WALKABLE BIKEABLE BERLIN
A Master Plan for a
Walkable, Bikeable Berlin, Maryland
Building Connectivity to Local and Regional Parks and our Local Heritage

A master concept plan for implementing community trails throughout the Town of Berlin and surrounding area, linking parks, residential communities and shopping amenities with a network of bike and pedestrian–friendly routes.

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The authors of this Plan extend a special thanks to the many residents and businesses of Berlin for providing meaningful input and to the following organizations for their participation: Town of Berlin, Berlin Parks Commission, Main Street Berlin, Worcester County Tourism, Worcester County Health Department, Worcester County Parks and Recreation, Worcester County Department of Economic Development, Grow Berlin Green, National Park Service, Assateague Island National Seashore, Historic St. Martin’s Church, Rackliffe House, Atlantic General Hospital, International Mountain Bike Association Eastern Shore Chapter, Germantown School Community Heritage Center.
Executive Summary

“Trails...support expanded economic opportunity; provide access to a healthy, sustainable lifestyle; and encourage all of our citizens to make that vital connection to our natural environment.” Governor Martin O’Malley in Maryland Trails: A Greener Way to Go

Berlin is an historic town on Maryland’s Eastern Shore situated between Assateague Island National Seashore and State Park to the south and the summer resort of Ocean City to the north. Berlin is a shining example of a community working together to offer visitors a respite from the boardwalk and beach. Berlin offers residents a more relaxed pace while providing a quality of life that attracts new residents and businesses.

Historically, children in the community walked or rode bikes to schools and for recreation. In the middle part of the last century, trends in Berlin and the surrounding areas followed much of the same trends around the country. As new schools were built and new development occurred throughout surrounding areas, it became more difficult to walk or bike to school. More often, people were forced to drive to the grocery store, sometimes many miles away. It is only over the last decade or so that we have come to see that we are battling childhood obesity and our children can’t walk or bike safely to schools or parks. Adults cannot walk or bike safely along many of the key roads that provide access to the grocery stores and other shopping and town amenities. Growth has offered many economic and quality of life benefits to Berlin and it has been those patterns of growth that have contributed to many of the health and environmental issues in Berlin and communities around the country.

By simply changing some of these patterns of growth, Berlin can reap the benefits of its “renaissance” by providing pedestrian-friendly routes and trails throughout Town, connecting area residents as Town and County meet at the greenbelt, and creating a gateway trail to Assateague Island National Seashore accommodating walkers and bikers, paddlers and equestrians. Trails and pedestrian-friendly routes can serve the community in so many ways - as a healthy form of recreation, as an outdoor classroom for our nature-deficient youth, as a local economic driver through tourism, and as a builder of community neighbor to neighbor. By guiding future development and incorporating a network of trails in new and existing projects we can regain the quality of life that comes with recreational opportunities, safe routes to school, and safe pedestrian and bike routes throughout town.

A ribbon cutting was held for the Worcester County Health Department ‘Safe Routes to School’ project at the 2012 Trail Mix event. Pictured from right, includes Marty Pusey, Worcester County Health Department, Mayor Gee Williams, Chief Arnold Downing, Jeannine Lamp and Dr. Jon Andes, Worcester County Schools retired Superintendent.
The development of the trails plan was guided by the goal of providing residents with a future that is more socially just, culturally rich and economically and environmentally viable. The concept plan for a Walkable Bikeable Berlin proposes trail routes affording citizens safe, convenient connections between neighborhoods and community institutions; user facilities and amenities for healthy recreation; and access to the region’s natural and cultural assets that define a sense of place and simultaneously fuel local economies.

The concept plan provides a framework for trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, and related facilities to encourage and promote the ease and safety of walking, biking and other non-vehicular recreational activities. The plan also serves to enhance future community growth with a well-planned network of trails for residents. The plan also provides guidance in protecting scenic lands, natural areas and working farms along the corridor between Berlin and Assateague, using a combination of conservation, scenic and public access easements.

