

Deseret News

Long-awaited canal covering creates a bike trail

By Sharon Haddock

Deseret News

Published: Thursday, July 21, 2011 8:27 p.m. MDT

LINDON — When the ribbon's cut and people start legitimately biking, walking and riding their horses on the trail over the Provo Reservoir/Murdock Canal, no one will have a bigger grin on his face than Utah County Commissioner Larry Ellertson.

Lindon resident, horseman and former mayor of the north Utah County town, he's waited patiently and worked tirelessly for the trail since before 1995.

Transportation Planner for the Mountainland Association of Governments, Jim Price, is right there with him, along with hundreds of avid bikers and horsemen in Utah County.

"We know there's a lot of public interest," Price said. "People can't wait. It's used now but it's illegal to do so and it's dangerous."

"Be patient a little while longer," he added. "It's coming together."

Price expects the 15-foot wide, 17-mile long asphalt trail linking Lindon and Orem through to the Thanksgiving Point/Cabela's area will be finished as early as the fall of 2012 — three years sooner than first projected.

The \$17.25 million, multi-use trail will be open to bikers, walkers and equestrian riders from 800 North in Orem through Lindon, Pleasant Grove, Cedar Hills, American Fork, Highland and Lehi, with six landscaped trailheads along the way.

The tunnels and under-crossings involved are currently under construction as the Utah Department of Transportation's expansion of the SR-92 corridor takes place.

Trailhead construction is expected to begin within the month.

The actual trail can be finished once the canal is piped and covered in a \$150 million water conservation project being done and paid for by the Provo Water Users Association.

The trail project represents a unique co-operative effort between federal, state, city and private entities involving millions of dollars and countless hours of planning and effort, said Price. Seven cities along with Utah County had to agree to the terms that allow the 100-foot right-of-way access atop the canal through their communities and provide for maintenance. Three construction companies are involved in the actual making of the trail.

"It's certainly a wonderful thing," Price said. "It's a marvelous example of cooperation between entities."

Ellertson said it's something to celebrate not only as a win for taxpayers but for those interested in seeing connections to a 250-mile non-motorized trails network known as The Wasatch Loop through Utah, Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Summit, Wasatch and Weber counties.

Utah County has \$1 million invested as part of a \$16 million-plus federal matching grant program.

"It's a priority with people," Ellertson said. "I hear nothing but positive comments about it."

"It will provide a great backbone and linkage to the Western trails we already have. I'm excited as are many people," he added.

Ellertson said eventually the trail will run from the Jordan River Parkway down to the Provo River trail, around the shoreline of Utah Lake and back to the Jordan River Parkway.

He also wants to see another mile-and-a-half of trail added to the top of the Provo Canyon bike trail to connect to Soldier Hollow. "That gives you a loop all the way around," he said.

Sharon Haddock is a professional writer with 30 years experience, 17 at the Deseret News. Her personal blog is at sharonhaddock.blogspot.com. Email: haddoc@desnews.com

© 2011 Deseret News Publishing Company | All rights reserved