

## **Newtown Rail Trail Update – August 6, 2021**

Dear Neighbors:

This announcement is the latest effort to keep you informed of the most recent developments relative to the ongoing development of the Newtown Rail Trail in Upper Southampton Township.

### **Trail Opening**

As communicated previously, the initial anticipated official opening date was intended to occur in July 2021. Unfortunately, this date has now been delayed, although we are still hopeful that the trail will open in the next few months. The opening has been delayed due to erosion issues with the trail in various locations, but particularly in the area from Second Street Pike to Tamanend Park.

The County has been working with our engineering firm, and the construction company, to determine the cause of the erosion, and to identify solutions for addressing these issues. The primary source of the erosion is due to heavier than anticipated stormwater runoff, some of which can be attributed to runoff from some adjacent properties. The County will be addressing the erosion issue via the implementation of additional stormwater management techniques to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff coming onto the trail. In addition to the implementation of stormwater management best practices, the County is looking into the option of paving portions of the trail, as well as binding the existing materials together with an environmentally safe product. It is anticipated that these improvements will mitigate the issues described above and allow us to officially open the trail.

### **Invasive Vines**

The County is also working to address the aggressive and invasive vines that are growing across the trail and the recently installed trees provided as part of the trail construction. We are currently working with the Penn State Extension and their volunteers of the Master Watershed Stewards Program to assess the invasive species and develop a management plan for us. The vine has been identified as Mile-A-Minute and can grow as much as 6" in one day. A management plan will be developed and will include removal and yearly control measures in cooperation with the Township and County personnel. In the interim, we ask for your continued patience. **The initial removal of the vines is currently anticipated to occur on Friday and Saturday, August 13 & 14, from 9am – 12pm.** However, please note that these dates are subject to change.

### **Potentially Hazardous Trees**

The County is also aware that several of the existing mature trails within the SEPTA-owned/County-leased right-of-way have fallen and damaged the fence posts and fencing we installed. Recognizing that this has the potential to pose an ongoing safety issue, the

County is in the process of working with an arborist to identify trees that might need to be removed. As you may recall, we originally left as many mature trees as possible to provide an additional landscape buffer for adjacent properties. However, based on our experience to date, we now need to reevaluate the need to remove some of these mature trees which are diseased and pose a potential threat not only to trail users, but to adjacent properties. Once the tree assessment is completed, those trees identified as posing a potential hazard will be removed. Again, with rare exception, the trees to be removed will be those located in SEPTA-owned right-of-way. However, there may be instances where a tree is located both on private property and SEPTA property. In those instances, before the tree is removed, the private property owner will be contacted to obtain permission to remove the tree. **The tree removal process will begin the week of August 9 and is estimated to take approximately 2 weeks to complete.**

### **Replacement of dead plantings**

As you are aware, extensive landscaping was provided as part of the overall construction of the trail project. Although most of these trees and shrubs have survived to date, we are aware of instances where the initial plantings have not survived. The County has a replacement guarantee with the landscape company that installed the trees and as part of the final inspection of the trail, any trees and shrubs that did not survive, will be replaced.

### **Road crossings**

As there is still the potential need for construction vehicles to access the trail to address some of the issues identified above, the gates, and in some instances, removable bollards, have not yet been installed where the trail crosses the street. These will be installed once all construction activity has been completed. The township will have keys to any gates installed at the road crossings for emergency vehicle access.

Should you have any questions, please check the Newtown Rail Trail website located at <https://www.buckscounty.gov/1081/Newtown-Rail-Trail-Updates> or contact Richard Brahler, Director of Transportation Planning, Bucks County Planning Commission at 215-345-3427 or [rgbrahler@buckscounty.org](mailto:rgbrahler@buckscounty.org).