



Thursday, May 16, 2013

Stakeholders Announce Completion of Ohio River Trail Plan

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Friends of the Riverfront, the PA Environmental Council and the communities of McKees Rocks Borough, Stowe Township, Coraopolis Borough and Neville Township announced the completion of the Ohio River Trail Plan which provides safe pedestrian and bicycle routes through their communities for residents and visitors.

“It’s appropriate that we are able to announce this accomplishment during National Bike Week and to celebrate these communities recognizing and taking steps to ensure that residents and visitors alike have safe and effective bike routes so that they may, literally, ‘Bike Anyplace,’” said County Executive Fitzgerald. “It was just a year ago that I met with over 60 elected and appointed officials at the Father Ryan Arts Center to kick off this effort by talking about the opportunities that such development can open for our communities. McKees Rocks, Stowe, Coraopolis and Neville have embraced that message and are clearly showing their commitment to a healthy community.”

The Ohio River Trail Plan proposes on-road alignments from McKees Rocks Borough to Stowe Township, through Coraopolis Borough and Neville Township, with an eventual connection to Montour Trail at the Montour Junction and Sports Legacy Project. A local loop bike route is proposed through the Shoppes at Chartiers Crossing once the connection is made between the Three Rivers Heritage Trail and the Montour Trail.

The Rite Aid Corporation is one business that is not waiting for that connection, but is already making it easier for its customers and the community to embrace a healthy lifestyle. Its store at 155 Chartiers Avenue in the Shoppes at Chartiers Crossing has already installed a bike rack, and within a few short days, has already seen a number of residents and visitors utilize it.

“With Rite Aid’s long-term commitment to Pittsburghers’ health and wellness, it was an easy decision to make our Chartiers Crossing store a little bit more bike friendly now,” said Rite Aid District Manager Tracy Rittle. “We are equally excited about the prospect of the extra foot and bicycle traffic that this path could bring to the community.”

The planning process was kicked off in May 2012 during a meeting at the Father Ryan Arts Center which was attended by 60 elected and appointed officials and community group representatives. Stowe Township, Allegheny County, the PA Environmental Council and the Friends of the Riverfront issued a request for proposal for professional services to support the multi-municipal planning with proposals for construction of new trails and additional public access points along the river.

“We are pleased to be an ongoing partner with Allegheny County,” said Thomas Baxter, Executive Director of Friends of the Riverfront. “Riverfront trails and greenway development is an important economic driver and also provides community connections and opportunities for alternative transportation to and from work, school and other destinations.”

Currently, the Three Rivers Heritage Trail ends on the banks of the Ohio River adjacent to Station Square. The opportunities provided by the development of trails in the communities have been wholeheartedly embraced by many community organizations, including the McKees Rocks Community Development Corporation.

“McKees Rocks Borough has been pursuing a vision of a safe, diverse and thriving community that takes advantage of our location to attract and retain residents and businesses,” said Taris A. Vrcek, Executive Director of the organization. “Trails and greenways bring job growth in construction and maintenance, as well as tourism-related opportunities for development. They also increase the quality of life in a community which, consequently, can attract new business. That is our vision, and this plan will allow us to move ever closer to that goal.”

Beginning in late summer, the partners will begin assisting the townships and boroughs in the implementation of the plans, which include raising funds for implementation.

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