

## Recon Tour 2006 Report

From September 25th to September 29th, ECGA's Executive Director Karen Votava, along with volunteer Tony Barrett and staff members John Piazza, Eric Weis, and Tanja Wiant, cycled 210 miles of the ECG from Trenton, NJ to Baltimore, MD.



This tour was conducted for many reasons:

- To develop/refine trail assessment tools
- Some of the staff had never traveled any of the ECG!
- To evaluate the quality of this particular segment
- To raise funds for the Close the Gaps Campaign

The NJ-MD segment was chosen because:

- It is a highly-populated region
- We receive many requests for information about this section
- There are critical gap areas that we wanted to see first-hand
- We wanted to evaluate Bike Route E in PA

We accomplished much on the tour:

- Four different types of route assessments (all attached below in this document)
- Seeing the region first-hand proved to be invaluable
- Fundraising (nearly \$2500)
- We learned so much from local advocates
- We completed trail inspections for designations

Overall lessons learned:

- It is crucial to complete the continuous route, while keeping in mind that the safest route isn't always the best route, and the most direct route isn't always the safest route.
- It is critical to get regional liaisons in place!
- Local knowledge and effort is indispensable
- There is still so much on-road
- Signs are very helpful!
- Specific issues (e.g. Susquehanna River crossing)
- There are many "gems" along the route that can best be appreciated outside of a car
- ECG's value cannot be underestimated
- People are psyched – the time for the ECG is now!

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- Off-road trail report
- Signage report
- On-road cycling report
- On-road walking report

# 2006 Route Reconnaissance Tour

## Trail Section Report

Karen Votava, October 3, 2006

### Northern Delaware Greenway Jones Falls Trail

**Surface Condition.** These are both recently built asphalt pathways. NDG is in excellent condition and appears to get a high level of maintenance. No surface problems *yet* but with the passage of time it may suffer from root incursions. JFT is not well maintained and has suffered from sewer installation work after its construction that has impacted (disturbed) some sections of this route. There was unclean water flowing over several sections.

**Tread Width.** NDG was at least 10 feet and felt quite adequate. Jones Falls width was variable as it moved from "trail" to sidewalk with some on-street sections as well. Width of JFT may be a problem in some areas.

**Travel Experience.** NDG is wonderful as it goes through lovely public parkland. Some fairly steep dips and turns might be a problem for wheel chairs but are fun for bikes to navigate. JFT does not feel like it is finished due to recent sewer work that disturbed it; nor properly maintained. It moves through some nice residential areas and some areas that are currently unsightly but will likely get cleaned up over time, like the stretch past the old Ma-Pa turntable. .

**Safety and Security.** Some rather sharp turns on the NDG as it descends and turns in wooded areas could result in accidents with oncoming walkers or cyclists. Wooded areas might feel too secluded at times for persons traveling alone. When entire route is done it should get more use, helping resolve this. JFT goes through an industrial area with low ped/car activity that might feel unsafe to some users.

**Services and Amenities.** Services are not a problem since both are in cities with plenty of services nearby. NDG has a growing set of amenities in the parks it passes through but JFT has little except in Druid Hill Park and at Penn Station where it now terminates.

### York Heritage Trail North Central Railtrail

**Surface Condition.** Both are stone dust trails and generally in good condition.. Some sections of the NCR have grass growing in the tread so that it has become essentially two tire tracks; but it was still fine for even narrow road bicycle tires.

**Tread Width** 10 feet or more for both trails.

**Travel Experience.** Lovely! Flat, mostly tree-lined but with some villages and individual old homes and barns along it, NCR follows a river for much of the route although it is not always visible from the trail. Wetlands, abundant flowers. While straight and flat, not boring.

**Safety and Security.** Low traffic crossings on both trails. Bikes tend to go through posted stop signs. Otherwise, it feels quite safe. Fair amount of users even on a (very nice) weekday in September helped make it feel secure.

**Services and Amenities.** Good signage, informational kiosks, benches and picnic tables, some porta-potties. Food at most villages. Some accommodations (B&B's) along route.

