support it. About three years ago, Mount Jackson partnered with the Conservation Fund to purchase 'The Knob,' a rock outcropping above town. We provided seed starter money then matched contributions from local citizens.
- Absolutely, with the towns along the corridor. Most of these towns and counties have already participated (funding the economic impact study). There is great potential for working together in future.
- There is a great opportunity for interconnection and linkages in the towns. The formation of the Rail-to-Trail Exploratory Partnership has been very positive so far, but there is an opportunity to expand. New partners will come in as the trail is extended to neighboring communities
- Having trailheads and regional access points will incentivize business and localities to encourage trail users to stop. These destinations provide an extra experience for users to plan their trip. Having important stopping points along the route only add to the attraction to the trail.

Trail Design

How do you envision a rail trail that would serve your community? What would it look like (surfaces, amenities, user groups, etc.)?

- A paved trail serving as a transportation corridor for a range of uses, including e-bikes, with no admission barrier
- A trail served by community businesses like B&Bs, microbreweries, wineries
- Plan for lots of capacity, this will be a very well-used trail
- Shade trees, grass shoulders
- Adequate parking at trailheads
- Paved in towns, hard-packed in between because paving is more expensive but requires less maintenance
- Safe for pedestrians
- Fabulous views
- Connector/spur trails that provide access to other attractions and amenities
- Nine bike-friendly towns along the way
- At least 10-foot-wide, all-weather, and bikeable
- Access to water and restrooms
- Well-maintained

- Smooth, hard surface--the rolled limestone surface on the High Bridge Trail is perfect
- With DC being a short hour & half drive, a bike trail would be a great draw. The single best attribute to Shenandoah County is our natural beauty
- A surface smooth enough to bike, walk, and roll carriages and wheelchairs from Broadway to Front Royal
- Lots of access in multiple ways
- Supporting a wide variety of demographics able to use the trail, especially with gentle grades.
- High Bridge is using pressure-treated lumber for the decking on bridges. Perhaps Trex could help?
- Different experience between town and countryside
- Accessible from communities so that residents have alternatives to driving
- Provide ample parking so the trail is also accessible for visitors
- It is important to have interpretation along the length of the trail to mark ecological and historical resources so the trail becomes an educational tool
- A paved, at least 10-foot-wide, multiuse trail with spur connections
- A transportation corridor (shared-use-path) with adequate width
- A surface compatible with skinny tires (quarry grit or pavement could work)
- The function of the material is what is important—ADA accessible
- A linear park that connects neighborhoods to schools and can serve as an outdoor classroom for walking field trips
- Paved through Woodstock. 8-10 feet-wide with spurs running off in various neighborhoods.
- It will serve beyond a recreational opportunity and become a major transportation mode. Imagine it paved in Front Royal area. Want to connect to rest of downtown and other resources within the community. Look at more than trail facility but how will connect with other town/county amenities and trail systems.
- I'd envision a trail that was easy to access from regular points, every few miles, but hopefully didn't cross roads too often. Maybe overpasses or underpasses at roads when possible, to try to keep it separate from roads as much as possible. The surface would either be paved or smooth, crushed stone like they have started putting on the C&O. Port-a-johns or outhouses every few miles would be good. If places to put camping sites along the way, would be great. Water fountains or spigots occasionally, too. Mile markers would be useful-- not only for user's use, but to make it easier for emergency services to locate people on the trail that call.

What should trailheads look like?

- Trailheads should be located where people enter and exit spur trails and also near water bodies, so people have a range of outdoor recreation options to choose from
- High Bridge is a great template. Each of our little towns have public areas, including parking, along the rail line. Mount Jackson town hall visitor center is right next to the tracks.
- The trailheads should have parking for at least a dozen vehicles and include some type of restroom facility, potable water source, a large bike rack and a map kiosk (map behind Plexiglas). Ideally it should include an air pump for flat bicycle tires (possible a few inexpensive tire patching kits). There should also be area information such as distance to the nearest food source and bike shop with contact numbers.
- Include public art
- Front Royal is a destination along I-66 and Northern Virginia. We need adequate parking and amenities for tourism traffic at the trailhead(s). Good strategic location (#6 interchange).
- Accessible, with resting areas, water fountains, tool repair, air pumps
- Located to connect to other trails, and retail/commercial establishments
- Trailheads should provide ample parking for visitors and residents. The location along the trail and access to major road will dictate the size of parking lots. Trailheads should also provide facilities for restrooms, trail information, basic repair tools and pumps, water fountains, trash receptacles (refuse, recycling and pet waste), and benches. The trailheads also provide opportunities for historical or geographical markers that tell a story about the Shenandoah Valley.

Economic Development

Where should trailheads be located to maximize tourism/business development potential?

