

DAVITT WOODWELL

- Davitt Woodwell:** ...the official historic record.
- Avigail Oren:** So, let's begin. My name is Avigail Oren, I'm here with Davitt Woodwell and Linda McKenna Boxx at the Pennsylvania Environmental Counsel's Office. The date is Wednesday, August 28th, 2019. It's around 1:30 p.m. So today, we're going to be talking to Davitt about the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, how you became involved and how the council became involved with the GAP Trail project. So, we'll back up, we'll start by talking about your background, how you came to PEC and then move more specifically into the trail building work.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yes, no problem.
- Avigail Oren:** Sort of culminating with the story about the acquisition of the U.S. Steel's coke-gas pipeline property.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Cool.
- Avigail Oren:** And now, I'm going to turn it over to Linda Boxx to sort of do a little warm-up introduction.
- Linda Boxx:** Sure. Well, Davitt's interview is a little unique in the kinds of interviews that we've been conducting so far because Davitt wasn't a funder, Davitt wasn't sitting around the table while we were, you know, picking out contractors. Davitt is what I would call, like, one of our secret weapons. Davitt worked behind the scenes on a number of projects. And, I felt that the story of PEC and- I'll get it differentiated, it was really Davitt – Davitt's contribution to the building of that GAP was important, but he did it, you know, behind the curtain. And, I thought it would be really an interesting supplement to a lot of the other interviews to have his story part of this, you know, oral narrative that we're developing, so...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Cool. That's very kind of you.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, it's true.
- [Chuckle]
- Avigail Oren:** So, why don't we begin with the brief story of your life that brings you up to 1991 where you joined PEC.

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Davitt Woodwell: I grew up in Pittsburgh, boarding school in New Hampshire, worked at camps in Ontario, you know, time at Laurel Highlands, outdoors a lot. You know, tried- really got into this whole conservation thing through things like canoe trips and paddling and sort of to the environmental side of as well. Was working as a Dean of Students at a boarding school in New York state, realized that needed another degree. Decided I didn't want to take Calculus to get into business school and get an MBA so I applied to Pitt Law School- or came back to Pittsburgh for a year. Worked in the DA's office, applied to Pitt, got into law school as a 30-year-old, got out of there. Or actually, the first summer that called Brian Hill who was at the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, I said, "Do you take interns?" He said, "No." I said, "Law student?" He said, "Yes."

[Laughter]

And then, was offered a job, that was 1993 when I got out – that was basically, "We'll give you a job for two months and then if you've raised enough money, you can stay." And, it's now about 30 years- pushing 30 years later. Yeah, so that was the quick one. And then, two years off – 2000 to 2001 leave of absence to run the Riverlife Task Force.

Avigail Oren: All right. So, why don't you give us an explanation of what exactly PEC is and what it has done over the years that you have been working here?

Davitt Woodwell: For the first one, we're statewide nonprofit. We do a lot in partnership and gap filling and convening on a wide variety of the environmental conservation issues that change over time, depending on where the need is and what the opportunities are – really with the idea that there's this great promise for Pennsylvania through Environment and Conservation for community, for individuals, for the economy. And, the environmental conservation issues should be part of the discussion at all times. They may not run it, but they may be part of it. And, also that really the story of the environment and conservation in Pennsylvania is really about legacies. So, it's a lot of legacies that we've been left whether it's from mining, timbering, oil and gas development- industrial use, we use Brownfields. And so, a lot of what we do is looking at how you

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address those issues, but also worry about what legacies we're leaving. So, what are we doing right now? Energy and climate is a big thing for us. Stormwater is a big thing with wet weather, whether it's in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh or Luzerne or wherever. And, one of the things that's developed over time is a focus on outdoor recreation, partially because we all love it. But also, because that's sort of what I consider the "gateway drug" to get people and users in Pennsylvania to care about the other environmental issues. So, we've got four offices across the state, 25 staff and right now, about a \$4 million budget. And, 40% of that goes to trails and outdoor recreation. But, that's our way to touch people and then get them to care about that stormwater, about the reforestation of legacy mine lands, about the climate issues, about the state budget, I mean, as boring as the state budget can be – it's a really critical discussion every year to sort of show what an administration, what the General Assembly thinks about the environment. It hasn't been good for over a dozen years, but in terms of the budget- but that's a way that we can then reach out to somebody and say, "Hey, you can contact us through a trail, through a water trail, through whatever," and we're now going to get back at you and hope that you can help.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm. So, when did PEC, like, focus on outdoor recreation began?

Davitt Woodwell: I don't have a clue.

Avigail Oren: Okay

Davitt Woodwell: No, I do. It's it was sort of early-mid-90s.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: And, it was sort of organic, I think. You know, there was work in Philadelphia on some things going on. There has been interest in public lands and other trails. But, for me, when I finally realized why this all mattered was '96 – riding, going to a wedding in Boston, taking a bike and riding the Minuteman Trail. And, that's when I saw the businesses popping up out of the backsides of old industrial buildings and realized what was going on. That was really the "a-ha" moment. I mean, the trail

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was there in Ohio, there were other trails around and other things happening. But, the sort of the idea- that's when I said, "Okay, this is what everybody's talking about. This is where that real potential comes from." We were doing some stuff by then. And, I was even trying to figure out when Hannah started.

Linda Boxx: Well, but your Northeast, PA...

Davitt Woodwell: Northeast, yeah.

Linda Boxx: ...office was doing trails early before anybody else was in your PEC...

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, yeah. And, the Greenways Commission, the governor's Greenways commission. What, what?

Linda Boxx: We were...

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, yeah. Was that in '95? I think one thing to find is what the governor's Commission on Trails and Greenways – I think it was what it was- was doing because it wasn't long after that, that we were doing the river conservation plans for all over the place and the DCNR got all the counties to start doing Greenways and open-space plans and really requiring them. So, there was this whole move that sort of moved up with Ridge, with Governor Ridge to put that together that Greenways Commission that I think got everything sort of coalesced and brought those different pieces that were happening around the state together, realized there was a real future there. And, from that – it really took off with DCNR.

Linda Boxx: It seemed like DCNR needed a formal plan with all the bells and whistles of a commission to really sort of institutionalize a lot of that funding and that program.

Davitt Woodwell: And, John Oliver was Secretary. And, John had been there for the last ride at Western Maryland in '75, right, along with Paul Whitman, and whoever else, so he got it. I mean, they saw that, and that was really the way to sort of throw some fuel on that fire. And then, you saw the state and, you know, whatever you want to say about the rivers- the river conservation plans – there was a lot of money that went into those and we

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probably knew the answers to that stuff two weeks into the two-year process. But, you know, public process was a big thing in the 90s. I mean, we had to go through all the hoops and everybody did it. But, those plans included a lot of trails. Then the different counties were all doing their plans. Allegheny County had early plans for the trail stuff. Yeah. And, that lasted for six or seven years, at least starting '95-ish, '96.

Linda Boxx: True. You're rattling some memories in myself. And, that's, if I'm not mistaken, Davitt, that's when the term "mega greenways" came out.

Davitt Woodwell: Yes.

Linda Boxx: And, that started giving focus to the major long-distance trail systems.

Davitt Woodwell: Right.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: And, that was very much towards the very end.

Davitt Woodwell: That the D&L... Yeah, yeah.

