

Biking and Hiking to a Better Doylestown

(History of the Doylestown Bike & Hike System 1992 - present)

The current Bike & Hike System has an unlikely origin: it began as a simple plan to use leftover balled Christmas trees to beautify the areas around Route 202 and the 611 Bypass. In 1992, Ben Jones, Borough Manager, and David Jones, Township Manager, assembled a group of residents to discuss how the Doylestown area could be aesthetically enhanced through these plantings. This committee¹, with equal representation from the Borough and Township, met bi-weekly to survey areas and implement the project. While driving cars, walking, and riding bicycles, the members often noted concerns about obstacles that hindered the enjoyment of the area and the freedom of people to walk and/or bike around surrounding neighborhoods. These concerns became the starting blocks for the Bike and Hike Committee.

Rapid growth in the Doylestown area had a significant impact on residents' ability to walk and bike. Housing developments were burgeoning, main roads were crisscrossing the region, smaller roads were often congested, and access to Doylestown Borough was becoming dangerous for both pedestrians and bicyclists. The Route 611 bypass was recognized as a huge obstacle, considered a catalyst of division in formerly integrated communities.

Not soon after, a tragedy altered the direction of the project. Lynn Goldman, Chairperson of the committee, had a personal situation that further fueled the fire when her niece was killed while riding a bicycle on a narrow road. This inspired the committee to widen the scope of its project to significantly reduce the probability that this type of tragedy would ever be repeated. This serious event, alongside the two abovementioned

¹ See Appendix A for complete list

situations (the Christmas tree project and the major development) culminated in the creation of the Doylestown Bike & Hike System.

The initial concept was to create a large wheel of multi-use paths circling around Doylestown Borough and Doylestown Township beyond the bypass, with the courthouse as the hub. The spokes of the wheel would lead to places of interest for residents and visitors. These include: museums, parks, schools, the hospital, and shopping areas. Not only would this help maintain the small-town atmosphere, but it would also ensure a sustainable community through both alternative transportation and healthy exercise.

The committee later developed a mission statement and a list of goals². To implement this project the committee realized that funding was necessary, so the group began to research applicable grant opportunities. The following year, they applied for an ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act) grant. Unfortunately, this proposal was not accepted for funding. Although various applications for grants went unnoticed; suddenly, the effort saw success.

Students from Kutz Elementary School in Doylestown Township learned about the planned system. Under the leadership of their teacher, Dr. Corinne Cody, the indomitable enthusiasm of children was captured as they were determined to get the project started. The students sponsored a logo contest, as well as numerous sales and other activities³. A year later, with over \$14,000 raised by the students (plus contributions from Doylestown Borough and Doylestown Township), the first section of the path was built and dedicated in front of Kutz Elementary School.

² Original mission statement & list of original goals in Appendix B

³ For complete list of Kutz Student efforts, see Appendix C

Doyle Elementary School in Doylestown Borough carried on the enthusiasm with creative student activities and involvement. With the help of a passionate teacher and parent volunteers, a second trail segment was built connecting Doyle with the trail at Doylestown Hospital. The beauty of these trails was significantly enhanced under the volunteer guidance of Peter Fernandez, a resident and local landscape architect.

Tom Kelso, a well-respected engineer and dedicated member of the original Committee, gave another boost to the Bike & Hike System. Kelso and his fellow Township Planning Commission members required all developers to include multi-use paths in all new building plans. In an ironic twist, the first developer to be required to meet this stipulation was Lynn Goldman, Chairperson of the Bike & Hike Committee.

Materials and in-kind services were donated by the Borough and Township. Citizen volunteers also came together to assist on projects, which allowed the multi-use trail to blossom. Over the course of a decade, various members of the original group remained active while many other interested citizens joined the monthly meetings to see the completion of over ten miles of the Bike & Hike System.

Doylestown's Bike & Hike System began to receive recognition, and applications for several new grants were established with the assistance of Stephanie Mason, Township Manager, and John Davis, Borough Manager⁴. The actions and results of the Committee were respected and PennDOT (Pennsylvania Department of Transportation) saw the trail system as an efficient and valuable investment.

In 2001, Doylestown Borough received a special honor from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of a “dozen distinctive destinations” in the United States. It was notably recognized for its “dedication to preserving historic landmarks, supporting

⁴ List of grants in Appendix D

local businesses and maintaining its unique character.” The ongoing development of a Bike & Hike System was often cited as a remarkable aspect of Doylestown.

