

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: Thanks for coming over, John. It's good to see you again, first of all.

John Oliver: It's good to see you too, Paul. We spent a lot of good times together.

Paul Wiegman: Yeah, we sure did. And, one of those good times was working on the Western Maryland Railroad.

John Oliver: Right.

Paul Wiegman: And, I'm going to talk to you wearing three different- you wearing three different hats because you had some pivotal roles in a lot of different ways here. First as director of land operations with the Conservancy. Second is the president of the Conservancy and third as the secretary of the department of DCNR – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

John Oliver: That's right, a mouthful.

Paul Wiegman: I'm still thinking DN- DER at times. Let's start with 1973.

John Oliver: Mm-hmm.

Paul Wiegman: There was a meeting in October with the Western Maryland people and I think it was in Baltimore if I remember correctly from the files. Can you tell me anything about that meeting?

John Oliver: Well, as I recall, we got word that the Western Maryland Railroad Company was going to abandon their line because they had a duplicate line, rail line on the other side of the river. And, we saw right away the advantages to this line being a trail, particularly when it ran through right through the heart of Ohiopyle State Park.

Paul Wiegman: Yes.

John Oliver: So, our media interest was what could we do for Ohiopyle State Park in terms of providing a fascinating, less than 3% grade trail through this incredible gorge? At that time though, the Western Maryland Railroad Company was interested in abandoning the entire line – 160 miles or whatever it was.

Paul Wiegman: From Connellsville all the way to Hancock, I believe, or Tonoloway, actually.

John Oliver: Well, you have a better memory than I do.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: Yeah, it's somewhere in Maryland.

John Oliver: But, anyway, it was the long- we said we simply could not assume responsibility for the liability associated with the bridges, the viaducts and tunnels and all the structures associated with it. So, we want to concentrate only on the 25 miles along the Youghiogheny River within Ohiopyle State Park.

Paul Wiegman: Okay, right. Where they interested right off the bat?

John Oliver: Well, there were two executives with the Western Maryland Railroad Company at that time who were definitely interested in working with us on this. One was Bob Hense who was a senior vice president and the other was a gentleman by the name of Dick Allen who was general counsel.

Paul Wiegman: Okay.

John Oliver: And, both of these guys felt that- saw the benefit of providing a rail-trail for the folks of Western Pennsylvania. And, we're hopeful, of course, that we would expand our interest to include all of their rail lines in Pennsylvania. But, again, we said the best we can do is only within the limits of Ohiopyle State Park.

Paul Wiegman: That's an interesting stance for the railroad. You would think they were just trying to get as much money as they could out of it. But, there was a real interest in the recreational benefits to the people of Pennsylvania and Maryland and beyond.

John Oliver: And, we certainly agreed, but the problem- we looked at the cost associated with the liabilities and they were just too much for a small land trust conservancy to assume. But, of course, they looked at the liabilities also from their standpoint and they wanted to get rid of them as well. So, they wanted to transfer them to us.

Paul Wiegman: What incentives was the Conservancy able to offer them as a corporation, as a company?

John Oliver: Well, of course, we looked at the benefits of a charitable contribution of this line to them and this was of interest to them. However, in the end, as you know, we paid \$50,000 for the 25-mile section within Ohiopyle State Park which is really a pittance compared to the value. But, they wanted- they needed something

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

to justify the sale, an outright charitable donation just didn't make sense and didn't work for them.

Paul Wiegman: Now, it was a bargain sale?

John Oliver: I believe it was a bargain sale and I think this was the preferred way that their accountants wanted it to be treated.

Paul Wiegman: So, a portion that was a contribution from the Western Maryland?

John Oliver: Yes, right, for sure.

Paul Wiegman: And then, there was some cash involved. You say that when you first – and it would have been you and Josh at that time.

John Oliver: Right.

Paul Wiegman: You were director of land operations and Josh was president.

John Oliver: That's correct.

Paul Wiegman: Josh Whetzel was president of the Conservancy. Do you remember that first time that you heard about the Western Maryland in this rail and where you and Josh all of a sudden excited and- did rail-trail come into your mind right away?

John Oliver: Well, we saw the- of course, this is rough country, rugged country and there are mountains and very hilly topography even outside the gorge. So, a trail that has less than 3% grade we saw immediately the benefits as an easy walking trail and, of course, the bicycling potential was there right away. In fact, I think it was even used on an occasion by mountain bikers even when the lines were there- and it's still there.

