



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

# MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 25 Issue 6

November-December 2014

## Valley Brook Bridge No. 2 Construction Update

By Mark Imgrund



*From left to right: Mark Imgrund, MTC volunteer; Congressman Tim Murphy, Washington County Commissioners Diana Irey-Vaughan and Harlan Shober; MTC President Dennis Pfeiffer, Peters Township Councilman Robert Lewis, State Senator Matt Smith, Greg Ullisee, Gibson Thomas Engineers; Bill Armstrong, WEC Engineers; Joe Marricco, Marricco Construction; Ned Williams, MTC Government Liaison.*

The ceremonial groundbreaking for the Valley Brook Bridge No.2 project was held trailside on Sunday, October 12, with many trail friends and a dozen or so gold shovel wielding dignitaries in attendance (left). The real groundbreaking took place on Friday, October 31, with few in attendance other than a handful of Marricco Construction employees, and only one "shovel" – an 18 ton Caterpillar 315C excavator. Considerably more dirt was moved.

Work on the bridge abutments will continue this fall and early winter, as weather permits, before the project is buttoned up for the winter. The 4-girder, 170-ft. span bridge will be fabricated over the winter and erected onto the abutments next spring, with anticipated project completion near the end of July 2015.

While construction is taking place, the trail will be CLOSED in the construction zone. The Trail Alert on the MTC website has a link to a map with the on-road detour for trail users to follow while the trail is closed. Please note that this detour is not recommended for anyone other than cyclists experienced with

riding on the road. Trail neighbor Tom Robinson is generously allowing trail users to traverse his property as part of the detour, and for parking for those who wish to use the popular trail section in west Peters Township into Cecil Township until the project is completed.

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Please be aware that this temporary parking access requires volunteers to open and close Tom's privately-gated entrance daily, and consequently may not be accessible for entry very early in the morning or as dusk approaches. Also, if you take advantage of this parking, be extra respectful of our trail neighbor's property, and do not park among the new cars that one of his customers often stores there. Instead, continue until you reach the wire fence.



The contractor installing form work on the west abutment

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:  
[www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)

To Converse, join the Yahoo Group at:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Montour-Trail/info> or

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>



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#### THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

is published bi-monthly January through December. All

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## The Prez says:

I met Mike Grumet near mile "0" as he finished his walk of the entire Montour Trail. The ultimate reason that all of us volunteers devote so much time to building and maintaining the Montour Trail is for the enjoyment of our users. I asked Mike, a relatively new trail user, to share his experiences. I am devoting the "Prez Says" article to share Mike's experiences in his own words and as a thank you to all of you volunteers.

Happy Trails

Dennis Pfeiffer, President

"My wife, Debbie, and I "discovered" the Montour Trail in the summer of 2013. I had just undergone some serious back surgery that left me wearing a clamshell brace



Mike and Debbie Grumet

and with permanent nerve damage and muscle loss in my right leg. The doctors and therapists said that any type of high impact, high intensity exercise was out of the question. They advised that the most effective and simple rehab was to just walk.

Debbie & I have been walkers for years, mostly on a couple of designated routes through our Mt. Lebanon neighborhood. But for this challenge we thought about it more broadly. So I investigated the Montour Trail as I would go past the Hendersonville Trailhead each day on my way to work at Southpointe.

A native of Bethel Park, I was familiar with the Bethel branch along Irishtown Road where I played baseball as a kid. And, admittedly, I was all too familiar with Al's Café at the Trail entrance. We began our walks there generally walking about two miles and returning for an overall

four mile trek. We explored the trail to the Library Trestle in one direction and toward Valley Brook in the other.

The trail itself was perfect for what I needed. The crushed limestone base and levelness of the trail was just right for someone wearing a hot, heavy brace with little strength in one leg. We began to branch out using the Valley Brook, Cecil Park, McDonald and other Trailhead entrances as starting points. By summer's end we had walked over half of the trail.

By 2014 I was feeling much better although still very limited in leg strength. With the experience from the year before being a good one, **I set out on a mission to walk the entire trail during the summer of 2014.**

I got another map and began to plan the walks in a way that would expose us to different and distant sections of the trail on a weekly basis. Some of the more distant sections became almost all day events as the driving time plus the walking time could add up to several hours. On these occasions we would sometimes stop for a late lunch on the way home. With better health the walks were now approaching six miles at a time.

