

trailNEWS

WORKING TO CONNECT PITTSBURGH TO WASHINGTON—THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS, NOT OVER THEM

Three Rivers Heritage Trail • Steel Valley Trail • Montour Trail • Youghiogheny River Trail North
Youghiogheny River Trail South • Allegheny Highlands Trail (PA) • Allegheny Highlands Trail of MD

Volume 5, Number 1

Summer 2005

DCNR Awards Trail Grants

Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and two local organizations recently accepted a \$500,000 check from Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Michael DiBerardinis for three trail projects in Allegheny County.

"Today is a good day for Allegheny County," Onorato said. "The three additional projects that the state has graciously included in their allocation process are a prime example of the benefits that Growing Greener funds can provide our communities and residents."

The Allegheny County Parks Department was awarded \$250,000 for the Montour Connector, a two-mile link that will connect the Montour Trail with the South Park fairgrounds. The Montour Trail Council also received \$50,000 to repair flood-damaged areas of the Montour Trail. See update on trail status on page 2.

DCNR also awarded the Steel Valley Trail Council \$200,000 for the acquisition of a pipeline corridor that is owned by U.S. Steel. This purchase is a critical component for trail development. (continued on page 2)



Allegheny County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and Hannah Hardy, president of the Steel Valley Trail

Great Allegheny Passage Trail Status June 2005

Somerset County, PA

Now Open: Trail from the Salisbury Viaduct to Meyersdale, PA is now open. Construction on the section from Meyersdale to the Mason-Dixon Line is underway. We can't estimate a completion date at this time. The reconstruction of the Big Savage Tunnel is finished, but the **tunnel is closed** until the trail on both sides is finished. We are hopeful that this section from Meyersdale to the Mason-Dixon Line will be finished, barring any unforeseen circumstances, sometime in **late** 2005. Unfortunately, this section will **not** be finished in time for a June or July ride.

The County of Somerset would like to remind the public that trespassing is prohibited during construction, and violators will be prosecuted. No one is permitted to enter these lands without the appropriate authorization. The closing is done in the interest of public safety, and everyone's patience and cooperation is appreciated. This closing pertains to the undeveloped trail, bridges and the Big Savage Tunnel.

Allegheny County, MD

The five-mile section from the Mason-Dixon Line to Frostburg, MD is open.

Construction is underway on the section of trail from the Frostburg-New Hope Road Trailhead (continued on page 2)



Marking the Miles

Ten straight days of clear, sunny weather were the only gift we could give Ed Talone as he paced our trail, driving in survey stakes at mile intervals to mark the Great Allegheny Passage system. Trail users well know that our many trail sections have individual mile markings, creating confusion as you transition from one to another.

Ed is the Trail Information Specialist at the American Hiking Society and used his volunteer week vacation to help us out. Ed has hiked all over the country including all the National (continued on page 2)

◀ Ed Talone, Linda Boxx, Bill Atkinson at MP 0

Inside

- Letter from the Prez3
- Trail Mix3
- Explore-A-Story3
- Walking Benefits.....4
- Trailbook 20054
- Attention BST Sponsors5

Trail Update continued from page 1

to the Woodcock Hollow Trailhead (approximately half way to Cumberland). The trail in this section is closed during construction, which is scheduled for completion by early fall 2005.

The final section from the Woodcock Hollow Trailhead into Cumberland is scheduled for bid late fall of 2005 with construction taking place in 2006, contingent upon final funding approval from the state and federal governments.

Allegheny County, PA

There are sections of trail built between McKeesport and Pittsburgh's Point State Park, the terminus of the trail. However, there are challenges involved in connecting those sections which include rehabilitation of the Hot Metal Bridge in Pittsburgh and land acquisition concerns. The timeframe for completion to the Point is still to be determined.

Montour Trail Status

Recovery from the ravages of Hurricane Ivan in September 2004 that closed nine miles of the trail has progressed nicely. Be sure to check <http://www.montourtrail.org/floodpages/floodmain.html> for progress. We expect to have all the flood repairs substantially complete by late summer.

Outside of flood remediation, the trail is complete from mile zero to about mile 30 with the exception of the bridges over Route 50, Morganza Road, and Georgetown Road in Cecil Township, which are all bypassed by short on-road rides.

