

Ohio River trail council readies for next phase

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February 8, 2015 SEWICKLEY, PA — The Ohio River Trail Council is moving forward with plans to establish a 41-mile route that will connect 26 Allegheny and Beaver county communities. The group plans to start a phase two project study in the spring that will include the design of a 15-mile bikeway segment that will begin at the Sewickley Bridge, travel through several towns, including Edgeworth, Leetsdale and Ambridge, and end at the Beaver County Jail in Center.

A kickoff planning meeting will take place at the Old Economy Village Visitor Center in Ambridge on Feb. 24. “We are really excited about the possibilities and are working hard to get as many stakeholders at this meeting as possible,” said John Orndorff, a director on the trail council.

Stakeholders include cyclists, residents and elected officials of the impacted communities and representatives of businesses that have locations along the proposed trail corridor, he said. The overall project is to build a greenways lane for hiking and biking from the Montour Trail in Coraopolis to the Ohio state line, he said. The trail will be a connector between the Great Allegheny Passage Trail and the C&O Towpath Trail to Washington.

The trail council has not determined the overall cost of the project, but it has raised about \$700,000 from private contributions, corporate donations, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, federal transportation grants and state Act 13 funding, said Vincent Troia, council president.

The trail project will consist of eight phases that address legs of the trail. Phase one, which will be a few miles of trail connecting the Montour Trail to the Sewickley Bridge, includes an engineering study that is taking place. The group expects to start painting and putting in bike lanes in the summer on the first phase, Orndorff said.

For phase two, Findlay-based Mackin Engineering Co. will conduct a study of the primary routes along state, county and local roads to find the best connections for cyclists.

It will give a cost estimate for the first phase of the work. Once that study is done, the trail council will go to the affected municipalities to get their input.

“I don't care how much money you raise. If the municipalities aren't on board, then it's not going to happen,” Orndorff said.

The phase two study will cost \$15,000, which is made up of donations from individuals, a grant from the Sewickley Valley Community Fund and \$10,000 from the trail council, he said.

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