By September I had only two sections remaining: the southernmost section at Clairton and the northernmost section at Coraopolis. I finished those on successive weeks and happily accepted that I had achieved my goal of walking the entire Montour Trail. I calculated approximately ninety miles (90) of Montour Trail walking done.

Walking the Montour Trail presents the opportunity for interesting and unique experiences. While I am sure the Trail is perfect for bike riders, **continues on page 4.**

## Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

### MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Dennis at 412-262-3748 for more information or to get on the agenda.

### Airport Area Friends: (MP 0 to MP 12.6 and the 6.3 mile

**Airport Connector)** The Airport Area Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest Grove Fire Hall, 2044 Ewings Mill Road, Robinson Township, PA 15108. New volunteers are always welcomed. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412-264-6303 for more information. Numerous Saturday "work parties" are held during the season. Please call 412-262-3748 to lend a hand at the work parties.

### Fort Cherry Friends: (MP 12.6 to MP 20.7)

Friends of the Trail meeting: Second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the McDonald Trail Station, 160 S. McDonald Street, McDonald, PA 15057 (adjacent to the Panhandle Trail). Work and cleanup parties will be scheduled as needed. For more information contact Tim Thomassy, 724-926-4617 or Chuck Hughey, 724-926-9436.

### Cecil Friends: (MP 20.7 to MP 28.5)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road; other months (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

### Peters Township Friends: (MP 28.5 to 30.4, Library Jct to near MP 35 and part of the Bethel Branch)

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Community Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@gmail.com

### Bethel Park Friends: (The 2.75 mile Bethel Branch and a short piece of main line trail around MP 35).

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

### South Hills Friends: (MP 35.4 to 46.3)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

### The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

## Volunteer feature: Bryan Seip

The Montour Trail Council has six Friends groups, each of which maintains a geographically defined section of trail. It also has one nongeographic Friends group, the Montour Railroad Historical Society (MRHS).

And it has one highly motivated volunteer who falls in both categories.

Meet Bryan Seip—lifetime railroad fan, MRHS president, and frequent one-man trail maintenance work party in Peters and Cecil Townships.

Bryan's not a loner by choice; he's often seen at Peters Friends work parties too. But his career—which has involved producing TV broadcasts for the Penguins, Pirates, Chicago Black Hawks, and ESPN—often takes him away from home on weekends. So on his free weekdays, he can often be found along the trail in Peters or Cecil with a mower or chainsaw.

Bryan loved watching the Montour Railroad chug past his Peters Township home in the 1970s. But when he moved back to Peters in 1999 after 17 years in Chicago, the trains were long gone.



*Bryan completing installation of the historical marker near the McDonald Viaduct. At left is the stone memorial recalling the late former MTC president Dick Quasey.*

While walking the trail with his dogs, he kept trying to remember what railroad signs, structures, or mine operations used to be there. His curiosity led him to the MRHS's online discussion group.

"Because the group had several people who had worked on the railroad, I sought to get them to tell me their stories," Bryan explained. "The more I heard, the more interested I became."

Sadly, not many physical remnants of the railroad remain. (Trail users can currently get a closer-than-usual look at one former mine site by using the temporary detour through the T. A. Robinson property during construction of the Valleybrook #2 trail bridge, just west of Route 19.)

But Bryan undertook a herculean effort to assemble what he could. That effort included not just collecting information and photos from old-timers, but personally photographing and writing brief summaries on each of the Montour Trail's more than 80 bridges. (The full report is available at <http://www.montourrr.com/Bridges/Bridges.html>.) *Continues on page 7.*



## Library Viaduct Construction Update

### By Tom Prezel

Thornbury Inc. continues to make great progress on the Library Viaduct Rehabilitation. We also continue to have great support for construction inspection by Mackin Engineering, for engineering consultation by WEC Engineering, and contract support from PennDOT District 11-0.

During this period, all of the concrete deck has been poured and has completed the fourteen day cure. The photo to the right shows the Thornbury crew and our Mackin Engineering Inspectors at the conclusion of the final deck pour on October 29, 2014.

Thornbury has drilled the holes for the railing supports in over half of the deck. Railing installation will start as soon as the railings arrive. At the eastern end of the Viaduct, a parapet wall has been poured over the Port Authority Light Rail Line on span 10 and a curb will be poured on span 11.

Required rivet replacement has been completed on all spans. Final painting of the new structural steel and the lower part of each support has been completed.

Required structural steel replacements have been completed. Replacement of the viaduct support bearings on the two abutments has also been completed.

