

VIDEO INTERVIEW – TOM MURPHY

- Tom Murphy:** ...my first as a legislator.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, as a legislator. Okay.
- Tom Murphy:** I was a legislator and that came available and then the legislators in that area opposed the state taking it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yes.
- Tom Murphy:** They're Republican – very property rights-oriented.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah.
- Tom Murphy:** This is before property rights probably was an issue.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Well, there was a lot of opposition for The Great Allegheny Passage, too.
- Tom Murphy:** Yeah, there is on all these trails.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Originally.
- Tom Murphy:** And, I'm on the board of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy nationally, so I've been involved.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, you were involved with ATA for a while, also.
- Tom Murphy:** I was involved really early on and I think before Linda was involved, I was involved with it. I went to some of their openings.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Back when they talked about the Spine Line? Those...
- Tom Murphy:** Right, right. And...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, well, what I'm looking for is just a...
- Tom Murphy:** It's so hard to put, I mean, the timing. I don't remember the timing well.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, don't worry about the times so much because it's really to take yourself, and I've talked to Josh Whetzel and a lot of other people that were involved in this whole thing. So, we have a record and...
- Tom Murphy:** That's good, as you're doing it.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, we're able to do it, so, you ready to go? Okay. By the way, we will do the introduction later.
- Tom Murphy:** Later.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, yeah. They'll know who you are. You ready? Okay. Thank you for coming, Tom. Should I call you Mayor?
- Tom Murphy:** Call me Tom.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Call you Tom, okay.
- Tom Murphy:** I'm not Mayor. I'd rather Tom- I never liked being Mayor anyhow.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You never liked being Mayor.
- Tom Murphy:** I mean the name. I like the job but I'd rather be Tom.
[Chuckle]
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay. Let's start where your interest began in trails.
- Tom Murphy:** Well, it really begins with the trail outside of Western Pennsylvania in the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.
- Tom Murphy:** An abandoned- Conrail was going to abandon a 63-mile, I think it was, right-of-way that ran from Williamsboro to Williams- Wellsboro to Williamsport.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** To Williamsport.
- Tom Murphy:** And, the legislators from that area opposed it and I happened to be on the Conservation Committee in the House of Representatives at the time and it came to my attention and I went up there- actually, John Oliver was concerned that the state would lose that opportunity and I went up there and it was one of these funny legislative battles that took place in the middle of the night and by a couple votes, we were able to convince the legislature to approve the acquisition of the that by the Commonwealth and today is a trail. And, that sort of led me back here to the Montour Trail. There was a group, Stan

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Sattinger and others, had this idea for the Montour Trail. I used to run out there when it was a railroad right-of-way.

Paul G. Wiegman: That's what somebody mentioned to me.

Tom Murphy: Yeah, and I was a young...

Paul G. Wiegman: That's when you were on the- you were still in the legislature?

Tom Murphy: I was a legislator and I was a young legislator and it was probably in the early 80s, mid-80s then.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay.

Tom Murphy: I would run out there and it was abandoned. And, it was just a beautiful valley if you've been down through the Montour Run Valley.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, it's a wonderful valley.

Tom Murphy: I said, "What a shame that we couldn't preserve this," and then I heard about this group that was sort of forming to want to try to get control of that right-of-way and it was Stan Sattinger and others who were, I think, part of the American Youth Hostel.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes.

Tom Murphy: They sort of had gotten together and...

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes, right.

Tom Murphy: And so, I got in touch with them and said, "How can I help you?" And, they obviously needed money and they needed the counties to sort of add it to their park inventory because it was going to be difficult for them to do it on their own. And so, then Secretary- Art Davis was the secretary of...

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay, yes.

Tom Murphy: And, I called him up and said, "I have a deal for you here, okay?"

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy: This is really great opportunity to put this trail through a very populated area, very, you know, booming area.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yes.
- Tom Murphy:** With the airport just beginning.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** With the airport.
- Tom Murphy:** A new airport under construction, it wasn't open yet. It was an opportunity to save this right-of-way. So, he came out, I got him sort of kidnapped one day when he came to Pittsburgh and we drove out and looked at the trail. So, he kicked in a couple hundred thousand dollars.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Mm-hmm.
- Tom Murphy:** And then, I talked to Commissioner Foerster, at the time, and I made the same pitch to him and he agreed that he would take the Allegheny County portion of the trail as part of the county inventory.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh. As part of...
- Tom Murphy:** So, that deals with the liability, insurance and everything that doesn't fall in.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure.
- Tom Murphy:** Unfortunately, we couldn't do the same thing in Washington County. The commissioners, at the time, I think, saw it as a potential threat to the Southern Beltway, a highway proposal that was there.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.
- Tom Murphy:** So, they didn't want to sort of make it a park. And so, I think to this day, the Montour Trail continues to own part of the Montour Trail in Washington County.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I believe they do, in that portion.
- Tom Murphy:** But, in Allegheny County, the trail is technically owned by the county.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And then, when it comes back in and down to Clairton, that's back into-

