

HANNAH HARDY 4.3.19

[Chatter/Testing Recorder]

Avigail Oren: And, let's get started. Okay. So, my name is Avigail Oren. I'm here today with Hannah Hardy. The date is Wednesday, April 3rd, 2019. We're at Hosanna House in Pittsburgh, 807 Wallace Street and it's just about 9:00 a.m. So, good morning, Hannah. Thanks for being here with me. We are going to talk today about how you became involved with the GAP Trail project, particularly with the Regional Trail Corporation and how the project intersected with your day job at the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. And, I'll ask you about how those roles were important in convincing Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area to walk away from U.S. Steel's coke/gas pipeline property in McKeesport and getting U.S. Steel to negotiate instead with RTC for the corridor. And, we'll also talk about the influence that Pittsburgh's 250th birthday or anniversary celebration had on the build-out of the trail's final gaps in the city. But, the question I want to start with, sort of to set the stage, is can you give me the brief and wondrous history of your life between birth and when you arrive in Pittsburgh and begin your work on the GAP Trail?

Hannah Hardy: So, before I was working on the trail?

Avigail Oren: Yeah. Just how did you end up in Pittsburgh and doing this work? Where did you go to school? What brought you here?

Hannah Hardy: Well, I'm actually from Pittsburgh. So, I grew up in Pittsburgh, I grew up on the North Side of Pittsburgh. And, I had a great, you know, kind of life growing up in a very interesting community. I went away to undergrad. I went to Miami University of Ohio. I was a pretty- I don't know if this is usual or unusual but I had no idea what I wanted to do when I grew up. So, I went- I selected that school because they had a very interesting interdisciplinary studies program where I didn't have to pick a major so that was kind of enticing for me. So, got to really dabble in a lot of different areas. I would say that- and I ended up writing my senior thesis on gentrification. So, I really focused on, you know, if I would have ended up with a major, I would have called it something like Urban Studies or something like that. So, that was really interesting to me. And then, I came back to Pittsburgh. I did some different work for a

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while and then I went to grad school. I went to the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at University of Pittsburgh. And so, I was- my Master's is in Public Administration. Actually, I had a community development focus. So, when I was in grad school, I had a community development fellowship from HUD – the Housing and Urban Development. So, while I was in grad school, I was working in community development corporations in Oakland, in East Liberty, on the North Side. So, that gave me some really valuable experience. Then to- when I graduated from grad school, I worked in community development. So, I was working on the North Side at a community development organization. I worked on a lot of park things, actually. A park master plan, that was when the stadiums were being developed. So, I did a lot of that kind of interface with making sure that resident concerns were considered as part of that process.

So, then I had an opportunity – and this really started my trail journey – I had an opportunity to go work for the mayor of the City of Pittsburgh at the time, Mayor Tom Murphy. So, that was in about 2000. And, I was in the Neighborhood Policy Office in the mayor's office. So, I was still doing the strong community development connection with community organizations all over the city, but Mayor Murphy was a huge trail supporter, proponent, trailblazer. I mean, really, just ahead of his time. So, I was in- he wanted somebody in his office who could coordinate trail development that was starting at that point to happen along the riverfronts in the City of Pittsburgh. I also did- the city was also embarking on master planning for the four main regional parks. So, I was doing, like, trails, I did community development work, but I was also doing this trail and parks work because those were such priorities for Mayor Murphy that he wanted somebody in his office to be, you know, doing overall coordination and it not being in one specific department. Like, he elevated it enough to have me working in his office on that so, that's kind of where I, you know, kind of... I can talk more about how that led to Steel Valley work and RTC work, but that's kind of, you know, the brief history. After, you know, and this may become more part of the interview, but I did end up – after I left the Mayor's

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office, you know, my time with Steel Valley started when I was in the Mayor's office so I could talk about that. But, after the Mayor's office then I went to the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

Avigail Oren:

Okay. So, I think the first thing I want to hear about is – so, you said that this job was overseeing the master planning for parks which included trail development among it. I'd love to hear a bit about what that day-to-day work was like – who you were working with and, like, as part of that I would like to know, did that bring you into Steel Valley Trail Council as, like, one of the founding members or did that come later?

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah, yeah. That's a good question. And actually, they are kind of separate. I don't think it's like the park stuff or the trail stuff underneath it. I mean, in fact, the trail stuff was probably a little more important to Mayor Murphy. So, it was very- but it was a great job. I mean, especially so early in my career. It was such a great job. So, I mean, I did day to day... We had a team. So, I put together, with other staff at the city, we had a team that was folks from City Planning at that time – so, City Planning, the Department of Engineering. The city departments have changed since then but at that time I had a key person from City Planning, a key person from the Department of Engineering and folks from Public Works. And so, there were different piece- there's different pieces of trail development. One is just securing the right-of-way and that can happen in any number of ways whether you're getting an easement from somebody, whether the city's actually purchasing the property, you know, just any number. There are so many different ways that trails are developed in terms of ownership. And then, there's, like, the planning piece of it. A lot of times we would be hiring consultants to do design work so, working with City Planning on that. There's always the funding that needed to happen and then the building. So, when I was in- for my day to day, I actually spent a lot of time out of the trails because one of the strategies that Mayor Murphy used was he taught, you know, had our Public Works crews become experts in trail building. So, we would figure out with City Planning how to acquire a piece of property. There were state grants that were involved and I'm sure you'll hear a

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lot about the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources funding. So, maybe there was a grant that was written to acquire a piece of property. Maybe there was, like, some design process. But then, I actually spent a lot of time out on the trails before they were built with the Department of Public Works and they did a lot of the building. So, I would- I'm certainly not an engineering expert, but I would be out there making sure that things were happening. So, my day to day was really any number of meeting with a property owner, we want to acquire this easement, we're going after this money to being out of the trail with the foreman.

There was this wonderful guy, Bob Booker, he was the foreman of Public Works. I think he since retired and moved to Florida and he, you know, had a big cigar in his mouth. He was like a motorcycle rider, one of those guys that you just love. And, he would- we would be out there talking about where the trail was going to go, picking fencing. Department of Engineering and Construction, there was a wonderful- he was an architect, Al Kovacik, he did a lot. He really put his heart and soul into that trail, into design work. Because some of the- if we had the property, we would just design it in-house and we would pick fencing and we would figure out where the asphalt was going to go. So, that was a very fun process. It was not easy. We had some property owners who were not interested, who were very opposed. Even when we acquired property, there was a specific- this isn't on The Great Allegheny Passage alignment, but there's a property on the North Shore of the Ohio River and we bought, legally, rights to the railroad but it kind of intersected their property and they- it was a marina [Peggy's Marina, which still existed as of April 2019] and they were very opposed to having the trail. Now, it's wonderful and I think they've come around and support the trail. But, back in those early days, people didn't know what these trails were going to bring, you know? So, I would be meeting with property owners, with Pat Hassett from the Department of City Planning to kind of, you know, say, "Okay, we're going to bring this trail through. You want extra fencing here? We could put fence in. What are some compromises to make this, you know, amenable to you as a property owner

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adjacent?” So, really my day to day was varied. It was a great job to have that early in my career, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Yeah, I mean, it sounds so dynamic. Talk a little bit about – you said the marina owner was resistant and that was representative of people not knowing what the trails were going to bring. What were they afraid of?