A stumbling block in the continuation of the multi-use path was the section from Delaware Valley College to the downtown area of Doylestown along U.S. Business Route 202. This high-volume four-lane divided roadway included an expressway interchange and a bridge over the 611 bypass. After a major effort on the part of the Committee in 2001, a \$400,000 matching grant was awarded by the PennDOT for this project. At its completion in 2003, this essential piece of the system connected the college with Doylestown Hospital, Central Bucks West High School, the YMCA, and the Doylestown streets that lead to the Doylestown SEPTA train station.

In 2002, the goals of safety and education were paramount. These goals were especially important when Peter Boor, an active member of the committee, became the liaison with the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission as they implemented the “Share the Road” project. This effort produced measurable improvements: eighteen “Share the Road” signs were placed at area locations, bicycling education materials were created for fifteen elementary schools in the Central Bucks School District, and a computer program to map bicycling facilities in the Doylestown area was developed. Maps of completed and planned bicycle routes were published in 2005.

In recognition of the many accomplishments of the Bike & Hike System, PennDOT agreed to fund another grant request. This enabled the Bike & Hike trail to be built from Route 202 through the Delaware Valley College campus to Wells Road at Lower State Road. As expansions like this one occurred, the trail system in Doylestown truly became a project worthy of community pride. In October of 2007, there was a

celebration recognizing 15 miles in 15 years of the Bike and Hike System. Students at Doyle Elementary School were a big part of the celebration as they had a party at the Central Bucks Senior Center to acknowledge the extension of the path to Shady Retreat Road.

In 2008, the Bike & Hike Committee was awarded an even larger grant of \$850,000 to extend the trail from New Britain Road at Delaware Valley College. This portion of the trail extends through the College to Lower State Road.

From 2009 through 2011, the committee began plans for an Upper State Road trail with other local municipalities, including New Britain Borough, New Britain Township, and Chalfont Borough. These municipalities developed the Tri-Municipal trail, which lead to the Doylestown Community Trail. In addition to this project, Destination Peace Valley and the development of the Neshaminy Greenway Trail got underway. A feasibility study for Destination Peace Valley was done. Then Doylestown received a \$200,000 grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) which kick started the planning process. As a supplement, two additional grants fueled this project, a \$138,000 grant from Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) and a \$10,000 PECO Greenspaces grant.

In early 2011, the Bike and Hike Committee discussed the desire to connect the current trail further, particularly reaching out to Peace Valley Park, the Neshaminy Trail, and the various SEPTA train stations. Delaware Valley College has been very receptive to working with the Committee in the development and expansion of the trail as it relates to the College.

In addition to this trail expansion work, Doylestown Bike & Hike continued to promote bike and hike safety in the community. This was apparent on June 18th 2011, when Doylestown Township hosted a “Cycling Education and Safety” event. At this event, community members shared a love of biking as they were informed of cycling rules and fitted for helmets. Another example of Doylestown Bike & Hike’s outreach work is the silhouette art that was placed over the 611 Bypass. This silhouette art was created to hang over the 611 Bypass Bridge in the likeness of the Cody family, serving as an honor to them. As a continuation of Doylestown Bike & Hike’s commitment to working with the community, these silhouettes were designed and built by local students at the Middle Bucks Institute of Technology. Though the process of creating and hanging this artwork was slow, the committee was more than excited to see this project completed.

Later in 2011, the Doylestown Intelligencer noticed the hard work of the Committee. Christina Kristofic, staff writer, wrote an article noting the development of the Bike and Hike trail system. She described the anxiety that some community members had as the planned trail came in close proximity to their properties, but went on to express how swiftly opinions changed to be in favor of the trail system. Many residents commented that the trails are a truly amazing resource for the community. As Kristofic notes, Doylestown Township (up until that point) had received \$1.5 million in grants from PennDOT and the DVRPC. The state DCNR also allocated a \$35,000 grant in 2009 that really helped to promote the movement.

In 2012, the Bike and Hike System celebrated its 20th birthday. Over the years, this system had matured into a large network of paths crisscrossing through the Boroughs

of Doylestown, New Britain, Chalfont and the townships of Doylestown, New Britain, and Buckingham. It not only connects these various communities, but it also reaches Peace Valley Park and expands even further allowing cyclists to travel from the Delaware to the Schuylkill Rivers.