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- Tom Murphy:** So, it is funny, I mean, somebody 25-30 years probably will look at this and say, “Why is this the case?” And, you sort of do what you have to do...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Exactly.
- Tom Murphy:** ...to make things work. And, in this particular case. And then, there was the man who was the president of the Montour Trail really, I think, got it. We went to see him and, you know, there was a lot of demand for pieces of it – a coal company out there wanted parts that went through its right-of-way.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, Duquesne Light wanted it for the...
- Tom Murphy:** Duquesne Light wanted an easement. And, they actually wanted a part- they wanted to buy it at the time to get the whole right-of-way. And, to the credit of the Montour Trail Group, I mean, we were able to convince the railroad president to hold it all intact until we raised the money.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yes.
- Tom Murphy:** And, to their credit, they were able to negotiate with the Duquesne Light so that there'd be a common usage.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That was Pittsburgh and Lake Erie railroad owned that line.
- Tom Murphy:** Right. And, it was- you need to get the man's name because he was really very instrumental who was president of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie line.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay, okay.
- Tom Murphy:** Stan would know. We met with him. He eventually died of Lou Gehrig's disease. Because in the intervening period when we went to see him first, we talked to him about it. And then, over the year we went and he was in a wheelchair.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Uh-huh.
- Tom Murphy:** He was very committed to wanting to see this trail happen. And, sort of belays the image of the railroads who are sort of anti-trail, in that case, and in the case of The Great Allegheny Passage, you had railroads that were willing to work with

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groups. And, you know, these are groups, at the time, had no clue where the money was going to come from.

Paul G. Wiegman:

No.

Tom Murphy:

Or who- just to buy it let alone to build the whole thing, right?

Paul G. Wiegman:

And, not how much it was going to cost either.

Tom Murphy:

And, the bridges, I mean, you get into the bridges and tunnels which are, who knows, right? But, to the credit, I mean, that's the story of... I think- when I travel all over the country, I look for trails to go on and, you know, everyone has a story like this. It really is a remarkable grassroots effort of people who just saw the opportunity and for a wonderful recreational story. And, you know, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, nationally, has helped to lay the framework...

Paul G. Wiegman:

Helped to lay those frameworks.

Tom Murphy:

...with the enhancement money and railbanking laws but it really is the grassroots that have created these trails all over the country.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Now, after working on the Montour, you're elected the Mayor of Pittsburgh in 1994.

Tom Murphy:

Well, even before Mayor, I was bugging Dick Caligiuri and then Sophie to do trails. The right-of-way running from downtown out along the parkway to Oakland had been abandoned.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy:

Which we now...

Paul G. Wiegman:

That was once- that was after the B&O station was torn down?

Tom Murphy:

Right, when the B&O, that was the- the Port Authority used that as a commuter train from McKeesport.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Right.

Tom Murphy:

And, that was abandoned and had sat there for years. There's, again, PennDOT was talking about buying it to put a RAM

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system to complete the RAM system at Bates Street. And, somebody else was talking about buying it for the parking lot.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Sure.

Tom Murphy:

The jail was being built and I remember calling Tom Foerster up and saying, "You need to move the jail 50 feet. Leave a 50-foot right-of-way there."

Paul G. Wiegman:

Did he do it?

Tom Murphy:

Now, for a trail, he did.

Paul G. Wiegman:

He did?

Tom Murphy:

I mean, because the jail was originally designed to be up against the highway.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Ah, okay.

Tom Murphy:

So, if you go back behind there you will see that there is a right-of-way. Same with PNC, I had the same conversation with Tom O'Brien. I was Mayor by then.

Paul G. Wiegman:

You were Mayor by then?

Tom Murphy:

And, that when PNC was building their operations center there and in saw the designs they had and I said, "You need to move your building over 50 feet from off the highway so we can put a trail through there.

Paul G. Wiegman:

So, was your- was the first trail that was built in the City of Pittsburgh, then, the Eliza Furnace Trail?

