

**THE
CIRCUIT
TRAILS**

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



Chester Valley Trail Ext. East

2023 in Review

In 2023, several miles were completed throughout the Greater Philadelphia area that now bring new connections to communities within the growing network of The Circuit Trails. Thanks to your ongoing support and advocacy for the trails, these key connections have paved the way for the Circuit Trails that are expected to be completed in 2024.

Longtime Circuit Trails Leader Takes on Role of Coalition Chair

For the first time since its launch in May 2012, the Circuit Trails Coalition has a new leader. Well, perhaps “new” isn’t the right word. The collaboration of non-profit organizations, foundations and agencies working to complete a connected network of more than 800 miles of trails in Greater Philadelphia and southern New Jersey has appointed Patrick Starr as the next Coalition chair.

Starr has been a longtime leader of the Coalition with a wealth of experience, helping to shape and steward the trail network since its earliest days. Starr, who is executive vice president of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council’s southeast region, served as the Circuit Coalition’s vice chair in Pennsylvania since 2012, working for 11 years in partnership with Sarah Clark Stuart who recently stepped down from the role, as well as with several vice chairs in New Jersey.

“I’m not new to this work, but I am thrilled to move into this role at a time when there is so much momentum for closing critical gaps in the network and advocating for 500 completed miles by 2025,” said Starr. “The Circuit Trails Coalition needs to refine our approach and



broaden our representation of diverse stakeholders from our area.”

In his position, Starr wants to focus on engaging underserved and disadvantaged communities in the Circuit Trails network. He brings additional experience to the Coalition as a convener of the Philly Upstream Suburban Watershed Cluster and the board chair of the Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers.

“Our vision of building 500 miles by the end of 2025 is not just about laying pavement for the sake of adding miles, it’s about creating safe and equitable access to trails that are welcoming to everyone. Trails provide inexpensive alternative

transportation, recreation access, safety, and community to users; trails are a resource meant for them,” added Starr.

The Circuit Trails Coalition works to secure and commit federal, state and local funding for trail development and maintenance across Greater Philadelphia and southern New Jersey. The Circuit Trails network currently encompasses 411 miles of completed trails, and there are 77 miles currently in progress. That means the network is more than 78% of the way to the short-term goal of 500 miles. Securing funding to move 30 more miles from the pipeline to in-progress phase would achieve the 500-mile goal by December of 2025.

A Year of Momentum on the Circuit

After another successful year of progress #OnTheCircuit, we are getting closer to making the vision of 500 miles of Circuit Trails by 2025 a reality.

Sustained federal, state and local funding are critical to the development of the Circuit Trails

network. In 2023, \$41.7 million was secured for the following trail projects listed below.

Eight miles were added this year, which brings the planned 836-mile network to about 47% completion. An additional 77 miles are actively in progress, emphasizing the significant

strides made toward the goal of achieving 500 miles by 2025.

We cut the ribbon on the Burlington-Camden Trail: Cove to Bethel, Chester Valley Trail Extension and the K&T Trail Extension, and broke new ground on the future Robert A. Borski Jr. Park.



Major Funding Wins

State	Trail	Funding Secured
NJ	Camden County LINK Trail	\$20,600,000
NJ	Rancocas Creek Greenway: Route 130 Bridge and Trail	\$13,200,000
NJ	Glassboro-Elk Trail: Elephant Swamp Trail	\$1,400,000
NJ	Burlington-Camden Trail: Route 130 Bridge	\$1,200,000
PA	Schuylkill River Trail: Near 61st Street to Passyunk Ave.	\$1,100,000
PA	Cross County Trail and Wissahickon Trail	\$1,000,000
NJ	Camden County Link Trail: Hi-Nella Segment	\$525,000
PA	Chester Valley Trail: Whitford to Downingtown	\$500,000
PA	Schuylkill River Trail and Chester Valley Trail Junction Center	\$500,000
PA	US 202 Trail: Solebury	\$465,000
PA	Chester Creek Trail: Crozer Park	\$250,000
PA	Cobbs Creek Trail: Segment B2	\$200,000
PA	Gulph Road Connector	\$188,000
PA	Chester Creek Trail: Chester Township	\$115,000
PA	Cresheim Trail	\$100,000
PA	Liberty Bell Trail: Schwab Road	\$100,000
PA	Schuylkill River Trail: Haws Avenue and Chain Street Trailheads	\$100,000
NJ	Burlington-Camden Trail: Pennsauken to Maple Shade	\$90,000
PA	Chester Creek Trail: Chester City	\$30,000
TOTAL:		\$41,700,000

