

MONTGOMERY COUNTY TRAIL ACCESS, DIVERSITY & AWARENESS PLAN



APA-PA Conference
October 2, 2022



Introductions...

Who are we?

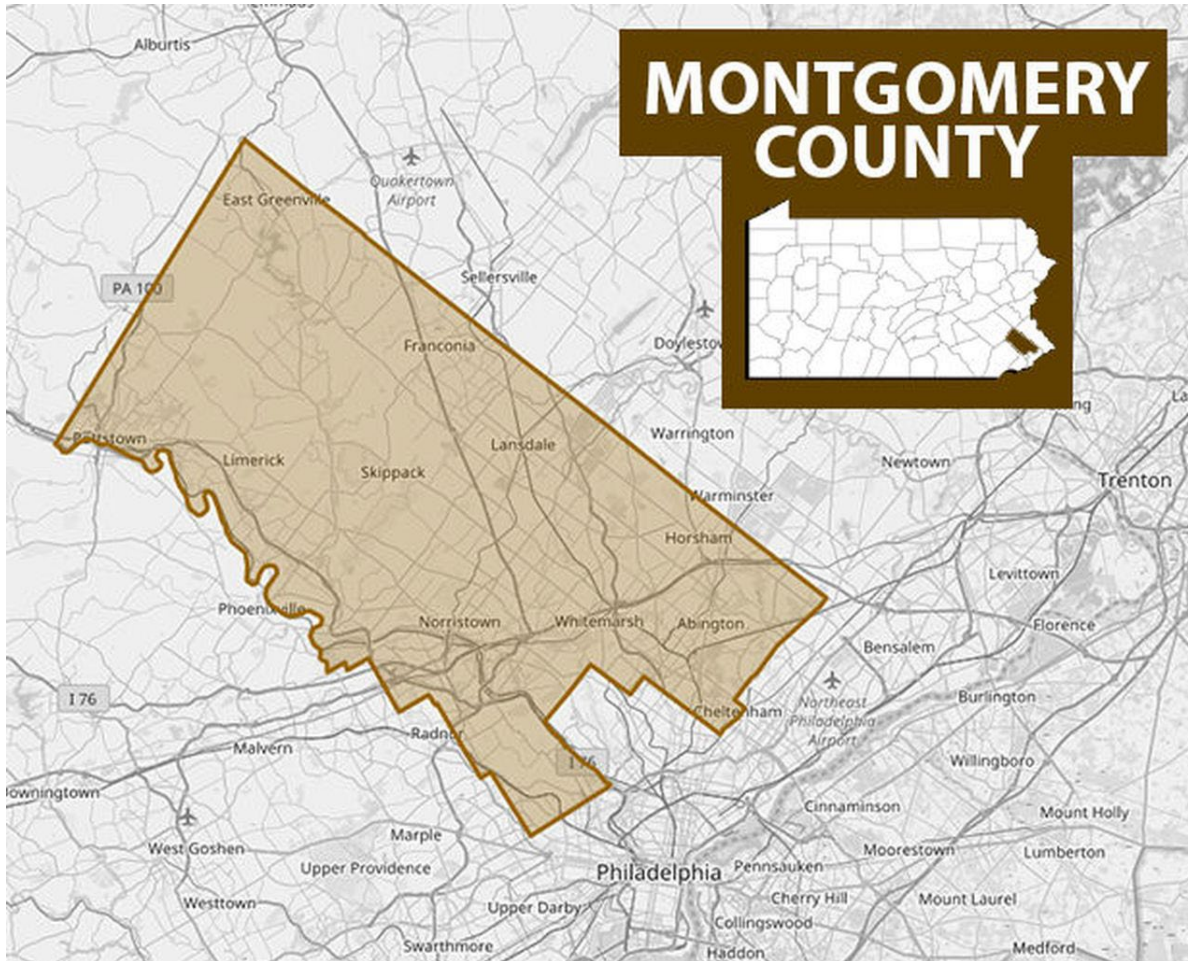


Donna Fabry



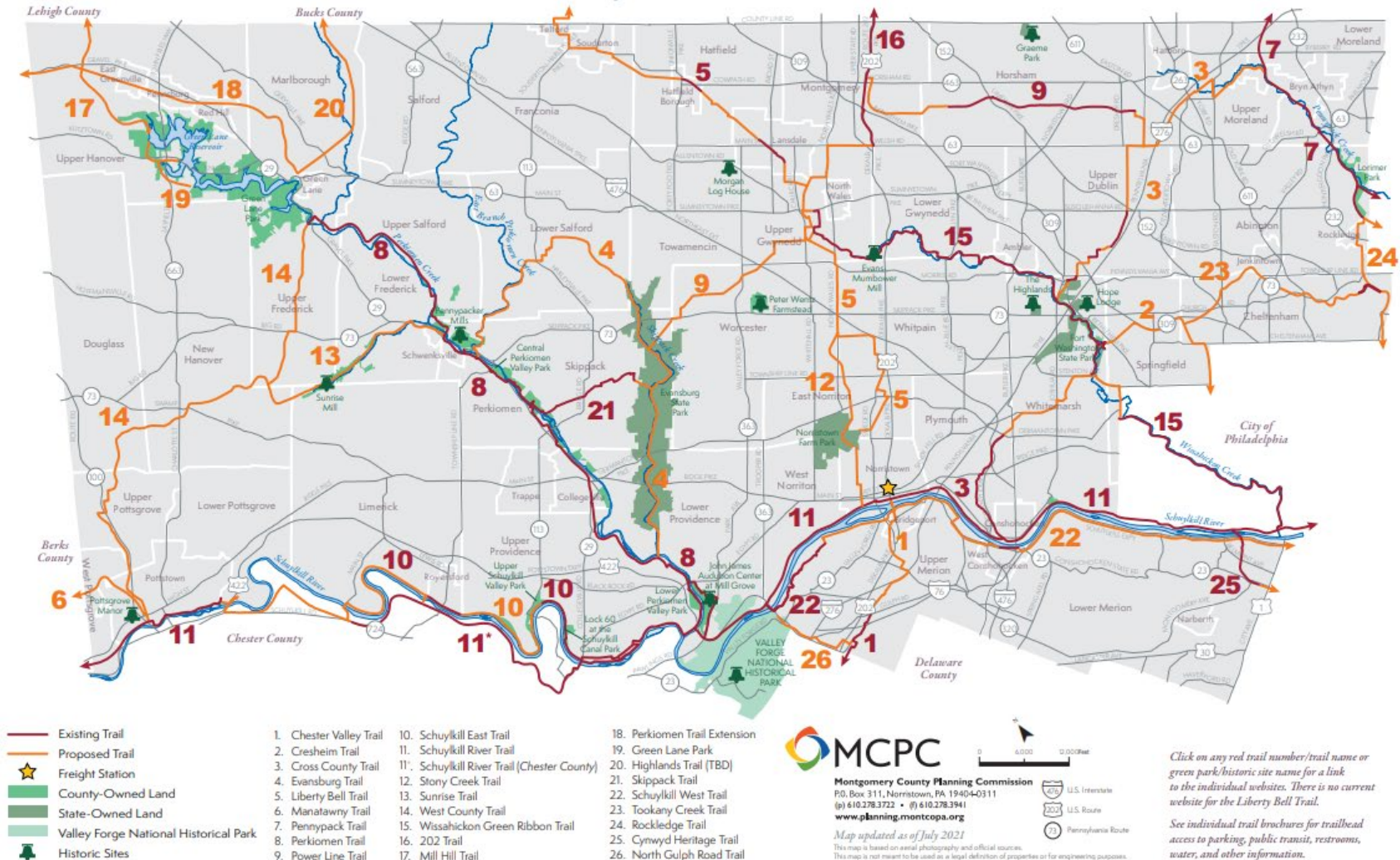
Anne Leavitt-Gruberger

A Little About Montgomery County...



- Consists of 62 townships and boroughs and more than 850,000 people
- Directly northwest of Philadelphia
- A major part of the region's economy
- A (motorized) transportation gateway
- A shopping destination
- A place of historic significance

And the County's Trail System...



Project Overview

- Funded by DVRPC Transportation and Community Development Initiative grant
- Study Goals
 1. Gain a better understanding about trail users' diversity.
 2. Increase the awareness, visibility, and ease of access to the county trail system.
 3. Modernize trail designs to take into account the changing, diverse needs of the communities they pass through.
 - Transportation AND recreation



What Did We Want to Learn?

- Access – What prevents potential users from accessing and using trails?
- Diversity – What prevents specific sub-populations from using trails?
- Awareness – What opportunities are there to increase awareness of the trails and trail access?





We Had Lots of Questions!

- What are potential causes of lack of diversity on the Schuylkill River Trail and Pennypack Trail, and what are potential solutions?
- What are the disparities in how people from different racial, age, and socioeconomic backgrounds use parks/trails/open space?
- What has been successful in overcoming the obstacles to park/trail use in other places?
- What are the health benefits of trail use for the target audiences?
- What are the transportation benefits of trail use for commuters?