Linda Boxx: Yes, or maybe eight or so mega greenways and the Great Allegheny Passage was one of them.

Davitt Woodwell: When, Ghost Town is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, too. And, that was- no, but I'm talking about in terms of what was going on when stuff was going on was, you know, 25 years ago, there was a lot of sort of nascent stuff going – Erie to Pittsburgh. When was Holden doing the early stuff, I can't...? I can't remember. Because that was '96, I thought that was built.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Through the 90s, in the 90s.

Davitt Woodwell: That was 90s, late 80s, early 90s, right?

Linda Boxx: I would say 90s.

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Davitt Woodwell: Nineties, yeah. So, I think then we just sort of organically came into it through partnerships and through working with people and, you know, different projects would pop up whether it was the northeast was doing a lot more. We've done a lot of work up there and it hasn't gotten as far as other parts of the state yet. Central Pennsylvania definitely has some work there now. And then, there was this great tit for tat and within PEC of southeast versus west because it was- so you had the GAP so they had to go to the circuit and they have a circuit way to go to the ICC and it was just sort of like- it was different ends of the state almost looking like, "Okay, you did that. We're going to one-up you. What can we do that's better?" and so far, nobody's outdone D.C. to Pittsburgh.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, right.

Davitt Woodwell: And, even though it's two different trails, they still call it the GAP.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: The whole way. Yes. Correct?

Linda Boxx: We don't.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, I know, but most people do. If they don't- yeah. So, you know, we started and then we were able to over time, get more staff who could do work on it. And, in Philly, a number of years ago, wrote a \$30 million proposal to the Federal Highways for a TIGER grant, but I think the DDRPC ended up getting \$25 million grant for the circuit work. Tried one of those out here for other stuff that didn't work as well. So, it's that kind of attention that it started getting. We were able to have staff that we're doing trails and Hannah, you know, when we got Hannah from the city, now somebody else's [inaudible 0:12:05.9] with the people, the phenomenal staff we've stolen from other people is very fun. Yeah.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: So, I just want to back up really quickly to clarify what your first role was at PEC.

Davitt Woodwell: Oh, PEC?

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Avigail Oren: Yes.

Davitt Woodwell: Staff attorney.

Avigail Oren: And, what does that mean?

Davitt Woodwell: Some of the stuff I started on were things like the wise use movement was really going wild at that point. So, a lot of work on takings issues and trying to counter this sort of anti-regulatory, anti-environment stuff that was flying around the country and actually that Western Pennsylvania was a hotbed for nationally. So, it was people basically trying to claim that the regulation of private property was taken under the Constitution and that if you regulated somebody's property, you had to pay them for the diminution of value. And, therefore, you couldn't have it. It'll be too expensive. So, there was a lot of stuff coming out of the west, but then there was Northwestern Pennsylvania became a very hotbed for that, and a lot of sort of anti-government work, anti-government sentiment, anti-regulatory sentiment, but also at the same time, the other thing I was really doing a lot of work on at that point was opposition to the Mon-Fayette Expressway that was coming up then. A lot of which is built and I love driving it because I'm alone on it. But, that was a Turnpike Commission project. So, that was early stuff as well as other policy pieces. And, that was, like, '93, '96. And then after that, we started- philanthropy started moving **D.C. and DP [? 0:13:52.7]** started moving into more project-oriented pieces. And so, we started doing much more of the project work as well as the policy work. Had some the Allegheny Watershed Network was something we put together in '95 or so – around the same time that the French Creek project started getting going in Northwestern Pennsylvania. Yeah, and we were doing- we're also doing a whole lot of growth management work at that point.

Avigail Oren: What does that mean?

Davitt Woodwell: It's trying to work with communities so that they would be prepared for growth and could manage. If you looked at development pressures that were coming on communities, there are certain things under Pennsylvania law they could do,

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like zoning. And, a lot of Pennsylvania municipalities didn't like the word "zoning". It goes back to the wise use stuff to, "Don't tell me what to do with my property." But, then when Walmart would come to town, they'd call and say, "Well, what can I do?" I said, "Nothing, you're too late." And so, part of the zoning also- part of the growth management work in a publication that Joanne Denworth who was president of PEC at that time really put together with help from staff, but she was really the force behind it was called "Guiding Growth." And, a lot of that also included walkable communities and trails and, you know, what can you do to make your community more accessible, better quality of life – still allowing as you have to enter Pennsylvania law really for all uses. But, figuring out to plan it ahead of time so that you're not caught flat-footed.

Avigail Oren: Well, so that's interesting to me to hear it because that sounds like an economic development work...

Davitt Woodwell: Mm-hmm.

Avigail Oren: ...not like something I'd expect an environmental organization to be working on. Can you explain why that dovetail?

Davitt Woodwell: It's because if you looked at that point – the governor's 21st Century Environment Commission, which was another Tom Ridge piece, were you on that one?

Linda Boxx: Mm-mm [negative].

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: Joanne was on that. I think Andrew did that...

Linda Boxx: Caren Glotfelty,

Davitt Woodwell: Caren Glotfelty, yeah, was one of the- it was one of the big things that came out of that as well after we were already on someone's work. But, a lot of this work was the amount of farmland that Pennsylvania was losing to Greenfield Development at that point. So, in the 90s, there was tons and tons of development going on. And, I think, Cranberry Township and Beaver County- Butler County was nothing like

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it is today. It was, I think, I was quoting the paper calling it the “poster child for bad development” and I forgot about that one.

[Chuckle]

But, it was just people were coming and sprawling and doing this wild development that still you see happening in sort of Eastern Pennsylvania with logistics companies now where the big distribution centers are coming in and some have said you see it with oil and gas development, too, communities that haven't done their zoning. So, if you don't have planning and a lot of these rural communities, you end up with projects that go to Greenfields, they go to places that haven't been developed rather than to previously developed sites. So, you have water quality impacts, you lose habitat, you know, you have all this stuff so keep control. If you're able to manage the growth and think about it long-term, you can have much better outcomes environmentally. One of the other problems with Pennsylvania, and this actually goes into trail stuff, too, is that there are 2,570-ish municipalities in Pennsylvania. And, each one of them is its own fiefdom. They may only be 67 counties, but the powers of the counties overuses and the municipalities is limited. So, you know, with the trail building, you're suddenly going- if you look at the Montour Trail example where they went municipality to municipality, just because I watched that one more closely on that level. You know, the fact that there are all these municipalities can make life a little difficult for you, too.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm, yeah, indeed. Well, I'll use that as a segue back to, as you put it, your theft of Hannah...

[Chuckle]

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: ...I think in the early 2000s. And, tell me about- do you remember hiring Hannah?

Davitt Woodwell: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Do you remember that time? Tell me about that.

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Davitt Woodwell: The city was going into Act 46, Act 47 sort of receivership stuff. And, it was clear that the city was going to be downsizing and doing whatever. And, we were doing more trail work. And, you know, Hannah had been doing a great job. And, it was just reaching out and saying, "Hey, before they ax you or when they ax you, let's talk." And, you know, I can't remember – I don't think she got axed. I think it was we went and the writing was on the wall, that was a position that probably wasn't going to survive. So, you know, we said, "Hannah, come on over." And, she said, "Well, here's what I'm doing." I said, "Do what you want." At that point, correct me on this one. It was a lot of Steel Valley Trail stuff that she was working on as I recall.