Celebrating on the Circuit Trails



Rails to Trails Conservancy, IM ABLE Foundation and the PA Center for Adapted Sports celebrated with organizations supporting adaptive recreation. Adaptive athletes joined in a trail ride on the Chester Valley Trail with the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia to explore the newly completed extension east from Exton to Norristown.



On Earth Day, the Clean Air Council and members of the Circuit Trails Coalition held its Celebrate Cobbs Creek Trail Earth Day event in West Philadelphia welcoming the community to join activities, including horseback riding, a birding walk, a guided walk with We WalkPHL and Tiny Trekkers, and a plant identification workshop.



Members of the Circuit Coalition celebrated Camden's growing Burlington-Camden Trail that will span 4.5 miles connecting Maple Shade to the City of Camden when completed. This free, family-friendly event at Stockton Park, featuring arts and crafts, skateboarding lessons, guided bike rides and walks, food trucks, and pony rides.

The Circuit's Community Grant Program

In 2023 the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) launched the Circuit Trails Coalition Community Grant Program with funding from the William Penn Foundation, initially investing \$150,000 over two years into [10 organizations](#) across the Greater Philadelphia region. Each grantee organization leads programming on or near multi-use trails that are part of the Circuit Trails network. With an additional \$167,000 from the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, PEC awarded two-year grants to another six organizations, bringing the total number of current Circuit Trails Community Grant Program grantee partners to 16.

NFWF funding will also allow [Legacy Land & Water Partners](#) to offer fishing and birding programming

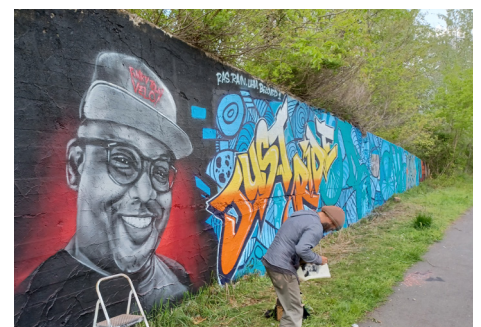


in partnership with all Community Grant Program grantees across the trail network in 2024 and 2025, bringing fishing and birding to groups across the region.

The Community Grant Program intends to improve access to and increase use of the Circuit Trails, particularly in historically disinvested communities and among marginalized groups. In 2023, grantee partners offered projects, activities, and activations including

