

**Eric Lidji:**

Today is December 18, 2017. I am Eric Lidji. I am here with Linda Boxx and Jack Pollock and we are going to be interviewing John Surma and Chris Masciantonio. Did I get it right? Okay. Now, we're going to be talking about the Great Allegheny Passage. So, the place I want to start – I don't know if it's where you want to start – but one of the things that I think is really interesting about the project is that so many key people have been bike enthusiasts or outdoor enthusiasts before the project came along. And so, I thought it might be interesting to start there – if you could tell me your history with biking and the outdoors.

**Male 1:**

It's particularly relevant. I'm glad you asked it that way because I was going try and find out what to tell you. In 1982, my wife and I were living in the Washington, D.C. area. I was working for the Federal Reserve Board at the time and we lived very close to Potomac in Virginia. And, the weather was nice, went out for a walk and we were the only people who were walking. Everybody else was on skateboards and bikes and all sorts of contrivances. And so, we went over and we bought some bikes in 1982. Mine was a Peugeot. It weighed a ton, you know?

[Chuckle]

But, it was – can you guess? – a 10-speed, this was really good. And, there's little gear shifters on the down wire. It was pretty cool. So, we went around, we rode down to the Alexandria eventually and past the airport. We'd go down to all the memorials for band concerts at night. It was really a great life. So, one day we're in Georgetown and we ride up this towpath thing and we peddle along and peddle along. And, we stop just to get a drink and we're getting close to this place called "Great Falls." And, some guy stops by us. And, I said, "How far does this go?" He said, "Well, it goes up just a little ways past Great Falls," but, you know, he said, "I heard somewhere someday, someone said that someday this is going to go all the way to Pittsburgh." This is 1982, okay?

[Chuckle]

That's where it started. I mean, it's an absolute true story and my wife would verify it that, you know, unbeknownst to me, unbidden, this gentleman tells me, "Someday it's going to go all the way to Pittsburgh." Who would have guessed it? And so- and fast forward after that I was back living in Pittsburgh years later and just enjoy riding some road, some trails, some trails around here, of course. You know, they're not always navigable. I tended to ride in valleys

[Chuckle]

Avoid hills – being lazy. And so, I wouldn't say "avid," but I was an active bicycle rider when this all began to occur. And, you're starting the river with the bridge but really, you got to go back further to the Kennywood Coke Oven Gas line.

**Eric Lidji:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** That's where it really starts. At least my story starts then.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, yes, yes, yes.

**Male 1:** That's when we first got involved.

**Linda Boxx:** That's right.

**Male 1:** And, it was with Dan Onorato and trying to get this piece of the property right here, right?

**Linda Boxx:** Right, right.

**Eric Lidji:** What piece were you referring to just now?

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** It would go from...

**Linda Boxx:** One point eight nine miles.

[Chuckle]

**Male 1:** ...around Homestead. Sort of from Homestead down toward McKeesport. But, it was on the Coke Oven and Gas line that we had. It was part of our Mon Valley Works Utility infrastructure. It took Coke Oven and Gas from that particular line, I think, was coming from Clairton probably and going up

towards Homestead. Now, due to changes and configuration, it wasn't needed anymore. So, it was abandoned, eventually removed, remediated and just replaced with crushed limestone.

**Male 2:** Yeah. Well, you used to take gas to the Carrie Furnace?

**Male 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then so, I probably- to the open hearths in Homestead as well.

**Male 2:** Homestead.

**Male 1:** So then, we didn't really any need for it. And, we had some remediation to do which we did and then we, you know, in a structured transaction conveyed it to the county in a very, you know, reasonable value that was good for us and good for the county. I'm sorry, I'm saying "county". I'm really saying to the- I'm not sure actually who the other side was.

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Well, it was transferred to the Regional Trail Corporation.

**Male 2:** Regional Trail Corporation. It was transferred to the Regional Trail Corporation.

**Male 1:** I can remember being in our research lab building in Homestead just, you know, right down the road from there with you and...

**Linda Boxx:** Lots of people, yeah.

**Male 1:** ...Jack and Dan me we had a big check and all sorts of stuff. And, it was a warm, nice sunny day and everything. And, that's kind of where it all started for me, at least.

**Male 2:** And, it was actually back in '06...

**Male 1:** Yep.

**Male 2:** ...it was almost to the date now because we met with- I was with Hannah – it was with the Steel Valley Trail.

**Male 1:** Hannah. I remember Hannah, sure.

**Male 2:** And, we met in Joe Curro's office which wasn't far from here. It might have been up a couple floors.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** Is Joe still here?

**Linda Boxx:** That was your big check

**Eric Lidji:** Who's Joe Curro?

**Male 2:** Joe Curro is a real estate representative.

**Male 3:** Research Center, yep.

[Crosstalk/Chuckle]

**Male 3:** He's the real deal.

**Male 2:** He closes the deals on the real estate. They may verify that. But...

**Male 1:** Joe was our real estate guy.

**Male 2:** We were in his office and he goes, "I can't believe this got done," you know, "You're the fourth or fifth entity that tried to make this happen and it's finally happening. I'm glad you guys got involved in making this happen." Because we closed the deal in December of '06.

[Crosstalk]

**Eric Lidji:** When you say "different entities" – for trails or for different businesses?

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** Trail-related.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah. So, that was before you...

**Male 2:** I was not- yeah, you can back it up...

**Linda Boxx:** ...let me give you this background...

**Male 2:** ...because I got into this in '06.

**Linda Boxx:**

So, we knew, you know, we understood that getting through, you know, from McKeesport to Pittsburgh was really tough. And so, what I decided that until we were connected to the C&O Canal Towpath and until we had this momentum of D.C. to Pittsburgh that there was no point- I just didn't want to spend really a minute looking at the various alignments through the Steel Valley area because, you know, it's irrelevant. So, I turned my back towards Pittsburgh and we got the Big Savage Tunnel done and we got the Maryland section done. And so, those were done in, like, '04, '05, and '06. But, once 2004 came along, we knew that Maryland was coming along. And so, at that point, you know, I could turn around. And, at that time, you know, U.S. Steel had been negotiating with the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation – Larry Ridenour and Augie Carlino. And, they, you know, they wanted to indemnify, you know, they wanted all- they wanted you to do everything. They didn't want to pay any money for it, you know. Because we have records of some of these, you know, the discussions back and forth. And finally, Augie sort of threw up his hand said, "We can't do this because U.S. Steel won't indemnify us." And, Hannah was president of the Regional Trail Corporation at the time. I remember, I was skiing out west and she emails me and she said, "Augie is backing away," I said, "Jump on it quick!"