Tom Murphy:

Well, it was really on the North Side when I became Mayor, probably, within a few months, we built the trail along the North Side from about the Ninth Street Bridge up to Washington's Landing.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy:

Okay, that part was- Zubik's Navy was there if you remember that.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Zubik's Navy, yes.

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- Tom Murphy:** And, I ask our law department to research it and turned out we owned the land as Zubik was just sort of putting stuff there. He didn't own the land.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh. The city-owned- that was city property?
- Tom Murphy:** So, we gave him notice that he had to move the stuff and the Public Works Crew actually built the trail. Then the next one was the Eliza Furnace Trail.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Then the Eliza Furnace.
- Tom Murphy:** And, you know, we worked closely with Friends of the Riverfront to really look at- and they were very instrumental and very helpful in getting the South Side portion above what we now know as Southside Works.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.
- Tom Murphy:** So, when we were buying- the city, when I became Mayor, bought the old Jones and Laughlin steel mill site on the South Side and, of course, any property we buy everybody knew that we needed to have a trail.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, you were instrumental in making sure that there was a trail into those properties?
- Tom Murphy:** Right. I have to tell you a funny story, particularly this week, if it is appropriate since the Steelers are in the Superbowl.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay. And, we should mention, when somebody looks at this, this is the week of the Superbowl.
- Tom Murphy:** This is the week of the- right. This is the Superbowl. If you go across the Hot Metal Bridge, which we also bought when we bought the South Side, off to the left is the UPMC Sports Medicine facility.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right. Yes.
- Tom Murphy:** And, the Steelers headquarters and four football fields, practice fields for the Steelers and the University of Pittsburgh.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right, that's the practice field, right.

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Tom Murphy: And so, when we bought the land, UPMC and the Steelers came to us and said they wanted to build this facility there and we thought it was a great idea. If you look at the site, there's a railroad track immediately behind it and so then the river.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yes, right.

Tom Murphy: So, it's a fairly narrow site. And so, they hire an architectural firm and the architectural firm comes back and it's designed so that the buildings are really into the river, right up in because they wanted the river views.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy: And, they sort of said, "We really can't do a trail here. There's just not enough room. We're going to put the road back behind- back by the railroad track and I said, "That's not the deal. All of our property – the riverfronts – are going to be parks and this is going to continue all the way down to Washington D.C. and The Great Allegheny Passage."

Paul G. Wiegman: Right.

Tom Murphy: "So, you need to move your buildings back." Well, Dan Rooney and Jeff Romoff took me to lunch one day and for an hour and a half, we yelled at each other about what this was going to look like. And, well, I'm happy to say if you go there, you'll see that there are riverfront trails and...

Paul G. Wiegman: The trail goes right through there and that'll be part of-

Tom Murphy: Well, but the problem is there are four 80-yard football fields because there was not enough room to extend the football fields. So, when the Steelers are in the red zone and can't score, of course, I feel very guilty about that, okay.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: It's your fault. Let's hope nothing happens.

Tom Murphy: But, Dan Rooney called me, you know, a few months after he was moved into the building, his office is right on the corner there and he said, "I'm looking out here and I'm seeing these people ride bikes and these families use the trail." He said,

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“We really did do the right thing, didn’t we?” And so, there’s sort of a story like that and I think anybody that has been involved in building trails will say that, probably, every foot of their trail has a story to it.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, I’m sure. And, that will be, ultimately, the trail that goes from-

Tom Murphy: All the way from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C., right.

Paul G. Wiegman: The Great Allegheny Passage.

Tom Murphy: That will connect it, right. And so, you know, the Allegheny Passage, I’ve ridden the trail twice all the way to Washington.

Paul G. Wiegman: That’s what I was going to ask.

Tom Murphy: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: You’ve done it, the whole thing twice?

Tom Murphy: Twice, now. Yeah. Well, one day on one trip we started right at Point Park.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, you did?

Tom Murphy: Yeah.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay.

Tom Murphy: And, we went the whole length all the way- five days to Washington D.C.

Paul G. Wiegman: Five days.

Tom Murphy: And, you know, I sell it all the time – I’m telling people they ought to do it. It’s a great trip.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay.

Tom Murphy: You know, and it’s become- the second time it became more convenient than the first in the sense that the bed and breakfasts have opened.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, you would have done it before...

