Georgetown-Lewes Rail/Trail Study

- House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension
- Rail/Study Trail : Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

August 22, 2011
Presentation Outline

• Background
  • Benefits
  • Statewide Rails to Trails/Rails with Trails 2006 Master Plan
  • Project Goals
  • Regional Consistency

• House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension
  • Project Needs
  • Alignment
  • Findings

• Lewes Library Project

• Rail/Trail Study: Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park
  • Design Guidelines
  • Current Freight Rail Usage/Operations
  • Future Rail Usage/Operations
  • Environmental Impacts
  • Right-of-Way Impacts
  • Preliminary Structural Evaluation

• Decision Considerations
Benefits:

- Transportation / Livability
- Conservation / Environment
- Tourism and Economic Development / Revitalization
- Historic Preservation / Community Identity
- Public Health and Quality of Life

Both the Delaware House and Senate voted unanimously to direct DelDOT to “create contiguous systems or networks of walkways and bikeways within and between cities and towns in Delaware in order to provide travelers with the opportunity for safe, convenient, cost-effective and healthy transportation via walking and bicycling.”

(Senate Concurrent Resolution # 13)
Background

- 17.8 mile corridor from the Historic Georgetown Train Station to the Cape Henlopen State Park
- Currently owned by the State of Delaware and operated by the Delaware Coast Line Railroad for the purposes of moving freight
Background

The Statewide Rails to Trails/Rails with Trails 2006 Master Plan:

- Identifies 11 railroad corridors for potential bicycle and pedestrian use
- Recommends the Georgetown to Lewes corridor for inclusion in the prioritization process for Capital Improvements Program projects for its:
  - Potential connectivity
  - Value to the overall statewide trail system
  - Proximity to the Southern Delaware Heritage Trail and
  - Availability of Right-of-Way (66 feet wide)
Project Goals:

- Provide a Shared Use Path
- Provide connection to existing trails and bike routes along the corridor
- Provide user amenities such as trailheads, parking, mile markers
- Compatible with Delaware Rail-To-Trail/ Rail-With-Trail Facility Master Plan
Background

Regional Consistency:

**Statewide Rails to Trails / Rails with Trails Facility Master Plan** (June 2006)
- Recommends the Georgetown-to-Lewes rail corridor for inclusion in the prioritization process for CIP projects

**2003-2008 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**
- Identified walking or jogging paths and bike paths as high priorities for the Georgetown and Lewes area according to a research study based on regional demand analysis.

**Sussex County Comprehensive Plan** (April 2008)
- Identifies the Georgetown-Lewes Rail/Trail as a proposed facility within the strategic plan to provide more parks and trails and create more recreation opportunities for Sussex County residents.

**Town of Georgetown Comprehensive Plan** (January 2010)
- Includes the Georgetown-Lewes Rail/Trail as a component of their pedestrian and bicycle circulation plan which is “valuable for recreation, but also for bicycle transportation to the many employers along its length”.

**Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending Report** (Draft June 2010)
- Georgetown and Lewes are within Level 1 Investment Areas which should adopt policies to develop and maintain recreation areas, greenways and bikeways.
Regional Consistency: Trail Network & Neighborhood Connectivity

Existing railroad corridor is in close proximity to:

- Bicycle Routes and Greenways (Rt 9, US 1, Cape Henlopen Drive, Gills Neck Road, Old Orchard Road)
- Multi-use Paths and Off-Road Trails (Junction and Breakwater Trail, Southern Delaware Heritage Trail, Sidewalks and shared roadway facilities, Lewes bicycle friendly travel network)
- Residential Developments and Neighborhoods (existing and proposed)
- Commercial Developments
- Scenic and Historic Highways (Kings Highway, Rt. 9)
- Cape May-Lewes Ferry
- Cape Henlopen State Park
Regional Consistency: Junction Breakwater Trail

- Operated and managed by DNREC
- Close proximity to Georgetown/Lewes rail track corridor
- Current Trail Usage:
  - Frequently and highly used
  - Special events 1,500 users a day
House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension

Project Needs:

- Relocation of the Lewes Boat Ramp
- Increased traffic of towing boats along New Road
- Fire truck accessing SR1
- Safety concerns:
  - Access from SR 1 southbound to New Road
  - Access from Minos Conway Road to SR 1 northbound due to crossing of two lanes of SR1 traffic especially when towing a boat
House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension

Alignment:
House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension

Alignment:
Existing bridge conditions
  • 40 ft clear width between piers
House Resolution Bill No. 47:
New Road Extension

Alignment:
Typical Sections: Rails-with-Trails option
House Resolution Bill No. 47: New Road Extension

Alignment:

Typical Sections: Rails-to-Trails option
Findings:

- A safe roadway connection from SR1 southbound to New Road is feasible
- RTT and RWT are both feasible options
- Anticipated impacts to utilities, traffic, right-of-way, and environmental resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Road Extension Construction Cost Estimate Cost</th>
<th>RTT</th>
<th>RWT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.7 million</td>
<td>4.7 million</td>
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</table>
Lewes Library Project

Coordination with City of Lewes:

- Potential library and parking lot expansion
- Purchase of adjacent property
- At grade railroad crossing for pedestrians and vehicles (estimated $280,000)
- Parking lot may serve as trailhead for Junction Breakwater Trail and Georgetown to Lewes Trail. Typical trailhead cost is approximately $415,000
Trail width: 10 ft usable width w/ 2 ft safety grading on both sides