### **Wilmington Waterfront Walkway**

**Surface Condition.** Paved, excellent.

**Tread Width.** Well over 10 feet.

**Travel Experience.** Exciting waterfront environment with diverse cultural and architectural features.

**Safety and Security.** Busy. Some bike police and other police seen. Not a problem during normal daytime hours.

**Services and Amenities.** A plethora of services and amenities along the walkway.

### **Gwynns Falls Greenway**

**BWI**

**Halls Trail**

**I did not cycle these trails as I was the truck driver that day.**

### **Conclusions:**

- Two trails were “green” and two went through urban landscapes. We all found them all to be a great relief from battling traffic on roadways, and all were interesting, none were boring. The landscape along the “green” trail was very lovely and relaxing. We enjoyed (sometimes vicariously) the amenities along them including the ice cream shop along the Wilmington Riverwalk, benches and picnic areas, informational kiosks, interpretive signage, and several visitor centers at old train stations on the North Central Trail. Among the best (most memorable) experiences along these trails was seeing and sometimes chatting with other trail users.
- While these trails seemed to be well maintained (except for the JT Trail but that was probably due to the sewer construction that had torn up parts of this trail), as they age problems may arise like incursion by tree roots, deterioration of pavement, lack of cleaning of trail surface, care for adjacent landscaped areas.. We should work to get friends groups active on all our trails. Urban trails like the JFT may prove difficult to get the support needed from government and citizens as it serves more as a utilitarian route.
- The Northern Delaware Greenway did not appear to be wheel chair safe in a few areas. Was it built to ADA standards (were federal transportation funds used to build it?) as we saw rather sharp turns and steep grades.
- None of the trails seemed to pose serious “personal security” issues in terms of the areas they passed through although some may feel insecure along parts of the JFT route.



2006 Recon Tour  
Route Signage Report  
Eric Weis

*Note: for these segments, signage was evaluated for the southbound route only.*

### **Pennsylvania Bike Route E**

The ECG signs found along PA Bike Route E (BRE) are MUTCD-style intrastate bike route signs with an “E” in the oval. They were manufactured and installed by PennDOT.

The BRE signs are of sufficient size. Each turn is marked, usually with a warning (50-100 yards prior to the turn), a turn sign at the turn itself, and a confirmation sign (50-100 yards after the turn). A few turns lacked the sign leading to the turn.

Several long stretches of road (without turns) lacked confirmation signs. The stretch of BRE on East Trenton Ave goes 2.5 miles to Woolson Dr without a confirmation; the stretch on Trenton Rd goes 4.5 miles without a confirmation until the turn onto Rt 413; the stretch on Columbus goes 3.5 miles without a confirmation before the turn at Oregon Ave.

*The post with the turn sign at the corner of Woolson and Tyburn is leaning at a deep angle, making it easy to miss.*

### **Gwynn’s Falls Trail**

Gwynn’s Falls Trail (GFT) is a designated segment of the ECG that guides trail users with its own signs as well as official ECG signs. The route is very well marked, principally with GFT signs, augmented with ECG signs at several locations: entrance to the path south of Sharp St (mile 0.7), as well as at miles 2.0, 4.0, 4.45, and 4.75.

*The end of the GFT (for ECG purposes) should be marked with an ECG sign with directional arrow to direct users through the parking lot to Reedbird Ave.*

### **BWI Trail**

The BWI Trail circles BWI Airport (approx. 13 miles), and has spurs to Linthicum Light Rail Station, BWI Rail Station, and the airport terminal. The spine route of the ECG uses the Linthicum Light Rail Station spur to get to the trail, then turns left to travel clockwise about 5 miles before leaving BWI Trail on a spur to the B&A Trail. The remainder of the BWI loop trail is designated as ECG, but is a scenic alternate route. The trail was evaluated from its northern end (spur at Linthicum Light Rail Station) to the Amtrak station, turning right rather than left upon reaching the loop trail.

As with the GFT, the trail is marked very well with native signage, accentuated with ECG signs. The native signage directs trail users to the terminal, the light rail station, the

Amtrak station, etc. ECG signs confirm that users are on the ECG, and were found at miles 10.9 and 13.0.

