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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Trail Development Update	5
Trail Benefits	15
Barriers to Closing Gaps	25
Community & Stakeholder Engagement	29
Trail Inventory	33
Implementation Strategies	55
Next Steps	59
Appendix & Resources	61



Introduction

People across the Lehigh Valley consistently list trails among the region's greatest assets, but successfully closing gaps in the trail network is complex and often takes many years to complete. It can require alignment among multiple stakeholders throughout the Lehigh Valley including municipalities, county agencies, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private partners.

Projects must comply with local, state and federal regulations, in many cases while intersecting with waterways, transportation corridors and environmentally sensitive areas. Securing funds for design, land acquisition and construction can also be a lengthy and expensive process.

Even with the many obstacles, significant progress has been made across the region since the 2013 inventory was completed.

Many of the gaps identified at the time have moved closer to closure through successful grant funding, planning efforts and construction of trail segments within the gaps. These accomplishments reflect a decade of coordinated work between regional partners and demonstrates the continued commitment to building a more connected and accessible trail network throughout the Lehigh Valley. This section highlights those original gaps and explains the work that has been done.

Trails are more than lines on a map or paths along our rivers and streams — they're how a region breathes. They give people a safe, simple way to move, connect and slow down, whether that's a morning bike commute to work, an evening walk, or a weekend escape into green space.

A strong trail network knits communities together, connects us to neighbors, supports public health and local economies, and turns open space into shared places, making a region not just easier to get around, but better to live in. Beyond recreation and mobility, trails also function as resilient infrastructure that supports ecological integrity and hazard mitigation.

In the Lehigh Valley, they are what people say they like best about living here.

For the importance of trails to our mobility, health and economy, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission has created an inventory of existing, planned and future trail infrastructure in the Lehigh Valley. This information helps identify trail infrastructure gaps, benchmark them against regional goals and prioritize how those gaps can be closed. This report and analysis translates regional goals, shown in municipal plans across the Lehigh Valley and regional plans such as *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, *WalkRollLV: Active Transportation Plan*, and *Livable Landscapes* into actionable locations, where the network fails to function as a true continuous system, and gives stakeholders a roadmap for fixing it.

In addition to this report, there is a complimentary interactive mapping tool at lvpc.org, that has been designed to coordinate the regional trail system and track gap closures, setting the stage for organized implementation across the region. The previous iteration of this report, the *Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory*, was completed in 2013, and many changes have occurred since then as this region grows, develops and evolves.

This report provides up-to-date trail data, which will inform regional stakeholders about the status of trail infrastructure and further support the build out of the regional trail network. This effort supports other active transportation initiatives throughout the Lehigh Valley for both commuter and recreational options. Municipalities and trail partners can use information included in this document to support funding applications for trail improvements.





Trail Development Update

Closing trail gaps is a complicated and intentional process that requires partnerships, funding, organization and patience. Trails cross many properties involving sometimes dozens of owners, all of whom need to agree to the addition of a recreational facility to their land or to sell it to a government agency or conservancy. Once property is acquired, investigation for contamination, threatened and endangered species, flood plains, steep slopes and other natural and manmade considerations must occur. Any protections for the community and plants, soil, water and wildlife are important to balancing recreational and natural assets, including people.

Resource identification is followed by engineering and approvals prior to any remediation or construction. With limited, but very important, grants available for trail projects, timelines to close important gaps can take decades. Fortunately, the Lehigh Valley has a multitude of deep, long-term partnerships that have resulted in more than 300 miles of trails we enjoy today. While much remains to be done, progress has been made since the Lehigh Valley Trail Inventory – 2013.

A special thanks to every dedicated, thoughtful and persistent trail advocate who has and continues to work toward a seamless regionwide and multiregional trail system.

The last trail gap analysis by the LVPC was completed in 2013 with the publishing of the *Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory – 2013 Lehigh and Northampton Counties*.

The following trails were identified in the 2013 Inventory as the Top Ten gaps in the region at that time. It is important to note that while some of these trail gaps remain, an incredible amount of work has been completed to move to closure, including many successes in receiving funding and building new infrastructure to help address these gaps.

2013 Top Trail Gaps

Trail Gap 1: Cedar Creek Trail to Little Lehigh Parkway Path
Trail Gap 2: Jordan Creek Greenway Trail
Trail Gap 3: D&L Trail to Ironton Rail Trail
Trail Gap 4: Nor-Bath Trail to D&L Trail
Trail Gap 5: D&L Trail Environmental Obstructions
Trail Gap 6: D&L Trail - Dauphin and Bradford Streets Share the Road
Trail Gap 7: South Bethlehem Greenway Trail to Saucon Rail Trail
Trail Gap 8: Karl Stirner Arts Trail to Palmer Township Bike Path
Trail Gap 9: Tatamy Rail Trail to Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center (JEEC)
Trail Gap 10: Bushkill Township PPL Trail to Appalachian Trail





Cedar Creek Trail / Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 1: Cedar Creek Trail to Little Lehigh Parkway Path

Municipalities: City of Allentown, Salisbury Township

Start: Little Lehigh Parkway Path at Kline’s Bridge, Allentown

End: Cedar Beach Trail at Hamilton Street, Allentown

Status update: This gap has been identified by the City of Allentown as phase two of the Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) Drive Trail extension project. As of 2026, the design and engineering for phase two of the trail gap closure project is out for bid. Phase one construction, between the Little Lehigh Parkway Path and Fountain Park, is underway, and the two phases together will create continuous trail from the Cedar Creek Trail at Hamilton Street to the MLK Drive trailhead at South 4th Street.



Jordan Creek Greenway
Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 2: Jordan Creek Greenway Trail

Municipalities: City of Allentown, Lowhill Township, North Whitehall Township, South Whitehall Township, Whitehall Township

Start: Gordon Street at Jordan Meadows Park, Allentown

End: Jordan Road at Trexler Nature Preserve, Lowhill Township

Status update: New trail has been constructed in multiple areas since 2013. Continuous trail has been constructed from MacArthur Road to Mauch Chunk Road. There has been new trail construction on both the east and west sides of Covered Bridge Park in South Whitehall Township, and there is a segment of trail that now runs from Lapp Road to Route 309, through Covered Bridge Park. Trail gaps remain on the Jordan Creek Greenway, from Mauch Chunk Road to Lapp Road, and from Route 309 to Trexler Nature Preserve.



Ironton Railtrail / Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 3: D&L Trail to Ironton Rail Trail

Municipalities: Coplay Borough, Whitehall Township

Start: D&L Trail at Cementon Trailhead, Whitehall Township

End: Ironton Rail Trail at Saylor Park, Coplay Borough

Status update: Since the last plan, Lehigh County has continued to have discussions with Norfolk Southern, the entity that owns the rights-of-way needed for trail construction. The County is raising additional funds to be able to purchase the land.



Nor-Bath Trail / Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 4: Nor-Bath Trail to Delaware & Lehigh Trail

Municipalities: Northampton Borough

Start: Clear Springs Drive, Northampton Borough

End: D&L Trail at Northampton Canal, Northampton Borough

Status update: The proposed alignment of the trail connection has been changed and partially constructed. The Nor-Bath Trail has been extended approximately an additional half-mile, from its 2013 terminus at Clear Springs Drive in Northampton Borough, to the intersection of Main Street and 10th Street. Planning is ongoing to determine the route of the final connection to the Northampton Canal trailhead of the D&L Trail.



D&L Trail / Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 5: D&L Trail: North Catasauqua

Municipalities: Catasauqua Borough, Northampton Borough, North Catasauqua Borough

Start: D&L Trail approx. 0.5 miles south of Northampton Canal Trailhead

End: D&L Trail near Race Street, Catasauqua Borough

Status update: Trail gaps 5A and 5B from the 2013 Lehigh Valley Trails Inventory have been closed as part of the Northampton and North Catasauqua Trail Improvements Project in 2022. Trail gap 5C, at the Race Street and Lehigh Street intersection is complete.



D&L Trail / Photo credit: LVPC

Trail Gap 6: D&L Trail – Dauphin and Bradford Streets Share the Road

Municipalities: City of Allentown

Start: Kimmitt's Lock, Allentown

End: D&L Trail at N. Bradford Street, Allentown

Status update: This project is in the final engineering phase. Final designs are being prepared to meet permitting needs. Projects are being led by the City of Allentown and Hanover Township.



Left to right: Basel Yandem, City of Bethlehem, Becky Bradley, LVPC, Michael Allehal, City of Bethlehem, J. William Reynolds, City of Bethlehem, Phillips Armstrong, Lehigh County, Lamont G. McClure, Jr., Northampton County and Ryan Meyer, Lehigh and Northampton Airport Authority. Photo credit: LVPC / Photo Date: 7-23-25

Trail Gap 7: South Bethlehem Greenway Trail to Saucon Rail Trail

Municipalities: City of Bethlehem, Hellertown Borough

Start: South Bethlehem Greenway at Auburn Street, Bethlehem

End: Saucon Rail Trail at Bachman Street, Hellertown Borough

Status update: A 0.9-mile gap separates the South Bethlehem Greenway from the Saucon Rail Trail, which has prevented an active transportation connection between Bethlehem and Hellertown. The gap also separates the Lehigh Valley's regional trail network, the LINK, from the Circuit Trails, greater Philadelphia's trail network. Due to the gap's local and regional significance, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) identified it as a top 10 trail gap in the Commonwealth. Various funding sources have been utilized to take steps to help close the trail gap, including Transportation Alternative Set-Aside funds allocated through the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study,

PA DCNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Highlands Conservation Act Grant, Northampton County Livable Landscapes Grant Program and congressional Community Project Funding. The final phase to construct the Greenway extension is now fully funded, with construction in 2026. The connected South Bethlehem Greenway and Saucon Rail Trail will provide 13.7 miles of safe and accessible trail for all users, to link together parks and open space, residential areas and commercial and cultural hubs.

Trail Gap 8: Karl Stirner Arts Trail to Palmer Township Bike Path

Municipalities: City of Easton, Palmer Township, Wilson Borough

Start: Karl Stirner Arts Trail at 13th Street, Easton

End: Palmer Bikeway at Edgewood Avenue, Palmer Township

Status update: This approximately one mile trail gap spans from the Edgewood Avenue trailhead of the Palmer Bikeway in Palmer Township, to the Karl Stirner Arts Trail trailhead in Easton, near the Easton Silk Mill. No new trail has been constructed in this segment since 2013, however, it is identified in planning documents such as Walk/RollLV and remains a priority to be connected in the future.

Factors affecting the closure of this gap include possible development of a large parcel of land on the south side of the Bushkill Creek that makes up a large portion of the gap, and high traffic and difficult sight lines for cyclists and drivers on Bushkill Drive, on the north side of the creek.

Photo credit: LVPC / Karl Stirner Arts Trail





Photo Credit: LVPC / Buskill Township - Jacobsburg Park

Trail Gap 9: Tatamy Rail Trail to Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center (JEEC)

Municipalities: Bushkill Township, Plainfield Township, Stockertown Borough, Tatamy Borough

Start: Tatamy Trail trailhead at Main Street, Tatamy Borough

End: Plainfield Township trailhead at Main Street (PA 191), Bushkill Township

Status update: This trail gap spans a handful of municipalities and separates four trails, the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center Trails, Plainfield Township Recreation Trail and Tatamy Rail Trail. Significant progress to close the trail gap has been made since 2013. Stockertown Borough has constructed a multi-use trail (Stockertown Rails-to-Trails) from Sherman Metzgar Park to the Belfast Junction trailhead of the Plainfield Township Trail. However, to connect from one trail to the other, trail users must navigate an unmarked crossing of Route 191/Main Street. From this junction, there is a conceptual trail connection to the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center, which has been partially constructed.

“Since 2013, the trail gap has received \$654,000 in funding from both the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) program and from DCNR to help finalize this trail gap. In 2025, a segment of trail was constructed from the Center’s southern entrance at Henry Road to Filetown Road, aligned along Route 33. The remainder of the conceptual route is anticipated to cross Route 33 at Filetown Road and continue along the Route 33 rights-of-way until the junction of the Plainfield and Stockertown trails. An additional gap remains from Sherman Metzgar Park in Stockertown, to the Tatamy Trail trailhead at Main Street. In 2025, Northampton County used Highlands Conservation Act Grant Award funding to purchase 43 acres of open space that includes the area of the trail gap in Stockertown Borough, which will help facilitate future trail construction.

