

[Alliance maps plans for trail from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie](#)

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A bike trail spanning from Pittsburgh to Lake Erie likely will feature Armstrong County along the way, according to a member of an alliance promoting the passageway.

Board members of the newly formed Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance met Thursday morning at the courthouse annex building in Kittanning to discuss the potential route and the status of projects. The alliance consists of 12 organizations who own and/or maintain trails from Pittsburgh to Erie, including the Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association.

The alliance is supported by several agencies, including the Department of Conservation of Natural Resources. Department officials advised the alliance yesterday to construct a project plan and set priorities.

Alliance President Jim Holden's ultimate goal, as written in an unofficial vision statement, is to connect the Erie Bayfront with the confluence of the three rivers, Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio, in Pittsburgh.

"In my mind there isn't any doubt that the trail will pass through Kittanning," Holden said.

The Allegheny Valley Land Trust, which owns the Armstrong trail, has purchased and converted 15 miles of abandoned railway in the county, said Ron Steffey, executive director.

The trail runs through Ford City, Kittanning and Templeton. The trust is looking to acquire funding to begin preliminary work on a trail through East Brady, he said.

About 60 percent of the Erie to Pittsburgh trail is completed, Holden said. The other 40 percent lies between connecting each of the trails and other land-acquisition hurdles.

One stumbling block along the route is a 30-mile gap between Kittanning and Pittsburgh in which there is no trail, Steffey said.

Friends of the Riverfront in Pittsburgh is attempting to get funding for a feasibility study to determine the best way to build a trail from the city to Schenley, in the southern part of Armstrong County. Litigation has been ongoing for an abandoned rail line between Schenley and Rosston that had been converted into a trail and maintained by the trust.

The Erie to Pittsburgh trail is still in the planning stage and subsections of the large project are in various stages of completion and land acquisition, Steffey said. The trail is a process of piecing the smaller sections together, he said.

The project may take awhile to complete, "but we do have a vision," Steffey said.

The portion from Pittsburgh to Armstrong County will be important, Steffey said, for city residents who want to travel north without driving. The trail will offer a look at the heart of small towns that usually are bypassed on highways and travelers who will spend money, he said.

"It's income that can be coming into the area," he said.

The completion of the Erie to Pittsburgh trail would bring more opportunities to connecting trails throughout the passage, Holden said.

"The goal is to get to Pittsburgh (from Erie)" and hook up with the Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C., passage, he said.

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