Paul Wiegman: They were still there, yeah.

John Oliver: So, we saw were right away there was a tremendous opportunity there. We were just- we felt badly, really, that we couldn't expand the whole line because we knew that there was potential there as well.

Paul Wiegman: All the way to the state line.

John Oliver: And, I must say our board was excited about it as well. As you mentioned, we had this wonderful- this last train ride in 19...

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: 1975.

John Oliver: 1975.

Paul Wiegman: Right.

John Oliver: And, that was a wonderful event and a lot of our board members participated and unfortunately some who aren't here today. But, it was a thrilling ride. You were there, you took some wonderful photographs and that really- that ride gave us encouragement and gave the whole project great momentum.

Paul Wiegman: Yes. That that was the point of kind of there was a watershed. Then suddenly, people are beginning to talk about a trail. Let's go back to that a little bit. What in your background and what do you think in Josh's background led you to think right away about a trail? I mean, this is an old railroad bed. And, if you look at it in the in the lower Yough valley or the upper Yough valley around West Newton and so forth, you're going through some industrial sites and so forth. But, in the 1970s, people weren't thinking about bicycle trails, but you and Josh were. You suddenly had the- it was very clear to you.

John Oliver: Well, you're right. The whole rail-trail movement had not started then. But, that it didn't take a genius to see that if the- once the ties and rails were removed and that you could smooth out the ballast, that there was great potential and then, as I said, an easy walking bicycle trail. And so, and Ohio's had fit in beautifully world with the multiple range and recreation opportunities there. And, bicycling and walking in this, as I said, this very rugged country and a very easy way was...

[Crosstalk]

Paul Wiegman: Would open it up to a lot of people to get into it.

John Oliver: ...would provide incredible opportunities.

Paul Wiegman: Now, you say that some of the problems where the bridges and the tunnels. What was the issue at that point about the bridges and tunnels?

John Oliver: Well, there were multiple bridges going over state roads and, of course, all of them had to be maintained. You can just imagine some of the bridges over the roads in Fayette and Somerset

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

County. If they weren't maintained, they would start falling on cars below.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: The tunnels themselves – Big Savage Tunnel, of course, was almost- that was almost 2,000 feet long and had to be maintained.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: And, we just simply couldn't- we couldn't handle it. And fortunately, for all of us, it's another organization has stepped to the forefront and is making it all happen along with the lot of partners. But, at that time, we couldn't do it.

Paul Wiegman: “We” being the Conservancy?

John Oliver: “We” Western Pennsylvania Conservancy couldn't do it.

Paul Wiegman: Now, I read a report that you worked with David Farringer and looked at all the bridges and tunnels and came up with a plan to bypass most of them. But, it seemed like in that documentation and those letters between the three of you, you visit them all. But, you got to the Salisbury Viaduct and said, “This is too much of a landmark to take down.” And, that kind of changed the view and now all but one of those bridges and tunnels is being used. It was kind of interesting to see that happen. Do you remember visiting some of them with David?

John Oliver: I do. We spent a lot of time on the road...

Paul Wiegman: Actually, in the field.

John Oliver: ...in the field checking on them. Of course, the Salisbury Viaduct which today is absolutely spectacular.

Paul Wiegman: It's a real landmark on the trail.

John Oliver: It is. There's no question about it. And, we did figure a way to- in fact, you can get on a township and a state road and bypass that. But, fortunately, that didn't happen.

Paul Wiegman: Yes, yeah.

John Oliver: The Salisbury Viaduct is intact and it is an incredible feature of the trail.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- Paul Wiegman:** Now, after you got going on this, there must have been public reaction on both sides of the scale. Do you remember some of the...?
- John Oliver:** Well, I think it was all positive, certainly when the announcement- when we bought the section within Ohiopyle and then conveyed it to the Department of Environmental Resources as part of their state park system. There was no question that DER at that time...
- Paul Wiegman:** Mm-hmm.
- John Oliver:** ...saw potential and was hopeful that someone would take it from there and expand it. But, I don't recall any opposition to it. Almost everyone saw the tremendous long-term potential of it. But again, the liabilities associated with maintaining all these structures were so significant that no one was, at that time, willing to step forward to take them on.
- Paul Wiegman:** Things have certainly changed in the 30 years...
- John Oliver:** Absolutely.
- Paul Wiegman:** ...since that the time had taken place. At the time of the work that you did, that the Conservancy did, we both did – you were in touch with Dr. Maurice Goddard, the late Dr. Maurice Goddard. But, what was his- do you remember his reactions to all of this?
- John Oliver:** Well, he never he never saw an acquisition he didn't like that we took to him. Doc Goddard and the Conservancy had a wonderful relationship over many, many years. And, when we met with him – Josh Whetzel and I met with him, he immediately saw the potential and his right-hand man for land acquisition, John Rex, the late John Rex – got on it and said, “As soon as you guys buy it from the Western Maryland, we’ll buy it from you.” And, sure enough, they did. And, that date was, Paul...
- Paul Wiegman:** 1978...
- John Oliver:** '78.
- Paul Wiegman:** ...is what I have.
- John Oliver:** And, that's correct. And, we had to- I remember very well a conveyance on a crisp day in November...