Hannah Hardy: There was the perception – and I think it’s changed at this point – but I think there was the perception that trails were going to bring more crime, people with an access to properties that weren’t there before. You know, I think the situation, in many cases, was we were purchasing railroad rights-of-way. Well, the railroads were kind of long gone so it was kind of like no person’s land, you know, and more private. And, you know, there was going to be increased visibility. If people were riding by with, you know, I take my kids on that trail. I live over there so I take my kids on that specific trail, right? But, I think there was this fear that, like, more attention was going to bring more just crime. So, one situation was a marina, you know, where people can be breaking into boats, things like that. So, there was this crime perception. There’s also this industrial park [Casey Industrial Park] over on the North Shore of the Ohio River, again, it’s not on the Passage alignment and so we were coming- they kind of- because the railroad was gone, they kind of just could go up to the riverfront. So, now we were going to be pushing back a little bit and having people riding on the river side of their property. Well, people probably never saw the river side of their property so there was a concern that, “Oh, people are going to know what’s in our industrial park and they have tenants,” and things like that. You know, I think the reality of trail development is it brings people, like me who have their kids and that’s going to kind of dissuade crime, you know, and things like that. But, there’s- certainly, nobody knew that back in those early days.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Hannah Hardy: People didn’t know that, yeah.

Avigail Oren: There wasn’t the proof of concept yet.

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Hannah Hardy:

Right.

Avigail Oren:

Right. That's so interesting. So, you're out every day, you're negotiating rights-of-way, you're thinking about design, you're building out trail. How does this bring you to intersect with- what was first? Was it with the Steel Valley Trail Council or was it RTC that came first?

Hannah Hardy:

Oh, it was definitely Steel Valley Trail Council first. And, Steel Valley, I'm not one of the founders of the Steel Valley Trail Council. I think I was there fairly early on, but really, I do have to give a lot of credit to Mayor Murphy because, I mean, he was one of the early board members of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. I mean, he kind of just is an early visionary, nationwide, in terms of trail development. And so, when I was working in his office, it was actually before- I mean, I think this work led to my work at PEC, actually. So, when I was working in his office, he was so interested in the regional connections that he, you know, we were building a trail on the South Shore of the Monongahela River. We were fighting to get this property and he cared about that within the City of Pittsburgh, but his interest was in making the bigger connection. So, it was really through his encouragement. He encouraged me to go out and connect with the Steel Valley Trail Council.

And so, there was a group that was meeting. I can remember the first meeting that I went to, you know, I would – not sure if I was supposed to do this or not – but I would take my little city motor pool car, you know, he was encouraging me to go out and interface with that group. So, I went out, you know, probably at first to talk about what we were doing on the south shore of the Mon to talk about how we were going to connect outside of the city and then that led into my involvement, my deeper involvement with the organization that was able to continue on through my work with PEC. But, it really was Mayor Murphy that encouraged me to make those- to be reaching out to those other organizations outside of the city limits.

Avigail Oren:

Okay. So, that's a great segue into my next question which was: were you involved in Mayor Murphy's negotiation of the

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right-of-way through the Steelers' practice field which was part of the 2002 Baldwin/Hot Metal Bridge connection on the trail?

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah. So, I came in- by the time I came into that negotiation, the right-of-way had been negotiated. What I had to do was- we were still in the process because the Urban Redevelopment Authority was involved in holding that property. So, we were still in the process of- I was there through that whole design process. The deal had already been done with the Steelers in terms of you're going to move your practice fields back, but I was very involved in the legal side of it, the easements, where, who's going to, how we're going to raise money. Like, I was involved in working with the URA – the Urban Redevelopment Authority. There's a woman there- she's now at Pitt, named Melissa Bilec. Gosh, her married name... I think she has a different last name, her married name. I'm connected to her so I can find her name. So, she was an engineer at the URA that was involved in that whole build-out of that site. And so, we worked together on, like, grant funding for design work. That was a pretty intense- that was not one that Public Works built. That was a pretty intense, I would say, high-level design in terms of, you know, that wasn't like a design-build.

We went through a full design process and then went to bid for construction for that trail. And, it was complicated because, you know, there were different property owners. It was the URA that owned that riverfront, there was the Steelers and UPMC were involved through, you know, their build-out of their buildings. So, that was a pretty complex one that was pretty heavy in terms of just agreements and who's going to do what when and where's the money coming from. So, I was involved in all of that. But, Mayor Murphy already had a deal with the Steelers on, "Okay, you're going to give us this land," and then we had to figure out how and where and what, yeah.

Avigail Oren:

So, tell me, what did you learn, like, when you left that project and you left the Mayor's office, what had you learned in that process of doing this complex, legal easement funding work for this particular section of the trail?

Hannah Hardy:

For the section on the Mon?

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Avigail Oren: Yeah. Or, you know, you could speak more broadly if you wanted to talk about the other. I'm curious about how this particular project sets you up for filling in the rest of the gaps over the next, you know, almost ten years.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah, I mean, it's just so interesting because every project is so different.

Avigail Oren: Interesting.

Hannah Hardy: But, getting access to the land is key. So, I mean, one thing that Mayor Murphy used to always, you know, he was really about... And, sometimes I think even probably Linda didn't always agree with him because sometimes he would want to build and just get something down there even if it wasn't like the A-plus, the end result. But, I think his point was, like, just to establish the right-of-way. So, I learned that, that there's something to that. There's something to you have to just set the vision. I mean, definitely, one thing that I learned was the vision for the regional trail, for the connections, beyond the City of Pittsburgh. I mean, I don't know if people would have fought it so much to build a, you know, how expensive and whatever, the cost to do two pedestrian bridges over railroad tracks in Whitaker and Duquesne if it weren't for the bigger connection. Right, so I learned that that big vision is key and you have to just keep, you know, speaking it to believing it. So, that was key.

I mean, you just have to be very dogged. I mean, that is one thing that Linda McKenna Boxx is so good at. She just simply does not take "no" for an answer and if she gets "no" then we figure out a different way. It doesn't mean the trail- getting "no" does not mean that the trail is not going to happen, it just means, "Oh, okay, we have to figure out something different then." What's a different- pull out a different, you know, tool from our toolbox. And, I saw that happen time and again especially on the development of the Steel Valley Trail. There were so many different alignments. There were so many different possibilities and maybe there was a lot that did not work for whatever reason. There were so many that did not work. And, that's frustrating and that's hard, you know? But, you know, if you hold on to that vision at the end of the day,

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you know, now we have the trail completed. So, I really learned a lot about that. I mean, the easement stuff, you have to have- and all of the legal pieces of it, you just have to have attention to detail. You know, like, if you're meeting with a property owner and they say we want X type of fence, you know, you have to figure that out or you have to just learn what it means. What are all of these specific pieces- I'm not a lawyer, I don't have a legal background, but we had to figure out how to talk with and work with lawyers so that we could get what we wanted.