Trail Gap 10: Bushkill Township PPL Trail to Appalachian Trail

Municipalities: Bushkill Township, Plainfield Township

Start: Bushkill Township Trail parking lot at East Moorestown Road (PA 512), Bushkill Township

End: Appalachian Trail near Route 33, Plainfield Township

Status update: Additional trail has been constructed, from the trailhead at E. Moorestown Road (Route 512), east along the road to Professional Drive. The Township and warehouse developers on the north side of Route 512 have agreed to allow future trail construction on the property.

To reach the Appalachian Trail, future trail development will likely be along utility rights-of-way and on-road segments of low-volume roads. Additional coordination between the Township, state agencies and property owners will be needed.

Photo Credit: Google Maps / Buskill Township - PPL Trail





Trail Benefits

Trails have become increasingly recognized as essential assets in Lehigh Valley communities. Trails can deliver a wide range of transportation, recreational, environmental, and economic benefits. The trail system serves as an important component of transportation networks, improving connectivity, providing accessible opportunities for physical activity, improving environmental resilience, and increasing economic activity. The wide range of benefits extend beyond the traditional belief of a strictly recreational asset.

As part of a connected network, they offer safe routes for walking and rolling that link places such as schools, workplaces, parks and transit stops, helping people travel without solely relying on motor vehicles. Trail infrastructure contributes to environmental resilience by preserving natural features, supporting stormwater management, and preserving ecological connections. Trails also generate economic value by attracting tourism and visitors, supporting local business and increasing property values. As communities look for ways to improve quality of life, investment in trail infrastructure has become increasingly valuable.

Trails as Transportation

Trails provide a critical transportation mode, linking people to key recreation, open space, education, workplace and other desired destinations, without a car and at little or no expense. They provide, reliable, safe and accessible corridors for walking, bicycling and other non-motorized forms of travel. These systems support and enhance traditional transportation infrastructure including roadways and transit, allowing for personal modal choice, supporting emerging

transportation technologies such as e-bikes and providing increasing opportunities at all ages and abilities to experience the region's abundant natural and recreational resources. These transportation systems provide low cost and accessible linkages to our daily destinations, while minimizing traditional infrastructure impacts and costs. This section reviews how our trails service as an important part of the transportation network.

Trails are an integral part of the transportation system, offering an affordable, flexible and healthy option for travel. The benefits to communities and trail users are many.

Trails reduce dependence on fossil fuels and offer residents healthier, more affordable commuting options by encouraging active mobility.

Trails provide safe, accessible routes for walking, biking and largely non-motorized forms of travel. These pathways help people move between neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and public transit stops without relying on cars, filling critical gaps in the transportation system.

Trails also bridge “last-mile” gaps to transit stations and employment centers, improving access for all users.

Connectivity is one of the greatest transportation benefits of trails. When designed as part of a regional or municipal system, trails link key destinations and form continuous corridors that make active travel both feasible and attractive. This not only benefits individuals but also reduces vehicle congestion, leading to cleaner air and less wear on road infrastructure.

For people who cannot or choose not to drive, such as youths, seniors or zero-vehicle households, trails offer a safe and free means of getting around. Expanding multimodal options allows communities to create inclusive transportation systems that support all residents, regardless of income or ability.

Trails as Recreation

Trails provide a physical connection to access our community's natural and cultural landscapes, while allowing us to be physical as we use them – whether walking, running, or cycling, the experience is much different than it would be sitting in a car or bus. Trails not only serve as a means to connect us to places to recreate such as parks, playgrounds, lakes, streams, sports fields, fishing spots, boat launches or campsites, they often are the source of recreational activity.

Whether you like to walk, bird watch, ride a bike, run, or roll, trails are usually how you access these places and in so doing, you are also recreating. These experiences build appreciation for maintaining and stewarding our trail network and the many unique and special places that the network allows us to experience. This section shows the many ways trails increase our region's recreation options.

Trails offer access to outdoor environments that reduce stress and improve mental health, giving people an accessible way to experience nature close to home.

Trails encourage regular physical activity such as walking, running and cycling, which improves cardiovascular health and reduces obesity and chronic disease rates.

Trails serve as community gathering places for casual encounters, family outings and organized events like charity walks or fun runs.

Social interaction is a core benefit. This fosters stronger community ties and creates spaces that promote inclusivity and shared experiences. A well-designed trail system can also become a source of local pride and identity.

Trails showcase and protect natural, historic and cultural resources.

Finally, trails connect people to nature and cultural landscapes, rivers, forests, farmland, and historic sites, helping build appreciation for environmental stewardship and heritage preservation.

Trails as Resilient Infrastructure

Resiliency is defined as, “The capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.” Trails add that toughness to our ecological community and landscape features in locations across the region. They are often one of many “spokes” in a community’s green infrastructure network – a connected system of nature-based corridors such as trails, greenways or riparian buffers that harness the benefits of ecological design. Trails, a type of green infrastructure, are sometimes constructed in or adjacent to ecologically sensitive areas such as wetlands, woodlands and floodplains.

Trail design must incorporate systems and materials that protect habitat and provide recreation opportunities. By incorporating ecologically sensitive design such as vegetative stormwater management practices and considering site constraints, trails may be better adapted to recover from natural weather events more quickly than traditional gray infrastructure. This section shows some of the ways trails make our environment more resilient.

Trails can help minimize impacts to wetlands and streams and increase site stabilization through climate adaptive practices.

Trails can be key components of green infrastructure networks, which can incorporate elements such as permeable pavements, rain gardens and bioswales, that all work together to manage stormwater and reduce flooding.

Trails can serve a functional role during emergencies.

Because they are often continuous and separated from major roadways, trails may act as alternative routes for emergency access or evacuation during floods, storms or traffic disruptions. This makes them valuable assets for community resilience and safety planning.

From a climate adaptation perspective, trails contribute to reducing urban heat islands by maintaining vegetated corridors and shade.

They preserve open space and habitat connectivity, supporting biodiversity and ecosystem health. Integrating trails into broader greenway or watershed planning efforts ensures that infrastructure investments achieve multiple objectives, transportation, recreation, stormwater management and climate resilience, all within one project.

Photo Credit: LVPC



Trails as Economic Generators

Trails generate economic activity in the Lehigh Valley as quantified in documents such as the 2014 Lehigh Valley Return on Environment Study and the 2025 Northampton County Return on Environment update. Studies referenced in the 2020 Walk/Roll LV- Active Transportation Plan note that Americans increasingly want to live in communities that are walk, bike and roll friendly, which has led to higher property values and higher property tax revenues in communities that invest in active transportation.

Trail users spend money at nearby businesses, purchase specialized equipment and clothing, purchase parts at repair shops, and generally support local communities they visit. Ultimately, trails boost tourism, raise property values and increase recreation-related spending across a region that has a reputation as one of Pennsylvania's most visited for recreational options. This section takes a closer look at how those benefits add up.

Trails provide significant direct and indirect economic and health benefits to the region.

The *2014 Lehigh Valley Return on Environment* study estimated over \$80 million in direct economic impacts annually from walking and bicycling activities. This includes direct spending on outerwear, athletic wear and equipment as well as generating income for trail users and supporting businesses such as restaurants, trail side cafes, and bike repair shops. Property values are also boosted by trails, as various case studies show that homes near them are valued higher and have elevated demand.

In the Lehigh Valley, there are many greenway and trail corridors in residential areas, such as the Jordan Creek, Bushkill Creek, Monocacy Way and more, which can boost surrounding property values from 5% to 32%, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The *Lehigh Valley Return on Environment* study calculated property values near a trail or park increased by \$14,600.

Trails contribute to local tourism and business development.

Visitors drawn to scenic or connected trail networks often spend money on food, lodging and recreation, boosting local economies. Studies, including the *2014 Lehigh Valley Return on Environment*, show that homes and businesses near well-maintained trails enjoy higher property values and increased customer traffic.





Barriers to Closing Gaps

Despite broad support, closing gaps in the Lehigh Valley's trail system remains a persistent challenge.

Trail gaps are often the result of a number of factors including historical land-use decisions, natural barriers or funding shortfalls. The process of closing these gaps is complex, requiring alignment among multiple Lehigh Valley stakeholders, regulatory compliance at all levels, and substantial financial resources.

Funding and Cost Barriers

One of the most significant obstacles to closing trail gaps and completing trail networks is securing adequate funding. Trails are often considered amenities rather than transportation infrastructure. This means that trail projects must compete for already limited funds against transportation projects focused on road maintenance, bridge repairs and transit improvements. If grants are available for trail projects, they may require local matches, which can be difficult for some communities and organizations to secure.

Cost estimating can be uncertain. Overruns are common due to rising material prices, complexities in the design phase, or even unexpected environmental issues. In some cases, the per-mile cost of trail projects is higher in gap areas because of constrained rights-of-way or the need for infrastructure upgrades or unique engineering solutions. These financial barriers can delay a project for years, leaving the gaps unaddressed.

Land Acquisition and Rights-of-Way Issues

Acquiring land to close trail gaps can be complex, expensive and time-consuming. Many of the conceptual trail corridors cross privately owned parcels, and negotiating easements or purchases can be contentious. Property owners may resist providing easements due to concerns regarding liability and privacy. Property owners may also resist selling property due to concerns over perceived negative impacts to remaining adjacent property they own.

In more urban areas in the region, high land costs and dense development can complicate land acquisition even more. Gaps may also occur along railways for rails-to-trails efforts. Rights-of-way acquisition for railways may require piecemeal negotiations with multiple landowners or difficult negotiations with rail companies. Without legal access to a more continuous corridor, trail projects may be forced to pursue expensive detours or risk delays.

Environmental and Regulatory Constraints

Environmental considerations can slow the development of a trail. Trails are frequently in areas that intersect with wetlands, floodplains, rivers or endangered species habitats. These projects will require special considerations to mitigate natural resource impacts, and in most cases, trigger specific permitting requirements. Compliance with federal and state environmental regulations, such as National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) serve important conservation purposes but often result in delays that can bring frustration to a trail project.

These considerations need to be factored early in the design and approval process to ensure successful integration with natural resources. Mitigation measures like constructing elevated boardwalks or implementing stormwater controls can significantly increase project costs. Balancing ecological preservation and easy trail connectivity is an ongoing challenge.

Stakeholder Coordination Challenges

Coordination among stakeholders can often be one of the most complex barriers to closing a trail gap. Trail gaps may span multiple jurisdictions such as counties and municipalities. This can require careful collaboration and long-term commitment. Differing priorities, timelines and funding capacity can stall or cancel projects, especially when one jurisdiction is unwilling or unable to work to advance a portion of a project.

Photo Credit: LVPC

Stakeholder conflicts may also arise, such as advocacy for different aspects of a trail project. Advocates for recreation, conservationists concerned about ecological impacts, transportation planners and local residents often have differing priorities. Achieving consensus on design, alignment and maintenance is a time-consuming process that can delay a project.





Community and Stakeholder Engagement

In 2025 LVPC staff solicited input from municipalities, county agencies, non-profits and regional partners through a variety of methods including stakeholder meetings, interviews and surveys.

Survey participants reviewed the LVPC interactive map and provided corrections, status updates, project descriptions, and links or offers to share Geographic Information System (GIS) files. Several responses included detailed project status including design, permitting, funding, grant amounts or applications, and specific physical or jurisdictional barriers.

This engagement provided valuable information used to verify and expand the Trail Connection Strategy and to document active, planned and conceptual trail work throughout the Lehigh Valley.

The objective of the outreach was to validate existing mapped trail assets, identify and describe persistent trail gaps and the barriers to closing them, to collect information on project status, funding, permitting, and obtain available spatial data in support of the regional inventory. The surveys were sent to local governments, county staff and multiple local trail advocacy organizations. A total of 24 surveys were completed.