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- Paul Wiegman:** It was cold, yeah.
- John Oliver:** ...in Ohiopyle and we exchanged check and deed.
- Paul Wiegman:** Mm-hmm.
- John Oliver:** And, the rest is history.
- Paul Wiegman:** It seems like the Conservancy bought it in, I think, May of '78 and then transferred it right to the state. So, it wasn't in the Conservancy's hands very long.
- John Oliver:** No, no. They liked a lot of our work with DER that time. Once the state was committed to it, they agreed to take it off our hands...
- Paul Wiegman:** Right away.
- John Oliver:** ...immediately.
- Paul Wiegman:** Now, that section was from Confluence to Bruner Run?
- John Oliver:** That's correct.
- Paul Wiegman:** That was the section.
- John Oliver:** Right.
- Paul Wiegman:** Now, the state park didn't go to Confluence, but they were willing to accept the right-of-way from Ramcat Hollow up to Confluence?
- John Oliver:** Well, and there were acquisitions. We, the Conservancy, was involved in acquisitions around Ramcat around at that time. So, there was an acknowledgment from DER that time that the state—that the Ohiopyle state boundary would be extended to Ramcat and beyond, really.
- Paul Wiegman:** What was the reason that was done that way? Was it...?
- John Oliver:** We were in the process of- the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy was in the process of negotiating for those parcels that would add onto to the park near Confluence which would coincide with the location of the trail.
- Paul Wiegman:** Of the trail. And, it brings the trail to it – a village to a town...
- John Oliver:** Exactly.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: Rather than just ending at Ramcat which is close to Confluence, but it has to- you gave it a chance for the towns to participate in what would become active visitor use and bringing visitors/tourism to Confluence as well.

John Oliver: And, back then, that was a definite purpose of this – Confluence would benefit which they have in a great way.

Paul Wiegman: In a great way, right. Now, at the other end, it ended it Bruner Run...

John Oliver: Right.

Paul Wiegman: ...which was out in the middle of nowhere at that point.

John Oliver: and Bruner Run, if you recall, was the last take-out for the Ohiopyle rafters.

Paul Wiegman: Yes.

John Oliver: Now, we wanted the state to go down as far as Connellsville and eventually they did, but the initial acquisition only went to Bruner Run.

Paul Wiegman: Bruner Run. Now, the rest of that acquisition – the Conservancy owned for a number of years. Apparently, the dates that I have – it wasn't until actually in the 80s the final piece from Bruner Run Connellsville was transferred to the state. There was some acquisition there wasn't there?

John Oliver: There were, I think, a few acquisitions at that end of Ohiopyle State Park.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: But, by and large, there were some parcels that were associated with the rail line that allowed the state room to build some facilities that would help the state and manage the line.

Paul Wiegman: Manage the whole thing. And then finally, it was connected actually into Connellsville...

John Oliver: Correct. Right down...