The Muse-Bishop project is underway. The trail will be **closed** from April 25th until some time in fall 2005 to allow for demolition of the existing fill and tunnel structure and erection of a new bridge. There is also active construction on the 0.6-mile connector to the Panhandle Trail that passes under the McDonald Trestle west of McDonald. About half of the remaining miles of main line between Cecil and mile 47 in Clairton are open, including the newly posted share-the-road section from Gil Hall Road to Large, and the 1.4 mile section from Arrowhead Trail eastward to the county line in Peters Township. Road detours around the three major breaks between completed sections from Cecil Township to Clairton can be found at <http://www.montourtrail.org/maps/bypass.html>. ■

DCNR Grants Help Trails continued from page 1

Hannah Hardy, president of the Steel Valley Trail Council said, "We would like to thank Secretary DiBerardinis for this very important grant from DCNR. This will match an Allegheny County Regional Asset District grant that must be obligated by the end of the year."

"There have been some major challenges in completing the Great Allegheny Passage including engineering feats like the reconstruction of the Big Savage Tunnel. Now is the time to concentrate on completing the trail segments in Allegheny County so that the Mon Valley and this region can realize the full benefits from this nationally recognized trail system.

With the assistance of both the County and DCNR, we hope to have this trail connection completed by 2008, Pittsburgh's 250th birthday." ■

Marking the Miles continued from page 1

Scenic Trails, some more than once, and has logged well over 40,000 miles. He can pace a mile within 25 feet, which we thought was accurate enough for our temporary mileposts. Carsonite markers based on his work are now appearing with the GAP logo and a number that indicates the distance from Cumberland, MD.

Ed started in Cumberland. First order of business was to determine where Milepost 0 was to be located. After deliberation, it was decided to place it west of the I-68 overpass at Canal Place, with the Western Maryland train station in the background. Ed's picture appeared on the front page of the *Cumberland Times* the next day and gave him certain celebrity status as he made his way north: "Oh, you're the guy marking the trail."

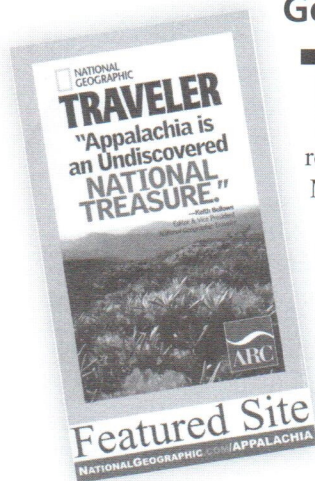
He used railroad track charts, engineering drawings, and existing mileposts as references, but relied heavily on his consistent pacing and concentration.

All the friendly folks who passed Ed and tried to say hello were greeted only with a slight nod as he had to keep his mind on counting steps. "People wanted to know where I had come from, how far I was going, but I just couldn't afford to lose my count. They probably thought I was just a grumpy guy, but hopefully they will now understand the mission I was on."

Volunteer Ned Williams has taken the lead for the mile marker project. Thanks, Ned, for developing the charts that Ed worked from; making some of the stakes, and stowing them, with others, along the trail; finding and ordering the Carsonite; researching fonts; ordering the numeral fonts; storing all the Carsonite; affixing the numerals and logo decals; designing and manufacturing an awesome slot digger; going out with various people to install the mile posts, with acute attention to detail that only those out in the field with him could appreciate.

Thanks to the Robertshaw Charitable Foundation for financing this effort. ■

Great Allegheny Passage featured site on National Geographic Geotourism Map



The cartographic and editorial expertise of National Geographic and the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) extensive knowledge and contacts throughout the region came together to create the engaging Geotourism MapGuide to Appalachia.

Sites representative of the region's rich, diverse and, in many cases, undiscovered treasures were selected for inclusion on the map. The Great Allegheny Passage, nominated by the Maryland Department of Planning, is one.

