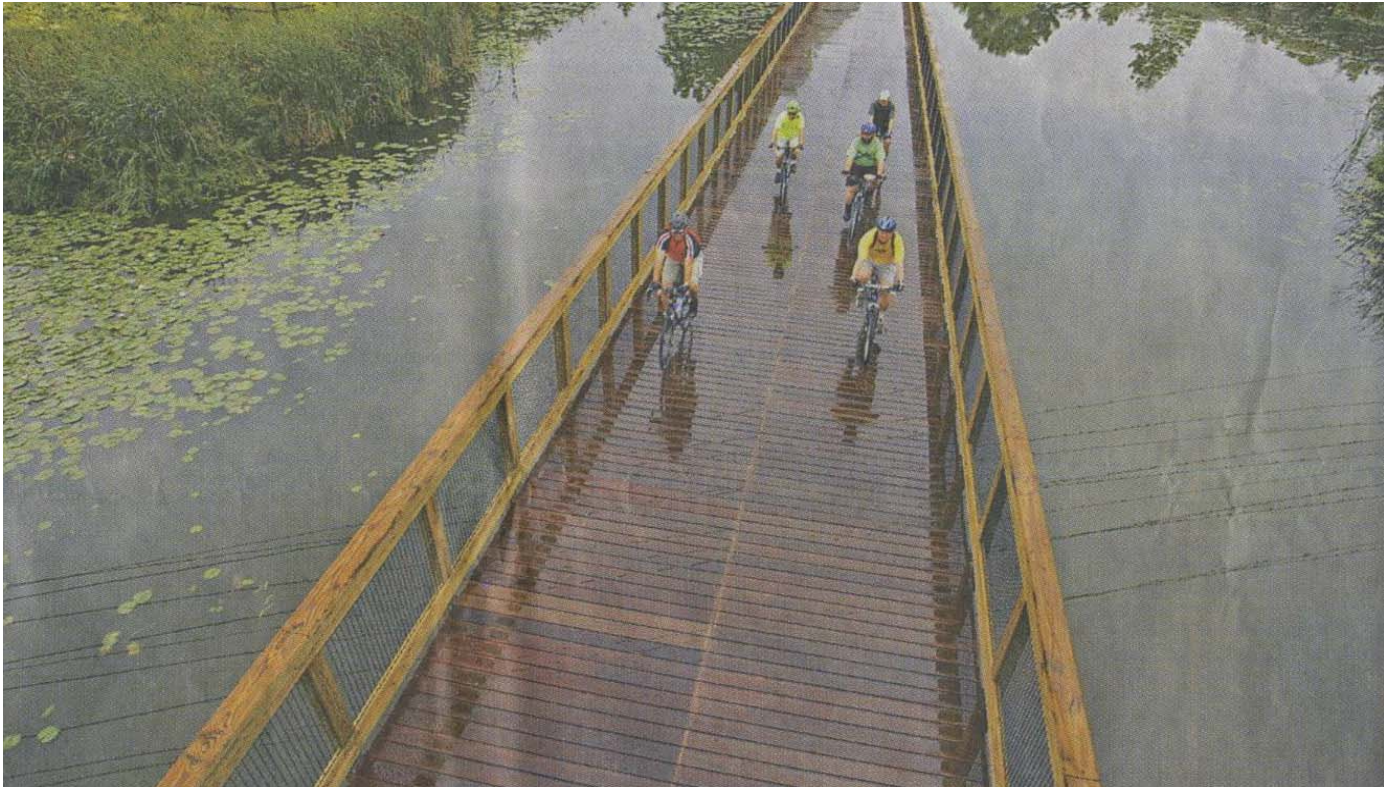


AKRON BEACON JOURNAL



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Bicyclists enjoy the scenery on a floating section of the Towpath Trail along Summit Lake's southern shoreline in South Akron. It will be dedicated Friday.

Trail idea really floats

Akron will dedicate new section of path along Summit Lake

By Bob Downing
Beacon Journal staff writer

ers of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail won't need a miracle to walk on water.

