



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Celebrating 32 Years

Volume 32 Issue 6

November-December 2021

Dinner & Drinks, but No Movie: The 2021 Annual Meeting

by Fran Hensler

The 2021 MTC annual meeting brought together about 70 avid Montour Trail Council members who were hungry for conversation, information, raffle prizes, volunteer awards, and (of course) dinner! Staged in the heart of the airport section, the program included charts, displays and speeches related to the fruits of our work, from additional Trail mileage to inroads in community relations.

President Deb Thompsen gave the State of the Trail update from several perspectives: trail building, community interaction, events and organizational development.

The .8-mile Coraopolis Connector is in its final stages now; Piney Fork projects added .4 miles of new Trail and a bridge. The MTC paving crew renewed over 6 miles of trail with limestone and, in a few areas, asphalt. Scour protection and flood prevention rounded out the list of improvements. Next on the list: the Route 51 crossing...

In terms of community contributions, the MTC food drive collected more than 2 tons of food for Washington and Allegheny counties' food banks. We improved Trail accessibility by upgrading four handicapped parking areas and started a collaboration with Always B Smiling. Boy and Girl Scout projects now have a consistent MTC point of contact, which will reduce redundant plans and increase needed amenities. Our 2021 Trail user survey revealed that top concerns include clear trailhead signage, year-round toilet facilities and adequate parking access — topics that will be prioritized as MTC updates its strategic plan. *Continues on page 5*

2021 Tour the Montour

By Pat Friesdam

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It had been two years since the last live Tour the Montour. Although the 2020 Virtual Tour the Montour was very successful, we were anxious to get back out on the Trail for an actual Tour. Apparently, the TTM Planning Committee was not alone in its desire to have the ride. Over 500 people registered for the return of the Tour - #19 and its great lunch, rest stops, and camaraderie.

Gateway Engineers took over as Title Sponsor and helped in so many ways. The Montour Trail Council thanks them for all of their input. The Council also thanks our Presenting Sponsors. They include Advanced Orthopaedics, & Rehabilitation, Audia, CEC, Chaffin Luhanna, Eaton, ParkWest Supply, Penna Flame, Pedego and UPMC Centers for Rehab Services. We also thank our Corporate Sponsors — Aero/the designs cycle wear, Bonnie Loya (Coldwell Banker), BUDD BAER Subaru, Creative Printing, EQT, MarkWest (Marathon), Pro Bike + Run, Range Resources, Seven Springs Mountain Resort, SKEPTIC distillery, Subaru South Hills, North Hills U-Haul. Our thanks to the Supporting Sponsors F. Grant Minor, AHN, Blue Line Grill, Country Meadows Retirement Community, Davan, John & Lori Putzier, Tandem Connection. To all the returning sponsors — thank you for your continued loyalty. Listed below are the prize winners:

The Pro Bike + Run \$500 gift card was won by Daniel T. Pike

The 7 Springs 2- night stay was won by Chandler Yocla

The Aerotech Cycling Kit was won by Mary Anne Curran

The U-Haul Inno INH2 hitch bike rack was won by Michael Dunn

Thanks to Tim Killmeyer for designing the t shirt this year. Thanks go out to Pepsi, Sam's Clubs (Mt. Nebo and Washington), Shop n Save (Washington) Starbucks (Washington), Cooked Goose, Ernie Delgado. *continues on page 4*

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:
www.montourtrail.org
To converse go to:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43518292159>



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The Prez Sez “I’m a Lumberjack and I’m OK”

At this year’s Annual Meeting, a special award was presented to thank the individuals responsible for clearing fallen trees from the trail. A stormy spring made this an especially rough year for those individuals. Here is the address given at the dinner:

Trees hate the Montour Trail. During every storm, and sometimes for no reason at all, they prostrate themselves in an effort to block human passage.

And yet, despite their arboreal best efforts, time after time, they fail. For as fast as they can throw themselves down like splintery suicide bombers, volunteers arrive to remove the wreckage. Summoned by Facebook, email, and text, they mysteriously appear like Ninja lumberjacks, clearing the path for stranded cyclists and walkers - then vanishing as quickly as they appeared. They are a Montour Lumber Company, working with chainsaws, axes, and all means of sharpened implements.