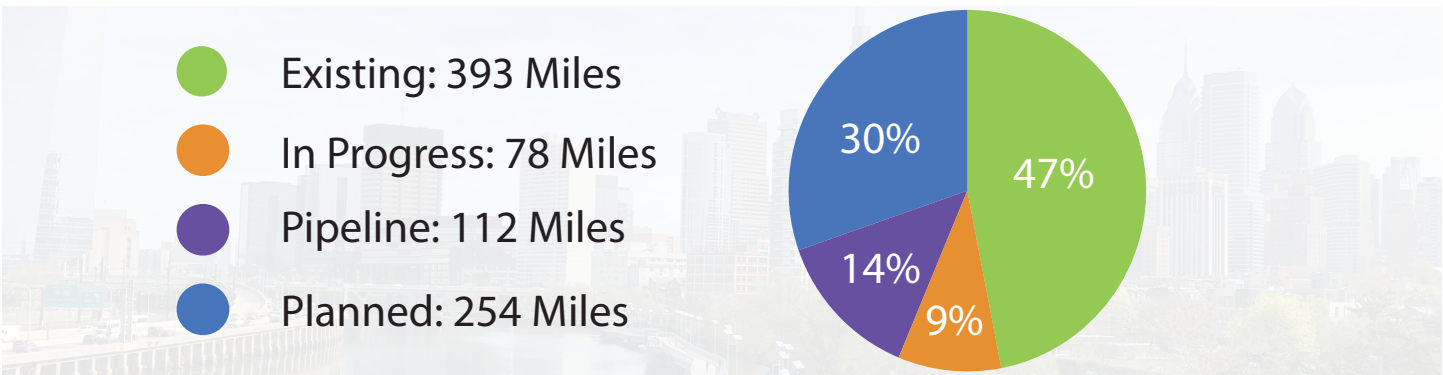
tree plantings, bike riding lessons, fishing, hiking, tactical urbanism, art installations, and more, encouraging people to enjoy group activities on trails across Philadelphia, Chester, Camden, and Trenton. These grantees will continue their work in 2024.

[Six new grantees](#) will further increase access to outdoor recreation in the region through community-based, culturally relevant projects and programs, helping to create a more welcoming, inclusive trail network.



Circuit Trails Completed in 2023

State	County	Trail	Mileage
NJ	Burlington/Camden	Burlington-Camden Trail: Cove Rd to Bethel Ave	0.26
PA	Philadelphia	Cobbs Creek Trail: 84th St to Eastwick Park	0.52
PA	Montgomery	Chester Valley Trail Extension East	3.9
PA	Delaware	Darby Creek Trail: Crossing near Swedish Cabin	0.08
NJ	Burlington	Delaware River Heritage Trail: 5th Street Trail - Eyre St to Walnut St	0.7
NJ	Camden	Delaware River Heritage Trail: Cramer Hill to Harrison Ave	0.05
PA	Philadelphia	Delaware River Trail: Aramingo Ave to Lehigh Ave	0.75
PA	Philadelphia	Delaware River Trail: Princeton Ave to Cottman Ave	0.26
PA	Philadelphia	Delaware River Trail: K&T Phase 2	0.6
PA	Bucks	D&L Trail: Tyburn Road Bypass	0.22
PA	Delaware	East Coast Greenway: PA-DE Border	0.3
PA	Delaware	Naylor's Run Trail: Chapman Park to near Marshall Rd & Long Ln	0.6
TOTAL:			8.24



Circuit Trails Openings Coming Soon

State	County	Trail	Mileage
PA	Chester	Chester Valley Trail: Chester Valley Trail to Ship Rd	0.54
PA	Philadelphia	Cobbs Creek Trail: Eastwick between 80th and 78th St	0.8
PA	Montgomery	Cross County Trail: Commerce Dr to Pine Run Tributary & PA Ave to PA 309	1.02
PA	Delaware	Carby Creek Trail: Darby Creek Crossing near Gillespie Park	0.06
PA	Chester	Exton Park Trail: Chester Valley Trail to Swedesford Rd	0.93
PA	Philadelphia	Fox Chase - Lorimer: Rhawn St to Shady Ln	0.62
NJ	Gloucester	Glassboro-Elk Trail: Elephant Swamp Trail	2.39
NJ	Mercer	Lawrence Hopewell Trail: Maidenhead Meadows	0.51
PA	Delaware	Newtown Square Branch: Haverford Vernon Rd to Manoa Rd	0.6
PA	Montgomery	Parkside Cynwyd Trail: City Line Ave to Montgomery Ave	0.47
PA	Philadelphia	Schuylkill River Trail: Schuylkill Banks - Near 61st ST to Passyunk Ave	0.87
PA	Philadelphia	Schuylkill River Trail: Schuylkill Banks - Gray's Ferry Swing Bridge	0.1
PA	Montgomery	Tookany-Tacony-Frankford: New 2nd St to Harrison Ave	0.37
TOTAL:			9.28