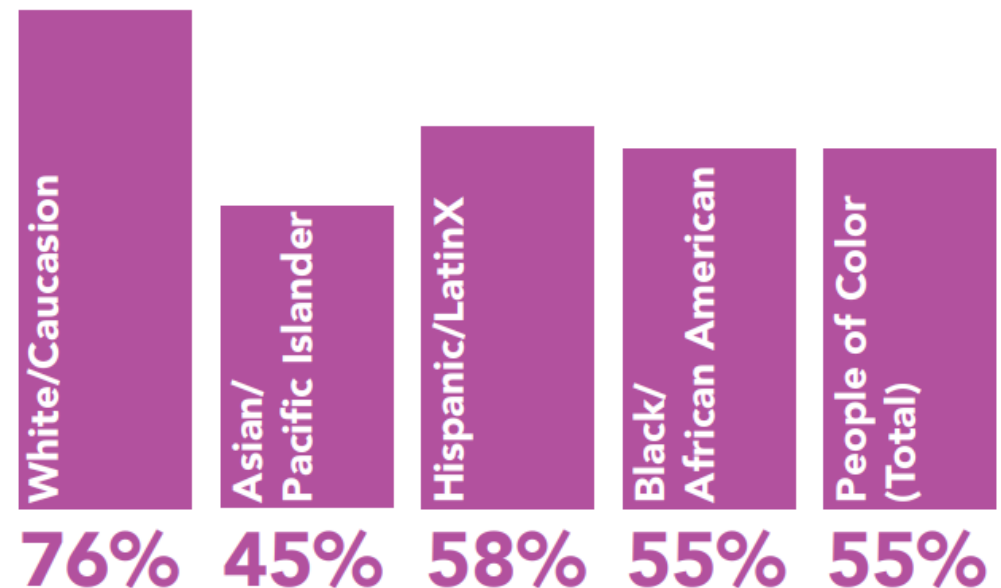


There's A Lot of Consensus

How do underrepresented communities use trails?



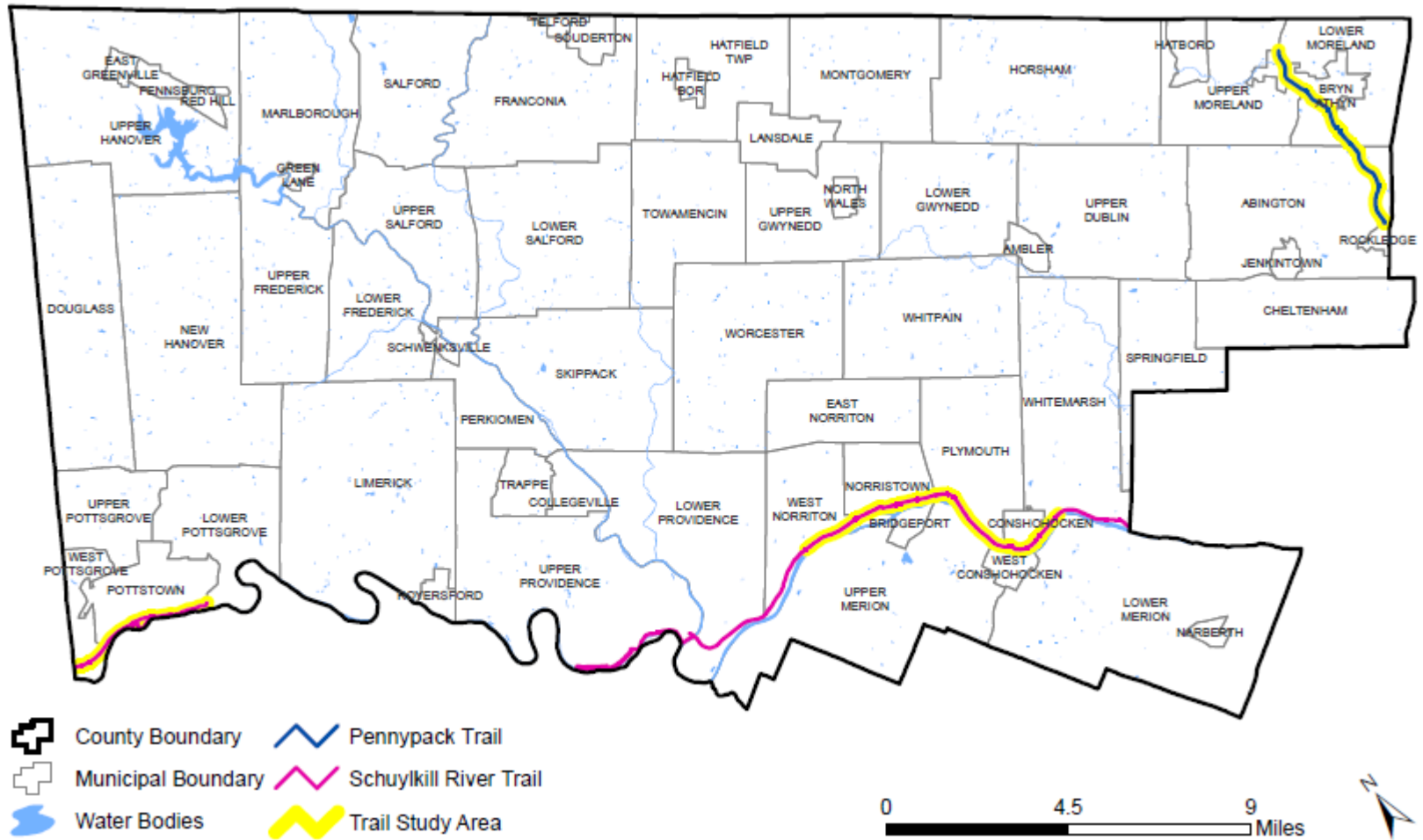
Do you agree with the statement:
"When I am in the parks or on the trails around here, I see other people like me."