Avigail Oren: Yeah, it just sounds like, you know, as you said, like the perfect first job for getting this really broad scope of project management but also community engagement.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: So, tell me about the transition from the Mayor's office to the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. What was your job when you moved over there but also explain what is the Council?

Hannah Hardy: Uh-huh, okay. So, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council is a statewide nonprofit organization. Their mission was – and I think it still is – conservation through cooperation. So, and they've certainly, I'm sure, shifted their portfolio of projects since I've been there. But, they work- you know, they're a statewide environmental organization. They do a lot- statewide they do a lot of land and water trail development. They also are involved in a lot of different policy initiatives. I mean, they're at the table as it relates to some of the fracking and natural gas work that's happening to represent some environmental interests. They do a little bit of stormwater and watershed type work, but they do have offices in Pittsburgh. They have a presence in Western Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and in Eastern Pennsylvania and then Northeastern Pennsylvania. They used to have, when I was there, they had actually a sizable office in Harrisburg. I don't think that exists anymore, just with some changes. But, they're a statewide nonprofit organization. They do have people throughout- so, trail development, they're a partner on a lot of different trail development projects around- across the Commonwealth. So, in Philadelphia, they have probably more than one staff that

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was working on land and water trail projects. In Northeastern Pennsylvania, they've led a lot of that trail work. So, I was- had an opportunity to go there working for Davitt Woodwell. So, he's maybe on your list of folks to interview. But, he's actually the president now so when I was there, he was the vice president for Western Pennsylvania. So, I had an opportunity to go there. I was working... Statewide, we had funding to coordinate the Pennsylvania Water Trails Program. So, that work was actually statewide with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the National Park Service which actually we're working with the Chesapeake Bay office of the National Park Service because of the Susquehanna River and the presence of the Susquehanna River and the development of the Susquehanna River Water Trail.

So, again, that was, like, community development and working with communities' access and in this case, it was their water resources. But then, in Western Pennsylvania, I kind of brought my portfolio of land trail, land development – land trail projects. And so, I would be at the table for the Steel Valley Trail Council- I mean, I was a volunteer. I was on the board kind of as myself but then also it made it really fit well with my work at the Environmental Council, you know. I was there at the Allegheny Trail Alliance and the RTC – all of that happened during the workday and was just part of my work. You know, and PEC still has somebody in, you know, some evolution of my position there. I mean, I started- we provided some very early staffing just because I was in the office. Like, I don't even think we had a grant to do it for what has now become the Pittsburgh to Erie Trail Alliance, you know, similarly looking at making that big connection. So, I was convening some of those early meetings. So, yeah, but I mean, really, the environmental council was very- played a big role in the development of The Great Allegheny Passage and, you know, some of that was through supporting my work. And, we held some of the- I guess we didn't really need to hold some of the grants, but I was writing a lot of the grants even when I was at the Environmental Council, things like that. So, that was kind of the nature of my role. It was split between land and water trails. And, I mean, PEC was just very

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supportive of completing the passage. Davitt is a very good negotiator, as well. I mean, he would get pulled into certain key negotiations. He has good connections at U.S. Steel so...

Avigail Oren:

So, this is interesting because when I look at the timeline of the trail development, the northern part of the trail has sort of the gap between- around 2002 when the gap is filled in from, like, Baldwin to the Hot Metal Bridge up until around 2006-2007 when the Hot Metal Bridge- well, there's the groundbreaking for the conversion to the car/pedestrian/cycle.

Hannah Hardy:

Oh, the Hot Metal Bridge, yeah.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah, right. So, that version of the- the new life of the bridge, I guess you would say.

Hannah Hardy:

Mm-hmm.

Avigail Oren:

And so, I'm curious what you were doing in that time. Like, can you help fill in what's going on behind the scenes that doesn't make it on to the timeline as like a completion or a major stage? But, like, what groundwork was being laid in those years?

Hannah Hardy:

Well, I mean, just... I mean, we just had spreadsheets on top- and I left all of my files- because there was somebody who was still doing my work. I left all of my files at the Environmental Council so all of my Steel Valley Trail Council files are at- were left at the Environmental Council. I mean, but we just had, you know, that section of trail... I mean, the Hot Metal Bridge was a project unto itself and that was a little bit different because we had the URA and, you know, it's different to do things in the city, you know? I mean, we had, like, professional engineers that worked for the URA that were working on the project, you know? They weren't designing the bridge but they knew how to manage a project, right? You know, from the Baldwin section of trail, you know, the Glenwood Bridge to McKeesport, it's, like, 13 miles on the river. I mean, we had a spreadsheet- I mean, there's... I think there's something like 21 individual pieces of property that we had to negotiate for. Some of those are easements, some of those were purchased outright, some of them we had to

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get- some of them the property owner didn't want to, like, give a piece of trail to a little volunteer trail organization so we had to get Allegheny County Economic Development involved. That was for the pieces in Whitaker, do you know what I mean? So, some of it was like, "Oh, my gosh – we have this opportunity to buy this trail." They won't give it to the Steel Valley Trail Council so we have to bring a new partner to the table, you know. I mean, just the spreadsheets of where things were, you know, because there are these stages, like we've talked about before, of right-of-way control, you know, to some type of design work to funding for development of the trail to, you know, to then, like, building the trail. So, there were just- I mean, I think it really... I mean, what was going on in that time was just, okay, where do we have an opportunity? Can we meet with this property owner? Let's try to nail down this piece of property.

You know, we had a lot of work on the Riverton Bridge that was done in McKeesport and we were actually looking for many years. So, that's a big- it's Union Railroad which is a subsidiary of U.S. Steel Corporation for many years. So, that's the connection across the Mon River into McKeesport. For many years, we spent probably a good number of years, I would say, looking at designing, trying to fund a hang off on that bridge. We started out talking to them about- because they were using the bridge – the Riverton Bridge. Can we figure out how to, if we can raise the money, can we build a trail, like, a little extra structure, you know, and you can still use your bridge for the railroad. I mean, what ended up there? We can talk about what ended up happening there. So, we probably spent, I would say, I can't remember, you know, years on, "Can we raise this money? Is it feasible going to them? Would you let us do it? What are the liability issues?" "Okay, you have these concerns, we have to figure out how to address them." The coke/gas pipeline, I mean, we spent... I mean, figuring out- a lot of it was figuring out what to do. It was a puzzle. I mean, it was so much- it was harder when you got out of the city. And, it was so complicated and there were so many property owners. And so, it was just- there was so much activity, but it was so slow to get to the big...