The concept plan proposes three inter-connected trail networks with suggestions for implementation. It also recognizes additional connections that could better serve the region as resources present themselves. These three vital networks combine to create a unified, far-reaching trails network serving citizens, community and region.

**Berlin Trail Network** - The plan recommends prioritizing projects that could easily promote safety within Berlin, as well as projects that would support improved access to parks and amenities like bike racks, signage and bike striping within the Town of Berlin.

**Berlin Greenbelt Trail** - The plan recommends that a greenbelt trail be identified and developed as part of the Town’s Growth Boundary, where possible. As the town expands to the west, the trail will serve to delineate the distinction between the important natural areas and transitional growth boundary, and serve as a recreational trail for fitness enthusiasts.

**Assateague Gateway** – This trail serves as the connection between Berlin and the Lower Shore’s only National Park, Assateague Island National Seashore. Berlin serves as a gateway to this national treasure, located less than 10 miles from Berlin. By fostering this corridor as a pedestrian and bike-friendly route, offering recreational options such as horseback riding and water trails, this corridor could serve to protect the scenic gateway of Assateague Island National Park and Assateague Island State Park, better connect Berlin with the national and state parks and promote the economic and healthy lifestyle benefits associated with a trail network.
Aerial Map of Berlin and Surrounding Area with Proposed Trail Corridor, Protected Lands and Existing Recreation Sites
INTRODUCTION

Mayor of Berlin, Gee Williams, has been heard to say, “Over the last twenty years, Berlin went through a revitalization period. Today, Berlin is in a Renaissance period.”

Berlin was a crossroads for commerce and trade, situated along the railroad serving points north and south. This bustling town served the rural population for home goods, entertainment and social needs up through the middle of the last century. At that time, Ocean City was fast becoming the tourist destination. Businesses and the people who had supported Berlin’s businesses moved out, leaving empty buildings and an older population. This trend would last until the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Gradually, as local business people began to invest in their community and entrepreneurs set up shop in the sleepy town, Berlin began a more than two decade long revitalization period. Community redevelopment grants and other incentives helped to pave the way for revitalizing Main Street. After years of hard work and determination, Berlin was reinvented as an arts, retail and dining destination for locals and visitors to the region. Berlin also became a sought-after location for young couples to raise their families.

Residents demand services and amenities, and a shift in demographics over the last 10 years that has brought more young families along with a new group of retirees has prompted new interests for health and wellness and recreational amenities. Collaborative efforts that have encouraged and helped to create a sustainable town have contributed to Berlin’s achievement as Maryland’s first Certified Sustainable Community. Projects contributing to this accolade include the implementation of rain gardens and rain barrels throughout the town to collect stormwater and reduce the amount of nutrients entering the local waterways; a volunteer recycling program for local businesses; a community garden at the library; native tree plantings replacing non-native species; and numerous projects with the local public and private schools. Ongoing education and outreach programs indicated overwhelming interest in a more pedestrian and bike-friendly town.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Through a series of meetings and workshops with community groups, citizens, town agencies, county agencies and businesses, it became clear that the local community is interested in improving existing recreational opportunities. By developing new trails, opportunities are created that enhance conservation, economic development and community health goals and link to the larger recreation plan throughout the county and connect and align with state plans. Participating groups and individuals consistently indicated that a local trail network within the
town, connecting to nearby destinations such as Assateague Island and St. Martin’s Historic Church could provide many long-term social and economic benefits. Other important benefits of a trail network would include the potential for habitat restoration throughout the watershed, preservation of scenic lands and farms along the trail corridor, and an enhanced quality of life for local residents and visitors. The most frequently cited benefits, however, were opportunities for recreation and exercise and the increased mobility and safety of users, especially children and the elderly.

