

Groups unite to build Pittsburgh-Erie trail

By Chuck Biedka
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Planning is under way to establish a hiking trail from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie.

Officials of the Friends of the Riverfront and various trails associations will hold a public meeting Monday to answer questions about linking about 10 trails intended for hikers and bicycle riders.

"It will take many years and many millions of dollars to complete it — but we've started," said Thomas Baxter, executive director of Friends of the Riverfront.

He said the many trail partners involve local and state governments and private groups.

A study is under way to work with 17 municipalities to take the trail from Route 28 north along the east side of the Allegheny River all the way to Schenley, Armstrong County, said Baxter.

Formed in 2006, the Erie-Pittsburgh Trail Alliance holds quarterly meetings. The organization consists of 12 trail groups and state and national advocacy groups.

The alliance is hosting the meeting at 7 p.m. Monday. Answering questions will be officials with the Armstrong Trail; Allegheny County Trails Partnership; and Butler-Freeport Community Trail.

The Freeport Bridge project will be addressed.

"It's a key community connection," Baxter noted about the bridge.

The goal is having people on the trail able to access Freeport to visit restaurants and other businesses — and for people from Freeport to have access to the trail, he said.

The alliance will focus on filling in gaps between other trails to establish a trail that basically would follow the Allegheny River north to Venango County, where various routes can be used to reach Lake Erie.

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