

MEMORANDUM

VDOT Shenandoah Valley Rail with Trail Assessment Phase 1 Report Takeaways

VDOT posted the Phase 1 Report for the Rail with Trail Assessment.

- Assessment Website: <https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/projects/staunton-district/rockingham-shenandoah-and-warren-counties---shenandoah-valley-rail-with-trail-assessment/>
- Link to Phase 1 Report: https://www.vdot.virginia.gov/media/vdotvirginiagov/projects/staunton/rockingham-shenandoah-and-warren-svrwt-phase-1-report-2025-03-06-rfs_acc.pdf

As a reminder, the purpose of this first phase was to set the stage for more detailed analysis of the challenges, costs, utility and safety of the concept.

Report Overview

- Confirms concerns about the much greater costs of restoring the rail line, and subsequently building an adjacent trail. For example, the report:
 - Notes the complexity (and additional expense) of attaching cantilevered steel trail structures alongside the bridges that carry freight trains
 - Identifies almost half (48%) of the corridor as requiring some sort of special, costly engineering and construction to build both a restored rail line and a trail along the 66-foot corridor.
 - These include structures such as retaining walls, blasting through rock faces, and engineered overhangs.
- Notes that a rail-with-trail could degrade historic resources, because its wider footprint could have archeological impacts that a trail alone would not have.
- Doesn't provide assurance for viable rail freight to return.
 - While we won't know the specific cost estimates until the third phase of the study is completed later this year, it's clear from this first phase that the additional funding required to restore an active rail line next to the trail is certain to significantly increase project costs, with no assurance that rail freight will return to the corridor.

Attached are specific references to these findings in the report.

VDOT PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS AND ONLINE SURVEY

VDOT seeks public input on two options for the unused Shenandoah rail corridor—either a costly rehab of the old railroad with an adjacent trail or transforming the corridor into the community-supported Shenandoah Rail Trail.

- **Timberville** - Tues April 8, 5-7pm, Plains District Community Center, 233 McCauley Ave
- **Front Royal** - Thurs April 10, 5-7pm, Warren County Govt Center, 220 N Commerce Ave
- **Woodstock** - Tues April 15, 5-7pm, Peter Muhlenberg Middle School Cafeteria, 1251 Susan Ave

Survey LINK: publicinput.com/svrwt

PLEASE SHARE MEETING INFO AND SURVEY LINKS WITH OTHERS!!