A gravel path leads through a forest of bare trees. The path is made of grey gravel and is flanked by brown, leafless trees. The sky is a pale blue with some white clouds. The overall scene is a quiet, natural setting.

**PA Rails and Trails:
A handbook on railbanking, interim
trail use, and reactivation**

**Kevin Starner, Skelly & Loy
Angela Watson, Parsons Brinckerhoff
PA Rail Freight Seminar – May 2012**

Purpose

- **Outline the legal framework and procedures of the railbanking program**
- **Investigate national precedence for conversion of established rail trails back to active rail use**
- **Identify railbanked & reactivated corridors in Pennsylvania**
- **Provide recommendations for future railbanking agreements**

Steering Committee

- **Pennsylvania Department of Transportation**
- **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**
- **Pennsylvania Rail Freight Advisory Committee**
- **Surface Transportation Board**
- **Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**
- **Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission**
- **Keystone State Railroad Association**
- **Genessee & Wyoming, Wellsboro & Corning, CSX, & Norfolk Southern**
- **PA Operation Lifesaver**

What is Railbanking?

Railbanking, as defined by Section 8(d) of the [National Trails System Act](#), is a voluntary agreement between a railroad company and a prospective trail sponsor to use a rail corridor that is proposed for abandonment as a recreational trail until such time that a railroad chooses to reestablish rail service on the corridor.

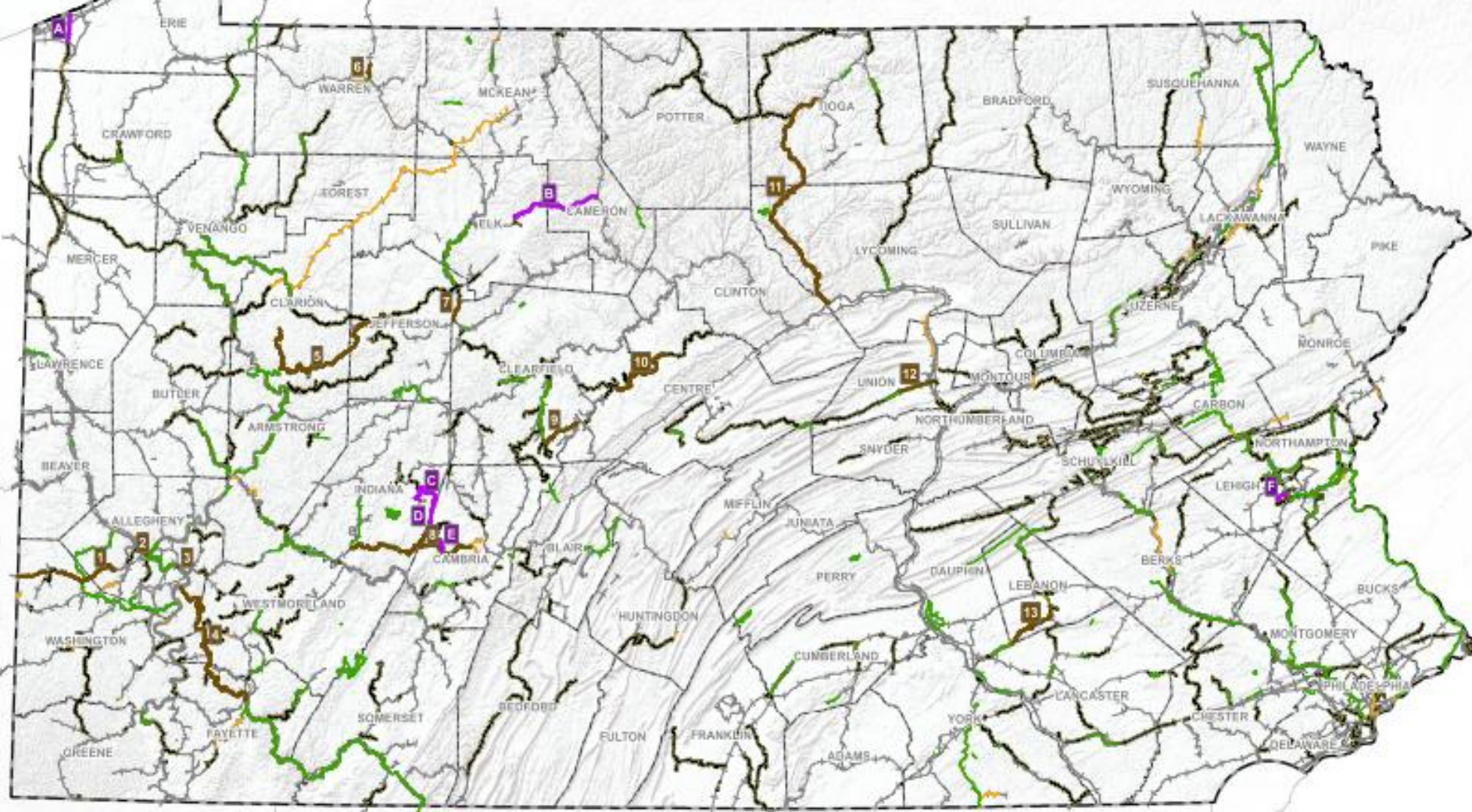
Railbanking Checklist

- Railroad files for abandonment approval from Surface Transportation Board (STB).
- Prospective trail sponsor files Public Use Condition/Trail Use Request with STB.
 - Within 45 days for abandonment application proceeding
 - Within 20 days for petition for exemption
 - Within 10 days for class exemption
- Railroad indicates its willingness to negotiate a railbanking/interim trail use agreement to STB.
- STB issues certificate of interim trail use (CITU) in the case of an abandonment application proceeding, or a notice of interim trail use (NITU) in the case of an abandonment exemption proceeding, allowing for a 180-day negotiation period.
- Prospective trail sponsor and railroad negotiate railbanking/interim trail use agreement for 180-day period.
- File negotiation time period extension with STB, as needed.
- If negotiations are successful, the line is automatically railbanked and the corridor can be converted to recreational trail uses.

Rail Corridor Preservation and Trail Development Options

- **Federal Railbanking**
- **Private Railbanking**
- **Abandonment and Acquisition**
- **Rails-with-Trail**

Railbanked Trails in Pennsylvania



Reactivated Corridors and the Reactivation Process

- **Reactivating a railbanked corridor is a fairly simple administrative process with the STB**
- **Reactivation becomes more involved when it is not the original abandoning railroad requesting to reactivate a railbanked line**
- **Snow Shoe Rail-Trail Case Study**

Rail Reactivation Checklist

- Railroad files petition to Surface Transportation Board (STB) to vacate the notice of interim trail use/certificate of interim trail use (NITU/CITU).

- STB grants a decision to vacate the NITU/CITU.

- Railroad reacquires the right-of-way pursuant to the conditions set forth in the trail use agreement.

Railbanking Moving Forward

- **Is there likely a need to reestablish rail service in the future?**
- **Has a potential trail sponsor expressed interest in establishing an interim trail use?**
- **Recommendations for the negotiation of a railbanking/interim trail use agreement.**
- **Considerations for potential reactivation of a railbanked corridor.**

Resources for More Information

- National Trails System Act

<http://www.nps.gov/nts/legislation.html>

- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR): Trails

<http://www.explorepatrails.com/>

- Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Trail-Building Toolbox:

www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/trailBuilding/toolbox/index.html

- Surface Transportation Board (STB)

www.stb.dot.gov