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The D&L Trail Gets a Little Longer

The ambitious journey to create a 165-mile trail from Bristol, Bucks County to Wilkes-Barre took a giant leap forward in June with the start of project to carve a 1.5-mile section of the D&L Trail connecting Northampton and North Catasauqua.

The \$1.5 million project, to be completed by year's end, will extend from Canal Street Park to the Lehigh County line, for the first time giving the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Trail an unbroken path through Northampton County.

That will bring to 148 the number of miles that have been completed along the trail, but who's counting? Well, pretty much anyone who's been contacting the D&L and state offices asking when they can plan their three-to-four-day trek along the long-anticipated trail.

Count Lauren Imgrund, Deputy Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), among them.

"The D&L is one of the Pennsylvania's major greenways and a backbone of the state trail system," Imgrund said during a groundbreaking ceremony June 3, along the Lehigh River, where the trail passes beneath the Coplay-Northampton Bridge. "It's taken so many partners to make this possible. Now, more than ever, this is a time when people want to be outdoors."

The D&L Trail project, and others that promote using trails as commuter options and ways to create more walkable neighborhoods, are part of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan's*

recommendations for a transportation network with more options for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Money for the project came from DCNR, Northampton County, trail users and supporters. And this investment goes well beyond recreation and environment, said Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure.

“It’s not just because we like being in nature. Green means money, too,” McClure said. “Ecotourism is big business right now and it’s only growing.”

Once complete, the 1.5-mile section of crushed limestone will link the Canal Street Park in Northampton, passing under the Coplay-Northampton Bridge, before continuing to North Catasauqua.

The Northampton-North Catasauqua piece is a key section that ultimately will be part of a 14-mile loop that traverses both sides of the Lehigh River, with crossings in Cementon and Allentown. For that to happen, a 3.5-mile section that’s part of the proposed \$425 million business and residential development project, called The Waterfront, in Allentown, will have to be completed. The LVPC is applying for the federal grant on what would be a more than \$20 million project to complete that section of trail called Riverside Drive. It’s a highly competitive grant, but the Riverside Drive project was a finalist in 2020 and was encouraged by federal officials to apply again in 2021.

“Beyond providing the final connection in Northampton County, this is an important section because it serves as a catalyst to encourage movement along the entire trail,” said Claire Sadler, Delaware & Lehigh Heritage Corridor Executive Director. “We get calls almost daily from people who want to plan their trip along the trail.”

Now, people have a better way to plan those trips. The Official D&L Trail Guide book is now available at <https://delawareandlehigh.org/explore-the-corridor/dl-trail-guidebook-app/> The book includes maps of the trails, places to stay and eat along the trail, as well as trail-friendly businesses.

In the guide, the Northampton-to-North Catasauqua section is a dotted line listed as “Future Trail.” Sadler is anxious to make some edits.

“This is just our first edition of the guide book,” Sadler said. “We’re hoping to need a second edition relatively soon, as more sections of trail are added. That’s the goal.”