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Plans Outlined for Montour Trail Improvement

Trail council plans bridges to eliminate dangerous crossing at Valley Brook Road.

By [Earl Buqaile](#) [Email the author](#) April 14, 2011

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Bicycle riders and walkers along the [Montour Trail in Peters Township](#) could find the traveling a little easier next year.

According to plans now taking shape at the Montour Trail Council, the design phase is expected to be finished by the end of the year for a new bridge to span Brush Run Creek at the trail head on Valley Brook Road near the sewage plant.

The proposed bridge will eliminate the need for walkers and bike riders to enter Valley Brook Road, an often dangerous, if not frightening, encounter for trail users.

After briefing council members about the plans last month, Mark Imgrund, president of the Peters Township Friends of the Trail and past president of the Montour Trail Council, explained the project.

"When bicyclists try to pull out and go to the connection of trail it's just a dangerous situation for everyone," he said.

The posted speed limit through the area is 25 miles per hour, but on the day Imgrund and [Peters Patch](#) visited the site, motorists appeared to be traveling faster. Imgrund said that many trail users have expressed their fears about sharing Valley Brook Road with traffic, and many walk their bicycles the approximately 250 yards to the next section of the trail.

"Once they get out and go to the bridge it's a wider shoulder on the road, but right now we hope we can get this fixed before there's an accident," Imgrund said.

The Montour Trail improvement project actually has two phases, according to Imgrund. The first part is to build a bridge over Brush Run Creek and connect with the old Montour Railroad right-of-way near the sanitary authority plant; the second phase will consist of construction of another bridge to span Valley Brook Road and connect to the existing trail. When completed, both phases will take bicycle and pedestrian traffic completely off Valley Brook Road.

The first phase of the project should be under way in 2012, and completed by the end of the year. Imgrund said it will involve cutting back the hillside some 15-20 feet near the spot where the former Montour bridge was located. They will need to create a slope easement to make the connection less than a 5-percent grade from the existing trail to the former railroad right-of-way.

The trail council hopes to have the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources approve its plans by the end of the summer, and a final design approved by the end of the year. The trail council has a \$95,000 DCNR grant to complete the design process.

Imgrund said the actual construction of the project would begin sometime next year. The council projects cost of the new bridge would be approximately \$400,000.

"We have much of the funding in hand, but (we) would also plan to apply for a local share account grant," he said.

Imgrund said the new bridge would be pre-fabricated, and would be swung into place on the new abutments and footers that will be built. Once the new bridge is in place, volunteers will turn the old railroad right-of-way into a trail, and complete a ramp to Valley Brook Road.

"The schedule for completion in 2012 is contingent upon us getting all the necessary approvals and funding in place, but it's very doable," Imgrund said.

The second phase of the project will carry the trail over Valley Brook Road at the site of another former railroad bridge. Imgrund said cost of that project is estimated at \$2 million since the bridge will have to be approved by PennDOT, and most likely will require special construction to meet state standards. It will link the newest section of the trail to the existing section, completely eliminating the need for walkers and bicyclists to share the road with traffic.

"The bridge is part of our long-term plan," Imgrund said. "Right now, we don't have the funding available, but the trail council has always been able to come up with funding in the past. Hopefully we'll be able to get this project completed as soon as we find the funds."

Imgrund said the trail council is working on completion of bridges over Morganza and Georgetown roads in Cecil Township. Those bridges are expected to be completed this year, along with the lighting of the National Tunnel.

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Burgh's Pizza and Wing Pub in Bridgeville holds an event yearly to help raise money for the Montour Trail. This year the Fun Run Event is Sunday, May 1.

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