

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS SAXTON TRAIL CONNECTIVITY STUDY

1. Purpose: The Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (hereafter also referred to as SAP&DC) seeks proposals from qualified trail planning consultants to perform a trail connectivity study in and around the Borough of Saxton, Bedford County, Pennsylvania. Saxton Borough sits between the termini of three regional trails: the Huntingdon and Broad Top (H&BT) Rail Trail, the Terrace Mountain Trail, and the Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Railroad Trail. SAP&DC and the community seek to connect these trails through and around Saxton Borough, effectively designating Saxton as a hub "trail town" and potentially spurring economic development through tourism.

2. Who may respond: Qualified trail planning consultants must have demonstrated expertise and be in good standing with both the state and federal governments. All requirements for a qualified trail planning consultant set by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PaDCNR) must be met. Proposals that include partnerships between multiple organizations or businesses are allowable. If necessary, consultants must be able to sign and seal any drawings as a design professional, such as a Professional Engineer or a Licensed Landscape Architect. Parties submitting proposals in response to this RFP are referred to herein individually as "offeror" or collectively as "offerors."

3. Description of Entity: The Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (or SAP&DC) is a nonprofit corporation that serves six counties in South-Central Pennsylvania. SAP&DC has been determined to be exempt from Federal income tax under Section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code. It is governed by a 19-member volunteer Board of Directors. Administrative offices and all records are located at 3 Sheraton Drive, Altoona, Pennsylvania 16601. For the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study, SAP&DC has received funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PaDCNR). SAP&DC will administer and distribute these funds to the selected consultant according to a separate contract.

4. Proposal Information: Proposals must be submitted no later than 4:00 PM EST on July 10, 2024. The budget for this project is an amount **not to exceed \$90,000**. Offerors are encouraged to prepare proposals in accordance with this budget, although cost will be a review factor. Proposals and supporting materials must be submitted in electronic format via e-mail to Lee Slusser at lslusser@sapdc.org. Questions regarding submission instructions or this RFP may be addressed to Lee C. Slusser, AICP, Director of the Planning and Community Development Division of the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission – Phone (814) 949-6506 or E-mail: lslusser@sapdc.org. E-mailed inquiries are preferred so that a written record can be maintained. It is the responsibility of all offerors to ensure that SAP&DC receives the proposal by the date and time specified above. Late proposals will not be considered.

All costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal in response to this RFP will be the responsibility of the offeror submitting the proposal and shall not be reimbursed by SAP&DC. SAP&DC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals received in response to this RFP.

Offerors may be asked to give a presentation to SAP&DC staff and/or the project steering committee. It is expected that a decision selecting the successful offeror will be made by July 31, 2024. Upon conclusion of final negotiations with the successful offeror, all other offerors submitting proposals in response to this RFP will be informed in writing of the name of the successful offeror.

The type of contract will be a firm fixed price. The period of performance for this program will be from September 2024 to June 30, 2025. Payment will be made when SAP&DC has determined that benchmarks have been satisfactorily completed. Should SAP&DC reject any progress points, SAP&DC's authorized representative will notify the contractor in writing of such rejection, giving the reasons. The right to reject any benchmark progress shall extend throughout the term of this contract and for ninety (90) days after the contractor submits the final invoice for payment. Progress payments will be allowed to

the extent that SAP&DC can determine that satisfactory progress is being made. SAP&DC will withhold 20% of the total contract amount until final delivery and acceptance of the final plan.

At the discretion of SAP&DC, this contract can be terminated at any time or extended beyond the specified contract period. The cost for the option periods will be agreed upon by SAP&DC and the contractor.

5. Proposal outline:

Understanding of Work to be Performed: Each offeror should demonstrate understanding of why the project is needed and how it will meet the greater Saxton community's needs. Proposals should describe how the offeror will accomplish the tasks defined in the work program within the specified time limits.

Service Delivery Process: Each proposal must describe how the offeror proposes to complete all tasks identified in the statement of work. The offeror must also include a timeline that demonstrates the completion of each task within the limits of the specified period of performance. The timeline should include project milestones that detail the completion date of each task outlined in the statement of work.

Organizational Experience/Past Performance: Each offeror should describe its organization, size (in relation to the proposed services to be performed), and structure. Indicate if appropriate if the offeror is a small, minority-owned, or disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE). DBEs are certified by the Pennsylvania Unified Certification Program (PA UCP) in accordance with 49 CFR Part 26. The following information must be obtained from offerors who maintain DBE status: firm name, firm address, firm's status as a DBE or non-DBE, the age of the firm, and its annual gross receipts. The offeror should also describe its prior experience that qualifies the offeror to fulfill the tasks described in this RFP based on past performance of the same or similar projects and programs.