Building Awareness and Support for the Circuit Trails

The 2023 Circuit Trails marketing campaign sought to achieve the following objectives, emphasizing awareness and engagement of neighborhood residents and under-represented and under-resourced communities to encourage trail use:

- Build trail-segment-level grassroots support and awareness for priority projects to drive forward “500 Miles by 2025” advocacy campaign
- Influence decision makers to fund and implement priority projects to support the “500 Miles by 2025” campaign
- Recognize accomplishments and generate momentum by celebrating trail mileage, funding and political support

The campaign leveraged proven inclusive marketing approaches that have been tested over the past two Circuit Trails marketing campaigns. The strategy sought to maintain brand visibility for the Circuit across the region while implementing an inclusive approach aligning the trail network with audience priorities around fun, leisure time, wellness and mobility.

Messaging under the campaign theme “My Circuit Trails” elevated the Circuit Trails as the destination for everyone—a close-to-home access point to recreation, adventure, nature and the outdoors, and transportation.



Information was packaged and distributed in English and in Spanish on owned and shared media channels to provide ideas, inspiration and information for people to discover (or re-discover) the trails near their neighborhoods as well as the wide-range of activities and programming that can be facilitated by trails. Video content showcased the many ways that the region’s diverse communities are using the Circuit Trails and making these resources part of their everyday life. These videos included testimonials and storytelling shared by multiple 2023 Circuit Trails Coalition Community Grant Recipients.

To connect with new and diverse trail users on- and off-trail, the campaign prioritized investment in paid media designed to engage under-represented and under-resourced groups; partnered with the urban radio station WDAS to build brand affinity between a beloved local radio station and the Circuit Trails experience; and coordinated street team efforts in Trenton, Camden and Norristown to market the trails in highly trafficked neighborhood locations (like markets) within a mile or so of the

trail. Paid digital media targeted JEDI priority communities including Greater Philadelphia Neighborhoods, Trenton, Camden, Norristown, and Southwest Philadelphia/Cobbs Creek, as well as publications reaching diverse audiences such as *Al Día*, the *Trentonian* and *Parkside* journal. Direct engagement with social media influencers who speak to priority audiences reinforced the diverse representation of trail use and trail users.

Across the Circuit Trails network, and throughout the trail season, events were leveraged to create deeper connections between the community and the trails in their neighborhood including more than 20 events planned for Celebrate Trails Day; the celebration of funding for the Spring Garden Street Greenway; and the “Jam and Juice” event held by Healing Through the Land, We Walk PHL, and the Philadelphia chapter of GirlTrek with celebrity host, Patty Jackson, at Fairmount Park.

Reach of the 2023 Circuit Trails Campaign:

- Web Engagement: Users up 27% during peak campaign (25.8K July - September)
- Video Reach: 230k views (130% increase)
- Social Community: 29,420 (4% growth)
- Paid Media Reach: 4.6+ million (print, digital, radio)
- Earned Media: 111 media mentions (through 11/2023)
- Street Team Connections: 2,100 people