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Avigail Oren: Bigger moments, yeah.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: So, one thing that you said was interesting to me, you said some of the property owners didn't want to negotiate or deal with RTC and you had to bring different property owners- I mean, different partners to the table. I mean, RTC is sort of an interesting organization in and of itself. What was that issue? Like, what concerns were these property owners having and what kind of partners were they looking for?

Hannah Hardy: Well, I need to clarify that a little bit because – and you probably have in the records – Steel Valley Trail Council was a later entrant to RTC. So, for many years, we were doing this separate from the RTC, right?

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Hannah Hardy: So, Steel Valley Trail Council started out kind of as a committee of Rivers of Steel. And so, it wasn't- I can remember we went to one meeting, you know, Linda was really trying to do a lot of the matchmaking to bring the Steel Valley Trail Council under the- you know, to have us become a member of the Regional Trail Corporation. And, it took a little while. You know, it took a little while for us on the Steel Valley Trail Council to understand the benefit of being a member of the Regional Trail Corporation. So, you know, at the very- there was a staff person, Larry Ridenour, he's, like, in Kentucky now, but he was what's called a circuit rider. That's actually how Brett started in Somerset. So, he had a position, it was called a circuit rider position. They were statewide positions [funded by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources] – people could apply for them. Gosh, all this is coming back, it's so crazy. And so, he was working at Rivers of Steel and part of his job was to build the trail.

Avigail Oren: Just refresh, because you've said two names now. Who are you now referring to?

Hannah Hardy: Larry Ridenour.

Avigail Oren: Larry Ridenour, okay.

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Hannah Hardy:

Yeah. He was working at Rivers of Steel and so he was, like, when I first started going to Steel Valley Trail Council meetings, it was, like, a committee that he was working with, you know? So, your question about- so, property owners... So, there was kind of a distinction, right? Steel Valley Trail Council before and after joining the RTC, right? So, I would say that once we joined the RTC – and I don't know if you have that year, of what year that happened. So, it looks like I was on the board of the Regional Trail Corporation from 2004 to 2013. So, I'm guessing that the Steel Valley Trail Council joined the RTC around 2004 because that would make sense, right? So, there was certainly a distinction before the Steel Valley Trail Council was involved with RTC because then it was just like this group of volunteers. Like, we were kind of really- I mean, the trail work is so volunteer-focused. After we joined the RTC, you know, that definitely- because the RTC, how it's set up, it's set up like as a land trust, right? So, it's set up to hold property so that was definitely helpful. But, that was a huge concern of U.S. Steel's with the coke/gas pipeline because of the environmental concerns. On that property, there was a physical coke/gas pipeline. I don't know if you've seen any of the pictures of them.

It was larger than- I mean, I can remember I have a picture- I don't have a picture, but I distinctly remember walking that site. I mean, the coke/gas pipeline was physically- I can envision this picture with this guy, Nick, who used to work at Allegheny County Economic Development Department. Like, the coke/gas pipeline was bigger than a man, you know. I have a picture of him standing next to it and it was large. So, they didn't want- I think that they needed, requested, wanted, for legal reasons – I think for liability reasons – a larger organization. Because certainly if there was an issue and the RTC gets sued, okay, well the RTC can go away. You know, we were like a flea compared to, like, all these other environmental concerns but certainly... So, some of it was the environmental, you know, we were developing trail through former steel mill sites. And, we were working with railroad properties, railroads, and steel mill companies, you know? And, they needed more- they needed to be working with a

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larger, more established entity for those liability concerns. And, I think some of it ties back to the environmental issues.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah. So, I think this is a great moment to transition to talking about that project. So, you began to describe this piece of property. Can you give me a little bit more? Like, before it was developed, if I was standing there, what would I have seen? And, can you also situate it in terms of, like, where it is on the trail. Like, what- how did it fit into the trail plan?

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah. The coke/gas pipeline is the lynchpin because there was no alternate. Like, it was the lynchpin because the alternate was so- would have been so challenging that the trail would not have been used. So, the coke/gas pipeline is a two-mile section of trail. It is physically located- it's on the bench of the hillside behind Kennywood. Beautiful views of the river. You can see the- I mean, because it's an industrial area, you can see steel mill sites and the Edgar Thomson Works but it's- I mean, you walk kind of behind the roller coasters at Kennywood. It's beautiful. I mean, there's deer. We would go down there and see evidence of deer. Very natural, very overgrown. There's actually been some slides [slides of the hillside due to water]. You know, one of the challenges now ongoing maintenance-wise is there's a hillside and there are slides and things like that – very vegetated, much vegetation. So, the reason I say it was the lynchpin is because there was no other geography. It was between a bench of a hillside and active railroad lines. So, if we didn't get that piece of property, the alternate would have been an on-road connection on State Route 837 for at least two miles, probably more than two miles just given how the trail alignment ended up going. More than two miles because it would have been all the way from Duquesne, it would have been up a hill, down a hill, and I wouldn't take my kids there.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah.

Hannah Hardy:

So, if we didn't get- I mean, really, the coke/gas pipeline was so important for the whole connection from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. And then, it's ironic because it's so beautiful but- not but, but, one of, you know, one of the reasons that it existed as an alignment is because – and I was on the site

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when it had this – there was a pipeline that ran the whole length. It was a coke/gas pipeline, it would take- I don't know a lot about the operations, but it would take coke-oven gas from one U.S. Steel facility to another. You know, at some point it went across the river to Edgar Thomson, I can't remember where. I think it would go to whatever was on the McKeesport site which had, you know, since been torn down. The McKeesport steel mill was not in operation. And so, I think that's why this coke/gas pipeline was not working anymore. So, it was, you know, just kind of sealed up but, you know, we had to do environmental work and there was where materials that were sampled on the property like that. It was a very large, physical structure on the bench of this hillside.

- Avigail Oren:** So, that had to be removed?
- Hannah Hardy:** That's right.
- Avigail Oren:** And then, even if that was removed, the question was is it safe to have people accessing this piece of land?
- Hannah Hardy:** Well, that had to be removed. There were rules. U.S. Steel was very clear about how that had to be removed and they actually wanted to remove it. They were taking full responsibility for the removal. We had to pay for it, but they didn't want anybody else on their property. They were going to give us a clean piece of property. So, and then to your point, yes, we had to design it in such a way where- and it was completely cleaned but also in terms of just the asphalt capping of the site and things like that, all of that was a consideration in the design, yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** To make sure that any, like, leached chemical wasn't...
- Hannah Hardy:** Right, right, right.
- Avigail Oren:** Environmental contaminants weren't being breathed into the panting lungs of bicyclist coming through.
- Hannah Hardy:** Right, right, right, yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** And, is that, when you were speaking about liabilities earlier, is that the bulk of what U.S. Steel's concern was or is their

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concern about liability more related to the physical structure being removed?