[Laughter]

You know, "We'll do it," you know, "We'll do the deal." And so, we, you know, we didn't have to push Steel Industry Heritage Corp. away. They released it and then we could jump in. And, you know, as the Regional Trail Corporation, we were used to buying properties that were imperfect. That was not- we weren't scared of that. I mean, the whole railroad corridor is one big long brown field. Now, at Coke Gas Pipeline – might be a little different. But, nonetheless, you know, we had confidence in our relationship with you that we could- because you would remediate it to a satisfactory level and so forth. And, you had given in October of 2006- no, I'm looking at the wrong one – January 2005, the Alabama property.

**Male 1:**

Oh, yeah. The Red Mountain Park?

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah. And so, we thought...

**Male 1:** That's pretty cool.

**Linda Boxx:** "...Oh, well, well maybe they'll give us a million dollars too..."

[Laughter]

"...to help us build it."

**Eric Lidji:** What's the story with the Alabama facility?

**Linda Boxx:** Well...

**Male 1:** We had- U.S. Steel is a very large landowner in Alabama which goes back to 1907 when U.S. Steel acquired the Tennessee Coal and Iron Corporation. It's a great piece of history, but I won't bore you with it now. And, Red Mountain was an elevated mountainous area just nearby the steel plants that we operated in Birmingham and had long been abandoned. There were some very historical sites there. These little shacks that the miners lived in with tin roofs – really interesting facilities. A high line with mules and steam and black powder they built to go from the mountain all the way down to the blast furnaces. It's like 100 feet tall with timber bridges – really, really neat stuff. And, it was abandoned. There was a group that wanted to turn it into a park. It's bigger than Central Park, by the way. And, we conveyed that- you might have been there under the shadow of the Vulcan statue...

**Male 2:** Yep.

**Male 1:** ...right on top of Red Mountain, right by the Club Restaurant kind of place. So, yeah, we had the piece of property we didn't really need. It was not suitable for any kind of development. And, they had some historical use for it. We had already done something like that with some lands pertinent to the Black Royal River and I forget the name of the other rivers too. The rivers that were very natural, wild natural places that were reclaimed. So, we were, I guess, I wasn't necessarily feeling philanthropic, but I was trying to find the best use for that kind of a property. And, the Coke Oven Gas Line, by the way, just

to be clear – it was an elevated pipe, okay? So, it wasn't in the ground. It was...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** Right it's an elevated pipeline.

**Male 1:** ...elevated with...yeah.

**Male 2:** The service road which was part railroad at one time and the other part was just a service road. But, whenever- and I will appreciate the fact that when you guys were about to convey that to the non-profit, you did diligence on the phase one because Joe was very, "We want to make sure this is okay before we give it to you."

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** So, that was done before it was conveyed to us. It was like, "We're not giving you something- a super liability."

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** "We're going to make sure it's not." And you guys did diligence.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** It was an elevated coke line so it wasn't like **inaudible** **0:10:29.1** or anything. It wasn't all that bad, to begin with. You know, we cleaned it up appropriately. But, it was in fairly decent shape, to begin with.

**Eric Lidji:** So, Red Mountain indicated to you...

**Linda Boxx:** Well, we thought that maybe there was an opportunity and I remember- I have a copy of an email that I sent to Joe as we were going back and forth, I said, "Well, you know, we'll work out a deal and maybe the U.S. Steel Foundation would like to, you know, donate some money to help us build the trail." And, Joe shut it down really fast and he said, "You don't know how much money we're going to have to spend to remove all the pipeline and do- I'm cheated a phase one and a phase two and whatever, you know, hotspots might have showed up."

You know, it was done very quickly. So, I think it was pretty good. But, he sort of [noise]...

[Laughter]

So, we- and I don't know how we negotiated it because originally you had- Joe had set the price at \$750,000 and we- working with you, you know, it's down to \$550,000. But, then there was also that Norfolk Southern inholding that was, like, a tower or something...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** Right.

**Male 1:** Yeah, I don't really...

**Male 2:** It was like an acre. It was like a...

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** ...an anomaly in the system. It just- no one knew it was there until the survey was done.

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** It was right in the middle of the Coke Gas Pipeline. It was about an acre which made- was problematic for us because we couldn't do development until that was resolved because it was...

**Linda Boxx:** We had owned it.

[Chuckle]

**Male 2:** We had to have access to it. But, the Coke Gas Pipeline from my perspective was very strategic because it was what led, I guess, Linda initially, "Well, if we can get this then we'll look at how to connect the rest of it." But, without that, I don't know if it would have been looked at, at all because it would be- and I would say, to look at that it's like, "This was impossible unless it's the Great Allegheny Passage."

**Male 1:** Yeah.



**Male 2:** “No one is going to try this.”

**Male 1:** My reaction was exactly the same when I was first contacted about wanting to talk about the bridge. I said, “Well, my recollection, it goes back really to this...” I call it the Kennywood Gas Line. That’s what I would call it.

**Male 2:** Okay.

**Male 1:** Yeah, just down over the hill. That’s where it really started. And then, once you all had that piece, there was momentum when we sort of got- I think we assisted slightly in getting the Norfolk Southern folks...

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Oh, I think you...

[Laughter]

**Male 2:** Oh, you did.

**Male 1:** ...on site...

**Linda Boxx:** ...more than slightly.

**Male 1:** We were big customers, we were big coal shippers and there were five people. I’m still friends with all of them, by the way – Don Seal still a good pal, we still say in touch and play golf together occasionally.

**Eric Lidji:** What’s his name?

**Male 1:** Don Seal was his name. He was the Chief Marketing Officer and Senior Vice President – fine, fine fellow. Came here when we dedicated the bridge. The bridge ribbon cutting, he was here for that.

**Linda Boxx:** Oh...

**Male 2:** Oh, that was it.

**Male 1:** And, but overall, they were, I think, once we explained the virtue of all this, they were quite supportive. And, railroads aren’t used to doing that sort of thing...

**Linda Boxx:** Absolutely.

**Male 1:** It's not their normal predilection. They like space and they don't want anything close to that.

**Male 2:** What I will say in relation to that – they were very cooperative in, “We'll work with you,” but because it's safety standards and issues which didn't know that much about, but I know a lot about them now. We adhere to all their regulatory, “You can do this, but you need to be 29 feet away, you need to be this high.” There were no compromises on safety on anything. It wasn't easy and cheap, but we facilitated all the railroad requirements. But, we wouldn't have had that without you guys opening a door.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** Yep. From there...

**Male 2:** You had to open a door.

**Male 1:** And, from there, all the way down past through Duquesne behind the old buildings that we kept there for the training center all the way through there – there's a couple of flyovers and those were all done with Norfolk Southern's help and support. So, once we started from Homestead past Kennywood, we had some momentum, I agree with that. The rest was sort of gravitational pull.

**Linda Boxx:** And, I think the piece we haven't talked about also is your role as co-chair for the Pittsburgh 250 Celebration with Dan Onorato and in- because I had to look up these dates. November of 2005 finishing the Great Allegheny Passage was named one of three legacy projects.