Staff Qualifications: Each offeror should identify all personnel that will be assigned to the project, including contact information, and specifically identify the project manager. Each offeror should also describe the relevant qualifications of staff to perform the proposed service, including technical, educational, and work background. This section of the proposal should include descriptions of the staff team makeup, overall supervision to be exercised, and prior experience of the individual staff team members.

Cost Proposal: All offerors must submit their total project cost, along with a task-by-task cost breakdown for each of the major tasks defined.

6. Proposal evaluation: All proposals must include all required elements. Proposals may be judged non-responsive and removed from further consideration if the proposal is not received in time, the cost of the proposal exceeds the amount of funding available, or the proposal is not adequate for the reviewers to form a judgment.

Evaluation of each proposal will be based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated understanding of the project and its goals: 20 points
2. Proposed scope of work: 20 points
3. Qualifications of the designated project manager and other key staff to carry out the project: 20 points
4. Relevant past projects: 20 points
5. Cost: 20 points

Proposals will be initially reviewed and evaluated by the Project Steering Committee and/or SAP&DC staff using the above evaluation criteria. Interviews may be conducted at that time. However, final selection of an offeror will be at the sole discretion of the SAP&DC Board of Directors. SAP&DC may, at its discretion, request presentations by or meetings with any or all offerors to clarify or negotiate modifications to the offeror's proposal.

7. Scope of Work: Superseding any requirements set forth here, the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study and the process that will create it must meet all requirements set for such a study by PaDCNR (see DCNR-2022-Plan, Plan-GPM-12 Rev. 12.17).

The Saxton Trail Connectivity Study must examine the feasibility of developing connecting trails between three existing trails as well as provide a “road map” on how to complete the project. It must include a feasibility study and an implementation strategy that sets forth specific recommended actions, priorities, and costs to develop, manage, and maintain the selected trails. It must include an executive summary, conceptual designs, and a detailed implementation matrix which will carry the trail to the development and/or acquisition phase. If possible, preliminary designs should be included. The project must include an operation, maintenance, and/or stewardship plan.

The selected consultant shall provide all major deliverables in draft and, after approval from the steering committee, final forms. Six bound copies of the final study must be produced, three of which must be sent to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PaDCNR).

Bedford County, Broad Top Township, Liberty Township, and Saxton Borough have met with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to discuss proposed trail expansion(s) that would connect the H&BT Trail with the Terrace Mountain Trail and the Huntingdon and Broad Top Mountain Railroad Trail through Saxton Borough. By connecting the three major trails through the Borough, Saxton could be effectively designated as a trail town to potentially spur community and economic development through increased tourism visitation, as well as create healthy and outdoor recreation opportunities for residents in Bedford County, Huntingdon County, and the surrounding region.

To complete the proposed trail expansion, a regional trail study is needed. This project, the Saxton Borough Trail Connectivity Study, will examine several aspects of the proposed expansion including potential alignments and routes for the trail, potential connections to community assets and other trails, right-of-way availability, project readiness, and project phasing, etc. The study will focus on the connections to be created in and immediately around Saxton Borough but must consider development of the overall trail system in northern Bedford and southern Huntingdon Counties.

Alleghenies Ahead is a comprehensive plan for the Southern Alleghenies Region that was adopted in 2018 as the Bedford County Comprehensive Plan and the Huntingdon County Comprehensive Plan. *Alleghenies Ahead* identified the continued extension of the H&BT Trail north to Huntingdon County as an action item for Recreational Amenities and Natural Assets for Bedford County. The trail gap between the H&BT Trail and the Terrace Mountain Trail has been identified as a Trail Gap and Proposed Improvement area in the 2022 Southern Alleghenies RPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

The Saxton Trail Connectivity Study will include “Green and Sustainable Practices” in the scope of work and will utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) during the period of performance. The study will also look at BMPs for implementation of the study and any future development for connecting the trails. The study will evaluate the climate impacts on the study area, such as flooding, drought, etc. and will determine how BMPs can address those impacts. The study will identify underutilized areas, including any vacant lots or brownfield sites that could be repurposed into functioning ecosystems for stormwater infiltration, habitat improvement, flooding mitigation, and public recreation areas.