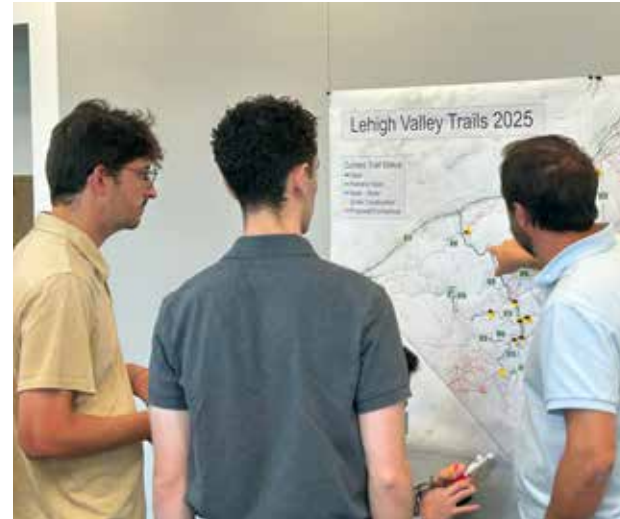


Left to right: Front Row > Rob Neitz, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Evan Gardi, LVPC, Brit Kondravy, D+L National Heritage Corridor, Christian Martinez, LVPC Middle > Bryan Cope, Northampton County, Scott Slingerland, Coalition for Appropriate Transportation, Brandon Sullivan and Trevor Pinho, City of Easton, Sherry Acevedo, Northampton County, Jeff Rau, PA Department of Transportation
Photo credit: LVPC

Survey participants repeatedly cited the following core challenges to implementing trail projects:

- Funding was the most frequently noted obstacle, including capital and maintenance costs for bridges, crossings and trail surfacing.
- Land acquisition and private property, including a lack of easements or unwilling landowners
- Permitting and environmental constraints, including National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stream permitting, environmental review timelines and coordination with state agencies.
- Jurisdictional fragmentation. Trails that end at municipal boundaries or require multi-jurisdictional agreements create issues for securing rights-of-way and maintenance responsibility.
- Safety and design issues, including difficult or hazardous road crossings, grade and railroad obstructions and lack of Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility.
- Lack of political or community will, including occasional local resistance or competing land use priorities that prevent acquisition or trail alignment choices.

Photo Credit: LVPC



Left to Right: Evan Gardi and Clay Karnis, LVPC, Bryan Cope, Northampton County



Left to Right: Chris Stroehler, South Whitehall Township and Clay Karnis, LVPC

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Lehigh Valley benefits from a strong base of rail-trail and greenway assets but connectivity between the networks is uneven. Major crossings and private parcels are significant constraints. Closing a relatively small number of linkages could substantially increase regional connectedness. Projects with committed funding and completed design and permitting demonstrate that the primary bottleneck for many gaps is right-of-way acquisitions and long-lead time coordination, rather than technical feasibility. In addition to the survey, the LVPC hosted and presented at two meetings of THE LINK Trail Network committee.

THE LINK is an interconnected network of multi-use trails across the Lehigh Valley and consists of over 125 miles of trails that connect into many more trail systems outside of the Lehigh Valley. These include Philadelphia, the Pocono Mountains, New York, New Jersey and various other regions. It is supported by a network of regional partners committed to enhancing this valuable resource. The partners meet often to discuss the growth of the Lehigh Valley's trail network. The LVPC presented survey results, mapping and preliminary findings at two LINK partner meetings to discuss the update to the Trail Inventory, the prioritization process and to gather input on the major trail gaps identified in the Lehigh Valley.



Left to right: Front Row > Rob Neitz, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Evan Gardi, LVPC, Christian Martinez, LVPC, Kent Baird, Brit Kondravy, D+L Heritage Corridor, Bryan Cope, Northampton County, Scott Slingerland, Coalition for Appropriate Transportation, Clay Karnis, LVPC, Brandon Sullivan, City of Easton and Sherry Acevedo, Northampton County

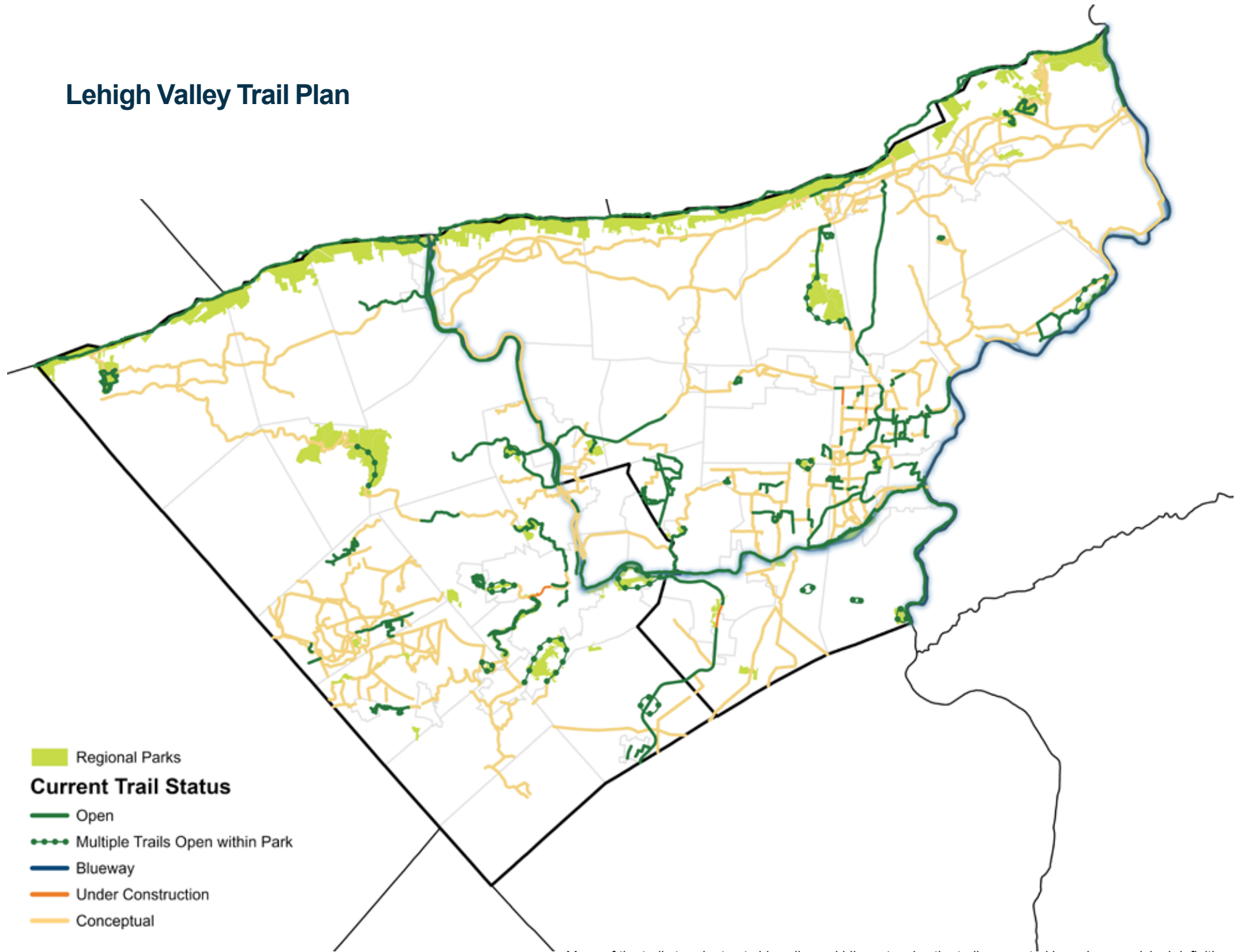


Trail Inventory

Based on information gathered, LVPC compiled an inventory of all trail infrastructure in the Lehigh Valley. The map is broken into three trail status categories: Open, Under Construction and Conceptual.

- Open trails include those that can currently be utilized throughout the region. These trails range from recreation only hiking trails, to commuter corridors, to winding pathways through the Lehigh Valley's parks and open spaces.
- Under Construction trails include any trail projects that are in the process of being built.
- Conceptual trails include all potential trail connections noted in municipal, county or regional plans, and those gathered during the community and stakeholder engagement phase of this effort.

Lehigh Valley Trail Plan

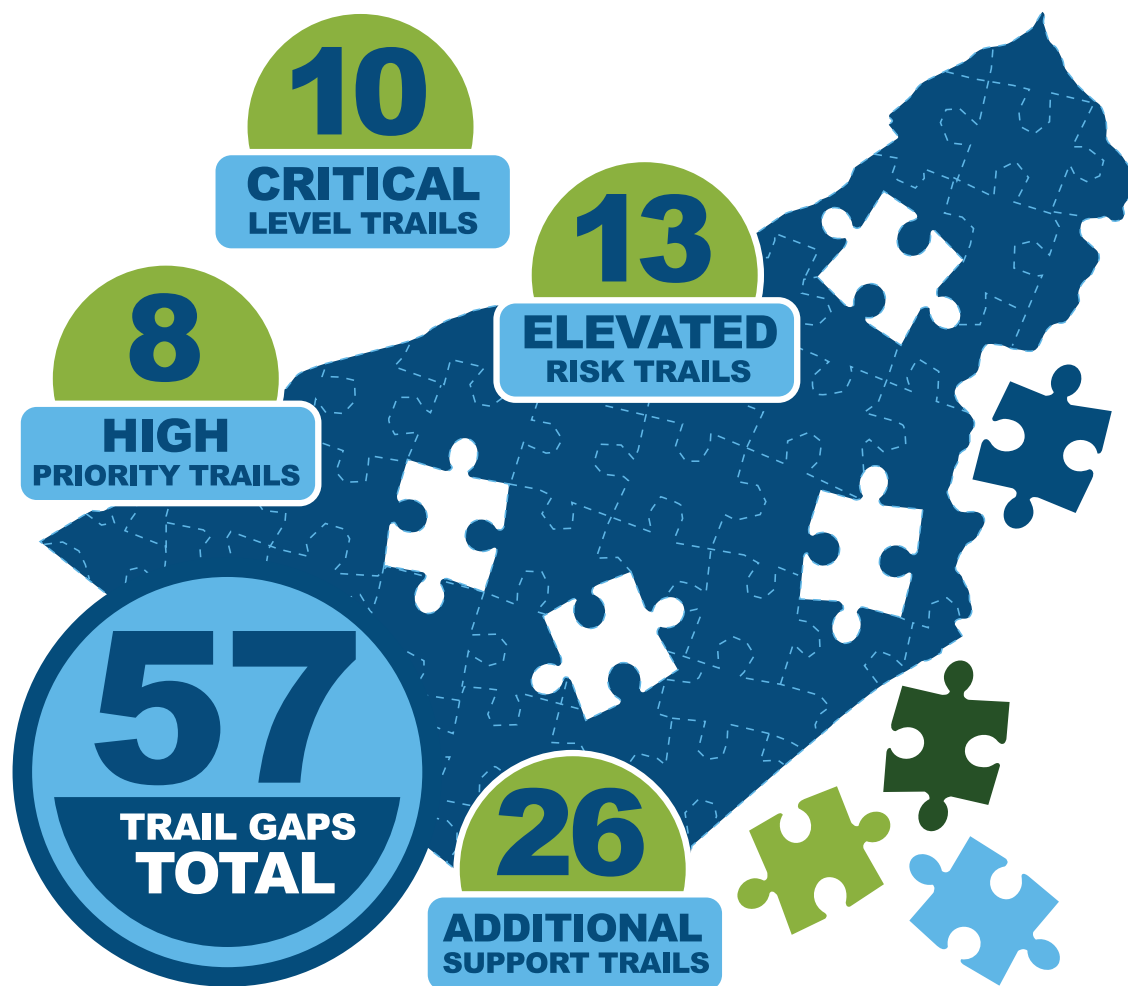


Many of the trails terminate at sidewalks and bike networks; the trails are noted based on municipal definitions.