**Male 2:** That's right. I forgot about that.

**Linda Boxx:** And I think Davitt Woodwell sort of put the team of you and Mr. Onorato together as being the co-chairs of the Gap component.

**Male 3:** Bridge the Gap.

**Linda Boxx:** Bridge the Gap, yeah.

**Male 1:** Well, Dan and I were on very good terms anyway. He's a fine fellow. We're still good friends today and Davitt's wife was an environmental attorney with the company so we had the right combination of forces lined up for us on that.

**Linda Boxx:** And, Hannah worked for Davitt at PEC?

**Male 1:** Right.

**Linda Boxx:** So, it was very...

**Male 1:** I remember she was a really nice person. I was riding the trail one day with somebody, I forget who, she was with us and she was seven months pregnant. She was...

[Crosstalk/Laughter]

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** Yeah, that's right. We did that.

**Male 1:** God bless her.

**Linda Boxx:** Funder's tour.

**Male 1:** She was pregnant with her second child but she was out there doing it.

**Male 3:** So, Linda, this is one of the news stories from the Coke Oven Gas line.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay. All right, yes. Yeah.

**Male 3:** With the picture, I think.

**Linda Boxx:** Uh-huh.

**Male 3:** I think Hannah's in that picture.

**Linda Boxx:** Right.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 3:** If you want that...

**Male 2:** But that's where the whole...

**Eric Lidji:** This is the McKeesport Daily News?

**Male 3:** And, this is the Post-Gazette also covered it.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay.

**Male 1:** That's where it all started. Ah, Chris, sure.

**Linda Boxx:** Slow, but sure.

**Male 1:** Holy cow, my name's in the paper. Thanks.

[Laughter]

**Male 1:** See, there it is right there. That story about it's going to go all the way to Pittsburgh. It's true. I'm telling you it's true. I didn't make it up. I didn't make it up. It's absolutely true. I told the same story like ten years ago.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, and in '82- you know it's interesting. I mean, it'd be interesting to know who it was that had the thought that something like that was going to happen because, you know, the P&LE- neither the P&LE nor the- well, the Western Maryland was abandoned at that point.

**Male 2:** Okay. But the P&LE...

**Linda Boxx:** Was not.

**Male 2:** ...what year did that happen?

**Linda Boxx:** In the '90s. You know, that was Regional Trail Corporation was born around '90.

**Male 2:** Right, correct.

**Male 3:** Linda, your point about the 250 though is important because that- those three projects they identified it was bridging the Gap it was a forged trail and it was remodeling or refurbishing The Point – Point State Park. And, John was the vice chair of the Allegheny Conference. Jim Moore was the chair at the time and John was transitioning into being the chairman and the 250 birthday was a big deal for the Allegheny Conference.

**Linda Boxx:** Absolutely.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 3:** And, this project was a big part of the 250. So, it kind of took a life of its own.

**Male 2:** We will eventually talk about that and the Riverton Bridge because that was so close and I think- Chris, you- it was within one or two days of not happening. It wasn't going to happen because there was a stalemate between the county and U.S. Steel.

**Male 1:** What, the bridge?

**Male 2:** On the bridge.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** There were problems with conveying...

**Linda Boxx:** It wasn't between U.S. Steel, it was only with the county.

**Male 2:** No, it was the county. It was the county.

**Male 3:** There were federal issues with the STB and U.S. Steel abandoning the bridge.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, you did all that.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** You guys did that. You guys got that done.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, but you did that and you got that done in a very expeditious way but the county was not- I mean, Jack, I think this is the time because Jack- we were talking about some things and how when you gave the directive to Transtar, your Transtar people to abandon the Riverton Bridge and the McKeesport connecting railroad – they were not happy but they did it because you were the boss and they did it and they worked with us perfectly cooperatively. Even though they didn't want to. With the county, you know...

**Male 2:** It was- I didn't get that. See, I was trying to put all of this together because I was the project manager. So, I'm putting- I'm working with U.S. Steel, all the railroads and the county. So, at that point I thought, "Well, this is the 250 being a signature project everybody's on board with this," and your

guys want- we would have meetings with U.S. Steel, railroad people, Union Railroad, Transtar – they would always show up and stay on a timeframe. Well, with the Riverton Bridge, we ended up with a problem on the Riverton Bridge and it was through their engineering department. What had happened was that you guys were giving the bridge to the county because for issues of someone can always fall back on. There's someone out there that does have potential liability and they could deal with it as opposed to a nonprofit. And I'm going to try to hit these time- because you probably- Chris, you may have known this.

**Linda Boxx:** Oh, yeah. Chris was Mr. ...

**Male 2:** You were the guy because I was on the hot seat on this because – and it goes back to the 250. We want something for the 250 in 2008...

**Linda Boxx:** October 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Male 2:** ...to make this work. We want something big, okay? So, I have engineers and contracting firms ready to do this project. I have them backed up. I have designs. I have...

**Male 1:** Bob Luffy was doing it, wasn't he?

**Male 2:** Bob was doing...

**Linda Boxx:** We built the ramp to the Riverton Bridge before we had the Riverton Bridge.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** And I'm telling Linda I need to spend this money because I can't do the- I can't make 2008 without it. So, Bob Luffy's backed up, ready to go.

**Eric Lidji:** Who is Bob Luffy?

**Linda Boxx:** American Bridge.

**Male 1:** He's also a contractor.

**Male 2:** Bob Luffy is the CEO for- he is American Bridge. He's in charge...

**Male 1:** Used to be a part of U.S. Steel years ago. It was a construction company.

**Male 2:** ...and we entered into an agreement for them to...

**Male 1:** PJ Dick was involved, too?

**Linda Boxx:** Yes.

**Male 2:** They did the ramps. They did the ramps. They were doing the ramp with Cliff. Yeah, Cliff and Tom Cary. I had those guys on contract. And Tom Cary, who works for Trumbull, he calls me and says, "Jack, if we can't start this tomorrow we can't do it because my crews can't sit here to do the ramp." I said, "Tomorrow, I'm pulling these crews to work. We have to go someplace else." In the meantime, we're working through Kathy McKenzie and Linda and I was like, "This is code red. The county is not signing off on this."

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Well, then Chris. This was like the...

**Male 2:** In the meantime, Tom Besselman is telling me, "Look, these guys don't want to take this bridge. Screw them, we're not going to give it to them." So, we're down to a real bottleneck here, you know? And one of the main issues was that they looked at the reports on the bridge and all your people, your railroad people are telling us, "This bridge is great. There is nothing wrong with this bridge. We've run trains over it forever." And, the county's like, "We want to do an in-depth study on is it okay?"

