SECTION III:

RWT Development Process

The current RWT development process varies from location to location, although common elements exist. Trail advocacy groups and public agencies often initially identify a desired RWT as part of a bikeway master plan. They then work to secure funding prior to initiating contact with the affected railroad.

When a public agency seeks approval of an RWT, the railroad company typically lacks an established, accessible review and approval process. While some RWTs move forward quickly (typically those where the trail development agency owns the land), many more are outright rejected or involve a lengthy, contentious process. RWT processes typically take between three and ten years from concept to construction.

Overview of Recommendations

Based on the research conducted for this report, the following recommendations are made regarding RWT development processes:

1. Local or regional bikeway or trail plans should include viable alternatives to any trail that is proposed within an active railroad corridor.
2. Each proposed RWT project should undergo a comprehensive feasibility study. If required, the proposed project also should undergo an independent, comprehensive environmental review.
3. Trail agencies must involve the railroad throughout the process and work to address their safety, capacity, and liability concerns.
4. Trail agencies should coordinate with other stakeholders, such as abutting property owners, utility companies, law enforcement officials, and residents.
5. The feasibility study and environmental analysis should incorporate extensive public review. Railroad officials should be invited to all public workshops, and encouraged to voice their concerns or suggestions.
6. Railroad companies should consider developing an internal process for handling and providing a consistent response to proposed RWT projects.

Blackstone River Bikeway, Albion, RI

"As a general rule, bike trails should not be located along railroad rights-of-way…[we] should not encourage recreational use next to active [railroad] rights-of-way."

DEBORAH SEDARES, PROVIDENCE AND WORCESTER RAILROAD, MA

"The biggest driver was the realization that this was a historic transportation corridor…to put another mode into this old corridor and reintroduce it to the people was a very exciting prospect."

LAMBRI SERVA, P.E., RHODE ISLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

7. Railroad companies should assign a technical team to the project that includes, at a minimum, representatives from the real estate, legal, safety, and operations departments, to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed.
8. All parties involved in RWT development should maintain a log of all conversations and decisions.

Current Practice

In August 2000, researchers for this report conducted a telephone survey of officials of all the Class I U.S. railroad companies and Class I equivalent Canadian railroad companies. In response to a question about the company's position or policy on RWTs, many offered statements such as:

- "Our position is to discourage trails on active railroad rights-of-way."
- "We do not allow trails along rights-of-way."

Most railroad companies emphasize consideration of future expansion needs, safety impacts, trespassing, liability, and future changes to adjacent land uses as reasons for opposing RWTs. Railroads often expect an increase in future business and would prefer to retain the right-of-way for expansion. They are reluctant to sell or lease the property for trail use because of the difficulty of returning the property to private use later. Possible reversion of the railroad land to adjoining landowners also may deter railroads from considering sale or lease of their land for non-railroad purposes. Railroad companies also protest that trail planners do not understand railroad operations and seem to promote the trail over safety and common sense. At the same time, most Class I railroads have at least one example of a trail near or in their corridors (see **Table 5.1**, page 59).

Cottonbelt Trail, Grapevine, TX

"What a railroad corridor is today does not mean it will be the same tomorrow… I would have liked to have been involved earlier in the planning process."

JAN SEIDNER, MANAGER OF RAILROAD FACILITIES, DALLAS AREA RAPID TRANSIT

"We did not realize how formal the railroad industry is. Make sure in all situations that the railroad company is involved."

JOE MOORE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION, GRAPEVINE, TX

Many advocates, on the other hand, do not understand the railroads' concerns. They struggle to understand company structure and even to determine which railroad company to contact about a proposed trail, since railroad companies often lease the tracks to another company. Furthermore, transit authorities, Amtrak, and railroad companies are governed and regulated by different laws and administrations. The trail project manager must become acquainted with the regulations and governing authorities of the specific rail line and cannot assume that all rail line corridors are governed and regulated uniformly.