Graphic courtesy of the Circuit Trails:

<https://circuittrails.org/wp-content/uploads/Equity-of-Access-to-Trails-Market-Research-summary-Fall-2020.pdf>

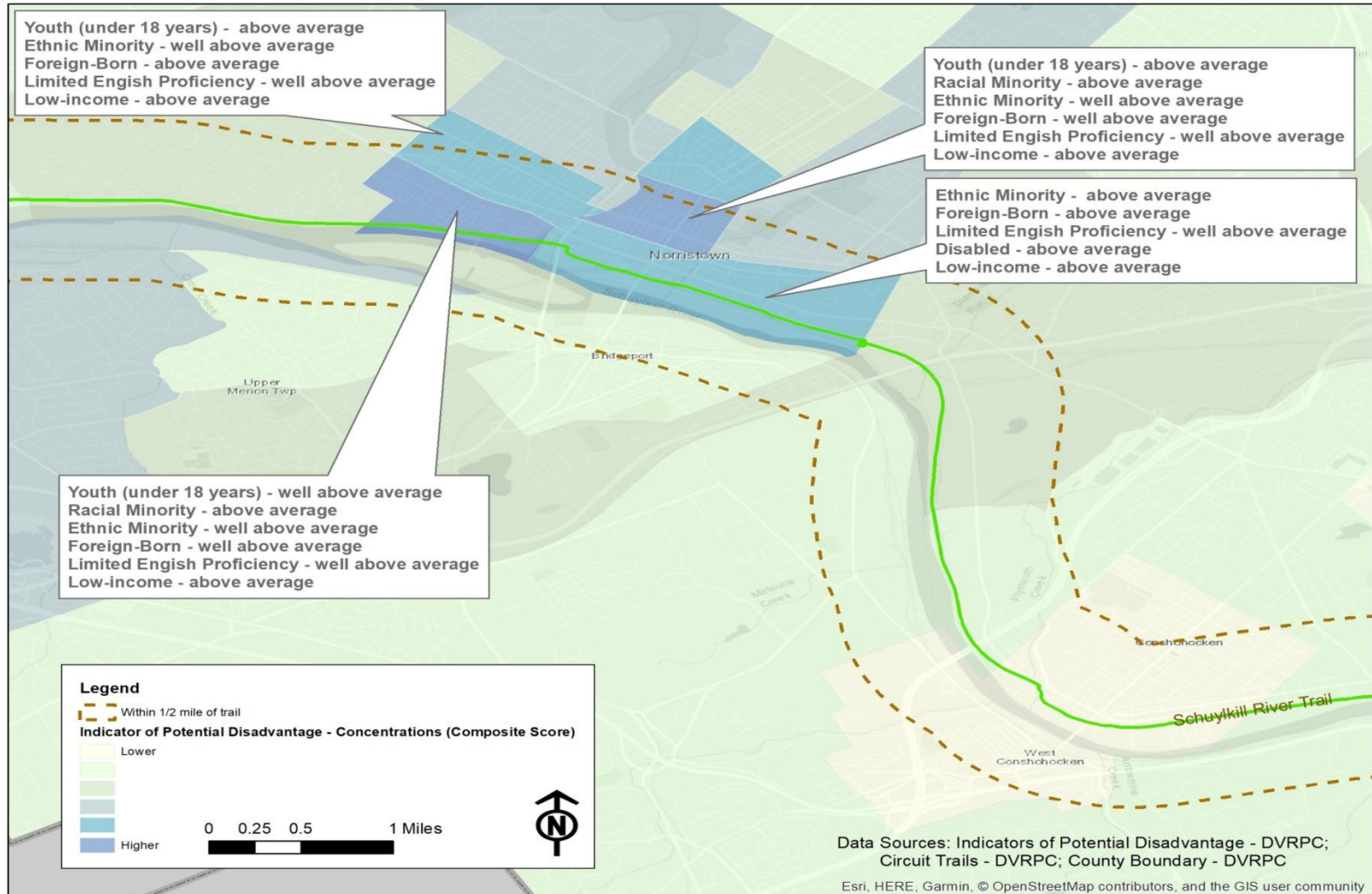
Plan Study Areas



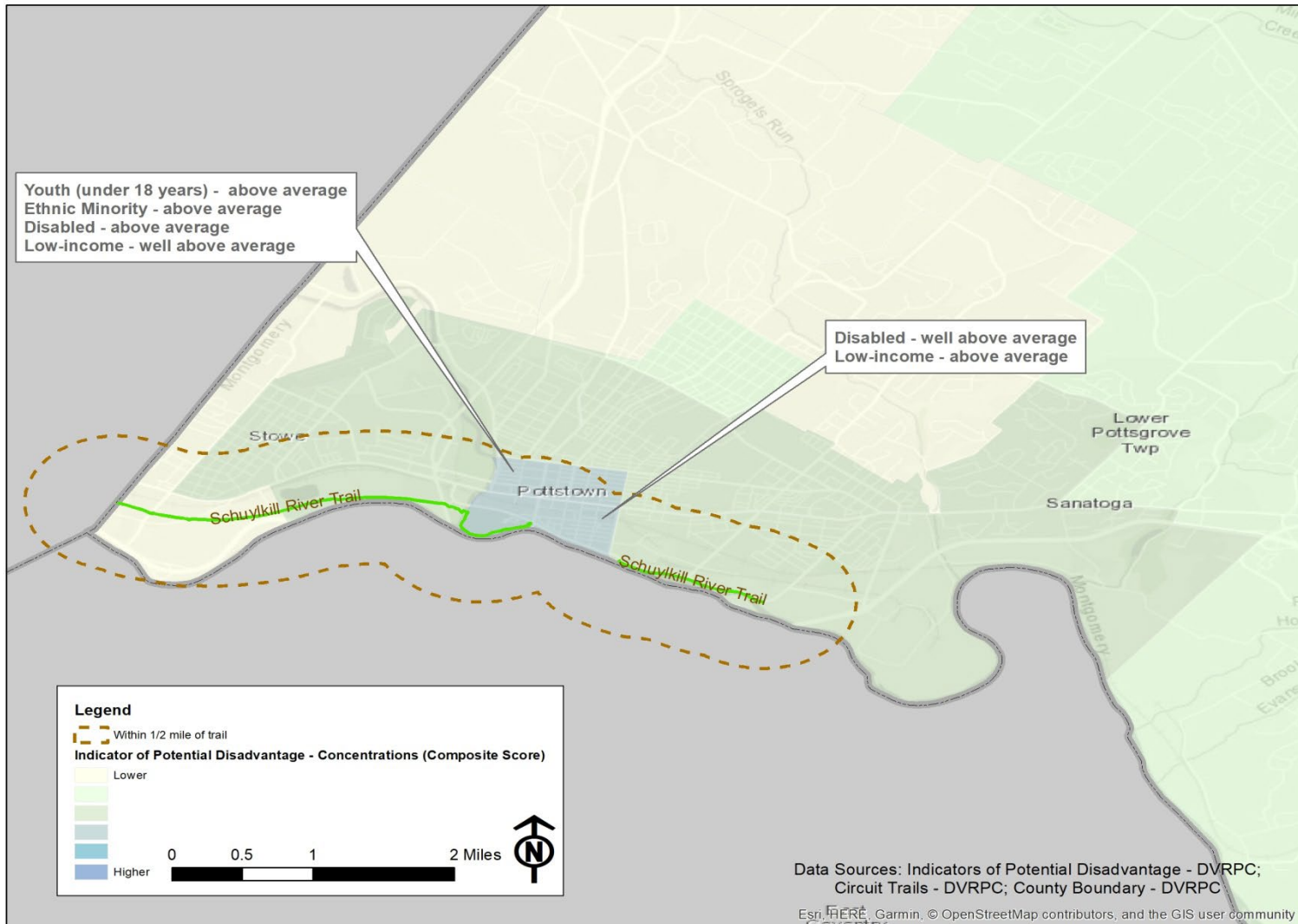
DVRPC Indicators of Potential Disadvantage (IPD)

- Uses U.S. Census American Community Survey 2013-2017 estimates for the following population groups
 - Youth
 - Older Adults
 - Female
 - Racial Minority
 - Ethnic Minority
 - Foreign-Born
 - Limited English Proficiency
 - Disabled
 - Low-Income
- <https://www.dvrpc.org/webmaps/IPD/#map>