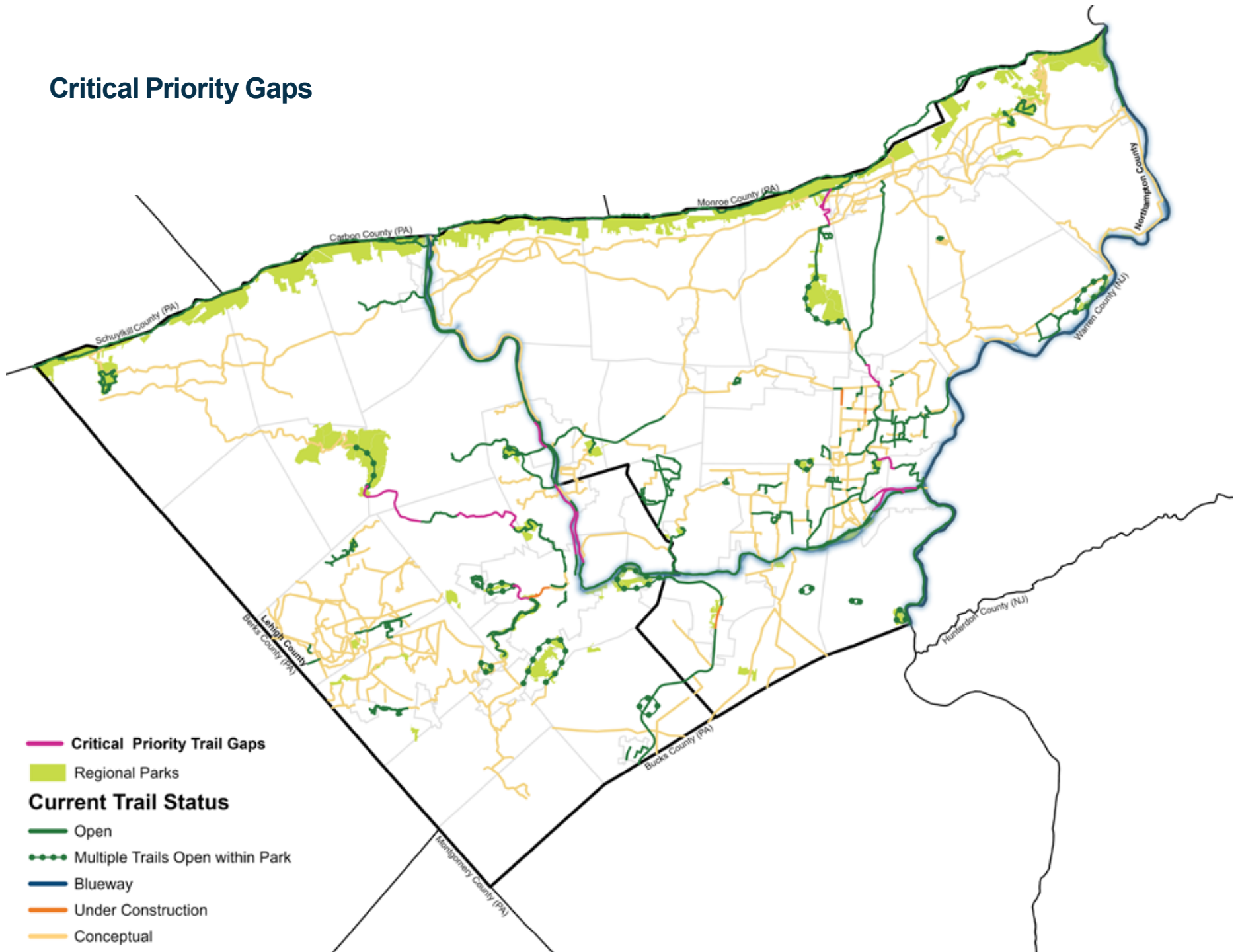
Piecing the Gaps

Fifty-seven trail gaps were evaluated and a complex, data-driven & geospatial analysis was done to determine classifications that helped set priorities for how regional leaders will work to close trail gaps in the coming years. The top 10 critical gaps are those trails that have the most significant impact in the region, closing major trail gaps in the regional network.

The additional High, Elevated, and Supporting priority gaps are still important for the region overall but during the analysis did not have as high of a regional impact. A more detailed description of the methodology used to determine the trail gap rankings can be found in the appendix at the end of this document.



Critical Priority Gaps



Many of the trails terminate at sidewalks and bike networks; the trails are noted based on municipal definitions.

JORDAN CREEK GREENWAY TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 1



Municipalities: South Whitehall Township, Whitehall Township

Start: Mauch Chunk Road at Jordan Creek Park, South Whitehall Township

End: East end of Covered Bridge Park, South Whitehall Township

Description: The Jordan Creek Greenway & Trail aims to connect existing protected open spaces creating a continuous greenway corridor along the Jordan Creek that provides recreational and environmental benefits. Closing this gap would connect Covered Bridge Park and Parkland High School and provide a continuous trail between these locations and neighborhoods and other parks in South Whitehall, Whitehall, and Allentown.

Status: Rights-of-way have been secured, and design and engineering have been completed between N. Cedar Crest Boulevard and Covered Bridge Park. This section of trail will also serve Parkland High School. South Whitehall Township is awaiting grants for construction funding. From N. Cedar Crest Boulevard to Mauch Chunk Road, the Township is engaged in discussions with property owners, and trail development in this stretch is intended to be included in future land development plans.

Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Blueway
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



JORDAN CREEK GREENWAY TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 2

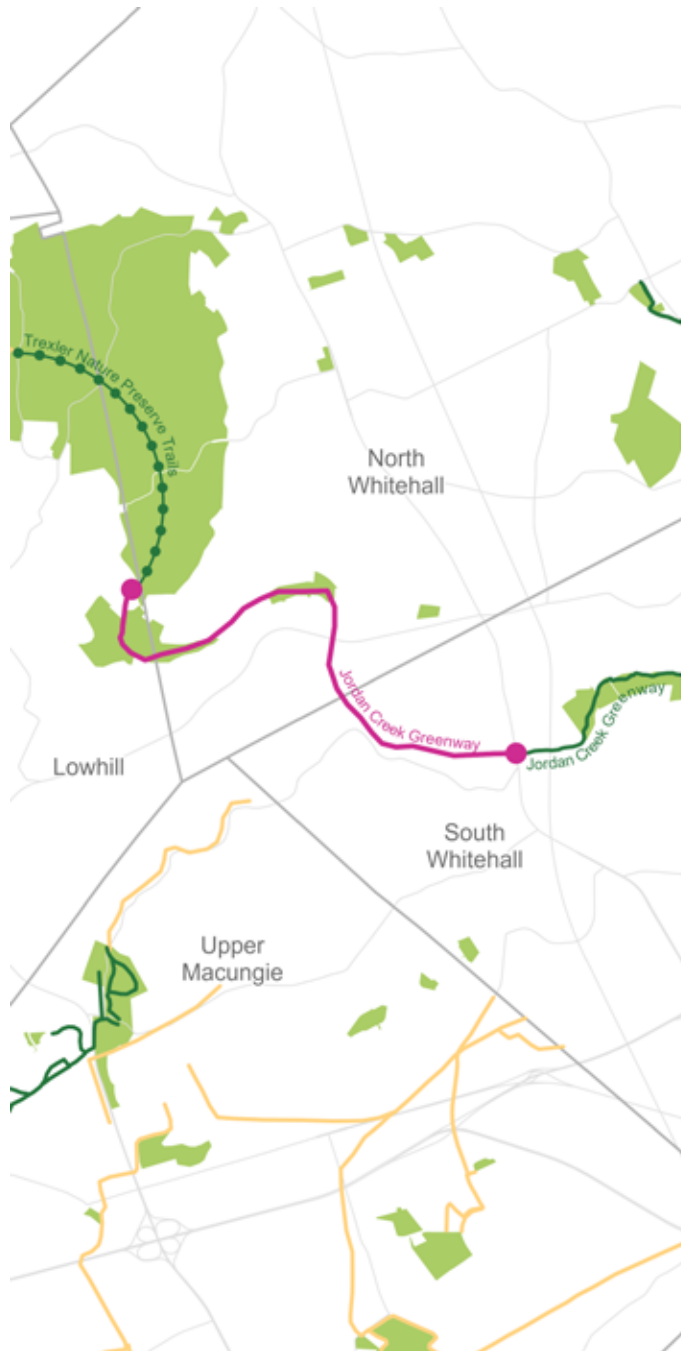
Municipalities: Lowhill Township, North Whitehall Township, South Whitehall Township

Start: Route 309 bridge over Jordan Creek, South Whitehall Township

End: Trexler Nature Preserve, North Whitehall Township & Lowhill Township

Description: The Jordan Creek Greenway & Trail aims to connect existing protected open spaces creating a continuous greenway corridor along the Jordan Creek that provides recreational and environmental benefits. Closing this gap would connect to popular outdoor recreation destinations, Trexler Nature Preserve and Covered Bridge Park. This section of the Greenway could also connect through the historic village of Guthsville, an area of cultural and recreational significance for South Whitehall Township. Closing the two critical trail gap segments in the Jordan Creek Greenway would provide continuous trail from Allentown to Trexler Nature Preserve, greatly enhancing outdoor recreation and multimodal connectivity across Lehigh County.

Status: Starting from Trexler Nature Preserve, Lehigh County is managing trail development from the southern end of the Preserve to Jordan Road, near the Rex Covered Bridge. Land has already been acquired for this segment and final engineering and permitting is occurring. From this point, east to the start of the gap at Route 309, planning is in progress, but there has been no land acquisition as of December 2025. North Whitehall and South Whitehall Townships are managing trail development efforts in these sections within their respective jurisdictions.



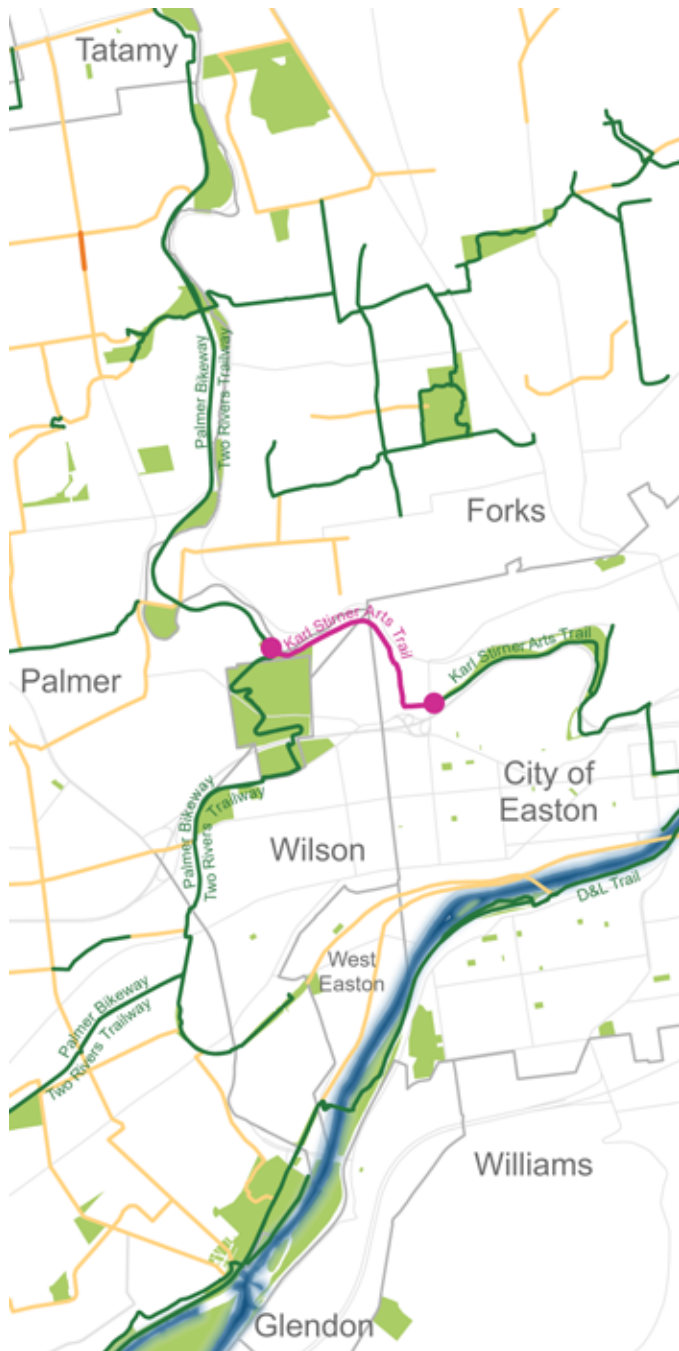
Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



KARL STIRNER ARTS TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 3



Municipalities: Palmer Township, Wilson Borough, City of Easton

Start: N. 13th Street at Simon Silk Mill, City of Easton

End: Palmer Bikeway at Hackett Park, Palmer Township

Description: Construction of trail in this gap would make the Karl Stirner Arts Trail continuous, providing a spur route from the Palmer Bikeway to the Simon Silk Mill, downtown Easton and Lafayette College. Constructing trail in this segment would provide a safer alternative for cyclists, as the current shortest connection, Bushkill Drive, is dangerous due to high vehicle speeds and short sight lines.

Status: There are two likely routings for trail in this gap. One is for trail to be constructed along the Bushkill Creek with land development activities at the former pigment plant site. This would likely connect at the Edgewood Avenue trailhead. However, it is uncertain what will go in at the site and when. The second option is to route trail along Hackett Avenue and connect with the Palmer Bikeway/Two Rivers Trailway at or near Hackett Park. Coordination is ongoing between the municipalities and landowners.

