

The Western Maryland Wheelmen Trail Ambassador (TA) Manual

February 23, 2010

Overview

The Trail Ambassadors (TA) are a joint effort between the

- *Allegany County Chamber of Commerce,*
- *Allegany County Tourism,*
- *Western Maryland Wheelmen, and*
- *the Allegany County Office of Homeland Security*

to promote and monitor biking trails in Allegany County, Maryland. As of this writing, "The Trail" refers to the Maryland portion of the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) between mile marker zero in Cumberland and the Mason-Dixon Line.

Purpose of the Trail Ambassador

The purpose of the Trail Ambassador is two-fold. The first is to actively *promote* the Trail. The second is to *monitor* the Trail you are helping to promote. Both of these functions are equally important and should be the focus of your efforts as an Ambassador.

Your role as a "**Promoter**" of the Trail involves many different aspects. Knowing the Trail is an essential part of your duties. Being able to advise Trail users on distances between Trail heads, where the restrooms are, where water is available, what/where services are available and other key information is part of what makes you a value to Trail users. Other skills and knowledge, e.g., bike repair and/or basic first aid, are complementary to being an information resource.

Your role as a "**monitor**" on the Trail is multi-faceted as well. You are expected to convey (not enforce) the rules in a friendly and positive manner. Be sure to approach offenders cautiously but in a friendly manner. Many times Trail users just are not aware that what they are doing is against the rules. Always avoid conflict at all cost. If you sense that a situation is becoming confrontational, walk away and then notify law enforcement of the problem.

The monitoring phase of your time also involves being the eyes and ears of the Trail management system. Surveying and reporting the condition of the Trail is important to ensure that maintenance problems are remedied quickly, regular maintenance is being conducted, and activity adjacent to the Trail, on neighboring properties, is not encroaching or having a negative impact on the Trail.

Specific Tasks of the Trail Ambassador

1. Provide maps, rules, and other service information to trail users. Be comfortable with reading the Trail map and directing Trail users to sections of the Trail they may not have discovered yet. Be familiar with the mile marker system. Know where there is parking. Be familiar with locations of restaurants or where Trail users can rent bikes or buy supplies. For more information on lodging and attractions, refer the Trail users to www.mmtrails.org or www.mdmountaininside.com.

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2. Relay Trail user comments and concerns to the Allegany County Bureau of Police 301-777-1000
3. Pick up occasional (and manageable) litter along the Trail
4. Help maintain safe trails by being alert and reporting hazards, damages, obstacles, fallen trees, vandalism, landslides, etc, to the Allegany County Bureau of Police
5. Relay potential maintenance needs such as mowing, tree trimming, culvert cleaning or areas needing a trash clean-up to the Allegany County Bureau of Police, 301-777-1000
6. Administer First Aid and CPR, *if qualified*, to injured or ill persons. Provide first aid kit to assist Trail users, assist in transporting injured people. Because of liability concerns, it is highly recommended that you offer someone the use of your first aid kit rather than perform any services yourself. The Good Samaritan Law will protect you for any services you provide that you are trained or certified in.
7. Provide assistance (tools and advice) to riders with mechanical problems. Because of liability concerns, it is highly recommended that you offer someone the use of your tool kit rather than perform any services yourself. The Good Samaritan Law will protect you for any services you provide that you are trained or certified in.
8. Call emergency services for a Trail user in need of assistance. Dealing with emergencies is best left to trained personnel. Heart attacks and seizures should only be attended to by trained professionals and first aid certified volunteers. Call 911 as soon as possible.
9. Be alert for illegal trail use, such as ATV s, unwanted signage, or horse use on sections where it is not permitted. **You have the right to:** Diplomatically approach people who have violated the rules of the Trail and let them know by giving them a Rule Card (See **Rules and Guidelines below**)
 - **You are here to inform - not to police!** Be courteous.
 - If warranted, contact the appropriate authorities and fill out an incident report.
 - Call 911 or , 301-777-1000 and stay until police arrive. You will need to be able to direct them to where you are on the Trail. Let police handle conflict and law-breaking situations.
 - Take photos of issues where appropriate.
 - Call 911 in cases of medical emergencies and fill out an incident report.
10. Provide current information, as available on trail condition, safety issues and impending weather conditions.
11. Post trip reports to the database at the **WMW Trail Ambassador's Group Web site:** <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WMWGAPTARPT/> Be sure to document your time and experiences, including:
 - Date
 - Time Started
 - Time Ending
 - Starting Mile Marker

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- Direction of Travel
- Total Mileage
- Number of Contacts
- Assistance rendered and other comments

If you do not have web access, please contact another Trail Ambassador who can then enter your trip information for you.

When you are on the trail with other Trail Ambassadors as a group, all can file a trip report in order to get recognition for time spent on the trail. However, only one should report the total number of contacts made by the Trail Ambassador group, or optionally the contacts and assistance rendered comments can be equitably divided by mutual agreement.