The newest segment of the Towpath Trail in South Akron includes a floating section that runs nearly a third of a mile along Summit Lake's southern shoreline and passes under the Kenmore Boulevard bridge.

Akron will dedicate the addition to the trail, which runs south from the Summit Lake Community Center to Waterloo Road, at ceremonies at 11 a.m.

Friday.

The wood-covered floating section - one of the most unusual features anywhere along the trail - is 14 feet wide and runs 1,645 feet over water, starting at Lewis Street.

Supported by polyethylene-filled floats, the section is anchored securely to the lake bottom and sits 16 to 18 inches above the water, decked with a durable hardwood from Brazil and 4½-foot railings with mesh fencing.

The project includes a floating observation deck along the floating trail at the southern end of the lake.

Akron spokesman Mike Teodecki said the floating trail was necessary because the city does not own any shoreline in that

Please see **Towpath, A7**



A flower grows along a new section of the Towpath Trail.

Activities are planned for Akron Bike Week

By Bob Downing
Beacon Journal staff writer

The dedication of Akron's newest section of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail on Friday will highlight the city's second annual Akron Bike Week.

Events include day and night bike rides, scavenger hunts, bike-to-work days and cycling workshops, starting Friday and running through Sept. 12.

The floating section of the Towpath Trail will be featured in a two-hour ride through downtown Akron Sept. 12. Meet at 8 a.m. at the Mustill Store, off West North Street near downtown Akron. Helmets are required. All ages are welcome.

Please see **Ride, A7**

Towpath Trail nearly done

Last segment to be built in Akron is near Advanced Elastomer Systems

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area. It was the most economical way to proceed with the trail.

Teodecki noted that the original canal featured a floating section of towpath for mules pulling canalboats at Summit Lake.

A small section of the floating trail was torched in April when someone stole a city vehicle and set it afire where the floating section ended and the trail resumed on land south of Summit Lake. That damage was repaired.

Nearly complete

Completion from Summit Lake to Waterloo Road also signals a major milestone: The Towpath Trail is nearly complete in Summit County.

That news thrills Dan Rice and other trail supporters, who have been promoting the 101-mile trail from Cleveland through Akron to New Philadelphia for 20 years.

The final two trail sections in Summit - in Akron and in Barberton - won't be finished until 2010 or later. But to Rice and other trail supporters, that doesn't matter.

"It's just an incredible accomplishment," said Rice, president and chief executive of the Akron-based Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, a grass-roots group.

"It's taken a lot of work and a lot of money and it's a tribute to all of our partners in Summit County who made it a top priority and to everyone who uses the Towpath Trail. . . . The towpath has changed Northeast Ohio and enriched a lot of lives."

Rice has been involved in pushing trail construction, creating partnerships and lobbying for funds for the popular trail since 1994.

Construction of the initial section of the Towpath Trail - 19.7 miles in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park - got started in May 1990. That section was dedicated in 1993.

Today, 82 miles of trail are complete in Summit, Stark, Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas counties, with another 19 miles, including 1.5 miles in Summit County, still to go.

More than \$85.2 million has been invested in the trail, which annually attracts an estimated 2.2 million walkers, hikers and bicyclists.

It is the centerpiece of the 110-mile Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Canalway, a federally designated historic corridor from Cleveland through Akron and Canton to New Philadelphia. It is one of 40 national heritage areas across the county.

Akron has invested \$3.6 million to run the trail from the north end of Summit Lake to West Wilbeth Road, about 1.4 miles. The land trail is 10 feet wide with 2-foot shoulders on each side.

The work was done by Cavanaugh Building Corp. of Akron., which also extended the trail from Wilbeth south to West Waterloo Road.

That extension runs three-fourths of a mile on the canal's east bank and includes a 60-vehicle parking lot off Wilbeth Road. The price tag: \$1.6 million.

One segment left

That leaves one Akron section of the towpath to be built: a half-mile piece downtown by Advanced Elastomer Systems. That section has been broken into three projects totaling \$7.7 million, with work likely to begin this year and to be completed

by July, Teodecki said.