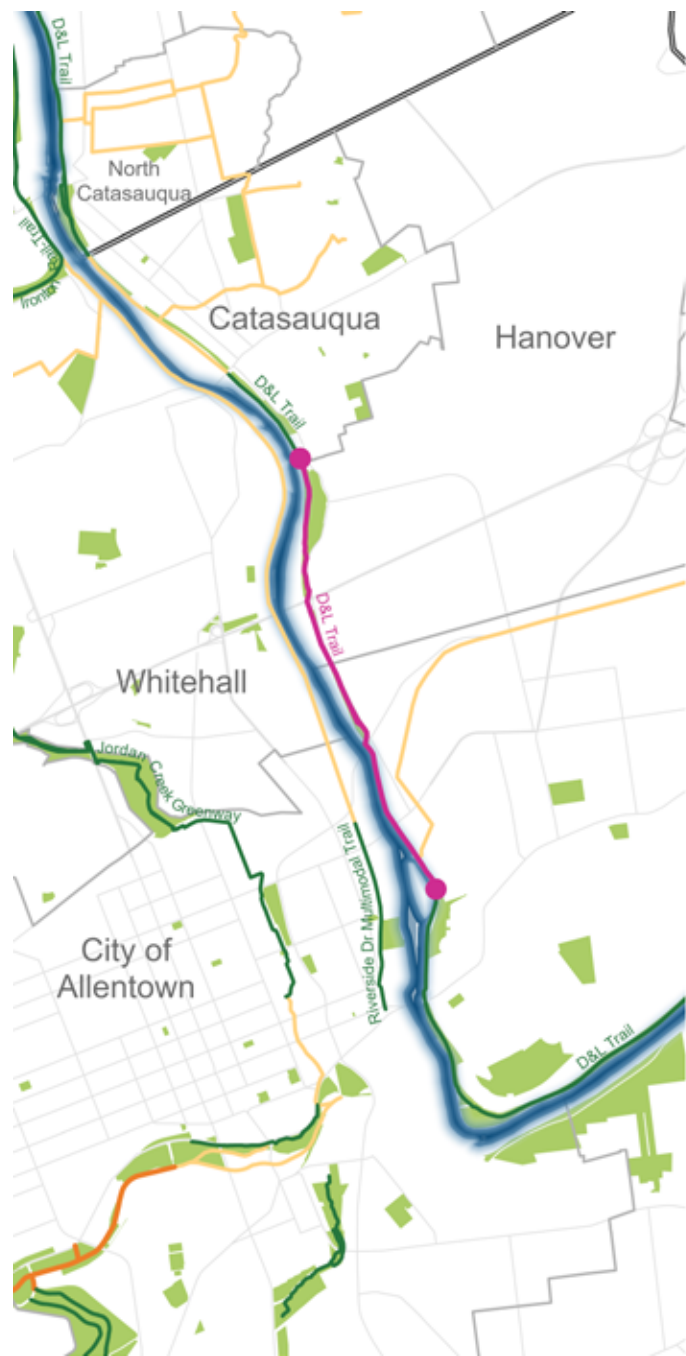
Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Blueway
- Under Construction
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



D&L TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 4



Municipalities: Hanover Township (LC), City of Allentown

Start: North Bradford Street, City of Allentown

End: D&L Trail at Hanover Canal Park, Hanover Township (LC)

Description: This project will build out a large segment of trail on the east side of the Lehigh River, creating a continuous route on the D&L Trail through the Lehigh Valley, connecting to Carbon County in the north and Bucks County to the southeast. Construction of this trail segment will also improve multimodal connectivity in and around East Allentown and between Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton as a whole. The project is part of a broader vision, to create a 14-mile loop trail along the Lehigh River between the Hamilton Street Bridge in Allentown and the Route 329 Bridge in Cementon, Whitehall Township.

Status: This gap has one main project area in Allentown and another in Hanover Township. In Allentown, the City is leading development activities, in coordination with Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) National Heritage Corridor. Just over one mile of trail will be constructed between the N. Bradford Street trailhead and the City line, between Kimmett's Lock and St. Luke's Way. There will be a shared-use path on N. Bradford Street, from the trailhead to the intersection with N. Dauphin Street. The trail will then be off-road with a multi-use path from the intersection, along N. Dauphin Street to the city line. This segment will go through Kimmett's Lock, which will be integrated into the trail. Hanover Township, in coordination with D&L National Heritage Corridor, is leading trail development within their jurisdiction. From the Allentown/Hanover Township line to Hanover Canal Park, an off-road multi-use trail is planned along N. Dauphin Street. These projects are in final engineering stages. Additional funding for construction in the Allentown area may be needed.

Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
 - Open
 - Multiple Trails Open within Park
 - Blueway
 - Under Construction
 - Conceptual
- Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



D&L TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 5



Municipalities: Whitehall Township, Coplay Borough

Start: Cementon Trailhead, Whitehall Township

End: Race Street Bridge, Whitehall Township

Description: Trail development in this segment will connect the D&L Trail to the Ironton Rail Trail (IRT). There are two gaps within this project area. The north gap is between the D&L trailhead at Cementon and the IRT at Saylor Park, Coplay Borough. The south gap is between the IRT Water Street trailhead and the Race Street Bridge in Whitehall Township. This project will align the D&L Trail with a portion of the already-open Ironton Rail Trail running north/south through Coplay Borough. The project is part of a broader vision, to create a 14-mile loop trail along the Lehigh River between the Hamilton Street Bridge in Allentown and the Route 329 Bridge in Cementon, Whitehall Township.

Status: Trail construction throughout the gap area will be along railroad rights-of-way, which still needs to be acquired. Lehigh County is leading trail development efforts, and the County has had discussions with the railroad about acquisition. More discussions between the County and railroad will be needed in the future, and Lehigh County is raising funds for acquisition.

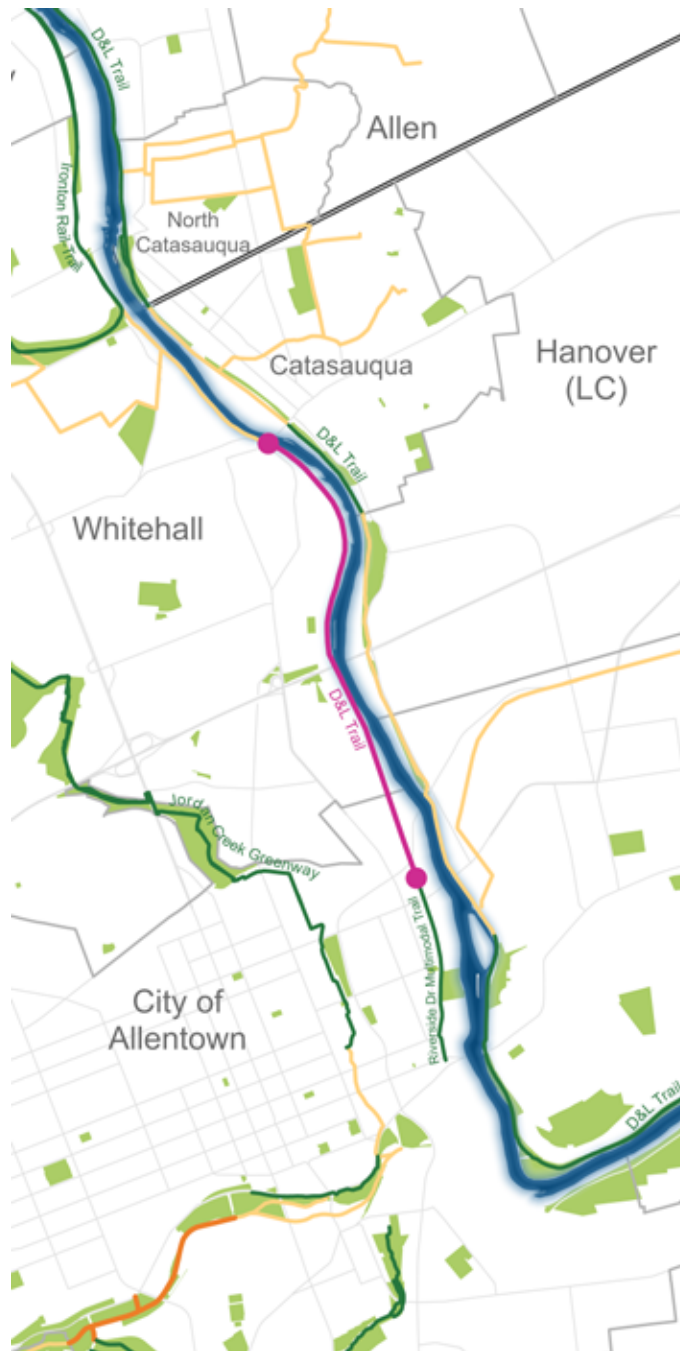
Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Blueway
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



D&L TRAIL - RIVERSIDE DRIVE / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 6



Municipalities: City of Allentown, Whitehall Township

Start: Riverside Drive and Furnace Street intersection, City of Allentown

End: Race Street Bridge, Whitehall Township

Description: The Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor Project will link Allentown and Whitehall Township, along the west side of the Lehigh River. The project was a successful applicant to the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant in 2021. A key goal of trail construction in this area is to create a multimodal commuting corridor, providing safe access to schools, jobs, shopping, entertainment and residential areas, where it largely does not exist currently. Trail construction from Furnace Street to Race Street will be aligned with construction of the Riverside Drive extension. The LVPC is leading planning efforts to close the gap, and is coordinating with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Lehigh County, City of Allentown and Whitehall Township. The project is part of a broader vision, to create a 14-mile loop trail along the Lehigh River between the Hamilton Street Bridge in Allentown and the Route 329 Bridge in Cementon, Whitehall Township.

Status: Trail has already been constructed through the first phase of the project, as there is an off-road shared-use path along Riverside Drive, between Hamilton Street and Furnace Street. Phase Two of the project is being designed and engineered. Received Carbon Reduction Program regional funding to help close funding gap. Working to leverage additional regional funds into project.

Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Blueway
- Under Construction
- Conceptual
- Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DRIVE TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 7



Municipalities: City of Allentown, Salisbury Township

Start: Little Lehigh Parkway Path at Kline's Bridge, Allentown

End: Cedar Beach Trail at Hamilton Street, Allentown

Description: This project provides a safe multimodal connection between some of Allentown's most popular recreation destinations, including the Lehigh Parkway, Rose Garden and Cedar Beach Park. This project is Phase 2 of 3 of an initiative to build out the MLK Trail, which will provide more continuity between the City's parks and create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, as Martin Luther King Jr. Drive has high levels of traffic and acts as a barrier between residential and recreational areas. The projects will greatly enhance multimodal connectivity throughout Allentown.

Status: The City is leading trail development efforts, and Phase 2 is undergoing design and engineering.

Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Blueway
- Under Construction
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



STOCKERTOWN TO TATAMY RAIL TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 8

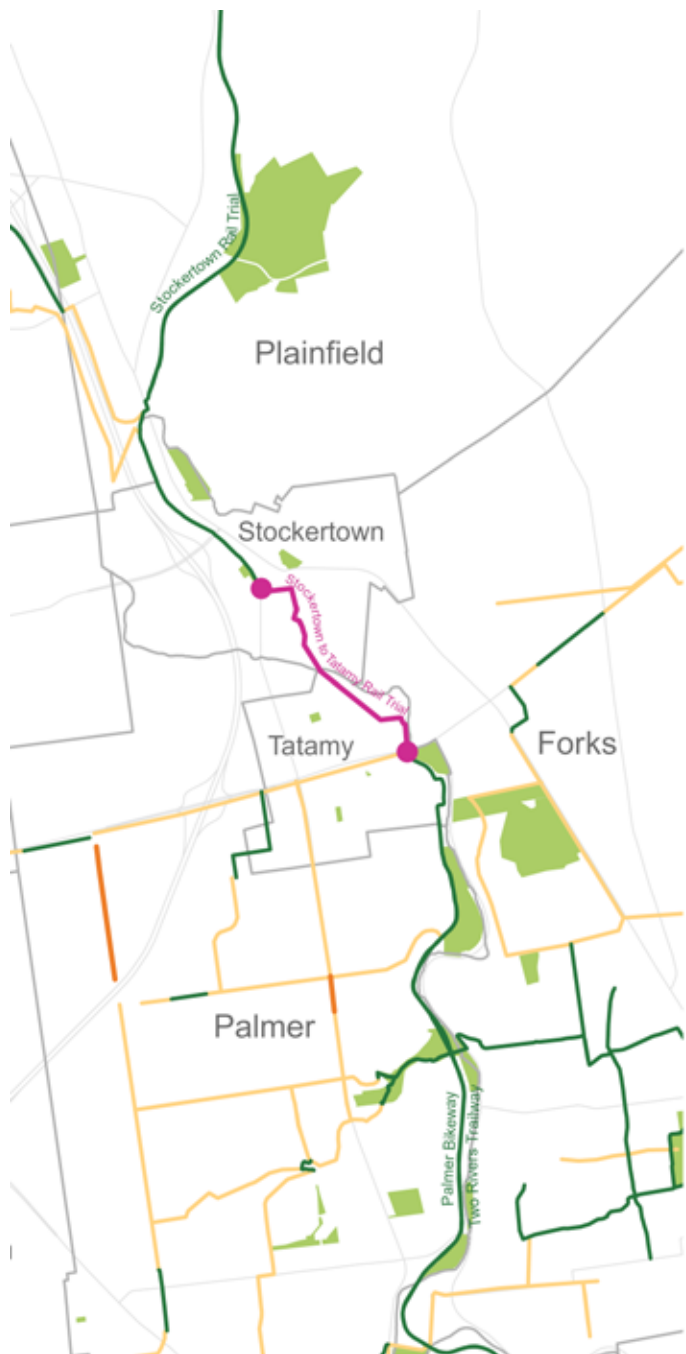
Municipalities: Stockertown Borough, Tatamy Borough, Forks Township