ADA-compliant considerations must be addressed in the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study, and ADA standards must be prioritized in the study for any future trail development. Any trail alignments produced by the study will identify “paths of least resistance” that will allow trail users with various disabilities and mobility issues to utilize sections, or all sections, of the trail. Signage can be incorporated that informs the user of trail characteristics (e.g., grade, surface type, etc.), allowing the user to determine if the section of the trail meets their accessibility needs. Any sidewalks and/or crosswalks that meet ADA standards and requirements will be prioritized when determining the optimal trail alignment. Any sidewalks and/or crosswalks (in the optimal trail alignment) that do not meet ADA standards will be improved during the development of the trail.

A detailed scope of work follows, taken PaDCNR guidelines (DCNR-2022-Plan, Plan-GPM-12 Rev. 12.17).

A. Executive Summary

The purpose of this element is to provide a short and succinct summary of the trail study findings to illustrate the vision, goals and findings of the trail study. The executive summary can be graphic in nature and used as a marketing/public outreach document for the trail effort.

B. Introduction and Context

The purpose of this element is to describe the community or region and how this trail meets the needs of the public.

1. Provide a vision statement for the trail.
2. State the study purpose and goals.
3. Describe the trail corridor; including size, land use, character and geographic location. Summarize any significant natural or man-made features, such as critical habitat, water bodies, geologic features, historic bridges, highways, etc.
4. Describe the surrounding communities; including demographics, other trails and recreational resources.
5. Provide general mapping of the study area.
6. Identify any boundaries or limitations of the study.
7. A general description of how the trail fits into the context of existing State, regional, county or local planning efforts

C. Public Participation

Public engagement will be an essential part of the Saxton Trail Connectivity Study, and strategies to engage the public involve the formation of a steering committee, steering committee meetings, general public meetings, and focus group meetings. The general public meetings and focus group meetings will include residents of the study area, business owners, municipal representatives, elected officials, trail users, and other stakeholders that wish to be involved in the planning process. At least two (2) general public meetings will be held.

A kick-off meeting is to be held with the project steering committee. After this kick-off meeting, the selected consultant team will further refine project goals and objectives, the timeline for the project, and study components. This task should also include two other project steering committee meetings to be held throughout the project as determined by the project steering committee. Meetings and other communications during the project may utilize teleconferencing and webinar formats.

On February 10, 2023, SAP&DC met with representatives from PaDCNR, local municipalities, and other stakeholders to discuss potential strategies to complete the Saxton Borough Trail Connectivity Study. The attendees of this meeting will serve as the core of the steering committee for the project. Other members from additional municipalities and stakeholders will be identified and asked to participate prior to the study initiation. All public engagement activities, including meeting agendas, comments received during the meetings, and general findings from the meetings, will be summarized and compiled for inclusion within the public engagement section of the study by the consultant.

D. Physical Inventory and Assessment

Site information must be mapped and analyzed to determine the managed uses for the proposed trail and facilities.

1. Prepare detailed mapping of proposed trail corridor or trail alignment(s) at an appropriate

scale. Identify mapping which may be available from local planning agencies, USGS, railroad company, etc.

2. Physiographic Features
 - a. The length, dimensions and right of way (ROW) boundaries
 - b. Topography
 - c. Soils or trail base composition
 - d. Surrounding land use
 - e. Erosion and drainage
 - f. Political boundaries
3. Natural Features
 - a. Significant natural features (rivers, lakes, ponds, rock outcroppings, wetlands, floodplains, etc.)
 - b. Existing vegetation (rare and endangered plants, invasive species).
 - c. Existing wildlife (rare and endangered species, sensitive habitat areas).
4. Cultural Features
 - a. Historic structures.
 - b. Archaeological sites.
5. Structures within the Corridor
 - a. Existing bridges, canals, culverts, and/or tunnels.
 - b. Existing buildings.
 - c. Potential trail encroachments.
6. Utilities
 - a. Location of utilities (water, sanitary sewers, electrical and gas lines, telephone, etc.)
 - b. Capacity of utilities to serve trail development.
 - c. Potential conflicts.
7. Intersections and Access Points
 - a. Existing road crossings, active rail lines, driveways, easements, etc.
 - b. Existing and potential pedestrian and vehicular access points.
 - c. Existing community assets and other trails.
8. Environmental Hazards
 - a. Preliminary environmental assessment studies.
 - b. Potential Phase I Environmental Assessment.

E. Wants and Needs

This task will utilize the information gathered through the public participation process and combine it with the physical characteristics of the trail corridor(s) to define the trail vision and uses.