It will require extending the trail south about 2,100 feet through the AES complex, running under a new bridge for motorists at West Bartges Street and continuing south of Bartges for 400 to 500 feet, he said.

The trail will then connect with a paved trail that runs south to Summit Lake.

That would leave one leg to complete: a 1.25-mile section in southern Summit County.

Metro Parks, Serving Summit County, is working on the trail from Eastern Road in New Franklin north to Snyder Avenue in Barberton. That section crosses an old landfill and an active rail line. The price tag is \$2.2 million.

That section will require a tunnel under the rail line, a boardwalk, a bridge over the Tuscarawas River and a bridge over the canal.

The work remains on hold until an agreement can be worked out with the railroad, park planner David Whited said.

Stark County has completed 25 miles of the Towpath Trail - with a railroad crossing in Massillon and a section on the Stark-Tuscarawas line still to be com-

pleted.

It is unlikely that the park district will get permission to cross the rail line on the Tuscarawas River levee near Tremont Street, so the Towpath Trail will probably remain detoured onto the west side of the river in Massillon, said park district spokeswoman Sarah Buell.

The current detour runs from Lincoln Way West (state Route 172) to Walnut Avenue but it will shrink to Tremont Avenue to Walnut Avenue when the widened Tremont bridge is completed and the Towpath is built on the east side of the river between Lincoln Way West and Tremont, she said.

The park district this fall is extending the trail by a half mile near state Route 212 at the Stark-Tuscarawas county line, but a new bridge is needed to carry the trail over the Tuscarawas River where a historic aqueduct stood, she said.

Design work is under way, \$440,000 in federal funds is secured and \$1 million is still needed, she said.

Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas counties need to build the remaining 15 miles of trail.

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Ride

Events are scheduled for Akron Bike Week

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Warning: There is a stiff up-hill climb to downtown Akron.

Other highlights:

- **Summit Tour of Metro Parks Bicycle Adventure**, with rides of 10, 25 and 63 miles on Saturday. The rides will begin at Howe Meadow, 4040 Riverview Road, Cuyahoga Falls, in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The first rides depart at 7:30 a.m. Helmets are required. The tour is limited to 1,600 riders. For information, call 330-865-8065 or visit <http://www.stompbikeride.com>.

- **Smart Cycling workshops and rides on Saturday** at three Akron community centers: 9 to 11 a.m. at the Northwest Community Center, 330-375-2849; noon to 2 p.m. at the Ellet Community Center, 330-375-2809; and 3 to 5 p.m. at the Mason Park Community Center, 330-375-2821. Helmets and registration are required.

- **Tour Akron Bike Ride**, 9:30 a.m. to noon Sunday. The 19.5-mile ride, sponsored by the Akron Bicycle Club, will begin at Hardesty Park off West Market Street. Helmets required. For information, go to <http://www.akronbike.org>.

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- **Crank Up!** scavenger hunt at 4:30 p.m. Sunday. Post-ride party at Grace Park at 6 p.m. Meet at the University Park Cycle Shop at 160 E. Exchange St. Sponsored by the University Park Alliance. Helmets are required. Admission is \$5. Participants must be 18 years old.

- **Pedal the 26-mile Akron Marathon route.** Meet at 8 a.m. Monday at the Spaghetti Warehouse parking lot, 520 S. Main St., Akron. Helmets are required. For those 18 or older.

- **Critical Mass bike ride** from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Sept. 11. Meet at the Highland Square branch of the Akron-Summit County Public Library off West Market Street.

Metro RTA will offer free bus rides Tuesday through Sept. 12 for cyclists.

There also will be free showers and a bike valet at the Citi-Center Athletic Club.

There are additional bike rides, workshops and promotions.

For a complete list of activities, go to <http://www.akronbikeinfo.org>.

Sponsors are the city of Akron, the University of Akron, the Downtown Akron Partnership, the University Park Alliance, the Cascade Locks Park Association, Metro Parks, Serving Summit County, and the Akron Bicycle Club.

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