



The V&E Greenline  
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## Timeline for the V&E Greenline

1850 to 1880

- Louisville city subscriptions and Tennessee state aid financed the Louisville and Nashville (L&N RR).
- Memphis & Charleston (Memphis and Ohio) RR track was completed into Memphis.
- The former rail line was absorbed by the L&N RR.
- The Memphis and Charleston Railroad folded and the L&N took ownership during this period.
- Dale Springs, near Springdale St, was a stop on the L&N Railroad. It was perceived to be located a long way from the city and was used for agricultural produce. Dale Springs was a center of recreation, had an artesian well, baseball diamond, dance pavilion, night club, and gambling spot.

1972 to 1987

- The L&N Railroad became one of the Family Lines created by the Seaboard Coast Line and it in turn became CSX.
- The L&N railroad abandoned the route from Wolf River to Front Street, including Vollintine Evergreen and the tracks and trestles were removed within two years.
- Rhodes student Julie Fitzgerald did a survey of residents adjacent to the railroad and they felt the railroad should be used for a greenbelt/biking trail.
- Mayor Richard Hackett informed a VECA meeting that the City was not going to purchase the railroad land from VECA to downtown.
- VECA thanked the City Sanitation Department for help in maintaining the railroad and expressed concern about the lack of maintenance by the railroad.
- Steve Gadbois expressed an interest in forming a committee to discuss a bike trail on the abandoned railroad.

1994 and 1995

- Charlotte Swailes started mowing the abandoned railroad near Auburndale Street.
- The Pew Charitable Trusts grant of \$975,000 to VECA had multiple projects, including the development of gardens and a path on the abandoned railroad.
- The Greenways Task Force, the predecessors of the V&E Greenline, had a Charrette to assess the abandoned railroad property and to plan future action.
- Mary Wilder and Mike Kirby started the flower gardens on the Greenline at Idlewild in gravel and eventually added soil, compost and timbers to the gardens.

- Pete and Charlotte Swailes involved residents in an Easter Egg Hunt for their grandchildren.
- The mission statement and goals for the railroad greenbelt appeared in the VE News. The mission was to make the greenbelt a crown jewel for the neighborhood.

1996

- Renate Rosenthal became chair for the Greenways Committee of VECA, the predecessor of the V&E Greenline Committee.
- Attorney Bob Schneider was hired by VECA on behalf of the V&E Greenline Committee to deal with real estate issues.
- The TN Secretary of State chartered the corporation which would own the land and it was called The Friends of the Vollintine Evergreen Greenway. Jennifer Jensen signed as Incorporator and President of VECA and Charlotte Swailes signed as the first President of The Friends. The corporation was later renamed the V&E Greenline Community Corporation.
- Mike Kirby and Pete Swailes started mowing the Greenline with a riding lawn mower.
- The V&E Greenline was founded through a purchase of the land from the railroad on November 11, 1996. A ceremony to celebrate the purchase was held earlier on the Greenline at Auburndale. Charlotte Swailes broke a Champaign bottle to christen the V&E Greenline.
- Marines helped clean the Springs section of the Greenline as part of the United Way Day of Caring.
- Tom Pellet detailed the type of trees and shrubs growing on the Greenline.
- Rhodes students working with landscaper Chris Pettit did a large amount of landscaping on the Cut section and 65 people turn out to work on the project.

1997

- "V&E Greenline" was selected as the name of the new trail.
- The railroad bed was featured on the Mid-South Garden TV show with Greg Touliatas. Greg Lieberman represented the committee on the show.
- The V&E Greenline becomes a program of VECA CDC after starting out as a committee in VECA. The Greenline was moved because it functions like a small parks department with expenditures and equipment and it needed the management and accounting available through VECA CDC.
- Due to the efforts of Mary Wilder, a state grant was provided to create a master plan that guided development of the V&E Greenline. Ritchie Smith, a prominent landscape architect, provided pro bono services in the development of a master plan. Jeff Summerville, a University of Memphis graduate in parks administration, worked as a VISTA volunteer in the preparation of the master plan
- The Greenline received the Anona Stoner Memorial Award from Memphis Heritage for preservation of the natural environment within an urban context.
- A design for signs and bollards was approved. The signs were designed by Sherry Henson and the bollards were designed and built by Greg Lieberman.
- Pete Swailes, Mike Kirby and Mary Wilder, working with Court Community Service Workers from Pretrial services, installed a watering system on the Gardens section to keep the flowers alive during the hot and dry summer months.
- Garbage cans were placed along the Greenline for the first time, which significantly reduced litter on the Greenline.

- Springfest sponsored by the Greenline Committee and Rhodes a students group called Friends of VECA. Jan Kirby and Margaret Leggett were chairs.
- Blake Rehberg's Eagle Scout project was a low water bridge at West Creek. It was the only way to cross West Creek, until Keeler Bridge was installed in 2003.