1. Discuss how the project relates to and implements existing local, county, regional, and statewide planning efforts.
2. Describe the character of the project area.
3. Describe the planned trail uses.
4. Describe the managed trail uses (transportation, nature, cultural, historical, recreation, etc.).
5. Describe the population information and demographic patterns of the project area (current and projected).
6. Develop a socioeconomic profile of potential trail user groups (age, income, physical abilities, minority, disadvantaged populations, etc.).
 - a. Analyze demand.
 - b. Estimate initial usage levels.
 - c. Project future usage levels.
 - d. Estimate seasonal demand versus year-round demand.
 - e. Trail assessment for use of other power-driven mobility devices.
7. Determine local access to outdoor recreation using the following resources:
 - a. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) [Park Metrics](#) is a comprehensive source of data benchmarks and insights for the effective management and planning of operating resources and capital facilities.
 - b. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) [ParkServe](#) interactive platform tracks park access in urban areas. The web-based tool identifies local parks and open

- space, determines the percentage of residents who live within a 10-minute walk, and identifies the neighborhoods most in need of new parks.
- c. DCNR Partnered with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and WeConservePA to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to understand access to outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania. TPL's Research and Innovation Team used the data analysis methods to assist DCNR in identifying [areas with the greatest need and opportunity](#). This [interactive map of outdoor recreation access in Pennsylvania](#) shows the results of the analysis. Data is available for a 10-Minute Walk by Municipality & County and a 10-Minute Drive for Trails and Water.
8. Determine the impact of potential trail uses and user groups on the development of the trail (surface, width, conflicting uses, facilities, etc.).
 9. Identify and address potential impact of the trail on adjacent land uses (agricultural lands, industrial properties, school facilities, businesses, residences, etc.).

F. Legal Feasibility

The ownership status of the trail corridor or trail alignments will be a major factor in determining the legal feasibility of the trail. Many issues affect the feasibility of a trail, such as land use regulations, environmental regulations, title issues, etc.

1. The trail corridor will likely not be owned or controlled by a single agency. Therefore, the consultant must...
 - a. Determine the ownership status of the trail corridor or potential trail alignment(s).
 - i. Identify current property owners.
 - ii. Develop a strategy for approaching property owners.
 - iii. Determine the required level of title search activity for each parcel.
 - b. If the trail is on a rail corridor that is being abandoned, see the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's fact sheet entitled, "[Railbanking – What, Where, Why, When and How](#)", as well as their publication entitled, "[Secrets of Successful Rail-Trails: An Acquisition and Organizing Manual for Converting Rails to Trails.](#)"
 - c. If multiple trail alignments are being proposed, it is best to closely examine the preferred alternative with a more cursory review of other alternatives.
 - d. Identify adjacent property owners and develop a strategy for gaining support.
 - e. Determine preferred method for establishing the trail, such as fee simple acquisition, long-term easement or lease, cooperative agreement, etc.
2. If the trail corridor winds up being owned or controlled by a single agency, the study must include:
 - a. Review easements, land use agreements, deed restrictions and local zoning to determine if there are any impediments to opening a trail.
 - b. If the corridor is owned or controlled by multiple agencies, a cooperative agreement or memorandum of understanding should be signed by all parties outlining roles and responsibilities, etc.
 - c. Identify adjacent property owners and develop a strategy for gaining support.

G. Prepare a Trail Concept Plan

All trail studies should include a conceptual plan that illustrates the vision for the trail and builds upon the physical inventory and assessment mapping. The concept plan should include:

1. Base map:
 - a. Trail Name, Phase, Location (political subdivisions), and Owner/Grantee.
 - b. Scale, North Point, Legend, and Date.
 - c. Distance of the trail and, if applicable, acreage.
 - d. Show exterior boundaries of site with metes and bounds or best available information. Indicate name of owner or lease.
 - e. Political boundaries.
 - f. Show rights of way and easements that intersect the trail.