**Linda Boxx:** An inspection.

**Male 2:** And it's \$250,000 to do the study and it'll take us "X" number of months. It's six months to do this. So, project's gone, okay? So, that's where this was. So, it was a stalemate between, "Well, if you don't want it we're not going to give it to you," and the project's never going to get done.

**Linda Boxx:** Tom was ready to do the deed back over to, I think it was...

**Male 2:** Oh, yeah. No, they were going to give it back, right.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah. To himself.

**Eric Lidji:** Tom who?

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Tom Besselman was going to...

**Male 2:** They said we're going to- Tom Besselman. We're going to deed it back to ourself and they'll never get this thing because they're being adamantly opposed to it and here's one thing that we resolved, I mean, because I do have some engineering background. So, I'm out there with American Bridge's crew and they were looking at the report and one of the abutments, if you looked at it where it went in the river it was skewed, like, 6 inches off. So, they're thinking, "This thing is sinking into the river." So, I had American Bridge's engineering firm out there and I'm thinking on my feet because I'm thinking, "Let's just check what we can do." So, they had the surveying tools, the instruments, transit is one. And, we checked the elevation at the water level and if you came up to the bridge level, it was perfectly level. What they had done is they came up, they leveled the stone. So, when they got up to the deck level, it was perfectly level. It was when they came out of the water it was showing a four-inch can because they hadn't made- they made that correction as they went up and it really wasn't settling. And then, Bob Luffy issued that report to the county and the county engineers said, "Well, if he stands behind this, it's okay and we're going to accept it." That...

**Linda Boxx:** But in the meantime, I called Chris. He called Kathy McKenzie to say like, "If you guys don't take this bridge, you know, it's going to go away."

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** I remember, Linda. Yeah. That was a tough couple of days.

[Laughter]

**Male 2:** And, the point being is you guys were giving up something you didn't want to give up and the county was getting something they really wanted for the trail but their engineering department wasn't as committed to their boss as your



employees were to you. And, I recognize that. You from the private sector said, "This is what we're going to do," but on a public sector they had no- it didn't matter what they did. They were acting independently. And that, to me, stood out as what a difference. You guys are telling them to do something and they're listening to you and the county executives tell them- and they're not doing what they're told to do and it's obviously come together.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 3:** And the other people...

**Male 1:** Go ahead.

**Male 3:** Bob Hurley was very helpful too, as I recall, the deputy director.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** But, in the broad sweep of history just so you understand what was happening here, there was a bridge across the Monongahela River and it was operated by a small, Class III connecting railroad that we owned. We still own lots of railroads. McKeesport connecting railroad – quite descriptive. And, it took skelp which is a form of steel, hot rolled coil that we take over that bridge. In those days, there was other uses of it before but it had gotten down to a just a train a week, maybe, plus or minus over to a tubular processing plant in McKeesport that would form into pipes, welded pipe. And, that was the purpose of the bridge that was coming from the Irvin Works up on the hill in West Mifflin. So, I don't recall exactly how it came to my attention that that might be a suitable route for the bike trail to get across the river.

**Linda Boxx:** Oh, well, we were bugging you.

**Male 2:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** That's how you knew.

[Chuckle]

**Male 1:** Okay, but I don't remember- I can't recall the first time I heard about it. I think it was Sterling, Tom Sterling came to tell me about it.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, we were...

**Male 1:** Chris, does that sound right?

**Male 3:** Yes.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** And I said, "Well, what do we use this bridge for?" And it turns out, you know, not for very much, as it happens and the bridge – bridges in general but that kind of industrial bridge it does need periodic maintenance and inspections. There's cost to it and, you know, it's- although for a bunch of people on bikes, even if they had extra large pizzas the night before it's okay for that. There's no problem there, right?

[Laughter]

Structurally it's fine for all that. You got to watch it but I think it's fine. You know, whether you put a locomotive and a couple of cars with a few 30,000-pound coils on it you have to do a bit of work on that. But, it would have taken work and cost and we weren't using it very much and we took a look at the cost of transporting whatever volume of steel we needed across the river on trucks and it was just as effective. So, we concluded it was probably as good a use as any to convey it to the council or the county. That part I'm not familiar with all of those details and...

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, the bridge went to the county.

**Male 1:** But, the question was, was that a better use for it and we didn't really have an important long-term use for it. That doesn't mean our railroaders don't- it's like playing a game – you always want to have more parts to fool with if they can have them but it wasn't really necessary for us. It had been maintained well but it cost a good bit of money to do that. So, my view was that it was best to convey that to the community in some form and complete that trail and would be something that we and our employees and everybody else would enjoy.

So, that was the reasoning. It was a slightly, somewhat economic reason. Well, if the guys would have said, "Hey, it's going to cost us \$5 million a year to, you know, truck all this stuff instead of using trains," well, we wouldn't be having this conversation. We wouldn't have done it. Okay? But, it was really on the margin was inconsequential from a cost standpoint. Probably was slightly more efficient to use trucks so that's how we did it.

**Eric Lidji:** How common is it for a major corporation to give up physical assets like that?

**Male 1:** I don't know. I guess not terribly common but, you know, undeveloped land or other things like that it's not impossible. But, we just we're a historically old company with lots of assets in this area and so we just have a lot of stuff. And here, in Alabama, and other places, Minnesota, Chicago. We have some excess assets of property and in this instance, there was really no vital commercial application for it. So, some more public-oriented application was fine. That's how I got to it, the conclusion.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, John, I think you may be deputized Tom Sterling to attend the Pittsburgh 250 meetings. And so, I got to know him, you know, and I was telling Jack, "Nobody knows how many meetings we went to." Like all over, you know, all over the place. But, what I was asking U.S. Steel to consider was a hang-off bridge, you know, like...

**Male 1:** Yeah. Okay. I remember that.

**Linda Boxx:** Okay.

**Male 1:** I remember that.

**Linda Boxx:** And so...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** Like the one in Harpers Ferry.

**Linda Boxx:** Like the Harpers Ferry...

**Eric Lidji:** So. this would be in addition to the Riverton?

- Male 1:** It would be on the side of it.
- Linda Boxx:** Hanging on the side of it.
- Male 1:** Hanging on the side of the bridge.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah, and so that's what we wanted because we didn't want to go way up on the vehicular 837, I guess, the McKeesport/Duquesne...
- Male 2:** The McKeesport/Duquesne Bridge which was fifty feet higher and way up away.
- Male 1:** Would not have been a solution.
- Eric Lidji:** Fifty feet higher than the...?
- Male 2:** In elevation of the Riverton Bridge.
- Eric Lidji:** Okay.
- Male 2:** So, you would have a huge ramp to get up to that.
- Linda Boxx:** And so, you know, Tom Sterling will get credits in heaven for putting up with my incessant, "Oh, come on, come on, come on! This would be great. This would be great." And I don't have the date written down, but I can remember I was driving in Western Pennsylvania and you know how bad the cell signal is. And, it was an early morning call. Tom Sterling called and he said, "We're going to give you the Riverton Bridge." And, I was sure I didn't hear that right, you know? Because I've been thinking like, "I'm missing some words or what did he really say?" And then I, you know, sort of was quiet and he said, "Did you hear what I said? I said we're going to give you the Riverton Bridge."
- [Chuckle]
- And, I was just stunned because we weren't asking U.S. Steel to abandon the Riverton Bridge for us so we could put a trail on it. We were just asking to use the structure and build a hang-off. And so, that was just like...
- Male 1:** It was a good result, yeah.