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- Tom Murphy:** I can't even remember. We did it really a long- a lot of the pieces were...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** There would have been a lot of gaps in there.
- Tom Murphy:** The piece from Confluence to wherever- to Meyersdale, I guess, wasn't completed.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That wasn't opened until 2001.
- Tom Murphy:** We rode the trail, though, and it was not a pleasant ride.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, you did ride the trail?
- Tom Murphy:** I mean, you're riding on railroad ballast most of the time.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, of course, Meyersdale to the state line will only open this year in 2006.
- Tom Murphy:** Right, well, so... Yeah, we went on the street and the roads on those. And so, you know, it is a remarkable achievement that this thing has been done. And, I'm glad you're telling the story of it because the story of these things is really about people taking control of an opportunity that they saw and most people didn't.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Let's- where did you get this interest in trails?
- Tom Murphy:** Well, I've run...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I know you're a runner.
- Tom Murphy:** I've run for 40 years and I always loved the riverfronts and I would run in Pittsburgh, you know...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You were born and raised here?
- Tom Murphy:** Here, yeah. And, I would- and I was born and raised here with my mother telling me three things when I was growing up. We grew up in Greenfield and Baldwin.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay.
- Tom Murphy:** Three things is: be home before the street lights come on, don't go into the coal mines- the abandoned coal mines, and the third one was never go near the rivers.

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[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, really?

Tom Murphy: Because we lived right up on the hill above the rivers, okay, and you know, there were railroad tracks and the rivers were badly polluted.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah.

Tom Murphy: And, there was no easy way to get to them.

Paul G. Wiegman: That's right.

Tom Murphy: And, we broke all those rules, of course, growing up.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: Of course.

Tom Murphy: I really enjoyed- I always loved the river. And then, you know, as I got older here and loved to run, I would run on the riverfronts on the old abandoned railroads or active railroads, along the railroads or through the old steel mill sites. And really, I never thought I'd be mayor of Pittsburgh, to be honest with you, you know.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy: And, I talked to Dick Caligiuri about doing them and I talked to Sophie about doing them and there was not really a whole lot of interest. And then, all of the sudden I was Mayor of Pittsburgh and had the opportunity to really begin to focus on wanting to build these- to build the trails in a way that would really invite people to want to come back to the rivers because, you know, we in Pittsburgh really just knew how to go over the rivers not really use the rivers in a way.

Paul G. Wiegman: Exactly, exactly.

Tom Murphy: And, you know, for me, of all the things that I was involved in as Mayor of Pittsburgh, the trails are the things I most love.

Paul G. Wiegman: Now, your vision has been to have a trail on all 36 miles of riverfront that's within the City of Pittsburgh?

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- Tom Murphy:** Right, right. And, I think eventually that will happen, you know, as Pittsburgh's economic basis changed. And, it really is- it's the opportunity is there, it really will be the community will that will determine whether that will happen or not.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Now, you've been in touch with- you have a unique feel for the community. Do you see people saying, like, "Come to this community," or, "I enjoy part of it because of these trails?"
- Tom Murphy:** Not initially. I mean, always the challenge with the trails is that there are only a few people – the Montour Trail, The Great Allegheny Passage – there are only a few people that see an advantage and, in many cases, there is opposition because if the railroad has been abandoned people want...
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, they want all kinds of...
- Tom Murphy:** They don't want people coming through their backyard or near house or all that.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** No. Oh, right.
- Tom Murphy:** And so, it generally is a few people who really get it, that make it happen. Now, if I would go out to the Montour Trail and say, you know, "We're going to build a highway on the Montour Trail," or something, then you'd have probably hundreds if not thousands of people at meetings opposing taking away the trail.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah.
- Tom Murphy:** And, that would be true in The Great Allegheny Passage.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Absolutely.
- Tom Murphy:** So, that's what I have such admiration for is the people like Stan Sattinger and Linda that sort of got it long before other people saw the opportunity they saw. Can I tell a quick story?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yeah, sure.
- Tom Murphy:** And then, it's about Schenley Park but it's the same vision. I don't know if you know who- you must know who Edward Bigelow is and Mary Schenley.

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Paul G. Wiegman: Yes, right.

Tom Murphy: And well, Mary Schenley was a very young, willful young woman and her parents sent her to a boarding school in New York at 16 and she met an older English gentleman 43 years old and married him and moved to London – never came back to Pittsburgh. And, she inherited much of what we would know as Shadyside and Squirrel Hill and would sell off the parcels of it to developers. And, she was down to her last big parcel, and this is in the 1890s, and she notified the city she was going to sell it to a developer and there was a man named Edward Bigelow who was the director of the Parks Department at the time and thought that we ought to have that piece of property for a park.

Paul G. Wiegman: As a park.

Tom Murphy: Now, think about that – in the 1890s, there's no suburbs. Why would you want to have a 500-acre park there?

Paul G. Wiegman: It's farmland. Yeah.

