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Connection of Brooke, Heritage trails OK'd

From staff reports

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WHEELING - By this time next year, local trail users should be able to get on the Wheeling Heritage Trail and reach Wellsburg without accessing state Route 2.

Members of the Ohio Valley Trail Partners on Wednesday learned a permit to connect the Wheeling Heritage Trail to the Brooke Pioneer Trail has been obtained. The trail currently ends at the Ohio County/Brooke County line.

Doug Wayt, president of the Ohio Valley Trail Partners, said the new trail section, when built, will extend 3.6 miles from the Short Creek area to Beech Bottom and then to Wellsburg. It will connect with Wellsburg's Yankee Trail, which is the designated trail that runs on the streets of that city's downtown.

Funding for the extension - a \$300,000 matching grant - is in place, Wayt said. The only requirement is that an engineer be on site when the trail accesses a 0.8-mile section behind Severstal-Wheeling's Beech Bottom plant.

"The engineer requirement is to ensure that everything (on Severstal's property) is done to specification," Wayt said, noting an engineer from Weirton already has offered his services.

Wayt also discussed a possible trail extension from Wellsburg to the Panhandle Trail in Weirton. He said a group would be approaching Wellsburg City Council next week to seek assistance.

The first part of that section would run from Wellsburg to Cross Creek Road, near Brooke High School. The next 6 miles would be tough, however, as there is an active rail line in that area, group members said.

Robert "Scat" Scatterday said that while those 6 miles will be challenging, "they are essential" to development of the trail.

"If we can finish that, we will have the longest continuous trail system in the United States at 430 miles," he said, as the trail would then run to Pittsburgh and eventually end in Washington, D.C.

Wayt said the Canaan Valley Institute has agreed to help plan that 6-mile stretch.

Bambi Bevill also gave members an update on a trail proposal for the Highlands.

Bevill said the proposed trail, which has the support of the Ohio County Commission, would begin in the east end of the Target parking lot, go behind Target and then run west behind J.C. Penney and other stores in the Power Center.

The trail would be 3,500 feet in length, with a loop at the end. It would be 10 feet wide and be handicap accessible.

"There are beautiful views there, even at this time of the year," she said. "The west end of the trail also provides for gorgeous sunsets, and the area already is lighted. This is a good start. We eventually want to see the trail go all the way around the Highlands. That would be great for biking."