



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SHEEPSKIN TRAIL GETS \$1 MILLION FEDERAL FUNDING BOOST

Uniontown, PA – Fayette county was recently awarded a \$1 million Smart Transportation Livable Community (STLC) grant for ongoing construction of the Sheepskin Trail.

Work is simultaneously under way on the Springhill Township and City of Uniontown portions of the 34-mile trail, which runs through the heart of Fayette County and is utilized by thousands of people each year. Fayette County Chief Community Development Specialist Art Cappella said the STLC grant is just the latest funding boost to have a major impact on the project.

“We are fortunate to have had a string of accomplishments in recent years regarding grant awards for design, right-of-way acquisitions and construction. The Springhill Township part of the trail makes a significant connection to the Mon River Trail in West Virginia,” Cappella said. “This trail segment will create and enhance connections for bicyclists and pedestrians, with the motivation being to attract visitors to Fayette County. The concept is a winning scenario for both the users of the trail, as well as for the business community. In our judgment, the trail will be safe and user-friendly.”

Fayette County Parks and Recreation Director Joe Ambrose said the funding will be used to complete approximately one mile of the trail’s southern extension into Lake Lynn; and includes construction of a bridge over Nilan Road.

“This money should be available in 2025, and that will finish the southern extension project completely,” Ambrose said. “We are extremely focused on getting the Sheepskin Trail completed across all 34 miles. This will be a huge boost to both Fayette County’s tourism and economic development.”

Cappella said the \$1 million grant is “important” because it “demonstrates immediate progress” on top of the other funding that’s been awarded in recent years.

“The county is designing, acquiring property, and constructing trails at different locations. It’s a multi-faceted effort,” he said. “We are so very excited about this construction work and advancing the Sheepskin Trail toward completion; and we have such a wonderful team of folks working on the project and providing expertise engineering.”

Fayette County commissioners Scott Dunn, chairman; Vince Vicites and Dave Lohr recently applied for grant funding through the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), which they hope to use as match funding for the STLC grant, if awarded. Additionally, the county applied for a federal Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) grant, which would be used toward finishing the trail’s design and construction, Cappella added.

“The Sheepskin Trail is so important to the county because of its economic impact and tourism attributes. It’s part of the American Discovery Trail that runs across the United States to California,” Cappella said. “Another factor is that employers – before deciding to locate in a certain area – look at recreational dynamics a region has to offer for its employees. The commissioners want to attract new business and industry to provide increased employment opportunities and raise the median household per capita income. The Sheepskin Trail is also part of the multi-modal transportation program that affords citizens options in how they may reach various destinations throughout the county, such as schools, work and recreational sites.”

Receipt of the STLC grant was approved by the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), of which Fayette County is a member and Commissioner Vicites serves as vice-chairman of its executive committee, at their June meeting.

Cappella said the trail’s connection to the Great Allegheny Passage, Monongahela and Cheat River watersheds, and more significant landmarks throughout SPC’s 10-county region makes it a “noteworthy recreational greenway.” The Sheepskin has also been identified by the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC) as a “key gap” in the trail system’s “Parkersburg to Pittsburgh” section, which includes more than 1,400 miles of connected trails.

“There are other internal connections to various trails within Fayette County, such as Browns Run in German Township,” Cappella said. “At the end of the day, the Sheepskin Trail is friendly toward the environment, and it affords users an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Laurel Highlands, including all the region’s natural assets.”

For more information about the Sheepskin Trail’s ongoing construction, contact acappella@fayettepa.org or jambrose@fayettepa.org.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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