Start: Tatamy Trail trailhead at Main Street, Tatamy Borough






End: Stockertown Rail Trail at Sherman Metzgar Park, Stockertown Borough


Description: An approximately one-mile gap between the Stockertown Rail Trail and Tatamy Trail, which is the last missing segment of continuous trail that connects Easton and the D&L Trail to the Slate Belt. Connecting this gap would provide enhanced recreation opportunities and multimodal access across Northampton County. The Stockertown to Tatamy gap has been identified as a top trail gap by both the LVPC and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Status: The County is leading trail development efforts in this area and coordinating with the municipalities. At the start of the gap, in Tatamy, there is a sidewalk crossing of Bushkill Creek on the Main Street Bridge, and the Borough is applying for grant funding to enhance this crossing and construct trail through Braden Park, to the Uhler Road and Bushkill Drive intersection. Within the gap area, trail routing has not been determined yet, due to environmental factors and landowner negotiations. One possible route is along Uhler Road and Sullivan Trail, then passing through the Bauer Preserve, a 43-acre parcel in the gap area acquired by Northampton County in 2025. The County is in the process of land and right-of-way acquisitions in this area, which will help determine trail routing.



Current Trail Status

-  Critical Trail Gap
-  Open
-  Multiple Trails Open within Park
-  Under Construction
-  Conceptual

 Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



TWO RIVERS TRAIL EXTENSION / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 9



Municipalities: City of Easton, West Easton Borough

Start: Two Rivers Trailway between S. 24th Street and Gerald W. Gross Community Park, West Easton D&L Trail at Glendon Hill Road, West Easton

End: Lehigh Drive and Larry Holmes Drive intersection, Easton

Description: Trail development in this gap area presents an opportunity to connect two of the region's most popular trails, the D&L Trail and Two Rivers Trailway, to downtown Easton and its riverfront. Easton aims to construct trail from the Lehigh Drive and Larry Holmes Drive intersection along rail rights-of-way parallel to Lehigh Drive. This right-of-way splits at the inactive Easton & Northern Railroad bridge, near the Lafayette Crew Boathouse. The rights-of-way gradually diverge, with one connecting to the D&L Trail at Glendon Hill Road in West Easton, and the other connecting to the end of the Two Rivers Trailway in West Easton, between S. 24th Street and Gerald W. Gross Community Park. Future opportunities include a Highline trail east of Lehigh Drive, using inactive railroad bridges, through Delaware Canal State Park and across the Delaware River into Phillipsburg, NJ.

Status: Easton and West Easton are in the process of acquiring properties within their jurisdictions to use for trail development. Rights-of-way from the Two Rivers Trailway to the railroad bridge at the Boathouse is owned by the municipalities, and they are seeking funding for trail development in this section.

Current Trail Status

— Critical Trail Gap

— Open

••• Multiple Trails Open within Park

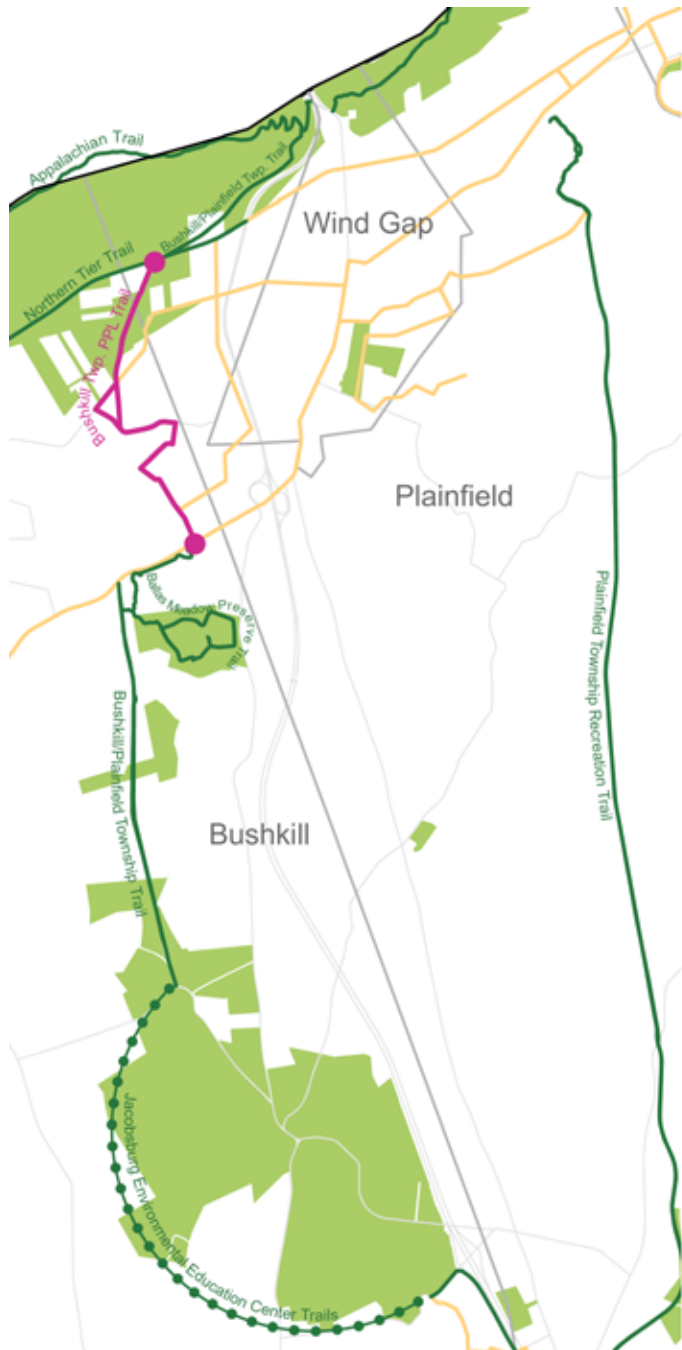
— Blueway

— Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas



BUSHKILL TOWNSHIP PPL TRAIL / CRITICAL PRIORITY GAP 10



Municipalities: Bushkill Township, Plainfield Township, Wind Gap Borough

Start: Bushkill Township Trail parking lot at E. Moorestown Road (Route 512), Bushkill Township

End: Appalachian Trail at Wind Gap, Plainfield Township or Wind Gap Borough

Description: This gap separates the Bushkill Township Trail and Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center from the Appalachian Trail. Connecting the regional trail network to the Appalachian Trail, which draws visitors from across the country, encourages more users to visit nearby recreation areas and businesses. Trail construction in this area will extend the Two Rivers Trailway and improve multimodal connectivity in Northampton County.

Status: Bushkill Township has negotiated with landowners near the trailhead at Route 512 for trail easements. Additional trail has been constructed east of the trailhead with the warehouse development on the south side of Route 512. The trail now ends at Route 512, between the two warehouses and shopping plaza. Trail rights-of-way have been secured along the warehouse on the north side of Route 512, but additional negotiations are needed with nearby landowners to bring the trail through this area. As of December 2025, the trail connection is planned to utilize utility rights-of-ways and shared-use on low volume roadways to route the trail up to Pennsylvania State Game Lands, north of 8th Street. There are trails on the Game Lands that lead to the Appalachian Trail. These will need to be widened and improved to encourage more users. Coordination is needed between Bushkill Township, Plainfield Township, Wind Gap Borough, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, National Park Service and private landowners. Additional connectivity opportunities exist by routing a trail east along 8th Street into Wind Gap Borough to establish a connection to the Appalachian Trail east of Route 33, which could encourage additional trail development in the Slate Belt area.

Current Trail Status

- Critical Trail Gap
- Open
- Multiple Trails Open within Park
- Conceptual

■ Parks, Open Space, Natural Areas

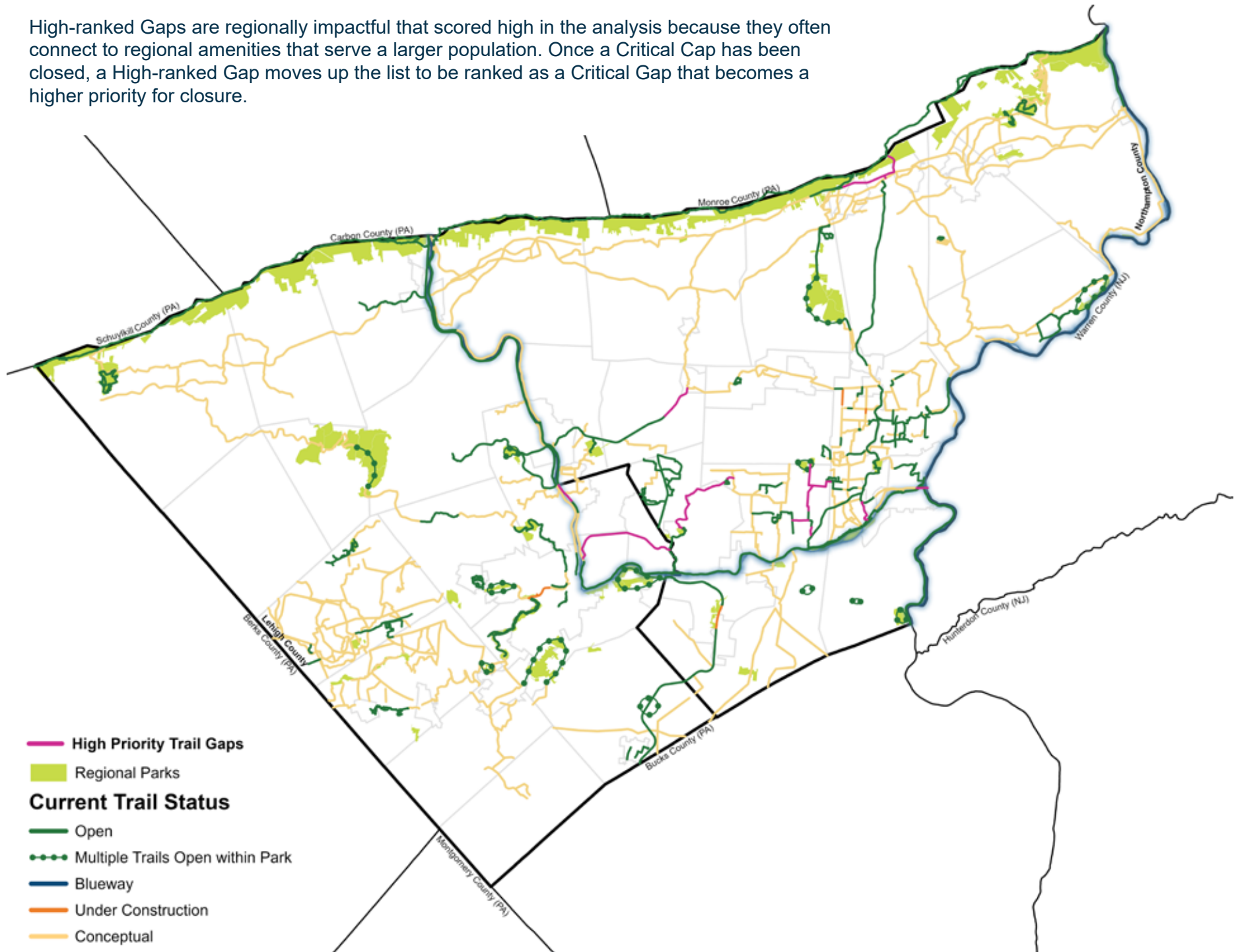




LEHIGH VALLEY HIGH GAPS

TRAIL	DESCRIPTION	MUNICIPALITY
Bethlehem Township Trail Network	Louise Moore County Park to Palmer Township Neighborhood Network	Bethlehem Township
Bethlehem Township Trail Network	Palmer Bikeway to Bethlehem Township Neighborhood Network	Bethlehem Township
D&L Trail	D&L from Race Street to North Catasauqua Borough Line	Catasauqua Borough
Monocacy Way	From Monocacy Park along Monocacy Creek to Housenick Memorial Park Trail	City of Bethlehem, Hanover Township (NC), Bethlehem Township
Nor-Bath Trail -Jacksonville Road to Bath	Current eastern terminus of Nor-Bath Trail at Jacksonville Rd to Mill Street in Bath Borough	East Allen Township, Bath Borough
Palmer Township Trail Network	From Palmer Bikeway on Freemansburg Avenue to D&L Trail	Palmer Township
The Highline	From the conceptual Two Rivers Trail Extension along Rail Line across Delaware River to Phillipsburg, NJ.	City of Easton
West Bethlehem Rail Trail	West Bethlehem Rail Trail from North Bradford Street to Pennsylvania Avenue and City line	City of Allentown
West Bethlehem Rail Trail	West Bethlehem Rail Trail from Pennsylvania Avenue/City Boundary to Monocacy Way	City of Bethlehem
Wind Gap / Pen Argyl Area Trail Network	From Appalachian Trail North of Pen Argyl Area High School to West Pennsylvania Ave. Trailhead and to N. Broadway continuing along 8th Street.	Plainfield Township, Wind Gap Borough, Pen Argyl Borough