- They should be located in the nearest city/town or within a mile of the nearest city/town.
- They should be located near road crossing to create linkages to towns
- They should connect to biking routes throughout the Valley
- Connect to downtown business districts where services are provided
- Connect to every downtown area along the route. These trailheads will be a major boost to the local downtown economy. It will also provide an incentive for localities and businesses to improve their own bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Localities should plan for connections to the trails with additional trails, sidewalks, and bikes lanes. The local destinations should then provide

adequate bicycle parking, outdoor seating at dining establishments, and other conveniences for users that make their visit more pleasant.

- Could they line up with bus stops?
- Woodstock is working right now on siting bus stops. Keep in mind any new welcome centers as well as school sites and connections with existing trails.
- The trail parallels I-81 and VA Breeze bus service that is within the vicinity. Encourage them to consider adding bicycle to their baggage.
- Shenandoah County is working on a masterplan for the North Fork of the Shenandoah River so it might help identify other resources and trail systems to help with siting of trail heads.

Do you think this trail would be a regional tourism attraction? Why or why not?

- Yes, I think it would draw people into areas they would not normally have visited.
- Yes, it would be an economic boon for the towns, bringing opportunities for business development
- Absolutely. There are many examples throughout Virginia that showcase the attraction to multi-use trails. The ongoing pandemic has also highlighted the lack of access to community and regional trails. People seek outdoor activities that can be experienced by families, groups or even as an individual. The rail trail would provide another great asset to the Valley that aligns well with access to the Shenandoah River and many state and national park trails.

Is there value in a trail town program, like the one along the Great Allegheny Passage, which supports partnerships, research, trail connections, development and marketing?

- Yes, the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O trail provide a multi-day bikepacking experience; it can be similar to the Appalachian Trail and related backpacking culture. If the Shenandoah Valley Rail Trail can be linked with other trails, it creates a larger and unique opportunity for users.
- Yes, it helps make the trail experience positive from beginning to end. When you go away with a good feeling, you want to come back

What would be important components of a successful trail town program in the Valley?

- Ideally there would be bike lanes installed from the nearest trailhead to points of interest such as museums or other attractions and to the nearest town.
- There should also be maps and information offering points of interest at each of the trailheads.
- A promotional map should be developed as well
- A website which highlights food, beverage and lodging near the trail would also be helpful.
- Buy-in from businesses and local government leaders.
- The concept that land and roads are not just for development and motor vehicles. Bicycling and walking can truly be alternate modes of transportation.

- Promoting a healthy lifestyle and the health benefits of getting outdoors, exercising and being in a peaceful setting such as a park.
- Shuttles
- Bike storage
- Uniform signage
- Water breaks
- Ice cream
- Flexibility to change ordinances in towns to make infrastructure more trail friendly
- Public transportation
- Bike racks on buses
- Breweries

Transportation

Could this trail serve as part of a broader transportation network? Why or why not?

- The existing rail line east of Massanutten provides both passenger and freight service running north-south. This corridor is not needed for freight service, but active transportation is needed
- It could provide connections to several parks and three schools in Broadway, and serve as a substitute for the sidewalks that are missing on Routes 42 and 11
- The trail would connect school sites and the welcome center in Woodstock. The Town has planned for a comprehensive trail network in their [Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Master Plan](#)
- Shenandoah County is developing a master plan for the North Fork of the Shenandoah River to support trail connections and water quality
- Front Royal is looking at how to connect to other trails within the town and Warren County
- The long-range plan for the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove Historical Park's trails will connect the park to the Town of Strasburg
- Shenandoah County has miles and miles of back-country, cycling-friendly roads. (That would be the roads without paint.) Converting this rail line to a bike trail could connect many of these roads.
- A connection to Cedar Creek would be fantastic, especially since this park offers many outdoor opportunities/interpretive hiking trails (with new trails being developed).
- The rail-trail parallels Route 11 and would provide important transportation service within towns and even within more rural areas
- A major transportation issue for much of the county is the lack of sidewalks. Now citizens must walk along major roads. We are working on a bus line but the trail would provide a significant transportation alternative for our community members.
- Many of the major employers of Woodstock are located within a half-mile of corridor, so there is lots of potential for work-place connections.