Weather permitting, by the time this newsletter is ready for press, we may already have some of the railings in place. The contract date for completion is April 2015.



*Looking west from the viewing area of the new deck.*

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## Prez Sez continues from page 2

walking allows one to take in the scenic views. We found the trail section between Stewart Road and Snowden along Piney Fork Creek to be possibly the most scenic of the entire Trail.

Of course this was all made possible by the Trail Volunteers who keep the trail extremely well maintained and can be seen on any day of the week doing anything from routine maintenance tasks to performing constructing activities on some of the remaining uncompleted sections. Of particular note I observed the start of bridge construction over Valley Brook Rd. and the large scale renovation of the Library Trestle. These improvements will make for an even better walking experience in 2015. Thank you all for your dedication to the Montour Trail project."

Mike Grumet

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Montour Trail logo gear makes great Christmas gifts! Visit our website ([www.montourtrail.org](http://www.montourtrail.org)) and click on *Trail Store* in the menu. We have a variety of clothing items, hats, water bottles, mugs, bags, and even a teddy bear available through our Café Press online store. Or visit the Tandem Connection to purchase shirts and hats in person.

## Photo Contest Winner



Congratulations to Jeffrey Smith for his winning picture of a barred owl near Mile 28 of the Trail. He didn't have his camera with him, but his cell phone did an excellent job of grabbing the image.

Winter is bearing down upon us and the Montour Trail offers and endless variety of photo opportunities. Show us how you like to spend your time on the trail when it snows or some other winter wonderland scene from your walk, run or ride. Go to <http://www.montourtrail.org/> and click the Enter the Contest link!

## 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour The Montour – Another Successful Tour by Sam Hvitfelt, Ride Director

After the rainy challenge of last year, Tour the Montour riders were rewarded with a spectacular day – sunshine and perfect temperatures prevailed on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 !

All told, this was another wonderfully successful year for the Tour! We hosted more than 650 riders this year, some of whom travelled from as far away as Nevada and Minnesota. The age range of our riders continues to impress – from 4 months old to 78+ years young. Curt Brown retained his title as King of the Mountain this year, while Julie Stahl stepped up to take the Queen of the Mountain this year. Both Curt and Julie can be seen sporting their commemorative red-dot jerseys around town and have an impressive award to display proudly, reminding others of their unsurpassed climbing skills.

As usual, the Lunch at Brothers Grimm at the 2014 Tour did not disappoint – I'd be curious to know how many of our riders actually *gain* weight participating in our event! Our sponsors: Brothers Grimm, The Oakdale Diner, Mediterra Bakehouse, Eat 'n Park and Anthony's Original Wholesale Produce kept everyone's energy levels up with their wide selection of yummy food. Steve Taylor from Brothers Grimm and his staff kept the food coming, hot and ready, right up to the last rider.

In addition to our plethora of fun and interesting gifts drawn by every rider at lunch, we had some amazing Trail fundraiser raffle options this year. Pro Bikes LLC generously donated a 2015 Specialized Sirrus Elite bicycle – Elizabeth Mills was the excited winner of the new bike. Seven Springs Mountain Resort unselfishly provided a Great Allegheny Passage weekend getaway, complete with bike and helmet rentals, transportation to and from the GAP and a packed lunch – Lisa Schatz was over the moon when she realized she'd won. FedEx Ground provided a signed Steeler football and signed Pirate's jersey for us to use to fundraise as well. Cindy Jones scooped up the 50/50 raffle winnings. In total, we raised \$3,300 for the Trail in raffle items – so we'd like to send a BIG THANK YOU to Pro Bikes, Seven Springs, FedEx Ground and everyone who bought tickets. And congratulations to our winners .

If anyone missed out on the Tim Killmeyer Collectors' Edition 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour T-Shirt (a touch of a Superman theme this year), we have a few left which can be purchased from the Trail office, or at our ride again next year. T-shirts are only guaranteed for pre-registered participants, so those in the know are aware there is distinct benefit for registering before the deadline.