1998

- The Greenline Committee was named the best Grassroots organization in the city by the *Memphis Flyer*.
- A fundraising brochure was created and residents were solicited to support the Greenline. This has become the major form of support for the Greenline.
- A state grant was received through the efforts of State Representative Carol Chumney for the purchase of a tractor and other equipment. Mary Wilder was instrumental in the effort and several committee members including Len Cobb and Pete Swailes attended a Town Hall meeting at Dino's Restaurant to make their request to Rep. Chumney. The Greenline Committee named the tractor the "Carol C" in 1999 to honor the efforts of Rep. Chumney.
- The evaluation of the Pew Charitable Trusts grant was done by the Rockefeller Institute of New York and it called the V&E Greenline one of the best examples of volunteer-driven success.
- The facilities manager at MLGW gave the Greenline access to the abandoned pump house at Idlewild to be used for the garden and mowing equipment.

1999

- Santa on the Greenline took place at Good Shepherd church near the Sheridan St Christmas lights (1997) and across from St. John's Orthodox Church as a part of the VECA Historical Committee's Christmas home tour (1999). Tom Snyder and Dick Mochow served as Santas.
- VECA received an award as Conservation Organization of the Year from the TN Conservation League for the efforts of the V&E Greenline, Cypress Creek Committee, Buckman Industries, and Rhodes College.
- A five K walk and run included the V&E Greenline and the Cypress Creek bike trail.
- Metal fundraising signs were purchased for the March contribution campaign.
- Mike Kirby made public presentations to the MLGW program for neighborhood leaders and the West Tennessee Planners Conference in conjunction with Scenic America about the V&E Greenline. Carol Ekstrom spoke to the annual meeting of the Geophysical Society in San Francisco on the use of the Greenline and Cypress Creek as a field laboratory for the local junior high schools.
- An article in The Commercial Appeal titled "VECA Prepares Bridge over Lick Creek" discussed the funding and design of the proposed bridge; it was a way that both neighbors and Keeler Ironworks found out about the bridge proposal.
- A study by the Greenline estimated 2,000 hours of volunteer time donated during 1999 worth over \$20,000 if the volunteers were paid an hourly wage.
- The City of Memphis Public Works Division used heavy equipment to improve the drainage from West Creek behind Woodmont Towers to Stonewall Street.
- Planning started for the Lick Creek Bridge with Bill Rehberg as chair and Sean Fegette of the VECA CDC staff performing architectural services. The *Memphis Flyer* and the Hershey Corporation provided funds for constructing a bridge at Lick Creek.
- The first annual yard sale held on May 15, 1999 at McLean Blvd and the V&E Greenline and it continues to the present. Jan Kirby founded the sale and continues managing it every year.

- Hands on Memphis volunteers worked on their first Greenline project.
- A neighbor resident, Michael McCune, volunteered to perform maintenance on the tractor.
- V&E Greenline volunteers worked on cleanup projects at Evergreen Presbyterian Church and Cypress Creek using the Greenline tractor.

2000

- A Neighborhood Demonstration grant was awarded by City of Memphis for both the tractor storage building on Watkins and the Lick Creek Bridge.
- The Lick Creek Bridge was installed with the construction being done by Keeler Ironworks, the crane work by Barnhart Crane and Rigging, architectural work by Sean Fegette, engineering design by Matt Lowe, and management by Bill Rehberg. A Commercial Appeal article described the installation of the Lick Creek Bridge and Mary Wilder was quoted as saying this was a miracle of volunteerism.
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development honored the Greenline with a Best Practices Award.
- Bill Rehberg received an award from Sierra Club and the Dichtel Award from VECA for his work in the construction of the Lick Creek Bridge.
- Renate Rosenthal and Dick Mochow were chosen by CDC for its board to represent the Greenline.
- Good Shepherd Church provided storage for the Greenline mowing equipment that was used on the Cut and Springs Section near the church.

2001

- Len Cobb was elected President of the V&E Greenline Community Corporation.
- The Lick Creek Bridge was dedicated and Will Keeler, Matt Lowe, Julie Auwarter, and Carol Chumney cut the ribbon and St. John's and Good Shepherd Churches blessed the bridge.
- The White riding mower was inoperable after years of worthy service as the first riding mower to cut the grass and weeds on the Greenline.
- VECA's 5 K run included part of the Greenline.
- Planning started taking place for Keeler Bridge over West Creek.

2002

- Hershey Foods awarded a check to the Greenline in honor of Bill Rehberg for its volunteer recognition program.
- Bill Rehberg joined Park Friends and thereafter was a liaison between that group and the Greenline Committee.
- Patrick Kickham landscaped the lot next to the Greenline at McLean Blvd as his Eagle Scout project.
- A survey of Greenline users was done as a way of increasing volunteerism.
- Construction footings were poured at Keeler Bridge site.
- Resident Joanna Curtis wrote a grant funded by the Conservation Fund and Eastman Kodak for Keeler Bridge.
- Regular Spruce Up the Greenline events began as a part of Hands on Memphis.
- Work on a retaining wall on Springs section started with help from Kappa Sigma Fraternity.