- Male 2:** So, you had to have some internal discussions on that. Just like you described.
- Male 1:** Well, it was just a business question. Now, the hang-off thing none of us liked because it...
- Male 2:** We didn't like it either. And, it was problematic.
- Male 1:** And even putting it on engineering-wise would not have been good for the bridge.
- Male 2:** Easy. Yeah.
- Male 1:** And, it would have been bad for the bridge itself, you know, just the way you would have had to cantilever it and it would have been a real pain in the keister. And, you'd have had some stuff coming down lower on the bridge, I think, than...
- Male 2:** The harbor line.
- Male 1:** I mean, there's questions of access and all that. So, it would not have been a good result. And so, we thought we would have had to do, you know, we had to keep the bridge up to a certain standard for us to use it for the county and the trails to use it it's a much different story. So, it was a good result for everybody, I think. I was glad to do it.
- Male 2:** But I would say of all the gives to the Gap for that was probably, I don't know, it's in the top two, you know?
- Linda Boxx:** Or one?
- Male 2:** It could be one. I said it could be...
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** There was no...
- Male 2:** In terms of skewing the alignment, you couldn't build a bridge across the Monongahela River because a nonprofit can't spend \$20 million to build a bridge.
- Male 1:** Building? Oh, no. You're good.
- Male 2:** You see, I would have been on the Duquesne Bridge is where the trail would have been. That was the only other option.

**Eric Lidji:** And, what would that have looked like?

**Linda Boxx:** Well, you would have had a big spiral to get up to the level of the bridge and then you would have gone across the bridge on a walkway this, you know, wide and then you would have to drop back down to railroad level.

**Male 1:** There weren't really any good options, I don't think.

**Male 2:** It was not good.

**Male 1:** So, we have somewhere and I wish I could find it. It's in a box someplace. It's here but it's in Ligonier. I can't find it. But, there was a photograph. Maybe you have a copy of it, Chris. There's a photograph of the last crossing of the bridge...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** Oh, yeah. I think...

**Male 1:** ...by the McKeesport connecting railroad.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, I gave that to you with a dollar.

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** Framed.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes. Yes.

**Male 1:** Yeah, a beautiful picture with a coil on it, bright sunny day taken from the river. Is that the same picture?

**Linda Boxx:** Right. Yes.

**Male 1:** I have it somewhere and I can't find it. It'll...

**Linda Boxx:** I had the digital version of that that we made that.

**Male 1:** Yeah. It would come up- it'll come eventually. That's a good piece of history. The last train for the McKeesport connecting railroad across the bridge. It was pretty cool.

**Linda Boxx:** WQED filmed the last train going into McKeesport and going out. And so, what we did or what they did for me was take a still going in and a still going out.

**Male 1:** Is that where it was from? Okay. Yeah, it was pretty neat.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** It's a nice memento. I have it somewhere and I even checked upstairs to see if it was in somebody's office.

**Linda Boxx:** I think it was framed.

**Male 1:** It was.

**Linda Boxx:** And I think because you turned it over to the county for a dollar and so I wanted to make sure the county paid its debt.

**Male 1:** But, I remember it was taken from the river level and it's yellow and green, I think, the train was I want to say. I can't remember.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, I can't remember that.

**Male 1:** But it was a bright sunny day with the water. It was a beautiful picture and I had it in my office for a long time.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** But, it was, for us, just the right answer.

**Eric Lidji:** You grew up in Western Pennsylvania, right?

**Male 1:** I did.

**Eric Lidji:** Do you think that played a part in your decision-making?

**Male 1:** Yeah, probably. But, it's not me, you know, it was the company's view and we all talked about things together and we all thought this was the right thing to do and it wasn't something we were giving up, a [inaudible 0:33:15.7] asset that was going to affect our operating performance. That wasn't the case at all. It had a small effect and in the long run, it was more cost effective than any other solution for us or for the trail. But again, if we would have had a vital transportation

need here we wouldn't have done it, okay? But we didn't and so that's the reason we did it.

**Eric Lidji:** But it does require some sense of the possibilities or the community benefit?

**Male 1:** Oh, sure. Sure.

**Eric Lidji:** And that takes some effort. It's not something that...

**Male 1:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. And, I thought trying to get this whole thing done was pretty anyway. I thought that was pretty cool. And so, then we still had to have a little tussle with my buddy Pete [inaudible 0:33:55.2] down there. But, once we got that squared away, the rest was easy.

**Linda Boxx:** We never got that squared away. Well, we got the B alignment.

**Eric Lidji:** What was that?

**Linda Boxx:** The Kennywood- the Sandcastle alignment.

**Male 1:** Sandcastle. Yeah, that was always hard.

**Eric Lidji:** Was there any pushback within any organization?

**Male 1:** About the bridge?

**Eric Lidji:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** I think maybe the railroaders always like to have more right-of-way, not less. God is not making any more so they always like to have more. And, if you would have had them make the choice they would have- even if it wasn't being used, they still wanted to have it. So, probably but that's okay.

**Male 3:** Eric, that bridge was built in like 1890 something.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** I was going to say around the turn of the century.

**Male 2:** It's one of the oldest bridges.



**Male 3:** It was servicing those Duquesne blast furnaces and on over to the national, too, operations. So, it was the small [inaudible 0:34:37.8] but Duquesne's not even operating anymore.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** Yeah, it was heavy duty. It was a heavy duty operating unit at one time so that was a very vital link but it was an old, old structure. Still okay but not really something we needed to be maintaining. But, you know, if I had just moved in from Silicon Valley or something would I visit, I don't know, maybe not. But, it was kind of easy for me. And, I'll tell you, Linda is really hard to say no to.

[Laughter]

Really hard to say no to. I think she and Jack and the whole group, but Linda, in particular, is quiet and determined demeanor and her visionary view in this whole thing is way beyond anybody's headlights that I've ever seen. So, this is a great accomplishment and she deserves all the credit. I was just a- I happen to be a face in the crowd, that's all. I showed up and we were there at the right time and she's the one who really showed us what to do.

