

Ashland to Lexington Cycling Relay

The fourth annual Kentucky Rails to Trails Council bicycle relay ride from Ashland to Lexington was a National Trail Day Event on Saturday, May 31st, 2008. The relays are held to promote the development of shared-use trails throughout the state and specifically the creation of a continuous railtrail over the abandoned 106 mile CSX railroad corridor between Lexington and Ashland. The relay followed secondary and county roads close to the corridor and in a few places was on the old corridor or adjacent to it. Winchester, Mt. Sterling, Olive Hill and Lexington have all received funding to do short sections along the corridor within city limits.

The relay went off very well with no accidents. Forty cyclists rode in the relay representing communities between Ashland and Lexington. Twenty or more RT supporters kept the rest stops, sag vehicles and relay transfer working smoothly. At least 1,595 miles were ridden in the relay. Three riders, Melissa Bellew, Jeff Taylor and Dan Marsh, rode the entire length of 130 miles from outside Ashland to Pleasant Ridge Park in Lexington. Rest stops were at Grahn, Olive Hill, Salt Lick, Mt. Sterling and Winchester.



(Mt. Sterling Montgomery County Trail Commission cooking up hamburgers for the riders in Mt. Sterling, L. Wilson, 7/2008.)

Just a few drops of rain fell on the riders; this was remarkable since severe thunderstorms, hail and 60 hour winds were predicted that kept many riders away. Riders rode by live turtles, snakes, and frogs in the road next to

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New Trail System in Oldham County

Greenways for Oldham County and the Oldham County Parks and Recreation Department have commenced construction for a new trail system within the county's Wendell Moore Park in Buckner, Kentucky. Plans call for nearly 3.35 miles of trails in the park, which will eventually link to the Commerce Parkway segment of the Oldham County interurban trail system.

The groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled for late July. Greenways for Oldham County is providing the bulk of the funding for the project with the county's Parks and Recreation Department and the county's Road Department providing equipment and manpower to construct the trails.



(Sign Near Entrance to Trail System within Wendell Moore Park, Greenways of Oldham County, 2008)

Greenways for Oldham County is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to encourage the creation of trails and greenway corridors, parks, and preserves in order to enhance and conserve the quality of life for the citizens and wildlife of Oldham County, Kentucky. For more news go to <http://www.oldhamgreenways.org:80/>, the website of the nonprofit, Greenways of Oldham Co.

WalkBike Frankfort was the recipient of the 2008 Outstanding Plan Award by the Kentucky Chapter of the American Planning Association (KAPA) for its development of their Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. Included is a one mile path along an old railroad bed connecting downtown to Kentucky State University.

Along the Youghiogheny

By Rebecca McNall Krall

I have been a great supporter of rail trails for years. As a child, I was fortunate to enjoy the Youghiogheny Trail that originally began at Ohiopyle, PA and, at the time, extended 5 miles to the little town of Confluence, PA. My family used to pack up our bikes in a trailer and drive to Ohiopyle on a Sunday in the summer and early fall to bicycle along the trail and watch the white water rafters attempt to navigate down the treacherous Youghiogheny River (pronounced yā-kə-gā-nē). This first section of the trail followed the river east and west from Ohiopyle and was bordered by rock outcroppings that helped to keep the area cool in the summer time.

The trail is a non-motorized shared use trail for hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, canoe access and fishing. The Youghiogheny Rail Trail is now part of the extensive 150 mile Allegheny Passage Trail that begins in Pittsburgh, PA and extends to Cumberland, MD. From there, the trail connects to the C&O Canal which continues to Washington, DC. The entire Allegheny Passage/C&O Canal trail



is 318 miles in length!

Two years ago, my husband and I enjoyed a two-day 100 mile trek along part of the Allegheny Passage beginning in Frostburg, MD and riding west to the little town of West Newton, PA. We decided to begin in Frostburg because of the recent opening of two refurbished railroad tunnels in that area. In addition, my mother wanted to join us for the first part of the trip to ride through these new tunnels.

For the trip, I rode a hybrid bicycle and my husband rode his road bike. I would not recommend a road bike for this trail, but it was all he had available at the time without renting or buying another bicycle. Most of the Allegheny Passage Trail is composed of crushed gravel that is fine enough to ride a road bike across, but more comfortable to manage on a hybrid or mountain bike. However, we cycled along several parts of the trail that were in excellent condition, but were grass covered except for a single or double track, which was a little more difficult to navigate on a road bike.

All along our trip we found bike shops, eateries, bed and breakfasts that had opened to cater to rail trail tourists. Several of the towns had refurbished or rebuilt the old train stations along the path and converted them into visitor centers and museums. The latter were used to portray the geologic and anthropologic history of the area. We made a point to stop at these information centers to learn more about the history of the areas through which we cycled. In some cases, were able to identify remains of the coal industry from the descriptions were read in the museum displays.

