

Mon Wharf riverfront trail nearly complete  
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By Jon Schmitz, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette



Darrell Sapp/Post-Gazette

Work continues on the 2,000-foot-long biking and walking trail on the rim of the Mon Wharf. Officials have scheduled a ribbon-cutting for Monday. The \$3 million project is the first of three phases in a plan to connect Point State Park with the Eliza Furnace Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage. The project features a concrete and bluestone walkway.

A 2,017-foot-long biking and walking trail on the rim of the Mon Wharf is nearly complete, and officials have scheduled a ribbon-cutting for Monday.

The \$3 million project, which began in March, is the first of three phases in a plan to connect Point State Park with the Eliza Furnace Trail and the Great Allegheny Passage, which goes all the way to Washington, D.C.

The wharf project features a concrete and bluestone walkway along the river's edge, bordered by an earthen berm of landscaping that will bring trees, shrubs and grasses to the formerly barren wharf. Species will include red maples, shadblow and tradition serviceberry trees, eastern redbuds and clusters of soft rush and little bluestem grasses, all of which are intended to bring native color to the edge of the wharf during the changing seasons.

Workers continued to pour concrete and install pavement and landscaping yesterday. The landscaping has been designed to withstand the river flooding that occurs on the wharf a few times a year and allow the water to drain afterwards. Connections for high-power hoses are included so that debris can be washed away. New lighting also is being added.

"This project has completely changed one of the city's most visible urban edges, and we couldn't be more thrilled for Pittsburghers to experience the Mon Wharf in a completely new way," said Lisa Schroeder, executive director of Riverlife, the project developer.

The two remaining phases are an \$8 million connection to Point State Park that will be cantilevered over the Mon River to avoid Fort Pitt Bridge piers and a \$4 million switchback rising from the wharf surface to the Smithfield Street Bridge.

The park connection is fully funded and expected to be built next year; money is still being raised for the switchback, said Riverlife spokesman Stephan Bontrager.

"We're confident that we'll be finding the funding sources [for the switchback]," he said. About \$1 million has been secured so far.

U.S. Rep. Mike Doyle, D-Forest Hills, has requested a \$2.5 million earmark for the project in the new federal transportation bill, but there is no indication that Congress is prepared to act on the legislation in the near future.

Mr. Doyle, Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato and Mayor Luke Ravenstahl are among those scheduled to speak at the 10 a.m. dedication on Monday.

"The investment in our region's riverfronts is paying off and the new Mon Wharf is a confirmation of that," Mr. Onorato said in a statement yesterday.

Funding for the first phase was provided in part by Riverlife, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PennDOT, the K. Mabis McKenna Foundation, the Heinz Endowments and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

While the wharf parking lot will continue to operate at the site, its 700-space capacity has been reduced by 150 to 200 spaces to accommodate the trail.

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