

LOCAL NEWS

Section filling Schuylkill River Trail gap now complete

The trail is now uninterrupted for 70 miles between Philadelphia and Reading



The recently-opened .9-mile connector between the Chester County and western Montgomery County sections of the Schuylkill River Trail uses the Route 422 bridge to allow trail users to use 70 miles of uninterrupted trail between Philadelphia and Reading. (Photo courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways)



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LOWER POTTSBGROVE — A dream that began nearly 50 years ago is now 70 miles closer to fruition.

The last piece of the Schuylkill River Trail connecting the Chester County section to the Western Montgomery County section has been completed. As a result, it is now possible to use the trail to get from Philadelphia to Reading without having to ride on a road for any portion.

Construction of the 0.9-mile connection between Industrial Highway and the Route 422 bridge in Lower Pottsgrove opened to the public on Aug. 19, closing a crucial gap in the trail.

A ribbon-cutting will be held on Sept. 29 at 1 p.m. to celebrate filling this important gap.



With the completion of this segment, the Schuylkill River Trail now extends nearly 70 miles, from Bartram's Garden in southwest Philadelphia to Riverfront Park in the City of Reading.



A ribbon-cutting for this new section of trail is scheduled for Sept. 29 at 1 p.m.
(Image courtesy of Schuylkill River Greenways)

“It’s so exciting. This was the number one question we always got asked on surveys and when people called the office,” said Elaine Schaefer, executive director for Schuylkill River Greenways, which oversees the trail and promotes its extension.

“Having this long a section open is a game changer, because it makes an overnight trip much more feasible,” she said. “If you’re riding in the Tour De France, 70 miles is a day’s ride, but for the casual rider, 20 to 25 miles a day is a nice, fun day.”

That’s good news for Pottstown, Schaefer said.

“Pottstown is in a perfect position for an overnight from Philadelphia. Pottstown has been on the brink of exploding for some time now, and this inflow of new visitors will be a real boost to Pottstown’s economy,” she said.

“I once went to a seminar with a Real Estate economist and he said what you need are three things: A long active trail, good apartments and a couple of breweries, and Pottstown has those things,” she said. It will be a good environment for bed and breakfast inns as well, Schaefer said, noting that the Three Daughters Inn on High Street gets a lot of recommendations from the Greenway office when asked by riders for a place to stay overnight.



Elaine Schaefer, Schuylkill River Greenways executive director, speaks Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026, during a meeting at the WCR Center for the Arts, 140 N. Fifth St., on redesigning the Reading Gateway Bridge. (BILL UHRICH/READING EAGLE)

“People are creative. If there is a market for it, they will find a way,” Schaefer said.

When the trail is finally finished as first envisioned in 1979, it will run the length of the river, 120 miles from Frackville in Schuylkill County, near the river’s source, through Berks, Montgomery, and Chester counties to Bartram’s Garden in Philadelphia.

The Schuylkill River Greenway Association, predecessor of Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area, was founded in 1974 to protect the river and explore its recreational potential. In 1979, early conceptualization and initial project efforts for the trail path were formally initiated by the greenway organization.

In 2003, the organization moved its office headquarters from Wyomissing to Pottstown to be more centrally located in the heritage area, according to the [history on the organization's website](#).



The yellow dotted line on this map shows the 0.9-mile new section connecting the Chester and Montgomery County sections of the Schuylkill River Trail. (Map courtesy of Montgomery County)

Schaefer said the next gap in the trail is when it reaches the City of Reading, “where there is a one-mile gap. After that, there are quite a few, between Reading and Muhlenberg, but I think when some of these other municipalities see how a long section of trail can boost their economies, they’re going to all want to be a part of it.”

In the end, she said, “It’s amazing how important a 0.9-mile section of trail turned out to be.”

Scott France, executive director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission, [told The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) that the county began to acquire rights-of-way to the land for the link a decade ago.

The \$1.28 million connector project was funded with the combination of a

Money to construct this section of trail, and many others, is important. But so is money to maintain the sections of the trail that are already built, and some funders find that prospect less enticing.

Stewardship Trail Challenge

Not so for the Pottstown-based Switchpoint Foundation and the Wyomissing Foundation.