Many RWT planning processes are quite contentious. In most cases, railroad companies are involved in some stage of the planning, although often not early enough.

Railroad companies may be willing to consider an RWT proposal if certain conditions are met. For example, a Class I railroad company official said, "The only instances where we are presently willing to cooperate in proposals to establish new trails on or adjacent to active rail lines are:

a) where we determine we have sufficient title and width of right-of-way that we can sell the subject property to the trail operator/sponsor, in other words, so that when all's said and done, it's not on our right-of-way;

b) the trail operator/sponsor agrees to erect and maintain in perpetuity a substantial fence between our common rights-of-way to preclude or substantially discourage trespassing, typically in the form of a covenant in the conveyance document;

c) that it does not include or require any new at-grade crossings; and

d) if any existing crossings are involved, that they will be equipped with appropriate crossing warning devices at the project sponsor's expense."

Another Class I railroad company, the BNSF, has developed specific design requirements for acceptable projects, but stresses that each project will be analyzed on its own merits, with trespass history a major consideration.

The Wheeling Corporation's report, *Rails with Trails* (Wait, 1998), offers the perspective of a smaller, regional company. "We at the Wheeling Corporation see many benefits of rails-with-trails within some of the communities we serve, both in economic development and enhancing the beauty of the area. With properly patrolled trails, these areas could see a dramatic decrease in trespassing, vandalism, and sabotage. And hopefully, through it all, the public will become more informed about our industry and the economic benefits of the rail carrier serving their area."

However, the Wheeling Corporation is very clear that it does not support all RWT proposals. Rather they offer a stringent set of guidelines for considering an RWT, including the following:

- The line in question must be a low-frequency, low-speed operation.
- The property must be available and suitable for this type of project.
- The tracks must be isolated from the trail with proper barriers.
- The statutory scheme must be compatible with joint use between trails and railroads.
- The trail operator must obtain proper property liability insurance.
- There will be compensation to the railroad for the use of their property, either through sale or lease.
- The trail operator, not the railroad, will cover the improvements to the property, along with the insurance costs.
- The trail operator and/or local community groups must provide the security personnel to properly patrol and control the property.

The Canadian Pacific Railway has developed a detailed internal process for handling requests for trails along its Canadian corridors (Canadian Pacific Railway, 2002). Acceptable trails will not hinder or risk railway operations.

It should be noted that some publicly owned railroad agencies allow, even encourage RWT projects on their properties. Examples include the State of Maine, Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA), and Vermont Central Railway.

"The trail has reduced, maybe eliminated, illegal dumping that occurred before the trail designation."

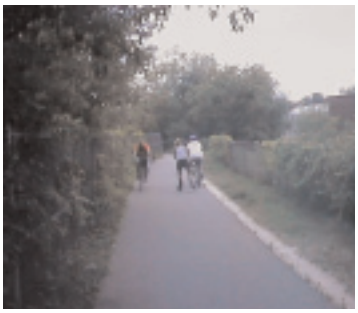
PARK RANGER KEVIN FAZZINI, LEHIGH RIVER GORGE TRAIL, PA

Assessing Potential Benefits

Through the course of this study, railroad company officials, law enforcement officials, and trail managers identified numerous potential ways that RWTs may benefit railroad companies and adjacent communities. Identifying such benefits is crucial to developing a successful RWT. Such benefits may include the following:

Beaten path made by children crossing tracks (left). New trail next to tracks leads to track undercrossing (right). *Oshawa Creek, Ontario, Canada*

