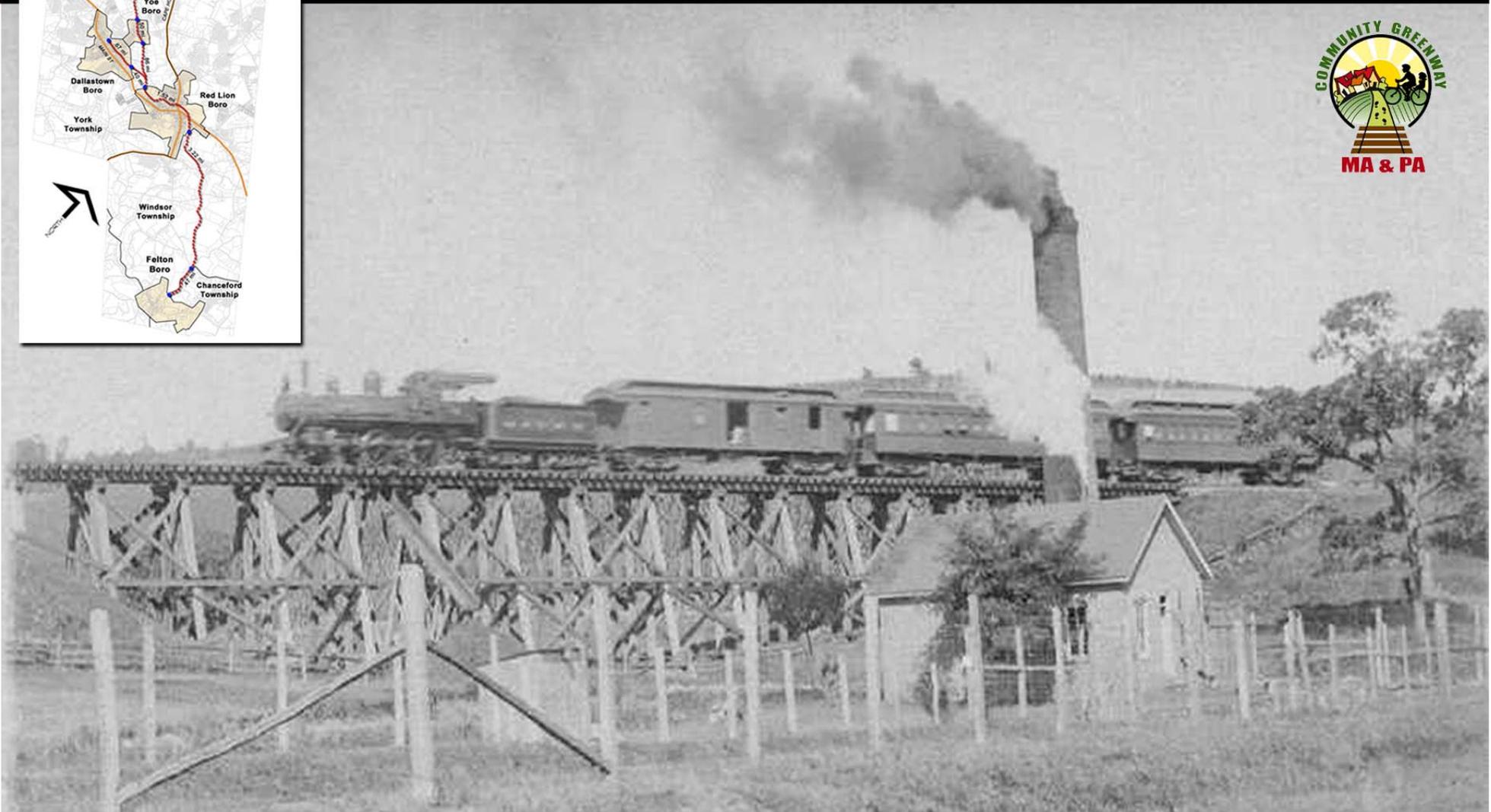
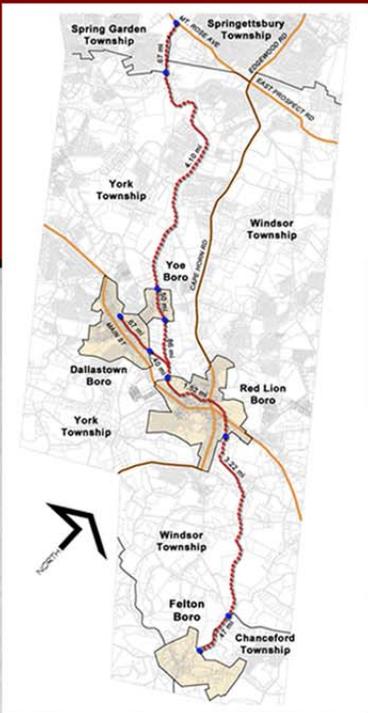