Hannah Hardy:

I don't know that I would distinguish those two because I think they were tied together. I don't remember, like, a distinguishing between those two. I just remember it being very clear that they were going to do the cleanup. I mean, I don't know if this is public or not, but I mean, part of the cleanup was the acquisition price, you know? We were- we had to do environmental work. I remember we did and actually Larry Ridenour from Rivers of Steel kind of managed the phase one or something so there was a very old document that was like a phase one environmental organization, environmental assessment. [There was a Phase I Environmental Assessment that was completed by a consultant under contract to Rivers of Steel that Larry managed (as I recall). This was very early.] So, we had to do all those things. The other thing is, you know, the other kind of trick in all of this is that it's not like we just had free money. We were applying for state grants for acquisition. So, we had to prove to the state that it was also a clean piece of property. So, it also wasn't like U.S. Steel- I mean, so there was just a lot of oversight. You know, because it's not like we could just write a check and say, "Okay, what's your price? Okay, here you go." No, I mean, we had to get- I don't remember all the mix of property that was in that. That had a lot of mix of funding. And, I'm sure some of it was public money and we had to prove that it was a clean site. We had to have a match to it, all those things, too. You know, but then we're just made- you know, the cleanup had to happen in a certain way so I don't think it was really related to the structure, more of just what was in the structure.

Avigail Oren:

I understand. So, it seems like this was one of those situations where you- I mean, in terms of, like, a project flow, you're having to move from an assurance from this partner back to a funder and then coming back- like a lot of back and forth negotiation but not one straight back and forth but rather sort of more of a, like, a spider web formation where you're taking sort of the imperatives of a funder back to U.S. Steel then

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taking their concerns back to maybe multiple funders and moving back and forth for years.

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah. That's definitely a good description of it. I totally agree. And then, the other thing is – so, we had to get to and from this property. I mean, getting to this property and from this property involved bridges over the railroad and there was any number of different solutions. That gets into the discussion about the Pittsburgh 250 which I don't want to jump ahead but, you know, getting- so, getting access, getting a deal done on the coke/gas pipeline was really only the beginning because we had to get to this bench of the hillside that was tucked between active railroads. So, that's... But, the way you described it about a spider web – so, we would inch forward on one little thing and then say, "Oh my gosh, but how are we going to get there?" Inch forward on one little thing and then say, "Oh, but you need this type of environmental assessment or you need this type of appraisal..." We had to get an appraisal that would justify the investment on the site. How do you get an appraisal? I mean, it was... I remember the appraisal alone was so complicated because we need an appraisal for, I'm sure, public funding at the time. But, how do you get an appraisal? Like what are the comparable properties?

Avigail Oren:

I truly have no idea.

[Chuckle]

Hannah Hardy:

I remember the appraisal. It was very complicated.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah.

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah.

Avigail Oren:

So, what- you sort of described how Steel Valley Trail Council moved from being a committee of Rivers of Steel over to being part of RTC. What was Rivers of Steel's involvement, if at all, in this project – the coke/gas pipeline property?

Hannah Hardy:

Well so, Larry Ridenour was a circuit rider. He worked full-time for Rivers of Steel doing trail development. He managed a lot of the early work. So, he was an employee of Rivers of Steel.

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At some point, I don't think that they ever owned the pipeline. I think their biggest concern wasn't owning property.

[Clarification: Their biggest concern was owning the property, they did not want to own the property.] They didn't see themselves- they saw themselves as doing some of the early development, but I think they were very clear from the very beginning that they were not going to be a property owner for the trail. In the interim- in the long term or even interim steps. So, that was very clear and I don't know- I wouldn't know if it was... I just don't think they saw themselves as a trail-owning organization.

Avigail Oren: They saw themselves as stewards, if anything.

Hannah Hardy: Well, not- builders, I would say.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Hannah Hardy: Through Larry, they saw themselves as builders, but they had no long-term stated interest in the trail in terms of ownership. Not even maintenance.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Hannah Hardy: You know, they really- they have a big project with, like, the steel mill site- with the Carrie Furnace site and things like that. And, they have- you know, at that point, they didn't control that property. So, there were a lot of negotiations with the National Park Service about that. But, in terms of, like, the trail, they just were very clear that they weren't going to be owners of property.

Avigail Oren: So, they were okay with Steel Valley Trail Council and RTC taking over this property- like, this project?

Hannah Hardy: I can't speak for them, but I think so.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah, I think so. I mean, I'm sure that there were certainly- I think, you know, it could have worked differently. They could

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have been the owners of the- because I think they have land control rights on other things. But, I think that they were fine with it. Yeah.

Avigail Oren:

But, Larry was still your conduit to U.S. Steel?

Hannah Hardy:

[I don't think he was ever really a "conduit" to U.S. Steel.] Very early. I mean, at some point in all of this – I'd have to look and see when he retired. So, at some point, he retired and moved and Rivers of Steel did not replace him and they were kind of happy to let go of the trail work. "Happy," whatever word, I don't know if that's the right word or not. But, they definitely let go of the trail work and then at some point later... You know, so I feel like with Linda and other, you know, as kind of a volunteer – we kind of kept it limping along for many of those years and then at some point, you know, Jack Paulik was hired when he retired from Westmoreland County. And, he really, when we were in the building, you know, beyond the- when we were in the building stages of coke/gas pipeline, of the Riverton Bridge, of the pedestrian bridges over the railroad tracks. You know, you need somebody with an engineering background. So, Jack Paulik was hired when he retired from Westmoreland. He worked for Westmoreland County Parks. And so, when he was done with that career, he was hired as a consultant, really, but he's an- I think he's trained as an engineer or he had that engineering background to be able to be like a- I mean, he did a lot of the negotiating. But, I know for many of those years, it would be me and Linda and different partners as it was relevant. We would pull in Economic Development when we needed to. We would pull in- Davitt was very involved in the- Davitt from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, you know, different partners. And then, at some point, it just- as we were getting into building, you know, there needed to be somebody to... You know, it never would have happened otherwise.

Avigail Oren:

Okay, interesting. So, let's talk about the Riverton Bridge negotiations. So, you already said that you were, for years, trying to figure out a way that you could... What's the word? Like...

Hannah Hardy:

Cantilever?

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- Avigail Oren:** Yeah, cantilever. That's a good one.
- Hannah Hardy:** Yeah, Larry Ridenour had all these drawings of... Yeah, right.
- Avigail Oren:** So, describe how the possibility of actually converting that bridge to a pedestrian and bicycle lane came to pass.
- Hannah Hardy:** Well, and now, I mean, it's interesting to hear Linda's perspective on it because I know the Pittsburgh 250 celebration... So, Linda's partnership-building with the Allegheny Conference on Economic- excuse me, Allegheny Conference on Community Development was very key. Because there were some business leaders that controlled much of this property that were very involved with the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. I mean, one of the early champions- I mean, I think it really came down to, you know, John Surma was the president and CEO of U.S. Steel and he actually is- became a big supporter of the trail. And so, U.S. Steel Union Railroad at that point, I don't know how they're structured now – the language that I always used or knew was that Union Railroad, which was the alignment from McKeesport to D.C. that we needed to, you know, for that- McKeesport, excuse me, across the river into Duquesne – they were a wholly-owned subsidiary of U.S. Steel. So, basically, you know, my understanding was that at some point, the business case for using and maintaining that Riverton Bridge became such that John Surma could say, "We're going to give you this bridge."
- Avigail Oren:** We'll take the tax write-off on it in doing it.
- Hannah Hardy:** Yeah, right. And, I think a lot of that had to do with Linda just being so smart about working with those business leaders through the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. I think that, you know, there was this goal to finish the trail by Pittsburgh's 250th celebration – what year was that in?
- Avigail Oren:** 2008.
- Hannah Hardy:** Yeah, I mean, so that- I remember being so nervous because I'm like, "We're never going to meet this goal!" That didn't matter. Having that goal got us across the finish line on so

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many projects. And, really key- it also brought some... You know, we talked about some accessing the U.S. Steel property.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah.