An important aspect of the proposed Walkable Bikeable Berlin is safe, walkable connections between neighborhoods, schools, parks, businesses and other destinations throughout Town. The trails will link neighborhoods, community facilities, historic and cultural sites and coastal areas while offering the healthy benefits of active recreation. These connections will showcase the many values of Berlin and the region, boost civic pride, and help sustain a viable local economy.

A Walkable Bikeable Berlin will offer the healthy benefits of active recreation in conjunction with something even more important and often overlooked in today’s hectic lifestyle: opportunity to spend time with families and friends in the scenic beauty of Maryland’s Eastern Shore.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Grow Berlin Green, a collaborative project between the Lower Shore Land Trust, the Maryland Coastal Bays Program and the Assateague Coastal Trust was established as a campaign dedicated to establishing the Town of Berlin, Maryland, and surrounding areas as a model community for participatory environmental protection, conservation and smart growth. The project, launched in 2009, included extensive outreach in the community at events, workshops and other citizen and civic meetings. Information gathering in the form of community surveys revealed overwhelming community interest for a more pedestrian and bike-friendly environment. In 2010, the Lower Shore Land Trust began to explore options for developing a master concept plan for a Walkable Bikeable Berlin.

Through the outreach and networking of Grow Berlin Green activities, we determined other groups were looking to address similar and related issues; Atlantic General Hospital was working on healthy choices and exercise options for the hospital campus; the newly formed International Mountain Bike Association Eastern Shore Chapter was working to create biking trails; the Worcester County Health Department was working on a Safe Routes to School project in Berlin.

During this time period, the National Park Service released their “Call To Action, Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Excellence”. Directives from the initiative include ‘Connecting People to Parks’ and ‘Preserving America’s Special Places’, and were compelling enough to request technical support from the National Park Service.
The Lower Shore Land Trust applied to the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program through the National Park Service and was awarded the technical planning assistance grant in 2011. This partnership helped efforts to engage citizens, partners and stakeholders in developing a vision for trails and land stewardship.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES - COMMUNITY TRAIL VISION

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”
— Abraham Lincoln

The goal for the master concept plan is to provide the Town of Berlin, municipal, county, state and federal agencies and planners a guideline for creating a successful trails network while providing the basis of need within the community.

The master concept plan is a tool to encourage and implement a connected network of trails around the community for healthy lifestyles that support the conservation values of the community and build stewardship ethic of the community.

The participating partners have acknowledged that Berlin and the surrounding community is a premier destination for the coastal bays and Atlantic Ocean beaches. Berlin has strived to create a destination for visitors and maintain the quality of life for local residents by offering a diversity of activities.

BENEFITS - BUILDING COMMUNITY & LINKING PEOPLE

“This proposal will support community efforts to further the Town’s goals, as well as the county’s, in linking conservation and economic development, and build on an even more successful partnership between the Town of Berlin, Grow Berlin Green and Worcester County.”
—Lisa Challenger, Director, Worcester County Tourism

The plan will provide many benefits to Berlin neighborhoods. A trail plan will serve to enhance and preserve area resources and characteristics highly valued by residents and visitors. The trail network will connect neighborhoods to many community institutions and amenities. It will provide, quite literally, a means to remember and celebrate the rich and varied history of Berlin. It will offer safe walks and community walkability by uniting people with place. In particular, it will provide an opportunity for those less-mobile community members, children and the elderly, to safely and easily connect with important local, state and national facilities, as well as their local friends and neighbors.