In September 2012, a "Party on the Parkway" was planned to recognize the completion of the "202 Parkway" and the adjoining Bike and Hike Trail. Numerous residents from all over the county came out to enjoy the beautiful and memorable day. There were avid and casual cyclists, many times accompanied by children on their bikes. There were also walkers and joggers all enjoying the new Bike and Hike Trail. This party signified 20 years of work by members of the Bike and Hike Committee.

In November 2012, a meeting at the Newtown campus of Bucks County Community College discussed the established bike paths throughout the Delaware Valley. These paths cover approximately 240 miles connecting towns, parks, train stations, and other destinations. The Doylestown community is lucky to not only have an amazing network of trails⁵, but also to be part of an even greater network.

In 2014 and looking forward, the Bike & Hike Committee is not only hoping to expand the trail and create more links, but also to raise awareness of these great assets. Hopefully, the enormous network of trails will expand, connecting new spaces and reaching other municipalities. Public outreach will be another significant goal. As these trails expand to new places, the Bike & Hike Committee would like more community members to get out and enjoy them. On September 28, 2014 Bike & Hike launched the first Neighborhood Trail Awareness Day. This event featured a 10K run, four bike rides, and a 2 mile walk. These excursions highlighted a variety of trails in Doylestown

⁵ See Appendix E for complete list of areas connected through Doylestown Bike & Hike trails

Borough and Township. In reaching out and in educating the community about the trail network, the Bike & Hike Committee hopes to engage even more residents for years to come.

Appendix A – Initial Committee Members

Cramer, Cora	Twp. Park & Rec. Comm. Alternate
Gaver, Richard	Doylestown Twp. Supervisor
Goldman, Lynn, Chairperson	Borough Park & Rec. Comm.
Gundlach, Robert	Borough Council Member
Hoehne, Michael	Central Bucks Bicycle Club, Alternate
Davis, John	Asst. Borough Manager
Jones, Ben	Borough Manager
Jones, David	Township Manager
Kelso, Thomas	Township Planning Commission
Larlick, Beth	Twp. Park & Rec. Commission
Ruddy, Robert, Vice Chairman	Bike Club / Borough Resident
O'Connor, Heather	Doylestown Borough Alternate
VanDyke, Carter	Doylestown Borough

Appendix B

Mission Statement

To safely interconnect principal population centers, places of work, schools, commercial areas, historical and cultural sites, parks and recreation areas, mass transit and other intermodal connections in both Doylestown Township and Doylestown Borough.

Original Goals

1. Connect Delaware Valley College to various locations.
2. Connect Edison Village park and historical area into the system.
3. Connect the Pine Run Reservoir and open space into the system.
4. Connect the YMCA into the system.
5. Connect all Central Bucks Schools within both municipalities into the system.
6. Connect all Bed and Breakfasts within both municipalities into the system.
7. Connect the Township's Central Park into the system
8. Connect the Township's Turk Park facilities into the system.
9. Connect the Borough's Maplewood, Hillside Avenue, Fanny Chapman and Burpee Park facilities into the system.
10. Connect the Doylestown Hospital facility and property into the system.
11. Connect the Barn Plaza Shopping Center and Theaters into the system.
12. Connect Township's Sauerman Park into the system.

13. Connect Fonthill and the Tile Works into the system.
14. Connect all retail centers into the system.
15. Connect the post office into the system
16. Connect the Senior Citizens Center into the system.
17. Connect the Township's Victorian Gardens open space into the system.
18. Connect the Township's Neamand Park and Neshaminy Green Way into the System.
19. Connect residential population centers into the system.
20. Connect the library into the system.
21. Connect the Art Museum into the system.
22. Connect the James Lorah House into the system.
23. Connect the Bucks County Courthouse into the system.
24. Connect the Aldie property into the system.
25. Connect or make provisions for future connections to the Peace Valley Park into the system.
26. Connect the Covered Bridge Park in New Britain Borough into the system.
27. Connect the North Branch Park in New Britain Township into the system.