- *Reduced liability costs*
  Railroads spend millions of dollars per year on insurance, legal fees, and claim payments. Entering into agreements that reduce liability exposure (e.g., indemnification agreements) can help to reduce these costs. This assumes that an inappropriate project design does not result in bringing trespassers onto the right-of-way and that trail insurers do not successfully claim gross negligence.
- *Financial compensation*
  Many railroad companies receive some sort of financial compensation, with an average sale price of more than $800,000 for those selling property. Others receive easement or license fees, or tax credits for donated land or easement.
- *Reduced petty crime, safety, and nuisance problems, including trespassing, dumping, and vandalism*
  Many railroad companies noted reduced problems directly attributable to well-designed trails, including adequate setback, separation, landscaping, and crossing design. Trails showing improvements included the ATSF Trail, California; LaCrosse River State Trail, Wisconsin; Mission City Trail, California; Platte River Trail, Colorado; Schuylkill River Trail, Pennsylvania; and Railroad Trail, Missouri. Planned trails expecting to see such improvements include the Springwater Corridor Oregon, Five Star Trail Pennsylvania, and Coastal Rail-Trail California, which currently see high levels of trespassing behavior both along and over the tracks. It should be noted that a proposed RWT in an area without a history of trespassing may increase incidents of trespassing due to the introduction of people in the area.



Living fence on the Waterfront Bikeway. *Burlington, VT*

The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Police Service has had dramatic results in reducing crime and trespassing through RWT designs that have improved the aesthetic quality of an area. Their approach relies on the concept of "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED), meaning, "the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence and fear of crime — and to an increase in the quality of life" (Canadian Pacific Railway Police Service, 2000). Such designs attract families and large numbers of commuters and recreational users and discourage vandals and criminals, who thrive in abandoned, ugly areas. For the Oshawa Creek, Ontario, "Trespassing Prevention through Environ-

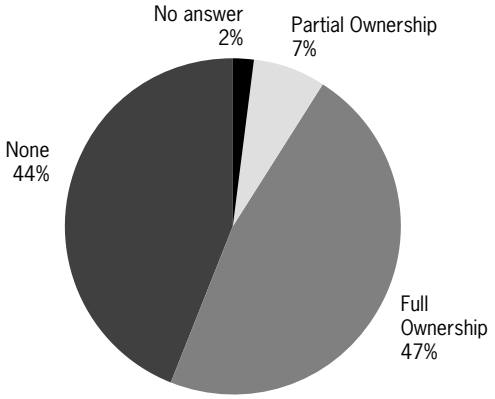
mental Design Project," the CPR built a new trail and pedestrian undercrossing to reroute trespassing children who were crossing to get to a nearby school. Another project, Toronto's "Weston Living Fence Project," aimed to reduce trespassing by providing landscaping near otherwise blank and often graffitied walls.

- *Reduced illegal track crossings through channelization of users to grade-separated or well-designed at-grade crossings*
  Good RWT crossing designs direct users to safe crossing locations. For example, RWTs in Perth, Australia, channelize users to fenced trail sections leading to at-grade crossings with automatic, trail-width gates that lock in place when a train is present. Several trails in the U.S. offer similar improvements, including the Springwater Corridor, Oregon, which is planning to construct two pedestrian undercrossings under tracks currently frequently used by trespassing river seekers; the LaCrosse River State Trail, Wisconsin, which constructed a bridge to connect trails together and thereby eliminate inter-trail trespassing; and the Burlington Waterfront Bikeway, Vermont, which dramatically reduced trespassing problems by channelizing pedestrian crossings to a few locations.
- *Increased public awareness of the important service railroad companies provide*
  A California train operator noted that people have been surprised to hear that trains still operate in this country today. Users on several trails expressed that the highlight of their tour is when trains come by. The Wheeling Corporation (Wait, 1998) offered hope that RWTs will help "the public become more informed about our industry and the economic benefits of the rail carrier serving their area."