Paul Wiegman: Right onto the main street.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- John Oliver:** Exactly. Went down to downtown Connellsville.
- Paul Wiegman:** Right through downtown Connellsville. We make it sound so easy. There must have been some difficult parts of this.
- John Oliver:** Well, I've got to give credit to Tony Suppa who was our director of land acquisition. And he, being a real estate broker, he understood this. He was able to get a lot of expertise from a guy by the name of Bob McKenzie...
- Paul Wiegman:** Oh, okay.
- John Oliver:** ...who was the Port Authority lawyer and was an authority on rights-of-way. And, he helped us tremendously on the title work associated with rights-of-way. So, we knew exactly what the railroad owned or what they had as an easement. And, this was all critical in our ability to negotiate with the railroad.
- Paul Wiegman:** And, it had to be terribly complicated.
- John Oliver:** Extremely complicated. I just remember reams and reams of paperwork and charts and I don't know whether Bob is around, but it would be great if you could contact him and ask him about...
- Paul Wiegman:** Good to talk, yeah. And certainly, we want to talk to Tony at some point.
- John Oliver:** Absolutely. We'll find Tony for you.
- Paul Wiegman:** We'll find Tony and get him because that's a- he did the hard part.
- John Oliver:** He did. There's no question about it.
- Paul Wiegman:** That really takes you to the time that you were president of the Conservancy. And, if I'm correct, when the transfer was made to Ohiopyle State Park, to the state – you were president of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and actually did the transfer of title to John Rex.
- John Oliver:** That's right.
- Paul Wiegman:** I remember standing down there. We had a railroad crossing sign behind us...
- John Oliver:** That's right, exactly. You took the photograph.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: Yeah, it appeared in Conserve...

John Oliver: That's right.

Paul Wiegman: Put that on one of these- one of the tapes or the DVDs that we're making. The Conservancy sort of- that was it for the Conservancy's activities in the trail at that point.

John Oliver: But, you know, it was interesting – when we did that, there was a lot of- it created a lot of interest in extending the trail and in the concept of the rails- abandoned rails for trail purposes.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: And, there was a lot of interest and excitement that came to the Conservancy because of our acquisition and conveyance to the state. And, we were constantly being asked to tell our story to other organizations outside the state who saw also potential in abandoned railroad rights-of-way for trail – primarily bicycle trail use.

Paul Wiegman: Bicycle trails.

John Oliver: At that time, interest in and safe, convenient, aesthetically pleasing bike trails was starting to increase. And, people saw this as a great opportunity.

Paul Wiegman: And, maybe you had something to do with that.

John Oliver: Well, I'd like to think all of us did at the Conservancy, as you correctly pointed out. There was a lot of behind-the-scenes work that went into these. It was very complicated. This was new. And, it took a large number of partners to make it all happen.

Paul Wiegman: To pull it all off.

John Oliver: Yeah.

Paul Wiegman: And, we certainly had had help from our partners in the state, too.

John Oliver: Well, they certainly got it going and gave us the recognition that, at least from a recreational standpoint, yes – it made a lot of sense. And, as I said before, a lot of people watched this happen and when it happened, the Conservancy had to deal with a lot of inquiries on this project.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- Paul Wiegman:** Now, this is much for my own research as anything else – the Indian Creek Railroad fit into there somewhere. I see references every so often. Was the Indian Creek Railroad before the Western Maryland or was it after or during?
- John Oliver:** If my recollection serves me correctly which is always questionable – the Indian Creek came afterwards
- Paul Wiegman:** Afterwards.
- John Oliver:** That's right.
- Paul Wiegman:** Okay. Because it was part of CSX.
- John Oliver:** It was part of CSX and the Conservancy was very much involved with the acquisition of the Indian Creek line.
- Paul Wiegman:** Mm-hmm.
- John Oliver:** And again, Tony Suppa had a lot to do with it. And today, that Indian Creek line is a very popular trail...
- Paul Wiegman:** Very popular.
- John Oliver:** ...bicycle and walking, biking trail.
- Paul Wiegman:** Now, in 1995, you left the Conservancy and went to Harrisburg to become the first Secretary of the DCNR.
- John Oliver:** Mm-hmm.
- Paul Wiegman:** And, in that position, suddenly the Western Maryland is back on your radar screen.
- John Oliver:** Well, I have to give credit to that to Linda Boxx. Linda Boxx – I wasn't in DCNR for more than a couple weeks when I heard from Linda and at that time, Linda had got the rail-trail bug and this was to be her great cause. And, she mounted a concerted public relations political effort to extend the Western Maryland acquisition further east and saw the potential of hooking up with the C&O in Maryland. And, she was the one that visited us regularly. She met with Governor Ridge and she talked to a number of the representatives and senators – anybody who would listen and who would not listen – she managed to visit and she persevered. And, we saw her regularly.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: Are you saying that Linda was nagging you?

[Chuckle]

John Oliver: No, she was- she was very persistent, I would say.

Paul Wiegman: And, you're very tactful.