Unfortunately, the weather had not cooperated with us on the first day of our trip. With reservations already made, we decided to continue our trek to our midpoint destination in Confluence, PA. After bicycling through 25 miles of mud and rain, we arrived at our guesthouse caked in mud. Easy access to an outside hose helped us clean up. It was a misty evening along the river as we dined and watched a fisherman standing in the middle of the Casselman reeling in fish after fish.

The second day of our trip took us through Ohiopyle, Connellsville, Smithtown, Cedar Creek, and West Newton. Many of these locations were once part of the coal mining industry that supported steel production in Pittsburgh. Coal mined in the area was processed in coke ovens that were located along the Youghiogheny River in Connellsville. The coke (refined coal) was then transported by train to Pittsburgh. While this era has long since passed, the remains of the coke ovens and coal processing plants can be found along this part of the Allegheny Passage. Some of towns also have disappeared, with the exception of a few homes that border the rail trail. Other towns, such as Connellsville and Smithton, are still in existence, but do not

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Letter to the Secretary of the KY Transportation Cabinet

July 22, 2008

Mr. Joe Prather
Office of the Secretary
KY Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero St
Frankfort, KY. 40622

Dear Mr. Prather;

Kentucky Rails to Trails Council (KRTC) would like to encourage you to appoint a full time Bike and Pedestrian Coordinator within the Transportation Cabinet. Our organization understands that the Cabinet does not intend to make this a full time position and that the duties would be shared by existing personnel. It is a well know fact that the state is required by the FHWA to have a coordinator and that funds can be made available. It is equally understood that this position does not have to be a full time position however; KRTC has worked with previous bike ped coordinators and understand the duties and responsibilities of this position. KRTC feels by not appointing a full time coordinator it deemphasizes the position and downgrades the importance of bike and pedestrian issues within the Transportation Cabinet. KRTC also recognizes that other DOT's in adjoining states have full time coordinators and dedicate substantially more funding for bike ped facilities than Kentucky including rail trails.

As you know more and more Kentuckians are recognizing biking and walking as modes of transportation and as gas prices increase there needs to be more emphasis on these modes. I continue to hear stories of communities fighting with District offices to get bike and pedestrian facilities included in road improvement projects. A full time coordinator can help more communities bring Kentucky in line with other states and the rest of the nation.

KRTC is always hopeful that Kentucky will change direction in so many issues when there is a change in leadership and administration. This is your chance to make a significant difference with minimal effort. Kentucky is so low on the list of accomplishments for bike and pedestrian issues that any improvement will see a significant jump in recognition.

On another matter, KRTC would also like to see a full time Rail Trail Coordinator. The part time Rail Trail Coordinator in GOLD is limited in their role and can only work with projects that have been funded through that office. This is not a true Rail Trail Coordinator. KRTC also proposes that the Cabinet rail bank every abandoned rail line. Railroad rights of way are invaluable assets to the community and should never be completely abandoned. Even if there is not a specific transportation or public utility plan for the corridor, they should be protected intact for future generations whether they be rail trails or future rail lines.

Sincerely

Keith Lovan, Chair

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experience the same economic power they once did in their heyday. As we cycled through this region we found remains of coke ovens, old coal processing plants, and many old steel railroad bridges refurbished for the trail.

Most of the 100 miles of trail we cycled was in excellent condition, with the exception of a short detour around a closed railroad tunnel east of Confluence, PA near Markleton. The tunnel was one of wooden construction that had suffered a fire years ago. The rail trail conservancy had decided it would be more cost effective to develop a detour around the tunnel than to remove and rebuild the tunnel. This detour was in poor condition during our raining ride on Day 1. However, we have learned recently from one of the rail trail visitor centers that the de-

tour has since been resurfaced. We have not been on this part of the trail since our ride to confirm this.

My husband and I were fortunate to have family in the area who were willing to transport us to and from our drop off and pick up points for the trip. A long distance cyclist could follow the Allegheny Passage Trail from just east of Pittsburgh to Cumberland, MD. At this point a train is available to transport cyclists back to Pittsburgh. An alternative is to complete the entire Allegheny Passage/C&O Canal trail to Washington, DC and return by train to Pittsburgh through Cumberland, MD. There are tour companies that offer transportation services to and from drop off points as well.

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Trip to the Monon Trail in Indianapolis

On June 28, 2008 under threatening skies 6 KRTC members toured the Monon Trail, the Central Canal Towpath and connecting trails in Indianapolis, Indiana. A combination of railtrail and other shared used trails connect communities, shopping districts, the state fairgrounds, museums, schools and parks.



(KRTC members on the Monon Railtrail near where it intersects with the Central Towpath, Indianapolis, In. 7/2008, D. Moore)

The cyclists rode 15 miles to 30 miles with lots of stops for looking. The majority of trails are paved except the canal towpath is fine packed gravel. Thanks to Cheryl Wyatt for organizing the trip. More trail pictures from the trip are in the Photo Album at <http://www.kyrailtrail.org/gallery/albums.php> and in the album of "Signs... and other trail elements".



(Cyclist looking at community murals along bank of storage buildings north of the State Fairgrounds on the Monon Trail in Indianapolis, 7/2008, S. Wyatt.)