# MA & PA Community Greenway

## Feasibility Study - Executive Summary

York County, Pennsylvania



December 2010



### Introduction

The MA and PA Community Greenway Feasibility Study explores the potential of converting approximately 12.4 miles of the former Maryland & Pennsylvania railroad corridor into a recreational trail in seven York County communities. The MA and PA Community Greenway study corridor runs north to south from Mount Rose Avenue in Spring Garden Township to the northern boundary of Felton Borough. The corridor passes through Spring Garden, York, Windsor and Chanceford Townships and the Boroughs of Yoe, Red Lion, and Dallastown. The MA & PA Railroad was a narrow gauge line stretching 77.2 miles from York, Pennsylvania at the northern end to Baltimore, Maryland at the southern end. The railroad tracks in the study area were dismantled between 1986 and 1987.

This study explored the feasibility of converting the former abandoned railroad corridor into a recreation trail. Recent initiatives to develop two recreation trail segments (the Red Lion Mile and Mill Creek Preserve) along the corridor have been successful, and the study explored the legal, physical, and operational feasibility of extending the trail for the full 12.4 mile length. The feasibility study answers the following questions:

- Legal feasibility – Who owns the corridor and has it been fully abandoned?
- Physical Feasibility – Can a recreational trail be developed on the corridor as it currently exists?
- Operations and Management Feasibility – If a trail can be developed in whole or in part, how will it be operated and maintained?

### The Planning Process

The seven communities work together with a team of consultants (landscape architects, engineers, recreation planner, and lawyer) to complete the MA & PA Community Greenway Feasibility Study. The foundation of the planning process for the feasibility study was based upon an extensive citizen participation process that included key person interviews, public meetings, community forums, an open house, landowner survey, and work sessions with a study committee. The purpose of the public participation process was to gather information, identify issues, seek out opportunities, build stewardship, and identify potential partnerships. The planning team conducted extensive field studies to explore the existing conditions of the corridor and adjacent lands and identified potential connections to community destinations.

### The Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad History

*(Affectionately known as the “MA & PA RR”)*

The Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad was formed on February 12, 1901 by the merger of the Baltimore and Lehigh Railway Company in MD and the York Southern Railroad in PA, both with a long drawn out evolution of plans, constructions, consolidations, receiverships, foreclosures, bankruptcies, and abandonments.

The MA & PA RR's circuitous and picturesque main line connecting Baltimore and York, through Delta, was 77.2 miles long, although these cities were only 47 miles apart. There were 12 summits, 476 curves (almost one half of the total mileage), 111 trestles and bridges, 27 stations, and 31 flag stops in the early 1950's. It required over four hours to complete the York to Baltimore run at an average speed of 18-½ mph. Today, that trip by automobile on Interstate 83 takes about 50 minutes. A round-trip passenger ticket cost \$1.50 in the 1930's & 40's.

At its peak in the early 1900's, the MA & PA RR owned 16 steam locomotives, 160 railcars, and had 573 employees, most in Baltimore, and 100 of which were for track maintenance alone. At that time, more than half the company's revenue came from passenger, mail, and express freight services, followed by milk, coal, and slate.

