

## Carroll County – Sandy Valley Trail Extension (Brown Township)

May 2, 2024

### Roll Call conducted

Commissioner Modranski provided ACG overview and described the parks and trails funding set forth. He mentioned the health clinic that is being funded in Carroll County. Gov. DeWine told communities to think big and a group met at the Carrollton Library. The committee then determined the main projects to develop for the ACG application. Ben developed trail plans with help from Dylan Sayre (MWCD). The trail from Waynesburg to Carroll County was researched. The trail ends abruptly just before Carroll County. The park Carroll County Park District does not have the funding to maintain or advance the trail. The trail was planned under ms Consultants. Ben distributed agendas and noted that all potential routes were investigated through Stark County. There are several private property owners and the process to gain permission was arduous and too lengthy to meet the requirements for ACG. Ben provided a summary of parcel ownership on the potential trail route. West of Malvern, Whitacre Greer owns much of the property. There are two privately owned parcels before the reaching Malvern Village Park. Then, there is the park and another privately owned parcel. Reed Avenue, Danmar Properties, and Furey Holdings also own property along the proposed route. OMEGA is suggesting the FHWA Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program be utilized.

Bob Neiderman stated that he has also researched a multi-purpose trail and at the time, the oil and gas work had not started in the area. He then met the North Country Trail group, who wanted to create a single track hiking trail rather than a multi-use trail. From Waynesburg to (close to) Malvern, there is an existing horse trail; however, it is Whitacre Greer property and their permission would be needed. The meeting is taking place to determine how to gain that permission. The North Country Trail needs to be removed from Citrus Road.

Chris Rotondo stated that he has called John Greer asking for his opinion and he stated that Stark parks had a contract but he did not want the group (Brown Township) to consult with them. The Stark Parks lease expires at the end of June. However, the Sandy Valley Trail will still be maintained. The equestrian trail was the one impacted by the expiring lease. Mr. Greer did not mention the lease expiring. 183 LTD was consulted and the township owns a parcel behind the cemetery in Minerva. Chris noted that Mr.

Greer did not close the door on the conversation. Chris called the insurance company and inquired about a lease agreement. Liability will be the principal issue with 183 LTD. The township owns from behind the cemetery to Blade Road (approximately 4,000 feet). The township has documents from a surveyor and the railroad is going to be contacted to inquire about land acquisition.

From Waynesburg to the Little Forest Inn is owned by Whitacre Greer. From there, the land is owned by two private entities.

The group reviewed a map of the area in question. The railroad ties are still in place although nothing has been stored there for approximately 10 years. Trustee Brock Hutchison asked the group what the overall goal is moving forward.

The North Country Trail is typically a footpath along private and public land; but it does share bike paths when necessary. Private property permission is often difficult to obtain, but the North Country Trail is very interested in the railroad property. Bicycles, horses, and foot traffic would be ideal. The school cross country teams would also benefit greatly from the project. Bob Neiderman asked if the project could be completed in phases. It is imperative to get the North Country Trail from Citrus Road. Obtaining permission from Whitacre Greer to utilize the horse trail would be ideal; however, a solid plan should be in place before he is approached.

The Carroll County GIS site was accessed and reviewed by the group. Mr. Neiderman pointed out the creek coming out of Lake Mohawk. Bringing the trail down Citrus Road and to the railroad bed would be the goal. There is an existing equestrian trail that runs to Stark Parks Trail in Stark County. The trail is well-maintained. There is a private road that will need to be researched that includes 6 residences. The road is on Whitacre Greer property, but the residences are privately owned. The parcel in question is owned by David Hull, but he does not own the road. The road is owned by Whitacre Greer. There is a gate that has a sign posted allowing horses but forbidding hikers. It would be simple to get the North Country Trail off of Citrus Road and onto the equestrian trail with Whitacre Greer permission. There are several oil and gas roads which present several opportunities to accomplish the overall goal. Ben noted that when plans were investigated for ACG, a route through Malvern Park was considered. If Whitacre Greer is on board, there will be no issue accomplishing the goal.

Mr. Hutchison is in favor of the phased approach. Ben noted that the FHWA program has a minimum ask of \$12 million for construction with a 20% minimum local match. That would cover the majority of the corridor; however, a planning grant would need to be obtained. Submissions are due for the planning grant on June 17<sup>th</sup>. With most programs, it is best to have a big request. Ben suggested that the group talk to Whitacre

Greer first. The hiking portion of the project would come at minimal cost. If a planning grant for preliminary designs was pursued, it would give the group a year to get things in order. Mr. Greer and other landowners will be invited to future meetings to discuss the matter further. Various landowners were discussed, and several are expected to be in support of the project.

1. North Country Trail and trustee contact Whitacre Greer regarding the trail only. OMEGA can help facilitate the conversation, as well.
2. OMEGA and Brock work on the planning grant (due June 17<sup>th</sup>) for whole multi-purpose from Waynesburg to Minerva.
3. Whitacre Greer's opinion will be known and a larger conversation can be had regarding the grant project. Property owners can be discussed as well. Awards will be made by Fall 2024.

Once the trails are in place, the maintenance responsibility will be determined. Maintenance is not expected to be arduous. There is a bit of distrust towards Stark Parks among the property owners. A private club currently maintain the equestrian trail. If selected to maintain the proposed trail, the township would have to prioritize the 48 miles of roadway for which they are responsible.

One reason for Stark Parks expired lease being released is that the area in question does not lie within Stark County. A new park is being created in Stark County. The terminated lease does not impact the railroad bed that North Country Trail is interested in. If permission is obtained from John Greer, North Country Trail will maintain the area while it is considered a hiking trail. Once it is converted into a biking trail, that may change. However, NCT and the other entities are willing to share the maintenance should that happen.

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TRUSTEE-CHAIR JOHN DUSTMAN

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TRUSTEE-VICE CHAIR CHRIS ROTONDO

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TRUSTEE BROCK HUTCHISON

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FISCAL OFFICER PEGGIE CONNER

All formal actions of the REGULAR MEETING of BROWN TOWNSHIP concerning and relating to the adoption of resolutions and/or motions passed at this meeting were adopted in a meeting open to the public, in compliance with the law, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.