“More Than Just a Train Wreck” Planning Group Meeting – Monday 3 Feb, 6 PM

Attending:


• NPS consultants Brown & Stroud came in the afternoon for a tour of the museum rooms at the TMHS admin. building, to get more context for the events of the train wreck, and to get a sense of possible assets to consider for connectivity.

• Roles & purpose of the Rivers, Trails & Conservation (RTC) assistance program: a non-monetary award. Assistance is viewed as an equal partnership between the NPS advisors and the planning group. NPS Advisors are able to assist in the following areas:
  ▪ Meeting planning & facilitation
  ▪ Visioning, goal-setting, work planning
  ▪ Bringing in new (under-represented) voices
  ▪ Community engagement
  ▪ Capacity building
  ▪ Strategic planning
  ▪ Conceptual design
  ▪ Funding strategies
  ▪ Telling stories/creating places (interpretive strategies, including public art/wayfinding design)

• A trails-user survey is referenced, which may have been the recent NECCOG survey. Can the results be obtained?

• Brown & Stroud lead a brainstorming exercise to identify the Vision, Mission, Barriers, Goals and Opportunities for the Train Wreck Park project.

• Vision:
  ▪ Obert: a destination point focused on the three known points of interest (train wreck site, Tri-State Marker and...? Cart Bridge?)
  ▪ Durlach: create a self-guided tour at a defined location which would work in concert with the Air Line Trail
  ▪ Chase: Improved ability for visitors to visualize the story of the train wreck (wayfinding artifacts)
  ▪ Durlach: two means of discovery – incidental discovery while hiking (on site) & intentional discovery while planning a visit (online)
  ▪ Stroud: overarching vision concepts can be articulated as connectivity, ease of access (site & information), visualization/understanding of context, gateway to other features in Thompson and the region.
Accessibility is articulated as a high priority. Graff & Kneeland affirm that they have been working on accessibility for CT Trails
Blanchette points out that the train wreck site itself is close to satisfying ADA requirements. The Tri-State Marker would have difficulty meeting those goals. Durlach points out that different users have different

- **Mission:**
  - Design for train wreck site interpretive tools
  - Additional wayfinding tools to boost connectivity to Tri-State Marker portion of trail
  - Improved connectivity to Pulaski Trail/RI trails
  - Consistency of narrative style & presentation
  - Improvements to Tri-State Marker site (e.g. a bench or picnic table adjacent to the marker, to allow a hiker to rest after reaching the site)

- **Barriers:**
  - Physical access (specifically for impaired users)
  - Funding/maintenance/vandalism – perennial problems for all trails
  - Abutter cooperation

- **Stakeholder Analysis (Other participants who should be involved):**
  - General public – primary responsibility to this group is to be broadly informative, e.g. via website page or other easily accessed forward facing platforms
  - “Consulting” members of the public are those with a more specific interest in trails use. Reach via a more interactive platform (surveys)
  - Next engagement level would be those wanting to be a part of the planning process, but are not yet engaged. How can they be reached/drawn in?
  - Collaborators (planning group+ others). Who are other potential partners not yet involved?
    Suggestions: The Speedway, abutters, user groups (hiking/cycling/equestrian clubs, etc), Thompson Business Association, state archaeologist, Air Line Trail 12-town taskforce. We should identify gaps in the knowledge and expertise of the planning group and invite participation
  - Empowered stakeholders = those with authority to approve/fund/act on the final project. Municipal/state level, e.g. CT DEEP.

- A coordination of links on websites is suggested (town/TLGV/Recreation/Historical Society) to drive interest in the project as it progresses.
- The NPS consultants will take the posters from the brainstorming session and consolidate to share with the planning group.
- Next Meeting will be Monday 2 March. Time of day TBD, but it is suggested that a daytime meeting would be preferable for many participants. NPS consultants may create a google poll to determine the best time? In months where Trails meets, the planning group will meet ahead of the committee, 5:30-7 p.m.