Linda Boxx: I think you were on the board of Rivers of Steel at the time.

Davitt Woodwell: Yes, yes.

Linda Boxx: I mean, I don't know that...

Davitt Woodwell: I don't think that played in.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Okay, yeah. I don't know that worked out.

Davitt Woodwell: I don't think that played into it much. Hannah was there.

Linda Boxx: Wasn't Hannah doing water trails first?

Davitt Woodwell: I think that's where we get the money.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, I think we had the money for water trails. And, it was sort of trying to be fungible with what we were working on. And, the water trails program – this is where I lose total track of time and everything else. You know, we have also been very involved with water trails. And, if I go look at the paddle that's in my office, I can tell you what year we signed. But, we signed the agreement with DiBerardinis when he was in and he and I were yelling at each other that day because I said to him, "I'm going to outlast you." Because he wants something done right away. And, I said, "We don't, you know, we work in a different time scale. You're looking at two years because I

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think it was closer to that – you're looking at two years, I'm looking at 20." He said, "You can't think that way." I said, "I have to think that way." And so, he and I were in a car yelling at each other over, you know, basically telling me he was a short-timer, which wasn't a good thing. I can't remember what year Hannah... I mean, this is where I lose track of the years, but some of it was also that she was sort of free to explore this world of what to do with trails in Western Pennsylvania because the all the stuff was happening with the ATA, all the stuff was happening with RTC, Community Regional Trails Corporation. And, it was sort of figure out where there's a need to have it fit.

Linda Boxx: And, I think, Davitt, if I'm- I wish I looked at our records, but you approached me or I approached you – however that discussion happened.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Because we funded Hannah to do the land trail stuff.

Davitt Woodwell: Correct.

Linda Boxx: And, maybe that was matching the water trails stuff.

Davitt Woodwell: I think it was matching- oh, we fungibly- [sic] yeah, fungibly [sic] paying for, you know, she was working on a bunch of different things, but it was really- it ended up being the trail stuff.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: And, the water trail pieces were there because we were figuring out how that all worked with DCNR fish and boat and Park Service. And, that was after or before we had done the fishing and boating access sort of census for Pennsylvania – that we did with DCNR? There was a Larry Williams and Tom Ford thing when Tom was still at fish and boat, Larry was at DCNR and they had this concoction. We got the money to go out and do that survey. That was with Jim Novak. We were also doing the river conservation plans. So, do you know what year Hannah joined?

Avigail Oren: I can get that.

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- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, can you tell me? Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. She's on LinkedIn.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, oh, okay. So, good.
- Linda Boxx:** But, I mean, I think some of these things, we can go back to the records...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** ...and fill in those details. But, I think we've funded Hannah, you know, like, for two years, the initial two years and I'm not sure how many...
- Davitt Woodwell:** It was two or three rounds of that.
- Linda Boxx:** Yes.
- Davitt Woodwell:** And then, it got built into all the other grants. Because our big grants were the hodgepodge of everything to the other...
- Linda Boxx:** But, it allowed Hannah to- she might have been involved with Steel Valley Trail.
- Davitt Woodwell:** She was really- yes.
- Linda Boxx:** Then when she became President and then actually, like, working, working, and then also she was President of Regional Trail Corporation at the same time. So, it allowed her to focus.
- [Crosstalk]
- Davitt Woodwell:** It was sort of a home...
- Linda Boxx:** I can't say this because here you were her boss.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** But, she was...
- Davitt Woodwell:** I mean, the way we do it is people have a long leash to do that and her portfolio was really to go do the trails. And so, like, where's the need? Where can we be a value and not step on people's toes?

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- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Can we be helpful for the other abilities we have that somebody else doesn't have potentially that we can add to it and help with? And so, she was- I mean, I still remember her going back and you know, dealing with all the bridges on those last sections.
- Avigail Oren:** The Whitaker...
- [Crosstalk]
- Davitt Woodwell:** The Whitaker...
- Avigail Oren:** ...and Duquesne [inaudible 0:23:00.7].
- Davitt Woodwell:** ...and all that stuff. Yeah, I mean, I still go back and think that there was the broader, but then the focus was also because of our involvement with Steel Valley.
- Linda Boxx:** Yes. And, I think the first project that was a real project was the coke-gas pipeline. And, you...
- Davitt Woodwell:** That was 2003, 2002.
- Linda Boxx:** That it was finished.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yes.
- [Crosstalk]
- Avigail Oren:** No. I don't think that's true. The transfer of the property was in 2007. So, it would be...
- Davitt Woodwell:** When was the 250th?
- Linda Boxx:** Eight.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Was 2008 was the 250th?
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah.
- Davitt Woodwell:** That goes back...
- Linda Boxx:** And, by that time, Surma and Onorato were co-chairs.

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- Davitt Woodwell:** Right, correct. Because that was the whole thing of going get Chuck- what's his name, Chuck...
- Linda Boxx:** Queenan.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Queenan. Chuck Queenan in the meetings and when we hijacked the 250th, which I will not be quoted on saying that we hijacked it.
- Linda Boxx:** No, talk about that because that's important.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah. But, I don't want to throw- I'm not throwing the conference under the bus.
- Linda Boxx:** Well...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Well, I can talk about the- I'm not going to actually say even though it's now on tape that we hijacked the process because I didn't have a better idea. But, the Allegheny Conference was looking for a signature project for the 250th anniversary of Pittsburgh. And, they brought folks together in that top floor of the Regional Enterprise Tower.
- Linda Boxx:** Twenty-third floor.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, 23. I spent five years in that building. Four years- no two years, sorry, two years in that building. For Riverlife. And, they were looking for the project to do and we were able to make the case that I thought...
- Linda Boxx:** But, you were able to make the case.
- Davitt Woodwell:** We made the case.
- Linda Boxx:** No. Who's the "we"?
- Davitt Woodwell:** Just the people who are involved – you, me, Hannah, whoever.
- Linda Boxx:** No, I wasn't involved in that meeting when the Great- finishing the Great Allegheny Passage was named a signature project. We were told about it after the fact.
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, I wasn't in the room when it was named. They were looking for ideas, I think. And, going to a meeting up there

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were all kind- I remember Cort being there and other people and it was just sort of what you guys make it the completion of the trail and people loved it. And, for some reason, it's stuck. And, we were able to get traction then with Chuck Queenan and with- because Darla was working for Onorato at that point, right? Yeah.

Linda Boxx: No, well, she might have been working for the Park Service at that point.

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: Actually, might have been...

Linda Boxx: Because she's been... Or, the county library or, you know...

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, I know. I don't want...

Linda Boxx: She ducked out around that time.

Davitt Woodwell: Okay.

Avigail Oren: I can tell you...

Linda Boxx: So, this... Avigail, let me say this. This has been a little bit of a mystery. I've talked to Laura Fisher asking her how- you know, the question is because it made all the difference in the world...

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: ...that we were named a signature project.

Davitt Woodwell: A signature project, right.

Linda Boxx: And, I've asked Laura Fisher about. We tried to get an interview with Chuck Queenan and that keeps falling off the rails. You know, I thought about asking Bill Flanagan if he knew. We did ask the question to John Surma.