- This idea goes back to a regional bicycle plan conceived in 2004. The trail would provide great access connecting a number of towns that are five miles apart and it would bring lots of job potential to these towns
- The corridor also provides an east-west connector to tie into existing north-south connectors in Strasburg. It would even connect to Strasburg's only grocery store.
- Warren is glad to be part of this discussion. This would be an important piece of infrastructure for Warren County and would parallel Route 55 from Strasburg to Front Royal, which is a busy road. The trail would help relieve automobile traffic for many of the neighborhoods along this section.
- Rockingham is looking at designating more bike and pedestrian corridors, like linkages between towns and more availability along corridors such as Route 42.
- The trail would help connect Timberville and Broadway to poultry plants and other local businesses so that their employees, who often don't have a means to get to work, would have alternative transportation choices for safe transport. Right now they walk along Route 42 without sidewalks.
- From both an economic development and transportation standpoint this would be very beneficial for the town of Broadway. It would be great region-wide, not just the towns
- This corridor is unbelievably gorgeous, with more expansive views than New River or Greenbrier trails
- The trailhead in Front Royal will be an hour away from six million people along the beltway.

Are there other transportation needs besides trail use to consider for this corridor?

- There are great options for horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking in the National Forest (26% of Shenandoah County is National Forest), but there are not a lot of road cycling options for all ages and skill levels
- The Virginia Breeze intercity bus service stops in Harrisonburg. They need to reserve some cargo space for roll-on bikes.

Are there important trail connections to the rail corridor you would like to see identified in the plan?

- Seven Bends State Park
- Shenandoah County Park
- Help towns develop their connecting trail networks
- Linkages to historic resources (millions invested in protecting these resources)
- Connections to trails within Civil War Battlefields
- Town of New Market
- National Forest (Seven Bends, Tuscarora Trail)
- Schools (3-4 large campuses along trail)
- Agritourism (Fields of Gold, vineyards, orchards)

- National Parks (Skyline Drive, Shenandoah, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove)
- In Shenandoah County we have miles and miles of wonderful back roads for cycling. Bike Virginia has been here twice in the past ten years. The problem with our back roads is that to make a loop a cyclist has to spend some mileage on busy Route 11 or narrow Route 42. The rail line would be the perfect way to safely connect these back roads.
- Front Royal's green way trail (Royal Shenandoah Greenway)
- Front Royal has bus service to the Appalachian Trail
- Strasburg's riverfront trail system
- NSVRPC will develop a map for the feasibility study with all these connections
- Extend to Harrisonburg, since the existing trail networks are not far from Broadway
- The National Forest has a great data set for planning connections to existing forest trail networks
- Tuscarora Trail
- Bike trails along Route 42
- If it were possible to extend the trail as far north as Winchester, it would be really awesome! Or a separate trail from Winchester that could be connected.

Future Work

What are some important topics for future study in relation to the trail?

- Condition of infrastructure (i.e. bridges)
- Community need assessments
- Demonstrate health benefits by measuring the baseline
- Demonstrate the increase in property values by measuring the baseline
- Descriptions of different organizational scenarios/examples for management
- In-depth evaluations/assessments of each quarter-mile of trail
- Will it be cleared during winter? Brochures and maps to distribute in shops.

What utilities are currently in the corridor and is there a potential for future shared use?

- Good question.

Would your organization or business consider providing a resolution of support for this project?

- Yes-Virginia Trails Alliance
- Yes-Friends of the North Fork
- Yes-Trust for Public Lands
- Yes-Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
- Yes-I would encourage Mount Jackson's council to pass a resolution
- NSVRC will organize an effort to get local resolutions or letters of support
- The Town of Front Royal supports extension of the proposed trail to the Town and partnering with other local governments and public agencies in discussing

the planning, construction, and maintenance of such a facility. I feel confident that the Town Council would adopt a resolution of support for this proposed project if needed.

- I'm sure the Winchester Wheelmen would be happy to provide a resolution of support for such a trail and can bring it up at the next meeting.

Other ideas or concerns?

- There is an opportunity to highlight the truly unique qualities of this corridor within the state, including the quirky, idiosyncratic qualities
- Delaware has a remarkable system of rails converted to bike trails in the Lewes area. I've cycled many of them. I would hope they could share some ideas with your group. Personally, I want this to move forward quickly. I've seen too many parks and ideas take too long to develop.
- Marketing funds need to be included in the project to help make it successful. It would help attract donors and help people discover the trail once it is complete
- There will be a huge upfront cost with right-of-way acquisition and bridge rehabilitation. It is important to get the costs right
- There needs to be some education on the benefits so there is constituent buy-in for new infrastructure
- This is a long-term project that is understandably going to take time and persuasion to get accomplished. It will take community support and buy-in from the local residents and officials to see the project come to fruition. It will also take strong local leaders to push this forward, even when faced with difficult decisions, in order to achieve the goal of creating a true benefit for the entire Shenandoah Valley.
- I worry about the ongoing political quarrels in Front Royal as holding up the project.
- Will also require constituent buy-in and support. Need to explain the experience and benefit for the citizens. Relatively close to W&OD trail, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, and the C&O Canal Trail.