

Grand History Trail Economic Summit Final Report
By Tom Jolin December 11, 2014

The Grand History Trail Economic Summit was held on October 30, 2014 at the Gettysburg National Park Visitor Center. The following were in attendance.

Andrew Merkel, Acting Director Adams County Office of Planning and Development
Randy Phiel, President of Adams County Commissioners
Jim Martin, Vice President Adams County Commissioners
Marty Karsteter Qually, Adams County Commissioner
Deborah L. Adamik, President & CEO Main Street Gettysburg
Tammy Myers, Gettysburg Heritage Center & Gettysburg Gift Center
Katie Lawhon, GNMP Management Assistant
Zach Bolitho, GNMP Chief of Resource Management
Rick Kendall, GNMP Acting Superintendent
Gary Laird, President of Hanover C of C
Norris Flowers, President Destination Gettysburg
Carrie Stuart, President Adams-Gettysburg C or C
Sue Cipperly, Emmitsburg Planner
Tammie Brush-Campbell, Habpi board member
Steve Niebler, Habpi Vice President
Brian Devost, GARA Executive Director and Habpi Board member
Ben Thomas, Cumberland Township Manager
Jim Paddock, Cumberland Township Supervisor
Al Ferranto, Cumberland Township Supervisor
Dan Bringman, Chief Financial Officer of the Gettysburg Foundation
Chris Ann Kimple, Legislative Aide for Rep. Dan Moul
Michael Birkner, Gettysburg Borough Council President
Susan Naugle, Gettysburg Borough Council
Scott Dellett, Gettysburg Planning Director
Alex Hayes, Editor Gettysburg Times
Jenni Wentz, Reporter for Hanover Evening Sun
Kelly Pack, Rails to Trails Conservancy Staff
Jim Brown, Rails to Trails Conservancy Staff
Carl Knoch, Chair of York County Rail Trail Authority and Speaker for Summit
Don Gogniat, Past board member York Co. Rail Trail Authority and Speaker for Summit
Bob Steenstra, Licensed Guide and Owner of GettysBike
Tom Jolin, Habpi board member

The following were not able to attend, but asked to be kept informed:

Joanne Hanley, President of Gettysburg Foundation
Scot Pitzer, Field Representative with Senator Rich Alloway
Patti Lawson, Associate Vice President Government & Community Relations at Gettysburg College
Robin Fitzpatrick, President Adams County Economic Development Corporation
Lori Lencheski, Economic Development Specialist, Adams County Office of Planning & Development
Gwen Loose, Executive Director York Co. Rail Trail Authority
Kelly Koch, Senior Conservation Planner at Adams County Office of Planning and Development
Dennis Hickethier, President of Habpi

The meeting was brought to order at 3:00, with Tom Jolin welcoming everyone. He thanked the GNMP and Gettysburg Foundation for the hosting the event at the GNMP Visitor Center. All elected officials were recognized.

Don Gognait presented an overview of the Grand History Trail (GHT.) He called it “mom, flag and apple pie” which is certainly a fitting description for Adams County. The GHT is an approximate 250 mile loop of which about half is already completed. It links popular existing trails, including Pennsylvania’s York Heritage Trail, The Baltimore-Annapolis Trail and the C&O Canal in Maryland and DC. The proposed circular corridor will connect important heritage sites such as the National Mall in Washington, DC, Harpers Ferry and Gettysburg National Military Park, eventually going through history rich Adams County. Towns that will be connected are York, Hanover, Gettysburg, Emmitsburg, Frederick, Harpers Ferry, Washington DC, Annapolis, Baltimore and many others on the way. Adams County is lacking of much progress on the GHT, except for Gettysburg Borough.

Carl Knoch gave a power point presentation regarding economic impact. Please refer to the attached Economic Fact Sheet, which will also be quoted here. Participants are encouraged to share the Fact Sheet with others. The economic potential is extremely attractive.

The Grand History Trail will connect Gettysburg to existing trails that attract millions of visitors from across the United State and the World. The current annual usage on completed connecting GHT segments includes the C & O Canal (DC, MD) – 4.7 million visits, Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail (MD) – 1 million visits, Baltimore and Annapolis Trail (MD) – 700,000 visits, Heritage Rail Trail County Park (PA) – 300,000 visits, and the Metropolitan Branch Trail (DC) – 200,000 visits. The Great Allegheny Passage (MD, PA), with 800,000 annual visits connects to the GHT via the C & O Canal. The developing East Coast Greenway from Maine to Florida will share a segment of the GHT.

According to the U.S. Travel Association (USTA; formerly Travel Industry Association of America) 27 million Americans have taken a bicycling vacation in the past five years. Bicycling is now the third most common vacation activity (USTA).

Bicycle tourists spend money. Eat – a lot and often; bicycling burns up to 450 calories per hour. It has been said that food is a bicycle’s “fuel.” Drink – again, a lot in order to stay hydrated, but also for pleasure, patronizing everything from lemonade stands to wineries. Explore – take in the sights, visit museums, art galleries and historic places, and learn about the places they visit. Lodging – stay in B&B’s, inns, hotels/motels, and campgrounds. They participate in other kinds of recreation along the way – visiting parks, exploring side trails and bike loops.

The Heritage Rail Trail County Park (21 miles) in York County, PA cost \$4.5 million dollars to construct (1990-1999). On average over the past 15 years 37% of trail users come from outside of York County. Average annual spending by trail users on consumable goods is \$2.3 million or \$35 million over the past 15 years.

The “Trail Towns” initiative along the Great Allegheny Passage (150 miles) promotes businesses aiming to capitalize off the 800,000 annual trips taken along the rural trail corridor between Cumberland, MD and Pittsburgh, PA. Direct annual spending by trail users exceeds \$40 million.

Ben Thomas, Cumberland Township Manager, asked what the cost would be of a feasibility study from the GNMP Visitor to Emmitsburg. Kelly Pack of the Rails to Trails Conservancy will assist in obtaining that information.

After the presentation, 19 people took a ceremonial bicycle tour of some GNMP sites. The tour was graciously led by Bob Steenstra of GettysBike, the official licensed bicycle tour company located at the GNMP. The group stopped at The Gettysburg Heritage Center on Steinwehr and partook of some treats, typical of GNMP tourists. The snacks were generously provided by Steinwehr Avenue Business Improvement District. See attached photos.

Excellent news coverage followed in the Gettysburg Times, Hanover Evening Sun, York Sunday News and Frederick News Post. The Gettysburg Times included an editorial to "finish the GHT." The Hanover Evening Sun included a video of the ceremonial ride. Katie Lawhon distributed a press release to various news outlets.

Those organizations that helped plan the Grand History Trail Economic Summit were: HABPI, Main Street Gettysburg, Destination Gettysburg, Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg Borough and the Adams County Office of Planning and Development.

Subsequent to the Summit, several people expressed the desire to work on planning and implementing the GHT in Adams County, Hanover to Gettysburg to Emmitsburg. This will certainly take a long time to accomplish. Nevertheless, a core group is willing to work on it, and Habpi President, Dennis Hicketier, is willing to help coordinate the effort. For sure, it will need a strong community/government partnership and lots of sustained resolve.

The Rails to Trails Conservancy will provide free copies of their winter issue magazine to all the attendees and interested individuals. That issue features two great articles about economic development from trails, one from Indianapolis and the other from the rural Virginia Creeper Trail. Habpi will help distribute the copies.

Respectfully Submitted,
Tom Jolin, Habpi board member