Existing Recreational, Cultural and Conservation Areas
- Scenic Byways
- ViewTrail 100
- Beach to Bay Indian Trail
- Ayers Creek Water Trail
- Rackliffe House
- Assateague Island National Seashore and State Park
- Ilia Fehrer Preserve (Adkins Property)
- Lewis Road Kayak Launch
- Historic Berlin
- Taylor House Museum
- Germantown School Cultural Heritage Center
- Civil War Trail
- Flower Street Transfer Station and site of future nature preserve
- Stephen Decatur Park
- Henry Park
- John Howard Burbage Park
- St. Martins Church
Many researchers contend that the leisure services sector is the largest economic sector in the United States. In most states, for example, recreation and tourism rank in the top three economic sectors as generators of income and employment. Cultural heritage tourism is ideal for rural communities. Not only does it support businesses traditionally associated with tourism--lodging, restaurants and gas stations--it also provides opportunities for local artists and other businesses. With features such as rich history, rural farms and forestland, recreation, and abundant wildlife, Walkable Bikeable Berlin and a surrounding network of trails is assured of contributing substantially to local tourism.

**Sense of Community**

“If you don’t know where you are, you don’t know who you are.” Wendell Berry

Berlin and the surrounding area offer a multitude of natural, scenic, historic and cultural attractions. There are existing ‘trails’ that provide cultural interest or recreational opportunities, and specific heritage sites. Together, these are part of the overarching trail system and enhance potential trail experiences.

A strong sense of place is a benefit frequently attributed to trails that connect citizens to community amenities and the slower pace of life permitted by walking. Trails allow people to become better acquainted with their surroundings and fellow residents, to appreciate a region’s history, and to develop that all-important sense of “belonging.” There are a number of historic, cultural, natural and recreational sites in Berlin and the surrounding area. By connecting people to these sites through trails, there is an opportunity to foster stewardship of these places and an interest in preserving these features that form a ‘sense of place’ for many in the community.

A **Walkable Bikeable Berlin** will foster this important connection of people and place. Further, the community-based approach used to create this plan serves to meet the needs and desires of Berlin residents, build citizen support through a common effort, and galvanize community resolve to build a safe, more walkable community for the future.

**Health and Wellness**

“We believe, as Americans, that it’s time to look critically at the health of our nation—and bring back the simple, fun, and absolutely vital practice of spending time outdoors to encourage personal health, forge community, and sustain humanity.” from HEALTHY PARKS HEALTHY PEOPLE US, A Strategic Action Plan by National Park Service and United States Public Health Service (2011)

Beyond connections and access, trail users will reap the many benefits of physical exercise. Whether walking outdoors or traveling from home to school, trail users will receive the benefits of physical activity. As a “community integrator,” the Berlin Trail Network will foster social interaction, strengthen existing relationships, encourage new relationships, provide priceless opportunities to exercise the imagination, relax the spirit, and calm the heart.
A Walkable Bikeable Berlin will greatly augment the ability of citizens to readily attain these benefits through high quality, close-to-home recreational experiences.

Environmental Stewardship

“We must educate our youth to be environmental stewards...to solve our energy and environmental challenges.” - Congressman Sarbanes.

People tend to value the things they understand and care for. The trail components of a Walkable Bikeable Berlin will draw people into the landscape. It will introduce visitors to a wealth of history and remind residents of their legacy, all of which contribute to the care and stewardship of the Lower Shore. The trail network will connect, instill and engage people. It will strengthen our sense of place, and sustain sound growth. It will inspire today’s residents to pass on to future generations that which they have received from their ancestors - their land, their legacy, their people.

The proposed plan takes into account the natural resources in and around Berlin, and opportunities to conserve them. The corridor between Berlin and Assateague provides numerous opportunities for resource protection, and at the same time, providing for low impact recreational activities. Biking, running, birdwatching, kayaking and horseback riding are activities that offer people connections to outdoors and the natural world that ultimately encourage healthy lifestyles and greater respect for our natural resources.

Safe Routes

“Safe Routes to School has the potential to improve the living habits of an entire generation of schoolchildren. It provides our children with fresh air and exercise. It reduces fuel consumption and air pollution, and promotes safety. Congressman Jim Oberstar (D-MN)
Former Chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Local efforts to establish “safe routes” encourage community leaders, schools and parents to improve safety and encourage more children, including children with disabilities, to safely walk and bicycle to school. In the process, related programs are working to reduce traffic congestion, improve health and the environment resulting in more livable communities for everyone. Safe, off-street walkways between homes and community facilities are vital. Imagine a stress-free
walk from home to church or school safely on a trail separated from speeding cars and trucks. Such “safe routes” are particularly important for our “more vulnerable and less mobile” citizens: seniors and school children.

