

Biking: Erie-Pittsburgh trail crucial -- and one 'sweet ride'  
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By Larry Walsh, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The next Great Allegheny Passage.

That's the goal of the Erie-Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, a consortium of 12 rail-trail groups working with state and national advocacy organizations toward connecting non-motorized trails between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie.

So how are things going?

The alliance will provide an update at a public meeting at 7 p.m. Monday at the Freeport Fire Hall, 400 Market Street, Freeport.

The meeting will include presentations on the alliance, the Armstrong Trail, the Allegheny County Trails Partnership, the Butler-Freeport Community Trail and the Freeport Bridge project. Alliance board members met in Millvale in April for a Community Trails Feasibility Study presentation that focused on the southern end of the Erie-Pittsburgh Trail. They also got their first look at the Route 28 project just south of Millvale.

"This is the crucial link for getting the trail routed out of the city," said Tom Baxter, executive director of the Friends of the Riverfront, the rail-trail group developing the Three Rivers Heritage Trail in and around Pittsburgh.

"We are thrilled that PennDOT and our funding partners have been able to support our vision of a non-motorized route from Pittsburgh to Erie."

The alliance receives technical assistance from the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

If you'd like to get involved in the development of the Erie-Pittsburgh trail, join one of the local trail groups and/or volunteer for a trail cleanup project. Representatives of local trail groups will be meeting Monday.

Ron Steffey, director of the Allegheny Valley Land Trust, said the next big challenge is finding a way to make a connection to the Armstrong Trail across the Allegheny River from Freeport. He said 16 miles of the trail have been completed from Schenley to East Brady and another 45 miles are in the planning stages.

Chris Ziegler, president of the Butler-Freeport Community Trail, said work is progressing on the last four miles of that 21-mile trail. Although the segment to Butler may not be finished until spring, it can be ridden on a mountain bike or a hybrid.

"I've ridden up and back 10 times," said Ziegler, who lives less than two miles from the trail. "It's going to be a sweet ride all the way down to Freeport when the entire trail is finished."

She's right. Start in Freeport, pedal up about 14 miles to the Serene Valley golf course, have lunch and then glide all the way back to your car. Delightful.

For more information on the Butler-Freeport Community Trail, go to [www.butlerfreeporttrail.org](http://www.butlerfreeporttrail.org) or call 724-968-6852.

## Sustainability summit

The Trail Town Program will launch the Great Allegheny Passage Sustainable Business Network with a half-day summit on business opportunities along the trail from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Turkeyfoot Valley Historical Society building on the Town Square in Confluence.

Participants will hear from businesses that are "Green on the GAP," be introduced to sustainable business practices that make economic sense and learn how to join the network.

Presentations will be made by Brad Smith of Confluence Cyclery, Eric Martin of Wilderness Voyageurs, a commercial rafting and bicycling company in Ohio, and Mike Dreisbach of the Savage River Lodge near Frostburg, Md. Each has implemented green technology in their respective businesses.

In a recent survey of trail-users, 83 percent said they would be more likely to patronize a business that engages in environmentally friendly practices.

To register, contact the Trail Town Outreach Corps at 724-603-3151 or e-mail [emayes@thesca.org](mailto:emayes@thesca.org). The \$10 cost includes lunch. For more information, go to [www.gaptrailsbn.wordpress.com](http://www.gaptrailsbn.wordpress.com), [www.GAPtrail.org](http://www.GAPtrail.org) and [www.trailtowns.org](http://www.trailtowns.org). The Trail Towns Program is dedicated to revitalizing communities along the passage.

Larry Walsh writes about recreational bicycling for the Post-Gazette.

Read more: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09318/1013451-140.stm#ixzz0f7YqDlad>