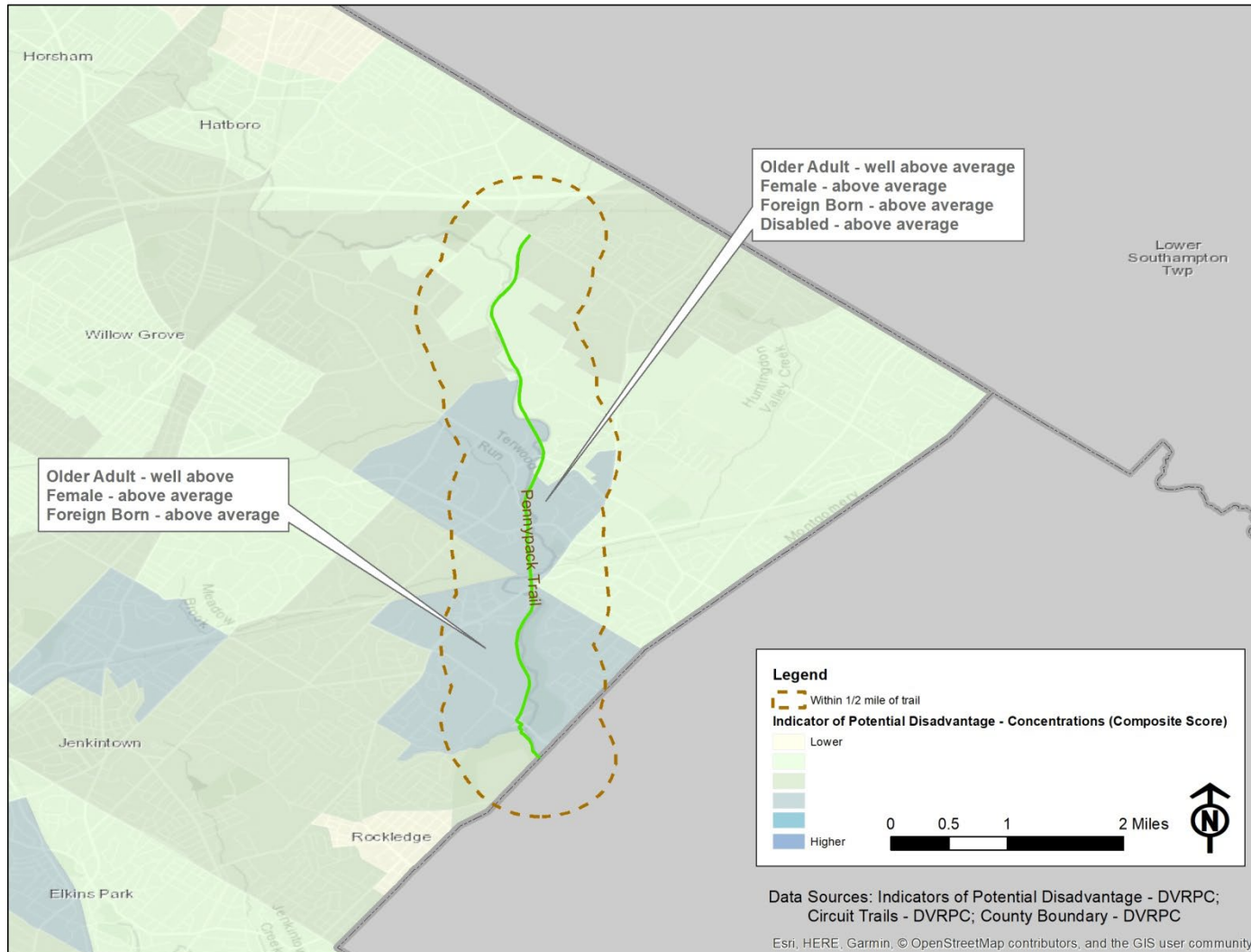
IPD – SRT Norristown



IPD – SRT Pottstown



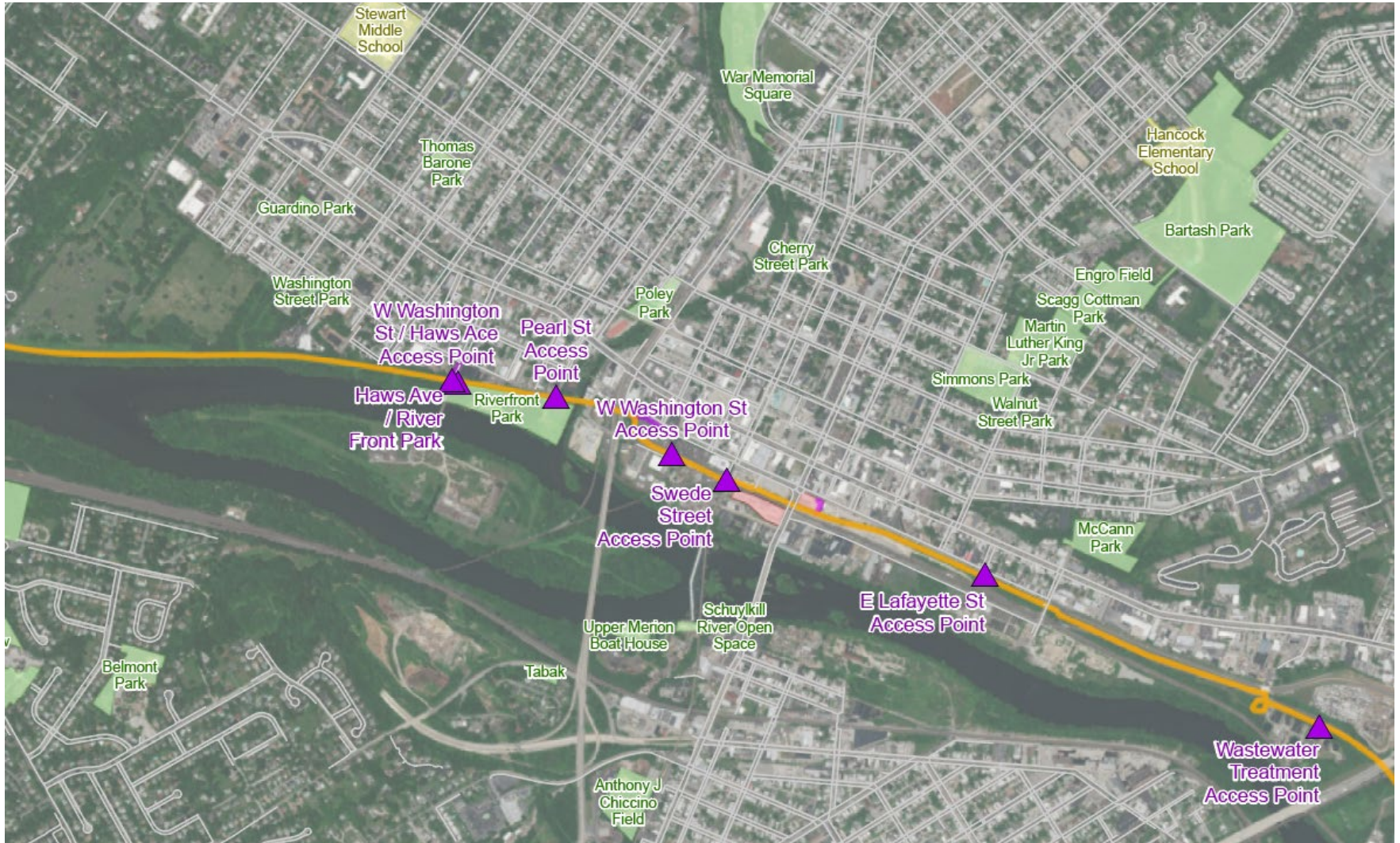
IPD – Pennypack Trail



Review of Existing Conditions



Access Analysis



SRT Norristown Haws Avenue and Riverfront Park



View of the Haws Avenue access point to the Schuylkill River Trail and roadway access under bridge to Riverfront Park.



Wayfinding signage and bench along the Schuylkill River Trail near the Haws Avenue access point.



Social path from Chain Street to Schuylkill River Trail.



View of Riverfront Park driveway with staircase to Schuylkill River Trail in background.

SRT Norristown

Norristown Transit Center & Trail Junction Center



View of the pathway passing through the Norristown Transit Center.



View of the recently landscaped Trail Junction Center with the Schuylkill River Trail to the right and the pathway access point at East Lafayette Street and DeKalb Street to the left.