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Rail Trails in Pennsylvania fall under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Information on Pennsylvania rail trails can be found on the PDCNR Web site (<http://www.gis.dcnr.state.pa.us/railtrails/>).

As a rail trail enthusiast it has been disappointing to observe the slow progress of rail trails in Kentucky. It is hard to understand why the Commonwealth gives such little attention to developing rail trails when citizens within the state are suffering from obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other maladies related to poor health and lack of exercise. The over used phrase from the movie *A Field of Dreams* is appropriate here. "If you built [rail trails], they will come." The completion of the Muhlenberg County Rail Trail is a great example of this phenomenon. During the planning and development of this rail trail, it was decided to limit the trail length to 6 miles for fear that few folks would use the trail. Now the trail is a popular site for many citizens in the area who enjoy a walk, run, or bike ride along the trail.

Unfortunately, in order to take advantage of economic growth that can occur around rail trails as we observed along the Allegheny Passage Trail, the rail trail must extend significant distances beyond 6, 8, or 10 miles. Rail trail enthusiasts flock to trails like the Allegheny Passage in Pennsylvania, the Little Miami Trail in Ohio, and the Katy Trail in Missouri to enjoy multi-day trips and excursions along the trail. Walkers, runners, cyclists, and horseback riders of all ages enjoy these trails. I applaud the tremendous efforts of the Kentucky Rails-to-Trails Council as it has endeavored to fight an uphill battle in Kentucky to encourage the development of rail trails across the Commonwealth. I continue to support these efforts financially and through participation when I can. However, in the meantime, my husband and I are mapping out our next rail trail adventure. Unfortunately, it will not be in Kentucky.

* * * * *

KRTC Booth at July 4th Festival Lexington

KY Rails to Trails had a booth again this year at the downtown Fourth of July Festival in Lexington. Many thanks to Cheryl and Steve Wyatt who set the booth up in the rain and to Gail & Chris Kulp, Peter Hrabak, Cindy Deitz, Jeanette Coufal, Greg Brock, Phyllis Hasbrouck, Edd Mackey and Keith Lovan who staffed it during the day. It attracted steady attention.

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gurgling creeks and heard the eerie sound of the seventeen year cicadas. Several riders choose not to ride but were prepared with vehicles and bike racks to help others since torrential rain was expected. The riders fought a strong wind out of the south west all of the way; frequent remark was "I would rather do hills than wind."

This year the relay had businesses and individuals as sponsors who helped with expenses. Many thanks to Graviss's McDonald's Restaurants, The Walker Company of Kentucky, Cooper Standard, Mrs. Edith Conyers, the Bluegrass Railtrail Foundation and the Mt. Sterling-Montgomery Trail Commission. The cycling clubs in Lexington and Ashland and sports shops along the route supported the ride with donations including the Ashland Cycling Enthusiasts, the Bluegrass Cycling Club, Ashland Bicycle & Extreme Sports, Cave Run bicycle & Outdoor Center Sports, Pedal Power, Pedal the Planet, and Schellers. Other supporters were The Lexington/Fayette Urban Co. Government, the Cities of Winchester, Mt. Sterling and Olive Hill, TREK, Eastern Hills Saddle Club and the Daniel Boone Railtrail Foundation in Morehead.

Many thanks to all the support people that accompanied the ride or meet the riders along the way and prepared food and drink.

Pictures of the relay are posted on the KRTC website.

Public Meetings On Adventure Tourism



The Big Sandy ADD has been holding public meetings for their "Adventure Tourism" plan. Most of the meetings were in July with three meetings to be held in August. They need input from the community at these meetings! Rail-trails supporters

should attend to give shared use trails a voice. If you enjoy water sports, cycling, hiking, horseback riding, riding an ATV, or other outdoor activities, you are invited to attend the public meetings held to discuss adventure tourism planning hosted by the Big Sandy Area Development District. Call 886-2374 for additional information. The August meetings are listed below.

August 11 - Roy F. Collier Community Center, 6:00 pm

August 12, 2008 – Warfield City Hall, 6:00 pm

August 18, 2008 – OSCAR, Oil Springs, 6:00 pm

Kentucky Rails to Trails Council, Inc.

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The Kentucky Rails to Trails Council is always in need of volunteers, e.g. writing newsletter articles, being an officer or board member, fundraising, giving presentations, contacting landowners, checking maps, web site design, letter stuffing. *I would like to volunteer with KRTC.*

Check if you would like to be taken on the mailing list for the newsletter and only receive notification when the newsletter is posted on the website. []

Corporate sponsorships are available: See <http://www.kyrailtrail.org/sponsors.php>

Please make check payable and mail to: Kentucky Rails to Trails Council, Inc.

Post Office Box 597, Lexington, KY 40588-0597

(7/08)



Kentucky Rails to Trail Council, Inc.
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www.KyRailTrail.org

Kentucky Rails To Trails Council, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit tax-exempt organization founded in 1995.

The Kentucky Rails to Trails Council promotes and advocates for the establishment and use of rail trails and associated greenways and multi use trails in Kentucky.

Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

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