The WMW lead trail monitor will monitor the database with support from Tourism and Allegany County Bureau of Police. The database tells us:

- What days the Trail was being monitored and for how many hours.
- Noteworthy information about the Trail, both positive and negative occurrences, concerns and maintenance needs. Anecdotal information is always welcome.

Trail Ambassador Requirements

1. Complete the Trail Ambassador Training Program developed with Tourism and the Allegany County Bureau of Police or do a training ride with a member of the TA training team.
2. Meet the Age Requirement (18 and over) unless partnered with an adult who has also completed the training.
3. Wear your Ambassador T-shirt, jersey or arm band when you are "on-duty". If you just want to go for a ride for enjoyment and don't want to serve in a visible "Ambassador" role that day, simply don't wear the identifying clothing. However, you may serve as an ambassador even when you're not wearing the official attire.
4. Interact effectively and courteously with people as ambassadors for the trail. This includes trail users, emergency service personnel, land management groups and adjacent landowners.
5. Serve as a role model for responsible Trail use. Follow the rules and act accordingly
6. **Always wear your bike helmet**, and tactfully encourage others to wear theirs.

Scheduling

Trail Ambassadors do not have a set schedule and are not required to report in before hitting the Trail in the role as an Ambassador. Simply record your trip data, and then post it on line to the database at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WMWGAPTARPT/> . Although not necessary, it makes good sense to partner with another Monitor when possible, for safety's sake.

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What to Carry With You --Suggested Supplies

1. Trail maps and rules and information about becoming a member of TA
2. Basic bicycle repair tool(s)
3. Basic first aid kit
4. Small notebook or monitoring log and a pen/pencil. This will be helpful for transferring information to an Incident Report, filling out your trip report, and recording recommendations and comments.
5. Cell phone (where service is available)
6. Tire pump, tubes, patch kit
7. Bag for litter
8. Camera
9. CPR and First Aid Certification (if applicable)

Bike Repair Training

Bike repair training may be available through a local bike shop, the Western Maryland Wheelmen, or from an experienced rider. There are a number of publications available for bicycle repair. It is a good idea for Trail Ambassadors to be familiar with the mechanical operation of a bicycle, be able to perform common bike field repairs and be familiar with basic bike repair tools. Although it is unlikely that a Trail Ambassador would be sued for performing bike repair that might result in failure or injury; it's a good idea to provide the user with the tools and parts and give instructions/advice for the repair. This way you are in no way liable for any repair of the user's bike. In addition, it helps the user learn how to perform the repair.

Contacts

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Tourism | Barb Buehl | 301-777-5132 | barb@mdmountainside.com |
| Tourism | Kim Shires | 301-777-5132-4 | kim@mdmountainside.com |
| Maintenance/Public Works | Ranger Mac | 240-580-4811 | smokechaser50@hotmail.com |
| Bureau of Police | | 911 or 301-777-1000 | |
| WMW Lead Trail Ambassador | Larry Brock | 301-697-4343 | Lbrock@gapselfstorage.net |
| Western Maryland RR | Dan Pluta | 301-707-4402 | dpluta@wmsr.com |

Limiting Conditions

The Trail Ambassador Program allows for modification in scope, termination, or alteration in any manner at the discretion of WCTA. Trail Ambassadors are not to represent the WCTA, Allegany Tourism and Homeland Security's office by expressing their opinions about issues that might be politically charged while on duty. Volunteer privileges can be revoked if they fail to properly represent the organizations.

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Rules and Guidelines

Great Allegany Passage (GAP)
Allegany County, Maryland

Please Note: The following is provided for your convenience only, and is current as of 12/09/09. Always reference the following site for the most current version: <http://gov.allconet.org/bop/Trail%20Rules%20and%20Application.pdf>

Allegany County is now responsible for all law enforcement and emergency response as well as maintenance of this recreational right of way (ROW). Trail Rangers associated with the Allegany County Bureau of Police patrol the trail. These law enforcement personnel wear uniforms and carry County issued photo identification.

• Dawn to Dusk Usage

The Great Allegheny Passage in Allegany County, Maryland, from Cumberland, Maryland to the Pennsylvania line is intended to provide year-round recreational opportunities. Access to, and usage of, the trail is permitted only between the hours of dawn until dusk.

• Public Safety Assistance

Call 911 for emergencies requiring immediate response by law enforcement or medical personnel. Call Allegany County Bureau of Police, 301-777-1000, to report all other trail related issues or problems.

• Motor Vehicles

Motorized vehicles are prohibited on the trail except for emergency response vehicles or those authorized by the County. The use of motorized vehicles by members of the Big Savage Sportmen's Club and the Piney Mountain Sportsmen Club, with recognized stickers, is authorized during Maryland Regulated Hunting Season. Low powered electric chairs for individuals with restricted mobility are permitted. All other motorized vehicles are prohibited without written authorization from the County.

• Trail Direction Use

Trail users are to travel on the right and pass on the left side of the trail. Trail users are to give warning when approaching others on the trail and when passing.

• Speed Limit

Trail users are to obey a 15 mph speed limit in the ROW.