Amtrak station bike parking being used to capacity. *Davis, CA*

Possible benefits to the community may include the following:

- *Increased tourism revenue*
  Along with other snowmobile trails in Michigan, the Railroad Trail brings in a reported $15 million of income to Ostego County and more than $100 million for northern Michigan. In Wisconsin, the LaCrosse River State Trail manager reported that the trail benefits local economies and greatly enhances the reputation of the State as a place to visit. However, it should be noted that trails increase the number of people in proximity to dangerous railroad operations, thereby enhancing the possibility of collisions and increased tort liability for the railroad.
- *Increased adjacent property values*
  Desirable property is valuable property. Many studies have shown that trails enhance property values by providing community amenities for fitness and health, aesthetic experience, and reduced crime (National Bicycle and Pedestrian Clearinghouse, 1995; Moore, et al., 1992; Moore and Barthlow, 1998; City of Seattle, 1987; Conservation Fund, 1995; PKF Consulting, 1994; RTC, 2000; Ryan and Wintarch, 1993; Strauss and Lord, 1996).
- *Other community benefits*
  - Additional benefits offered by various officials include the following:
  - Improved access to transit from RWTs connecting to transit stations;
  - Improved access for maintenance and law enforcement vehicles;
  - Opportunities to improve residents' health;



NOTE: Partial ownership indicates that the trail manager owns parts of the trail and received an easement or unofficial permission for the remainder.
Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

FIGURE 3.1 Agency ownership of rail corridor, by percentage of trails

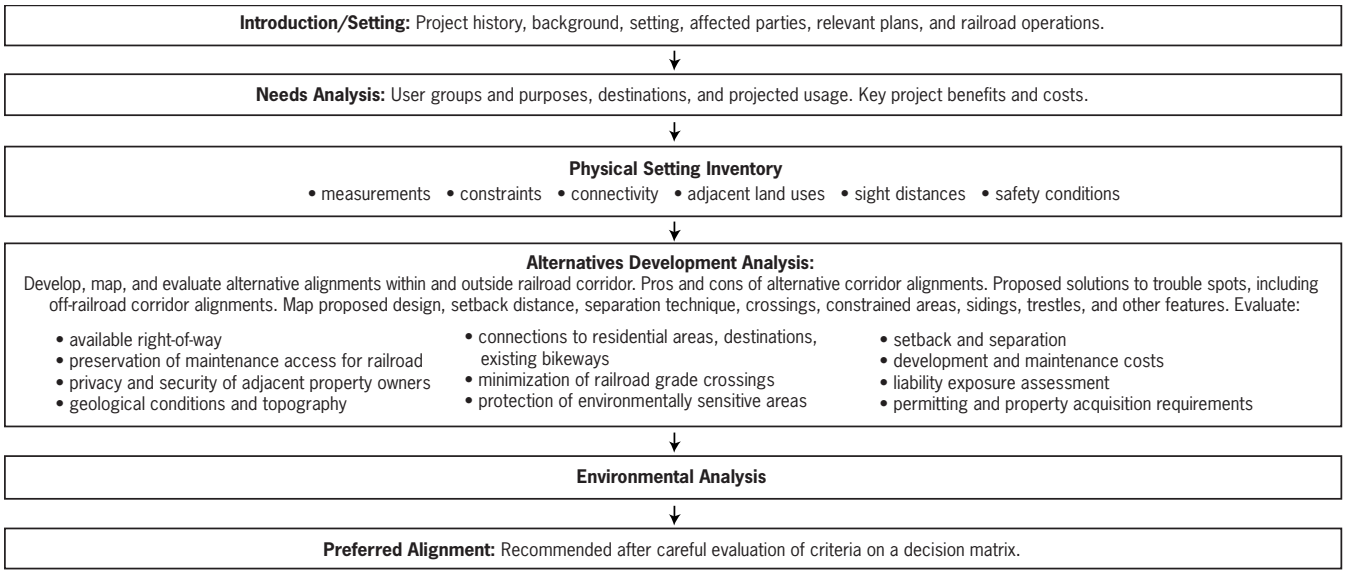


FIGURE 3.2 Steps in feasibility study

- Increased opportunities for aesthetic experiences;
- Alternative transportation options; and
- Family-friendly recreational opportunities.

Corridor Acquisition

Government agencies (usually States, counties, and cities) own about half the RWT corridors nationwide. In the remainder, the railroad retains ownership. For 80 percent of these, the trail management agency purchases a use easement or license from the railroad or transit authority, utility, private landowner, or other government agency (see **Figure 3.1**, RTC, 2000).