## SUMMARY

Each designated segment of the East Coast Greenway that we encountered was properly signed in terms of frequency and placement.

2006 Mid Atlantic Reconnaissance Tour  
On-road Route Report  
John Piazza, October 6, 2006

**Overview:**

Assessment to the on-road portion of the tour route was conducted by use of an evaluation sheet (see attached). To expedite data collection given the tours short duration, information was recorded into a hand held digital voice recorder for later transcription. The items noted for this review related to the types of facilities available for cyclists the route and the general condition of these facilities. An attempt was made to provide an evaluation of both the south and north bound lanes and unless noted should be considered to be consistent for both.

The greatest majority of facilities encountered for bicycle travel were made up of road shoulders of varying widths and to a lesser degree shared lanes. Few officially marked bike lanes were encountered. A detailed breakdown of each of the on-road portions traveled will be provided for review within the completed evaluation forms pending transcription.

**Trenton, New Jersey – Day 1**

**Cycling facility:** All of the cycling facilities experienced in the portion of Trenton the tour passed through were shared lanes. No specific on-street accommodations for bicycles were noted.

**Traffic Volumes:** Traffic volumes on these streets were generally light to moderate, but motorists' sensitivity to the needs of cyclists was very poor. Improvements allowing cyclist to avoid this situation would need to be made considering that for the foreseeable future access to the portions of the D&R Canal which run through Trenton will require some on street connections be incorporated.

**Traffic Speed:** Traffic speed was generally in the range of 25 to 35 mile per hour (mph).

**General Evaluation:** Intersections pose a significant hazard to cyclists throughout this on-road portion of the route. Cycling within the travel lanes is best advised by individuals with urban cycling experience. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in an urban setting (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer grates).

**Trenton, NJ – Philadelphia, PA – Day 1**

The route traveled throughout this portion of the tour followed the alignment of the State's *Bike Route E*.

**Cycling facility – General analysis:** The greatest percentage of the cycling facilities experienced throughout this portion of tour was made up of shoulders incorporated into the travel lanes on both sides of the road. Widths of these shoulders varied, but on average were between 5 to 10 feet. Intersections and parked vehicles often posed the greatest challenge to cycling by requiring entry onto the official road surface to maintain through travel. The road surfaces were generally in good condition throughout this portion of the tour route. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in sub-urban and urban settings (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer

grate, parked cars). Within the City of Philadelphia, it was apparent that concerted effort has been applied towards accommodating on-road bicycle travel. Starting at Richmond Street and continuing through the planned route (Delaware Ave., Columbus Blvd., and Delaware Ave.) to Penn's Landing a designated bike lane exists.

**Traffic Volumes:** Traffic volumes experienced throughout this portion of the tour were generally light to moderate with several areas being notably higher. This was especially true on State Routes 13 and 413 and on Orthodox Street and Aramingo Avenue. State Routes 13 and 413 had significantly higher volumes of large truck traffic. Vehicle proximities on Orthodox Street and Aramingo Avenue could prove challenging to inexperienced cyclists. As expected traffic volumes increased in certain areas once the tour entered the city limits of Philadelphia, but for the most part motorists seemed sensitive to allowing for sufficient passing distances.

**Traffic Speed:** Traffic speeds were generally in the range of 35 to 45 mile per hour (mph). It was often noted that vehicles seemed to exceed the posted speeds in many areas by about 10 mph.

**General Evaluation:** This section of the tour posed a few challenges notably along Orthodox Street and Aramingo Avenue, but on average was navigable by individuals with average on-road cycling skills. As would be expected caution would need to be exercised at the numerous intersections which exist along this route. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in an urban to semi-urban setting (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer grates).

