



Trail Connections Grow With New LINK Interactive Maps

The Lehigh Valley has one of Pennsylvania’s most extensive collections of multi-use trails, yet few people know they could get from one side of the region to the other without needing a center line, guiderail or car.

THE LINK Trail Network is trying to change that and last month unveiled an interactive map organizers hope will entice more people to explore a recreation and commuter network that’s 125 miles and growing. For the trail enthusiast, the new online mapping can provide the kind of information needed to plan a multi-day excursion or commute to work, and it can help the casual trail user get beyond the wooded paths in their own neighborhood.

“THE LINK Trail Network’s new interactive map is part of THE LINK Trails Coalition’s continued efforts to provide helpful information to people of all ages and abilities and encourage them to use all of the beautiful trails that we have here in the Lehigh Valley,” said Claire Sadler, Executive Director at Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and a partner of THE LINK Trails Coalition that includes the LVPC. “Our new interactive map is a valuable tool that all trail users can benefit from when planning their activities on the trail, including recreation, exercise, education and alternative transportation.”

The interactive map can be found at thelinktrails.com/interactive-trail-map

The clickable map includes details for nearly 20 trail segments across Lehigh and Northampton counties, with information on everything from access points, how long each segment is, how close it is to community services and where to park. Each segment includes a separate map, photos and a chart listing the activities that section of the trail can handle.

It also includes information on trail segments not yet opened but planned for the future.

The new map not only serves as a tool for hikers, bikers and commuters, but it reinforces the Lehigh Valley brand, said Alex Michaels, President of Discovery Lehigh Valley, which markets the region to visitors.

"The No. 2 reason people come here, after visiting family, is for outdoor recreation," Michaels said. "It's part of what makes this region special."

That runs parallel to LVPC data gathered during a regionwide survey in 2018. When asked for their favorite thing about living in the Lehigh Valley, the No. 1 thing cited by the 1,064 respondents was parks, trails and recreation activities.

And Sadler said in the future, there will be more to like because more miles will be added to the trail network in the coming years. Northampton and North Catasauqua broke ground on a 1.5-mile section of the D&L Trail last year, and the LVPC in November was awarded a \$21.2 million federal grant to build a key 3.5-mile scenic commuter road and trail from the Allentown's Lehigh Riverfront into Whitehall Township.

That segment, known as Riverside Drive, will become a transformational multimodal corridor that will complete a key segment of the D&L Trail, reconnect the community with the Lehigh River, and give disadvantaged neighborhoods greater access to shopping and job centers, while reducing congestion and air pollution.

"Beyond providing recreation and tourism benefits to the Lehigh Valley, THE LINK also provides active transportation routes for residents to commute to school or work," Sadler said. "We anticipate this new interactive map to be an asset for residents and visitors alike to better understand the many connections made by THE LINK trails."