Many of the trail management agencies purchased the trail right-of-way, obtaining their funding through a variety of Federal, State, county, city, and private funds. Railroad companies also may choose to donate the land, gaining a tax deduction.

Transfer of ownership is seen as the cleanest way to reduce liability risks, although indemnification agreements can have a similar effect, as explained in *Section IV*. Financial compensation also helps gain railroad company support for projects.

Process Flow

Feasibility Review

Trail managers should undertake a comprehensive feasibility analysis of the project. An RWT feasibility study will serve numerous purposes. It will summarize the goals of the agency seeking to build the project. It will clearly describe the setting, the relationship to local planning documents, the need for the project, land ownership patterns, railroad activity, and other information necessary to determine feasibility (see **Figure 3.2**). The feasibility study should identify and evaluate multiple alternative alignments, including at least one that is not on the railroad right-of-way, and identify a preferred alignment. Three RWT feasibility studies are profiled on the next two pages:

- The proposed Cupertino, California, RWT (partly feasible);
- The Davis-Dixon, California, RWT (rejected as not feasible); and
- The proposed Indian Head, Maryland, Trail (considered feasible).

See *References* for additional examples.

RWT Feasibility: Examples

Cupertino RWT

DESCRIPTION: The California cities of Cupertino, Los Gatos, Campbell, and Saratoga are managing a feasibility study for this proposed 14 km (8.7 mi) RWT project that runs through the heart of California's Silicon Valley (Alta Transportation Consulting, 2001). Union Pacific Railroad (UP) owns the property. The Union Pacific services Hanson Permanente, a concrete plant, and runs approximately three freight trains per week. The trains move slowly, about 32 km/h (20 mi/h) and typically haul coal and cement products from Los Gatos to Cupertino.

Adequate space along parts of proposed RWT. *Cupertino, CA*

DESIGN ISSUES: The right-of-way is 24 m (80 ft) wide in most spots but constrained in a few. A single set of tracks runs approximately 9.1 m (30 ft) off the east right-of-way line, leaving about 15 m (50 ft) of right-of-way to the west of track centerline. For approximately 3.2 km (2 mi), a Pacific Gas and Electric right-of-way parallels the UP right-of-way, allowing an additional 26 m (85 ft) to the west of the tracks. Constrained points include a tunnel, several drainages, and portions that are paralleled by a sound wall.

The typical trail setback from track centerline will be 7.6 m (25 ft) with a 1.2 m (4 ft) high chain link fence. The RWT would cross 18 roadways and impact five creeks that provide habitat for protected species including the California spotted toad and steelhead trout. An existing privately permitted at-grade crossing serving vehicle access to the historic Hammond Snyder home is recommended to become a public crossing.

Tunnel along proposed RWT. Trail will be re-routed in this section. *Cupertino, CA*

PROBLEM: At the corridor's north end, steep grades and a single track tunnel.
SOLUTION: Implementation of this segment should be postponed until the rail line is no longer in use.

PROBLEM: Narrow setback in several spots
SOLUTION: Trail will divert to an adjacent roadway with bicycle lanes. At bridge locations, the trail will utilize fencing, signage, and guardrails to keep trail users on the trail and off the tracks.

PROBLEM: Two major roadway crossings requiring grade separation.
SOLUTION: Three options: Construct overpasses, wait for abandonment of rail line and then make use of existing rail bridges, or divert to adjacent roadway.

PROBLEM: With addition of a barrier between the tracks and the trail, residents who currently trespass to use the corridor will not have good access to the trail.

The Union Pacific Railroad planned track expansion led to a search for better alternatives.
Davis, CA

SOLUTION: No easy solution. Trail developers would like to establish an at-grade crossing, while the UP representatives are opposed. An overcrossing would have an undesired impact on the community, while an underpass would not be environmentally feasible.

OTHER: Negotiations with the Union Pacific Railroad are underway as of this writing.