Motorized vehicles: EMS and rail maintenance vehicles only

Equestrians prohibited

Trail surface recommended to be asphalt pavement with stone dust safety grading

Include mile markers, wayfinding signage, and benches

Provide connectivity to nearby trails/bicycle routes/sidewalks

Example: Junction Breakwater Trail
Design Guidelines:

Existing Conditions:

- 66’ width of existing right-of-way
- Top of ballast is approximately 9’ wide
Rail/Trail Study:
Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

Design Guidelines:
Rails-with-Trails:
• Multi-use path is adjacent to the rail tracks
• Requires wider footprint
Rail/Trail Study: Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

Design Guidelines:

Rails-to-Trails:
- Existing rail tracks and ties will be removed
- Multi-use path will go on existing rail ballast
Current Freight Rail Usage/Operations:

- **Schagrin Gas**  
  (at Sussex County Industrial Airpark)  
  Approximately 2 to 4 carloads per week

- **Mountaire Farms**  
  (at Gravel Hill)  
  Approximately 8 to 9 carloads per week

- **SPI Pharma**  
  (near Cape Henlopen State Park)  
  Approximately 3 carloads every two weeks  
  (materials are not hazardous)

- Freight rail operations are currently low speed and infrequent
- Coordination indicates that existing freight customers (Schagrin Gas and Mountaire Farms) would face negative economic impacts if rail operation was eliminated
Rail/Trail Study:
Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

Future Rail Usage/Operations:

Existing/Future Rail Customers:
(No major increase in volume or usage anticipated)

- Mountaire Farms (Gravel Hill)
- Schagrin Gas (Sussex County Industrial Airpark)
- SPI Barcroft (Cape Henlopen State Park)

No rail usage planned or anticipated:

- Justin Tanks (Sussex County Industrial Airpark)
- Off-shore wind farm
- Dinner excursion train
- Passenger rail line (due to low population density)
Future Rail Usage/Operations: Passenger Rail Service

- Potential for a public transportation/transit route (commuter train, light rail) from Georgetown to Cape May-Lewes Ferry or Cape Henlopen State Park
- Future Sussex County land use and density were evaluated (year 2030): Census data indicated a dwelling unit of $1.7 - 2.9$
- FTA provides general thresholds for successful transit projects based upon number of dwelling units per acre.
  - $0 - 3.0$: Does not support bus or rail
  - $3.01 - 7.0$: May support bus, does not support rail
  - $7.01 - 9.0$: Supports bus, may support rail
  - $9.01 - up$: Supports bus and rail

Comparison:
Commuter rail line from Philadelphia, PA to Atlantic City, NJ
Serves 2 counties with density of 2,309 people/sqmi and 489 people/sqmi.
Sussex County, DE density = 210 people/sqmi
(line never turned a profit; due to low ridership, the line was suspended from January to May, 2011)
If rail line is terminated and tracks are removed, a trans-shipment area is required for SPI Pharma.

Potential locations:
- Gravel Hill
- Cool Springs Road

Cost: approx. $330,000
(Does not include cost for mechanical or electrical equipment used by SPI Pharma for their operations)
Environmental Impacts:

Findings:

- Environmental features/resources are present within and in close proximity to the right-of-way corridor.
- Impacts to the resources can be anticipated.
- Avoidance, minimization, mitigation efforts need to be determined.
- Permits will be required.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Potential Environmental Impacts from Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park</th>
<th>RTT</th>
<th>RWT</th>
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<td>STREAM CROSSING IMPACTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>WETLAND IMPACTS</td>
<td>0.4 ac</td>
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<tr>
<td>FOREST IMPACTS</td>
<td>1 ac</td>
<td>4 ac</td>
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Right-of-Way Impacts:

RWT option will have significantly more property impacts
 Approximately 175 properties will be impacted by Rails-With-Trails (from Cool Springs Road to Cape Henlopen State Park)

- Sheds
- Mature trees and tree canopy
- Private landscaping
- (some of which have been placed on public right-of-way)

RTT avoids the majority (if not all) of the impacts
Rail/Trail Study: Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

Preliminary Structural Evaluation:

Railroad swing bridge over the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal

- Bridge structure carries rail tracks only
- Evaluation suggest that structure cannot accommodate and cannot be modified/widened to accommodate pedestrians/bicyclists

Freeman Highway Bridge (US 9)

- Bridge structure may be used for a trail or sidewalk/bikeway to cross over the Lewes-Rehoboth Canal
- Preliminary findings indicate that the structure can be modified/widened to accommodate pedestrians/bicyclists
Rail/Trail Study:
Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park

Preliminary Trailhead Locations:

- Historic Georgetown train Station
- Near Sussex County Industrial Airpark/Sports At The Beach
- Broadkill Station (SR 5, Harbeson Road)
- Nassau (SR 1, Coastal Highway)
- Queen Anne’s Railroad Station in Lewes
- Cape Henlopen State Park

Example: Junction Breakwater Trail
## Decision Considerations

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<tr>
<td><strong>Cool Spring to Cape Henlopen State Park</strong></td>
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Next Steps

- Review Comments Received from Public Meeting Tonight
- Receive Input from the City of Lewes
- Further Coordination with SPI Pharma
- Provide Recommendation for Rail to Trail (RTT) or Rail with Trail (RWT)
- Determine Potential Funding Options and Implementation Strategies
- Complete Final Design and Right-of-Way Requirements
- Construction
- Provide continuous Updates to the Public throughout the process