- Planning started for the stationhouse by examining the Springdale option for the facility.

2003

- The Greenline Walk and Talk series included the “History of Lick Creek” and the “Urban Farmer”.
- Standards for the use of the Greenline were enacted by the Greenline Committee. The standards addressed what is acceptable behavior by Greenline users.
- The Kudzu eradication project involved a meeting with adjacent neighbors who were mailed information about the project. Fred Hoffer was instrumental in both developing this successful project and doing the actual spraying.
- The ice cream social was held on the Greenline at Hawthorne St with more than 100 people in attendance.
- Rhodes College received a grant from the Associated Colleges of the South to plant trees on the Greenline. The first of the trees were planted in February under the power lines at Belvedere St and the Greenline.
- A Sierra Club hike on the Greenline included city council member Carol Chumney.
- Hurricane Elvis and its straight line winds decimated sections of the Greenline trees and the adjacent Jackson Ave tree canopy. Memphis City Beautiful, the Greenline, Rhodes, VECA, and the Sierra Club participated in an event designed to encourage tree planting by educating the public and making trees available. The motto was “to tree or not to tree.” The Greenline received 22 large trees from Memphis City Beautiful for planting on and adjacent to the Greenline. Rhodes College Kappa Sigma Fraternities, Rhodes Friends of VECA, and Rhodes College Physical Plant assisted in moving and planting trees.
- The V&E Greenline website (VEGreenline.Org) was operational thanks to the efforts of neighborhood resident Wendi Holden Allan.
- Kappa Sigma Fraternity at Rhodes College adopted the Springs section of the Greenline.
- The Keeler Bridge was trucked to its site by Barnhart Crane and Rigging and lifted onto the footings. Rob and Will Keeler supervised the installation. Rob Keeler said “We did it because it’s a great neighborhood coming up and it’s something we can contribute.”
- *At Home in Memphis Magazine* called the Greenline amenity the green arrow and had some fabulous pictures of the trail.

2004

- Bill Rehberg reported on the Greater Memphis Greenline project that would run from Midtown to Cordova.
- Len Cobb and Craig Jordan won the VECA Dichtel Award for community service and Will and Rob Keeler won the Borys Award for public service.
- The Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation provided a grant for the Stationhouse project. Hershey Foods made a generous donation to the Stationhouse project because of the efforts of Hershey employee Bill Rehberg.
- *Rails-To-Trails Magazine* had an article on the plans of the V&E Greenline to seek designation as an arboretum in the future. The article features a picture of Dick Mochow and volunteers planting trees at Dickinson St and the Greenline.

## 2005

- Rocky Mokhtari donated the use of his equipment and dozer operator Danny Snider donated his time in landscaping the drainage on the Cut section of the Greenline.
- Rails-to-Trails, the most prestigious organization in the field, honored the V&E Greenline as its trail of the month for March.
- Renate Rosenthal was named by *Memphis Woman Magazine* (July 2005) as one of “50 Women Who Make a Difference” for her work as the chair of the V&E Greenline committee.
- Herb and Marsha Greiner donated a bench for the Arbors and Gardens section and volunteers installed it.
- Bill Rehberg agreed to maintain an email list of volunteers and to maintain regular contact with them about events and announcements.
- MLGW agreed to sell two parcels of land at Avalon and the Greenline for use in the stationhouse project. One parcel was used for the Stationhouse, while the second was surplus land that would enhance the neighborhood park feeling of the area. Barbara Swearingen Holt supported and advocated for the land transfer when it came before City Council because of the public commitment of the Greenline Committee.

## 2006

- Neighbors for Trees, a VECA Committee, worked to designate the Greenline as an arboretum. Tree labels were installed on the Greenline between McLean Blvd and Auburndale St.
- McLean Baptist Church donated pea gravel to the V&E Greenline for landscaping the trail.
- Construction of the stationhouse building was completed, except for some ongoing work that was done by volunteers. Residents and users provided substantial funding in the form of contributions, contractors were hired, and much work was done by volunteers. Water and sewer was added at a later time.
- Mowing volunteers were Tom Kirby, Chris Morton, Len Cobb, Chuck Fox, and Craig Jordan and each was responsible for a different section of the Greenline.
- Renate Rosenthal was Chair of the V&E Greenline Committee and Len Cobb was President of the V&E Greenline Community Corporation.
- VECA held its annual summer social event (ice cream social) on the Greenline at Hawthorne.
- Jackson Hutchison worked on bollards as an Eagle Scout project that was placed adjacent to the stationhouse and the Lick Creek Bridge.
- November 11, 2006 was the tenth anniversary of the V&E Greenline. This date was used to dedicate both the Stationhouse and Keeler Bridge and to celebrate the anniversary. Neighbors for Trees held their yearly festival at the same time.