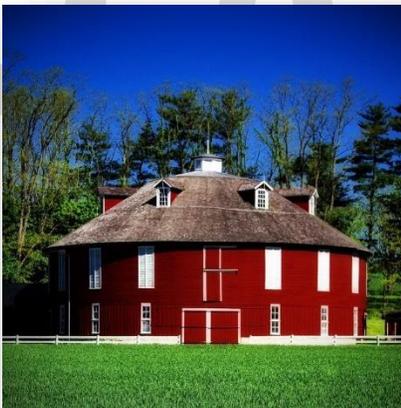


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ABOUT THIS STUDY

Albertin Vernon Architecture, LLC, with Brian Auman, Landscape Architect (the consulting team) was hired in the fall of 2012 to explore the feasibility of repurposing a 27 mile long section of the abandoned railbed of the former **Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad (L&TRR)** as a rail trail for non-motorized recreational use by the general public. The L&T RR was owned and operated by the *Pennsylvania Railroad* and its successor, *Penn Central*, for freight and passenger rail service for almost a century until the early 1970's, when the line was formally abandoned.

The *Centre County Recreation and Greenways Plan* prepared by the *Centre County Office of Planning & Community Development* identified the 27 mile portion of the corridor that lies within Centre County as a potential regional connector trail linking Lemont, a small village that functions as a bedroom community for nearby State College, the home of Penn State University, to the *Buffalo Valley Rail Trail*, a 9.1 mile segment of the L&T railbed that connects Mifflinburg and Lewisburg, PA, home of Bucknell University. The Centre County portion of the former L&TRR corridor runs through several municipalities, villages, and hamlets situated amidst rolling hills, prime farmland, and forests.

The western end of the 27 mile corridor--between Lemont and Centre Hall--is situated between Upper Brush Valley Road and Route 45, renowned for its iconic red round barn. The middle section of the railbed--between Centre Hall and Coburn--lies within Lower Penns Valley, prized for its highly productive limestone soils, pristine streams, trout and fly fishing. The eastern section of the L&T lies in the gap carved by Penns Creek through Thick and Poe Paddy Mountains. Stations and stops along the former L&T RR's route through Centre County included Lemont, Oak Hall, Linden Hall, Gregg Station, Centre Hall, Penns Cave, Sinking Creek (Spring Mills), Zerby, Coburn, and Ingleby.

Gregg Township, located near the geographic center of Centre County's 27 mile section of the L&T corridor, agreed to be the sponsoring municipality for the feasibility study. Gregg Township was proactive in securing trail easements from landowners along the railbed even before the *Centre County Greenways and Trail Plan* was completed. The township provided the matching funds and secured a *Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)* grant for the study from the *PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA-DCNR)*, the state agency charged with conserving the Commonwealth's natural resources and promoting access to public land for recreational purposes. The *Centre County Office of Planning and Community Development* agreed to provide in kind assistance in administering the grant for Gregg Township and PA-DCNR.



USGS Quadrangle maps of the eastern half of the route of the 27 mile Centre County segment of the abandoned Lewisburg and Tyrone Railroad; viewed from 30,000 feet

ORGANIZATION OF THIS REPORT

This feasibility study was designed to answer the question, “Is it feasible to repurpose the abandoned L&T railbed, or any section of it between Lemont and the Centre County line, as a rail trail?” The answer to that question required finding answers to 7 more questions:

1. **Legal Feasibility**-how did the L&T railroad come into being, and who owns the right of way now?
2. **Physical Feasibility**- what is the condition of the railbed and what are the opportunities and constraints to repurposing it as a trail?
3. **Political Feasibility**- do landowners and the community support the idea of repurposing the L&T railbed or any portion of it as a trail?
4. **Market Feasibility**- who would use the trail, and for what purpose?
5. **Design Feasibility**- what is the community’s vision for the trail?
6. **Financial Feasibility**- how much would the trail cost, how would construction and operations be funded?
7. **Operational Feasibility**- who would manage and maintain the trail?

Answers to those 7 basic questions emerged through a process designed to engage as many people as possible with a stake in the outcome of this feasibility study throughout the study period, a process that continued to evolve as the project unfolded:

1. **initiate** meet with the study committee to develop an approach that reflects the diverse values of the community
2. **investigate** study the history of the abandoned L&T rail line to determine who owns the right of way now
3. **inform** share planner’s vision of a 27 mile long destination type trail and initial findings about who owns the railbed now
4. **invite** ask the community to share their aspirations and concerns about repurposing the railbed as a rail trail
5. **investigate** inventory and assess physical opportunities and constraints and potential trail user interests
6. **imagine** meet with the community to discuss what the trail might look like as smaller, community based trails
7. **improve** meet with neighborhood groups to refine that vision
8. **inspire** present a final report that gives neighborhood groups tools to continue to explore community based trails where there is public access, landowner interest and community support