**TRAIL SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS**

_The trails could be enjoyed by the local community and also by tourists who are interested in activities from bird watching to mountain biking._

Delegate Norman Conway

Extensive community input was facilitated and collected throughout the process of developing the master plan. Every effort to gather input from a variety of individuals and groups was made, and workshops and outreach events were held in locations throughout the Town, including Town Hall, the Multipurpose Building, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and the Assateague Island National Seashore Education Building. A series of community workshops was held in late 2011 and early 2012 for the community to come together and learn about possible options for developing a trail network, and to encourage input from a variety of user groups. Mountain bike enthusiasts, equestrians, birdwatchers, heritage groups, environmental and conservation groups, sports and fitness enthusiasts, parents and students were all represented and provided comments, indicated areas currently used, and offered suggestions for new trails and linkages. The outreach efforts further identified the community interest in the project, the economic potential and the opportunities for conserving the cultural and natural heritage of the area.

A series of three focus group sessions was held in late October of 2012 to review maps and suggested trail options. These sessions helped to further delineate three areas for trail prioritization: a Berlin Trail Network, a Berlin Greenbelt and a Berlin – Assateague Corridor. Additional comments included numerous options for trails that could connect core population areas of Berlin, Ocean Pines, Snow Hill, Pocomoke, and further to Ocean City and Salisbury as part of a regional plan. Representatives from heritage organizations and recreational groups indicated support for a connection between Berlin and St. Martins Historic Church in Showell, ultimately connecting along Route 589 through Ocean Pines and linking back through Holly Grove Swamp to the Assateague – Berlin Corridor. A dual purpose trail connection using the railroad bed between Berlin and Snow Hill, ultimately connecting Pocomoke City with Selbyville, Delaware, is part of a long-term vision for economic development and recreational opportunities for the Lower Shore. Consideration for using the Town of Berlin spray irrigation site west of town could also provide an excellent trail opportunity. As non-vehicular connections between Berlin and Salisbury are explored, this site
could provide multiple trail options and natural resource protection. For the purpose of this plan and due to current limited resources, our recommendations are focused on the Berlin Trail Network, the Berlin Greenbelt and the Berlin – Assateague Corridor Trail. As other funding options become available, or community priorities shift, these other suggestions would serve as exemplary projects for consideration.

PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to plan for success and build momentum for the trail network. The intention of this plan is to identify key segments that are highly visible and popular to complete a project that the community can rally around. By implementing the plan in phases, the community will be able to continue to prioritize projects and build on-going support for the various projects. Within each trail segment are recommendations that could be implemented as funding is available. Long-term projects that may require significant funds or those that may have obstacles that make the project more difficult to complete are indicated as such. A final set of community focus group workshops was held in the fall of 2012. Facilitated by Shawn Dalton of Thrive Consultants, recommendations were further refined resulting in those submitted in this plan and outlined in Appendix B.

BERLIN TRAIL NETWORK

The Town and partners should make every attempt to support the creation of trails throughout the Town to better connect neighborhoods, downtown shopping district, schools, and institutions with residents. Berlin is a well-established community which may result in trails opportunities that at first may be limited and disconnected. As initial routes make in-roads, efforts to demonstrate the values and benefits of trails will be useful to help integrate community planning (and growth) in the future that should augment development of more trails. Although there are limitations in Town for creating natural trails, a number of recommendations would serve to advance non-vehicular transportation and recreation around Town. The Arts & Entertainment District recommended an arts walk extending throughout the district with the goal of incorporating art sculptures and monuments to highlight Berlin as an arts and cultural destination. A trail route around the downtown could provide opportunities to combine the mutual goals of the Arts and Entertainment District with recommendations set forth in this Plan.