John Oliver: No, no, and I love her to death. And, I really mean that because- and frankly this project would not happen if it wasn't for Linda. She would not take "no" and she worked around every single obstacle. And even today, she is the- if there was a saint for this project, it's Linda Boxx, true and simple.

Paul Wiegman: She told me a story that the Great Allegheny Passage – which she now calls it – at that time when you were Secretary at DCNR, you were hearing from the Allegheny Highlands Trail from the Yough North Trail from the Steel Valley Trail from whatever trails – all these different trail- trail organizations. And, she says at one point, you finally said to her, "Linda, I hear from all these people and I don't know who they are. Name it one name."

John Oliver: There's no question about it. We were getting piecemealed to death on this and it's all one project. But, as you know very well, the reason it's been so successful is different communities, different organizations have taken parcels of it and Somerset County for example. Hank Parke, the commissioners – they took a major- in fact, if there was one county that should be singled out for their entrepreneurial approach to this as a potential rail-trail and travel/tourism project, it's Somerset County. But, Linda was behind an effort to pull all these different groups together and I think it's called the Allegheny Trail Alliance.

Paul Wiegman: Yes, Allegheny Trail Alliance.

John Oliver: And, that was that was needed in order to get funding. If you could see the whole picture but knew the different pieces had to be for acquisition, for development, for improvement, that had the big picture – the big plan had to be done. Linda did that working with all these other organizations.

Paul Wiegman: And so, because of that, she credits you with the name "The Great Allegheny Passage" coming about.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

John Oliver: Well, she's nice, but I've got to give her the credit, really. In her very special way, she made this happen, pure and simple.

Paul Wiegman: What help did DCNR provide to the Allegheny Trail Alliance and the individual groups?

John Oliver: Well, we provided matching monies for acquisition and construction. As you know, you can't use the ballasts. So, you have to get rid of the rails, you have to get rid of the ties, and you have to get rid of the ballast.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: And then, you have to improve the trail.

Paul Wiegman: Right.

John Oliver: And then, someone has to maintain the trail.

Paul Wiegman: Right.

John Oliver: So, these are all fairly costly projects plus you have to reconstruct the tunnels and the bridges and the viaducts so that they can handle people.

Paul Wiegman: Right.

John Oliver: And, all this takes...

Paul Wiegman: And, they can handle people safely.

John Oliver: Safely, absolutely. And, all of this required a lot of money and a lot of engineering work. And, to this day, it still does. But, what makes this very special is that different groups have assumed responsibility for the parcels that are in their backyard, so to speak.

Paul Wiegman: Seems to me that if we look at the whole picture and kind of wrap it up – you're very proud of what has taken place.

John Oliver: Oh, I am, Paul. I think this is a world-class project as I have mentioned many times. Once this is completed, it will be the most intriguing, most fascinating, most glamorous rail-trail project in the world. The topography from mountains, the agricultural areas, the hills, the various landscapes, the Youghiogheny Gorge – just incredible. And, to think you'll be able to get on a bike in downtown

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Pittsburgh, hopefully at Point State Park, and end up in Georgetown, Washington, D.C. is incredible.

Paul Wiegman: I remember an instance on one of the Members' Days that we rode bikes on the trail and I started out in Ohiopyle with you. And, within moments, you were far ahead of me and I made it about three miles and you made it all the way to Ramcat. I kept thinking at that point, "Boy, John must really enjoy this trail." Personally, what's your feeling about the trail? What's your feeling on it?

John Oliver: Well, first of all, you're talking about a stretch which is very, very personal to me. It's that stretch of Ohiopyle State Park which is probably the wildest, most remote stretch from Ohiopyle up to Confluence. And, of course, the natural beauty is unsurpassed – you have the Youghiogheny River, you have some flats across the river that you look into – they have the gorge itself. And, of course, you can just see the potential the first time you're on it as a great biking trail. And, of course, people can walk on it. Older people – they can- people in wheelchairs can use it. You just saw right away that potential existed. And, as I said, if you're an outdoors person and you enjoy it as much as you and I do – it was there and it hit you right between the eyes.

Paul Wiegman: I can always remember when we worked together in the Conservancy – I would be out in the field doing something and the next had come back to the office. And, the first thing you at would ask me was, "What wildlife did you see?" You really have a connection with the outdoors.