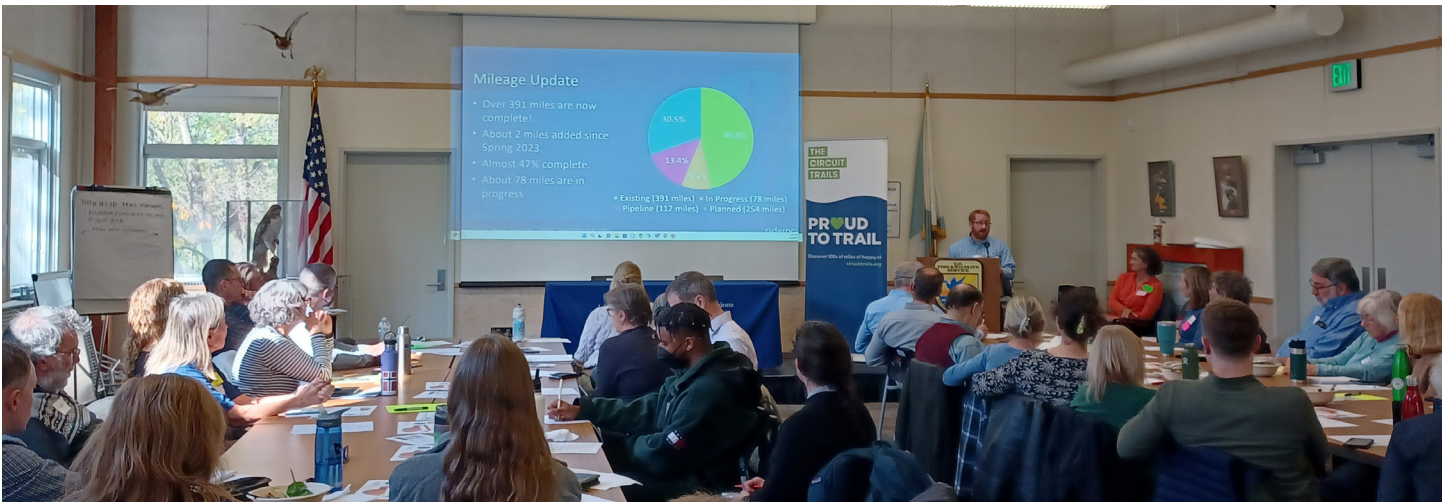
Montgomery County Celebrates the New Chester Valley Trail Extension

Photo Credit: Perry Benson



On Monday, March 13th 2023, members of the Circuit Trails Coalition joined the Montgomery County Planning Commission and local officials to cut the ribbon on the highly anticipated Chester Valley Trail Extension East. The new 3.94 mile segment links the existing 14.5-mile portion of the Chester Valley Trail, which currently runs from Exton to King of Prussia, to the Schuylkill River Trail in Norristown connecting the gap between Chester and Montgomery counties. The project began the construction phase in the fall of 2021 and was funded through the U.S. Department of Transportation's Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program.

This \$18 million dollar project includes the installation of two pedestrian bridges at South Gulph Road and Henderson Road and enhanced two bridges for increased bike and pedestrian use passing through three municipalities including Upper Merion Township, Bridgeport and Norristown. The new trail was constructed with 10 to 12-foot-wide, paved, multi-use trails that make up the regional Circuit Trails network. There are currently 393 existing miles throughout the region that make up the long-range vision of 800+ miles of trail by 2040.



The Circuit Trails Coalition is a collaboration of nonprofit organizations, foundations, and agencies working to advance completion of a connected network of trails – The Circuit Trails – in the Greater Philadelphia region. Its goal is to raise the profile of bicycle and pedestrian trails and their public benefits so that building the Circuit Trails becomes a significant regional priority. Since its May 2012 launch, the Circuit Trails Coalition has brought together dozens of organizations to advocate for completing The Circuit Trails network, with an eye toward raising the profile of trails and their many public benefits.

Circuit Trails Coalition Members

Members of the Circuit Trails Coalition are a diverse group of nonprofits working in the fields of transportation, recreation, health, environmental sustainability, and economic development.

The Circuit Trails Coalition is governed by a steering committee comprised of elected representatives from the 60+ member organizations.

Circuit Trails Coalition Public Partners

The Circuit Trails Coalition has formed active partnerships with governmental agencies that work to provide support and resources for Circuit Trails development and management.

Local, county, state and regional organizations are involved, representing interests such as planning, transportation management, parks, and conservation.

Circuit Trails Coalition "Circuit Citizens"

The Circuit Citizens community is a growing, interconnected, multi-county network of people who are interested in supporting and advocating for the advancement of the Circuit Trails network.

Circuit Citizens are the grassroots of the trail movement, who take action at the local level to increase support for trails.

Want your business or organization to become involved? Visit circuittrails.org for more information.

This work of The Circuit Coalition is made possible with the generous support of:

