

URBAN JOHNSTOWN CONNECTIVITY

The September 11 National Memorial Trail and the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal Greenway intersect in Johnstown's Central Business District (CBD) and promise a significant economic boost from tourism. Options need to be assessed to close a few missing links and to develop off-road trails, dedicated bicycle lanes, streetscaping, and reduced conflicts with industrial traffic to foster additional jobs growth and make these nationally significant trails attractive, safe and functional.

These trails also will connect local transportation resources – the mass-transit bus terminal in the central business district (CBD), the historic Amtrak passenger rail station, and the historic Inclined Plane. In addition, these trails will connect vital community assets, including parks and public open space, national register historic districts, and cultural and heritage sites that also support tourism, and will improve community livability and opportunities for healthy, engaged lifestyles.

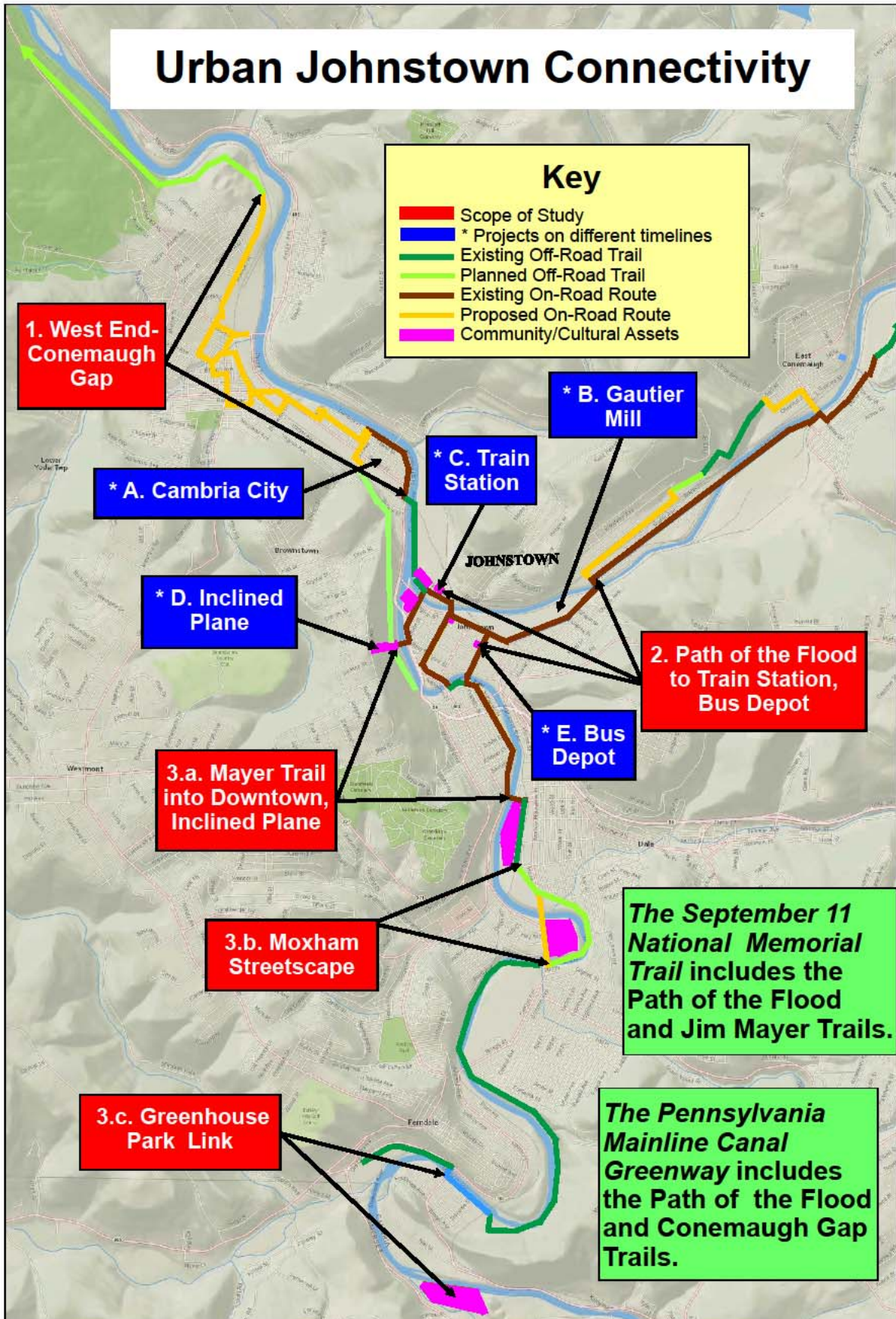
The two nationally significant trails follow three corridors along the major waterways, reversing the community's historical neglect of the rivers to now highlight them. Corridors 1 and 2, shown on the map on page 2, are part of the Main Line Canal Greenway while corridors 2 and 3 are part of the 9/11 NMT. The corridors, show with red boxes on the map on page 2, are:

- ❖ Corridor 1 connects the existing Cambria Iron Trail through Cambria City and the West End to the planned Conemaugh Gap Trail (part of the Main Line).
- ❖ Corridor 2 connects the Path of the Flood Trail into the Downtown and its key transportation assets — the central terminal for mass-transit buses, the Amtrak passenger rail station and the Inclined Plane (Part of the 9/11 and the Main Line).
- ❖ Corridor 3 connects the downtown to Greenhouse Park using existing sections of the James Mayer Riverswalk Trail (part of the 9/11 Trail).