John Oliver: Well, I love it, Paul just like you did and there's no question that's some of the best times I ever had with the Conservancy is when I tagged along with you. As one of our great naturalists in this region, that was always a wonderful experience and education for me. And, still to this day – it means everything. So, whether it's natural history or just outdoor recreation – this is what binds us to conservation and our work at the Conservancy.

Paul Wiegman: May 21, 1975 – we took a train ride – the last passenger train on the Western Maryland Railroad – 30 years ago and a couple weeks. What do you remember about the day?

John Oliver: Well, I believe was it was a nice day – it was maybe overcast. There was a lot of excitement about this. And, not only from the

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

folks that we're going to go through spectacular scenery but by train buffs who are just- who love to experience these types of events. Although, most of them regretted the fact it was the last train ride. But, we had a lot of VIPs on board...

Paul Wiegman: We certainly did.

John Oliver: ...I think there was a catered lunch, we had wonderful discussions and could see out the windows – just a very special day. I know that when it ended, we had to get- I think we took the bus back.

Paul Wiegman: We took the bus back from Hancock, right?

John Oliver: Everybody was sorry that a beautiful day had come to an end.

Paul Wiegman: As I remember, it was a three-car train – there was the engine and then there was a sort of a passenger car, but it was a dome car. And, then, the last car, the third car was there. I think they call it a rail observation car and the whole back was glass. You were riding backwards, but you could see the rails as you went through.

John Oliver: Yeah.

Paul Wiegman: And, I can remember sitting back there with Sarah Rodman and Graham Netting and talking about the gorge and talking about the scenery that we were going through. It was a really wonderful day from the standpoint of generating interest in the trail – but just from the standpoint of being with those people. I'm trying to think of some of the other people that were on there. I know it was scheduled for the publisher of the Connellsville paper – he was somewhere else and had to get back and he was one of the people- he was on the board.

John Oliver: That's right. I can't remember his name.

Paul Wiegman: Henderson?

John Oliver: No, no.

Paul Wiegman: It wasn't Jim Stevenson, but it was...

John Oliver: No, I can't remember, but I can see him. Jim Driscoll.

Paul Wiegman: Jim Driscoll, right.

John Oliver: Yeah.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: And, he very, very much wanted to be on that train.

John Oliver: Oh, absolutely.

Paul Wiegman: Whose idea was the train ride? Do you know if it was the Western...?

John Oliver: I think it just was a sort of collective idea that the...

Paul Wiegman: Between the Western Maryland?

John Oliver: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

Paul Wiegman: And, there were Western Maryland people.

John Oliver: And, a lot of us at the Conservancy. We saw the benefit. You know, the best way for a lot of folks to see it, in fact, the only way they could see the potential was to go on the train ride.

Paul Wiegman: And, actually see the train.

John Oliver: Yeah.

Paul Wiegman: Now, we went from Pittsburgh...

John Oliver: That's correct.

Paul Wiegman: On the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie to Connellsville. And then, we got on the Western Maryland. And, from Connellsville, we went on the Western Maryland to Ohiopyle...

John Oliver: Right.

Paul Wiegman: ...where we crossed the High Bridge.

John Oliver: Right.

Paul Wiegman: And, the train stopped and we all got off and walked across the High Bridge with only one railing on one side.

John Oliver: I remember that.

Paul Wiegman: And then, watched it come across.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- John Oliver:** That's correct. And, that High Bridge – you look down a long way you can see the rapids. In fact, they called it the rapids, they call that...
- Paul Wiegman:** “Railroad Rapids.”
- John Oliver:** “Railroad Rapids” – it’s right below us. In fact, I think people were going through – they were rafting through that day.
- Paul Wiegman:** Yeah.
- John Oliver:** But, I remember a number people didn’t like the heights and so they were grabbing on- in fact, some of them even stayed in the cars that they were not going to look down and experience that.
- Paul Wiegman:** And, in Ohiopyle – we got onto the B&O because the Gap was already there in Ohiopyle.
- John Oliver:** That’s right.
- Paul Wiegman:** Part of the span was removed. And then, we went to Confluence and we transferred back onto the Western Maryland and stayed on the Western Maryland all the way to Hancock.
- John Oliver:** Right.
- Paul Wiegman:** Somebody told me or I looked somewhere – we stopped, I think, in Confluence and had lunch.
- John Oliver:** I can’t remember that. It wasn’t a catered lunch?
- Paul Wiegman:** I think it was catered, but I think it was a boxed lunch.
- John Oliver:** Was it? Okay, you’re probably right. I remember that. I mean, I can’t remember the details of that part.
- Paul Wiegman:** Do you remember the newspaper that was on the train? I didn't realize this until recently. Richard Scaife was on the train.
- John Oliver:** Right, right.
- Paul Wiegman:** And, he had a special issue of the *Tribune-Review* printed for a commemorative souvenir edition that had the front page was the page announcing the Johnstown Flood of 1936. And, he had people, here two staff workers in striped uniforms that handed the paper onto the train like the old papers were transferred.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