Davitt Woodwell: I remember...

Linda Boxx: He came in after the fact, but so...

Davitt Woodwell: I remember pushing it.

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- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Davitt Woodwell:** That doesn't mean I got it done. I just remember at least bringing it up, pushing it in this meeting or with some others, and getting enough traction that I was, like, well, for the 250th, that would be something that's much bigger. And, I was sort of surprised that we got it.
- Linda Boxx:** Jim Rohr was the chairman of the Conference at the time. And, I think they were looking for projects that were not just about Pittsburgh.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.
- Linda Boxx:** And, the fountain was already sort of deemed one of the important projects because they were going to be a lot of public and private money put into it.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** But, I think they were looking for- and another project or multiple projects that stepped outside of Pittsburgh.
- Davitt Woodwell:** And, Laura was doing the Braddock's trail book at that point or whatever it was.
- Linda Boxx:** Forbes Road.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Forbes Road, yeah, Forbes Road book. And, you know, we brought it up and it was like, "What do we do?" And then, we're sitting in a room with Queenan and with Chris Masciantonio from U.S. Steel and maybe with Onorato or somebody from Onorato's office and bringing them to the table to make the case to them that this was valid. This was worth it. And then, you know, Chuck was talking about... I still remember that "heavy and highway" is the term I will never forget. We need the heavy [? 0:27:35.3] highway guys for the construction people, heavy and highway. And, you know, it just took off and Surma got in there and Onorato got in there.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, so at some point, and I want to tell you...

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[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: Well, the pipeline was before that, right?

Linda Boxx: We were absolutely not party to those discussions. And, we- you know, I got a call from somebody or an email from somebody said, like, "We want to make completing the Great Allegheny Passage one of the signature legacy projects."

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: At the time, for the 250, I was like, "Yippee!"

[Chuckle]

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: You know, I mean, this is awesome. And then, I became part of the process as part of, like, information building and so forth. But, I've never been able to really discover because, like I said, that was- it brought resource to the table – political, financial, intellectual, like, all kinds of resources to the table that we would have never been able to acquire.

Davitt Woodwell: Because that was shortly after we did the Bassmaster Classic. And, we did the Classic in 2005. And so, 2008 was the 250th?

Linda Boxx: Right.

Avigail Oren: Darla was back at the county in 2006.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, she was there, I think.

Linda Boxx: Well, she was named- I remember Bob Hurley telling me after Onorato had been named one of the co-chairs that they had hired Darla back, I think, to put her on this project.

Davitt Woodwell: Okay.

Linda Boxx: You know, but she might have been there, but they were putting her on a project. But, she was very recently back to the county.

Davitt Woodwell: I remember at some point being in meeting – I think this could be how many meetings – I want to get it in my head – but 23rd

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floor, talking about what the signature project, essentially the GAP.

Linda Boxx: Mm-hmm.

Davitt Woodwell: And then, getting traction. So, I think somehow, I threw it out there thinking was going to be shut down immediately.

Linda Boxx: Well, and I think that, you know, I always thought that Jim Rohr probably liked the idea very much because they were in the process of acquiring the banks with the gold domes in Georgetown. The...

Davitt Woodwell: Oh, down in D.C.?

Linda Boxx: Yes.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Riggs Bank.

Davitt Woodwell: Oh, that's right. I remember when they did that, yeah.

Linda Boxx: Yes. And so, and it occurred to me later that, like, "Oh, this is working in very nicely with the marketing schemes that were..."

Davitt Woodwell: Yes.

Linda Boxx: ...Pittsburgh to D.C. and we're going to do this ride.

Davitt Woodwell: Yes.

Linda Boxx: Just start at the Riggs Bank and so forth. So, there was a synergy, I would say, in that respect.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah. And, there was also a synergy because this was really important to Surma because I remember doing a press conference for something at the Tech Center, with Surma maybe- it's might have been couple... What year- It was the year we did the video that didn't go off well because Sally Wiggin messed up and we didn't get to show the video thanking everybody that we did that the lifetime achievement for the trail. That was six years ago, five years ago?

Linda Boxx: Probably.

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Davitt Woodwell: But, Surma was way before that.

Linda Boxx: Yes.

Davitt Woodwell: Surma got into this and loved telling stories about growing up and riding the trail. And so, I mean, there was a whole thing throughout this of U.S. Steel being this critical link to get the Allegheny County piece done, both literally in terms of the coke-oven and gas pipeline and the bridge. So, the Transtar, which was the railroad and the U.S. Steel property. And then, also at that point, Surma was important in civic life. He was standing there with Onorato, they were buddies.

Linda Boxx: Okay, so I'm going to try to just create bullets. So, I'm going to say this is new information to me, Davitt, and I'm glad to know it – at some meeting, you or you and others proposed that the finishing the Great Allegheny Passage would be one of the legacy projects of Pittsburgh 250...

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: Yes. So, it was either at the meeting or a result of the meeting.

Linda Boxx: And, it was accepted.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Okay. But, we had already- you had already started working with us to acquire the coke-gas pipeline...

Davitt Woodwell: Yes, yes, before that.

Linda Boxx: ...because that was a long...

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: That was long before that. Joe Curo and the whole thing, yeah, yeah.

Linda Boxx: It was when Rivers of Steel was sort of presumed developer of that section of trail because they always said that, "This is our section. We're going to build it." But, they were cautious and/or reluctant to own any property and especially Brownfield property. They did not want to own it, but yet they had first rights of refusal, I mean, informal...

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- Avigail Oren:** Hannah doesn't remember them having a first right of refusal.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, it wasn't probably that written, but they had agreements going back and forth.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Maybe, yeah, I don't...
- Linda Boxx:** Joe Curo would know this.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Joe Curo.
- Linda Boxx:** I think that's one of the ones, the 15-minute interviews.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay. Joe Curo?
- Linda Boxx:** Yes, because he would know that. But, they had definitely correspondences going back and forth. And, Rivers of Steel wanted indemnified by U.S. Steel and U.S. Steel wasn't going to indemnify them. So, it just kept going. The volleyball just kept going back and forth, back and forth. And, finally, and I think this is around 2003 or '04, but I'll say more like '03. And, you were on the board, Hannah was working within the mix somehow.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** She joined PEC in 2003.
- Linda Boxx:** Okay.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** So, I think Augie Carlino had sent an email saying, like, "We don't want this anymore." And, that opened the door for the Regional Trail Cooperation to jump in and do what it could do. I mean, it was used to buying Brownfields.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** You know, so it wasn't something we were unaccustomed to or afraid of. And so, that opportunity to **pour [? 0:33:57.7]** Rivers of Steel to back away and us to jump in forward. And, I think that's probably about the time we said we need Hannah really working on this.

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Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: So, we can...

Davitt Woodwell: So, that might be when you started... So, the water trails was funding part of her position.

Linda Boxx: Right. Funding the land trail.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah. It could have been a lot of other- actually, it could have been naturally a bunch of other stuff, too.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: We do things fungibly [sic].

Avigail Oren: Fungibly [sic]. Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: Yes.

Avigail Oren: So, let's back up to who reached out first to John Surma, about the property?

Davitt Woodwell: I think it was Surma. I went through probably- did you go through Curo?

Linda Boxx: We picked up...