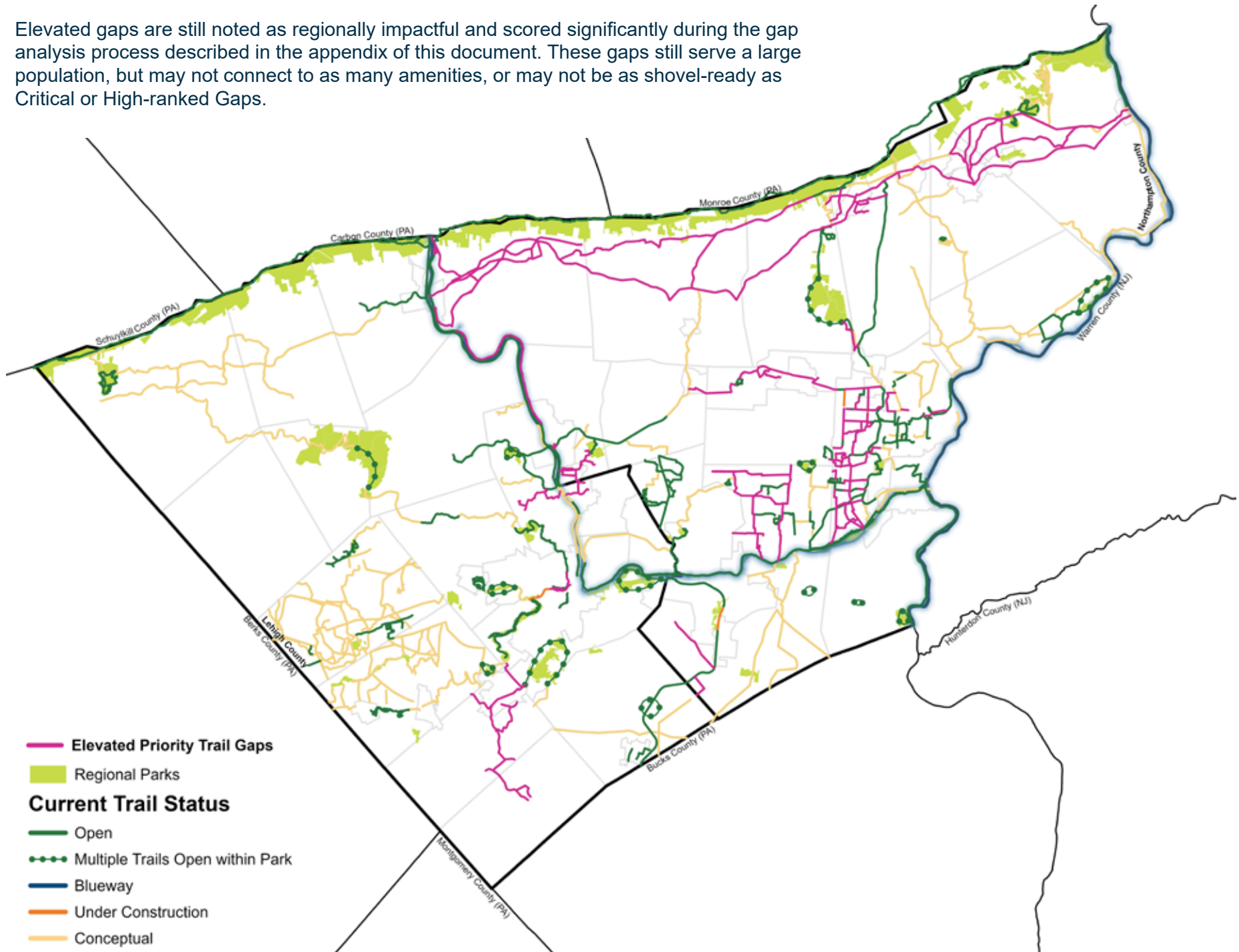
High-ranked Gaps are regionally impactful that scored high in the analysis because they often connect to regional amenities that serve a larger population. Once a Critical Cap has been closed, a High-ranked Gap moves up the list to be ranked as a Critical Gap that becomes a higher priority for closure.



LEHIGH VALLEY ELEVATED GAPS

TRAIL	DESCRIPTION	MUNICIPALITY
Bethlehem Township Trail Network	Multiple connections within Bethlehem Township Neighborhood Network	Bethlehem Township
Catasauqua-North Catasauqua-Allen Trail	D&L Trail at Catasauqua to Catasauqua Area High School and Nor-Bath Trail	Catasauqua Borough, North Catasauqua Borough, Allen Township
D&L Trail	Northampton to Walnutport, east side of Lehigh River	Walnutport Borough, Lehigh Township, Allen Township, Northampton Borough
MLK Trail Phase 3	Current Eastern terminus of MLK trail to Hamilton St. Future goal is to connect to the D&L trail, east Allentown and north to Jordan Creek Greenway	City of Allentown
Nor-Bath Trail	Jacksonville Road to Route 946 in Moore Township via Bath Borough	East Allen Township, Bath Borough, Chapman Borough, Moore Township
Northern Tier Trail	Extensive trail network spanning northern municipalities in Northampton County	Boroughs of Walnutport, Wind Gap, Pen Argyl, Roseto, East Bangor and Portland Townships of Lehigh, Moore, Bushkill, Plainfield, Washington (NC) and Upper Mount Bethel
Palmer Township Trail Network	Multiple connections to Palmer Bikeway and D&L Trail from the Township's neighborhood network	Palmer Township
Saucon Region Trail Network	Saucon Rail Trail to Upper Saucon Township Line	Upper Saucon Township, Lower Saucon Township
Saucon Region Trail Network	Saucon Rail Trail to I-78 Overpass	Upper Saucon Township, Lower Saucon Township
Southwestern Lehigh County Trail Network	Extensive trail network spanning southwestern municipalities in Lehigh County	Salisbury Township, Emmaus Borough, Upper Milford Township, Lower Milford Township
Whitehall Township Trail Network	Schadt Ave to Ironton Rail Trail and D&L Trail	Whitehall township

Elevated gaps are still noted as regionally impactful and scored significantly during the gap analysis process described in the appendix of this document. These gaps still serve a large population, but may not connect to as many amenities, or may not be as shovel-ready as Critical or High-ranked Gaps.



LEHIGH VALLEY SUPPORTING GAPS

Allen Township Trail

Spur from Nor-Bath Trail at Savage Road North to Howertown Park and south to residential cul-de-sac at 8th Street

Allen Township

East Allen Township Trail

Housing development along Hanoverville Rd to Nor-Bath Trail at Bicentennial Park

East Alen Township

Forks Township Trail Network

- Ramblewood Drive Trail
- Uhlers Crossing Network
- Two Rivers Trailway to Forks Trail Network
- Fox Run Rd to Easton Area Middle School
- Winchester Drive Trail

Forks Township

Hanover Township Trail Network

Business park on High Point Blvd to Orchard Ln along agricultural and residential property lines

Hanover Township (NC)

Institute Road Trail

Loop from Institute Drive to natural area

Upper Mt Bethel Township

Jordan Creek Greenway Trail

Trexler Nature Preserve to Leaser Lake

Lowhill Township, Weisenberg Township, Lynn Township

Saucon Region Trail Network

Upper and Lower Saucon Network

Upper Saucon Township, Lower Saucon Township

Saucon Region Trail Network

South Mountain Preserve to Upper Milford Township Line

Upper Saucon Township, Lower Saucon Township, Upper Milford Township, Salisbury Township

Twin Lakes

Loop from Totts Gap Road to natural area

Upper Mount Bethel Township

Two Rivers Trail 9(A)

Stockertown to Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center Trail

Stockertown Borough, Plainfield Township

Upper Macungie Township Trail Network

Trail connections between residential, commercial and industrial areas

Upper Macungie Township

Washington Township Recreation Complex

Washington Blvd to Ackermanville Road through Washington Township Recreation Complex

Washington Township (NC)

Whitehall Township Trail Network

- Ringer Road to Ironton Rail Trail
- Spruce St. to D&L Trail

Whitehall Township

Lower Macungie Trail Network

Various independent trail routes in Township. Proposed trail connection between southern terminus of Lehigh Parkway and Alburtis Trail Network through Lower Macungie Township and Macungie Borough

Lower Macungie Township

Macungie Trail Network

- Hills at Lock Ridge Trail to Locust Street.
- Route 100 to Lower Macungie Trail Network

Upper and Lower Macungie Township

Martins-Jacoby Watershed Trail Network

Loop trail and spurs through numerous Slate Belt communities

Portland Borough, Upper Mount Bethel Township, Lower Mount Bethel Township, Washington Township (NC), Forks, Township, Plainfield Township, Roseto Borough, Bangor Borough and East Bangor Borough

Minsi Lake Nature Trail

Connecting nature preserves north of Minsi Lake to existing nature trail around lake

Lynn Township

Nor-Bath Trail - Bath to Route 946

Regional connection between Bath Borough and PA Route 946 in Moore Township

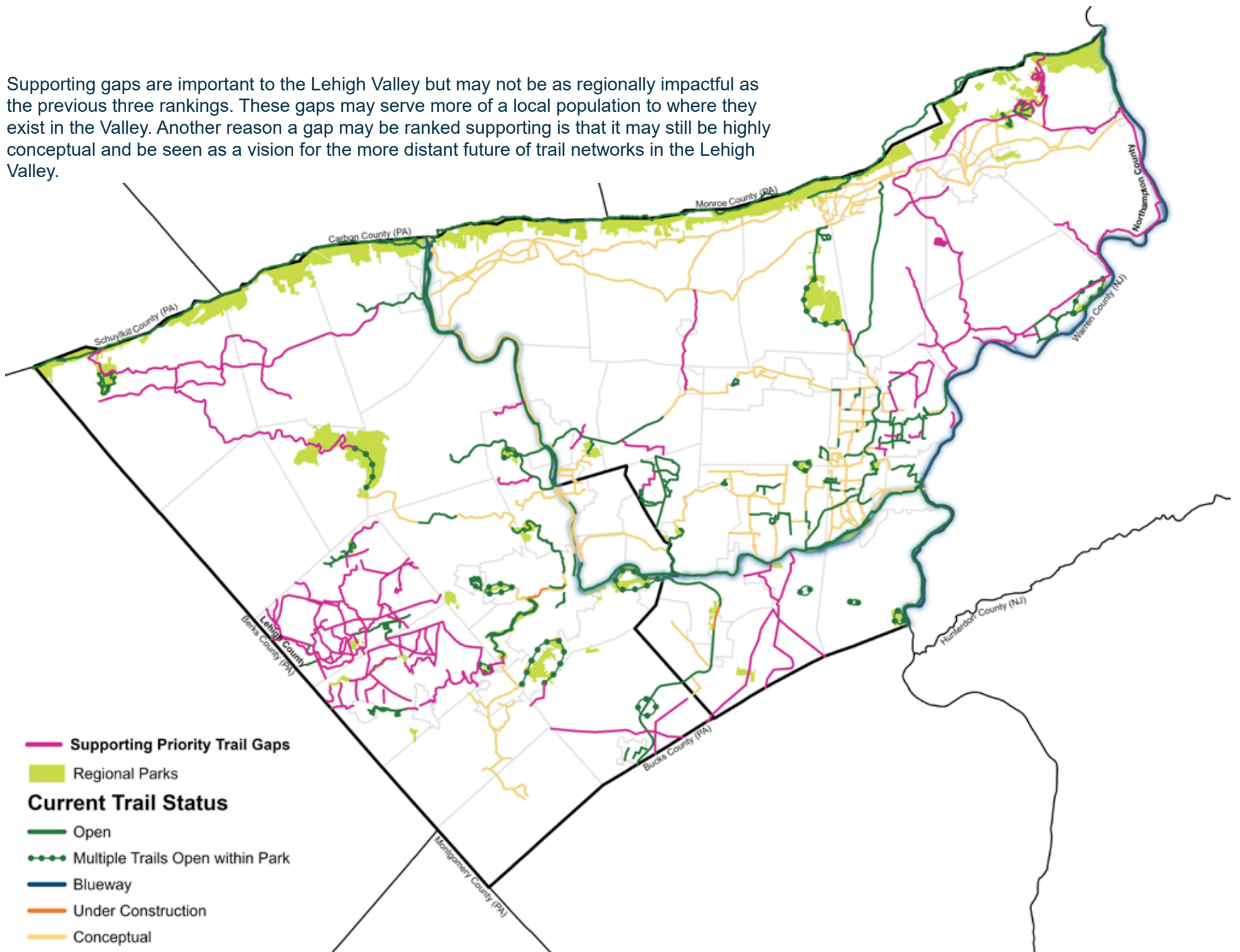
Moore Township, Chapman Borough, East Allen Township, Bath Borough