### **Philadelphia – Delaware – Day 2**

**General Evaluation:** My evaluation on this date was conducted from the support vehicle and only included a portion of the planned route, thus I was not able to make as direct of observations from a cyclist's viewpoint. The portion of the route evaluated on this date included State Routes 291 and 13 through the southwest portion of the state. State Route 291 incorporated an approximate 8 foot shoulder which was well marked from the official road surface and had posted speeds of 35 mph. Surface conditions were good and traffic volumes were evaluated as light. State Route 13 was predominately a shared lane within an urban residential setting. Surface conditions were generally good. Some intersections pose significant hazards to cyclists throughout this portion of the route. A heightened degree of alertness is advised in these areas especially for individuals with little to no urban cycling experience. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in an urban to semi-urban setting (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer grates).

Some of the other tour participants who actually cycled the route on this date were asked to give their assessment of the on-road portion and their comments were as follows:

### **Philadelphia to Delaware – Bike Route E:**

A bike lane was present through south Philadelphia which transitioned into a road shoulder towards the PA/DE state line. Traffic was moderate to fast in some sections with a great amount of truck traffic. Over all the cycling facility in this portion of the route was considered good.

**Delaware state line to city of Wilmington:**

There were only a few on-road portions immediately outside the Wilmington city limits. Most were assessed as being shared lane or shoulder. Traffic was generally slow and accepting of cyclists sharing the lanes.

**Wilmington to Newcastle:**

This portion of the route was assessed as being very substandard in terms of its cycling facility. The provided shoulder was largely very narrow and exposed riders to fast moving traffic. At least one highway intersection was noted as being very dangerous.

**Newcastle to Newark:**

Other than a few challenging places, which were in the minority, the general route configuration in this portion was very good offering wide, clean shoulders and reasonable traffic volumes.

**MD/DE border to New Freedom, PA – Day 3**

**Cycling facility – General analysis:** The greatest percentage of the cycling facility in this section of the tour was represented in shoulder running parallel to the travel lanes. Most of these shoulders were wide (average 8 – 10 feet), but dimensions varied in several areas and often within the same segment (i.e., individual street or road). Most of these shoulders were delineated by with a painted stripe. Shared lanes made up a slightly lesser percentage and were the only other type of facility experienced in this section of the tour with several segments incorporating a mix of both types of facilities. Surface conditions were generally good. One area of concern was noted for the facility on the Conawingo Dam (US Rte 1) which is used to cross the Susquehanna River. The configured shared lanes are fairly narrow and afford cyclists very little room to pass comfortably over the dam.

**Traffic Volumes:** On average traffic volumes were light to moderate. The majority of the route passed through rural or residential settings. Large truck traffic increased in several areas including along State Routes 13 and 277 and along US Route 1.

**Traffic Speed:** Posted traffic speeds ranged between 35 to 40 mph throughout most of this section of the tour. On average, most traffic seemed to have been traveling within this range of speed. As previously mentioned, the close proximities of the facility on the Conawingo Dam combined with a tendency for motorist to increase their speed across the dam proved to be the most challenging portion of this leg of the tour and may not be advised for less experienced cyclists.

**General Evaluation:** This section of the tour passed through a great deal of rural setting affording very pleasant scenery and low traffic volumes. The on-road facility being mostly road shoulder provides a comfortable on-road cycling option away from motor vehicles. As noted the most challenging portion of this leg of the tour exists on the Conawingo Dam and is not advised for those cyclist who are not experience with on-road travel. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average along the average roadside (e.g., broken glass, litter, road kill). This section was very hilly with some fairly steep grades and a few long hill climbs.

#### **New Freedom, PA to Baltimore, MD– Day 4**

**Cycling facility – General analysis:** This leg of the tour was interspersed with travel on several off-road trails (York Heritage Trail, Northern Central Railroad Trail, and Jones Falls Trail). The on-road bicycle facility in this portion of the tour was mainly shared lanes with the balance being made up of shoulder. Surface conditions were generally good with a few areas undergoing resurfacing. A large percentage of the route traveled through residential areas with the notable exception of the area between McCormick Rd and Ridgely Rd which passed through a predominantly light industrial complex. The area at the intersection of Nightingale Rd. and Charles Streets posed the greatest challenge for this portion of the tour with a particularly busy traffic circle and continuing heavy traffic for the length of Charles Street. This portion of the route started out as a shared lane just past the intersection, but quickly transitioned into an approximately 2 foot shoulder. At Ruxton Rd the shoulder widened to between 10 to 12 feet allowing for greater separation for cyclists from the motorized travel lanes.