The Map Guide was inserted in the April 2005 issue of National Geographic's *Traveler* magazine, read by over four million people across the country. The map is also on the web at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/appalachia/>. ■

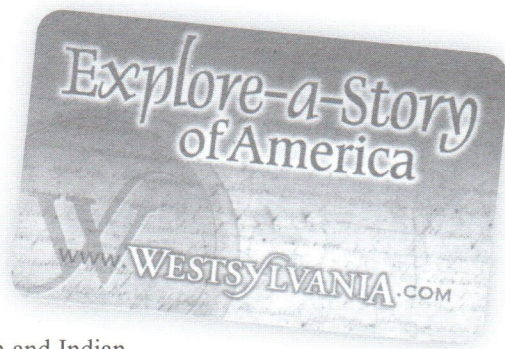
trailMIX

There are some new faces on the ATA Board of Directors. **Rob Boulware**, Director of Communications for Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania and a member of the ATA marketing committee, and **Dave Fawcett**, a member of the Allegheny County Council, recently joined as at-large members. Dave represents RiverLife Task Force, the organization responsible for building the last mile of the Great Allegheny Passage from the Mon Wharf to Point State Park. Both are trail advocates and valuable additions to the Board. Welcome Rob and Dave! ATA would like to thank former Board members **Linc Van Sickle** and **Karl Thomas** for their service. Linc, representing Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association, has been a trail supporter since the early days and left the Board after many years of service to enjoy retirement. Karl represented Friends of the Riverfront and resigned to become the executive director of Pittsburgh Voyager. Congratulations to **Mary Shaw** and **Roy Weil** who received one of the 2004 Stewards of the Environment award from Recreational Equipment, Inc., a Seattle-based supplier of specialty outdoor gear and clothing. Mary and Roy received this award because they love cycling and the outdoors, and the guidebooks that they co-authored encourage others to become involved in outdoor activities. *Post-Gazette* reporter and avid trail supporter, **Larry Walsh** underwent quadruple heart bypass surgery on Dec. 24 and is doing very well. He reports that outdoor bike riding is part of his cardio-rehab program, and he plans to be on some part of the Great Allegheny Passage every weekend. "Outdoor biking is much more fun than the pedal-in-place Airdyne 'riding' that I do twice a week at Shadyside Hospital." *Great Little Walks* has been so popular that a second edition has been published with updated information on the 12 walks. The book will be available soon at local retailers such as Barnes and Noble, or it can be ordered for \$7.95 plus shipping and tax by calling ATA at 1-888-282-2453. **Yough River Transport** fans have written to say that they have found the shuttle service prompt and professional. Yough River Transport also provides emergency pickups. <http://youghrivertransport.com/> Phone 724-277-0550. ■

The Great Allegheny Passage and the Explore-A-Story of America program

The Explore-A-Story of America program is designed for residents to discover more stories about the region and support their local heritage development projects. The program is sponsored in our region by Westsylvania Heritage Corporation (WHC) and in our community by the Allegheny Trail Alliance. The Great Allegheny Passage tells many stories of our region from Native Americans, a young George Washington, the French and Indian War, and steel and coke.

When you become an Explore-A-Story member, you receive *Westsylvania* magazine and a membership card. The card accesses privileged offers at participating attractions (called Storytellers) and businesses (called Good Neighbors). Two percent of the amount of your purchase at participating Storytellers and Good Neighbors goes to the approved heritage development project (called Community Conservation Initiative) of your choice, like the Great Allegheny Passage. Check out the website for more information. <http://www.westsylvania.com/> ■



LETTER FROM THE PREZ

Last fall we posted a survey on our website and received over 250 responses from you, the trail user. Thanks to all who took the time to tell us what you think and how we can improve the trail experience. We always appreciate the comment, "you're the best!" but we really wanted to hear concrete feedback from you. And we did:

- Most of you are cyclists and you love the Ohiopyle to Confluence run.
- Half of you found the trail through word of mouth.
- You want more signage, both directional and educational.
- You want up-to-date construction information on the website.

To address your concerns, we decided to tackle the signage issue first, specifically the mileposts. Our many trail sections have spawned separate mile marking systems. We intended to wait until the trail was complete to Cumberland (MP 0) before installing premanent mileposts. As an interim solution, we decided to install temporary markers to indicate the system mileage (see article on p. 1)

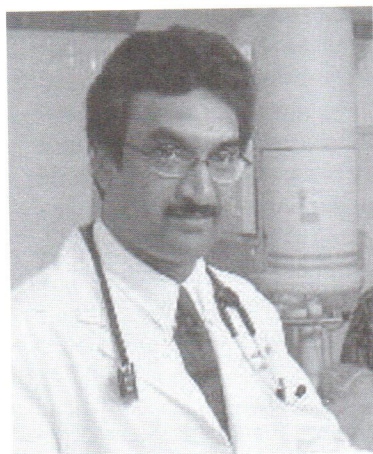
Interpretive signage is increasing. The Steel Industry Heritage Corporation in partnership with the Steel Valley Trail and the Friends of the Riverfront are in the process of designing interpretive signage for those sections of trail. The Rockwood River and Rails Festival has partnered with ATA in developing a sign about Rockwood that will be in place soon. We are currently working on a short (it's very difficult to keep it short) story of the Big Savage Tunnel to be installed on a sign near the western portal once construction is complete. A recent grant from the Westsylvania Heritage Corporation will help fund more such signs.