In gratitude to these stealthy heroes, we would like to take this opportunity to give a special ‘thank you’ to those individuals responsible for keeping the Montour Trail log-free. We hereby award these slices of an actual trail-blocking tree, sliced by Dave Wright, and sanded by Fran and me, and varnished by Dave to honor those who have contributed the most tree-removal effort.

Awards were presented to Eric Kosmach, Dave Oyler, Dave Hajnik, John Kozak, Pete Merther, Mark Modispacher, Lee Liebert, Ron Lesko, Rich Bilski, Dale Risker, Dick McCracken, Bill Zinn, Jesse Forquer, Dave Jackel, Dave Mikula, Julian Wolfe.

If you’re interested in joining a Friends Group to be one of our “lumberjacks”, as well as doing any of the other numerous tasks necessary to keep the Montour Trail in good working order, drop an email to volunteer@montourtrail.org.

-Deb Thompson

THE MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

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All Trail-Letter correspondence should be addressed to:

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Other Trail Contact information:

<https://montourtrail.org/contact-us/>

We are going digital, if paper correspondence is necessary:

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NEWSLETTER EDITORIAL TEAM

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Mark Imgrund

Dennis Pfeiffer



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 the Montour Trail Office 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 Mark Modispacher at 412-266-1544 for more information. Numerous "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 6:30 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 22.0 to MP 28.5)

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday 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 and varying locations during warmer weather at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties on the first Friday and third Saturday of every month at 8:30 a.m. For more information, please call Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132. For monthly meetings contact Wayne Pfrimmer at 724-747-9766 or by email at waynepfrimmer@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 Caucus Room behind the 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 Bill Capp at 412-833-5928 for location and information.

South Hills Friends: (MP 35.4 to 46.6)

Meeting second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room or the Township Library located at the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties on the second Saturday of the month. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler1950@gmail.com, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

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

The Westland Friends: (MP 21.0 to 21.9, and Westland

Branch) Standard meeting schedule is third Thursday of the month at 1:30 PM at MTC Office in Bridgeville. During Pandemic, meetings have been moved outside to Galatit trailhead pavilion. For more information contact Dave Hajnik at 412-498-3854 (text enabled) or dave@theneonweb.com

Note: Some of these meetings are still being held virtually these days due to the pandemic. Please contact the appropriate individual to verify physical or on-line meeting specifics!

Remember When

November-December

30 years ago, 1991: On December 23, MTC acquired title to 21 miles of right of way in Washington County. Allegheny County received tile for 8 miles as well as perpetual easement for an additional 9 miles.

25 years ago, 1996: Track material from the Meadows racetrack is used to surface the trail from Hendersonville eastward towards Chartiers Creek with the help from Cecil Twp Public Works.

20 years ago, 2001 PUC hearings allow ten bridges to remain in place and 8 will need to be removed.

15 years ago, 2006: The Montour-Panhandle Connector is completed in November by volunteers with the installation of asphalt millings and a crushed limestone surface following the rebuilding of a rust-caked bridge over Robinson Run.

10 years ago, 2011: Ground is broken for the "Bridges at Hendersonville" The bridges will allow trail users to cross over Morganza and Georgetown Roads.

5 years ago, 2016: This year, an air lock of sorts will be built at each end using plastic curtain strips that you find in entrances to cold rooms. Trail users can just push these aside and enter the tunnel. This way there is no need for users to close a door behind them.

Patrolling the Montour by Phillip Torrez

Kevin McGoun was recently named co-chair of the Montour Trail Council's Trail Patrol, which monitors the trail as ambassadors and a helpful-hand for trail users needing assistance or information. McGoun joins Jesse Forquer, the patrol's other co-chair who spearheaded and organized the Trail Patrol roughly two decades ago.

"I enjoy helping the trail users and have met a lot of nice people while patrolling the trail in my spare time," said McGoun, who has been a patrol member for the last four years.

Since these volunteers patrol the Montour on bicycles, they are able to cover a sizable area and be on the spot when it's most important.

Patrol members carry bike tools to assist with minor trailside repairs, a tire pump and patch kit, a first-aid kit, and trail maps. They also have mobile phones if medical assistance or law enforcement needs to be contacted.

You'll recognize patrol members because they wear t-shirts identifying themselves.

McGoun said current patrol members include Brad Albert, John Breitigan, James Cray, Robert Dudash, Robert Filby, Jesse Forquer, Mark Imgrund, Dale Main, Tony Prezioso, John Schwartz, Dennis Sims, and Mike Wallach. He noted that this list may be incomplete and asks that patrol members not listed here contact him at (412) 443-5317 so they can be added to the master list.

