

Planning & Development

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Towpath Trail

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Submitted by David Beach | Last edited April 17, 2010 - 5:51pm

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Marc Lefkowitz

This section will cover the exciting development of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, the 110-mile recreational trail from Cleveland to Akron and points south. New segments of the trail are opening every year. One of the biggest missing links remains the northern most segment through the Flats in Cleveland.



Updates

April 2010 update: Progress on northern sections of the Towpath

Extending the Towpath Trail is a work in progress.

Fall 2006 saw the first addition north of the path's end point since the Cuyahoga County's Towpath Trail Extension: Alignment and Design Study was released in 2002. A public-private partnership led to the creation of a 1-mile trail at the former LTV West site—now Steelyard Commons shopping center. The trail and a loop around the perimeter of the site at the river's edge are done, but a 1-mile gap still exists between it and the Towpath, which terminates at Harvard Road.

In June 2006, NOACA requested \$7.9 million from the federal government for the preliminary development, design and construction of the segment from Harvard Road to Steelyard Commons. Because it's federal funding, it will take four years for the segment to go through the phases to completion. Meanwhile, cyclists can travel from Harvard to Steelyard on the street—Jennings Road will have 4 foot shoulders and a sidewalk.

Building the Towpath Trail the six miles from Harvard Road to downtown Cleveland at (proposed) Canal Basin Park will cost upwards of \$48 million, according to Ohio Canal Corridor. That investment includes a paved trail and 40 acres of linear green space as part of the trail corridor. The plan is to stagger fundraising with building the trail in 1-mile segments. Funds to purchase property are expected to come from the federal government and private sources, such as a Tax-Incremental Financing deal at Steelyard. Donovan estimates the Steelyard TIF will generate \$10-15 million for the Towpath.

"My theory is we drag as much of that into the development of Canal Basin Park," he said, "because it's much harder to build parks than trails. We're also interested in NOACA's internal review of how it uses CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality) funds. It could impact the development of the Towpath" if it became a new funding source.

In November 2006, Ohio Canal Corridor (OCC) sent out an RFQ looking for firms to design the next segment—north from Steelyard to Quigley Road/W. 3rd in the Industrial Flats. Funding for design and construction could come from a \$2 million state capital request submitted by OCC and The Greater Cleveland Partnership, and from the initial Steelyard TIF payment, which kicks in February 2007. This section could lead to a major connector to the Tremont neighborhood.

"The Towpath has relativity to the Innerbelt Bridge project," Donovan added. "We can leverage that investment."

May 1, 2008: Towpath Trail Partnership Committee selects a preferred route for Stage 1, the 1-mile segment from Harvard Road to Steelyard (to be presented at a June 17 public meeting). "Besides the obvious environmental concerns, there are complicated engineering challenges led by a spiderweb of rail lines which must be crossed by going around, under or above," Ohio Canal Corridor writes.

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This site is inspired by the memory of Richard Shatten, a former board member of EcoCity Cleveland, who pushed Northeast Ohio to think strategically about regionalism and sustainability. A service of the GreenCityBlueLake Institute at the [Cleveland Museum of Natural History](#). Operating support provided by [The George Gund Foundation](#). The GreenCityBlueLake name and logo are registered service marks of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.



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