Berlin is currently in the process of implementing a stormwater utility to help address a number of stormwater issues. There may be opportunities for incorporating trails in conjunction with stormwater restoration projects. Where possible, these combinations should be evaluated for important educational purposes, additional public access for recreation and fitness, and improved water quality downstream.

Recommendations:
- Signage
- Additional bike racks at schools, shopping centers, parks, downtown
- Dog waste facilities placed strategically around town
- Bike striping along key road routes
- Benches
- Trail head for maps and information about local historic and cultural sites
- Create a consistent logo for all three segments
- Review proposed stormwater restoration projects for feasibility of incorporating trails
- Link residential neighborhoods to Town parks with sidewalks and trails where feasible

Building on the success of the previous Safe Routes to School project, the Worcester County Health Department and other agencies should promote and implement Safe Routes to Schools within Town limits and encourage pedestrian and bicycle transportation for errands and recreation.

**BERLIN GREENBELT**

Within the Urban Growth Boundary, the Town will incorporate a Greenbelt area to define the ultimate boundaries of the Town. Individual parcel sizes east of Town are generally smaller and already developed, making the easterly side of Town a more difficult location in which to establish a Greenbelt. This should not limit the Town’s attempts to incorporate such a worthwhile feature, however. Kitts Branch, a tax ditch located along the East side of Berlin, may provide opportunities for a trail that could link to a boundary Greenbelt. To date, one landowner has expressed interest in supporting a trail along his property. Such a project could stimulate additional interest and support.

Parcels to the west and south of the Town are generally large parcels, where annexation requests will likely occur in the future. These parcels should be identified for a Greenbelt and trails. During annexation requests, the Town should attempt to negotiate a perpetually protected area between 200 and 1,000 feet wide along the outer areas of the property to be annexed. This Greenbelt area should include existing forested areas or areas to be planted in forest. A successful Greenbelt will include forests, walking and bicycling trails and wildlife habitat. Partnerships with local and State conservation groups should be formed to allow for optimal design and location of the Greenbelt.

The process of creating a Greenbelt is recommended as part of a 10-25 year plan. Connectivity of the individual segments of the Greenbelt should be considered as each annexation and/or development request is submitted. It should be noted, however, that a Greenbelt segment could be considered anywhere within the Urban Growth Boundary. The Town should work closely with Worcester County to determine if any areas immediately outside of Town limits could be utilized for a segment of the Greenbelt.
Recommendations:

- Negotiate project along Kitts branch with interested landowner (South Moon Under)
- Establish trail from Flower Street to existing transfer station along Kitts Branch. The transfer station has been identified by the County Parks and Recreation Department as a future nature preserve.
- Utilize a consistent logo and mark areas that become established as trails.
- Provide count down traffic lights at the intersections of Route 113 and Bay Street and at Route 113 and Route 376.
- Plan for a pedestrian bridge over Route 113 in the future, where most appropriate.

**BERLIN - ASSATEAGUE CORRIDOR TRAIL**

Partners and stakeholders recommend establishing a regional connector trail that would identify the corridor between Berlin and Assateague Island National Seashore for scenic and conservation protection and recreational purposes. This project will serve to enhance the recreational and fitness opportunities and support local, state and federal conservation goals. A well-defined and visible connector trail between Berlin and Assateague Island National Seashore would serve to identify the viewshed along the corridor for protection and further boost eco-tourism and healthy lifestyles.

Scenic, conservation and trail easements will help foster the connection between Berlin and Assateague. This corridor is the gateway to the state and federal parks, and provides scenic and conservation values along the gateway. Protecting this corridor will promote a positive experience for visitors to the park by ensuring they will be able to enjoy the natural, scenic and cultural qualities of the coastal bays and Maryland’s Lower Eastern Shore. A corridor trail will also serve to promote the Ayres Creek Water Trail, currently in development, and the Iliia Fehringer Nature Preserve, a County owned park managed by the Maryland Coastal Bays Program. This corridor could serve as a hub for ecotourism, enhancing the offerings of Assateague State Park and Assateague Island National Seashore.