If you're interested in learning more about the Trail Patrol, please contact Kevin McGoun at the telephone number above..

Tour the Montour continues from page 1

Many thanks to the Forest Grove Sportsmen Club for the great trailside venue. Thanks to TREK Robinson for donating its site for package pickup.

The Tour went off seamlessly because of its many Volunteers. Volunteers worked many hours on Parking, Mile 0, Rest Stops, SAG, Patrol, Traffic Control and Crossings, Lunch, Raffles, Baskets, Venue Prep and Clean up, trail preparation and repair and maintenance, Bag Packing, Registration, and Package Pick up.

Next year's Tour is schedule for Sept 24, 2022. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Merry Christmas

MRHS Installs its 34th Sign Along the Trail by Bryan Seip



Recently the MRHS (Montour Railroad Historical Society) installed a new interpretive sign at the Cliff Mine Trailhead with President Bryan Seip on the drill (left). A double sign—one side showing the history of the Montour Railroad and the other side showing the history of the Montour Trail. It was placed next to the information kiosk - so maybe that will encourage trail users to stop and read information from both displays (below)

The same sign is planned for installation at Hendersonville (Tandem Connection lot) as part of a Girl Scout Gold Award project. Hopefully that one will be finished soon along with another project sign at the Triphammer Trailhead re: Knothole & Bertha Mines.

A third copy of the histories sign is planned for the Summit Park area in South Park when that section is completed, and a high traffic location can be chosen. Perhaps another copy could be installed in the Montour Junction area when that trail section is completed.



and Happy New Year

Annual Dinner and Meeting continues from page 1

Our Tour the Montour biking event set new records: ~520 participants (during a Covid pandemic) and an estimated \$45,000 in donations that will be applied to Trail maintenance!

We improved the MTC organization by reconvening the finance committee, securing a new treasurer, and welcoming a new co-chair to the Trail Patrol. Volunteers have a central point of contact with the new volunteer@MontourTrail.org email address. A trail-counter project identified that we had an estimated 4,000 unique visitors resulting in a total of 150,000 visits

Trail-wide and Friends Group awards were handed out to those who rose above and beyond the call of duty. A new award category, the Lumberjack Company presentation, honored those who felled dozens of damaged trees following the violent storms that hit the region. The award was a slice from a fallen ash tree, polished and personalized.

Keynote speaker Fred Zelt told tales about Five Million Pedal Pushes, his personal journey as cyclist, rails-to-trails advocate, geologist, mentor, charity-ride sponsor and optimist. He summed up his experience as the key to connection, service as part of a network, and a path to well-being. He commended MTC members with this thought: "In your work on the Montour Trail, you have found a way to do useful work that serves others, and to be around other good, service-oriented people. You can view Fred's here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-uEFtpHH7k>.

Holiday Trimming

This striking Montour Trail Lenox ornament would look great on your holiday tree! For a \$55 donation per ornament, one (or several) can be yours. Send an email to MTCspecial@MontourTrail.org with your name, email, quantity, and phone number to reserve it. Package pickup will be scheduled at the MTC office in mid-December.



Airport Friends Overhead Branch Trimming Work Party 10-1-21 by Dennis Pfeiffer

About every five years the Airport Friends schedule work parties to trim the lower overhead branches above the trail and remove dead trees. This is a very time-consuming task and this year it took us six work parties to complete the work. We started on June 24, 2021 near mile 6.4 and ended the work on October 1 2021 at mile 11.4 the Boggs Trail Head.

Thanks to all of the volunteers who lent a hand over the six work parties to complete this important task. A special thanks to Jeff Williams who did 95% of the overhead trimming with a telescopic chain saw while standing in the bed of our dump truck. (See photo of Jeff and our final work party on 10/1/2021.)



Airport Friends Sixth and Final Overhead Branch Trimming Work Party 10/1/2021

(In Truck) – Jeff (On ground) L to R – Dennis, Maryann, Kevin, Alex, Pete



The Montour Trail Volunteer Construction Crew finished up their resurfacing chores on the Panhandle Connector in October. To the left, Dave Jaeckel operates the roller to compact the freshly laid limestone by the Noblestown Road parking area.

MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Montour Railroad Passenger Service**By Bryan Seip – Montour Railroad Historical Society**

The Montour Railroad began operations in June of 1879, hauling coal from Cliff Mine to a barge loading facility in Coraopolis. Four months later, a connection with the newly opened Pittsburgh & Lake Erie Railroad was established, which also provided connecting service from Montour Junction to Pittsburgh. Passenger service was then started on the Montour, serving fifteen stations along its twelve-mile length. A contract to carry U.S. Mail was granted to the Montour and the Railway Express Company established express shipping service to various stations along the Montour route.



The original Montour Junction passenger station at Coraopolis in 1879. The Montour track ran behind the station while the P&LE ran in front. Photo courtesy Coraopolis Historical Society from Dr. Frank Braden Collection.

The original station at Montour Junction was a one room building serving two railroads, with the P&LE track in front and the Montour running behind the station. By 1900 a new, bigger station was built which included passenger waiting rooms and a covered freight platform.

As the Mifflin Extension was opened in 1914, passenger service grew with the addition of new stations bringing the total to 38 stations in 42 miles of track. In railroad terms, a station is a fixed physical point on the railroad. It is not necessarily a building or structure. Many of the passenger “stations” on the Montour may have been simply a small trackside shelter or platform. Most of them are listed on the timetable as Flag Stops. The train would stop at those stations only if someone was there to be picked up or dropped off by the train. A red flag might be displayed to tell the conductor and engineer a stop was to be made, or passengers would simply wave down the train. Scheduled stops would be made at designated stations or depots listed on the timetable. These might have a railroad agent or Ticketmaster and/or Railway Express office where stops would be mandatory.

In 1915, Montour passenger trains ran between Montour Junction and Longview in Bethel Park. The Montour also operated passenger trains between Groveton and Moon Run on its Pittsburgh & Moon Run subsidiary.

Montour passengers could make connections with passenger trains on the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway Panhandle Division at McDonald and Primrose, and with the PCC & St. L’s Chartiers Branch to Canonsburg and Washington at Hills Station (Lawrence). Connections also were made with the Wabash & Pittsburgh Terminal Railroad at Southview; the Pittsburgh Railways Washington interurban car line in Peters Township (Valley Brook and Old Washington Roads); and the Pittsburgh & Charleroi interurban streetcar line in Bethel Park. There was also a connection with the West Side Belt Railroad at Longview Junction in Bethel Park.

Passenger service was provided by three trains in each direction on weekdays and two on Sundays. The Moon Run Division operated three trains on weekdays only. Passengers carried by the Montour in 1916 averaged around 9,000 per month. The fare from Montour Junction all the way to Longview was \$1.60.

The Montour also received revenue from shipments of milk and produce carried from local farmers along the route to the Montour Junction station where it was transloaded to P&LE Pittsburgh bound trains. The farmers were charged 7.5 cents per milk can. In 1914, 18 percent of passenger service revenues came from milk shipments. In April, 1915, 9,775 cans of milk were shipped, an average of 325 per day. While passenger service was a profitable piece of the Montour Railroad, the main business was hauling coal and that remained the focus of the railroad.

The 1920’s, cars became more popular, roads were being improved, and trucks started hauling freight, milk and produce directly to Pittsburgh markets. Passenger revenues were declining, and aging locomotives and equipment were nearing the end of their service life and needed replacement. Thus, in 1927 the decision was made to end passenger service on the Montour.

One last passenger train ran on a portion of the Montour in 1981, when the Allegheny County Industrial Committee sponsored a passenger excursion to demonstrate the potential of commuter service in the Pittsburgh area. The Montour segment was envisioned as a future line to the Pittsburgh airport, but those plans never came to fruition.

You can contact the Montour Railroad Historical Society through Facebook by searching for the Montour Railroad Historical Society. There are currently 425 members from across the country. 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>



Milk cans are loaded onto a Montour train at the Steubenville station (Trail Mile 12) circa 1915. The bridge in the background is Rt. 22. Sam Matchet photo from the Lee Matchet collection.

I want to support the Montour Trail Council!



Become a member now!

Go to MontourTrail.org/help-us/join
or scan the Q-R code with a smartphone



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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. Not all new members have been entered as of print deadline and will be listed in the next issue of the newsletter.

New Members

Joseph Barton
Tom & Kathy Bello
David Bordo
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Claire Dougherty
Bruce Drummond
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Patricia Ross
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Todd Sidwell
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Jeanne & Parker May
Christopher Nagy
Charles Staub
Mchael Weiner
John & Maureen Yadlosky

Leaders

Richard & Lynn Lipovich
David Rhing

Donation received in memory of Arnold Greenwald

from Eric & Lynn Young

Donation received in memory of Stanley Olenn from

Bernadette & Albert Pickens
CIO First Net
Sue Hughes

Dedication and story this spring. The location is mile 25.6, the Kurnick Plot.

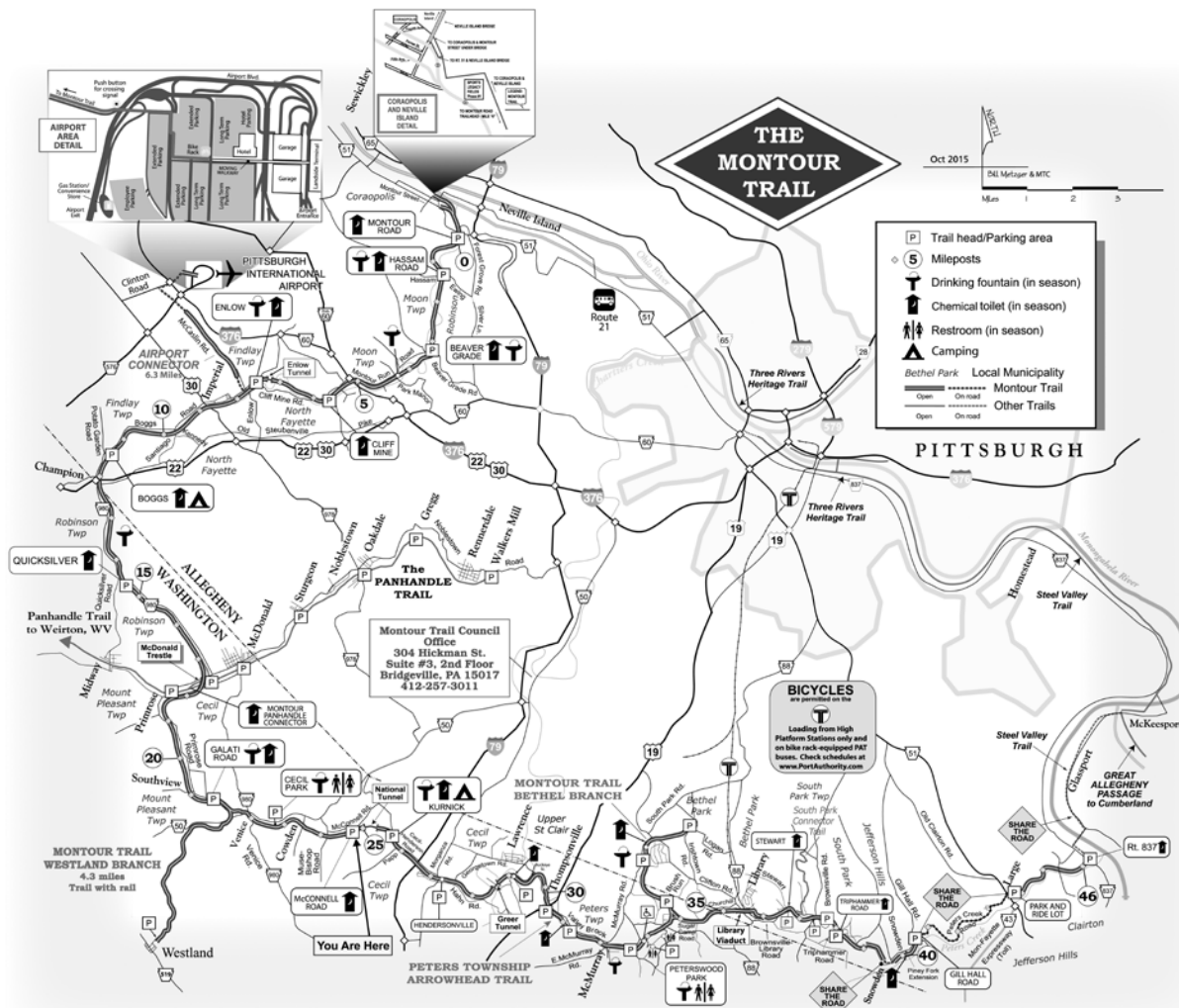




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