**Eric Lidji:** There's a remarkable sense of people being at the right place at the right time with this project.

**Male 2:** A lot. Yes.

**Male 1:** I think that part's true probably.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes.

**Male 1:** That part's probably true. Yeah. And we had, you know, some folks at the railroad that I was close with and we had a good alignment of interest there and, you know, they were responsive. And I was at Marathon Oil which was a related company at the time this was back in the mid-90s probably. I was trying to get- I was running pipelines. So, I was trying to drill a pipeline under a- at this point, this was a Chessie system. CSX rail line somewhere in Kentucky or someplace like that. I'm trying to get this- the people that work with me trying to get this drill permit and the Chessie folks wouldn't let

them have it. So, I'm like a senior vice president and on our Board of Directors is John Snow who was at the time the CEO of CSX Railroad, went on to be treasury secretary. He's really a good guy. Still a really great friend. And, I was with him at a Board meeting and the guys got me all prepped up. I'm going to try to see if I can edge this through, you know? So, I said "Johnny, my pipeline guys are trying to get this right-of-way drilled underneath somewhere in Kentucky, wherever it was. He said, "Well, you know, my predecessors and yours have been fighting about that kind of stuff for a hundred years. Let's talk about it tomorrow morning."

[Laughter]

That's the just the way it goes, you know? This kind of stuff has been happening for a long time and we have a lot of history to it and so this is what happened. So, it worked out okay. We were lucky.

**Male 2:**

Yeah, we were very fortunate to have you as U.S. Steel president at the time. I think it was- it really allowed us to facilitate because there were- if we did not have the cooperation of the railroads, union, I mean I could tell you a couple stories where you got the railroads are like- you guys did things that were amazing, you know? Like, "We'll move that railroad or we'll eliminate it." I'm looking at it like, "How do we get around this thing?" "Oh, we can move that track or we can take that track out," you know? I'm thinking, "How do I get..." And, you guys did it time and time again, you know? And, I do remember Tom Sterling when we were going through these properties he asked me directly, eventually, he said, "Now, are you sure you have everything you need now?" Yeah, he asked me that.

[Crosstalk/Laughter]

**Linda Boxx:**

Like, are you coming back for more?

**Male 2:**

I didn't want to act like greedy and I said, "Yeah, I think we're okay." I honestly gave him that answer.

**Male 1:**

Earlier in his career he had been the senior executive over all the railroads so he knew it all really well. And by then, he was

by senior [inaudible 0:38:16.1]. He's really a good guy. Still a great friend. We still hang out together a lot. I tried to call him today about this but I couldn't reach him. So, but he was a good person at the right time as it turns out...

**Male 2:** He was.

**Male 1:** ...at the right time because he knew it all. But, if you look back in the broad sweep of history all the places that it goes now and I ride on it a good bit. Not a lot but, you know, occasionally. I'm more of a Montour Trail person just because of where I live. But, none of that property that we conveyed or the railroads did, we wouldn't be using it today anyway. It was all the right thing. It's in the right place for the right reasons.

**Male 2:** That's right.

**Male 1:** So, I say go for it. Go forth and prosper. That was fun. It was a nice thing to do. There was- Linda, I'm sure you remember this but there was some dinner, awards dinner for some group that I don't recall what it was. It was environmental.

**Linda Boxx:** It was probably PEC.

**Male 3:** It was.

**Linda Boxx:** Pennsylvania Environmental Councils and that you got the award.

**Male 1:** We got some nice award. It was kind of fun to be able to talk about what we did. The guy said, "Giving away a bridge is really a lot of fun. I didn't expect it to be so much fun." It was kind of a neat thing. It's the easiest thing we've ever done." And money is one thing but something like this that really changes the course of history is something to be...

**Linda Boxx:** Besides, I mean, you asked the question about the timing and so forth. But, the Pittsburgh 250 – I can't emphasize that enough.

**Male 1:** Yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** And, I've asked Laura Fisher several times, "How did the finishing of the Great Allegheny Passage..." because we didn't

ask for it to be a legacy project, you know, the Conference decided. And, I never figured out who in the Conference said like, "Hmm, let's finish this trail." Unless it was Jim Rohr because they were opening up, they had bought the bank in D.C. and I think he was using that as sort of this connection.

**Male 1:** Right. Yeah. Could be. Yeah. I know which one you mean.

**Linda Boxx:** The one with the dome and Georgetown.

**Male 1:** Yeah, the big dome right there. I know which one you mean.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, so they had just bought that whole system.

**Male 1:** Yeah, that's right. I don't remember that about how it became selected. I just don't recall. I know that it was going to, you know, they had the bike race came in. I remember I was sitting at my back fence. My property goes right down to Route 30. I was sitting on a fence post when they came by. I went down to watch the bike race. I happened to be in Ligonier that day. I went down to watch them go by. It was really cool.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 3:** That was on October 4<sup>th</sup>. They called it the Legacy Trail Ride. That was the...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** No, no, no. This was a professional race.

**Male 3:** Oh, okay.

**Linda Boxx:** So, this was...

**Male 1:** And, that segment finished in Ligonier. The next morning, they took off. I rode down on my bike with Josh Wetzel and all of them guys and saw it all. Yeah. It was pretty neat. Yeah, the race actually...

**Linda Boxx:** That was honoring Route 30. That was honoring the...

**Male 1:** Yeah, that went all the way to the Point, I think.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes.

- Male 1:** That ride went all the way in. I'm not sure how they did it but that was pretty neat. But, how it got selected – I'll tell you who was involved in that was Chuck Queenan in the original conception of what to do about the 250.
- Eric Lidji:** Who is Chuck Queenan?
- Male 1:** Chuck Queenan is a lawyer of great standing here in town with Kirkpatrick and he was sort of, he's not really retired but, in those days, this is almost 20 years ago probably or close to it. I remember going down to his office and hearing- he told me about it. He wanted to tell me about it because I was sort of new on the Conference and all that but he was one of the moving portions on the historical aspect of it. So, whether that led into the bike trail, I don't know. It's hard to say. But, I'm glad it's done.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. I mean, there was no guarantee that it was going to get done.
- Male 1:** If you were on it, it was going to get done.
- [Laughter]
- Linda Boxx:** Well...
- Male 1:** It was pretty cool. It was a lot of fun. I tell people the best way to ride is to get dropped off at the Big Savage Tunnel and no matter which way you go it's downhill the whole way. I'm in favor of gravity. I like having gravity work for you.
- Male 2:** The older you get the more you appreciate that.
- Linda Boxx:** That's right.
- Male 1:** I'm in favor of gravity. I'm looking for downhill, downwind. That's what I want.
- [Laughter]
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. I'm looking at other questions.
- Male 1:** Shoot.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 2:** I will emphasize the fact that whenever that bridge was finally transferred and I have it was transferred on July 25<sup>th</sup> of '08. Then we have the official- we can now get on the bridge to do this work and it was July 28<sup>th</sup> of 2008 and the Conference had set up October 4<sup>th</sup> – we want to ride this. So, there's 60 days and you know construction projects aren't easy to do. So, that's where Bob Luffy and Cliff, they put their crews on these at full force and in 60 days we went from riding trains, pulling the rails off that bridge to riding bikes. It was done in 60 days. It was like...