Davitt Woodwell: I dragged Masciantonio and, I think.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: So, can you just, for the record, just who are all...

Davitt Woodwell: So, at U.S. Steel at that point – and my full disclosure on my conflict here is my wife works for U.S. Steel and is currently the General Manager for Environmental at U.S. Steel. So, knowing and hanging out with a bunch of those people – Chris Masciantonio was and still is Government Affairs, U.S. Steel. Joe Curo was in the real estate department, Miles Stipanovich may have been involved with some of this, at least I talked to him a couple of times in the law department. Tish was in the law department at that point, my wife. And so, it was sort of talking to them and convincing them that this was a good

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project. It made sense. Surma got it. Their PR guy at that point, his name, I just forgot.

Linda Boxx: Not Tom Sterling? I mean, he was the...

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: No, Sterling was, yeah, Sterling was way out.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Davitt Woodwell: And, Sterling got him. Sterling was all over it.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, he was wonderful. And, he was doing the Transtar piece, which is the railroad. So, I mean, U.S. Steel was really involved in the community and, you know, reaching out. And so, mine was trying to, at that point, trying to make the case, I think, to Masciantonio that the coke-oven gas pipeline made sense, too. We met with Curo a few times. Joe Curo is a hero in this. Yeah, Joe Curo is a hero because I don't think it would have happened...

Linda Boxx: A different real estate agent wouldn't have been his patient.

Davitt Woodwell: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, Rivers of Steel had, basically, I think, tried his patience in terms of trying to get this property transferred. And so, we came in and we tried to expedite things as best we could. And, I remember that cold day and you were probably there. I know, Hannah was there. I mean, it was sub-zero. And, we were out there with Joe Curo...

[Crosstalk]

Davitt Woodwell: I wasn't there. I don't think.

Linda Boxx: You weren't on that one?

Davitt Woodwell: I don't think I was there, yeah.

Linda Boxx: Nick Bosonetto or whatever from the county. He worked for Lynn Heckman.

Davitt Woodwell: Okay, okay.

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- Linda Boxx:** You know, just a cast of characters, but we were freezing and walked the whole coke and gas...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, I was not there. But, it was sort of the, you know, I was on the- regardless what Linda says, I figured I was on the periphery of all this all the time, was my view, that there were it was sort of being able to get people to talk to each other and do some other things.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. I mean, I want to push you on that a little bit. Because the way you described it, it sounds to me like your social relationships with these people was really instrumental. And, that's not nothing.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Well, it was also coming off the high Riverlife at that point, too, was that was the whole stuff... So, it sort of created the- there had been the whole Riverlife thing and this was, to me, an extension of that.
- Avigail Oren:** Can you go back a little bit and describe just what you did at Riverlife that would have led to your relationships with your...?
- Davitt Woodwell:** So, Riverlife was sort of this conglomeration of people and efforts that was brought together. It has many fathers, many parents because it was successful at that point. So, you know, the Heinz Endowments claim success. Tom Murphy can claim success. John Craig who was there, the *Post-Gazette* was claiming success. Paul O'Neill, who at that point, was when he started was not yet Secretary of Treasury of Alcoa was claiming success. A lot of people really bought into this idea. And, my deal there was I've been named to the task force but after the first boat ride or whatever it was with David McCullough talking to us all. I went to Eloise Hirsh she was Planning Director of the city at that point said, "This is cool. I have to work on this." You know, when you think about hiring... So, we went through the interview process and became the first Executive Director. And so, we spent two years mostly planning, doing planning work, but also, as John Craig said, "minding other people's business." So, we got with him as the indefatigable leader who was playing role of both the city's paper of record as the Editor in Chief and also co-chair of a nonprofit which was a very odd situation to have

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somebody in. We would go in and mess with people's projects and say, "You got to do these differently." A lot of great early successes with that stuff. Did the plan...

Avigail Oren: Such as...?

Davitt Woodwell: The Great Lawn on the North Shore would not be there if, basically, John hadn't gotten involved. We went in and told the Steelers and this Sports and Exhibition Authority they didn't move the road. Because they the road there was on the water and there was nothing in between the river in the road. So, based on that, we got the city of change \$600,000- spend an extra \$600,000 bucks with the SCA to move the road back and you now have the water steps and the Great Lawn and all that stuff, which is very cool.

Linda Boxx: Was the Alcoa building built differently because of that?

Davitt Woodwell: Alcoa building was up.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: It was up, yeah. But, Station Square got redone somewhat differently. Signage on Heinz Field got done somewhat differently. We were working on programming issues. What other pieces... the Mon Wharf is different. The barriers – one of the big things that happened during that process was the barriers on the Fort Pitt Bridge were designed and we were told early on in the process that they were going to be these new barriers that would block the view from the bridge. So, we got very involved with learning a whole lot about how traffic barriers work and it ended up- it started, but ended up not the punch line. But, the end is after I left, we got these shorter barriers are now called "Pennsylvania barriers." But, we've gone through this whole process...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Versus Jersey barriers.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, versus Jersey barriers.

Linda Boxx: Sure.

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Davitt Woodwell: So, they're Jersey barriers with the see-through thing on top. And, that was trying to get Elsie Hillman to go to Tom Ridge and Tom Ridge said, "No," and we basically sued the Secretary of PennDOT who got really mad at me. And, Max King pulled us into a meeting. Max played good cop to my bad cop. And, he was planning on to sort of berated me in front of the Secretary and we said, "Oh, no, we'll do this." And, the Secretary then said, "Okay, I'll agree to do this new process." And, we got the barriers so we were happy. So, I mean, those were some of the things that happened.

Linda Boxx: And, Max was at Heinz.

Davitt Woodwell: Max was at Heinz at that point, Heinz Endowments.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: And then, we came out in 2001, end of 2001 with the plan for Three Rivers Park that is still out there and, you know, still doing, you know, Eloise Hirsh said one of the things for her that was the great outcome of this was that people were actually talking about design issues at cocktail parties. And, that was something that never happened and they were talking to her about what the city could look like. So, that was a cool thing. And so, trails and riverfront were all part of that as well as the programming. So, one of the things that carried over from that was I started looking at, with some others, at the Bassmaster Classic, this national bass fishing tournament. And, we have the- you know, the tournament was here in 2005. And, we had 11 hours of continuous coverage on ESPN for the weekend. It was a beautiful weekend. There were no fish but...

Avigail Oren: I was going to ask. Are there...?

[Chuckle]

Davitt Woodwell: Oh, there are tons, there's tons of fish. Our problem was that Hurricane Ivan had come through and wiped out two years' worth of fish. So, it was the smallest winning weight on record for this tournament. Four years later, we had the FLW tour with a million-dollar first prize come to Pittsburgh – there were much bigger fish caught that time. But from that, sort of the

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idea of programming the rivers and the riverfronts – there was a lot of activity. The foundations at that point were all very much bought-in for some unknown reason, Linda, to funding the Great Allegheny Passage. I mean, people were there and I think that the fact that U.S. Steel would come to the table as a corporate partner first with the coke-oven gas pipeline and then with the bridge. And, that it would be the 250th signature event of legacy.

Linda Boxx: Well, it was called “legacy” first and then it turned into the “signature project.”

Davitt Woodwell: Signature, yeah. It was the signature project. It was the sexy thing, you know, getting the trail done. And, you made it so.