Hannah Hardy:

I will never forget – we were out... So, the U.S. Steel property was kind of well underway. We knew we were going to get the coke/gas pipeline but then it got to this question of, okay, how the heck are we going to get there, right? So, we were out looking at options. I'm sure that there were people from Union Railroad there and Norfolk and Southern. And, I can remember being out there in Duquesne, what are we going to do? Are we going to go here with a big fence? Are we go on this side? What are we going to do? And, I think it was one of the- and he has an engineer, you know, he was somebody that had, you know, probably had more engineering background than I do. I think he was one of the business leaders from Union Railroad [one of the Allegheny Conference Corporate partners] who was there and he said, "Why don't you do a pedestrian bridge?" And, that would have been- that was, like, our A-plus. That's like exactly what we would have wanted, right? Instead of just, like, putting the trail next to a wall with a fence, you know. And, he said that and it just broke things loose and then it said, "Okay, yeah, wait. We can do this." Okay, what Norfolk and Southern- but then we had to figure out what was over Norfolk and Southern rail lines. They certainly gave us their requirements, but there was another business leader saying, "Oh, why don't you put a pedestrian bridge?" That's the best solution for the trail, let's do the best. You know, so it really got these new ideas at the table. It wasn't just me or Larry Ridenour, God love him, he'd been talking to U.S. Steel for years. You know, but he was a trail guy. You know, it was somebody else saying, "No, this is important for the region." You know, it just, like, opened everybody's minds.

We took a key trip – I was really pregnant so I didn't ride on a lot of it. So, my son was born in January of 2006 so it must have been that fall of 2005. Building up to the Pittsburgh 250th, Linda organized a bike ride. We actually did most of this

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section. Like, we started in Washington D.C. – we had, like, a bus. I’m trying to think – did we go all the way? We didn’t go all the way to Pittsburgh. Like, it was just- because these people were so busy. It was just, like, three days. With a bus, we’d get out, do- like, and I didn’t do all of it because I was fairly pregnant but, you know, we would get out and do key sections of the trail. So, it was so interesting. So, it was like I got to go, Jack Paulik got to go, Linda went. So, there were some key trail people but then there were, like, John Surma came. Other leaders, I’m just not going to remember everybody’s names from Pittsburgh 250th, from Allegheny County – the Conference on Community Development. So then, they saw it as part of- they could see the vision, you know? Like, we took this bike ride, beautiful fall days, you know, that probably opened people’s minds a lot. Like, oh, it’s not just these crazy trail people, you know? Like, this is a big deal. This connects to why we started in Georgetown. So, that was probably, like, one of those watershed moments that just kind of changes things a little bit, you know? So, and that must have been, like, fall of 2005, I’m sure.

Avigail Oren: So, I want to show you this, I guess we’d call it a map I found in the archives...

Hannah Hardy: Mm-hmm.

Avigail Oren: ...of the Allegheny Passage, Closing the Gaps and what it is, is an illustrated map showing from the Point, the Eliza Furnace Trail going over the Hot Metal Bridge along- this is called the Mon Wharf development?

Hannah Hardy: Mm-hmm. No, the Mon Wharf is down here.

Avigail Oren: This is the Mon Wharf. Right, right, right, sorry. So, this is all Baldwin.

Hannah Hardy: This is all Baldwin stuff here.

Avigail Oren: Right, thank you. The Hot Metal Bridge to Baldwin connector, the coke/gas pipeline section all the way to the Riverton Bridge in McKeesport. And then, there’s an arrow, like a little sign with an arrow saying, “To D.C.,” and Illustrated in it are some iconic Pittsburgh locations like Heinz Field, the U.S.

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Steel Tower, the Cultural District, Station Square, Carrie Furnace, and the Waterfront, and Kennywood. Do you remember- how does this map fit into the overarching Pittsburgh 250 project?

Hannah Hardy: Well, I mean, I think it was part of it. We had tons of these printed. I mean, I think this was part of the 250 project, right? I mean, this was- you know, it just gave such a shot in the arm in terms of publicly, in terms of raising the elevation of the trail, you know. And again, I think it took it away from just a project of, you know, trail organizations who were wonderful and- but it took it kind of beyond trail advocates to being a regionally significant project.

Avigail Oren: Who created it and where was it distributed?

Hannah Hardy: I don't remember who created it. I mean, I think it was...

Avigail Oren: Like, whose idea was it?

Hannah Hardy: I don't remember whose idea it was. There was a woman at- so, this, on the other side, you know, all of this content, I'm sure, came from the Allegheny Trail Alliance. You know, this was the Allegheny Trail Alliance map. So, it looks like the back of it was all Allegheny Trail Alliance. So, there was a woman at the Allegheny Conference on Community Development – Laura [Fisher]... Oh, I can see her. I'll Google her name. She was really- she was kind of like the staff lead there and she did a lot of the- she was very much involved in a lot of the history work that Allegheny Conference on Community Development did. So, she was like... Laura... Oh, I'm not going to remember. I'll find it. I can find her name easily. But, she did a lot of, like, the Forbes Trail and very historically-minded... She did a lot. She was also- she had a background in media. Like, I think she used to work **W**IQED or something like that. And so, I think, you know, probably some of this was her. I'm sure she and Linda kind of had a brainchild to do this because they knew that in order to talk about a project this was a good way to do it publicly. It looks like *Pittsburgh Magazine*. So, it's interesting that the Allegheny Conference on Community Development's logo is not on it. It doesn't say Pittsburgh 250 on this so I don't know.

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Avigail Oren: Yeah, well, I thought that was interesting, too. Particularly because it's, like, very specifically about filling in the gaps. And so, that's why I was curious how it...

Hannah Hardy: Maybe ATA did it. Maybe. I mean, U.S. Steel is very prominent on this so maybe this was something that Linda really wanted to do with and for U.S. Steel.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm. So, then let's- just keeping with the thought of closing the gaps, how did the- you've spoken a little bit already about how the goal was motivating. But, I'd be curious to know, like, what entities came to the table because of Pittsburgh 250 that were essential to its success and what people were essential to its success?