While we can never thank all our generous sponsors enough – it won't be for lack of trying . Many thanks for their financial support go out to our wonderful Title Sponsor: Newalta; Premier Sponsor: Thermo Fisher Scientific; Presenting Sponsors: Brothers Grimm, Nova Chemicals, Wojanis Hydraulic Supply, FedEx Ground, Quality Quick Printing, Penna Flame, Millcraft Investments, Advanced Orthopaedics & Rehabilitation, AeroTech Designs and Park West Supply; and our Corporate Sponsors: Lanxess, Chairman of the Boards, Matrix North American Construction, RG Johnson Company, Eaton, REI, Day Apollo, Airport Authority, MarkWest, Trek of Robinson, and WYEP 93.1fm. Additional and much needed patronage came from our Supporting Sponsors: Wilderness Voyageurs, Tandem Connection, Bradley Physical

Therapy, Washington Health System, Southwestern PA Eye Center, The Tomayko Group, Country Meadows Retirement Communities, South Hills Chrysler Dodge, Jon M Lewis, Appalachian Producers Services, ADP LLC, Original Shake and Twist, Holy Trinity Knights of Columbus, AFG Retirement Income Planning, Mueller Appraisal Service LLC, Somma Funeral Home, Roadside Ribs and Community Bank. You'll find the names of all wonderful sponsors proudly emblazoned on our T-shirts – and we appreciate them all .

Our biggest THANK YOU goes to all our fantastic volunteers, who rise to all manner of challenges to ensure that our riders are safe and well cared for, from the early morning hours of parking through lunch to the final clean up at the end of the day – we'd be lost without you .

Congratulations and heartfelt appreciation goes out to our excellent Tour the Montour Planning and Execution team members (Phyllis McChesney, Bud Halpin, Pat Friedsam, Janet Jackson, Cyndi Fink, Teresa Gallagher, Mark Imgrund and Dennis Pfeiffer), our honorary (secret weapon) team members Jim, Karen and Sarah Robbins and our event team leads:

Dave Mueller – Rest Stops  
Debbie Andrus – Food/Grimm  
Tim Killmeyer – King/Queen of the Mountain  
Don Thobaben – SAG/Ride Patrol  
George Coholich – Parking  
Noel Letterio – Gifts/Prizes

Aside from a communications glitch with the bicycle support folks not arriving at Mile 0 this year (apologies!), our 12<sup>th</sup> Tour will go down in history as a magical combination of wonderful weather, volunteers, sponsors and riders . On behalf of the entire team, we'd like to thank all who supported and participated in our 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour the Montour . Please don't forget to mark your calendars for next year's lucky **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Tour The Montour on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 .** We will see you all there .

Until then, keep smiling, riding and enjoying all that The Montour Trail has to offer .

### The King and Queen of the Mountain



The King and Queen of the Mountain display their trophies. Queen Julie Stahl (left) climbed the mountain in 6:35 and the King, once again this year, Curt Brown (right) in 3:41.

Riders tested their mettle against the elevation of Hassam Road, an average 8% grade over the 7/10s of a mile hill.

## MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

**It Wasn't All Coal By Bryan Seip – Montour Railroad Historical Society**

For over a century, the Montour Railroad's main business was hauling coal. Coal from the mines went to the Champion Preparation Plant where it was cleaned, sorted and reloaded for delivery to the final customer. Hopper cars flowed in both directions on the Montour as coal shipments were sent out via connecting railroads and empty cars were brought in to supply the mines for loading.

But the Montour's rail traffic wasn't all coal. Passenger trains traveled on the Montour from its start in 1879 until 1927. Ridership was considered moderate, with most passenger trains made up of only a couple of coaches and a baggage car. Farmers had milk and produce picked up at the local stations and sent to markets in Pittsburgh.

Before truck deliveries became the norm, many local businesses were serviced by the railroad, with deliveries of materials in different types of freight cars. These loads would be delivered to the Montour RR at one of several interchanges with outside railroads. The Montour would then ship the cars to local businesses along its route.



*A Montour crew pulls a string of freight cars down the Hills Transfer track near Montour Mine #4 in 1980. The tank car, gondola and box car might have been destined for three separate businesses along the Montour. Roy Parkinson photo, courtesy Gene P. Schaeffer.*

During the height of coal mining operations in the area, the company stores in the mining communities would receive goods and supplies by rail. Clothing, groceries, furniture and home appliances would be delivered to the company stores at Hendersonville (the current Tandem Connection bike shop), Cowden, Westland, Imperial, Library and others.

The coal mines would also receive rail shipments of equipment, materials and supplies for use in the mines.

Other non-coal freight traffic to regular Montour customers included:

Box cars and center beam flat cars carried lumber and building supplies to businesses like Brookside Lumber in Bethel Park, Cunningham and K & K Lumber in Imperial, Easton Lumber, McMurray Supply and Greenhills in Peters Township, and Keifer Supply and Slater's in Bethel Park.