CONCLUSION: Many parts of the project are feasible, while others are not. One end of the project will be delayed indefinitely, and some segments will divert to adjacent roadways.

Davis-Dixon RWT

DESCRIPTION: This 8 km (5 mi) long project linking the cities of Dixon and Davis was originally proposed in the 1994 Solano County Bicycle Plan. That plan identified an option along the Union Pacific Railroad mainline, which would provide a direct connection between the two communities.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS: Design challenges included the need to cross both the tracks and Putah Creek. More importantly, the Union Pacific Railroad was concerned that this was an extremely high-speed and high-frequency mainline, and that additional tracks would be needed in the future. While the safety and liability issues could be addressed, the need for a future track was a major obstacle.

CONCLUSION: Since there were viable on-road albeit less direct alternatives, this option was dropped from consideration.

Proposed site of Indian Head Trail adjacent to Naval Surface Warfare Center Railroad.
Charles County, MD

Indian Head Trail: Maryland

DESCRIPTION: The Indian Head Trail is a proposed RWT that would extend 20 km (12.5 mi) along the U.S. Navy Railroad from Waldorf to Indian Head, Maryland. This trail has the potential to draw significant tourism revenues to Waldorf and Indian Head and serve as a key regional linkage along the evolving Potomac National Heritage Trail. The Charles County Board of Commissioners and Naval Surface Warfare Center are both in favor of the project.

The railroad is owned, and infrequently used by the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), Indian Head Division, but also has been used for an occasional excursion train. The Commander of the NSWC has gained approval from the U.S. Navy to allow this dual use of the corridor, which has a 61 m (200 ft) right-of-way.

DESIGN ISSUES: This railroad is very rarely used, and the poor condition of the tracks requires very slow train speed. In some areas, the rail corridor extends through wetland areas, creating a constrained amount of space for dual use. It is anticipated that boardwalks will be installed in these areas.

CONCLUSION: This is a feasible project. The extreme low frequency of train use in the corridor makes it a good candidate for an RWT. The NSWC is very interested in this project as part of their physical fitness program for Navy personnel, while providing a community amenity.

Stakeholders should be involved through a technical advisory committee or frequent communication via meetings, newsletters, phone calls, and e-mails.

Today, trail planners are more likely to run a more inclusive process than in years past, with most key agencies and companies reporting they were involved in various aspects. However, on many trails studied, railroad representatives complained that they were not involved early enough. Trail planners often echoed this sentiment.

Planning for Alternatives

Bikeway and trail networks are mapped out on both publicly and privately owned corridors as part of local general plans or master plans. Frequently, privately owned railroad corridors appear as part of a local or regional bikeway or trail network before the railroad has been notified or with little to no railroad permission. However, RWT corridors should not be included on bikeway or trail plans unless the affected railroad is notified. If a proposed trail shown on a trail or bikeway plan is on private railroad property, this information must be noted on the plan. Trail planners should consider all reasonable alternatives to the RWT corridor.

Environmentally sensitive area on proposed Downeast Trail along the abandoned Calais Branch owned by the State of Maine. Trail either will be on boardwalks or divert to an adjacent road. *Calais, ME*

Environmental Considerations

Railroad corridors often parallel or bisect wetlands, waterways, shorelines, or other environmentally-sensitive areas. Where physical constraints on an RWT would result in a proposed trail having to be located in such an area, the RWT may have to be designed as a boardwalk, relocated, or eliminated from consideration.

As part of or concurrent with a feasibility study, environmental concerns should be analyzed pursuant to local, State, and Federal environmental laws to determine environmental resources that might be impacted. This would include biological, cultural, hydrologic, geologic, and other physical resources, along with potential noise, light, traffic, safety, and other impacts. By identifying sensitive areas, any potential RWT alignment can be tested and then altered as needed to avoid significant impacts. Concurrent feasibility and environmental analyses are recommended to allow RWT planners and engineers to pre-mitigate an RWT project or eliminate an unacceptable alignment early in the process.