Hannah Hardy: Well, so, definitely the property owners that were- the industrially focused property owners like U.S. Steel, like Union Railroad, like Norfolk Southern. So, we had kind of like a little team of very high-level folks at those organizations. The other is that Dan Onorato was the county executive at the time, having... So, we talked a little bit before about, like, who could hold property – the county came in and they still do this. Darla Cravotta, you know, still delivers the message that the county will be a long-term property owner for trail, not just on this passage but, you know, just to connect the regional trail network. So, at that point, Dan Onorato, I can't remember exactly when it switched over to the County Executive Rich Fitzgerald but Dan Onorato was certainly- I think he was probably one of the co-chairs of the... It'd be interesting to look back at who were the co-chairs for the Pittsburgh 250th.

I know one of them was Jim Rohr who was the president and CEO of PNC. So, he really convened- he used his role to convene a lot of these industrial leaders. You know, he convened some key meetings at, like, the Duquesne Club downtown with the county executive, with John Surma, with, you know, some of the other- with the folks from Norfolk and Southern and said, "Hey, this is a priority. How are we going to get this done?" And then, that led the way to us then going out in the field with these folks to be figuring out how we were going to get this done. So, I do have to really give, you know, the county came in at a key time when we were trying to say,

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“How do we get this done?” and they said, “Okay, well, we’ll hold this property. We’ll hold the Riverton Bridge.” You know, I don’t think there was a possibility. The Riverton Bridge is owned- is it owned by RTC now? Was it transferred to RTC? It’s owned by the county. Regardless, it definitely started out as- I mean, I have on my door, I could pull it out, one of the ATA newsletters of the... So, this is- I have on my door, this is our ATA- Allegheny Trail Alliance newsletter from the summer of 2011. So, this is a picture when we are- this is the Riverton- no, I’m sorry, the Whitaker Bridge, pedestrian bridge. So, this was at the ribbon cutting and these are my kids on bikes because we were getting ready to leave for vacation later that day so I had to bring them to this ribbon cutting. But, this is County Executive Rich Fitzgerald. This is the former, he’s now the State Department of Community and Economic Development Director. He was Allegheny County’s Economic Development Director, Dennis Davin because they own this property. So, this is a ribbon cutting. So, this is 2011. This must have been when our pedestrian bridges were done to connect to the U.S. Steel pipeline.

Avigail Oren:

Right. And, just to be clear what these are is you’re biking down the trail to get up to that coke pipeline, you go up over the railroad tracks, ride the two-mile section and then have to take another pedestrian bridge back over the railroad tracks and down to the trail on the water?

Hannah Hardy:

That’s right. So, I would say the key people are those industrial leaders, those business leaders and then local government with the county. And, the county stepped up big time. The county even built, you know, some- through the Redevelopment Authority of Allegheny County, you know, probably still hold some of this property.

Avigail Oren:

So, I want to talk about the, I don’t know if you call it dedication or ribbon-cutting ceremony. In 2009, you and Linda dedicate the two-mile section of trail between McKeesport and Duquesne which includes the Riverton Bridge, includes, I think, the coke/gas pipeline, as well, section. And, I wanted to ask, like, what are your memories of that day? Like, what did it represent to you? How do you feel? Like, how did you feel?

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Like, does this stand out in your mind as a moment of, like, accomplishment or...?

Hannah Hardy:

Yeah, I think that actually because the Riverton Bridge and the pipeline were separate so there wasn't too much- two-mile section between McKeesport and Duquesne- oh, including the Riverton Bridge? Hmm. Yeah, we had a couple of key events that were- then, you know, after so many years, we had a couple of key events that we really tried to celebrate. We actually had a big celebration, I can still see the picture because we printed up like a deed, basically, when U.S. Steel was giving us the coke/gas pipeline property. So, we tried to celebrate just acquiring the land because that was important after so many years of not hearing anything. So, I do remember- I mean, several things but we had separate events for the Riverton Bridge for the section of trail in Duquesne because there was... Gosh, I mean, that was a big project, too, because in Duquesne, the Allegheny Economic Development was building flyover ramps to access the Duquesne- the former steel mill site. And, we had to punch a hole through one of them to make a tunnel. That makes it a lot more expensive. You know, they could have just built the flyover ramp as they normally would and we had to say, "No, we need you to put this tunnel in here otherwise you're going to cut off the trail." So, I remember clearly that ribbon cutting. You know, it was always just such...

There was a lot of speculation or, you know, trail people were like, "Why isn't it happening fast enough?" you know? So, there was always this, not criticism, but just, you know, why does it take so long? And so, the celebration events were so huge because the trail folks would just turn out and were very supportive. And, it was also a nice opportunity to publicly recognize. I mean, it's no small thing that- I mean, U.S. Steel gave us a railroad bridge. I mean, they had trains that were using that bridge until they stopped using it so that they could give it to the trail. That's a huge business decision that I know nothing about. But, that's a huge business decision that they made at some point. And so, I just remember it being very exciting, you know, we were always onto the next. You know, it was like, this is great but we still need to get this other thing

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done. So, definitely Linda, especially, all of us were, you know, not totally happy until we finally closed that last link through the Sandcastle section.

Avigail Oren: Right, that was going to be my next question.

Hannah Hardy: Which was definitely huge, as well. But, they were a lot of fun. I mean, the Allegheny Trail Alliance is good at celebrating and you need to celebrate those achievements because there's a lot of work and effort and we need the trail- we needed trail advocates pushing and we needed property owners coming to the table. We needed to celebrate our major funders. People, you know, the funding for this trail came from a lot of different places and some of it was public money and some of it was private money but it's all so important. It was just a puzzle piece and it was, you know, they were great events to celebrate. Yeah.

Avigail Oren: Yeah, it didn't occur to me how, I guess, how much utility they had beyond sort of the catharsis or the closure of feeling like, ah, a project being complete. But yeah, that they served a lot of different purposes, it's interesting.

Hannah Hardy: Well, and especially when we weren't done, you know, to show progress and to show- to build the momentum. To show the property owners that people were going to use this trail. I will never forget when we were opening- this wasn't the Riverton Bridge opening; this was the section of trail in Duquesne through the steel mill sites so it didn't really connect anywhere yet. It was just an alignment on the Duquesne steel mill site. This is the one that had to have a little hole, we actually did the ribbon cutting right at the tunnel through this flyover ramp because it was a big concrete flyover ramp. And, I'll just never forget, you know, that day we were having- the trail wasn't even officially opened. There were still items on the punch list to finish with the fencing and all the stuff. And, we were leaving the, you know, kind of official announcement and there was, like, an older gentleman walking his dog.