Our website is a valuable portal to our trail, and our new site with the same great information is scheduled to go on line soon. It's restructured, includes more pictures, and will be easier for us amateurs to update.

Keep the suggestions coming; this is your trail, too. ■

— Linda McKenna Boxx

A walk or ride on the trail can help you reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, arthritis, weight gain, and osteoporosis.



Dr. Debasish Chaudhuri, Somerset Hospital cardiologist, reports, "Walking can be very beneficial to an individual's health, and the Great Allegheny Passage provides a pleasant walking environment."

Research has found that it's not necessary to run marathons or climb mountains to reap the benefits of exercise which include reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, weight gain, cancer, arthritis and osteoporosis. Experts recommend walking 3 to 5 mph for at least thirty minutes, five or six days a week.

This minimal amount of exercise, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, may substantially decrease the risk of stroke by 20 to 30 percent. Also, walking lowers blood pressure and increases the amount of HDL (or good) cholesterol in the blood and reduces the risk of blood clots by 30 to 40 percent.

"Regular aerobic exercise, such as walking or biking, is just as important and useful in prevention of coronary artery disease as any medication," said Dr. Chaudhuri. Walking not only reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke, but it also helps build bone density and strengthens muscles to help in the prevention of arthritis and osteoporosis. In fact, research has connected regular brisk walking with a decrease in the incidence of certain types of cancer, including colon and breast cancer.

The benefits of walking are much more than what many people realize, and the hundreds of thousands of us who live within a few miles of the Great Allegheny Passage can easily explore scenic walking trails. "The Allegheny Highlands Trail section is in my backyard," said Dr. Chaudhuri. "It's a free health club with amazing vistas."

For more information, call Somerset Hospital at 814-443-5000. ■

Several indispensable tools for riding the GAP on the Internet Biking The Internet

The Allegheny Trail Alliance website—<http://www.atatrail.org>—is one tool, and the other is a group of individuals, loosely linked via the Internet in a news group hosted by Yahoo. It now has 158 members and allows the sharing of information about the Great Allegheny Passage.

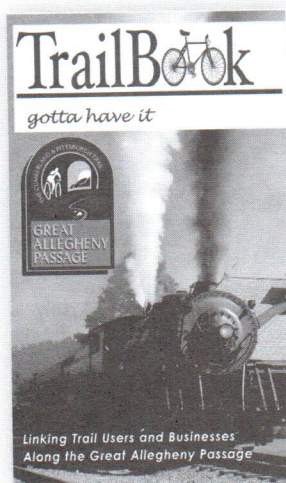
Topics range from up-to-date conditions of the trail, interesting sights along the way, places to stay and eat, and people's experiences. Last fall during the floods in western Pennsylvania, local users kept everyone informed about what parts of the trail were damaged, put out calls for volunteer help to restore damaged sections, and spread the word when sections were reopened.

The group is free and easy to join. First you go to Yahoo Groups at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>. At Find A Group, type in Great Allegheny Passage. The search results will give you Great Allegheny Passage and on the right side of the screen will be a button to "Join This Group."

Click the button, give yourself a name and password, and you're ready to send and receive emails. There is no cost, and if you decide you don't want to participate, you can leave the group as easily as you joined.

I've been a member and have been especially pleased with the expert comments, cordiality, and valuable information that flows through the group. No rants or raves, no flaming, just good information about the Great Allegheny Passage, bicycling, and having fun. ■

By Paul g. Wiegman



TrailBook 2005 Connects Visitors to Businesses

A new book about towns and businesses along the Great Allegheny Passage is now available up and down the trail. Created by Fieldstone Publications, *TrailBook 2005* fills a marketing gap separating trail users from the businesses along the trail.