Recommendations:

- Utilize a consistent logo and include marking upgrades along corridor of Assateague Road (MD 376) and Route 611.
- Establish prioritization of properties for conservation, scenic and public access easements
- Identify funding for easements
- Conduct outreach to landowners along the corridor to identify interest
- Install interpretive signs at Assateague Island National Seashore and other available sites
- Promote the connections between Berlin and Assateague
- Work with the State Highway Administration to prioritize use of road Right of Ways for enhanced biking and trail offerings
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Implementing a trails network will likely take years, although there are immediate actions that can produce benefits in the short-term. The trails network should include a combination of community sidewalks, on-road designated bicycle lanes and off-road paved trails, enhanced shoulder areas along roadways, signage, markers, rest areas, benches, bicycle racks, trailheads and maps, as well as using tools such as public access easements, conservation easements and scenic easements. This plan recognizes that funding is one of the key components to prioritizing and implementing the various trail projects. There are aspects of the overall project that may take decades to complete, although by recognizing these projects as part of a master concept plan, they should be periodically reviewed and implemented when feasible.

Looking ahead, mid and long-terms goals would be to incorporate a shared use bike path along the sides of the roads. The shared use bike path would further enhance the benefits of the corridor trail by the additional safety that a trail separated from the road can provide. This will improve the trail benefits and build increased interest for recreation and ecotourism, a boost to area economic development. Additional loops and connections could also be phased in, particularly the Ocean Pines portion and a rails and trails component, as referenced in the section on Recommendations for Future Actions.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

Funding for trails, sidewalks and bike lanes involves financing, planning, construction and maintenance. In many instances the sources for each of these differs within one project or portion of project. For instance, a community may provide the maintenance for a portion of a trail which passes through, although the community funded neither the planning nor construction of that trail. It is also understood that there will be some areas that are not suitable for projects at this time, in part because of private property ownership or the project may be too cost prohibitive.

- **Municipal** - Municipal funds are typically limited, and directed toward local needs and desires such as recreation, paths through parks, and local pedestrian / bike access. In some cases they may entail directing available funds from other sources (such as Safe Routes to Schools) within the community. As noted above, however, the municipality may undertake the maintenance (and thereby responsibility) for portions of trails which pass through and serve that community. Municipalities have several other options at their disposal. Berlin may be able to incorporate some stormwater utility funds for trails that address stormwater problems.
- **Capital campaign drives** directed at a specific project that is seen as significant by the community.
- **Bond issues** to spread financing over a long term. Like capital campaigns, these require community support.
- **County** - Funding for trails and paths which serve and connect communities within that region and which are seen as part of a greater plan are frequently provided through the region’s allocation of available funds from the state and federal government. These may come from
FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) ‘enhancements,’ funds for transit links or the Hometown Streets and Safe Routes to Schools efforts.

- **State** - Maryland is committed to the development of trails and trail systems for both health purposes and as pedestrian / bike roadways for travel within and between communities. Like the regional funds, much of this money is federal funding distributed through the state for these purposes.

- **Federal** - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) – Last year, Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress Transportation Bill (MAP-21) which consolidated a number of different programs into one program (National Recreational Trails, Safe Routes to Schools, and the Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP)). Sidewalks, bike paths, and shared-use paths are now eligible for this program. This is a reimbursable Federal-Aid program, which requires a 20% cash match. Depending on the type of improvements for the Assateague Corridor Trail, this could potentially be a funding source. Please note that the program requires 30% construction design plans at the time of application for construction funding.