Tom Murphy: And, I mean, you wouldn't think that people needed it. They could go to Carrick or somewhere where there was country, right?

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah.

Tom Murphy: And so, he went to the mayor and said, "I think we need to buy this property from Mary Schenley to create a park," and the mayor being the courageous mayor that he was said, "Let's have a referendum." And, they had a referendum and the voters of the City of Pittsburgh turned it down.

Paul G. Wiegman: They did?

Tom Murphy: Said we shouldn't spend the money. Why would we want to spend the money to buy all this land?

Paul G. Wiegman: Right.

Tom Murphy: So, Edward Bigelow, just convinced that we should have that property for a park, got on the fastest steamship he could to New York or the fastest train he could to New York and the

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fastest steamship he could to London and within a few weeks before the developer was to sign the papers, convinced Mary Schenley to donate that property to the City of Pittsburgh.

Paul G. Wiegman: Wow.

Tom Murphy: Now, imagine. And, I look at the Montour Trail or The Great Allegheny Passage as the same thing.

Paul G. Wiegman: It's the same vision.

Tom Murphy: You know, you're telling the story but 20, 30, 40 years from now or 100 years from now when untold thousands of people will have enjoyed that trail, those trails, in the midst of even probably a more dense development around them...

Paul G. Wiegman: Absolutely.

Tom Murphy: ...as Pittsburgh grows and expands. It's this remarkable story of people that sort of see these opportunities. In many ways, the most valuable parts of what we can do for our community is to give people a place to go enjoy themselves.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, look ahead like that.

Tom Murphy: And, to look ahead. And, these opportunities are really, truly once in a lifetime because all of the trails, I mean, if you don't grasp the moment, carpe diem, seize the day.

Paul G. Wiegman: Seize the day.

Tom Murphy: If you don't seize the day, they're gone. They're gone because they'll be sold off piecemeal and you lose that opportunity to create that park.

Paul G. Wiegman: Exactly. Yeah. Now, you looked at Pittsburgh as a hub connecting trails – regional trails.

Tom Murphy: As it was a hub for railroads. I mean, Pittsburgh, for 100 years was in many ways the center of railroads. I mean, there were 3,000 trains a day that would come into and leave Pittsburgh back in the 1920s.

Paul G. Wiegman: Right.

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- Tom Murphy:** And so, it was this railroad hub and for the trails as we move into a new generation coming down the Allegheny River, going down the Mon River, going out the Ohio River – all represent opportunities. But, it really is about community will. These opportunities will present themselves and it is a question at that moment if there is an Edward Bigelow somewhere in this community or in, you know, Westmoreland County or in Armstrong County who will seize the day and grasp the opportunity at that moment.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I feel very strongly that Josh Whetzel, Jr. was that Edward Bigelow because he recognized that trail, the value of The Great Allegheny Passage in 1975.
- Tom Murphy:** And so, he was.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** At that point...
- Tom Murphy:** And, I don't know that history and somebody- I'm glad I'm learning about it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, at that point, many people said, "Who would ride a bicycle? Why do people want to ride bicycles?"
- Tom Murphy:** Right.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** So, it does...
- Tom Murphy:** Well, let me just pick up on that because, for me, one of the most heartening experiences I had, last summer I'm over at the water steps over by PNC Park.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, yes, right.
- Tom Murphy:** The little- we call them the water steps.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.
- Tom Murphy:** The little waterfalls and I had ridden my bike and I'm just sitting there and this couple comes riding down and we start talking. And, they are 85 and 83 years old and they live in Millvale. And, for the first time in 60 years, they are riding bikes.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** For the first time.