Appendix C - Kutz Elementary School Fund Raisers

3/95	MacPrincipal's Night	\$922
4/95	Tee Shirt Sale	\$3,151.50
8/95	Constitutional Rights Foundation Mini-Grant for Service Learning	\$400
11/95	Lahaska Ironman	\$1,000
11/95	League of Women Voters	\$1,000
11/95	Committee to Elect Dan O'Neill	\$99.89
5/96	Donations in response to students	\$180
	Thos. Roth (\$10), Dr. Reisenberger (\$50), Dr. Hajatian (\$50, John Welsh (\$10), Village Green Books (\$10), Dr. Killian (\$25), Training Zone (\$25)	
8/96	Sponsors –display sign in window	\$900
	\$100 each from Carroll's Jewelers, Nuveen and Bullock, DMD., Eleanor Chipman, William Goldman, Rudolph Group, Franchois Kowalski, St. Luke's Quakertown Hospital, Dr. Gilhorn, Children's Sample Outlet	
9/96	Fred Beans Car Sales on weekend	\$400
12/98	Village Improvement Assn.	\$5,000
12/98	vanAmeringen Foundation	\$2,500

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Appendix D - Grants Received

7/1995	David Heckler, State Senator	\$50,000
1/1998	Keystone Community Grant	\$10,000
10/2001	PennDOT	\$400,000
10/2003	PennDOT	\$192,000
3/2005	PennDOT	\$850,500
2012	DVRPC	\$138,000
2012	DCNR	\$200,000

2012	PECO Greenspaces	\$10,000
2013	Bucks County Open Space	\$310,204

Appendix E - Doylestown Bike and Hike System:

Completed since 1994

- 1) Delaware Valley College to Doylestown Borough to train station
- 2) YMCA
- 3) Hillside Ave. in Doylestown Borough
- 4) Doylestown Hospital and property
- 5) Neamand Park and Neshaminy Green Way
- 6) Bucks County Public Library
- 7) Michener Art Museum
- 8) Mercer Museum
- 9) Doyle Elementary School
- 10) Lenape Middle School
- 11) Central Bucks West High School
- 12) Linden Elementary School to Burpee Park
- 13) Shady Retreat Rd. from Broad St. to Limekiln (Sr. Citizens Center, Professional Center, Doylestown Commons Development)
- 14) Kutz Elementary School from Central Park
- 15) Delaware Valley College to Central Park and various locations
- 16) Pine Run reservoir and open space
- 17) Other schools in Central Bucks
- 18) Fanny Chapman and Burpee Park
- 19) Covered Bridge Park in New Britain Borough
- 20) Mrs. Paul's development

Planned

- 1) Pebble Hill Road – Bicycle Route S
- 2) Connectors for Gateways In and Out of Doylestown
- 3) Bucks County Courthouse
- 4) Support of Bike Route S (advocate for improvements)
- 5) Safe Routes to Schools
- 6) Edison Village Park and historical area
- 7) Turk Park
- 8) Maplewood development (across 313)
- 9) Sauerman Park
- 10) James Lorah House
- 11) Fonthill and Moravian Tile Works
- 12) Retail Centers in Doylestown Borough, Easton Rd. and East Street, Cross Keys Shops, Barn Plaza
- 13) Aldie property
- 14) Peace Valley Park
- 15) Post Office

- 16) New Britain Train Station
 - 17) Green Street
 - 18) Finish connecting portions of Bike/Hike System
 - 19) Additions to Pebble Hill Road
 - 20) Cherry Lane to Museum Destination
- Comprehensive overall plan

Connection Points as of 2011

- Bucks County Public Library
- Central Bucks YMCA
- Delaware Valley College to Central Park and Doylestown
- Doyle Elementary School
- Doylestown Hospital
- Hillside Avenue in Doylestown
- Kutz Elementary School from Central Park
- Lenape Middle School
- Linden Elementary School to Burpee Park
- Mercer Museum
- Michener Art Museum
- Mrs. Paul's development
- Neamand Park and Neshaminy Green Way
- Shady Retreat Road from Broad Street to Limekiln Road

Ongoing connections include:

- Covered Bridge Park in New Britain Borough
- New Britain Train Station
- Peace Valley Park
- Pine Run Reservoir and Open Space
- Safe Routes to school

Planned connections include:

- Additions to Pebble Hill
- Aldie Property
- Bucks County Courthouse
- Cherry Lane to Michener Museum
- Edison Village Park and historical area
- Fonthill and Moravian Tile Works
- Green Street
- James Lorah House
- Maplewood Development
- Other schools in Central Bucks
- Pebble Hill Road
- Doylestown Post Office
- Retail centers in Doylestown Borough
- Sauerman Park
- Turk Park