Pati, I know I'm filling up your mail box, but...

I went out to Hitchins this morning and walked from the first iron bridge to Leon. What I saw really excited me. I kept saying to myself: "John, all these weeks you've been seeing the trees but not the forest!" The reason I say that is, we have only been looking at running the trail through this section right up next to the roadway. We don't have to do that! Remember, we have a 100 foot right of way available to us! I have a proposal

I call this the “Three Bridges Section” proposal:

1. Between the first and second iron bridges, the trail should leave the roadway and drop down beside the rail bed to the right (north) side. This gets us away from road traffic and related safety issues. With this new routing the trail is immediately in a quiet, shaded natural setting (but still within the 100’ wide ROW). The trail can continue on this path (it’s quite level) until the second bridge.
2. Just before the second iron bridge the trail will come up the embankment to road level again. After the bridge, the trail will stay next to the road for a short distance and then drop down on the left (south) side of the embankment. It will travel through the trees and along a planted field adjacent to the ROW.
3. Just before the third iron bridge, the trail will again come up the embankment to road level and cross the bridge. Between the third bridge and Leon, the trail will be routed beside the road where necessary and about 40 feet to the right of the roadway as terrain permits.
4. Just before the roadway passes under Rt. 7 (that high overpass) there is a stretch of about 200 yards that is very constricted by a narrow road cut. Here, bikes and horses will share the road with vehicles. Walkers will leave the roadway and walk up a rise so that they walk in parallel with the roadway, but about 15 feet above it. It’s a very nice wooded section and more enjoyable than walking on the dusty road..
5. The last quarter mile of the trail just before Leon will be located 30’ to the right (north) side of the roadway, along a flat open field that abuts the ROW.

This proposed routing of the trail will give us a much more scenic trail. Most of it will be cool and heavily shaded, and walkers will have a real sense of being in nature. I’m confident we can make it wide enough for walkers and bikers, and there’s a chance that horseback riders can be accommodated in many sections.

I estimate that the raw trail can be cut out in about 10 days of bulldozing and a month or two of volunteer tree/brush cutting. Once the basic clearing is completed, it will just be a matter of toping the new trail with rock and stone dust. At $200 per hour, the bulldozing will cost us about $16,000. Hopefully we can get county trucks to haul away debris for us.

In contrast, our more conventional road-side trail routing would oblige us to purchase uncounted tons of rock to widen the roadbed, and will, in the end, give us a trail that’s right next to a dry, dusty and not very inviting county road. We would also have to invest considerable time and material in creating a safety barrier for the long stretches of shared roadway.

To really appreciate the possibilities, I think you will need to walk this section with me.

New subject.

When we submit our proposal for the Three Bridges Section, can we add a second trail segment to the proposal? If Fred Collins agrees to sell us his land, can we use some of the $50k to pay him? The Collins section would be very easy and cheap to develop. We can clear it with volunteer labor and put up some signs that say “Tygart Valley Trail”. Walla!

New subject:

I also have a plan for interfacing the “Three Bridges Section” trail with a walking-biking trail into Hitchins and another one into Fultz. Because several sections would require that walkers/bikers share the old road (e. g. those narrow little bypass sections we took pictures of) we will not be able to get grant funding for those segments. But still, if someone were willing to be flexible, they could easily ride a bike all the way from Hitchens to Fultz. In future years, we could use grants to build the Hitchins and Fultz sections into fully developed trails.

Please give me a call if you would like me to come in and confer with you on all this.

John