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- Tom Murphy:** They bought bikes.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** They bought bikes and rode the...
- Tom Murphy:** They bought bikes because they could ride on the trail. It's flat, they don't have to compete with automobiles.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** They feel safe.
- Tom Murphy:** And, they feel safe, right. And, it's a wonderful little ride coming down from Millvale to down there.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Sure, that's a beautiful ride down through there.
- Tom Murphy:** It's a little ride and so it was, for them, it changed their lives. I mean, instead of probably being in their 80s and relatively sedentary, they have changed how they were going to lead their lives. And it, for me, sort of typified, it really epitomized the impact the trail is going to have.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You had to feel pretty good about that.
- Tom Murphy:** Yeah, I did. That made me feel very good.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** I can imagine. I have heard that a lot of the trails you actually have gone out and scouted. Now, there's all kinds of stories.
- Tom Murphy:** For 30 years!
- [Laughter]
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.
- Tom Murphy:** I mean, I've dreamed about this for 30 years. I didn't realize I'd be mayor to actually make it happen but, yeah, in my head I have another 50 miles of trails in Pittsburgh I wish I could have built.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** But, not even in your head, but you actually went out and walked and biked.
- Tom Murphy:** Oh, I probably have pretty much been on all of them. I mean, when we bought Somerset and one of the reasons we bought what is now Somerset with the slag dump that you see when you come in the parkway is I would run down through there for years and years.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh. Through...
- Tom Murphy:** Down through, follow Nine Mile Run down, right.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Nine Mile Run into Duck Hollow.
- Tom Murphy:** There's an old dirt road and an old bridge down there. And, you know, I came back one day from a run down there and said to the Urban Redevelopment Authority, "Let's buy this piece of property." I mean, we're building 700 houses in this spectacular development but my true motivation was to continue the Frick Park all the way down to the river.
- [Chuckle]
- Paul G. Wiegman:** All the way down to the river.
- Tom Murphy:** I mean, we're adding- of the 238 acres we're adding 150 to Frick Park.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And now, we can- there is a trail that could be built up Nine Mile Run.
- Tom Murphy:** Well, there is a trail of sorts and you can go- I mean, one of my favorite long runs is to go start at the Frick Art Museum, have somebody drop me off there at the beginning of Frick Park.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, okay. Up on Reynolds.
- Tom Murphy:** And, go down through Frick Park and down through Nine Mile Run and we've built the trail from Duck Hollow down to the Glenwood Bridge.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Yes.
- Tom Murphy:** You've got to cheat a little bit and go across the railroad tracks and across the Glenwood Bridge and then drop back down onto the South Side and go all the way in. The trail is all the way to the Glenwood Bridge in the South Side. And, go all the way back down.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Wow.
- Tom Murphy:** I mean, it's about 10 miles from Frick Park to Station Square.

VIDEO INTERVIEW – TOM MURPHY

Paul G. Wiegman: To Station Square.

Tom Murphy: Yeah. It's a great ride.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, it wouldn't take much to go...

Tom Murphy: It's called Nine Mile Run.

[Laughter]

Paul G. Wiegman: Because it's nine miles run. Yeah, it's a good reason to call it that. It wouldn't take much to go from the Frick Museum in the other direction and get down onto Washington Boulevard and there you are.

Tom Murphy: Well, we have that- that's underway.

Paul G. Wiegman: That's underway.

Tom Murphy: I mean, one of the last things I was doing as mayor is- the goal, I mean, what I would like and we were looking for a name for it which is that if you start at the Point you come up the Allegheny River to Highland Park.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay.

Tom Murphy: Come up through Highland Park, up along Washington Boulevard.

Paul G. Wiegman: Right.

Tom Murphy: Up Negley Run through East Liberty into Mellon Park, into Frick Park.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, that's right. You go into Mellon.

Tom Murphy: Through Nine Mile Run. So, you could make, literally, almost a continuous loop, probably 90% of it off road around the city. Which would be, I think, a great addition to the city to have that kind of loop trail that would literally loop the whole edge of the city.

Paul G. Wiegman: It'd be wonderful.

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Tom Murphy: You know, it was another interesting thing about Edward Bigelow was he originally outline- laid out the boulevards and the city.

Paul G. Wiegman: Okay.

Tom Murphy: Bigelow Boulevard, Washington Boulevard – thinking of them as a grand loop road around the city.

Paul G. Wiegman: Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy: Okay? And, that was sort of part of the theory. Now, we obviously did not pay attention to it.

Paul G. Wiegman: No.

Tom Murphy: I mean, you have segments of it along the Boulevard of the Allies or...

Paul G. Wiegman: And, Washington Boulevard and Negley Run.

Tom Murphy: Washington Boulevard. There's little segments where it's park-like.

Paul G. Wiegman: Right.

Tom Murphy: And, that's was the idea of a boulevard. And so, his idea was that you would have Washington Boulevard going into Bigelow Boulevard, Baum Boulevard is you would create these sort of park-like roadways that would go around the city.

Paul G. Wiegman: What was the low point in all this as you were- obviously, there was some hard discussions at times.

Tom Murphy: Yeah, I mean, you get into- everybody wants their own beachfront, in effect, if you know what I mean. You know, whether it's for security or just to have the vista or being able to if they want to build out and be able to look up and down the river. And so, I mean, there's always discussions like that. And, you know, the difficulty of putting the funding aside and that's always a challenge, you know. But, I guess the challenging part for me was that to try to build the community part of it. That came slower than what I had imagined.