- g. Surrounding properties and uses.
 - h. Topography: One to ten foot contours. If not available, show spot elevations indicating land character and significant grade changes.
 - i. Water Bodies: Streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, etc.
 - j. Floodplain: Delineate floodway and limits of 100-year (1%) floodplain.
 - k. Wetlands: Identify locations on and/or immediately adjacent to site.
 - l. Soils.
 - m. Access points other than trailheads.
 - n. Utilities: Railroads, water, electric, sewage, gas, phone, etc.
 - o. Existing structures and manmade features: bridges, tunnels, culverts, fences, encroachments, utility structures, etc.
2. Identify and describe proposed features:
- a. Trail location and any alternative routes. Alternatives should be given priority order.
 - i. Develop preliminary alternative *sketch* drawing(s) and present the drawing(s) at a steering committee meeting for review and discussion.
 - ii. Prepare a written evaluation of each alternative highlighting both the positive and negative points, and through community discussions and public participation determine which solution, or combination of ideas from the alternatives, offers the best compromise.
 - b. Location of trailheads and related facilities (restroom, water, emergency telephone, lighting, parking, maintenance, etc.)
 - c. Areas for trail access control structures and emergency access points.
 - d. Areas needing natural buffers and/or screening.
 - e. Linkages to parks, schools, neighborhoods, other trails, etc.
 - f. Areas where structures are needed (bridges, tunnels, etc.)
 - g. Significant natural and cultural resources and opportunities for their interpretation.
 - h. Areas requiring significant effort or large dollar figure to complete the trail.
 - i. Areas of potential user conflict.
 - j. Opportunities for interpretation of natural and cultural resources.
 - k. Constraints and opportunities related to ADA access.
 - l. Consideration of the use of Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices as required in subtitle A of title II of the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#), § 35.137 Mobility devices.

H. Preliminary Designs

Any preliminary designs will build upon the conceptual plan. Designs will guide the development of the trail and trail facilities by providing sufficient detail to meet applicable standards, protect and/or enhance natural resources, and develop accurate cost estimates for construction. If there are alternative alignments, preliminary designs are needed for the preferred alternatives.

For DCNR-funded studies: If the trail corridor is owned or under the control of the agency, then the designs must be signed and sealed by a design professional. If the property is not under the control or ownership of the agency, then written approval from the current landowner or a signed sales agreement is required before preliminary designs are prepared. The trail study RFP and consultant contract should include an option for preliminary designs if control of the property is obtained during the study period.

General design and construction specifications should be based on anticipated uses and accessibility for disabled persons as prescribed in the current ADA Standards for Accessible Design available at the US Department of Justice website. Preliminary designs will include:

1. Location and layout of trail, trailheads, structures and trail amenities.
2. Connections and linkages to parks, schools, neighborhoods, businesses, transit facilities, other trails, etc.
3. Trail surface materials with typical cross sections. This may include multiple options for trail surfaces.
4. Proposed trailheads, including parking (including ADA accommodations), comfort stations, utilities, landscaping, and routes to connect parking areas and trailhead facilities to the trail.
5. General floor plan for all structures and indoor facilities.
6. Road crossings and required crossing features, including signals, signage, pavement markings, etc.
7. Design of proposed bridges or other significant structures. More detailed evaluations of trail structures such as culverts, underpasses, bridges, tunnels, etc. may be required to determine present condition and potential rehabilitation cost.
8. Proposed drainage infrastructure, including culverts, catch basins, inlets, drain tile, swales, rain gardens, etc.
9. Site control structures, including fences, walls, gates, etc.
10. Lighting types and locations.
11. Signage types and locations.
12. Landscaping/vegetation types and locations (native species are encouraged).
13. Designs for mitigating potential conflicts between proposed trail users.
14. Delineation of potential phases of development.
15. Protection/enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas.
 - a. Sustainable site design and green infrastructure.

I. Trail Management, Operation, Maintenance, and Fiscal Feasibility

The purpose of this work element is to estimate the costs of building, operating and maintaining the trail and associated facilities based on the conceptual/preliminary designs.

1. Provide detailed cost estimates for land acquisition and development of the trail. The cost estimate should include: engineering and other professional services cost; construction and materials cost; project administration cost; and, a contingency of at least 10% of the construction cost estimate.
2. Develop a phased and prioritized multi-year capital development program. Explain the implementation strategy, identify the trail infrastructure to be developed, and provide the costs associated with each phase.
 - a. Identify sources of funding, including in-kind, volunteer, and donated services.
 - b. Phases of development should coordinate with other planned capital improvements such as transportation projects, sewer expansions, flood mitigation projects, etc.
3. Determine ownership/maintenance/management options for the trail.
 - a. Identify potential roles of public and private organizations through the use of cooperative agreements or memorandum of understandings.
 - b. Identify the organizational structure.
 - c. Develop a business plan.

J. Implementation Matrix

This portion of the study should summarize the study's recommendations and implementation strategy into specific action steps. Each step should identify responsible parties, time frame for beginning implementation, associated costs, potential funding sources, and any additional notes.