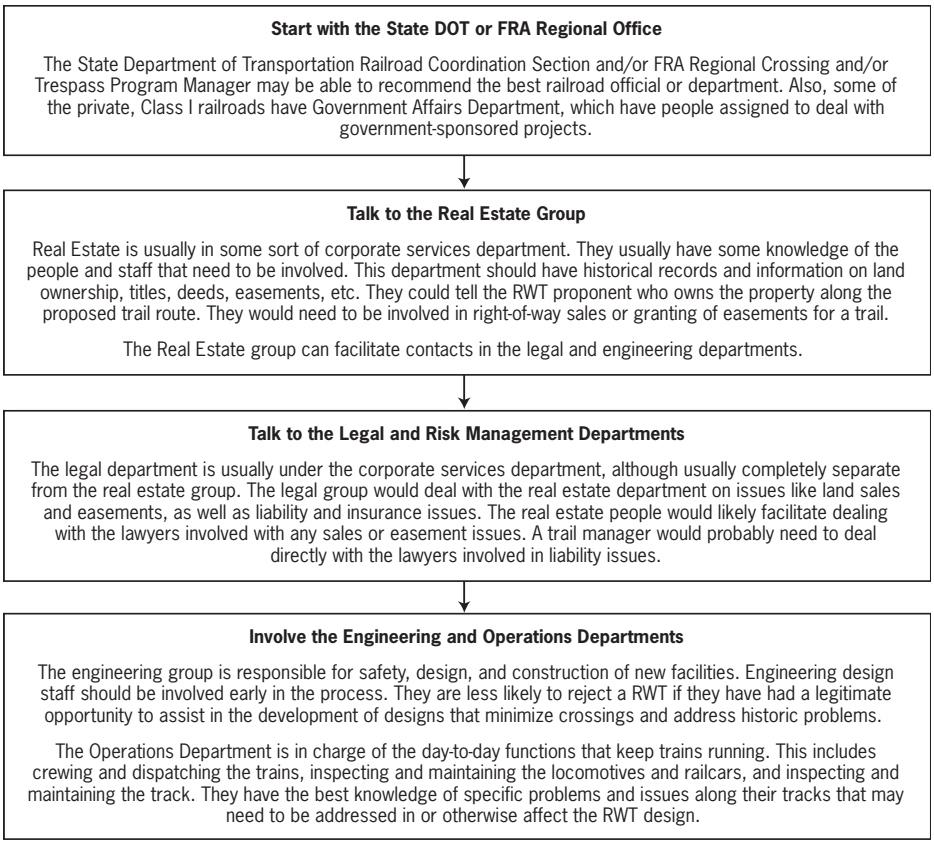


FIGURE 3.3 Involving railroad companies

Involving the Stakeholders

Coordination between the trail manager, other related government agencies, and the affected railroad is critical for success. Involving the railroad and affected agencies early in the process is a common theme heard from surveys and interviews on existing RWTs around the country.

"Get top (railroad) management to agree and give them a stake in the project."

JOHN WOOD, SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL MANAGER

Stakeholders may include representatives from the following groups:

- Railroad companies, including representatives of real estate, operations, maintenance, and legal departments;
- Utility companies, such as telephone, cable, water, sewer, electric, and gas;
- Law enforcement officials;
- Other adjacent landowners;
- Trail user groups; and
- Transportation, public transit, parks and recreation, and health departments.

A good example of railroad involvement occurred during planning of the Schuylkill River Trail, Pennsylvania. According to the trail manager, "The trail itself was approved by the County Commissioners in 1974; however, the approval of Conrail was hard fought. In 1990, the Chairman of County Commissioners contacted a senior vice president of Conrail

and the two of them worked out an agreement. The County's designers worked with Conrail designers to assure that their interests were addressed, concurrent to negotiation of the agreement. When the design was completed, Conrail and the County signed the easement agreement. The Agreement had a clause that the trail design would meet approval of Conrail engineers, and it did, since they were part of the design process. Bottom line: Get top management to agree and give them a stake in the project."

