



East Falls



THE  
CIRCUIT  
TRAILS  
100s OF MILES  
OF HAPPY



July 20, 2020

Alan Greenberger  
Chair, The Philadelphia Art Commission

Leslie Richards,  
General Manager, SEPTA

Michael Carroll,  
Deputy Managing Director

Dear Mr Greenberger, Ms. Richards and Mr. Carroll,

As leaders of the organizations and businesses listed above, we are writing to express our strong support for the prompt advancement of the Wissahickon Gateway trail, a key gap of the Schuylkill River Trail and the Circuit Trails network.

This trail is expected to be built by the City of Philadelphia and will be aligned on property that the City is expected to lease from SEPTA.

This trail project has been under development since 2009. Significant local, state and federal funding and private funds have been invested to advance this project. We have attached a timeline to inform you about the number of studies, public meetings and grants that have been dedicated to this project.

Regarding the current conversations between the Art Commission and civic organizations that are underway concerning the trail (which is 30% design of the Wissahickon Transportation Center), we encourage all agencies to work together to resolve the issues being raised.

Notwithstanding these issues, we urge the following actions be taken as soon as possible and without delay:

- 1) SEPTA and the City of Philadelphia **sign a lease** so that the City can have access to a property necessary to design the trail;
- 2) the City of Philadelphia **acquire the property** it needs behind Mr. Storage;
- 3) the City of Philadelphia **secure access to the property behind the Manayunk Movie Theatre** for the trail; and,
- 4) The City of Philadelphia **issues a contract to design the trail** so that it is eligible for construction funding.

This trail is of utmost importance to the City and the Commonwealth and has been named a key gap multiple times by each.

We urge you to work together to advance this trail project as soon as possible without further delay.

Sincerely yours,

Sarah Clark Stuart  
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia &  
Circuit Trails Coalition

Heidi Grunwald  
East Falls Community Development Corporation

Gwen McCauley  
Manayunk Development Corporation

James Calamia  
Roxborough Development Corporation

Maura McCarthy  
Fairmount Park Conservancy

Ruffian Tittmann  
Friends of Wissahickon

Kay Sykora  
Roxborough Manayunk Conservancy

Linda McGrane  
Bicycle Club of Philadelphia

Brady Gibney  
Cadence Cycling Centers

Cc:

Commissioner Katherine Ott-Lovell, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation  
City Council Member Curtis Jones Jr.  
State Representative Pam DeLissio  
Anne Fadullin, Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
Jean Lynch, PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

## Timeline of Wissahickon Gateway Trail Project

1991 - Fairmount Park Commission (Peter O'Dell) received a state grant to study the "Wissahickon Connection", which proposed a bike/ped bridge across the Wissahickon.

2008 - Schuylkill Master Plan, East Falls to Manayunk by Brown & Keener

2009 - Wissahickon Gateway Feasibility Study by Brown & Keener on behalf of Manayunk Development Corporation and presented to Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) proposes that the SRT be extended from Kelley Drive over the Wissahickon Creek and continue as a riverbank trail behind PECO and the Steinberg property and Movie Theatre property to the Pencoyd Bridge.

Wissahickon Gateway is identified by the Bicycle Coalition, Schuylkill River Development Corporation, Schuylkill Project, East Falls Dev. Corp. as **the most critical gap in the Schuylkill River Trail** in the "Complete The Trail" campaign launched in late 2008/early 2009.

The Wissahickon Gateway Project is determined "not ready to go" for inclusion in the City of Philadelphia's 2010 TIGER application.

2010 - PPR applies for and receives DCNR funding & DVRPC Regional Trail Fund funding for Feasibility study

2010-2012 - Two study group meetings, a site visit and and public meeting

January 2013 - Michael Baker releases the Schuylkill River Trail Study Gap at the Wissahickon Gateway, also known as "the Engineering Study." Bicycle Coalition supports the Alternative #2 - Riverside Trail Alternative with Upstream Crossing

Funding for Wissahickon Gateway design was included in PPR's FY14-19 Capital Program

2013 - PCPC publishes the [Philadelphia Trail Master Plan](#) ; names the Wissahickon Gateway Priority #2

2014 - 2019 - PA Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) names the Wissahickon Gateway among the Commonwealth's [top ten trail gaps](#)

2014 - 2015 - PPR actively pursued ROW discussions with SEPTA and PECO; advocates met with PPR staff and PPR Commissioner Michael DiBerarninis for updates

2014 - Wissahickon Gateway trail included in the [Lower NorthWest Plan of Phila2025](#).

2016 - advocates met with PPR Commissioner Ott-Lovell to call for moving the project forward

2016 - advocates sent letter to General Manager Knueppel asking him to accelerate acquisition of the Steinberg property to enable PPR to have access to necessary ROW to build the trail

2017 - PCPC receives a Transportation & Community Development Initiative's (TCDI) grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to support smart growth initiatives that implement DVRPC's Connections 2045 Plan for Greater Philadelphia. The project is called "The Wissahickon Gateway Plan"

2017 - PCPC holds [open house](#) on Wissahickon Gateway Plan

2018 - PCPC publishes an update to the [Philadelphia Trails Master Plan](#); Wissahickon Gateway is a Tier One project

2018 - PCPC holds final [public meeting](#) (May) and publishes its [Wissahickon Gateway Plan](#) (July) which features the riverfront alignment of the trail.

2018 - PPR applies to DCNR for funding to acquire land behind Mr. Storage.

2018 - SEPTA acquires the lot from the Steinberg family that it needs to build a Wissahickon Transportation Center. ROW for the trail is included in the early designs on the property.

2019 - PPR receives a grant from DCNR for acquisition of the last piece of property it needs to build the Wissahickon Gateway