

From: [Gordon, Paul W.](#)
To: [Gordon, Paul W.](#)
Cc: [Stone, Evan](#); [Brahler, Richard G.](#); [Joseph Golden \(jgolden@ustwp.org\)](mailto:jgolden@ustwp.org)
Subject: Newtown Rail Trail Update
Date: Tuesday, July 30, 2019 2:18:59 PM
Attachments: [image005.png](#)
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Good afternoon,

Thank you again for your interest in the Newtown Rail Trail within Upper Southampton Township.

This is our second official communication to those of you who requested to be added to this distribution list. The first email was sent on June 6, 2019. Since that time, the only additional emails or communications sent from the County were to individual property owners who requested to be added to this list after our initial email of June 6. Those individual emails contained the same information that was sent to the email distribution group on June 6.

As communicated previously, the County did hear your concerns and feedback following the open house held on May 14, 2019. Since that time, the County has been working on several fronts to address your questions and concerns. More specifically:

FENCING & LANDSCAPING

We have been working with our consultant to revise the fencing and landscaping plans. The final plans can be found here:

<https://trails-bucksgis.opendata.arcgis.com/>

- Significantly increased the overall amount of fencing landscape plantings to be provided.

Fencing: Increased +148% / 8,057 linear feet, to a total of 13,504 linear feet

Landscape Plantings: Increased +141% / 606 plantings, to a total of 1,036 plantings

- Upgraded to a more robust three rail type fence versus the previously proposed split rail fence

- The proposed fencing will now be placed along the shoulders/edges of the trail versus along the property lines along the trail corridor. This will provide a visual cue to trail users as to the area in which they should remain.

- The proposed landscaping will be between the fence and the adjacent property lines, located on the property the County will be leasing from SEPTA. No landscaping will be installed on private property. However, private property owners are free to install their own fencing and landscaping on their own property.

Again we note that these plans and the depiction of proposed landscaping and fencing are for general location purposes and construction bidding purposes. ***Final locations of all landscaping and fencing will be field verified at the time of construction to account for existing vegetation, topography and other existing site conditions affecting placement of these items. The intent is to remain as true to the plans as feasible.***

TRESPASSING

In addition to upgrading the fencing and increasing the amounts of landscaping and fencing, we will also be adding signage at 500 foot intervals reminding people to stay on the trail, and not trespass on private property.

IMPACT TO HOMEOWNER'S INSURANCE POLICIES AND PREMIUMS

We also heard your concerns regarding potential impacts to your liability insurance/homeowner's insurance policy and potential increase to your insurance premiums as a function of the trail being developed.

Throughout the development of the County's proposed trails we have documented and noted resident concerns about the likelihood of increased premiums and liability for homeowners adjacent to the trail. BCPC staff has thoroughly researched the issue and has spoken with numerous insurance brokers and industry professionals such as the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, the Pennsylvania Insurance Department; Bureaus of Consumer Services as well as numerous local insurance agents.

Insurance carriers look at each home (and its individual perils) and policy on its own merits. The only instances of an adjacent property/use being considered as having a negative premium effect on a residential property, is when the adjacent use is of a commercial / hazardous nature. This is most common where multiple homes are attached and or a multiuse property situation exists such as a restaurant adjacent to a home. This is most likely to occur in densely populated locations. *All industry experts we have spoken with said exactly the same thing: they had never heard of any example of a public space like a trail, park or recreation field ever being a factor in the pricing of an individual homeowner's policy.* Furthermore in the case of the rail trail, there is no additional peril caused by the trail as the land is separate. One industry contact even suggested that the peril is substantially reduced since the tracks are removed and the railroad has ceased operations. While the County cannot speak to each property's unique situation or insurance coverage, we remain confident that homeowners adjacent to the trail should not be subject to increased premiums, nor do they automatically take on additional peril as it relates to liability. By way of further illustration, the trail is viewed by insurance carriers no differently than the public street or sidewalk at the front of a house.

PARKING

Bucks County and Upper Southampton Township have discussed the concerns raised of the potential for people parking on adjacent residential streets to access the trail. Here are steps being taken to

address those concerns:

- As part of the improvements to Tamenend Park, the Township will be including a 70 space parking lot
- The Township and the County will be clearly communicating that trail users should make use of the parking lot at Tamenend Park or the Southampton Train Station for accessing the trails
- Lastly, the Township has indicated that if residents of a particular street are interested in requesting that their street be posted for No Parking, that they contact the township who will walk them through the process for requesting this.

TRAIL STATUS

- At this time we are currently finalizing the trail design, and securing the needed permits and approvals.
- We are also in the process of preparing the documents needed to solicit proposals for construction of the trail.
- Currently we anticipate that construction will begin in Spring 2020 and we hope to have the trail open by late Summer 2020.

Please feel free to contact me at any time with additional questions and feel free to forward this e-mail to any neighbors you feel may benefit from this correspondence.

On behalf of Richard Brahler, Director of Transportation Planning and Evan Stone, Executive Director, we appreciate your understanding and interest.

Paul W. Gordon

Senior Transportation Planner
Bucks County Planning Commission
1260 Almshouse Road
Doylestown, PA 18901
P: 215-345-3884 F: 215-345-3886
www.buckscounty.org