He was not a through-trucker, he was not taking his bike to D.C. He lived in Duquesne and the trail was not even officially opened yet and he was using it to walk his dog. And, that's

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what the trail is. That's why I'm involved in the trail, you know? That's turned my whole career towards public health, you know, because of that section of trail. And, that has an impact. That has an impact, you know? That has a huge impact. People wanted that trail to be built. I mean, people were using the coke/gas- we couldn't keep people off of the coke/gas pipeline. Like, when we were under construction, that was one of the biggest headaches for Jack Paulik was, like, trying to keep trail advocates off of it. Trail users – not advocates – trail users off of it because people couldn't wait to get on to it. And, it was a liability – we were under construction, you know? This was after the environmental cleared, this was just a construction issue. You know, we had to just do alerts over and over again. Please, it's not open yet. Like, it was this way through all the trail. I mean, they had these issues in Somerset County, too. You know, people just wanted, the desire was so strong for the users. For a variety of users, for people who were doing the whole trail or people who just wanted to go on their section of trail in their community. You know, it's so important.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah, that's really lovely. So, I guess I want to give you an opportunity if you want to say anything about the Sandcastle negotiations. Do you see that- I mean, I know it was one of the last links or the last problems that needed to be solved. But, did it- like, what is its relevance to you, like, in the grand scheme of your involvement with the trails?

Hannah Hardy:

Well so, there were two, you know, kind of companion projects that had to happen. We had to get through Sandcastle and then on the other side of the bridge is this Keystone Salvage Yard which is a Brownfield site. So, getting through their property – they were another private property owner that had a lot of liability concerns. Interestingly enough, they were kind of very nice and interested in the trail and worked with us very diligently, but they were a salvage yard. They have big, those big magnetic machines that take cars, like, over, you know, they had liability concerns about where the trail was going to go, a wall, fencing and things like that. So, those two projects kind of had to go in tandem. You couldn't go through Sandcastle and have people end at a salvage yard without

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anywhere to go. So, I think of those two together, you know, I would say... So actually, we spent a lot, you know, there were early times with Sandcastle and then we kind of took- I feel like we had to spend more time with Keystone because that was actually expensive. We had to build some- there was a big wall that had to be built and things like that. So, I felt like there was some back and forth between those two projects to kind of time them so that they were- could happen at the same time. You know, I think that it was... I think we started early with Sandcastle, but then it didn't, you know... Sandcastle was never going to happen if the coke/gas pipeline wasn't going to happen, you know? So, I think then we kind of- everything came in waves and so I think at some point after, probably, the 250 we kind of really said, "Okay, we need to make this connection into Sandcastle." So, I think it was- there was a long time when I didn't think the Sandcastle connection was going to happen.

The owners of the property just really were not interested which was confusing at some point because of the nature of the site because it is not an industrial business and it is a business for recreation. So, we actually at one point wanted to be down by the river. There was a piece of property that was owned, I think, given to the municipality – it was kind of behind Costco down by the river but there was just no way to get through Sandcastle. Like, we kind of had to let go of that at one point. And then, you know, so it's kind of an average alignment through- it's just basically getting through. You know what I mean? So, I think it was- I'm relieved that it happened. I think it is a fine compromise. We had to deal- we were, like, up against the railroad tracks so... But, that was not easy, you know, because we had to get through this other Keystone Salvage Yard and there's a crossing there and they had some very specific concerns. So, I'm glad. There was a long time when I didn't think we were going to get through Sandcastle so I'm glad that we did get through Sandcastle.

Avigail Oren:

And then, bring me up to the present day. So, you ended up leaving the Environmental Council in- was it 2013?

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Hannah Hardy: I think it was 2012. I pulled up my... So, I went to... Oh, yeah, I guess it was. Very early- so, it was actually my trail work that led to... So, I was at the Environmental Council for a long- a good number of years. Basically from...

Avigail Oren: A decade.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah, right. That's right. So, but it was really my trail work that led to a shift in my career towards being very interested in public health which is where I am now and part of it was, you know, building that section of trail through Duquesne and thinking about the people in Duquesne and, you know, a municipality that maybe doesn't have a park but that this is, you know, a new thing for them. So, that opened up kind of new doors and interests for me professionally. So, I left in January 2013 and I don't have any public health experience other than my community development experience I think is very relevant to what I'm doing now. But, so, I was the program director of Operations and Programming for "Let's Move, Pittsburgh," at Phipps Conservatory which is a childhood obesity-focused project. And then, that then led to my work at the Health Department. We have- she was new at the time, a health director, Dr. Karen Hacker, and she's doing, kind of re-made our whole department and I was building a partnership with her when I was at Let's Move Pittsburgh that led to my current position. So, I've been here about 4 1/2 years now. But really, I trace a lot of my interest in public health to the trail work that I was doing as it just opened up, you know, as I was thinking about the next evolution of that work and became less- you know, building the trail was so important to me for so many years and it is but then I was thinking more about use of the trail. Then that just led to a lot of other things for me. Yeah.

Avigail Oren: So, have you remained involved with RTC, SVTC, ATA- like, which of these entities have you remained involved with? Or, did you feel like with the end of the trail building you were able to sort of say, like, "I'm stepping back and moving on"?

Hannah Hardy: Yeah, I'm not on any of the boards anymore. I was on the board of Friends of the Riverfront for a year and a half or two years. I actually just started a Ph.D. program so that's kind of

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changed my life a little bit. So, I was maintaining- so, I just rolled off of that board, not because I wasn't committed to it, but actually the board meetings were the same night as my class and it just- it was just a logistical issue. So, I didn't- I felt like it was really time particularly for the Steel Valley Trail Council, for them to have newer leadership so I did roll off of that. And, my job at "Let's Move" was just different and not- I wasn't going to do that trail work as part of my job. So, I'm definitely still a supporter and go to trail events and things like that, but I'm not on any boards right now. I just rolled off of the Friends of the Riverfront board but it's mostly because of this academic program. But, I was staying involved in that and making connections to my new work with Friends of the Riverfront and so I'm doing some projects with them as they evolve what they're doing and so I think there's an opportunity for me to partner with the trail organizations in my current role, just differently. So, I'm looking for those opportunities to do that.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah, that's excellent. So, this is, like, the moment at the end where I want to give you an opportunity to talk about anything I didn't ask you about or anything that occurred to you earlier that we went off on a different tangent or...

Hannah Hardy:

I mean, I think that the story is so important to tell and I think it's a huge accomplishment that the trail is built. That has really attributed to so many different people who played different roles and each organization certainly played a role. You know, even when I was at PEC, they played a key role in some negotiations but then, you know, the ATA kind of played- Allegheny Trail Alliance played a role that was different but complimentary to the Regional Trail Corporation's role. You know, so, I think it was kind of- I just learned a lot about that as part of this work. So, I think that's very interesting to me. I don't think I have much more to add beyond that. I mean, it's a very interesting project. I certainly am very... You know, I decided to make some changes in my career, but certainly, it's like, oh, you know, I used to do that. Which is interesting to think about. So...

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Avigail Oren: Well, it does seem like, you know, this one experience in the Mayor's office did kick off, you know, a huge chunk of your career, you know, set you up for a lot of success and interesting twists and turns. Well, thank you so much for sharing your memories.

Hannah Hardy: Yeah, it's great. Be interested to see what comes of it.

[End 1:16:57.7]

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