



Public gives views on bike trails

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By KATIE SEMINARA

The city is working to provide alternate routes for transportation, while keeping health in mind.

YOUNGSTOWN — It could be five years before Valley residents see a full-blown network of bike trails, but plans are moving forward.

“We’re still in the really early stages,” said Sarah Lown, development incentive manager for the city.

Plans for a bike trail that would connect YSU with Mill Creek MetroPark were discussed at a recent public meeting. The plans for the path stretching about 1.5 miles have officially been in the works for about four months, she said.

Because official planning is in its infancy, costs for the proposed trails have not been estimated.

The meeting was a way to learn from the public and take their ideas into consideration. Biking and hiking enthusiasts shared that they are not necessarily interested in separate biking and hiking trails or bike lanes, Lown said.

Instead, they would like to see bike routes and fitness trails in the city.

“I think it’s a good idea,” said Frank Krygowksi, safety chairman for the Outspoken Wheelmen.

The Outspoken Wheelmen is a recreational and social bike-riding group with about 300 members.

Other related projects involving bike trails have been planned by people who do not understand the needs of cyclists, and Krygowski went to the meeting to provide input for those who would be using the paths.

The argument was that specific bike routes would be safer than just adding bike lanes to roads.

“Bike lanes have many problems that people don’t realize,” Krygowski said.

Safety is the No. 1 concern; sometimes drivers cannot see bikers, and bike lanes also accumulate trash including gravel and broken glass, he said.

Krygowski noted that it’s a bikers right to be in traffic lanes.

Rather than bike lanes or new bike trails, cyclists encourage the city to mark off bike routes. These

routes would simply be roads that are more pleasant for cyclists to ride on with adequate signs for vehicle drivers and bikers, he said.

“We would do a lot of markings on the pavement,” Lown said.

One other option Krygowski mentioned was to create a bike map, which would show riders smoother roads with less traffic.

“That’s very doable,” said Lown, adding that downtown hiking maps could be created as well.

For those interested in hiking and walking trails, the idea of fitness trails was also introduced at the meeting.

The fitness trails would benefit downtown workers, as well as community residents, Lown said.

It would be nice for people to go out on a nice day during lunch breaks and know they could get in a two-mile walk, she said.

The important aspects of planning will be keeping the public engaged and making sure people will use the bike and fitness trails. Trails that are safe and conveniently located are key, Lown said.

The extended plan for the bike trails in the city would connect with the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Trail, which runs from Ashtabula to East Liverpool, and the Stavich Trail, which runs from Lowellville to New Castle, Pa.