Five related projects are further along and their development is being pursued separately, although they could possibly be combined with this project later. These assets, highlighted with blue boxes on page 2, are:

- A. The Cambria City Streetscape Project, which should be ready for design-engineering in the next few months (part of Corridor 1 above).
- B. The Gautier Mill Streetscape Project, for which the mill has applied for construction funding (part of Corridor 2).
- C. The train station, which has received a multi-modal transportation grant for needed repairs and improvements and where Amtrak plans additional upgrades.
- D. The bus terminal, the main transfer point for bus routes across the county where repairs of the attached parking garage have been funded.
- E. The Inclined Plane Renovations and Improvement Project, for which engineering-design funding is being sought.

Urban Johnstown Connectivity



The City of Johnstown seeks a Plans, Specifications and Estimation Package (PS&E) for a comprehensive study of alternatives or a feasibility study for bicycle-pedestrian connections in and adjacent to the City with related streetscape components. The work envisioned for each corridor is summarized below.

On Corridor 1, the existing Cambria Iron Trail connects the CBD and train station to Cambria City, where trail and pedestrian-friendly streetscape and other work is planned, and connects Cambria City through the West End to the planned Conemaugh Gap Trail. The Cambria Iron Trail includes a pedestrian bridge to Roosevelt Boulevard on the edge of Cambria City. Roosevelt Boulevard here is both US 56 and US 403, carrying the second highest traffic volume in Cambria County, including approximately 20% trucks. The existing sidewalk from the bridge to Cambria City is bisected by a utility pole (see photo above), so the sidewalk is not ADA compliant and is not wide enough for a bike. Options for improving this connection need to be evaluated, especially an option of constructing the trail atop the flood wall or bridging from the existing bridge to Power Street, which is a low-volume, one-way street where dedicated bike lanes could be added. On the northwestern side of Cambria City, alternatives for bike-ped traffic to Conemaugh Gap need to be assessed. One option is placing the trail atop the flood wall from Cambria City to the Cooper Avenue Bridge; several options exist for on-street connections.



Cambria Iron Trail's pedestrian bridge meets Route 56-403 from the right in the photo above, where bike-ped improvements are needed.

Corridor 2 connects the Path of the Flood Trail into the Downtown and its key transportation assets — the central terminal for mass-transit buses, the Amtrak passenger rail station and the Inclined Plane. Currently, this trail comes through Staple Bend Tunnel, America's oldest railroad tunnel and part of Allegheny-Portage Railroad National Historic Site, but then follows streets into the CBD. Maple Avenue, US 271, is a heavily industrialized corridor with substantial truck volumes but also serves as the route for the Path of the Flood. Construction is partially completed on an alternative route following a historic trolley line through woods into Upper Woodvale, a quiet residential



Pedestrian underpass to Maple Avenue.

neighborhood that connects back to Maple Avenue through a pedestrian underpass of the Norfolk-Southern main line. Trail and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and beautification are needed through Upper Woodvale from this underpass past the bus terminal and the Johnstown Flood Museum to the train station. Some of that work is anticipated through grants being pursued by Gautier Steel, Inc., but that work needs to be extended to the east and west.

Corridor 3 is more complicated because it entails three separate areas between two completed segments of the James Mayer Riverswalk Trail and overlaps with corridors 1 and 2 where it enters the CBD and links to the Inclined Plane.

No off-road route for bike-ped traffic is possible unless the trail is placed on top of the flood walls in Corridor 3.a. entering the downtown from Sandyvale Memorial Gardens and Conservancy at the Hickory Street Bridge. A study of alternatives here should assess the potential to remove the concrete channel and replace it with an earth embankment with a trail on top of it; keep the concrete walls but place trail atop the channel; place trail under the Route 56 expressway as envisioned in the City Parks and Open Space Plan; or simply use share-the-road signage. This assessment should look at extending the trail beyond the Tech Park Trail to the Inclined Plane on the wooded hillside and beyond to the Heritage Discovery Center in Cambria City.



View from Hickory Street Bridge.



Corridor 3.b. connects existing trail segments and extends from Bridge Street to Sandyvale Memorial Gardens. The trail here is in development and PennDOT has agreed to provide trail crossings at Central Avenue and Bridge Street, but streetscape and aesthetic enhancements are needed along those industrial streets and bike-ped accommodations are needed between the trail crossings, especially for access to Greater Johnstown High School. In

addition, access for trucks and other vehicles entering industrial properties at Central Avenue and Bond Street needs to be improved.

Corridor 3.c. will examine alternatives for extending the Mayer Trail to Greenhouse Park, which includes Whitewater Park in the Stonycreek River and is a popular play spot for kids and a place to learn whitewater boating skills. Off-road options that would require a bridge over the Stonycreek in Riverside need to be assessed along with share-the-road options through Benscreek. Options for on- and off-road bike-ped access along Route 403 from Bens Creek to the park also need to be assessed in case access cannot be obtained for a bridge from Riverside to the park.



Whitewater Park will be an easy destination for city kids on hot summer days..