Paul G. Wiegman: You mean community support?

VIDEO INTERVIEW – TOM MURPHY

- Tom Murphy:** Yeah. I mean, the sort of- the get a sense of ownership of these trails. That was hard to get people to get it before the trails were opened. Now, I think it would be hard to take any of them away.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You think it's there now? Oh, people are using them?
- Tom Murphy:** Yeah, people are using them but it was- there was a moment, I mean, when we were buying the railroad right-of-way that runs from downtown to Oakland through- the Eliza Furnace Trail.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right.
- Tom Murphy:** You know, there was some really touch and go moments. There was hard negotiation with the railroad. People thought we were nuts to spend the money.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** That would have been CSX by that time.
- Tom Murphy:** Yeah, it was hard to- spending the money and the tight budget to buy that property. You know, as it turned out it's more than paid for itself with the parking and Greyhound Bus station there is all part of that property we bought. But, at the time, it wasn't an easy conversation.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** How about the high points? Besides the people on the...
- Tom Murphy:** Well, the high points are really more of watching, you know, I use the trails pretty much every day in Pittsburgh and just watching how people use them. I mean, there was a funny flurry of letters a month or so ago. There was a letter- somebody wrote a letter about wasn't it nice that the Parks Department plowed the Eliza Furnace Trail.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Oh, I saw that.
- Tom Murphy:** And then, there were other letters back about saying well, they didn't do a very good job. And, it was interesting to see where the letters are from.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** Okay.
- Tom Murphy:** Because very few of the people were from Pittsburgh. They were from Forest Hills or Edgewood.

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Paul G. Wiegman: They were outside and Bridgeville

Tom Murphy: And, you know, my inclination was to write back to the people from Forest Hills that was criticizing and say, “Is it okay- you know, why don’t I come to the trail in Forest Hills and see how well you maintain it?” And, the fact of the matter is there is not a trail in Forest Hills.

Paul G. Wiegman: There’s no trails in Forest Hills, right.

Tom Murphy: You know, and it really sort of- you get the sense of how regional these things are and how much people enjoy them. I mean, it really- it helps people, I think, focus their lives in a different way and it makes it easier to exercise, be healthier.

Paul G. Wiegman: It brings another question I had, do you see this beyond something- the trails beyond just simply recreational?

Tom Murphy: Oh, yeah. I think it’s a lifestyle. I think if you look at the cities, I believe, we compete within America today – the Bostons, the Washingtons, the Minneapolis, Austin, Texas, Seattle – these are cities that aren’t any better in the weather than we are, in some cases worse. They might be closer to the ocean in some of them. Some of them aren’t. But, they’ve really created- it’s a lifestyle. I’ve always believed that people make two choices- two reasons why they make choices about where they’re going to live. One is the job opportunities.

Paul G. Wiegman: Mm-hmm.

Tom Murphy: And, the second is the lifestyle. The quality of life you can have in that city. And, you know, that was the- continuing to be the challenge. We need to create the jobs but also, we need to create a modern city and not a city that sort of looks to it’s past but now one that more looks to its future. And trails, for me, epitomize that because they talk about how we use our riverfronts which we’ve said for 50 years is our most important asset but how long’s it been since we used them? And, I think the trails have really opened that up.

Paul G. Wiegman: Well, I can remember Zubik’s fleet where Heinz Field is.

Tom Murphy: Right.

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- Paul G. Wiegman:** Right there in the...
- Tom Murphy:** Pretty much all the way up to Herr's Island, right. And so, yeah.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** As people begin to move back into the city, as residential development takes place in the city, are these trails going to be important for just transport- for people getting around?
- Tom Murphy:** Well, you know what, it's funny. When we began to develop Herr's Island as we would know it in old Pittsburgh but now Washington's Landing, right? The residents- the first residents moving back there would have a Christmas party because we were real involved in developing that they'd invite me and staff and the URA to their Christmas parties and it was so much fun talking to the people that had moved out on Washington's Landing because many of them were empty nesters or people that had moved to Pittsburgh and in a million years if you had said to them that they'd be living on an island in the middle of the city and they'd be taking up biking or rowing or canoeing, they would have said you're crazy, right?
- Paul G. Wiegman:** You're crazy.
- Tom Murphy:** And yet, they had made a choice in lifestyle in why by the virtue of where they bought it almost demanded that they start riding bikes or walking on the trails or maybe enjoying the boat club or now using the rivers in ways that they never thought about. It was a remarkable- you might want to interview some of the people because it was really interesting to see how, when you create the opportunity, how people take advantage of it.
- Paul G. Wiegman:** And, that would- you begin to look at Lawrenceville. You begin to look at the Millvale/Etna- all of those towns along the river can begin to use these trails as transportation, ways to get into the city.
- Tom Murphy:** For example, a friend of mine- friends of mine in Lawrenceville named Carol and Al Borik who are avid birdwatchers and we have a little piece of the riverfront open as a trail there. And, you know, every time I see them, they report to me on the birds they see down there and some unusual ones that are

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just probably passing through and it now is sort of a little oasis down by the river where they can enjoy, the birds can go and they can enjoy watching them.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah.

