

Hiking trail around city to cost \$1M

Standard Speaker
Front Page JAN 2004

□ A study by an engineering firm estimates the total cost to build all segments of the Rails-To-Trails project will be around \$1 million. The first four-mile segment of the trail has been estimated at \$160,000.

By JIM DINO

jimdino@standardspeaker.com

The 16-mile walking/hiking/biking trail around Hazleton will cost about \$1 million to build, a member of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership says.

Sue Nasrani, a member of the Rails-To-Trails committee of the Partnership, said the study by Alfred Benesch and Co. engineering firm has estimated the cost of segments of the trail which indicate that the entire trail will cost around \$1 million in total to build.

The first four-mile segment of the trail, which is already designed, has been estimated at \$160,000.

The Partnership has raised the money to build the first portion, which will begin near the intersection of Route 93, East Broad Street, and the Heights Beltway, to the Ashmore section of Hazle Township.

Construction on that portion will begin in the spring.

Nasrani said the second segment — from Ashmore to the Village of Eckley — will be the most costly, because a bridge will have to be built over an active railroad a creek. That segment is estimated at \$600,000.

The third and final segment, from Eckley to the Lehigh River at Rockport, near Weatherly, has been estimated at \$250,000.

"Alfred Benesch has done an excellent job," Nasrani said. "We (members of the Rails-To-Trails committee) asked a lot of questions about drainage. Dreck Creek will have to be diverted under the trail with a 15-inch pipe. Working with Alfred Benesch has been excellent, because Michael Cera (the engineer working on the project) is a local resident."

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Partnership, said there are two packs of drawings for the first phase, which will be included in a Request For Proposals (RFP) for construction of the first segment that will be advertised for bid soon, anticipating construction beginning in the spring.

Nasrani said the drawings have been approved by the state Department of Transportation.