Linda Boxx: Well, but it was quite a roller coaster ride on our end. And, you know, pointing back to Davitt, you know, Davitt was always sort of like, “Okay, how do we...?” And, it was really bringing U.S. Steel to the table as a trusted partner.

Davitt Woodwell: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, the coke-gas pipeline – I think if I remember and I will check the dates. But, I'm going to say that Rivers of Steel released it so we could grab it around 2003. And, it took several years till we could work through the environmental issues. U.S. Steel wanted to remove the pipeline first.

Davitt Woodwell: They did it themselves.

Linda Boxx: They were giving us a clean site.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, there was area to two of remediations they had to take care of. And, I remember Joe Curo when we were, like, arguing about the price down to, like, the \$25,000. He said, “We put over a million dollars, two million.”

Davitt Woodwell: I don't know. I didn't... I mean, the...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: But, he said, “We put over million up to two in remediation.”

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- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Linda Boxx:** Removal and remediation.
- Avigail Oren:** And, then bundled that into the price of the property?
- Linda Boxx:** No, no, no.
- Avigail Oren:** Really?
- Linda Boxx:** No, we ended up paying... Right. We ended up paying about \$525,000, \$550,000 something- a little over half a million for this two-mile corridor – 1.89 mile the corridor. And, they were, you know, I can think at the end of the day, Joe Curo was so relieved that somebody, you know, sort of said what they were going to do, that we kept marching forward with the end in mind and we were not backing down. We were not going to say, "Well, you have to indemnify us forever," and so on and so forth. So, it worked out, you know, very, very successfully. And, you know, I think Hannah and Jack Paulik went in for whatever reason I couldn't make it, like, it was the last workday in December of whatever year...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** ...to sign the paperwork or pick up the paperwork to get it recorded.
- [Crosstalk]
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. Jack remembers that.
- Linda Boxx:** Okay, yeah.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, and I think it was me, again, sort of being on the outskirts of this and just watching and coming in. You know, when it was like, "Okay, who can you get a meeting with so-and-so." It's that kind of thing. But, but it was- look at it and then it goes so far along then it's back a little bit and it's forward and the people got bought-in at that point. I think that also helped with the 250th.
- Linda Boxx:** Right. So...

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- Davitt Woodwell:** The coke-oven gas pipeline – Surma was already so far in to make it a legacy project. And then, you got the Transtar and the bridge.
- Linda Boxx:** So, the 250.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. Well, I mean, to that point, what was otherwise a real estate transaction becomes for U.S. Steel you know, an important legacy they're leaving, you know, like, it becomes... Yeah, it's not about their self-interest. It shows their, right, commitment to the community. So, yeah, let's talk about the Riverton Bridge.
- Davitt Woodwell:** I had almost nothing to do with that. That was already rolling, the relationships were there. Qualcomm [? 0:46:43.1] got in there, you got in there.
- Linda Boxx:** So, we- and I'll say "I" because Larry Ridenour was still working at Rivers of Steel and there was some transportation enhancement money. And, Larry had this plan to go along the road in McKeesport and build a ramp up to the McKeesport-Duquesne Bridge and somehow drop then back down onto property that, I think, the county owned, ended up owning some of the Duquesne Works property. And, I remember that meeting because we have a site visit with PennDOT and you know, as there always are, 15 people were there.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** And, Larry is walking it this way. And, I said, "Yes, but while we're here, I want you to look at this because this is where we're actually going to put the trail on this abandoned rail line here. And, we're negotiating, you know, we're having discussions with U.S. Steel about building a hang-off the Riverton Bridge so that they can continue to do railroad work and we can just use the piers and sort of build our own structure." And, you know, I'm sure the PennDOT people said like, "Well, these people don't know what they're talking about, you know, here you have one person taking over this bridge. This other person who, we don't know who she is, but she's putting it on this other bridge." So, you know, I'm saying it was, like, my pestering. And, I probably was pestering through you,

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Davitt, because I didn't have the relationships with U.S. Steel people.

Davitt Woodwell:

Yeah.

Linda Boxx:

But, I was, you know, through the Pittsburgh 250, started meeting Tom Sterling and saying, "Tom..." you know, like, making a point to sit beside him at those meetings up on the 23rd floor. I said, you know, I sent him pictures of different ways that the trails, you know, hung off of the sides of railroad bridges. And I said, "You know, it'll be at our cost, and we'll do this, and you don't run that many trains anyhow," and so on and so forth. And so, just pestered him a lot about it. But, at that point, you know, and Davitt, I'm going to turn it back to you – at that point, you know, John Surma and Dan Onorato had agreed to be co-chairs of the finishing the Great Allegheny Passage.

Davitt Woodwell:

Correct.

Linda Boxx:

So, there was a big committee, Jim Rohr was the head of and then each of the three legacy projects had their own co-chairs.

Davitt Woodwell:

What were the other two?

Linda Boxx:

Well, the fountain.

Davitt Woodwell:

The fountain was one.

Linda Boxx:

Yes, and the Forbes Road.

Davitt Woodwell:

Forbes Road, okay, yeah.

Linda Boxx:

So, like, I don't know who were... Mike Watson, perhaps, with the Forbes Road, I don't know.

Davitt Woodwell:

Yeah.

Linda Boxx:

But, for sure, Dan Onorato and John Surma were co-chairs. And, will you somehow convinced Dan or John Surma to be...?

Davitt Woodwell:

I don't know.

Linda Boxx:

You don't know?

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Davitt Woodwell: I mean, this was well, yeah. So, that was going at that point, it was conversations, I mean, it was working, I think, with Chris Masciantonio, and saying, "Look, here's what's happening. You guys should be part of this. Here's what it's talking about. Here's what it is, here's what it isn't." And, I think it just flowed. It was a bunch of different people and it just flowed. You know, Chris bought into it, Curo was bought into it, they were, you know, they got it because of the coke-oven gas pipeline, because of Surma's commitment to trails. They understood it. And then, those guys became the co-chairs and there was basically no stopping it because they also had Chuck Queenan and, basically, consigliere. And, you know, and with the unstoppable force of Linda going through here, too. That was the group that I think made it happen. And then, you know, once they were on board, it was details and sort of, "Okay, what projects do we need? Who do we need to have come in?" You know, Queenan was talking about getting the- and I don't know if this happened, but getting highway folks to donate their time and everything else that didn't come through. But, it was the kind of level of thinking there was and the fact that Linda was able to sort of wrangle all these other resources and the foundations to come to it as well. It was like, "Here's the list of things that has to happen." And then, when did the Whitaker Bridge go? I mean, that's all part of this stuff.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: That was...

Linda Boxx: The Whitaker Bridge was 2007.

Davitt Woodwell: Was it already there?

Linda Boxx: No, no.

Davitt Woodwell: No, it was... Yeah.

Linda Boxx: You mean the two flyovers?

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, the two flyovers, yeah.

Avigail Oren: That was...

Linda Boxx: No, it was '10.