Tom Murphy: It just changes, I think, in a very healthful and helpful way, people's perceptions of their neighborhoods.

Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah. One last thing, I hope you're going to stay involved in this whole thing.

Tom Murphy: Well, you know what I'm like the informal inspector of these trails now because I'm virtually- I mean, I'm still running, I ride bikes.

[Chuckle]

Paul G. Wiegman: You're the mayor of the trails.

Tom Murphy: So, I still go out and use them a lot and, you know, I know those people in public works and if I see something that ought to be done- it really is the- will be fundamentally whether we continue to build on what we've done and expand it and there's opportunities to expand it that will really be about whether this community has the will to make it happen. It's not a question of money. It's not a question of opportunity. It's a question of whether there's the will to make it happen. And, that's the challenge for us.

Paul G. Wiegman: And, that's- people do. That's people.

Tom Murphy: That's people saying, "This is in our values. These are important."

Paul G. Wiegman: And, it's just not government officials.

Tom Murphy: It's not government officials.

Paul G. Wiegman: It's people in the communities.

Tom Murphy: It won't happen if its just government officials that will be- people who every day just enjoy being in a little oasis in the middle of a thriving city. And, we have that opportunity today

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to create those special places and that opportunity will disappear if we don't grab it.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Very good.

Tom Murphy:

Thank you.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Thank you. Good to have you.

Tom Murphy:

I don't know if that's what you wanted.

Paul G. Wiegman:

No, that's what we need. I agree with you. You're going to stay involved with RTC and so forth?

Tom Murphy:

Yeah, actually I have a board meeting this week. I'm going to New Orleans. I'm spending most three, four days a week in New Orleans working with their rebuild committee down there.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Oh, okay.

Tom Murphy:

They figure I have some- I'm the outside expert with experience on doing these old industrial sites and understanding how to finance it and everything.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Yeah, yeah.

Tom Murphy:

So, it's been interesting.

Paul G. Wiegman:

I'll make sure the Meyersdale portion is opening on the 26th of May.

Tom Murphy:

Is it?

Paul G. Wiegman:

Yes.

Tom Murphy:

For sure?

Paul G. Wiegman:

Yeah.

Tom Murphy:

Because they were talking about last year.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Oh, yeah. I'm on the board of- I'm on the Somerset County board.

Tom Murphy:

The tunnel was supposed to have been up last fall, I guess.

Paul G. Wiegman:

Well, the tunnel's done. The tunnel was done.

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Tom Murphy: But, there's nothing- there's no...

Paul G. Wiegman: There's one little bridge. We've had a horrible time with CSX. We had to pick up a...

[Break]

Cameraman: Rolling. These are Tom Murphy questions. All right.

Paul G. Wiegman: Let me see. Did I ask him about...?

Let's begin in how your interest in trails began. What was it that led you to thinking about recreational trails?

Mm-hmm.

Yes, okay.

I'm assuming you can just fit those in, yeah.

Cameraman: Right. And then, you want to ask another question?

Paul G. Wiegman: I understand that you personally explored the city and scouted some of the routes that the trails now follow. You didn't send out somebody from the Cityworks, you actually were there walking and riding your bike.

I see.

Mm-hmm.

In all of the work that you did, what was...

In all of the work that you did...

In all the outstanding work that you've done with trails in the City of Pittsburgh, what were some of the low points?

And, of course, let's take it on the other side in that same work that you've done with trails in the city of Pittsburgh which has just been a marvelous job. What were some of the high points?

What were some of the high points? What were the points that really made you feel... whatever.

Cameraman: Well, that's good.

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Paul G. Wiegman: Yeah, that's started off.

Cameraman: Any more? Is that...

Paul G. Wiegman: I just want to personally thank you from myself as a bicycle rider and many, many other friends that I have – thank you for building the system you have and being a part of the trail system in Western Pennsylvania.

Okay?

Cameraman: Lovely.

[end 37:06.2]

slt-t/cr-p

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