- John Oliver:** Yeah, right, right. Oh, is that right?
- Paul Wiegman:** Yeah, I had forgotten about that.
- John Oliver:** I had forgotten about that, too, yeah. And, I think you got a call Dick Scaife and ask him. He's a real railroad buff and that's what- and so, I think he probably has memories of that day.
- Paul Wiegman:** Just as a coincidence and it really doesn't have a lot to do with the Western Maryland – I can remember getting to Hancock and I had a meeting that night of the board of directors of the Audubon Society and that was the night we voted to take up the Beechwood project.
- John Oliver:** Oh, is that right?
- Paul Wiegman:** Yeah. So, those two projects got intertwined...
- John Oliver:** And, you're still involved with them both?
- Paul Wiegman:** Yeah, still involved in both.
- John Oliver:** Exactly, yeah, yeah. It was a wonderful day and really, it was a public relations success because it started- I mean, this is no question – everyone saw the potential of this project for recreation, for recreation use.
- Paul Wiegman:** I always put a lot of- give a lot of credit to Josh for that – that he was very attuned to that kind of thing.
- John Oliver:** Oh, absolutely. When it comes to far- I mean, looking ahead, way beyond and the potential of an immediate action and the far-reaching benefits of it. He has few peers when it comes to that in terms of land conservation and outdoor recreation.
- Paul Wiegman:** Somebody suggested to me and maybe you can enlighten this a little bit – that his thought of the Western Maryland came from the fact that when he was with the Conservation Foundation which is in Washington, right, that he and Farley would walk the C&O Canal. So, they were familiar with that C&O Canal pathway of excellent outdoor, an excellent trail within an urban setting. And, that may have been- and I'll ask him this – that may have been some of the spark that led him to- when he heard about the Western Maryland – led him to think about this whole project.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

John Oliver: There's no question about that. And, that also reminds me that Josh is very persistent. I remember when things weren't going well, we not only made a trip down to see the corporate executives in Baltimore, we also went up to Cleveland to see them on this project. And, Cleveland, I think, was the headquarters for CSX at that time.

Paul Wiegman: Okay.

John Oliver: I'm not positive. And then, it's now down in Jacksonville, Florida.

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: But, Josh was- we kept insisting on doing this deal even though there were bumps along the way and some obstacles. But, as I said, those two – Bob Hense and Dick Allen where the two executives at CSX who really wanted us to do this project.

Paul Wiegman: That's quite a plus on the corporate side.

John Oliver: Absolutely, yeah.

Paul Wiegman: That's something that you don't see every day and it's a real pleasure to know that there was somebody that was really interested in this – not just it's real estate value, but it's recreational value.

John Oliver: Oh, yeah, yeah. There's no question they had a problem. But, once they went before the ICC and gave notification of their abandonments – now what to do?

Paul Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

John Oliver: And, we were not only an opportunity out there for turning over this asset into a trail but also a means of getting rid of a real liability that they saw.

Paul Wiegman: There's a paragraph in the final ICC decision that actually mentions the fact that this would go to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy as a recreational trail.

John Oliver: Oh, is that right? Okay.

Paul Wiegman: Yeah. And, there would be there would be some benefit to it.

John Oliver: Oh, that's great.

INTERVIEW - JOHN C OLIVER III

Paul Wiegman: So, it's part of the official decision that was made by the ICC, yeah.

John Oliver: Mutually beneficial.

Paul Wiegman: Mutually beneficial. Great.

John Oliver: Well, thanks, Paul. This was a lot of fun.

Paul Wiegman: Thank you. Have a good lunch with Josh.

[Crosstalk]

John Oliver: I will do that.

Paul Wiegman: And, we'll talk to him next week.

John Oliver: I'll prep him. I'll tell him that, yeah.

Paul Wiegman: Okay, yeah, okay.

[End 0:43:01.4]

cr-t/p