



***Southwest Region Planning Commission***  
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**DATE:**                      August 22, 2019  
**TO:**                        Plan for Ashuelot Rail Trail Project Advisory Committee  
**FROM:**                    SWRPC Staff  
**RE:**                        Plan Development – Draft Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The Plan for Ashuelot Rail Trail project aims to develop a common understanding of how the trail is perceived, used, and maintained today. It also seeks to develop a unified vision for how the trail is managed and developed moving forward into the future. An effective trail vision is supported by goals, broad statements that express general public priorities as understood through data collection and public engagement undertaken during previous plan development activities. Goals are further elucidated by objectives, which lay out actionable tasks that contribute to fulfilling one or more goals. This memo proposes a draft vision, goals, and objectives for Project Advisory Committee feedback. Proposed language is intended to serve as springboard for discussion, not as a final determination of the form and content of the Plan’s vision, goals, and objectives. The vision, goals, and objectives will inform Plan recommendations for future trail-related projects, programs, and policies. Staff anticipate that the plan vision, goals, and objectives will be supplemented with an Implementation Plan to provide more detail about the location, overview, funding options, and responsible entities involved with specific projects or initiatives. The following assumptions were made when creating the draft material:

- When reviewing the draft content below, consider that the time horizon of the Plan should be less than about 10 years and include ongoing efforts and short-term goals. Therefore, progress towards a goal should be able to be observed and measured during that time.
- The audience of the Plan will be a wide variety of individuals and groups, including trail owners and managers, host municipalities, stakeholders representing trails and/or specific users, landowners, legislators, grantors/granting agencies, planners, and the general public.
- Improving the trail will always require coordination and collaboration from multiple parties.
- The plan does not guarantee implementation funding and is expected to be used to guide a variety of fiscal decisions, grants, and related discussions.

**I. Vision Statement**

A vision statement is a concise articulation of an ideal future. It establishes and communicates the target that guides planning activities. Informed by public engagement and data collection efforts undertaken so far during the Plan for Ashuelot Rail Trail project, the following draft vision statement is offered for PAC consideration and discussion. PAC members are encouraged to examine whether content is missing from the statement or if any language needs clarification.

*The Ashuelot Rail Trail will function as a continuous transportation and recreation corridor that is scenic, accessible, safe and welcoming to a wide variety of users—local residents and visitors alike. Trail facilities will balance the needs and priorities of the trail’s many stakeholders, including state agencies, municipalities, landowners, user groups, businesses, and non-profit organizations, who will work collaboratively to maintain and develop the trail as*

*a shared public asset. The Trail will be widely celebrated as a valuable resource that enhances the surrounding area's quality of life, ecology, and economic vitality.*

## **II. Goals and Objectives**

Goals and objectives build upon the vision statement. Goals are broad statements that express general priorities as understood through previous project activities. An objective defines a specific activity that will contribute to fulfilling a goal. The following draft goals and objectives are offered for PAC consideration. Similar to the vision statement, PAC members are encouraged to assess whether any goals or objectives are missing or need clarification.

### Increase awareness of the trail, among both local residents and visitors.

- Develop and distribute promotional materials, including printed trail maps and brochures. Digital resources, such as a website, app, or social media presence, should also be considered.
- Establish a trail brand rooted in the history and unique characteristics of the surrounding communities. A trail brand could include elements such as a logo, standardized colors, graphics, and other design features that could be used on signage, maps or other promotional materials.
- Design and implement a wayfinding system standardized along the trail's entire route. Such a system could use a combination of signs and maps, located both on the trail and at nearby points of interest, e.g. village centers.
- Design and install signage that advertises the trail to motorists passing by trail crossings.

### Increase use of trail as an alternative for trips made by car.

- Integrate the Ashuelot Rail Trail with the surrounding roadway network, with a focus on improving connections between the trail and key points of interest, like village centers, schools, and residential neighborhoods.
- Increase the number of pedestrian and bicycle trips along the trail.
- Develop and maintain a trail surface easily traversed using a variety of transportation modes and by people of all ages and abilities.

### Expand opportunities for outdoor experiences.

- Improve connections between the rail trail and nearby parks, trails, and natural areas.
- Promote the trail as part of health and wellness initiatives.
- Protect sensitive habitats and natural resources along the trail corridor.

### Enhance regional and local economies.

- Promote the trail as a tourism destination.
- Work with relevant groups/orgs to organize and advertise on-trail events.
- Promote context-sensitive land uses that complement the trail. Near existing development, complementary land uses might include retail establishments, tourism-based industries, restaurants, or residential neighborhoods. In more rural areas, open space and agricultural land uses may be most appropriate.

### Create an on-trail experience that is accessible, safe and welcoming to a variety of users.

- Enhance trail crossing visibility using pedestrian warning signs, crosswalks, or other measures.
- Educate trail users regarding trail etiquette and regulations through posted signs and other outreach methods.
- Clearly delineate the public trail right-of-way from abutting privately-owned parcels.
- Identify areas where on-trail encroachment poses an issue and work with landowners to address encroachment of private property onto public land.
- Consider installation of lighting, where appropriate.
- Maintain a clean trail environment.
- Ensure that trailheads offer parking areas that accommodate a variety of users and vehicles, e.g. vans, buses, trailers.

Facilitate communication and collaboration among trail stakeholders.

- Establish an umbrella “friends of the trail” organization with members from a wide variety of stakeholder groups. Such an umbrella organization could function as an entity through which to coordinate trail maintenance, trail development projects, marketing, advocacy, fundraising, and more.

**Recommendation:**

**Review draft vision statement, goals, and objectives in preparation for discussion at the August 29<sup>th</sup> PAC meeting.**