Northern Lehigh Rail Trail

Allemanengel Road to Slate Heritage Trail near Emerald Washington Township (LC) along rail right-of-way

Lynn Township, Heidelberg Township, Washington Township (LC)

Supporting gaps are important to the Lehigh Valley but may not be as regionally impactful as the previous three rankings. These gaps may serve more of a local population to where they exist in the Valley. Another reason a gap may be ranked supporting is that it may still be highly conceptual and be seen as a vision for the more distant future of trail networks in the Lehigh Valley.





Implementation Strategies

There are various strategies available for stakeholders to plan, finance and construct trail infrastructure.

To acquire funding, there are many grant programs available for stakeholders. Given that trails serve many purposes, from recreation to transportation, funding opportunities from a variety of agencies may be available depending on the type of project. Some potential funding opportunities for trails in the Lehigh Valley include:

Trail Funding Programs

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)

(PennDOT)

Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA)

(PennDOT)

Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF)

PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)

Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP)

DCED

Local Share Account Grant programs

DCED

Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF)

Pennsylvania Environmental Council (FEC)

Pennsylvania Water Trail Mini-Grants

Before acquiring funding to design or construct trails, local governments can utilize various planning tools to identify current and future trail needs. An initial step is to update comprehensive plans, as well as other specific plans, such as trail and active transportation plans, if possible. These planning documents examine land use trends and establish goals and strategies to help guide near and long-term community decision making.

Local government plans are the foundation of how a community envisions itself in the future. Goals and strategies from plans can be implemented through zoning code and subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) updates, as they can provide incentives for trail construction and set aside land for open space or recreation. Communities can also require trails and sidewalks through the subdivision and land development process. Adding a trail or sidewalk requirement in SALDOs is an effective way to improve trail connectivity while minimizing costs to taxpayers.

For example, the City of Allentown's SALDO requires properties proposed for subdivision or land development approval to provide a trail easement if one is identified on the property in an adopted trails plan.

Specific locations for future trail development can be identified by municipalities through creating or updating their official map. By identifying trails on an official map, municipalities can formalize and prioritize their intent to construct trails, which can be leveraged when pursuing funding sources for public projects. Utilizing these various planning tools allows municipalities to accommodate changing community priorities or other issues. Demonstrating a community's intent to develop or enhance trails through tools like plans and official maps helps trail projects more easily go from concept to reality.

To promote trail connectivity across municipal borders, local governments, community organizations and other stakeholders can participate in collaborative efforts.

Here in the Lehigh Valley, THE LINK, is a group of local governments, non-profits and advocates that work together to promote the region's trail network. Approaching trails from a regional lens encourages greater opportunities for connectivity, grant funding and usage of trails. Educational opportunities about trail planning and infrastructure are available in-person, through PennDOT Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) classes, held at the LVPC's office. In addition, there are many informational guides online, provided by the LVPC, WeConservePA, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and more.

Alignment with Regional Planning Efforts

The Trail Connection Strategy supports recommendations within existing initiatives such as *the Lehigh Valley Priority Climate Action Plan for Transportation Decarbonization* and *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*. LVPC will begin updating *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in 2026. Data updates have already been initiated for the Regional Plan, which will reference the findings of the Trail Connection Strategy.

The Trail Connection Strategy supports recommendations within the recently adopted regional climate resiliency plan,

Pathway to a Resilient Greater Lehigh Valley, by identifying active transportation as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle travel and congestion, while improving local air quality.

This report also aligns with actions and strategies in the Lehigh County and Northampton County Livable Landscapes Plans, with key health and economic benefit findings of the 2014 Lehigh Valley Return of Environment Study, and the 2025 Northampton County Return on Environment Study.





Next Steps

This report highlights high priority conceptual trail connections, that have been identified in published planning documents. However, by looking at the regional map, there remain gap locations in the trail network where no conceptual trails are currently identified. This map can serve as a starting point for municipalities and planning agencies to identify future additional conceptual trail connections.

By first identifying future trail connections a community wishes to have in a plan, the process to eventually get it constructed can begin. Identifying conceptual trail connections in planning documents allows them to be elevated in reports such as this one and makes grant applications to implement them much more competitive.

Update of Trail Data and Gap Closure Information

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission will implement an annual process to update regional trail network data and trail gap closure status. This process will incorporate information submitted by regional stakeholders, including,

but not limited to, municipal and county governments, transportation agencies, trail advocacy organizations, land management agencies, and other relevant public, private and non-profit partners.



Appendix and Resources

Methodology

Trail gaps in the Lehigh Valley's trail network were prioritized using a variety of different methodological factors. These factors are listed below with information about each one. Only trail gaps specifically identified within an adopted local or county active transportation or parks, recreation and open space plan were considered.

Trail Gap Evaluation Criteria

The following section outlines the full set of evaluation criteria used to assess regional trail gaps for planning, prioritization and funding purposes. Criteria draw upon federal, state, regional and local planning frameworks—including the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Pennsylvania state transportation law, and U.S. Code Title 23—and align with adopted Lehigh Valley plans such as *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*.

***FutureLV: The Regional Plan* Alignment**

Statutory Alignment

- Evaluate whether the project supports the goals of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), relevant Pennsylvania state law, and 23 U.S.C. requirements for metropolitan planning.
- Flag projects that fail to meet any applicable federal, state or regional requirements.

Commuter Trail System Consistency

- Determine whether the trail gap falls within an identified Commuter Trail corridor as mapped in *FutureLV*.

Movement Between Centers

- Assess whether the proposed gap closure enhances movement of people between designated Centers, consistent with the plan's place-based strategy.

“Types of Places” Framework

- Confirm the project encourages linkages across all place types in the Valley.

Walk/Roll: Active Transportation Plan Alignment

Project Consistency

- Projects listed in *Walk/Roll/LV: Active Transportation Plan*.
- Additional assessment ensures the project remains consistent with the region's long-range multimodal vision.

Regional-Specific Criteria

Economic Impact Area (EIA) Location

- Determine whether the gap is located in an Economic Impact Area (EIA). A composite index of need based on energy, transportation, housing, health, workforce, pollution, water/wastewater and broadband indicators.

Sidewalk Inventory Relationship

- Assess sidewalk conditions and connectivity where applicable.
- Evaluated through geospatial analysis utilizing LVPC's Geographic Information System (GIS) sidewalk inventory layer.

Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority Transit Integration

- Identify if the project improves access to or from the public transit network.

Safety: Suspected Serious Injuries/Fatalities

- Use PennDOT pedestrian and bicycle crash data (suspected serious injuries and fatalities) from the Commonwealth's Traffic Information Repository.
- Aligns with the *Lehigh Valley Traffic Safety Plan* goal to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by 50% in 20 years.

Employment Connectivity

- Assess whether the gap closure improves access to employment centers.

School/Educational Connectivity

- Measure the connection to schools, colleges or educational institutions.

High Population Density

- Apply federal/state planning statutes weighting population density impacts.
- Evaluate whether the project falls within 10 minutes of a trail, consistent with DCNR priorities.

Population Affected by Gap Closure

- Utilize 1/4 mile buffer-based service area analysis.
- Identify methods for calculating non-resident users (e.g., employment density, community facilities, regional draw).

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural (DCNR) Resources Statewide Priority Trail Gaps

Statewide Gap Alignment

- Determine whether the project is identified as a priority trail gap by Pennsylvania DCNR.
- Compare DCNR priorities with regional gap mapping to assess overlap.

Connection to Public Recreational Facilities

Trails

- Evaluate direct connections to existing public trails.

Parks

- Confirm linkages to public parks; define parks within the document as publicly owned or publicly accessible recreational spaces.

Length of Trail Gap Segment

Short-Segment Prioritization

- Gaps less than five miles in length feasibility and cost-effectiveness.

Shovel Readiness

Existing/Proposed Project Status

- Identify whether the project appears as a conceptual trail or in prior inventories

Engineering & Design Completion

- Assign points based on level of design completion.

Permitting Status

- Evaluate whether necessary environmental and regulatory permits have been secured.

Funding Secured

- Assess any dedicated or committed funding sources.

Rights-of-Way (ROW) Status

- Identify whether ROW is acquired, under negotiation or unknown.

Tie-Breaker Use

- Applied shovel-readiness as a criteria.

RESOURCES & TOOLS

Key Partners



Delaware & Lehigh (D&L)
National Heritage Corridor



The LINK
Trail Network



Coalition for Appropriate
Transportation (CAT)



PA Department of
Transportation



Community Bike
Works (CBW)



Lehigh County
Parks & Recreation



Northampton County
Parks & Recreation



Lehigh Valley
Greenways



PA Department of
Conservation and
Natural Resources

Maps and Plans Referenced for this Strategy

DCNR Trail Map

Pennsylvania Trail Plan

Lehigh County Livable Landscapes

Northampton County Livable Landscapes

Future LV: The Regional Plan

Trail Implementation Grants

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Motorized Trails Grant

Pennsylvania Recreational Trails (PRT) motorized projects. PRT motorized projects include the development, rehabilitation or maintenance of designated routes on land for all types of motorized recreation activities, as well as the purchase or lease of equipment to be used exclusively for the maintenance or construction of land and water trails and trail-related facilities.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Non-Motorized Trails Grant

Trail projects include the acquisition, planning, development, rehabilitation or maintenance of designated routes on land or water for non-motorized recreation activities, as well as the purchase or lease of equipment to be used exclusively for the maintenance or construction of non-motorized land and water trails and non-motorized trail-related facilities.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Park Rehabilitation and Development Grant

These projects involve the rehabilitation and development of public parks, recreation facilities, greenways and river conservation projects.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Land Acquisition and Conservation Grant

These projects involve the purchase and/or donation of land for park and recreation areas, greenways, critical habitat areas and/or open space.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Recreation and Conservation Planning Grant

Planning projects study the needs, benefits and opportunities for future land acquisition, development and/or management of parks, recreational facilities, critical habitat, open space, natural areas, greenways and river/watershed corridors.

**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation -
Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program**

The federal Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) provides funding for projects and activities defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, environmental mitigation, trails that serve a transportation purpose and safe routes to school projects.

**Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Multimodal Transportation Fund Program**

The program is intended to provide financial assistance to municipalities, councils of governments, businesses, economic development organizations, public transportation agencies, and ports and rail freight entities to improve transportation assets that enhance communities, pedestrian safety and transit revitalization.

**Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic
Development Greenways, Trails, and Recreation
Program**

Projects which involve development, rehabilitation and improvements to public parks, recreation areas, greenways, trails and river conservation.

**Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic
Development Multimodal Transportation Fund Program**

Funds may be used for the development, rehabilitation and enhancement of transportation assets to existing communities, streetscape, lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, connectivity of transportation assets and transit-oriented development.

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Highlands Conservation
Act Grant Program**

State agencies, counties and municipalities are eligible through this program to receive grant funds to acquire land that can be used for trail and greenway development.

**Department of Revenue - Redevelopment Assistance
Capital Program Funds**

RACP projects are authorized in the Redevelopment Assistance section of a Capital Budget Itemization Act, have a regional or multi-jurisdictional impact, and generate substantial increases or maintain current levels of employment, tax revenues, or other measures of economic activity.



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**For more information
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