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Ohio River Trail Council plans 41-mile recreational route

By **Sandra Fischione Donovan**

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Ohio River Trail Council members envision a 41-mile recreational route through Allegheny and Beaver counties that could feature boat houses on former industrial sites and even a town green in Coraopolis.

The council, a consortium of residents, municipal officials and Beaver County commissioners announced plans on Thursday to visitors in an open house in the Community College of Beaver County.

The bike trail would travel along the river through 26 communities, connecting the Montour Trail to Beaver County's border with Ohio. It would link with other trails including the Great Allegheny Passage and the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway.

A master plan gives specifics for building the trail, the first section of which would extend from the Coraopolis-Neville Island Bridge to a point under the Sewickley Bridge in Moon. The plan calls for redeveloping "brownfields" — environmentally tainted land — in Coraopolis, Moon, Monaca, Aliquippa and Midland that sit along the proposed trail. Reuses for the properties include boathouses and multifamily housing between the Coraopolis business district and the Robert Morris University Island Sports Center on Neville Island.

The "town green" at the intersection of Mill Street and Fourth Avenue in Coraopolis would be used as a town center.

Two trail council projects are part of an application for a federal transportation grant that also involves Lawrence County. If approved, \$551,000 in grant money would go toward building the first section of the trail. Moon officials plan a riverfront park near the Sewickley Bridge.

Trail council CEO Vincent Troia, a Monaca optometrist who lives in Moon, said he hopes the first phase can be built in 2016.

Troia said the trail council has \$400,000 in state and federal money to put toward design engineering for the first part of the trail, which would cost \$951,000.

Trail officials will try to use utility rights-of-way when possible, he said, or negotiate with property owners to accommodate a trail section. He said he's negotiating with two landowners in Ohioville, Beaver County, for parcels that would allow connections to the Great Ohio greenway.

Justin Rogers, planning manager for Mahoning County Mill Creek Parks in Ohio, said Great Ohio has completed 75 of its planned 110 miles of trail. Planning "started over 20 years ago," Rogers said.

"It's a 20-year vision," said Monaca Manager Mario Leone. "I'm hoping in three years, the Monaca portion is done."

Sandra Fischione Donovan is a freelance writer.

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About Sandra Fischione Donovan

Sandra Fischione Donovan 412-320-7920
Freelance Reporter

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