

Pike trail to be discussed



Gazette File Photo

An entrance to one of two tunnels is shown in this March, 2013, photo on the Old PA Pike Trail, formerly called Pike2Bike. An open house will be held Saturday to allow the public to see the 8.5-mile trail and listen to a presentation on one of the most prominent parts of the development of the trail — lighting for the tunnels.

Pike trail's master plan to be on display Saturday

By Will DeShong
Gazette Staff Writer

Planners believe there is light at the end of the tunnel for the long-proposed Old PA Pike Trail project.

They want lights in the tunnels as well.

An open house event will be held Sept. 23 for the trail — formerly called Pike2Bike — that spans an abandoned 8 1/2-mile section of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in parts of Bed-

ford and Fulton counties. Included in the event will be lighting demonstrations showing proposals on how to possibly light the trail's two tunnels, the longer of which spans more than a mile.

"The biggest highlight of the day, for me, will be the demonstrations of lighting options," said Don Schwartz, director of the county's planning commission. "How the tunnel will

be lit is a big part of the study."

Schwartz said the lighting is vital to the project for safety reasons, but also could become a significant aesthetic part of the tunnel's design.

"The tunnels absolutely need to have lighting," Schwartz said. "The safety needs to be improved if we're going to have large groups of people out there.

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Old Pike Trail open house . . .

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But the lighting could be an attraction itself — really, it should be.”

Navarro and Wright Consulting Engineers of New Cumberland is working on a master plan for the proposed project.

Ric Albano, a spokesman for the developer, said the lighting is a key aspect of the tunnel’s potential.

“There could be lighting shows in the tunnels as an attraction,” Albano said, adding there could be an incorporation of audio along the way. “It’s pitch black in there, even on the brightest day.”

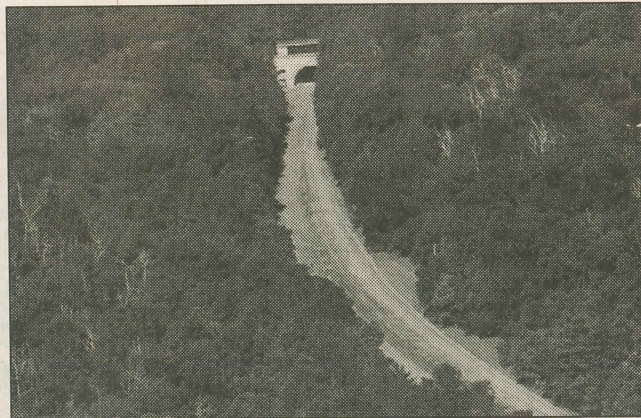
Albano said the demonstration Saturday will be a sneak peak of what could be done.

Navarro and Wright’s master plan, still in development, will be on display at the open house, which will last from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“The development of this project can have a major impact on the future of Bedford County,” Schwartz said. “We want to get (the tunnel) safe and accessible, and make it a great family experience.”

Schwartz said the vision for the tunnel goes beyond a bike trail.

“It’s not just a place to walk and ride a bike,” he said. “We want regularly scheduled events of all types, including concerts,



Gazette File Photo courtesy the Pa. Turnpike Commission

A photo provided by the Pennsylvania Turnpike commission shows an aerial view of the eastern entrance of the former Sideling Hill Tunnel that once took the Pennsylvania Turnpike travelers through the mountain to and from Breezewood. It is now part of the Old PA Pike Trailer, formerly known as Pike2Bike.

drone races and antique car shows.”

Albano said the trail’s proximity to the highway and the interchange make it an ideal location to become an attraction.

He said the renovation project has been discussed for more than 15 years.

“There has been a lot of talk about it, especially with its location,” he said. “This is the closest anyone has come to moving the project forward.”

Navarro and Wright in March were selected to update a 2006 master plan for the trail, as well as a economic impact analysis.

The 2014 economic impact

analysis concluded that the lowest cost of renovations to the trail would total around \$3.5 million, while more expensive alternatives could be twice that amount.

Schwartz said the development of the trail will take another two to three years if “everything goes right.”

“It’s going to be great when it’s done,” he said. “This has been on the radar screen a longtime. But very soon it could be a reality.”

Before that happens, Schwartz said Bedford and possibly Fulton counties need to establish an authority to own and run the trail.

“There’s a lot of hard work left to go,” he said.

Albano said those involved are dedicated to moving the project forward.

“They’re very serious about making this happen,” he said. “This is a very unique time and opportunity to make this into a major destination.”

There will be free guided bus tours provided by Garry Pepple at the open house. The tours will begin leaving the parking lot of the former Ramada Inn, 16637 Route 30, Breezewood. Buses will take participants to the Sideling Hill tunnel, where they can be dropped off and picked up for a return trip.

The tour will include a brief lecture about the trail and the history related to the South Pennsylvania Railroad and the Turnpike.

“We want this to be an event for participants of all ages,” Albano said, adding he thinks there will be a number of other events in the future as the project progresses.

Primary presentations will be given at noon and 2 p.m., but there will be staff available throughout the day for questions.

Live music will be played until 3 p.m. A variety of food truck and concessions will be available at the former Ramada Inn until 4 p.m.

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