• Wildlife and Livestock

Trail users are encouraged not to disturb wildlife and livestock.

• Trash Removal

Trail users shall carry out their own trash.

• Helmet Use / Audible Warning Device

Bicyclists and equestrians should wear a helmet. Maryland State Law mandates that children under 12 years of age must wear an approved helmet when operating a bicycle. Bicycles must have an audible warning device.

• Pets

Pets shall be on a leash at all times. Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pets, including horses.

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• **Brush and Borden Tunnels**

Only pedestrian traffic is permitted in the Brush and Borden Tunnels. Bicyclists must walk their bikes through both tunnels. Brush is west of Cumberland, MD (Cash Valley). Borden is west of Frostburg, MD. Brush Tunnel, the longer of the two, has electric lights. *(Note 12/9/09: Brush tunnel is now lit)* Flashlight use, however, is recommended.

The ROW between Cumberland, MD and Frostburg, MD is designed to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic, as well as the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad (WMSR). Trail users are encouraged to check the WMSR operating schedule prior before any trail usage: www.wmsr.com, 800 - TRAIN - 50. Pedestrians are prohibited in the Brush Tunnel during WMSR use.

• **Western Maryland Scenic Railroad ROW**

All trail users are advised to stay on the trail surface and away from the WMSR ROW as the train approaches and passes. Do not enter the train track area except at designated crossings. The train will signal at all trail crossings. Train maintenance equipment and personnel may be in the trail ROW at any time. Trail users are urged to use caution as railroad ballast, rock, and gravel may be on the trail surface.

• **Fires**

Fires are prohibited in the ROW.

• **Hunting**

Hunting is prohibited in the ROW. The transport of loaded firearms or any loaded device designed to harvest game animals is prohibited in the ROW. The trail is only open for hunting access during the Maryland Regulated Hunting Season or by written authorization from the County.

• **Chains and Farm Gates**

Chain and farm gates used by the hunting clubs for access shall be opened and closed after entering onto or exiting from the trail at all times.

• **Trail Alterations**

No agency, club, organization, individual and/or property owner may alter the trail or any appurtenance without written authorization from the County.

• **Permit Use for Property Owners, Clubs, etc.**

Any agency, club, organization, individual and/or property owner desiring to cross or use the ROW is required to complete the County's license permit application, receive an executed license agreement from the County, and reimburse the County according to the current fee schedule.

• **Camping**

Camping is permitted in area adjacent to the trail on privately owned property authorized to provide overnight accommodations. Camping is prohibited in the ROW.

• **Horseback Riding**

Horseback riding is permitted only from Frostburg, MD to the Pennsylvania line. The improved surface of the trail is designed exclusively for bicycle and pedestrian use. Horseback riding is permitted only in the ROW in the grass area adjacent to the improved trail surface.

• **Alcohol Consumption / Tobacco Use**

The consumption of alcohol and use of tobacco products are prohibited in the ROW.

• **Special Use – Special Use Permit Application**

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Special use activities with 15 or more participants, i.e., races for runners, fund raisers, organized group rides designed for trail use by specified users, require written authorization from the County. Special use activities shall be conducted in such a fashion so as not to exclusively limit the use of the trail during these activities. Special Use Permit Applications are available on the County's web site, www.gov.allconet.org, or may be obtained at the Allegany County Office Building – Main Entrance Security Personnel, 701 Kelly Road, Cumberland, MD 21502, Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., from local bicycle shops, from the Trail Rangers, and at the Allegany County Bureau of Police Headquarters, 11400 PPG Road SE, Cumberland, MD 21502, 301-777-1000.

No activity or recreational usage along the trail shall impede the peaceful enjoyment for all trail participants. As a courtesy, trail users who stop along the trail are asked to leave the improved surface of the ROW to allow for the safe and unimpeded travel of other trail users.

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Fact Sheet **Great Allegheny Passage in Maryland (GAPM)**

- The GAPM is 20.47 miles long from Cumberland MD to the Mason-Dixon Line.
- The elevation rises from 625 feet in Cumberland to 2250 feet at the Mason-Dixon Line.
- The average grade is 1.75%.
- Cumberland is mile 0.
- Frostburg (New Hope Rd. Parking Lot) is at mile 15.4
- The Mason-Dixon Line is at mile 20.47
- The trail parallels the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad for 14.2 miles from Cumberland.
- The Maryland portion of the trail goes through two tunnels. Brush tunnel is 914 feet long and Borden Tunnel is 945 feet long.
- The Connellsville extension of the Western Maryland Railway, from Cumberland to Connellsville, was completed in 1912.
- Passenger service was discontinued in 1957.
- The last train (a special passenger train) ran on May 21, 1975 from Connellsville to Cumberland.
- Restrooms are located at Canal Place and the WMRR Station in Cumberland. Portable restroom facilities are located at:

| <u>Mile</u> | <u>Location</u> |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 5.3 | Cash Valley Rd |
| 9.5 | Woodcock Hollow Trailhead |
| 15.5 | New Hope Road Trailhead in Frostburg. |