**Source:** “The Maryland and Pennsylvania Railroad History”  
<http://www.redlionpa.org/history.htm> (accessed December 29, 2008).

## **Executive Summary**

### **Community Benefits**

While the benefit of trails and greenways are primarily viewed as recreational and environmental, the big picture is more encompassing. Trails and greenways can provide greater benefits to communities including improving public health through wellness and fitness opportunities, stimulating local economies and revitalizing communities through trail related businesses, providing alternative transportation options, preserving local history, and engendering community pride. When seen as a whole, the far-reaching benefits of trails and greenways are compelling.

Typically trails can be developed through modest investment, when compared to construction of other community facilities and are the least expensive recreation facility to maintain.

Trail enthusiasts encompass the full spectrum of a community, from young children to seniors and persons with disabilities. Trail activities are primarily self-directed, allowing individuals, families, community groups to fit them into their busy schedules. Trails often host special events, bringing a community together to celebrate.

### **Summary of Plan Findings**

**Physical Feasibility** – The majority of the historic rail corridor, from Mount Rose Avenue to Felton Borough is discernible in the field, although overgrown in many locations. The majority of the culverts and bridges remain and could be rehabilitated. There are stream and road crossings and wet areas that will need to be addressed to accommodate a recreational trail. Alternative routes for the trail are suggested for areas of extensive wetlands and at Taylor’s Trestle.

**Legal Feasibility** – The railroad right-of-way has been formally abandoned and title to land encompassing the former rail corridor has reverted to the contiguous property owners. There are approximately 290 individual properties contiguous to the right-of-way and 27 landowners have received quit-claim deeds from the railroad company. Implementation of the recreational trail will require working with willing landowners to secure access easements.

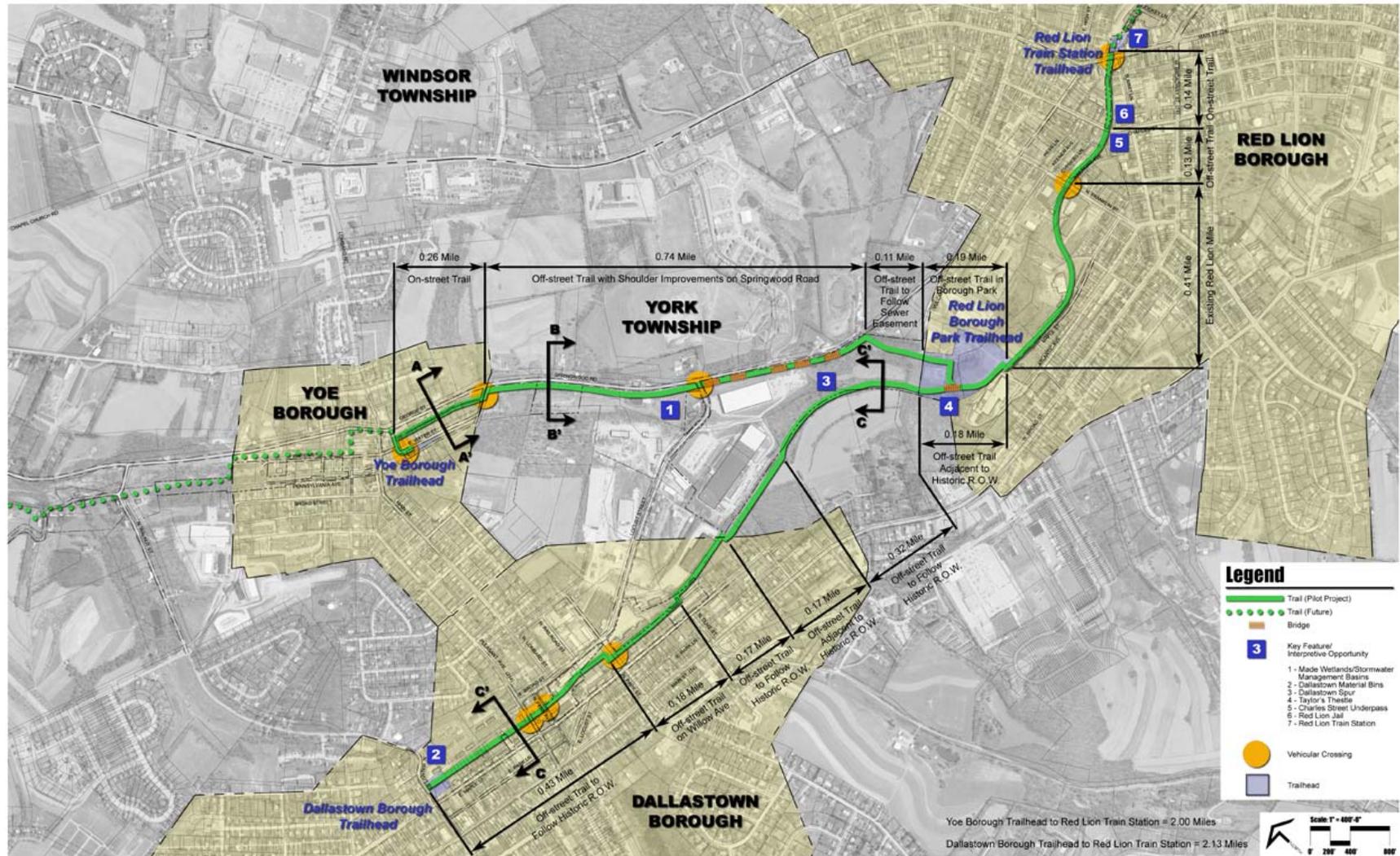
**Operations and Management Feasibility** – The operations and management feasibility assessment for the MA & PA Community Greenway provides baseline information for organizing, funding, and undertaking tasks by the participating municipalities. This plan makes recommendations for a series of work items and tasks needed to develop and maintain the trail as a community asset: one that is an attractive, safe, and secure amenity.