The 2002 ATA economic impact study showed that one-third of the trail users at the "destination"

trailheads asked for more information on where to stop, stay, eat, shop, have a wheel rebuilt, or buy an inner tube. Designed to be used while planning a trail visit or as a handy pocket guide as you are cruising along, *TrailBook 2005* answers

those questions and will be updated every year as more trail-related businesses come on line.

A special feature of *TrailBook 2005* is the most comprehensive map available of the full length of the Great Allegheny Passage and the Montour Trail from the Pittsburgh area, through the mountains, to Cumberland, MD and the C&O Canal Towpath. The 18" x 24" map is printed on both sides in full color on Tyvek® (a weatherproof, tear-resistant paper-like material) and folded to tuck neatly into the pocket of the back cover. Important trail towns are enlarged so you can find your way around. The book and map are fully cross-indexed so you can locate what service you're looking for and learn more about it, too. The book can be purchased for \$6 at many trail-side businesses, or it can be ordered by calling ATA at 1-888-282-2453 for the retail price plus shipping and tax. ■

Ride Remembers Last WM Passenger Train

On Saturday, May 21st, Paul Wiegman led a ride celebrating the 30th anniversary of the final passenger train on the Western Maryland Railway. Paul was on that train and he wrote about it in the Sunday, May 21, 2005 Focus section of the *Tribune-Review*. Below is a shortened version.

On the morning of May 21, 1975, a train pulled out of the B&O Station in Pittsburgh. It was the last train carrying passengers to travel the tracks of the Western Maryland Railway. The train traveled east from Pittsburgh to Connellsville. Here, at the western end of the Western Maryland Railway, the reason for the ride began.

From the Bowest yards just outside of Connellsville, the little train slowly wove through the deep forests on the south side of the Youghiogheny River. There was no schedule to keep so the engineer took his time and let the passengers enjoy the white water, rock cliffs, and multihued spring greens of the Allegheny Mountains. We stopped for photos at Ohiopyle. At Confluence, people gathered along the tracks to wave, take pictures, and watch since this would be the last time such a train would pass this way.

The little train rolled on and into the coal black dark of the Big Savage Tunnel. Off of Allegheny Mountain and headed into the Appalachian Ridge and Valley lands, the train passed through Frostburg and Cumberland to stop at Hancock, Md., where the trip ended.

Months before the train made its jour-



Paul G. Wiegman

Last Western Maryland Passenger train at Ohiopyle, May 21, 1975.

ney the Western Maryland Railway had petitioned the federal government to abandon its westernmost tracks as it was owned by the B&O which had parallel tracks. Fortunately, the senior management of the Western Maryland didn't want to just abandon the railway. They fervently wanted to make sure that this spectacular route would be opened to public enjoyment well after the sound of the engines subsided.

That vision was shared by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy led by president Joshua C. Whetzel. With the help of

the railway, the train was arranged to carry local officials, reporters, state officials, dignitaries and others to let them see firsthand the beauty of the river valleys and water gaps.

By the end of the ride to Hancock, there was unanimous approval of the idea and the passengers were ready to ride back to Pittsburgh on bicycles. However, there were many obstacles including the reconstruction and maintenance of massive structures. Months after the little train rode through the mountains, the vision began to cloud. By the end of 1975 the project was shortened to just 25 miles within Ohiopyle State Park. It took years to sort out all the details.

At Ohiopyle State Park, Superintendent Larry Adams hadn't forgotten the vision. He quietly began to build a trail once the tracks, ties and ballast were gone. The embryonic path was between Ohiopyle and Confluence through the spectacular Laurel Ridge Water Gap and the first nine miles were opened in 1986.

The public used those miles of trail and clamored for more.

Today the vision of bicycling from Pittsburgh to Washington, DC is being realized. To each of us, the Great Allegheny Passage is something extraordinary. I had the unique pleasure to ride on that little passenger train 30 years ago yesterday and again on May 21, 2005 to ride again on the trail through a warm western Pennsylvania spring. Save the date and join the anniversary ride in 2006. ■

Attention Big Savage Tunnel Sponsors

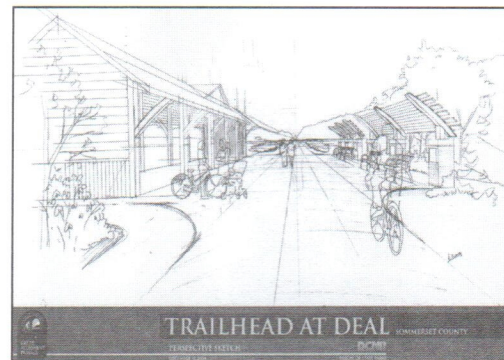
Thanks to all who donated to the Big Savage Tunnel Sponsor-a-Foot campaign. The campaign was very successful; we received support from trail users from all over the country.