Box cars of furniture went to Wickes Furniture along Montour Run Road.

Box cars and refrigerated cars went to McKesson Robb Industries and Richlyn Machinery

near Wickes.

The Briggs & Turivas yard was located where several office buildings now stand along Cliff Mine Road, near the Parkway West. Rail cars and equipment were delivered for repair, rebuilding or scrapping, with many different types of cars going into and out of B&T. During the steam era, B&T rebuilt or scrapped many locomotives as well.

The Agway in Imperial received box cars with feed and supplies and also tank cars of propane gas.

Tank cars and box cars of chemicals went to and from the Chemicals & Solvents Co. on the Muse Branch. This operation leased several original mine buildings from National Mine #3 and was located on the hill above Muse.

Box cars of Less-Than-Car-Load (LCL) Freight were unloaded at the Library Freight House on Pleasant Street.

The shops adjacent to Montour #10 Mine in Library would see gondolas and flat cars with mining equipment to be serviced or repaired. Several large shop buildings occupied what is now the Park-n-Ride lot near the Library trolley station.

At several locations, short spurs called team tracks were built where wagons with teams of horses, or in later years, trucks could be backed directly up to a rail car to unload freight. Some examples were at Cliff Mine, Champion, Southview, Hendersonville and in Bethel Park, next to Al's Cafe.

Other businesses along the Montour would receive occasional loads and earth moving equipment was hauled in and out as strip mining progressed in the area.

While the vast majority of traffic on the Montour was coal hoppers, many other types of rail cars could also be seen, keeping local businesses supplied with goods and providing rail fans with an interesting variety of cars to watch.



*Milk cans destined for Pittsburgh are loaded onto a baggage car at Steuben Pike Station ca 1917. Rt. 22 crosses the bridge in the background. Sam Matchett photo, courtesy Lee Matchett.*

*You can contact the Montour Railroad Yahoo group at [http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour\\_rr/](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/) There are currently 339 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer. There is also much information at <http://www.montourrr.com>*



## Welcome New Members

*The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have recently renewed their membership and to remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.*

### New Members

Lindsay Baxter  
Jim Bugielski  
Nathaniel Coblentz  
Mark Collins  
Charles J. Fields Jr.  
Richard Jones  
Nikola Kolev  
Michael Moore  
Francis J. Schmitt, Jr.  
J. Schreiber  
Victoria & David Serafini  
The South Park Historical Society  
The Tapyrik Family

Floyd Thomas  
Laurie Vanselow  
Valerie Winter  
Jack Yakovich

### Benefactors

Tim Baker  
Dick & Annette Bryant  
Greg & Juliann Brzozowski  
Irene & Keith McAllister  
Helge H. Wehmeier

### Leaders

David Kasper

## Volunteer Feature continued from page 3

Bryan may have surpassed MTC mapmaker Bill Metzger as the single individual whose productions are most visible along the trail. He has fabricated and installed most of its 20 historical markers, guided the Eagle Scout project that placed four signs in West Peters (see the previous newsletter issue), and spearheaded a revival of the old Montour Railroad mileposts, which can be seen in Bethel Park and Peters with more to come.



*Bryan and former MTC Employee, Tim Sposato, admire their work at the revived Montour Railroad Milepost 30.*

Bryan acknowledges the MRHS's visibility advantage: "All the other Friends groups have their assigned territory, but we can go anywhere." To grab trail users' attention, he has focused primarily on interpreting readily identifiable sites and structures, such as the remains of the now-replaced bridge over Georgetown Road in Cecil. The old mine store in Hendersonville, now the

Tandem Connection, is among half a dozen sites where Bryan hopes to add a sign next year.

Although Bryan does most of the sign work himself, he gets help from about two dozen local MRHS participants and the online discussion group's 200 members, many of whom can only contribute money instead of their time because they reside far from Pittsburgh—as far away as California and Germany.

Thanks in large part to Bryan's contributions, traveling the Montour Trail is now a rewarding historical as well as recreational experience.

## I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

### I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$35
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### Don't Forget

The Montour Trail Council may be designated as your United Way Contributor Choice as option #3308.



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**Merry Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year  
from the  
Montour Trail Council**

Just in time for Christmas, the trailhead at milepost 0 and the first 1/2 mile should open about December 15!