### **Pilot Project**

A sound strategy for building support and momentum for trail projects is the development of a pilot trail segment. The initial development of the Red Lion Mile preceded this study and provides a great start for the MA & PA Community Greenway. The pilot project extends the Red Lion Mile to connect the three Boroughs of Red Lion, Yoe and Dallastown and portions of York Township. The pilot trail extends 3.3 miles with two legs and will link the three primary population centers of the study area and includes several points of interest. Trailhead opportunities exist at each end of the pilot segments and physical constraints can be readily addressed.

# MA & PA Community Greenway

# Pilot Project



## ***Executive Summary***

### ***Next Steps***

The findings of the feasibility study present both opportunities and challenges. While the physical corridor can be readily converted to a recreation trail, the right-of-way no longer exists under a single ownership. There is support in the community for trail development and real excitement about community benefits as well as concerns regarding privacy and private property rights. These and other challenges will need to be addressed as the seven communities move forward with the next steps toward creating the MA & PA Community Greenway.

The following actions are recommended to begin the implementation of the MA & PA Community Greenway.

- Reconstitute the MA & PA Greenway Committee. Create a mission for the organization along with roles, responsibilities, and an annual work program.
- Work on the pilot project. Define a detailed action plan for implementation.
- Determine who will own, monitor, and manage the easements for the MA & PA Community Greenway.
- Work with the York County Rail Trail Authority to make the best use of the services they can provide to assist with the implementation of the trail.
- Begin to work with willing property owners on securing easements for the trail.
- Work with adjacent property owners to resolve encroachments and issues and opportunities of mutual interest.
- Apply for grants to fund master planning and trail development.

- Identify trail management and operational issues procedures and policies that should be worked out before trail segments are available for public use.
- Consider applying for a Peer Study grant under PADCNR to work on an agreement among the seven municipalities for working together.
- Promote the trail. Plan events and activities on the trail corridor.
- Develop a master plan for trail segments. Master plans will translate the findings and recommendations of this feasibility study into plans for detailed improvements and trail layout.
- Complete surveys, wetland delineations, design and engineering plans, land development plans, as required. Apply for environmental, roadway, and other permits necessary to develop the trail.