A Quick History of the Swamp Rabbit:

How It Hopped from Rail to Trail

1889: A small group of local businessmen launch a railroad with the vision of connecting Greenville County to the Atlantic ports and Tennessee. The official name is the Carolina, Knoxville and Western Railway, but passengers fondly nickname it the Swamp Rabbit. It is believed the name came from the wetlands along the Reedy River that the line traversed and the bouncy nature of the ride. Two years and 12 miles later, the CK&W goes bankrupt.

1892: A new owner acquires the line, adds three miles and extends service to Marietta.

1896: Ownership hops over to another group of investors.

1899: Another owner acquires the line for scrap and begins removing the rail in Marietta.

1904: Yet another owner acquires the line, changes the name to the Greenville & Knoxville Railway, and reinstalls the tracks in Marietta.

1910: The line is extended to River Falls (near current-day Jones Gap State Park).

1917–1920: The railroad is bought and sold numerous times until the Baker Fentress Company buys it, changes the name to Greenville & Northern Railway Company, and uses the line for hauling timber for 37 years.

1957–1998: There are even more owners and many uses, including weekend passenger service and industrial hauling. Service from Travelers Rest to River Falls is abandoned, and the rails on that section are removed.

1998: Greenville County Council authorizes funding that allows the Greenville County Economic Development Corporation (GCEDC), a County agency, to acquire the rail line.

2005: Carlton Owen, a Greenville resident and Upstate Forever Board Chair, organizes teams of volunteers to remove the thick vegetation that covered up the line, allowing the public to see the enormous potential of a trail.

2006: GCEDC seeks approval from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB) to abandon rail service and establish a trail.

2007: The STB approves the abandonment and names Upstate Forever as the Interim Trail Operator. Later that year, the Greenville County Recreation District (Greenville Rec) agrees to become the full-time operator. Ty Houck is named Director of Greenways, Natural and Historic Resources to oversee development and operations of the trail.

Believing in the positive health benefits of the trail, the Greenville Health System (GHS) announces its partnership with Greenville Rec and the trail is named the “Greenville Health System Swamp Rabbit Trail.”

April 2009: With over 3,000 people coming to the party, the GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail opens with the 1st Annual GHS Swamp Rabbit 5K in Travelers Rest.

2009–Present: Every year the trail hops north and south. Enjoyed by over 500,000 people annually, the trail has transformed Travelers Rest, has substantially boosted the profits of businesses along and near the trail, and generates nearly $7 million in tourism-based revenues for Greenville County each year.