**Traffic Volumes & Speed:** On average traffic speeds were posted from between 35 to 45 mph with traffic volumes being generally light. Within the residential areas, motorists seemed to adhere to the posted speed limits. In areas such as that described above for Charles Street, drivers seemed to exceed the posted speed limit (40 mph) by about 10 to 15 mph. This posed the greatest concern in the area initially accessing Charles Street due to a combination of close proximity and large traffic volume feeding in from an exit to Interstate 83.

**General Evaluation:** The on-road sections in this part of the tour posed few challenges for cyclists comfortable with navigating along shared lane facilities. A noted exception would be for the situation described above for Nightingale Rd and Charles Street. Travel through this area could pose a challenge for cyclists with little to no on-road experience and extreme caution must be exercised by all who travel along this portion of the on-road route. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in a residential and commercial setting (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer grates). One outstanding condition was noted along Charles Street where concrete residue exists along the shoulder leading up the hill to Ruxton Rd. This material could require a cyclist to enter the motorized travel lanes to avoid making contact. Some challenging hills were encountered between the end of the NCRT in Cockeysville and the out skirts of the Baltimore metroplex.

#### **Baltimore, MD to BWI Airport, MD– Day 5**

**Cycling facility – General analysis:** The majority of the final leg of the tour was spent traveling on both the Gywnns Falls Trail and the BWI Trail. Some on-road portions linked these two trail systems starting from Baltimore's Inner Harbor district. Upon leaving the Inner Harbor the route traveled through areas that were a mix of urban residential and commercial and eventually transitioned into an industrial area located within the Interstate 395 and 95 corridors. The cycling facility in this section of the route was a mix of shared lane interspersed with shoulder. A designated bike lane exists along Potee Street in the section between the Gywnns Falls trail and the BWI Trail for approximately 6/10ths of a mile. The balance of the route leading to the BWI Trail had access to shoulder along the travel lanes.

**Traffic Volumes:** As was expected traffic volumes were heaviest in the Inner Harbor district and became very light throughout the rest of the designated route. A great advantage was gained in accessing the Potee Street bike lane since this area had a high volume of traffic combined with the closest proximity to fast moving vehicles.

**Traffic Speed:** Traffic speeds were average to what had been experienced in similar areas the tour had passed through. The Inner Harbor area was posted at approximately 25 to 30 mph and traffic volume required motorists to adhere to the posted speeds in general. The only significant speeds encountered were in the area of Potee Street where motorist had the ability to exceed the posted speed limit (40 mph) because of the configuration of the roadway (i.e., wide, four lane highway).

**General Evaluation:** This section of the tour posed few challenges. The most notable issue experience was a requirement for cyclist to cross over Potee Street from the southbound to northbound lane to maintain access to the incorporated bikelane. All other portions of this route were either within urban commercial setting with slow traffic or lightly traveled industrial areas. Most cyclists with average on-road experience would find this portion of the on-road route easy to navigate. No significant road hazards were noted other than those encountered on average in an urban to semi-urban setting (e.g., broken glass, litter, sewer grates).

**Summary:**

- The sections with bonafide bike lanes did feel safer to cycle than the unmarked shoulders
- In general the road routing was selected to provide good shoulders and direct routing, however, these roads also tend to have heavy traffic - often with trucks. And for the most part they don't take one through interesting landscapes. Most were lined with strip commercial or industrial. Thus while feeling fairly safe for experienced road cyclists, the routes were not interesting and were unpleasant (e.g., traffic fumes, noise, etc.).
- It might be possible to find better routes on local roads and could be done with greater ease if we are not required to secure agency endorsement for it. Even though they may end up being less direct they would serve as a great improvement given the issues cited with the current route.

