

## Public gets first look at Latrobe-SVC hiking/biking trail

*By Chris Ulicne, Latrobe Bulletin Staff Writer  
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Area residents got their first glimpse of the Latrobe Community Revitalization Program (LCRP)'s proposed hiking/biking trail from Latrobe to St. Vincent College during a public presentation Monday night at SVC's Fred Rogers Center.

The \$2.2-million project would connect the existing trails at Legion-Keener Park in Latrobe to the entrance drive to the Fred Rogers Center, according to Jim Pashek, president of Pittsburgh-based Pashek Associates, the firm responsible for the \$20,000, grant-funded feasibility study.

The trail would first link the park to Route 981 with a new pedestrian bridge, then follow Route 981 all the way to a proposed painted crosswalk near Jioio's restaurant. Utilizing an existing Norfolk Southern railroad track crossing, the trail would then continue south along the abandoned railway, heading over Monastery Run to SVC, connecting into another proposed trail system that would link the Fred Rogers Center to Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve.

Pashek said the Latrobe trail also could eventually connect to other areas, including Wimmerton, New Alexandria and Keystone State Park.

"That's the most exciting part of this trail project. There are so many connections," Pashek said.

Pashek has listed other potential benefits of the project before, including encouragement for locals to take up the trail and work toward a healthier lifestyle. He also earlier said such trails are "very desirable" in communities because there's anecdotal evidence that suggests businesses are looking to locate in areas with recreational

opportunities for their employees, which could create an economic boost.

Furthermore, a recent "Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania Resident Survey" conducted by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) found that, "Hiking and biking are among the most popular outdoor recreation activities in Pennsylvania," and approximately three-fourths of those surveyed indicated that they would be more likely to use a trail if it was within walking distance from their homes. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they believe it is "very or extremely important to build more greenways/trails and to build pedestrian and cycling paths between places of work, schools and shopping areas."

At an earlier meeting concerning the trail, Pashek had mentioned several possible right-of-way issues because it crossed property belonging to local businesses and Norfolk Southern, but the latest proposal for the trail path avoids right-of-way issues with Norfolk Southern. The affected business owners have expressed support for the project and seem willing to let the trail cross their properties, too, according to previous statements from Latrobe Planning Commission Chairman Ron Weimer.

While the LCRP is still working on securing funds for the Latrobe-SVC trail, Pashek said that "hopefully, within a couple of years, funding will start to be available for some of the work," and the project could possibly be completed in about three to five years. He said that over the next 12 months, he will be working on choosing a project coordinator who will then be responsible for seeking grants and support from municipalities and community foundations. In the meantime, some sections of the trail's path could be

cleared out in preparation, perhaps by volunteers < Pashek said he expects that volunteer work and in-kind services will help cut costs for the project considerably.

Pashek Associates' feasibility study was funded by a \$16,000 grant from the Port of Pittsburgh Commission acquired by the Latrobe Planning Commission and a \$4,000 match grant from the McFeely-Rogers Foundation. Unity Township Supervisor Jake Blank also said the township provided some materials for the planning process.