The feasibility study and trail development process should incorporate extensive public review via public workshops and other outreach methods. Railroad officials should be invited to all public workshops, and encouraged to voice their concerns or suggestions. Public workshop facilitators should work to focus the discussion on the RWT proposal only, rather than allowing diversion onto other railroad-related issues and practices.

Railroad Coordination

Once a railroad corridor is selected as a potential shared use path, one of the first steps prior to initiating a feasibility study or environmental review is the question of railroad coordination and access to the right-of-way. Early coordination with the railroad is an essential element of a successful RWT project. If the public agency is serious about the project, they should commit to developing the project into enough detail so that the true impacts, benefits, cost, and feasibility of the facility are known. Conversely, if a railroad company has absolutely no interest in allowing public access to a corridor, they should express those thoughts in clear terms to a public agency at the outset. As part of any planning, feasibility, environmental, or design work on an active railroad right-of-way, the RWT entity should obtain written permission and meet other requirements, such as using flaggers, prior to entering the railroad property.

However, trail planners usually find it very difficult to identify the appropriate person at a Class I or other non-local railroad to contact about a project. Large railroads can have thousands of employees in numerous States; few if any have a person who deals specifically with RWT projects. Since RWTs are not revenue-producing (unless the railroad is compensated for the right-of-way purchase or use) or even related to railroading at all, the company has little incentive to devote staff resources to an RWT project. The decision-making process, as in all large organizations, involves multiple departments and professionals in a variety of disciplines.

Class I national railroad companies and other railroad companies with significant land holdings should consider developing internal procedures for dealing with RWT proposals. Short-line and transit operators may have only one or few rail lines, so they may not need a standardized procedure. The procedure may follow the process outlined in **Figure 3.3**, setting forth a standardized point of initial contact in the real estate department. The real estate representative would assign a technical team to each RWT project to ensure that RWT concerns are adequately addressed.

Another potential starting point may be FRA's Regional Crossing and Trespass Program Managers, who likely will know or be able to help to determine the appropriate contacts at the railroad. These managers, located in each of FRA's eight regions, develop programs to respond to the unique needs of the States and local communities in their regions in rela-

FRA Regional Crossing and Trespass Programs

Region I
CT, NJ, ME, NY, MA, RI, NH, VT
(800) 724-5991

Region II
DE, PA, MD, VA, OH, WV
(800) 724-5992

Region III
AL, MS, FL, NC, GA, SC, KY, TN
(800) 724-5993

Region IV
IL, MN, IN, WI, MI
(800) 724-5040

Region V
AR, OK, LA, TX, NM
(800) 724-5995

Region VI
CO, MO, IA, NE, KS
(800) 724-5996

Region VII
AZ, NV, CA, UT
(800) 724-5997

Region VIII
AK, OR, ID, SD, MT, WA, ND, WY
(800) 724-5998

tionship to the railroads and their safe operations. Some of the issues they address include assisting railroads and communities to close crossings, plan rail corridor programs, advance public education and awareness, and promote law enforcement.

State departments of transportation also have long established relationships with railroad company personnel. Thus, trail planners should consider contacting the Railroad Coordination Section of their State department of transportation for railroad company contact and coordination information.

Keeping Written Records

It is critical for the parties concerned to maintain written records of all aspects of an RWT project. This begins with the planning effort. Typically, the trail project manager or railroad representative will keep a log including a record of key phone conversations and copies of e-mails, transmittals, and meeting minutes. The written record may help defend parties against lawsuits. It also helps provide continuity through potential staff changes, since many RWT planning efforts last for several years. The written record provides documentation as to how and why decisions were made and which parties were involved.

Once the planning phase is complete, the project manager should continue maintaining the log through the construction, operations, and maintenance phases. He or she should write weekly reports documenting field conditions, key work items, and needed repairs. If requested in a court of law, these records will verify that the local agency diligently maintained the trail and proactively addressed safety issues and repairs.