**2006 Recon Tour  
On Road Walking Report  
By: Tanja Wiant**

Overall, the majority of this route is not highly recommended for a walker. (Of course, once the off-road portions are complete, the trails will be very safe and appealing for walkers!) The urban areas are generally appealing and safe with interesting scenery, but the portions in between the cities and towns had few sidewalks, moderate to heavy traffic, and many times not the most pleasing scenery. A walker views their environment in much more detail than a cyclist, so sections that a cyclist can breeze quickly through would be a major portion of the walker's journey. When the walker moves from trail or sidewalk to walking in the street (usually on decent shoulder, but not always), he/she may need to cross the road in order to walk against oncoming traffic, and there was not always a safe place to cross.

In areas such as north and south of Philadelphia, we may want to develop a separate but parallel walking route for the short term until trail sections are completed.

**>> Trenton, NJ to Philadelphia, PA**

**Overall:** This route was entirely on-road. It had some pleasant areas, but for the most part was not very interesting for the walker. There were many sections without sidewalks where the traffic was too fast for a walker to feel comfortable.

E Trenton Ave: Sidewalks 90%. Wheelchair accessibility below average – lots of choppy sidewalk. ¼ mile was not good for walking at all – no shoulder or anything. ½ very good for walking and wheelchairs.

Tyburn Rd: Shoulder for most, traffic not too fast.

Trenton Ave: very nice, residential, sidewalks.

Rt 413: Mostly commercial. Some shoulder, some sidewalk, some nothing. Not a pleasant walk. Lot's of commercial driveways to cross.

Rt 13: At first no shoulder at all, then some shoulder and occasional sidewalk. Mostly commercial, fairly busy.

Philly city limits: Sidewalk nearly the entire way. Somewhat urban to urban setting. Safety of some portions questionable for walkers alone. Aramingo not very pleasant scenery, but plenty of sidewalk.

**>> Philadelphia, PA to Newark, DE**

**Overall:** Anytime we were within a more urban area, the route was pleasant and interesting. However, the sections in between towns were missing sidewalks and/or not a very pleasant walking environment due in part to heavy traffic, trucks, and uninteresting strip commercial development.

Columbus, Oregon, and Passyunk: All have sidewalks, very good for walking. Columbus and Passyunk not very interesting to walk along.

Essington Ave: Few sidewalks but wide shoulder. Dull scenery.

Bartram: Bike lane only. Fast traffic, but not heavy. Not recommended.

Rt 291: 1<sup>st</sup> half not recommended. No sidewalk. Chester has sidewalks, then bike lanes. Not pretty, but interesting scenery (factories).

Rt 13: Sidewalks in town, then oil refineries and sidewalks or shoulders.

DE border-Wilmington: Don't think we did the actual route. Most was very nice for walking.

Wilmington-Newcastle: Very busy, fast cars. Sidewalks for the most part, but some busy road crossings.

Newcastle-Newark: Wide shoulder, occasional sidewalks, just not very interesting. All busy road and suburbs. Few amenities.

#### **>> MD/DE border to New Freedom, PA**

**Overall:** Very pleasant scenery the entire route, but very few sidewalks. The majority was narrow or no shoulder and moderate to fast traffic. A fearless walker would enjoy the route, but most would find the traffic too close for comfort.

Rt 277-Rt 1: Shoulder about 25% of the time, the rest had nothing. 2 lane road, pretty unsafe.

Rt 1: Shoulder most of the way; sidewalk in Rising Sun. Dam very unsafe. Fast traffic, small shoulder.

Rest of the way: mostly no or narrow shoulder. Traffic light but fast. Sidewalks in Stewartstown. 851 very unsafe after Stewartstown.

#### **>> New Freedom, PA to Baltimore, MD**

I drove the truck this day.

#### **>> Baltimore Inner Harbor to BWI**

**Overall:** There were sidewalks or path for the majority of this route. There were a few sections without sidewalk that also had not the most pleasant scenery, but overall it was safe and interesting.

Inner Harbor and Gwynns Falls Trail: Mostly excellent. Some industrial sections of trail had no sidewalk and rough road and were not good for walking.

Roads after trail ends: Sidewalks until Belle Grove Road – then no sidewalk for a bit. But this is where Sally's sidepath will go. Maple Road on to BWI trail very nice.