**Male 1:** September 25<sup>th</sup> was the ribbon cutting. And here we are. You were there. There's Linda, there she is. There you are.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** But, it was really a push to get that done in 60 days. Like from most projects take two years to do that.

**Male 3:** You had a lot of corporations supporting that if I remember. Someone provided the decking. Snavelly...

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Yes, yes. Snavelly. That's right.

**Male 2:** Snavelly did. That's correct. We had...

**Male 3:** Other construction firms. Some engineering firms.

**Male 2:** We had the tracks decking donated to us through Steve Snavelly.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, Steve Snavelly.

**Male 1:** That happened really fast. It did happen really fast.

**Linda Boxx:** But, we didn't wait...

**Male 2:** You couldn't do it any faster.

**Linda Boxx:** We didn't wait. I mean, the thing is you didn't talk to Steve Snavelly during that 60 days. You'd already lined that up.

**Male 2:** It was already bought.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** It was on the way.

**Linda Boxx:** We were doing things concurrently not sequentially.

**Male 2:** You can't do that unless everything, all the ducks had to be lined up. And, the only- not the fact that 60 days is a little bit of pressure but about halfway through that because they knew it was kind of my project I had a phone call. I forgot about this and they said, "Oh, the Riverton Bridge is on fire." And I go, "I don't need that, you know?"

[Laughter]

And, what it was, it was somebody had a barrel and they were burning excess waste and left it to burn after the project, like, that night. But, they called and said they have a fire department going to the Riverton Bridge, it's on fire. And I go, you know, "That can't happen." It was not a big deal. It was just kind of a false alarm. That was just one of those.

**Male 3:** Eric, is this how oral history is turned out? I mean, you got a bunch of people like us who all bring our observations. I'm just curious, is this how it usually sounds?

**Eric Lidji:** Yes. Yeah.

[Chuckle]

**Linda Boxx:** He prefers things more orderly but...

**Eric Lidji:** That's the transcriptionist's problem, not ours.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 3:** This was not an orderly process, okay?

**Linda Boxx:** That's right.

**Male 3:** You know, this was somewhat random as you can tell.

**Eric Lidji:** Linda, do you have anything else?

**Linda Boxx:** Well, you know, just to say that Brooks Robinson and RIDC and then Bob Stevenson afterwards, you know, really got things started because while we were eyeing the Coke Oven Gas pipeline, we started looking like how do we get there? And RIDC stepped up very quickly with very few strings attached and said, "Oh, sure, you can go through the McKeesport- we'll figure out how to get you through Duquesne," you know, "You just get everything else lined up and we'll work with you." That was a little nerve-wracking because until you have something written, you know, is it really good? But, they were, you know, tremendous but then in turn when the ramps to the Riverton Bridge were taken out, all of the sudden that opened up all that space that was behind the ramps. The old, I guess that was the old first Sterling site.

**Male 2:** Yep.

**Linda Boxx:** So, I mean, everyone- you might not have gotten anything for it but except a sense of, like, you know, good. But, it really, I think, helps those industrial plants, those industrial parks develop in a nicer way.

**Male 1:** That's right. There was more room when that got aligned and it was right at the right level, too. It's an easy ride. I enjoy going across those. That's pretty cool.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes, yeah.

**Male 3:** That last section, also, Linda, you received a good deal of support, I think, from the governor, it was Rendell at the time, or DCNR I think provided some funding.

**Linda Boxx:** Well, for the Riverton Bridge, that was Qualcomm gave a million or half a million and DCNR gave half a million. And so, we didn't have federal funds at which, you know, we couldn't have done it in 60 days if we had had federal funds on it.

**Male 1:** I'd forgotten about Qualcomm. That's my old sidekick, Timmy. Timmy used to work for me years ago.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:** They gave us a substantial grant for the Riverton Bridge.



- Male 1:** Yeah, Tim used to work for me so we're old buddies.
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, okay. All right.
- Male 1:** I'd forgotten about that partner, that's right.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. And they gave it to us- we took John Rowe and Tim out and three weeks later we had a check for, you know, half a million dollars.
- Male 2:** A lot of money.
- Male 1:** Right, you plan did- strikes both of those two. They were like that.
- [Crosstalk/Laughter]
- Linda Boxx:** But again, the 250, everyone wanted to get it done.
- Male 1:** I had forgotten about that part of it, you're right. There was a really- and I remember going down to McKeesport – there's like that old hotel there or something and that's where somebody was starting from or leaving or doing something and one of the TV announcers were there. It was a big to-do. It was on a Saturday, I remember. I had to go- I was going away somewhere and I couldn't ride in the thing but what was that? There was a big deal. It was at that hotel along the Yough River in McKeesport...
- Linda Boxx:** Yes.
- Male 1:** ...and there was some big event there. I'm sure you were there. I can't remember what it was.
- Linda Boxx:** Yes. Well, I'm trying to...
- Male 1:** That was one of the 250 final ride things, wasn't it? Was that it?
- Linda Boxx:** Yes, that is exactly right. That's exactly right. That was the...
- [Crosstalk]
- Male 3:** Was that the Legacy Trail ride from before?
- Linda Boxx:** There was a group doing a 24-hour relay...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** That's it, yeah. That's what it was. It was something like that, yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** ...and then there was the Langley, you know, Allegheny Conference did a, like, camping trip. So, they were coming along and then the 24-hour – both groups met at the McKeesport, you know, at the marina...

**Male 1:** Exactly. That's where it was. Yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** ...earlier that day and then we all rode into Pittsburgh for the grand finale.

**Male 1:** Yeah. Exactly. Yeah, I had to go somewhere. So, I remember being there then I had to go from there right to the airport if I recall that night.

**Linda Boxx:** But Ish McLaughlin- you knew Ish, did you not?

**Male 1:** Sure. He was the PJ Dick guy, right?

**Linda Boxx:** Yes. Yes. So, Ish and his wife and Bill Byham and a group of, a small group, wanted to do the same ride that the Conference was planning except that they wanted it high-end. They weren't going to be camping. And so, Bill Byham's son ended up, like, shuttling them to hotels. And so, I started them off because I was really nervous about them. Especially Ish because he was very much up in the air at the time. And so, I biked with them for about three days, got them to Hancock and I figured they were okay and they were okay because I saw them at the Point. But then I went back to D.C. and started, like, I rode the first leg of the 24-hour relay and then jumped...