The Greenway recently announced that the Switchpoint Foundation has pledged \$500,000 and the Wyomissing Foundation awarded a \$150,000 Centennial Grant to help build a permanent source of funding for major repairs and improvements to the Schuylkill River Trail.

“I ride on the Schuylkill River Trail with several friends and Pottstown leaders every week,” Scott Bentley, CEO of the Switchpoint Foundation, said in a press release. “We are thrilled to have such a well-maintained and level trail, with beautiful scenery, on which to ride. Not only is it an important part of the quality of life here, but it’s also vital to tourism and economic development in the Pottstown region and beyond.”



This new section of the trail was opened to the public on Aug. 19. (Image courtesy

“The trail provides an extraordinary, free resource for recreation, transportation, health, and community connection,” said Patricia Giles, President of The Wyomissing Foundation. “We are pleased to support a fund designed to ensure that this important community asset remains safe and enjoyable for generations to come, as well as serve as a catalyst for investment and tourism.”

“These incredibly generous commitments,” Schaefer said in the press release, “help create an enduring source of funding to care for the Schuylkill River Trail.”

But the effort to create this fund is open to large and small donors alike.

How You Can Help

For the next eight weeks, supporters can also join the Greenways Stewardship Trail Challenge.

“Every mile you run, ride or paddle through Oct. 11 can help protect the river and trail. The Stewardship Trail Challenge invites runners, walkers, bikers, and kayakers to log miles along the Schuylkill River and Schuylkill River Trail while raising funds that go directly toward the Schuylkill River Greenways Stewardship Fund,” according to a Greenways press release.

This is the final year of a \$5 million campaign to create this fund that will provide a sustainable source of revenue for projects such as bridge repairs, improving trail surfaces, and fixing damage after storms.

Here’s how it works: [participants join the challenge with a donation of any amount through GiveCloud](#), then track their miles on the SRT throughout the challenge. After donating, participants will establish their own fundraising page through GiveCloud to multiply their impact by sharing their fundraiser with family, friends and social networks. Every mile logged and every dollar raised fuels the large-scale maintenance projects that are needed to keep the trail passable and enjoyable for all for years to come.

“Anyone who loves the trail can be part of its future with a contribution of any size,” said Schaeffer.

Instructions for creating your P2P fundraiser: After submitting your donation, click the “Start a Fundraiser” button. Customize the name of your fundraiser with your name and goal. Suggested Page Name: “Your Name’s Trail Challenge Fundraiser to bike/walk/run XXX miles to benefit the Schuylkill River Greenways Stewardship Fund.”

Set a realistic individual fundraising goal. \$500 is a suggested starting point, but feel free to choose whatever goal you think is achievable within the two-month time frame. Click “Finish.” You will be emailed your fundraising link to share with your networks.



One year's Ride for the River began at Royersford's Trestle Bridge. (MediaNews Group file Photo)

Other Trail Events

- Ride for the River — Sept. 19 — An annual ride to explore the trail while supporting Schuylkill River Greenways. The new connector isn't on the route for this event, but you could easily check it out before or afterwards. Register: <https://schuylkillriver.org/ride-for-the-river/>

- First-ever Annual Schuylkill River Trail Shuffle — Oct. 10 — In Riverfront Park in Pottstown. After breakfast, [registered participants](#) can undertake a 10-mile run on the trail, a 5K on the trail, or a one-mile fun run. Cash prizes will be awarded for the course record, along with age group awards.
- SRT Cycle and Stay — Oct. 3 and Oct. 4 — Park in Valley Forge, then take a shuttle with your bike to Reading. Then ride your bike on the trail: from Reading to Pottstown, where you can stay overnight and have dinner. On Sunday, ride from Pottstown to Valley Forge. The event is self-guided, and riders can use the new [Schuylkill River Trail Ride Guides](#) to help you find places to stop, eat, and sleep. \$50 per person for shuttle and bicycle support and luggage transportation.

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- From spring to fall, the Greenway conducts “Pedal and Paddle” events, involving both biking and kayaking. The last one this year will be held Oct. 17 at 10 a.m. and is “bike only” at the Bartram’s Garden section of the trail in Philadelphia. A bus shuttle leaves Riverfront Park in Pottstown at 8:30 a.m.

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