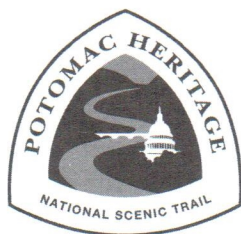
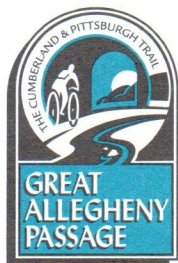
The donor monument will be installed at the trailhead in Deal. Andrew Evans of DCNR designed a beautiful trailhead with ample space to mount several plaques to list the names of the campaign donors who contributed \$100 or more.

Because the plaques will be permanent components of the trailhead, we want to ensure that the donations are accurately listed. A complete list of donors, arranged alphabetically in each category (Crown Contributor, Portal Patron, and Rock Anchor), is available on our website www.atatrail.org. Please contact us by email at ata-mail@atatrail.org or by calling our toll-free number 1-888-282-2453 with any corrections.

If you do not have internet access, you can call our toll-free number, and we will tell you the way your donation is listed. The deadline for corrections is July 31, 2005.

An announcement will be posted on the website once the plaques are in place so that you may see the donor list at the trailhead and the magnificent Big Savage Tunnel. ■





Connecting People and Places in the Potomac Heritage Trail Corridor

Potomac Trace, a new journal being produced through a partnership between the American Hiking Society and the National Park Service Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail office, explores the significance of places and stories in the trail corridor, including those along the Great Allegheny Passage. View online at www.potomactrace.org or, to receive a copy in the mail or contribute an article, contact David Lillard, editor, at david@lillards.com.

ATA Trail News ©Summer 2005

Trail News is published two times a year by the Allegheny Trail Alliance (ATA). The ATA is a coalition of the seven trail-building organizations whose purpose is to assure the construction, maintenance and use of the Great Allegheny Passage trail system. The GAP is a multiple purpose, non-motorized trail from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD where it will join the C & O Canal Towpath to Washington, DC. To subscribe or unsubscribe, contact ATA:

Phone: 724-853-2453 • Fax: 724-832-8519
atamail@atatrail.org • www.atatrail.org.

- ☐ **Friends of the Riverfront**
Three Rivers Heritage Trail—Point State Park to the Glenwood Bridge,
- ☐ **Steel Valley Trail Council**
Steel Valley Trail—Glenwood Bridge, through McKeesport, and on to Clairton,
- ☐ **Regional Trail Corporation**
Youghiogheny River Trail—McKeesport to Connellsville,
- ☐ **Ohioypyle State Park, PA DCNR and Yough Trail Council**
Youghiogheny River Trail—Connellsville to Confluence,
- ☐ **Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association**
Allegheny Highlands Trail—Confluence to Mason-Dixon Line,
- ☐ **Allegheny Highlands Trail of Maryland**
Allegheny Highlands Trail—Mason Dixon Line to Cumberland,
- ☐ **Montour Trail Council**
Montour Trail—Clairton to Groveton

Support the Trail!

Join a trail group, volunteer, and/or make a donation—The Allegheny Trail Alliance's partner organizations welcome volunteers. Request information on a specific trail by checking below or log onto www.atatrail.org.

How Do I Make a Financial Contribution?

Your gift can make a difference. To make a donation, please fill in the form below and mail to ATA, 419 College Avenue, Greensburg, PA 15601

I want to help build the Great Allegheny Passage(GAP). My tax-deductible donation of _____ is enclosed (Please make check payable to RTC/ATA.).

Donors of \$20 or more may choose a thank you gift from the following (please check your choice).

- ☐ GAP logo pin
- ☐ GAP logo patch
- ☐ GAP blue/white logo decal and postcards of Bill Price's black and white railroad photos—5 each of Big Savage Tunnel and Keystone Viaduct.

Name _____

Address _____