**Male 2:** That's a pretty cool picture.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah, saw the gang in, like, Rockwood and then got to the Point. And it was like I was so exhausted by the time that whole thing was over but it was so remarkable.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** I remember that now. That was a bit of a blur. That was a bit of a blur. I recall that now.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes.

**Male 1:** I remember being there when everybody was there. Andrew Stockey or somebody was up on the microphone and yakking away. It was kind of cool.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah. I mean, your leadership, your gifts and your support with Norfolk Southern, you know, really made it happen. We could not have done that without your support.

**Male 1:** Yeah, I wouldn't have done it without you, so, okay. We're glad to do it. Glad to do it. I didn't do anything. We were glad to do it. We had a good team on our side doing it and we were glad to do it.

**Male 2:** But, that alignment from McKeesport to Sandcastle, it was 28 properties and 12 of those were railroad properties. The piece of Norfolk Southern, Union Railroad or Transtar...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** Sure, we had that minutes away, there's a takeoff there minutes away...

**Male 2:** ...you have 12 of those properties. Twelve of them. So, we had twelve properties.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** ...you got the control center at the top of the hill. We had a lot of assets right in that vicinity. There's a lot going on there.

**Male 2:** I mean it was all, the entire infrastructure was railroads. As soon as you...

[Crosstalk]

**Male 1:** There's power lines and gas lines. There's all sorts of stuff there. That was a business buff for us.

**Male 2:** I think you alluded to that it actually looks so much better now than before we did this because a lot of what we were dealt

was the bottom of the barrel kind of thing. I mean, particularly from Norfolk Southern where we had to build this track. It was through areas that you wouldn't even consider putting a trail there because you couldn't. You just couldn't. I mean, it's through almost a swamp, you know.

**Linda Boxx:**

Luckily, they had a drainage ditch there and we were able to sort of widen the space where their drainage was.

[Crosstalk]

**Male 2:**

There was a drainage ditch, right. Right. And then going back to that Riverton Bridge which was, again, our first signature project early in this because of the Hot Metal Bridge which was, I think, \$11 to \$13 million to do that. Well, we were going to do the Riverton Bridge with PennDOT money. We had a couple million dollars out of Transportation Enhancement money and we had this huge meeting with PennDOT and your railroad people, the two Larry's – Larry Dearson and Larry Murdoch. I don't know if you know those guys but they were good guys and they were- and I'm sitting in this meeting with 15 people and your railroad people are arguing, "Leave this bridge alone. Don't paint it, you're going to destroy the integrity," from a railroad standpoint. They said, "Don't- if you strip the paint off of there you're going to encourage rust as opposed to prevent it." And, they were arguing with PennDOT and PennDOT is like, "We're stripping this off and you're going to paint it." So, I'm in the middle and I'm going, "If I don't strip this off and the railroad people..." which I'm listening to because it was like you own this. That's a good way to go. And PennDOT's telling me it's part of doing his bridge, "You're going to have to strip the paint off, do the in-depth inspection and repaint it." And, based on they're doing the Hot Metal Bridge before we would do anything it was \$4 million to get to now we can start the project. So, the PennDOT way was about an \$8 million project to follow what they had done on the hot metal bridge and the route that we went based on what I was being led from your guys was \$2 million. And money-wise, we didn't have an unlimited budget. So, we took the \$2 million route and that's what you have as opposed the \$8 million route.

**Linda Boxx:** But it was about a million for the bridge. And...

**Male 2:** The million- the bridge was \$1 million. That's right. It was \$1 million for the bridge. \$1 million rather than eight.

[Crosstalk]

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Right. And then the ramp was...

**Male 1:** That bridge lasted 120 years because they did it the way they did it. That's the reason that bridge is still there.

**Male 2:** It was \$1 million.

**Male 1:** Chris, you did a good job with all this stuff. I'm impressed. This is very nostalgic here. This is good. This is really cool. I need to find that picture of the last train going over.

[Crosstalk]

That's a good one. Well, if you guys have it that's okay. I don't need it. I want to find my version of it that's got the dollar and all that stuff on it.

**Linda Boxx:** Yes. That's right.

**Male 1:** I got to find that.

**Linda Boxx:** So, it took until, you know, Kennywood was sold that...

**Male 1:** The Spanish outfit, yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** Right. That they started talking to us. And, things were going very, very well really until the lawyers got involved. And, when the lawyers got involved, they didn't want a crossing on Kennywood property. So, we had to cross, as you know it does, it crossed before you get onto Kennywood property and then slide through between CSX and Kennywood- or the Sandcastle road. But, we had proposed and had developed a really nice plan for them where you would come around where that drop off place is and widen the sidewalk so that if you were at Sandcastle and parked up at the far end you can just get on this really nice sidewalk, nice quad. You don't have to walk through cars and it would be the bike trail, too. But then, when you get to the main gate area you would cross and we

even had, you know, showed them signals that we could put in. They didn't want to hear anything about it. And the manager there, Damien Dondarro, wanted it because he saw it as being good for his...

**Male 1:** Improvement, yeah.

**Linda Boxx:** ...right, for his park. That you're adding an asset for me. But, the lawyers in California said, "No, no, no." So, you're wedged in between the fences.

**Male 1:** That's okay. It's all right.

**Linda Boxx:** It's okay.

**Male 1:** We can get through it. It's not perfect but...

**Male 3:** That was difficult I recall.

**Male 2:** Yep. That was extremely difficult.

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** Pat [inaudible 0:55:05.6], I used to work with him, too. I thought maybe I could twist his arm a bit but he wasn't having any of it.

**Male 2:** No, he didn't bend for anyone.

**Male 1:** He was pretty difficult on that one, too. He wasn't going to take any, not from me at least. I tried my best but he didn't want to hear of it so...

**Linda Boxx:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** Okay, thanks, Eric.

**Linda Boxx:** It was okay. It worked.

**Male 1:** You got what you need, Eric?

**Eric Lidji:** Yeah.

**Male 1:** You probably got more than you need.

**Eric Lidji:** Unless anybody else has any other thing? No?

**Male 2:** Nope.

**Male 1:** I would express as I have many times my deep appreciation for this, Linda. You did a great job for us and Jack and the rest of the team. Just tenacity and the vision with extraordinary grace and delicacy to get it all done. Just unbelievable and I played a small part, we did. I didn't do much at all. Chris and Tom Sterling did more but to imagine that we can get on that bike here and ride all the way down. They're working on those ramps down there I saw today, by the way.

**Male 2:** Are they?

**Male 1:** To get down to the...

**Linda Boxx:** Oh, the switchback?

**Male 1:** Yeah, to get down to the wharf, I guess. It's just extraordinary. It's just unbelievable what progress in a relatively short period of time. So, congratulations again.

**Linda Boxx:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Eric Lidji:** Thank you. Thanks everybody.

[end 0:56:07.0]

slt-t/cr-p

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