



ELLEN O'CONNELL/Standard-Speaker

Dave Morgan, left and Brad Blanner, second from left, both students at Hazleton Area High School, listen as Bob Skulsky, executive director of Council of Government and the Civic Partnership, explains the preliminary site assessment for the Rails to Trails during a tour of the site Tuesday.

Students, civic partnership to research Rails to Trails area for points of interest

By **JIM DINO**

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We know where the trail will go.

But what will go along the trail – like parking lots and signs to direct travelers – and where will they go?

With an advertisement about to go out for a professional to build the first part of the hiking and biking trail between Hazleton and Weatherly, these questions need to be answered now.

So a group of people walked the first four miles of the trail Tuesday afternoon to get some answers.

Bob Skulsky, executive director of the Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership – which is spearheading development of the trail through a special committee – said the Partnership is looking for anyone who may have information about the railroad that

7-7-04
traveled over the path of the new trail, or any historical points along or near it.

“We are looking for recommendations,” Skulsky said. “If there were any native Americans who crossed this land, we want to know about it. We want to find out any and all history about the railroad, or the land along the trail, so that we can include the information on the signs.”

Brad Blanner and Dave Morgan, who will be seniors at Hazleton Area High School this fall, are doing as their senior project research toward developing the wording that will go along the signs.

“We re using mostly the Internet so far,” Blanner said.

The two young men need to have their work done by

early August, so that the signs can be produced and erected in the fall.

So far, Skulsky said about five signs are planned for the first four miles of the trail – unless more information and points of interest are identified.

Also, Skulsky showed the group some signs that will be

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Trail

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posted on a triangular kiosk in the parking lot/reception area of the park, somewhere near the entrance.

Two sides of the kiosk will have permanent, Fiberglas signs that explain the history of the trail and railroad on one side, and the history of the Hazleton area on another side.

On the third side, Skulsky said there will be posted signs that can be changed – like during hunting season, people using the trail will be advised of the season, and asked to wear fluorescent clothing and take other safety precautions to avoid being shot accidentally.

A large sign will also be erected to hold a map of the area, and the trail.

There will also be a parking lot near the trailhead, but its exact location has not yet been determined, Skulsky said.

Other people on Tuesday's excursion were: Diane Madl, of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Jamie McIntyre, an archaeologist with the state Department of Transportation (PennDOT); April Hannon, also of PennDOT, and Jack Gouldstone, a member of the Partnership's board of directors.

Anyone who believes they may have information, or know someone that does, on the trail or the land on or near it is asked to call Skulsky at 455-1508. All replies will be kept confidential.