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- Davitt Woodwell:** '10?
- Linda Boxx:** '10. 2010.
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, that's still...
- Linda Boxx:** Seven, seven, that's why I get mixed up. It was...
- [Crosstalk]
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, that was still...
- Linda Boxx:** July 7...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Even though this was the 250th project, it doesn't mean that it was done at that point. This was still the add-ons from it that kept going as a result of that.
- Linda Boxx:** For the Pittsburgh 250th, what we had done was the stretch through the RIDC Park in McKeesport, over the Riverton Bridge and then we dropped...
- [Crosstalk]
- Davitt Woodwell:** So, that was the big opening?
- Linda Boxx:** That was the big opening. And then, everything else from 2008 to '13 took that many- five more years to finish construction.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Right, to the big opening, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** Right.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah. But, that was the momentum. Well, it was momentum from way before that just happened. There was a turbo boost or something from the 250th.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** And, we kept relying on Dan Onorato's interest, you know, as the co-chair, to try to get his staff to move things along more quickly. And, I know that was a frustration of Jack Paulik's because he'd be, you know, with county people trying to get things moving. And, they would be, you know, sort of

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shrugging their shoulders, “Oh, I don’t know.” And, he said, “But, your boss wants this done,” you know?

Davitt Woodwell:

Yeah.

Linda Boxx:

And so, we were, you know, it was – as any bureaucracy – building the Great Allegheny Passage was certainly not their only project that they had going on. But, we try to use, you know, the county executives, you know, chairmanship, co-chairmanship as a reason that they should pay faster attention to what we needed.

Davitt Woodwell:

I mean, in some ways, I think Surma was the secret weapon because that gets you the Allegheny Conference overall that, you know, gets in...

Linda Boxx:

Well, it got us the attention with Norfolk Southern.

Davitt Woodwell:

Yeah, that too, yeah.

Linda Boxx:

I mean, that was, like, far the biggest contribution because if we hadn't had the agreement from Norfolk Southern to build two bridges over top of their rail lines across there loathed to do...

Avigail Oren:

Right.

Linda Boxx:

We would have had to build some sort of, you know, trail on sidewalk along 837 and it would have been horrible.

Davitt Woodwell:

The Allegheny County connections, I would say, wouldn't have worked if John Surma hadn't been CEO of U.S. Steel at that point.

Linda Boxx:

Correct.

Davitt Woodwell:

That's what shook all this.

Linda Boxx:

Right. But, I didn't bring John Surma to the table. I mean, once he was at the table, you know, we fulfilled... When they said “jump,” we said, “How high on the way up?”

Davitt Woodwell:

Yeah, yeah.

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- Linda Boxx:** I mean, we did everything as quickly and as efficiently as we could to make sure everybody was satisfied and, you know, sort of worked our fingers to the bone and make sure everything happened.
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, his buy-in... I mean, and Curo... I mean, before that, Curo, Joe Curo really paving the way literally and figuratively, I guess, to get to that point where Surma is like, "Okay, we're in this and it's working," and the convergence of the fact that they already had project in, that the 250th was going on. He was involved with the conference. The conference was doing the 250th. You know, they had all their facilities through the Mon Valley. You know, from the Research Center in Homestead to the fully-integrated stuff of ET, Clairton, and Irvin.
- Linda Boxx:** Edgar Thomson.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Edgar Thomson, right.
- Linda Boxx:** Without a "P".
- Davitt Woodwell:** Sorry, yeah. Yes. The fact that team led by John got behind it really did pieces that would never happen anyway because I remember earlier on talking and wondering, "How the hell do you get under, through that rail yard?" That was the killer before all this – was the rail yard in whatever community, Duquesne by Kennywood.
- Linda Boxx:** But, that's Duquesne, yeah.
- Davitt Woodwell:** And, Duquesne... And, there was no way through it. You look at this thing. It's a railroad, it's a spaghetti mess. And then, the coke-oven and gas pipeline is just like this...
- Linda Boxx:** How do we get there?
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, it is this miracle thing.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Davitt Woodwell:** I could, you know, foundations and others will say, "Well, we made it hell." None of that, it doesn't matter how much money you have unless you bought Norfolk Southern.
- Avigail Oren:** Right, right.

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Linda Boxx: If we didn't have those two flyovers to connect the coke-gas pipeline.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, connect it so that they get to get the coke-oven gas pipeline which is two miles, would you say?

Linda Boxx: 1.8689.

Davitt Woodwell: 1.8689 plus.

[Chuckle]

So, coke-oven gas pipeline gets you the flyovers, gets you the bridge...

Linda Boxx: Riverton Bridge.

Davitt Woodwell: ...gets you all this stuff. There's no trail. I mean, that is an amazing legacy in the Mon Valley to leave.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: Now, can the Mon Valley do more probably to benefit from it? You know, what can McKeesport do to take advantage of the trail? What can Duquesne do? There's still, I think, there's more to be done there. But, yeah, if John hadn't been there to say to his folks "go ahead," we wouldn't have the trail now.

Linda Boxx: And, it is sort of a funny story because I don't think it'll come in my interview because it's so appropriate here. So, the Riverton Bridge – I'm still nudging Tom Sterling about, you know, the proposal. And, you know what cell service is like in Somerset County and so forth.

Davitt Woodwell: Uh-huh.

Linda Boxx: So, it was early morning, I was on my way somewhere and a call comes in – I see it's Tom Sterling. And, he says on the phone, "Well, we're just going to give you the Riverton Bridge." And, I go, "Which words did I not hear that conversation?"

[Laughter]

And, I sort of like, "Oh, gosh, I think he said that, but that couldn't have been what he said." And, he sort of got angry.

DAVITT WOODWELL

He said like, "Linda, did you hear what I said? We're going to give you the Riverton Bridge."

[Laughter]

And, I just sort of had to find some signal and pull over because I didn't want to thank him if he was saying, "We're not going to give you the Riverton Bridge." I mean, I couldn't be sure that I was hearing- is what I was hearing. And so, I said, "Oh, okay."

[Laughter]

And, I think, you know, I know he was, like, because I should have been screaming in ecstasy on the phone. But, I wasn't sure that's what he had said.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, I told him this story later. I said, you know, like, "I wasn't sure I heard you correctly." Anyhow, that's a story that will be told elsewhere that isn't already about how that was, you know, U.S. Steel deeded it to the county and the county is real slow in taking it on. And, we actually had the last train run over in May of '08 and had bicycles going over and in October of '08.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: But, talking about Tom Sterling there – I think the other thing is that even though- I mean, John- this wasn't a matter of John Surma just saying "go do it" and all the people at U.S. Steel reluctantly saying, "Well, the boss said we have to do it." They were bought-in. I mean, Joe Curo was committed to this thing. Chris Masciantonio was, Tom Sterling was. They were all, like, "This is a good project." They were proud of this project it seemed.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Absolutely.

Davitt Woodwell: I think they were very proud of it.

Linda Boxx: The railroad side of it was not happy about it.

