

The Kanawha Trestle Rail Trail Project

The Friends of the Kanawha Trestle Trail, a tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organization, is involved in developing the Kanawha Trestle Rail Trail. The trail will be a multi-use non-motorized trail connecting the Mound in South Charleston to the State Capitol complex. Plans are to connect the Elk River Valley via Coonskin Park through to Capitol Market and Kanawha City via the 35th Street Bridge. Our group sees this as a 10 to 15 year plan to connect the many public, historic, cultural, educational and recreational properties in our community.

This rail trail system will preserve and restore two historic and unique rail structures that are eligible to be listed on the National Historic Register. One is the CSX Trestle over the Kanawha River built in 1907 with a combined steel Truss and timber construction that is over 4200 feet long. The other is the Whipple Bridge over the Elk River built in 1890. The Whipple Bridge is an early example of iron construction with impressive cut stone river piers.



CSX Four Trusses View North

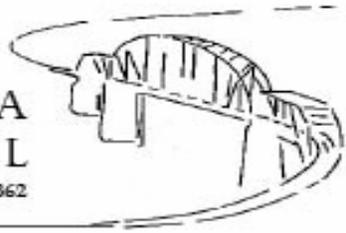
This project will enhance the livability and attractiveness of Charleston, South Charleston and the surrounding area as well as create a greater sense of community and increased civic pride. Last, but not least, the project will create a more walkable community and increase the level of physical activity among residents, promoting a healthier life-style.



CSX Timber Span View North

Kanawha Valley residents scored trail development as the highest priority on the SCORP survey for 2002. Rail-trails can bind communities together as effectively as the railroads did before them. Proof of that is found in the hundreds of communities now reconnected by unused rail corridors transformed into vital community assets. Linking the places where we live, work, learn and play with trails and greenways is a crucial element of building safer, healthier, more livable communities.

Trails and greenways connect us to our neighbors by creating common ground for social interaction. They connect us to our families by providing safe and healthy recreation areas for children, parents and grandparents. With the restoration of the railroad trestle, we will connect to the rich period of history when previous generations helped build and connect



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America by rail. By connecting America with trails and greenways, we create a valuable legacy that honors the past, enriches the present and provides a precious gift to the future. When developing a new rail trail, several issues are always a matter of concern to the community. These issues are:

Liability - Generally trails are covered by the overall insurance policy of the public entity that manages the trail. Public liability risks from trails are small relative to other public services like roads, playgrounds and swimming pools. By considering safety concerns when designing and maintaining a trail, you can lower these risks.

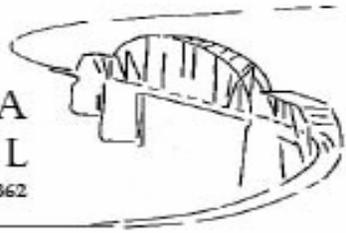
Safety - Trail development may actually decrease the risk of crime in comparison to an abandoned and undeveloped rail corridor. Several studies show that people prefer living along a rail-trail rather than an abandoned corridor. Typically, lawful trail users serve as eyes and ears for the community. As trail advocates the committee will be sure to address security concerns beginning in the planning stages and continuing through the development of a trail's management plan. The trail's design can also enhance safety, such as with landscaping and lighting.

Maintenance - We envision a cost of \$1,400 to \$2,000 a mile for yearly maintenance, mainly grass cutting and minor repairs. Historically, rail trail projects have tremendous community support with volunteers continually showing support by literally adopting the trail and helping maintain it. We see this happening already with the creation of the "Friends of the Kanawha Trestle Trail" organization. (A separate maintenance cost analysis was performed specifically for the trestle structure with an annualized cost of \$36,000.00)

Management - The rail trail will be owned and operated by a joint development entity consisting of the municipalities through which the rail trail traverses. The committee proposes to enlist representatives from the City of Charleston, the City of South Charleston and the Kanawha County Commission to serve on the governing board. Additionally, the entity's structure will allow for inclusion of additional municipal and county partners as the rail trail expands.

Phase One of the project will incorporate a concrete deck for the trestle, which is anticipated to dramatically reduce maintenance costs. Further, we envision using the initial grant funds to address all identified deficiencies with the structure so only minor maintenance will be needed for the near future. And to ensure the structures longevity, plans are in place to create an endowment fund to cover the expense of larger, capital-related maintenance items that will inevitably occur.

FRIENDS OF THE KANAWHA
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In summary:

- CSX is a “willing seller” of the trestle and 4 to 5 acres of adjoining property at below fair market value
- Steptoe & Johnson has begun the title search to confirm real estate title to trestle acreage
- A phase one environmental study has been conducted by CSX. The report has been submitted to the City of Charleston
- Completed preliminary and secondary engineering studies found no fatal flaws. These reports are also on file with the City of Charleston
- A Master Plan has been developed Floyd Browne Group
- The project has been adopted by Sasaki Associates as part of the Riverfront Development Masterplan
- Charleston Area Alliance has featured the project as an example of ongoing community development
- Norfolk Southern is considering a “Rail with Trail” along its right of way in the city
- The project has been included in the long range transportation plan developed by the local Metropolitan Planning Organization
- Through the leadership of Congresswoman Capito an \$800,000 federal transportation appropriation has been obtained
- The city of Charleston has pledged \$475,000.00 to the Kanawha Trestle Trail
- \$60,000.00 was donated by The Greater Kanawha Valley
- To date over \$40,000 Budget Digest funds have been obtained for preliminary work related to the trestle trail
- Several thousand dollars have been donated by individuals and community organizations

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