



Ironton Rail-Trail Oversight Commission

2021 Accomplishments

A Report by Carlton Gillikin - President

- 2021 was an active and successful year for the IRT. Due to COVID early meetings were conducted via Zoom then by following health guidelines moved to attended meetings.
- Casey Coleman was appointed Commissioner to represent Whitehall Township and as a replacement for Robert Abbott who retired after 20+ years of service to the IRT. In early 2021 Ron Bealer stepped down as President due to health issues.
- A Plymouth 20 ton Locomotive, originally used at the Dragon Cement Co. in Northampton, was donated and delivered from a Texas Co. for display at the Portland St. Trailhead. Shipping was made possible by North Whitehall Township and the installation, manpower and trucks, donated by Ironton Body Works. Many dead trees were removed along the trail in this area by NWT. Various fund raisers are planned for 2022 to refurbish and paint the locomotive to its original colors.
- Members of the commission participated and handed out candy at the Coplay and the Whitehall Halloween Parades.
- The children's model Train Engine, Tender, and Caboose at the Chestnut St. Trailhead was refurbished and painted by James Karnhausl of Troop 50 for his Eagle Scout Project.
- A number of grants were prepared and submitted, none of which were obtained or awarded at this time: Paving the Whitehall Trailhead parking lot, Shipping and Refurbishing the Plymouth Locomotive, Installing Safety Lights at Mauch Chunk Road, and Safety signage and street painting at trail road crossings.
- The yellow Pump Car model display was removed from the Portland St. Trailhead, refurbished, and painted. North Whitehall Township will install it on a new set of tracks for display at the Levans Rd. Trailhead.
- 70 participants and 38 businesses/individuals enjoyed the IRT 20th Annual 10K Run/Walk, our main fundraiser. Other events held on the IRT include: Mental Health 5K, Pediatric Cancer Foundation 8K/5K, Fight Against Colon Cancer 5K, The NHS DECA Frosty 5K, The Rotary Club Jingle Bell 5K and a number of conducted Historical Walks.

- 12 Kiosks have been refurbished with new HD Lexan panels and 21 Kiosks received new Historical posters and pictures. Most all of the trail's wooden bridges and safety fencing were cleaned and stained by Eagle Scout Connor Zappe Trp 59, and also by Volunteer Organizations and individuals.
- A Kindness Garden of Painted Rocks was installed at the Spur Junction by a group called Lehigh Valley Rocks. They agreed to maintain it. Similar Kindness Gardens may be seen on other trails.
- An IRT Lost and Found box was fabricated and installed at the Chestnut St. Trailhead.
- The IRT Trail Map/Handout Brochure was updated, copies printed, and installed in the Kiosks. Crown Bicycles sponsored the brochures.
- A Train RR Wheel Bench was fabricated and installed on a concrete pad at the Levans Rd. Trailhead.
- 3 Memorial Trees were planted to honor of individuals Krapf, Lowers, and Kline, A memorial tree is being planned for deceased IRT Member Duane Noll.
- The Steam Pump House in the Parkway was boarded up for safety and an engineering quote was obtained to repair the collapsing building. This may be a future project and is included in the 5 year plan.
- The RR Water Tower structure in NWT was power washed to remove graffiti and a newly designed wall kiosk with Historical Pictures was installed on it.
- IRT Work Days were frequently held more than once a month plus times individuals did maintenance work all adding up to many volunteer man hours. Work included mowing, trimming, cutting brush and trees (a new chain saw was purchased), removing graffiti, replacing broken fence rails and posts, and staining. A new convex safety mirror was installed at the boardwalk blind corner, new Christmas wreaths were installed on the caboose, wooden router signs were made and installed at the RR building foundations uncovered this year of trees and overgrown vegetation by NWT. The signs designate the Water Tower, Conductors Office, the Blacksmith Shop, and the Section Building. The 2 large Main Trailhead signs at the Chestnut St. entrance were taken down, repaired, painted and their posts refurbished.

- RR items such as an iron rail section, RR spikes, and a large IRT display map were provided to the Whitehall Grist Mill Museum.
- 425 feet of Safety Road Guard Rails was installed along Quarry Street next to the trail in North Whitehall.
- Trail usage on the 9.2 mile IRT was busy for 2021. Individuals and bike usage peaked in 2020 at 302,084. The Trail Count for Year 2021 was 237,910 (easily add 20% for walkers/bikers not counted).
- Replacement batteries were installed in the 2 Eco-Trail Counters.