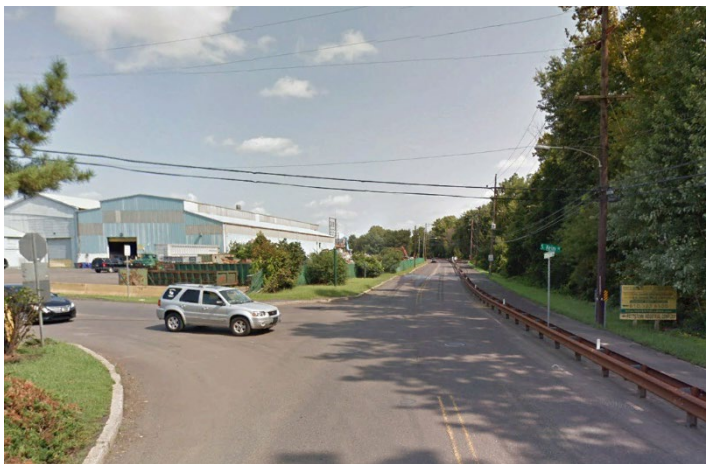
SRT Pottstown



View of the stairs connecting the eastern edge of Riverfront Park with the Hanover Street/College Drive intersection looking east.



View of the College Drive trail crossing looking west. The South Street trail is visible on the right side of the photograph.



View of the guardrail barrier along the eastern trail segment at the intersection of Keim Street and Industrial Highway.

Pennypack Trail



View of the site amenities at the Byberry Road trailhead and parking lot.



View along the Pennypack Trail facing south at Feters Mill Road, with existing signage and food truck seating area to the left.



View of the adjacent roadways where the Pennypack Trail crosses Feters Mill Road with no connecting pedestrian or bicycle facilities.

Outreach

Events

- Interviews
- Bike Derby at Rupert Elementary
- Hancock Elementary Resource Fair
- Norristown National Night Out
- Pottstown Carousel of Flavor
- Day on the Trail at Lorimer Park
- Focus Group Meetings

Public Engagement



Findings



Recommendations

- Include community in decision making
- Increase public/private partnerships
- Improve marketing of trail
 - Print and digital
 - Provide English and Spanish versions
- Educate people on how to use the trail
 - Partner with schools/youth organizations
 - Lead group walks/rides

Recommendations

- Improve Signage (awareness) and connectivity
- Gateway/Trailhead improvements
- Corridor Improvements
 - Benches/places to gather
- Public Art
- Increase programming and improve accessibility of existing programming
 - Walking/biking tours
 - Free movies/concerts in park spaces adjacent to trail
 - Involve public in decision-making/projects



SRT Norristown Conceptual Designs

Haws Avenue Access

- Signage & Connectivity
- Gateway improvements
- Public art



SRT Norristown Conceptual Designs

Chain Street Access



- Signage & Connectivity
- Gateway improvements

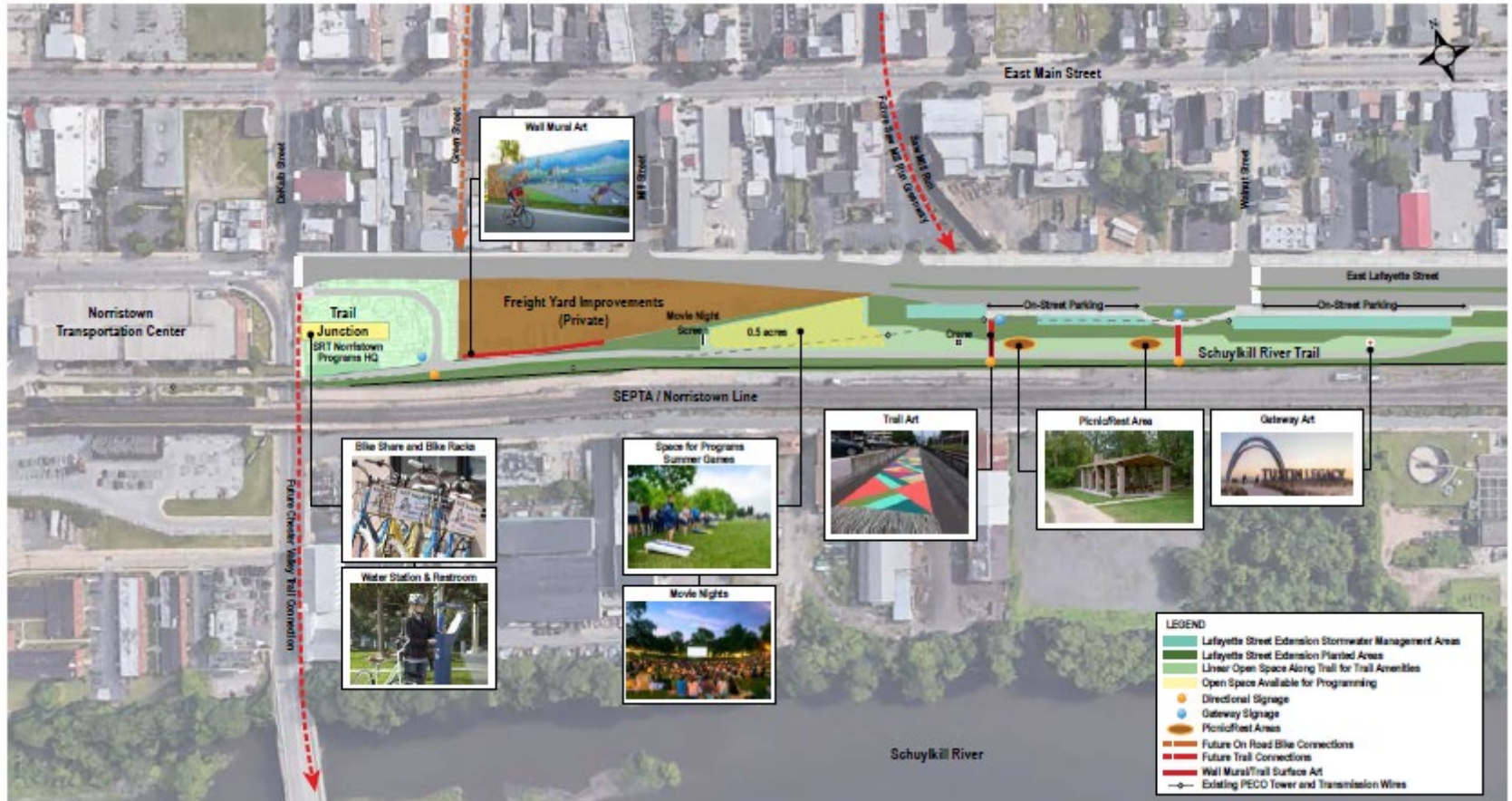


SRT Norristown Conceptual Designs

Norristown Transportation Center



SRT Norristown Conceptual Designs Lafayette Street Corridor



What Can You Do Right Now?

- Invite everyone to have some fun
- Extend an overt welcome
- Host organized group activities
- Create spaces where people feel safe
- Placemaking
- Develop places to gather and relax – not everyone is on the trails for a high energy bike ride
- Prioritize trail maintenance and amenities
- Install wayfinding signage
- Build something that feels like it's outside of the “normal” environment
- Show people enjoying the trail!
- Leverage social media in addition to traditional outreach methods



Questions?

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