- **Private Funding** - Grant funding is available through many private avenues, most of which have specific agendas. Key to obtaining such funding is a clear match of the project goals to the funding intent. Often, private grants require a non-profit entity [501(c) 3] to receive and administer any funds. Frequently, private funding can be used to meet the matching requirements of many public programs which require some amount of local funding as a good faith indication of local support. There are numerous private/public partnerships, and one such example has been implemented in Portland, Maine. An ‘Adopt – A – Trail’ program has been initiated where local businesses sponsor a trail and in return they are featured on trail signage. [http://trails.org/join-renew-or-donate/adopt-a-trail/](http://trails.org/join-renew-or-donate/adopt-a-trail/)

- Finally there are **in-kind gifts** and cooperative partnerships which permit a right of way through private lands.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS**

Community members and representatives from specific user groups made many recommendations for the trail network. Due to the focus of the concept plan, not all of these recommendations could be included in detail. Funding and community interest for some of these recommendations may drive their priority and should not be discounted.

The opportunity to promote connectivity through trails makes Berlin, the National Park Service, local conservation groups, recreation groups and the health and wellness community natural partners. The economic development potential of a recreational corridor with scenic landscapes of farms and forested areas supports goals of a top notch outdoor recreation destination for the state of Maryland. The foundation is already in place for achieving such a goal with the existing water trail along Ayers Creek, the proximity of an existing equestrian farm, the County-owned Ilia Fehrler Preserve and established partnerships with the National Park Service.

Outreach efforts recognized significant interest in connecting Berlin to parts north, including St. Martins Historic Church and the more populated Ocean Pines area, as well as to the
communities south of Snow Hill and potentially Pocomoke City by developing multi-modal transportation opportunities along the railroad line. Such a trail would connect population areas to heritage sites and local communities, promoting the type of economic development that befits a health conscious and environmentally sustainable community like Berlin.

There are future State Highway Administration plans to upgrade MD 589 and include a pedestrian and bicycle trail beside the road. This upgrade would support efforts to enhance regional connections. A loop from Berlin north to Showell, through Ocean Pines, across Grays Corner through Holly Grove Swamp back to Assateague Road could also provide a link to Ocean City. This regional loop could serve as a transportation corridor and recreational trail, connecting to the State transportation corridors.

All efforts should be made to connect to the State transportation corridors. Currently, Route 50 serves as the transportation corridor for the Lower Shore. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently working closely with the National Park Service, the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration, Department of Planning, Office of Tourism, local governments, trail groups, and volunteer citizens on a wide assortment of trails throughout the state to enhance the non-vehicular inter-connectedness throughout the State.

**METHODOLOGY**

By 2011, community support for a trail network was clearly evident, and we determined that it would be useful to gather more specific information about potential trail sites, user groups, priorities and obstacles to implementing projects. In order to pursue funding to support a trail initiative, the Lower Shore Land Trust and Grow Berlin Green partners worked with the Town of Berlin and community members to present the concept of a trail program to the Mayor and Council. In May of 2011, the Mayor and Council passed a resolution in support of the concept. Since then, we have received technical support and funding to conduct workshops and participate in community events, collecting valuable information for the master concept plan.

Initially, information was collected at local events around Berlin. We distributed surveys at community events to gather information about interests from visitors and locals. We held an initial stakeholders meeting December 5, 2011 to share information and to determine viable support and interest. In February of 2012 we held two community workshops, open to the public. One was held at the Multi-Purpose Building on Flower Street and the other was held at the Berlin Mayor and Council Chambers. Finally, in October of 2012, with the generous support of the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, we were able to conduct three focus groups for the specific geographic areas; Berlin, Berlin Greenbelt and the Berlin – Assateague Corridor. A full report is included in the appendix.
APPENDICES

Appendix A - Maps

  Map 1 – Berlin Trail Network

  Map 2 – Berlin Greenbelt

  Map 3 – Berlin – Assateague Corridor

Appendix B – Focus Group Report, Thrive Consulting

Appendix C – Town Resolution