

# SHENANDOAH RAIL TRAIL EXPLORATORY PARTNERSHIP

## Partners

Central  
Shenandoah  
Planning  
District  
Commission

Northern  
Shenandoah  
Valley  
Regional  
Commission

Rockingham  
County

Shenandoah  
County

Warren  
County

Broadway

Edinburg

Front Royal

Mount Jackson

New Market

Strasburg

Timberville

Toms Brook

Woodstock

Alliance  
for the  
Shenandoah  
Valley

Friends  
of the  
North Fork  
of the  
Shenandoah  
River

Shenandoah  
Valley  
Battlefields  
Foundation

Shenandoah  
Valley  
Bicycle  
Coalition

January 15, 2022

Dear Senator Obenshain, Speaker Gilbert, Delegate Wilt and Delegate Wiley:

We, the undersigned members of the Shenandoah Rail Trail Exploratory Partnership, ask you to secure funding for the acquisition of the Shenandoah Rail corridor this session. There is a rare opportunity this year to direct state funds to a project that will build our local economies while preserving a historically important rail line for future use.

The rail corridor in its current state provides no public benefit. In several of our towns it is overgrown with trees and weeds. In contrast, a future rail trail will bring significant economic development to our communities. An updated economic impact study in 2021 projects some \$32 million of annual visitor spending, creating more than 300 new jobs.

In addition to spurring economic development for our region, we believe the project will improve quality of life in other significant ways. A multi-use trail will bring public health benefits, safe transportation alternatives, and additional outdoor recreation opportunities, all identified as local needs in the state's feasibility study.

As you know, the communities in your districts strongly support the concept of the rail trail. The boards of supervisors of the three counties and the town councils of the nine towns along the corridor have all adopted formal resolutions in support of the trail. The towns and counties contributed the funding to the economic impact analysis, and the counties contributed funding for the real estate appraisal that is currently underway. Also, local chambers of commerce, including Shenandoah and Harrisonburg-Rockingham, formally support the project. When VDOT asked for public comments for a Shenandoah Rail Trail as part of the feasibility study, a record 9,283 people responded, most of whom live in the three counties, with 94% of all respondents saying they would use the trail if it were built.

We understand that the corridor will be acquired through railbanking, which ensures that rail service can be restored to the corridor on some future date, if it becomes economically viable again. But with Norfolk Southern's decision to discontinue rail service along the line and sell the corridor, we have concluded that a multi-use trail is now the best use of the corridor.

Ultimately, we believe that this project will be a full public-private partnership, with funding from local, state and federal governments matched by significant corporate and private philanthropy. We anticipate that local communities and private donors will provide several million dollars to the development of the trail. However, initial funding from the Commonwealth to acquire the corridor is essential.

With overwhelming support from adjacent localities and community members in your districts, we ask you to please do what you can this session to ensure the proposed state-wide trail funding remains in place to secure this important project.

We are very fortunate to have your leadership in the General Assembly at this time, and we thank you for your help.

Sincerely,



**Mayor Tim Proctor**

Town of Broadway



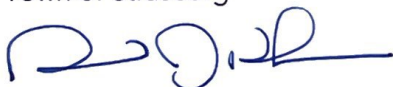
**Mayor Jeremy McCleary**

Town of Woodstock



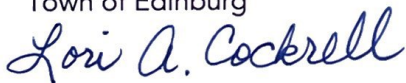
**Mayor Brandy Hawkins Boies**

Town of Strasburg



**Mayor Dan Harshman**

Town of Edinburg




**Vice Mayor Lori Cockrell**

Town of Front Royal



**Mayor Larry Bompiani**

Town of New Market



**Bonnie Riedesel, Executive Director**

Central Shenandoah

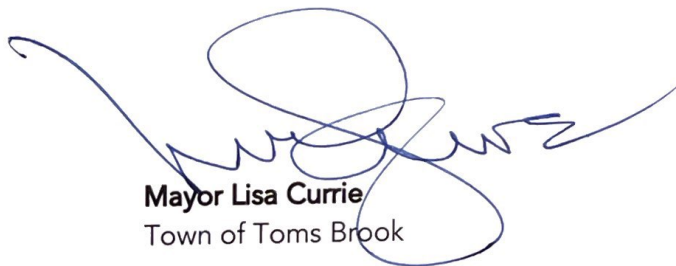
Planning District Commission



**Brandon Davis, Executive Director**

Northern Shenandoah Valley

Regional Commission



**Mayor Lisa Currie**

Town of Toms Brook



**Supervisor Brad Pollack**

Shenandoah County



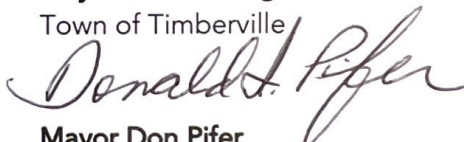
**Supervisor Delores Oates**

Warren County



**Mayor Don DeLaughter**

Town of Timberville



**Mayor Don Pifer**

Town of Mount Jackson



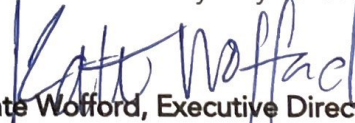
**David Brotman, Executive Director**

Friends of the North Fork Shenandoah River



**Kyle Lawrence, Executive Director**

Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition



**Kate Wofford, Executive Director**

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley