THE TRAIL-LETTER
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PUC ISSUES FAVORABLE ORDER ON MONTOUR BRIDGES

MTC has gained interim victory in its quest to save the bridges. As you may recall the MTC previously intervened in hearings on the bridges and at-grade crossings of the Montour Railroad and urged the PUC not to order their abolishment until their use for Trail purposes could be evaluated. The PUC has considered testimony and submittals from the MTC and many agencies and has rendered the following opinion:

"... we are convinced that it is in the public interest to remand this proceeding to the ALJ (Administrative Law Judge) for consideration of the Rails to Trails Act, ... we conclude that it is in the public interest to consider the requirements of this Act before adopting a final order in this proceeding. It is critical that these crossings not be abandoned or removed prior to an evaluation by the parties and the ALJ of their possible recreational uses. If this opportunity is not taken now, public recreational uses of these crossings may be lost forever. ... We direct that the Department of Environmental Resources be afforded an opportunity to participate...."

"Finally, we have received a letter dated May 21, 1991 from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission stating that the rail line in question is a 'potentially eligible historic resource'. Furthermore, the Historical Commission states that it has a responsibility to review federal and state actions under 37 Pa. Cons. State Section 508 for their effect on cultural resources, including prehistoric and historic archaeological sites and historic structures... the Historical Commission further notes that 'It has not been consulted concerning either the Public Utility Commissions policies and procedures in these matters or with regard to the specific action in this matter - approving the demolition of potentially historic bridges.'

"... we are sympathetic to the Historical Commission’s desire to be involved in this proceeding. Accordingly, we feel that the appropriate remedy is to make the Historical Commission a party of record at this proceeding and give it an opportunity to be heard at the hearing on remand so it can present evidence in support of its positions...."

The future will hold many tasks for those of us who are directly involved in preparing for and participating in further hearings on this subject.

SALES AGREEMENT SIGNING

Dignitaries meet to witness the signing of the sales agreement to acquire the Montour Railroad during the Allegheny County Commissioners meeting on Sept. 14. Seated from left to right, Commissioner Peter Flaherty, Gordon E. Neuenschwander - President of the P&LE and Commissioner Larry Dunn. Standing from left to right, Susan Scott - aid to Commissioner Flaherty, Rep. Ron Gamble (D) - 40th, Stan Sattler - President of MTC, Dick Wilson - legal council of MTC, Commissioner Tom Foerster, and Larry Ridenour - government liaison of the MTC.
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS
AWARDS MTC $25,000

The Allegheny County Democratic Delegation, chaired by Representative Tom Michlovic, has awarded the Trail Council a regional legislative initiative in the amount of $25,000. The grant will be applied towards the cost of trail development. Area legislators who were especially supportive of our cause include Representatives Greg Fajt, Ron Gamble, Tom Murphy, and Fred Trello.

TRAIL REPRESENTATIVES ADDED

The following additional persons have volunteered to work with their communities to develop support for the Trail and to coordinate matters affecting the Trail development with local government officials:

Pat Lheureau Robinson Twp. (Washington Co.)
John L. Baker Mount Pleasant Twp.
Don Berty Cecil Twp.
Tim Banfield Jefferson Boro

This brings to eleven the number of municipalities in which we have designated trail representatives. These members will play important roles in the development of the Montour Trail.

A Ride Into the Future

Sometimes you just get tired of waiting for this darn old trail to get done. Hell, it's goin' on three years and all that we've got is a good idea. Okay, so its more than that. I'm frustrated because the Pirates just choked, so I had to get out of town for awhile.

Drove down to check out the Virginia Creeper. They can get anything done down in Washington, D.C. that is. Can't be outdone by Burke Gilman from the other Washington. Seattle that is. What failed several times as a railroad, now thrives as a recreational trail in the Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority (NVRPA) system.

The Washington and Old Dominion Trail (W & OD) Trail still connects Alexandria and the Appalachians. The trains are gone now and it's still a slow trip by modern standards. Down there, in the promised land, where the traffic is like Pittsburgh at 5 PM, all the time, recreational sanctuaries are in great demand. Some observations will follow.

Had a few miles under my belt, it was sunny and warm, stopped at the Freeman House, now a museum. Freeman: revolutionary statesman-type, the usual wood floors and beams, antiques and souvenirs, a cozy place. Preppie-type white-haired gentleman, L.L. Bean attired, on volunteer cash register duty. Pleasent personality. Youngish face, very helpful, you've seen the face before in places like this. I took a glass of iced tea, a Gatorade, and some "orange slices" from a penny-candy jar, and consume them on Freeman's wood deck overlooking a stream. Lots of trees around lending privacy. Couldn't really see too many of the trail users from there.

Good Break. Now time to move on. Several busy grade crossings through Vienna, Herndon, and Sterling. They were well marked with stop signs but there was lots of traffic. The bridges on the Montour will be a definite plus.

Around mile 26, a rest area with vending machines, paper-money friendly, and with more Welch's juice flavors than I know existed. Overheard a group of seniors wondering aloud about the fate of a companion.

"What's she look like," I inquired.

"Green tights," one of them answered.

"She was leaning on the fence eatin' a pear" Some loud guffaws. "Hey that was my pear!"

A little further down the road was the country store in Ashburn. "One of the two best stops on the trail." I hear someone say. "The other one was the 7-11 at mile 18.

I'd have to give the nod to the country store, for several reasons. It's Rockwellian character of the place comes not so much from the wooden floors or the fishing license for sale sign inside, but from the things like the worn lock of the place that comes from real use and from operating on a mom and pop-type budget. It comes from the type of people who stop by who are not wearing the latest fashions. There are benches and picnic tables provided by the NVRPA adjacent to the store and trail.

The best perspective comes from the stone wall across the street where you can see cultures collide. I especially enjoyed watching the country boys leaning on their pick-ups, spitting tobacco juice and ogling over the city girls in Lycra. No danger, plenty of city boys around, just a slice of life... vintage Rockwell.

The best part of the trail was the last 10 miles from Leesburg on west. At times the trees, leaves in peak color, formed

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MTC 'S SECOND PICNIC A CYCLING AFFAIR

Many of the attendees participated in a 25 mile bike ride from Cecil Park through Washington County and back to the Park. Attendees show their MTC pride by wearing the appropriate attire.

MONTOUR MEMORIES

In early 1982, the Allegheny County Commissioners went for a train ride. At the behest of the late Dr. William Hunt, the special train ran from the B & O station downtown to Tarentum, back through the Northside, across the Ohio Connecting Bridge to Scully Yard, down the PC & Y to Coraopolis and the Montour to the Marriot by the Parkway. It was the last passenger train over the Montour. Here, the train crosses over Beaver Grade Road. That's the old Beaver Grade Road bridge in the foreground. More on this train ride in later issues.
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tunnels over the trail. Maybe this just co-incided with my ideal trail scenario which includes the Swedish Lycra Team. But hey, it was beautiful.

Other general highlights included restored train stations in the larger towns along the trail. And the signage. There were so many signs, especially east of Leesburg. There were signs admonishing cyclists to audibilize their presence, to keep their speed in check, and to ride single file. They also warned pedestrians to keep right, walk single-file, and look behind them before making sudden movements. Pets are to be leashed. the signs actodlike subliminal tapes. After one trip down the trail, I feel pretty confident that I know all the trail rules.

Recycling is big in the eastern communities. The vending area mentioned earlier had separate receptacles for the different species of recyclables.

The W & OD is very horse-friendly. There is plenty of trail space for horses, often completely separate from the pedestrian traffic. At Purcellville, the western terminus, a sign says western expansion now being studied. I proceeded to the end of the parking lot behind a small apartment house where the undeveloped right-of-way continues toward the Blue Ridge. I don’t know how much further it goes, but as Don Juan says, “It’s a path with heart and will be followed breathlessly.”

Can’t wait ‘til we have one of these near Pittsburgh

Happy Trails,

Dino Angelici

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