

[Trail to link city with 17 communities on Allegheny River](#)

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Bikers and hikers will be able to trek from Pittsburgh up to the county line in Harrison on a new trail soon to be built along the banks of the Allegheny River, officials announced Friday.

The trail, sections of which are completed, would connect the city and 17 riverfront communities, as well as link Allegheny County to greenways running to Harrisburg and Erie, county Chief Executive Dan Onorato said. The Allegheny Valley Trail would lead to the Great Allegheny Passage, which, once complete, will link Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C.

"Once you're in our county, you're going to be able to trail everywhere on the rivers," Onorato said.

Bicyclists, municipal officials and community groups hailed the effort, which the group Friends of the Riverfront recently touted by seeking proposals to connect the 21-mile Three Rivers Heritage Trail to the Armstrong Trail.

"Once the Great Allegheny Passage is finished, we look forward to connecting Pittsburgh to Harrisburg and Pittsburgh to Erie," said Thomas Baxter, the group's executive director. "We're really hoping to build on that."

"I think it's a wonderful way to link all our communities and get folks to utilize the rivers," said Julie Jakubec, township manager in O'Hara.

Sections of the proposed 32-mile trail that are completed include paths in Millvale and the 2.7-mile Squaw Valley Trail in O'Hara. A study looking into the best way to complete the trail should be done within a year, officials said.

St. Margaret Foundation yesterday contributed \$25,000 to the construction. It pledged the money because it is dedicated to serving the health and wellness of those living and working around UPMC St. Margaret, executive director Matthew Hughes said.

Leaders could not estimate what it will cost to build the full trail.

A trail snaking through the Allegheny Valley will encourage people to wander into local business districts, as well as connect towns to Pittsburgh, said bicyclist Louis Fineberg, 40, of Bloomfield.

"It's a remarkable opportunity. I think it would do a lot to link our communities, which have been separated by roads like Route 28," said Fineberg, a consultant with the advocacy group Bike Pittsburgh. "Any way we can get cyclists out of harm's way ... and onto the rivers would not only be a boon to tourism but a boon for commuting, as well."

The completed trail would bring together the region's resources, such as parks, business districts and entertainment venues, said Sean Brady, assistant executive director of Venture Outdoors.

"Connectivity is one of the greatest challenges for this area," Brady said. "Creating this linear type of connection serves to strengthen each of these individual amenities, which brings a great benefit to everyone along the way."

