

# Sandcastle nearing bike trail agreement

## Last link in Great Allegheny Passage

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By Jon Schmitz, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Allegheny County and Sandcastle Waterpark are expected to announce an agreement within days that will allow completion of the last missing piece of a biking and hiking trail linking Pittsburgh and Washington, D.C.

"I really expect we'll have a formal announcement in the next couple days," said James Judy, vice president of operations for Palace Entertainment, owner of the park.

"I believe that is probably going to be the case," agreed county spokesman Kevin Evanto.

The deal would cap years of negotiations aimed at finding a way to accommodate the trail on the park's narrow strip of land between a railroad line and the Monongahela River.

The roughly one-mile stretch is the last link in the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage from Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md., where it connects to the C&O Towpath to Washington.

When all is complete, it will be possible to bike about 335 continuous, mostly flat miles from Pittsburgh to the nation's capital without interference from motorized traffic.

The former owners of Sandcastle for years resisted efforts to build the trail through the park, saying there wasn't enough room.

"The next time you visit Sandcastle take a close look at the tight access road and try to visualize a 10-foot-wide trail running between the road and the railroad tracks. I hope you will conclude that not having the available land wide enough for a trail does not make us stubborn," said Peter McAneny, then-president of Kennywood Entertainment, in a 2008 letter to the Post-Gazette.

Mr. McAneny and county officials announced later that year that a deal was close, but the talks got sidetracked when Kennywood Park and Sandcastle were sold.

"We're thrilled to be on the trail," Mr. Judy said in a phone interview from California on Monday. "It's been a very high priority for me to get this done." He said the park owners did not want to be the only missing link.

The site is accessible by a narrow two-lane road and has limited parking, which fills to capacity several times a year, he said. "It's been an extremely tricky piece of property to work with."

The county helped to design a plan that would minimize the impact on parking by re-striping the lots. The trail will run parallel to the access road, Mr. Judy said.



Source: Allegheny Trail Alliance Post-Gazette

The trail developers cleared another major hurdle last week with placement of two bridges over railroad lines in the Mon Valley. Crews hoisted prefabricated bridges over active freight lines in Whitaker and Duquesne along the Monongahela River.

That cleared the way for construction of a 2 1/2-mile section linking Duquesne and The Waterfront retail complex. That piece is expected to be completed in January.

No construction timetable has been announced for the Sandcastle section. An agreement with the water park would keep the county on track to meet county Executive Dan Onorato's goal of completing the entire trail by "11-11-11" -- Nov. 11, 2011.

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