

A Proposal for Consideration of the DuBois-Sandy Recreation Subcommittee

Connecting DuBois and Sandy Township:

**“Building a Walkway from a West Sandy Trailhead near
Triangle Springs through the Highland Street Tunnel
to Shaffer Road and the DuBois Mall.”**

INTRODUCTION

On August 3, 2021, Sandy Township Manager Shawn Arbaugh and DuBois City Manager John “Herm” Suplizio announced that the two municipalities are working together to plan a 2-2.5 mile connector trail from the DuBois City Park to the Wolf Run Rails To Trails trailhead in Sandy Township near Falls Creek.

The city and the township agreed to provide the matching funds of \$10,000 apiece for the grant application through North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission to conduct the planning for construction of the connector trail.

Arbaugh and Suplizio expressed that through working together on this community project, residents will be able to safely walk, run, and bike all the way from the DuBois Mall to just outside of Brockway.

WHAT THIS PROPOSAL DOES

Now that consolidation between the DuBois and Sandy Township is underway, this proposal further connects DuBois and Sandy Township by constructing a 2-2.5 mile Walkway from a West Sandy Trailhead near Triangle Springs through the Highland Street Tunnel to Shaffer Road and the DuBois Mall.

This project continues the momentum of municipal cooperation focused on enhanced recreational assets and opportunities by seeking to secure a

grant from the North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission to conduct the planning for construction of this connector trail.

Residents will be able to safely walk, run and bike all the way from a West Sandy Trailhead in the Triangle Springs area to Showers Field and access the northern and southern banks of the Beaver Meadow Walkway along the Sandy Lick Creek, and to a point near Lezzer Lumber on Shaffer Road (SR 4017) by the DuBois Mall.



The Walkway travels through the Highland Street Tunnel, across South Third Street, over the Chestnut and Maple Avenue B&S railroad bridges, and along the the railroad easement on the southern bank of Sandy Lick Creek approximately 1 mile to a point near Lezzer Lumber on Shaffer Road (SR 4017) by the DuBois Mall.

Planning for the construction of the connector trail would include the refurbishment of Highland Street Tunnel, upgrading and repurposing the Chestnut and Maple Avenue B&S railroad bridges for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and safety lighting and drainage along the Walkway.

HISTORY OF THE TUNNEL

The Highland Street Tunnel “The Tunnel,” is formally named the “Cottage Hill Tunnel”, derived from an early name for the Second Ward of the City of DuBois and a location of the first church building in 1873.

The Tunnel was constructed in 1903 by the Buffalo and Susquehanna Railroad (B&S) to haul coal from the booming mines in the area. The Tunnel straddles the corporate boundaries of Sandy Township and the City of Du Bois and the bore stretches 401.5 feet long.



In 1930, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) purchased the (B&S) and the neighboring Buffalo, Rochester, and Pittsburgh Railroad (BR&P). By the 1970's, the B&O had abandoned the majority of the former B&S line north and south of DuBois.



Sometime in the 1990's, this segment was partially dismantled, but not completely abandoned. The property was acquired by the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad (B&P). Tax parcel maps for Clearfield County indicate that the tunnel and the right-of-way are still retained by the B&P, who continues to operate the remaining rails east of DuBois to the Interstate I-80 bridge.

Currently, the the Highland Street Tunnel sits forlorn and vandalized, although in a fairly decent condition. Only the portals show excessive deterioration.

The B&S railroad bridges over Chestnut and Maple Avenue in DuBois appear structurally sound but in need of restoration and repurposing for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.



INCENTIVE FOR FURTHER WALKWAY CONNECTION

The proposed Walkway connecting DuBois and Sandy Township is a win for the the North Central PA Planning Commission who has long planned and visioned the reopening the historic rail transportation corridor from DuBois to Curwensville for recreational walking, running and biking.



The proposed Walkway is a strategic step to reopen the DuBois to Curwensville corridor by extending the proposed Walkway from the West Sandy Trailhead 2.1 miles to C&M (Clearfield & Mahoning Railway) Junction in Brady Township, and connecting to the 17.4 mile RJ Corman Railroad (RJCRR) “Bickford Line” right of way through Luthersburg, Rockton, Brown Springs at the Moshannon State Forest, Bilger’s Rocks and along the historic Anderson Creek Gorge (The Great Shamokin Path) to Bridgeport and the David S. Ammerman Trail (Clearfield to Grampian Trail).

The proposed Walkway connecting DuBois and Sandy Township is also a win for for the DuBois region.

The DuBois region will benefit from enhanced recreational assets and economic growth serving as an I-80 “Rails to Trails Hub” in Northcentral Pennsylvania, North to Brockway and South to Curwensville.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Many generations of former and current residents have related adventures, stories and local traditions about the Highland Street Tunnel, and voiced support of a Walkway connecting DuBois and Sandy through the Highland Street Tunnel by posting home made videos and photos on this GoDuBois thread.

A survey is now being planned by the DuBois-Sandy Recreation Subcommittee seeking recreational ideas from DuBois-Sandy residents on future unplanned projects.



It is hoped that DuBois-Sandy residents and organizations will consider the merits of this proposal for discussion and inclusion in the upcoming survey.