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- Davitt Woodwell:** Right, yeah. But, those principles with whom everybody was dealing with – they saw this value and they said, “This is what we're doing for the community.” Yeah. That's the way- all I did was a few phone calls and meetings.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, but if you were the one who suggested that the Great Allegheny Passage be...
- Davitt Woodwell:** I think so.
- Linda Boxx:** I mean, that's a mystery because everybody I've talked to has denied it. “Not me.” So, I'm glad to know...
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, it wasn't a forceful- it wasn't a Khrushchevian moment.
[Crosstalk/Chuckle]
- Avigail Oren:** Banging on the...
- Davitt Woodwell:** But, it was sort of, yeah. And, I don't know if it was saying it and it got traction, but... And, other people may have said the same thing. I just don't know it, too.
- Avigail Oren:** We'll have to go dig up those meeting minutes.
- Linda Boxx:** Do they have minute meetings...?
- Davitt Woodwell:** I doubt it. And, I sort of remember a crowd- a bizarre crowded room, maybe on the 23rd floor. And, it was sort of, you know, what are the ideas...
- Linda Boxx:** That's a good idea.
- Davitt Woodwell:** What are the ideas for this? And, I don't know if it was a facilitated meeting whereby, I was writing down their ideas and sending them in but I didn't get enough of a chance.
[Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** That was when Mike Langley was the CEO of the Allegheny Conference. Yeah. Jim Rohr was the...
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** And, John Surma was right after him, I think, or right before- right after him.

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- Davitt Woodwell:** It was one of those.
- Linda Boxx:** And, Queenan was right before.
- [Crosstalk]
- Davitt Woodwell:** Queenan was right before.
- Linda Boxx:** Queenan, Rohr, Surma.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** So, there was this nice continuity of people who really wanted to get this done.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, wanted to see it done. I mean, and don't forget...
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** Bill Flanagan is still at the Conference and he would know if there are records about those big meetings.
- Davitt Woodwell:** And, you had Rohr on stage at 2013 at the Point.
- Linda Boxx:** He loves telling the story.
- Davitt Woodwell:** Which one?
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** Well, how we were standing up...
- [Chuckle]
- Davitt Woodwell:** Yeah, go ahead. I would say, like, two rows back he was turning... [mumbling] ...yeah.
- [Laughter]
- Avigail Oren:** So, I always like to ask at the end of these interviews about what trail building and the Great Allegheny Passage means to you personally or what, you know, how does it fit into your life and career more broadly?
- Davitt Woodwell:** Let's see – most recently, well, two rides ago – my ride two rides ago was on Sunday on the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, dropping a kid at school. And so, what it means in one way is

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when I go to places, I look for the trails because it's a way to get a much better sense of where you are, what the communities are like. And that, I mean, these may be double track trails and state forest, national forest, or they may be, you know, urban pathways or whatever. But, I drive just basically everywhere I can with a bike or two. And, understand much better since that '96 ride and watching what Linda has done and the trail towns work and everything. And then, we did Rivertown as a spin-off of that and all this other stuff. Just how important to a community those connections are because they're- you can be on them and be alone or you can be there and be part of the community. If you ride through, you know, if you do the whole Pittsburgh to D.C. or D.C. to Pittsburgh. You spend a lot of time maybe by yourself, but you also go through communities where you see how important that trail is to the people who are out walking their dogs or getting some exercise, hopefully, you know, in some cases because the doctor probably told them to. Access for kids. You go along even in downtown Pittsburgh; you will get the water steps and the water steps wouldn't be there if it weren't for the trail in Pittsburgh. And, I mean, it's not on the Great Allegheny Passage, but it's on a trail.

And, that has become a community gathering place as have, you know, the stadiums. The stadiums are a little different because people are walking around and I try not to hit them. But, you know, they've got all these different uses. They are nondenominational, everybody can use them. And, I think also in those- in the last 20 or whatever years that is, seen the acceptance of trails and the fact that people are now clamoring for them and not opposing them as much. And, there's still some places where people don't want them but generally speaking, the acceptance is there and wherever we've gone – we bring people together from across the country every year now. And, we've done it in Philadelphia, we've done it in Bentonville, Arkansas. We're going to Western New York next year – from “Regional Trail Initiatives,” we call it. And it's, you know, places – San Francisco, Portland, Minneapolis, Austin, Pittsburgh, D.C., whatever, and seeing what is happening around the country with these efforts has just been phenomenal. So, personally, I mean, yeah, I say that

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we do it to turn people into stewards. That's from PEC's mission, that's why we do it. Personally, I want to ride more. I mean, it's my way of getting out there and, and seeing these places and, you know, if Pittsburgh were on the ocean, maybe I'll be sailing more. But, the trails have presented this opportunity for commuting, for recreation, for economic development. And, the fact- we just did a podcast recently – trails are the new golf. I think Josh... It was, basically, a real estate guy saying- or guy from a national trail, from American Trails saying that, "In the real estate world, it used to be that you want a golf course as the amenity. Now, you want to trail." And, you know, that's shown- our office is on a trail. There's value to that there. Today there are only three or four bikes in here. Often there's six. And, it's a way that it crosses political lines, it crosses all kinds of lines and it really brings people together. And, you know, Sunday riding through neighborhoods in Seattle, because it was a place I'm not used to, was really in a lot of ways no different than riding from Pittsburgh in the South Side and the North Side and it really lets you get a place. So, yeah, they're phenomenal. And, I learned a lot from somebody, from Linda, from all this stuff.

Avigail Oren: Is that somebody Linda?

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, it would be Linda, yeah.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah, absolutely. And then, I remember we did have- Linda and have had our moments. But, one of them was also... Because a lot of our work now is we're looking at Erie to Pittsburgh and we're looking at, you know, I want to connect to Buffalo because if we get to Buffalo, because of what has happened with the Empire State trails – you get to Albany, you get to New York, and you get to Montreal. And, Buffalo is connecting to Toronto and we do work on the East Coast Greenway. But, at one point, it was, like I said, "Okay, we got to start thinking about what the next one is." And, this was maybe 2010 or something like that. And, I said, "No, you don't, we're not done yet. This is what we're doing."

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[Laughter]

Linda Boxx: That's all I'm doing.

Davitt Woodwell: I know, I know. But, it's good. But, now we've got to face the maintenance stuff. So, you've got this... I mean, there is a generational thing here where a lot of the trail world is aging out.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Davitt Woodwell: And then, what do we do for the trail builders who have been so passionate? That's a lot easier to get excited about than trail maintaining. And so, figuring out what that next wave is, and how you get folks to maintain and not have it sort of age out, grey out is going to be the challenge coming up.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Davitt Woodwell: And, I think the Great Allegheny Passage and C&O but, you know, some people think they are together. And, you can see the difference – the C&Os had different maintenance issues over time being part of the Park Service.

Linda Boxx: But, we are taking care of those.

Davitt Woodwell: Correct, correct. But, you know, the Great Allegheny Passage has the recognition that maybe some of these other trails won't have to have people come around it. So, it may become incumbent on the ATA and others to sort of raise a flag in defense of their brethren and sistren of the trails to do stuff. So, it's going to be interesting. But, it's been fun to watch and have been able to be on the periphery of it and have some fun playing with it. I mean, Hannah was the one doing all the work for us. She did a lot of that stuff.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Well, she did a lot of the great, you know, like staff work.

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: But, I still say, Davitt, don't minimize your role.

[Chuckle]

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Davitt Woodwell: I always will.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Davitt Woodwell: So, yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Well, on that note...

[Crosstalk/Laughter]

Davitt Woodwell: Yeah. So, all right.

Avigail Oren: Let's turn this off.

Davitt Woodwell: Cool.

Avigail Oren: Thank you.

Davitt Woodwell: No, thank you. That was cool.

Linda Boxx: Good.

[End 1:08:01.5]

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